

Lytchett Bay
Birds and wildlife
2023

*Shaun Robson
& Nick Hull*



Welcome to the 32nd consecutive Lytchett Bay annual report and surely our best ever cover photo – many thanks to Gary Watton for capturing this image of this year’s Forster’s Tern and allowing us to use it. The data that we have gathered & published over the period constitutes a comprehensive log of the site’s ornithological importance since 1992. Since 2014, thanks to work led by **Nick Hull**, we have widened the report to cover a much wider taxa, interest in this section is growing year on year (page 52).

A turbulent and often wet year. A cold spell in January produced little and soon gave way to heavy rain. Whilst the odd cold spell occurred into March it was the wind and rain which persisted, well into May, meaning that the spring rainfall was above average. June to the contrary was the driest and sunniest on record. Just as we began to get excited about a classic hot July and August it all changed. In fact it seemed like we might not ring at all during our peak migration period at one point. Wind and rain was the typical daily weather for almost the whole period. September started hot and still and but by mid-month this all changed. South Westerly storms became the norm for the rest of the autumn and continued with only minimal respite until the year end.

Despite this unhelpful weather it was another exciting year for birds. Whilst not matching 2022 for its record diversity we were blessed with some remarkable quality. 164 species were recorded. Three new species were added to the Lytchett Bay list moving it on to 237. Ringing effort was well down on recent years – this was mostly down to the weather but also due to the departure of the ever enthusiastic Joe Parker to a new and exciting role at Lundy Bird Observatory.

The highlights of the year included our first **Forsters Tern**, **Red-rumped Swallow** and **Great Grey Shrike** – yes you did read that right. These three species occurred at Lytchett Bay in 2023. A **Common Scoter** was the first to be seen since 1981! Not quite so rare but becoming increasingly so was the first **Turtle Dove** for 6 years. **Great Northern Divers** put on a record breaking show, **Wryneck** continued its great run with our 7th record. 2 **Cranes** likewise, occurring for the 7th time.

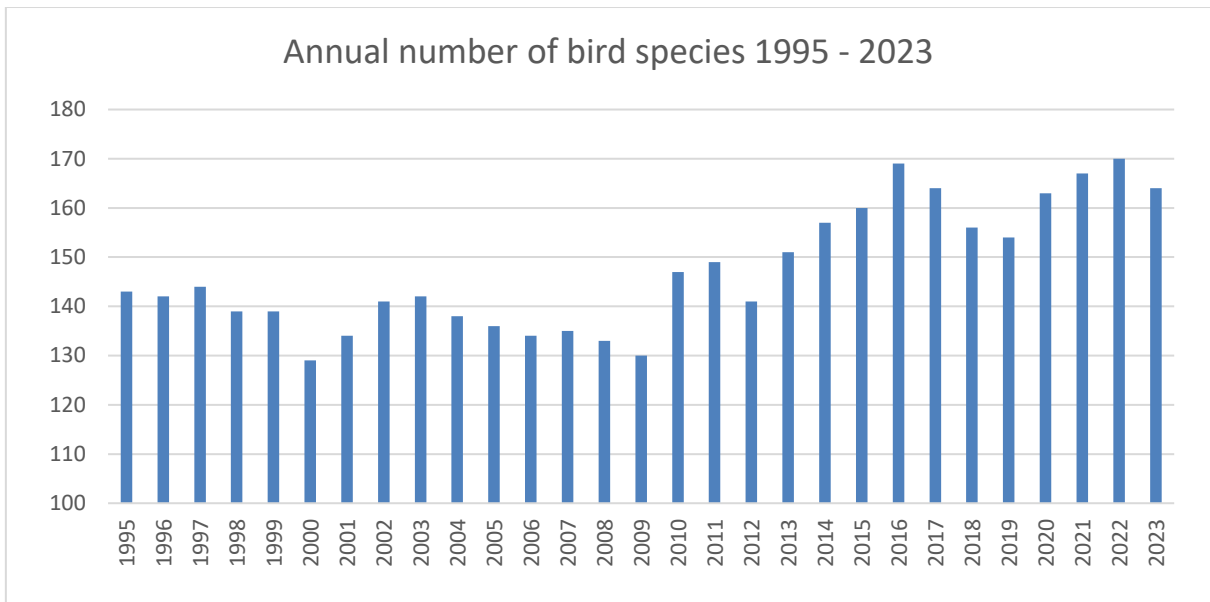
Brent Goose, Shoveler, Swift, Stock Dove, Mediterranean Gull, Cattle Egret, Osprey, Jackdaw, Swallow and Linnet occurred in greater numbers than ever before.

With the possibility of the recording area list reaching 250 in the not too distant future, and on-going debates of what the next new species will be, we thought it would be fun to predict the next addition to the list and informative to remind readers of the 237 species which have already occurred.

Six of the highest current Lytchett Bay listers were asked to predict their next 5 species. The outcome of this optimism is written up in Appendix 2. The article also details the growth of the area list since 1992 and some of the fantasy predictions which have been made previously. The systematic list itself includes a brief note on the status of all 237 species – see note below at the introduction to that section.



