

Wallasea Wetland bird monitoring: October – February counts

This inter-tidal wetland, created on Wallasea Island by DEFRA, is designed to compensate for bird habitat losses elsewhere in SE England. The site is being surveyed for winter bird usage to monitor the success of the scheme. Six counts will be carried out this winter by *CJT Ecology* on behalf of DEFRA. Three on a rising tide (low water to high water) and three on a falling tide, with each count made up of six sub counts (one/hour). The following table summarises the peak counts for some of the key species from the first five counts:

State of tide:	12/10/2006	05/11/2006	09/12/2006	29/01/2007	04/02/2007
	Rising	Falling	Rising	Falling	Rising
Cormorant	9	9	14	8	19
Little egret	45	10	18	8	12
Brent goose	10	1	0	169	159
Shelduck	5	67	82	286	147
Wigeon	3	3	2	23	5
Teal	7	21	762	347	333
Mallard	11	110	133	105	87
Oystercatcher	0	0	0	5	5
Ringed plover	733	303	167	193	275
Golden plover	1352	150	828	824	700
Grey plover	11	26	22	19	29
Lapwing	1530	362	1530	1202	1493
Little stint	6	3	3	1	1
Dunlin	159	424	514	489	1214
Black-tailed godwit	0	7	4	65	13
Curlew	9	12	43	16	7
Redshank	92	77	64	64	116
Black-headed gull	62	22	53	12	284
Common gull	29	4	6	0	7
Herring gull	2	76	18	10	105
Skylark	23	49	17	3	6
Meadow pipit	8	17	8	10	4
Starling	133	86	1	0	34
Total for all species:	4356	1876	4311	3884	5074

A total of 54 species have been recorded using the site during the five surveys carried out to-date. It is still early days but the site is already supporting good populations of many key species. Of particular note are the numbers of ringed plover, with the October count being of International Importance. The four figure counts of lapwing and golden plover are also encouraging. The increase in 'probing' waders as the winter went on was an indication of the good siltation rates and associated colonisation by invertebrates. On the wildfowl side the numbers of shelduck and teal using the site were pleasing, along with the presence of up to 169 brent geese, feeding on algae. The site has also attracted three unusual birds, with up to 4 little stints, a single female goosander and a black brant, the latter being the rarest of the three races of brent geese (*nigricans*).

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