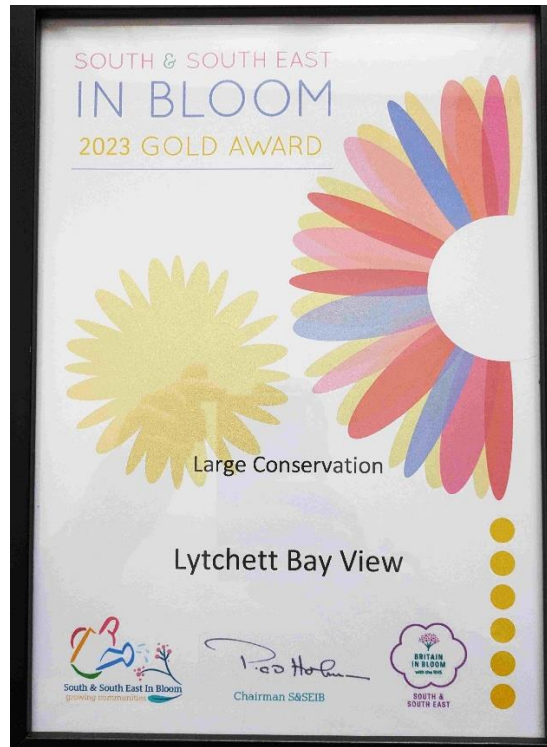
A misty morning from Lytchett Bay View © Shaun Robson



Lytchett Bay – people and wildlife

The undoubted highlight of 2023 has been the establishment of Rock Lea View as a popular and very well visited facility. Having opened in autumn 2022 it has now been discovered and enjoyed by a large number of local people and birdwatching visitors on a daily basis.

The views of Lytchett Bay and its wildlife get better and better as the birds become habituated to the fact they can feed undisturbed. By the year end Brent Geese, Avocets and Spotted Redshank are regulars in front of the platform as the tide rises and falls. Ospreys were seen every day between 1st August and 29th September, sometimes several on view at once. White-tailed Eagles have been recorded on 57 dates, Marsh Harriers almost daily and Hen Harriers have put on great show this winter.



Lytchett Bay View, the original raised viewpoint mitigating against disturbance and providing awesome views of the local area received a gold award for large conservation areas by South and South-East in

Bloom. A fitting reward recognizing the excellent work led by Lytchett Minster and Upton Town Council at a site that they describe as “The jewel in their crown”.

Earlier in the year Dorset Wildlife Trust in partnership with the students and staff of the media department at Bournemouth and Poole College made a series of films on the Turlin Moor shore. These had multiple purposes – developing the student’s creative skills and promoting the nature value of Lytchett Bay primary among them.

The finished films can be viewed via the following links and are well worth a watch.

[College DWT final major project](#) – a ten minute film about the project and the local nature (starring some familiar faces)



Dorset Wildlife Trust's Chief Executive describing the importance of nature in the major project film. © Shaun Robson



[THE CREATURE FROM GILLMAN LAKE - Short Film](#) – a 10 minute comic horror set on the shores of Lytchett Bay.



Work parties were again a feature of our efforts to maintain and improve the area. A litter pick of Chad's Copse at Easter, cleaning the ditches around the lower end of Watery Lane to reduce flooding, path clearance at RSPB Lytchett Fields and the provision of bird food and operation of the feeding station were all brilliantly supported by our volunteers. The Turlin Moor litter pickers did a great job on the first Sunday of every month. Bulb planting led by BCP Parks Foundation team should brighten the Turlin Fields in the coming year.

Dorset Dogs ran a pitstop encouraging responsible dog ownership at Lytchett Bay View. Thanks to everyone for their support.

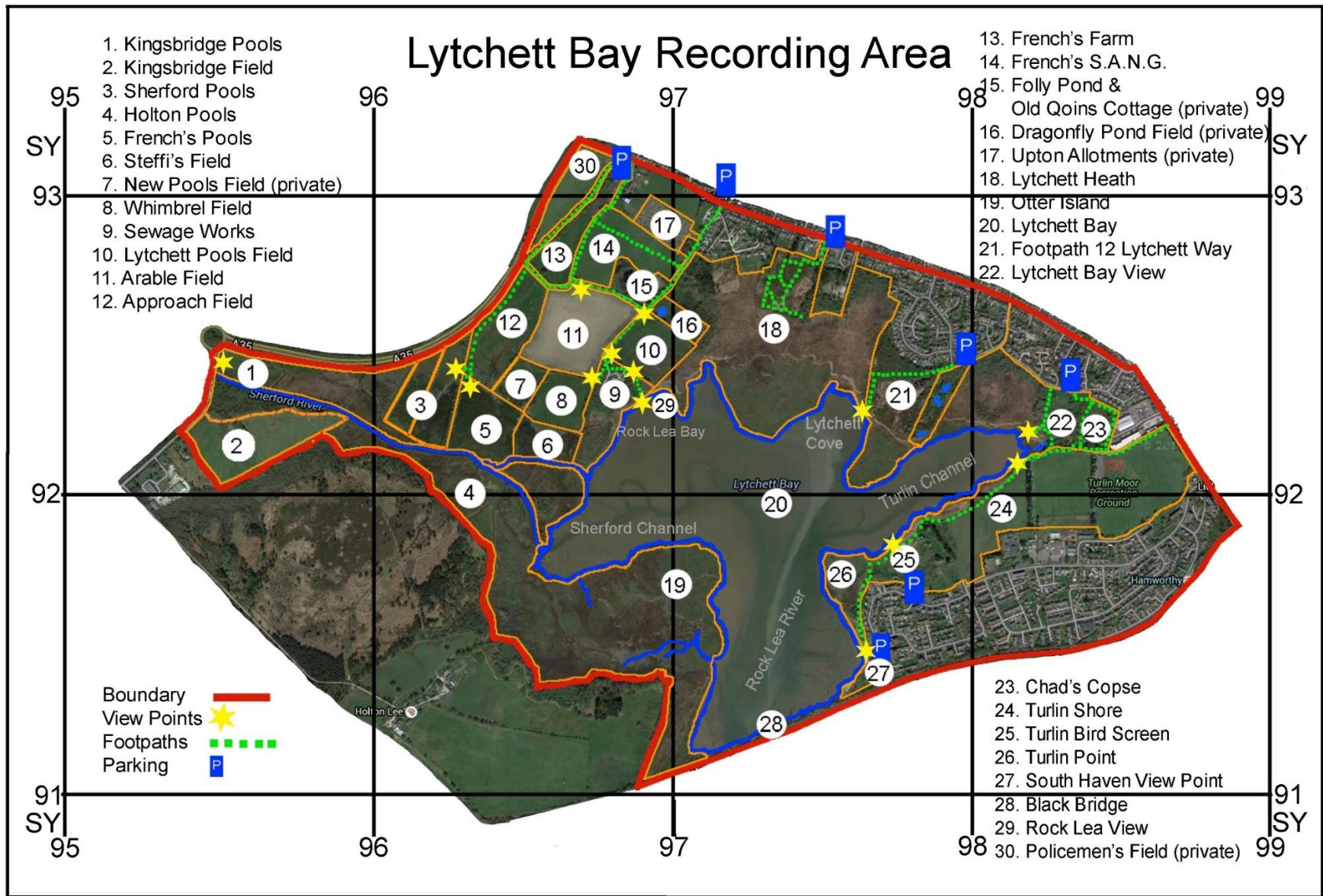
Anyone who has ever explored the boundary between the private land at the entrance to footpath 12 and the reedbed to its west can't have failed to notice the apparent manmade cutting through the land. It is something that SR had noticed 25 years ago, had referred to as "The Gut", and had puzzled as to its origin. This year, thanks to Ray Griffin an article about this landscape feature was brought to our attention. It turns out that it was a canal to transport clay "of the most excellent quality" from Upton through Lytchett Bay which opened in 1831.....to find out more turn to Appendix 4 on page 48.

The year ahead looks like an exciting one full of opportunities. The western part of the area is included in a landscape recovery project pilot [Projects of Landscape Recovery scheme announced - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/projects-of-landscape-recovery-scheme-announced). The foundations of which are still being put in place and will take many years to deliver but hold potential.

More immediately the RSPB has agreed a new management agreement with Natural England. Watch this space for some positive changes in land management and access.

As we write a positive planning application to increase the size of the SANG and its associated car park at Frenches Farm is under consideration.





Nick Hull's map above gives a complete overview of the recording area. Whilst we have named as many sites as we can, please remember that some areas remain private and we would be grateful if visitors stick to the extensive network of public and permissive pathways that are available. There is a wide selection of viewpoints that provide visibility of the area.

Bird Ringing 2023

Collectively, ringing activities took place on only 29 dates, the poorest in the last 10 years (average 51 2014-2023) largely due to poor weather. A total of 863 new birds of 41 species were ringed, with more than 100 birds ringed in 3 sessions. Efforts were spread between three sites: Lytchett Fields (RSPB) – Aquatic and Pipit projects, 16 dates, Lytchett Heath (ARC and DWT) – 9 dates and Sandy Close Pond (Private Garden) – 4 dates.

A dreadful year for Aquatic Warbler migration through Britain and Ireland. For a while it looked like none might be recorded at all, only for some late field records to save the day, alas none locally. Our Pipit project was almost flooded out but surprisingly we ringed 6 new Water Pipits. Scandinavian Rock Pipits on the other hand were very thin on the ground, presumably not helped by the huge areas of flooded fields around the harbour and elsewhere. There is no doubt about the ringing highlight of the year, look up the account for Great Grey Shrike for all the details.

Thanks to some keen eyed observation, largely by Ian Ballam, we had an excellent number of colour ring reads to supplement the data gathered by conventional ringing. The map below gives an overall picture of the bird movements to and from Lytchett Bay. See the systematic list for the fine details.

Lytchett Bay 2023 notable ringing recoveries



Appendix 3 summarises species ringing totals. Details of recoveries and controls are detailed under species accounts. Since 1983, at least 35,601 birds of 88 species have been ringed at Lytchett Bay. We continue to research historical data and add new data and discoveries as we find them.

Our ringing data is published on Trektellen. We are endeavouring to add our historical data to this accessible database. All input data is available at [\[Trektellen.org\]](http://Trektellen.org) - [Totals Lytchett Bay RS \(Dorset, England\) -1](#)

Acknowledgements:

The Birds of Poole Harbour & Dorset Bird Club host this and our previous annual reports on their websites which is hugely appreciated.

SR would like to add particular thanks to Ian Ballam for his continued commitment to birding and bird recording at Lytchett Bay and for his support with various volunteer activity at Lytchett Fields. To friends at Stour Ringing Group for companionship and support. Many thanks to fellow editor Nick Hull for his survey work and assistance in researching and writing this report. To Stephen F Smith for his work on plants at RSPB Lytchett Fields (see Appendix 4 for latest survey results). To the Lytchett Fields work party crew for their continued help in managing the reserve.

Stour Ringing Group would like to thank the RSPB, Post Green Estate, DWT & ARC for their kind permission to ring at Lytchett Bay.

Many thanks to all the observers who supplied records and comments via BirdTrack, e-Bird, Twitter and other information sources. Finally, to everyone who has allowed us to use their ever impressive photographs which brighten and decorate this report. Please keep them coming.

Systematic List 2023 - Shaun Robson

3495 specific records were collated during the year via the **@BirdTrack** and **@Team_eBird** databases covering 164 species. In addition, many more records of common species were submitted via “complete lists” to both databases. Each of the main sites at Lytchett Bay have been set up as e-Bird “Hotspots” – including Rock Lea Viewpoint. Users of e-Bird are encouraged to log their sightings against these. If anyone would like advice on the use of e-Bird then SR is very happy to try and support. BirdTrack’s site mechanism is based around 1km squares, again records logged against the actual square are most helpful.

BTO Wetland Bird Surveys (WeBS) are conducted monthly from September to March. RSPB Lytchett Fields is surveyed completely bi-weekly on the high tide. This data is incorporated within the species accounts.

Nocturnal sound recording conducted by **Nick Hull** at Lytchett Way continues to provide surprising information about the unseen migration over our area and the highlights of this research are included in the systematic list.

BirdTrack functionality has been used to generate graphs showing the weekly maxima throughout the year for some regularly occurring species. The interpretation of these requires some caution as not all “graphed” species are counted every week; this can lead to gaps in the data. Where necessary this is clarified in the text.

Bird records were received from the recording area each day with the exception of Christmas Day, a new record in the level of coverage.

The systematic list follows the latest IOC list as followed by the Dorset Bird Club.

Species names are followed by 2 or 3 numbers. The first is the record known count recorded at the Bay. This now includes historical counts by observers going back to 1975. The middle figure is the maximum day count in the period since 1992 (if less than the first). The final figure is the number of years in which the species has been recorded since 1992 (max 32), the year in which the current spell of comprehensive coverage began.

The symbol which follows each species name shows the direction of travel of the species status at Lytchett Bay over the last 5 years. We think these are quite intuitive; strongly increasing, increasing, stable, declining and strongly declining. Hopefully this feature will enable others to compare the data from this site with experiences at their own site and engender some debate and understanding.

Each species or sub-species listed in [blue](#) did not occur in 2023 but has occurred previously as detailed.

Dark-bellied Brent Goose: (148 – 24) ↔

Common winter visitor. Present until 31st Jan when 37 were still present. 2 spring migrants on 23rd Apr. First of the winter 25th Oct after which birds were present almost daily until the year end. Max 148 on 29th Nov, a record count for the Bay (previously 144 on 11th Jan 2019)

Pale-bellied Brent Goose:

4th record. 5 were with the Dark-bellied flock in front of Rock Lea View on 15th Dec (SR).

2022: 3rd record. One on 25th Jan (NHu). Accidentally omitted from last year's report. Previous records in 2018 & 2019

Black Brant: 1 record. 2018.

Canada Goose: (602 – 32) ↗

Increasingly frequent visitor. 3 pairs bred successfully. Max 300 on 11th Oct.

Barnacle Goose: Scarce visitor. Recorded in 12 years since 1992. Last record 2022.

Greylag Goose: (40 – 24) ↔

Uncommon feral wanderer. Recorded in 7 months on at least 24 dates. Max 13 feeding on Lytchett Fields on 24th Oct.

White U136 was present on 4th Apr 2023. It had been ringed as a pullus 283 days earlier on 25th Jun 2022, 8km south-east at Poole Park, Dorset.

Pink-footed Goose: 1 record. 1981

Tundra Bean Goose: 1 record. 2022.

White-fronted Goose: Scarce visitor. Recorded in 6 years since 1992. Last record 2021.

Mute Swan: (58 – 32) ↔

Uncommon resident, increases in winter. Bred between 2002-2007 and in 2015. Another poor year. A flock of up to 16 on 13th- 14th Oct was the only double figure count of the year.

Bewick's Swan: 1 record. 1983.

Whooper Swan: Rare visitor. 4 records. 2010, 2016, 2017, 2018.

Egyptian Goose: (13 – 10) ↗

Scarce feral visitor. The first record was in 2011. The poorest year for a while. Recorded on 5 dates across the year, mostly fly overs. Max 6 on 20th Nov.

Shelduck: (645 – 548 – 32) ↘

Occasional breeder and winter visitor. 2 family parties noted, one in Jun and one in Jul. The max count was 39 on 22nd Nov. Worse than last year but still not as bad as 2012, which was the worst year on record.

Mandarin Duck: 2 records. 2003 & 2011

Garganey: Scarce visitor. Recorded in 8 years since 1992. Last record 2022.

Shoveler: (32 – 30) ↔

Scarce visitor, which can occur at any time. The year started with a record count when 32 flew over on 2nd Jan (PVH), previously 28 on 22nd Nov 2015. After this the year was far more typical with records in single figures on 16 dates across the year. By way of comparison NW Holes Bay, approximately 1km away, hosted 312 on 30th Dec 2023! Demonstrating the importance of habitat diversity within any locality.

Gadwall: (73 – 26) ↔

Uncommon visitor and occasional breeder. 1 pair again bred, hatching 9 juveniles in early Jun. There was no repeat of the spring gathering of non-breeding adults and there were no double figure counts of full grown birds.

Wigeon: (732 – 32) ↔

Common winter visitor. Absent from 28th Apr until 5th Sep. Max 578 on 3rd Dec.

Mallard: (123 – 32) ↔

Breeds at several sites around the recording area. Very regular on Sandy Close Pond. Fewer in winter. Max 93 on 18th Aug.

Northern Pintail: (21 - 24) ↔

Scarce visitor. A poor year with 13 bird-days on 5 dates until 20th Feb and from 15th Oct. Max 6 on 5th Jan.

Teal: (1345 – 32) ↗

Winter visitor and passage migrant. 6 juveniles on 9th July again suggested local breeding. Max 554 on 2nd Oct.

Green-winged Teal: 3 records. 2000, 2016-17 & 2022.

Pochard: (24 – 17)

Scarce visitor. 1 was at a flooded Lytchett Fields on 26th Jan and another in the Bay on 19th Oct.

Tufted Duck: (20 – 19) ↔

Scarce visitor. 1 on 6th Aug was the only record.

Scaup: 1 record. 1986.

Common Scoter: (? – 3)

6th record. Last year we said, “one day we will see one swimming on the water in the Bay”. This was that year! Following stormy weather on 2nd Nov a juv was found swimming in the Rock Lea channel (SR et al). To the delight of all local listers it lingered. In fact to everyone’s surprise it fed actively in the Bay until 28th Nov. This was the first to be **seen** at the Bay since 27th Jul 1981!



Even though this bird was present daily for almost a month it never came close to the shore and a competition for the least-worst picture developed. This phone scoped effort just about won © Shaun Robson

Goldeneye: Previously uncommon winter visitor. Now rare. Recorded in 25 years since 1992. Last record 2018.

Smew: 4 records, 1980, 1997, 2001 & 2014.

Goosander: Scarce visitor. Recorded in 11 years since 1992. Last record 2022.

Red-breasted Merganser: (73 – 32) ⇔

Winter visitor. Recorded on at least 48 dates until 29th Mar and from 19th Nov. April departures and October arrivals were once the norm. Max 8 on 12th Jan.

Ruddy Duck: 2 records, both 2001.

Grey Partridge: 1 record since 1992, in 1999.

Pheasant: ⇔

Common resident.

Red-legged Partridge: (4 – 8)

Scarce introduced visitor. One on 28th Feb.

Nightjar: (3 – 24) ⇔



Irregular breeder. A pair present at Lytchett Heath from at least 3rd Jun – 16th Aug. Breeding likely as juvenile recorded in daylight on last date. 2 migrants recorded at Lytchett Fields on 8th Aug.

Finding a bird in the open at its daytime roost is a very fortunate event © Ian Ballam

Swift: (140 – 32) ⇔

Passage migrant and occasional local breeder. Recorded between 27th Apr – 5th Sep (latest date, previously 28th Aug 2012). At least 140 over Lytchett Fields on 4th Jul was a record count for the Bay, surpassing 113 on 23rd Jul 2000. It was thought that more were present. Otherwise counts were small and usually in single figures.

Cuckoo: (2 – 31) ⇔

Scarce visitor in spring. A poor year with only 4 records. Singles on 20th Apr, 27th Apr (sound recorded), 19th May and 22nd May.

Feral Pigeon: (- - 32)

Common resident.

Stock Dove: (138 – 32) ↗

Common resident, increasing. Again bred in the vicinity of Lytchett Fields. The arable field attracted more than ever. Max 76 in first winter period on Mar 26th and then record breaking numbers in second period peaking at 138 on 7th Dec (previous record 72 on 13th Nov 2013).

Woodpigeon: (17,785 – 32) ↔

Common resident and autumn migrant. Autumn movements were again few in the predominantly windy weather. Max 1000 west in 45 minutes on 5th Nov.

Turtle Dove: (2 – 12)

Previously uncommon but almost annual visitor, now rare. 1 flew north over Turlin Moor on 4th May (SC), the 4th record this century (earliest record, previously 6th May 1984). Found by a visiting birder looking for the Forster's Tern. First record since 22nd Oct 2017.

Collared Dove: (18 – 32) ↔

Resident. Recorded across the site on a daily basis. Max 10 at on location on 11th Jan.

Water Rail: (67 pairs – 32) ↔

Common resident and winter visitor. No perceived change in status after 2013's complete breeding survey found 67 prs.

Corncrake: 1 record. 1996.

Spotted Crane: 4 records. 1983, 1992, 2014, 2016.

Moorhen: (18 – 32) ↗

Common resident. Breeds widely across the area, much more so than in the past. The Sandy Close Pond birds moved on after reed cutting in autumn 2022.

Coot: (62 – 21)

Very scarce visitor, though night recording is proving that they are very frequent overhead nocturnal migrants. The first was sound recorded on 14th Mar at the Lytchett Way listening station and on a further 13 dates in spring until 26th Apr! There was one nocturnal bird in autumn on 5th Oct. There were no field sightings this year.

Common Crane: (8 – 5)

Rare visitor. 7th record. 2 circled over Lytchett Fields on 22nd Feb (IB et al). They looked like they might land in the arable field but were spooked before touch down. They eventually drifted off north.



A call from Ian Ballam brightened a dull February afternoon © Shaun Robson

Little Grebe: (12 - 32) ↔

Winter visitor. Present in the Bay, and occasionally on Lytchett Fields, on many days until 8th Mar and from 21st Aug. Nocturnal migrants were recorded up to 4th Apr. Max 7 on 26th Oct.

Great Crested Grebe: (7 - 29) ↗

Increasingly frequent visitor. Seen on at least 104 dates, a remarkable increase even compared to recent good years. Records from every month except Jun. Max 6 on 6th - 8th Dec.

Slavonian Grebe: 1 record. 1989.

Black-necked Grebe: 2 records. 1994, 2019.

Stone Curlew: 1 record. 2019.

Oystercatcher: (400 – 32) □

A common winter visitor and passage migrant. Turlin Fields and Turlin Shore at high tide remain the favored locations, with fewer birds remaining in the bay to feed at low tide. Increasingly birds are seen on Lytchett Fields, particularly in spring and summer.

After a quiet start to the year numbers using Turlin fields improved in the second winter period and continued into 2023. Max 135 on 12th Nov. Birds were present during the breeding season at Lytchett Fields but any attempt at breeding was unsuccessful again.

Of(11)//m+//R - present at Turlin Fields, Lytchett Bay on 22nd Nov 2024



Ringed as a pullus on 25th Jul 2023 at Wisła, Zastów Karczmiski, Lubelskie, POLAND.

© Ian Ballam

Black-winged Stilt: 2 records. 2014 & 2016.

Pied Avocet: (327 – 31) ↗

Increasingly regular winter visitor and passage migrant. Year on year occurrence seems less reliant on cold weather. Present almost daily until 11th Feb and from 10th Oct. Nocturnal migration (nm) was sound recorded on night of 1st - 2nd May when three separate flocks flew over. Max 238 on 1st Dec.

Monthly max:

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
162	126	2	2	nm	1	0	2	0	35	97	238

Lapwing: (3000 – 32) ↔

Formerly bred, now a non-breeding visitor in smaller numbers. Bred regularly during early 1990's. Last confirmed breeding 1999. Present during Apr & May but there was no evidence of a breeding attempt. Max 625 on 1st Feb.

Monthly max:

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
495	625	40	2	9	40	60	50	31	76	151	221

G//GN + Nfl//Bm - present at Lytchett Bay on 10th Feb 2023.



It was ringed on 16th Apr 2021 as an adult female at Watton's Ford, Avon Valley, Hampshire, UK. A movement of 24 km. The bird has previously been observed at Lytchett Bay in autumn 2021, May, Jun, Jul & Oct 2022.

© Ian Ballam

Golden Plover: (160 – 18)

Scarce visitor, surprisingly so. 38 overhead on 2nd Jan was a good count but the only record of the year.

Grey Plover: (18 – 26) ⇔

Scarce visitor. Recorded on 7 dates. 2 on 25th Feb, 1 calling over Sandy Close Pond on 3rd Apr, 2 on 4th Apr. There were no further records until 1 on 27th Sep. 3 on 11th Oct, 1 on 21st Oct and 2 on 25th Oct.

Ringed Plover: (50 – 28) ⇔

Passage migrant, previously scarce. 297 bird-days on 59 dates. A small reduction on last year's peak.

Spring migration 15th Mar (sound recorded) – 16th Jun. Max 35 on 23rd May. Autumn migration 25th Jul – 4th Oct. Max 18 on 25th Aug. There was one unusual winter record, a single on 22nd Nov.



Flocks of waders briefly dropping in before flying off north over the observer's head is one of the most thrilling aspects of spring migration. Ringed Plover and Dunlin beautifully captured here by © Stuart Utting at Rock Lea View.

Little Ringed Plover: (15 – 21) ↗

Increasingly frequent summer visitor, but this was a poor year. The first was on 17th Mar. Birds were then seen frequently until 9th Jun. The peak count was 4 on several dates. 1 pair were present until mid-May but did not breed.

Return passage was light and brief with birds only recorded on 11 dates between 20th Jun and 31st Jul. Max 5 on 29th Jun.

Whimbrel: (157 – 32) □

Passage migrant, most numerous in Spring. The first was recorded at the noc-mig Listening Station on 24th Mar. After which there was a good passage of 308 bird-days up to 26th May. Max 50 on 9th May.



© Peter Corbin

Autumn passage occurred between 29th Jun – 15th Sep involving 93 bird-days, max 5 on 13th Aug.

Curlew: (116 – 32) ↔

Common winter visitor and passage migrant. Frequently seen on Lytchett Fields in small numbers. Each month's count was slightly higher than 2022. Colour ring reading provided a fascinating insight into the diverse origins of our visiting birds.

Monthly max:

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
41	37	28	12	12	26	48	20	n.c.	25	n.c.	31

M//R+R//WR (FP45756) - present at Lytchett Bay during winter 2022/23 until at least 17th Feb, arriving back the following season on 16th Jun 2023 and continuing until the end of the year.



© Ian Ballam

It was ringed as an adult female at Strodgemoor, Burley Street, New Forest, Hampshire, UK on 25th May 2018. The bird was fitted with a GPS tag, but unfortunately this fell off one month after fitting. It was seen in the Avon Valley, Hants in Mar 2019, presumably on its way back to its breeding site. First encountered at Lytchett Bay on 16th Sep 2018, the bird has returned to over-wintered every year since. Many thanks to Pete Potts for this information.

Yfl(T6)R+Y – was present at Lytchett Fields on 6th May.



This bird had been part of a head starting program and had been released in the South Downs, nr Arundel, Sussex on 13th Jul 2022. This was the first record of the bird since release. Information about the the project can be found at <https://www.birdguides.com/news/headstarted-curlews-released-in-sussex/>. Many thanks to Chris Heward for this information.

© Ian Ballam

R//M+W(K1M) – was present at Lytchett Bay on 28th Oct and 13th Nov and continued in to 2024.



It had been ringed as a pullus at Siikalatva, Pohjois-Pohjanmaa, Oulu, FINLAND on 1st Jul 2023. This is our first recovery of a bird from that country. Very exciting, even though it is known that a lot of Finnish Curlews move to the UK to winter. Many thanks to the University of Helsinki for this information.

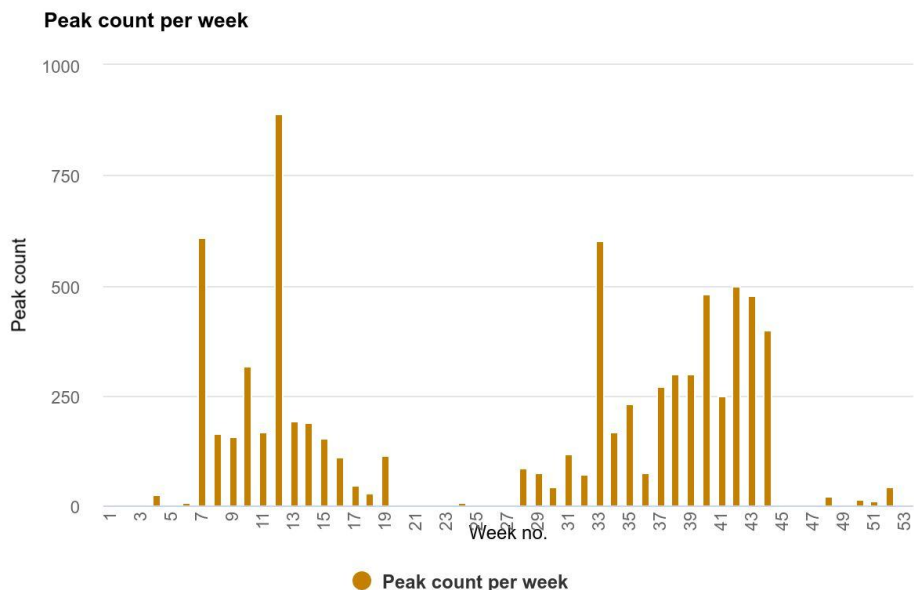
© Ian Ballam

Bar-tailed Godwit: (110 – 28) ⇄

Scarce visitor. 16 bird-days on 13 dates. Spring passage between 25th Mar – 26th Apr. In autumn between 27th Jul – 24th Sep. 2 singles in Dec. No counts greater than 2.

Black-tailed Godwit: (1240 – 32) ⇄

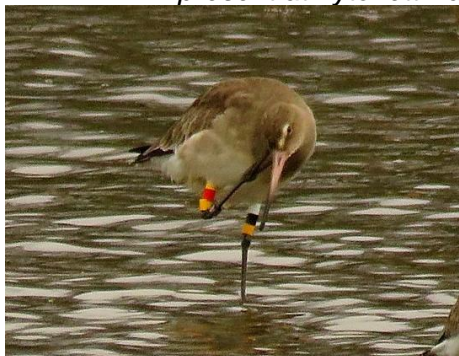
Common passage migrant and winter visitor. Spring passage was again strong. Max 891 on 23rd Mar. The first juv of the year was seen on 3rd Aug. Relatively scarce in both winter periods.



www.birdtrack.net

Over the last 26 years colour ringed birds have proved that birds visiting Lytchett Bay breed in Iceland (*L.l.islandica*). Birds seen at Lytchett Bay also visit western France, Portugal, Ireland, Scotland, The Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, E England as well as many locations along the south coast.

WNY+YRY - present at Lytchett Bay on 21st Feb 2023.



It was ringed at Axe Estuary, Seaton, Devon on 18th Jan 2015. It has previously been encountered at Lytchett Bay in 2015, 2017 & 2018 and 2021. Until Apr 2023 all sightings had come from the UK. However it was then seen twice at Akureyri, N ICELAND

© Ian Ballam

LNL+YRY - present at Lytchett Bay on 15th Feb 2023.



It was ringed at Axe Estuary, Seaton, Devon on 10th Nov 2013. It has previously been encountered at Lytchett Bay in 2014, 2015, 2017, 2018, 2021 & 2022. All recent records are from Poole Harbour.

© Ian Ballam

LNY+YRY was present on 31st Mar 2023.



It had been ringed on 10th Nov 2013 as an Ad at Axe Estuary, Devon. It was previously seen at Lytchett Bay in Jul & Aug 2015. Other English sightings extend as far as Lincolnshire.

© Ian Ballam

Left leg always given first, all rings above the tibia (unless preceded by the mark //). Recently some birds have been marked with leg flags rather than rings. Colours are:

O = Orange	L = Lime (this can look very washed out in the field, approaching white)
R = Red	G = Green
W = White	B = Blue
Y = Yellow	N = Niger

Many thanks to Pete Potts and the Farlington Ringing Group, Böðvar Þórisson and the Iceland Wader Group for supplying this information.

Turnstone: (9 – 12)

Scarce visitor. After none in 2022 it was good to have 3 records this year, all at Lytchett Fields. 2 on 30th Jul, 1 on 2nd Aug & 1 on 27th Aug.

Red Knot: (300 - 48 – 23) ↔

Scarce visitor. Another poor year with records on only 8 dates between 2nd Aug – 9th Oct. Max 2 on first date. Note the revised all-time record total. A record of 300 on 6th Oct 1978 has just come to light.

Ruff: (11 – 28) ↔

Scarce visitor. The poorest year since 2012 when there were none. Singles on 11 dates. One on 7th Jan was a good winter record. Single spring record on 16th Mar. The remainder were between 26th Aug and 29th Sep.

Stilt Sandpiper: 1 record. 2017.

Curlew Sandpiper: (13 – 17) ↗

Scarce autumn migrant. A good year, even if not matching the excesses of 2022. 66 bird-days on 27 dates between 11th Sep – 6th Nov. Max 6, 3rd – 5th Oct.

Temminck's Stint. 1 record. 2014.

Sanderling: (7 – 8)

Rare visitor. 1 on 22nd May was the only record.

Dunlin: (1800 – 1200 – 32) ↔

Regular winter visitor and passage migrant. Both winter periods were again decent by recent standards, Max 305 on 10th Mar and 474 on 17th Nov. No records between 2nd Jun & 10th Jul. The huge majority of birds were seen at Lytchett Fields.

Little Stint: (7 – 17) ↗

Scarce autumn migrant. Like the rest of Dorset, a very poor year. 1 at Lytchett Fields on 17th Aug was the only record.

Buff-breasted Sandpiper: 1 record. 2017.

Pectoral Sandpiper: Rare Visitor. 4 records. 1992, 2014, 2021, 2022.

Long-billed Dowitcher: 1 record. 2020.

Woodcock: (5 – 22) ↔

Scarce but under recorded winter visitor. The number of records of this species is largely a reflection of the effort made to see them. Nick Hopper studied Woodcock during early 2014 on behalf of The Birds of Poole Harbour. Following transects at Lytchett Bay the estimated winter population was predicted to be 8 birds (No more than 5 have ever been seen on one visit). Again, very little effort was made to survey birds at Lytchett Fields. Recorded on 4 dates to 27th Feb. One at Holton Pools on 21st Apr was interesting. Birds have been recorded roding at nearby Holton Lee in recent years.

Jack Snipe: (6 - 23) ↔

Scarce but under recorded winter visitor. Like Woodcock, records are to a degree a reflection of birder / survey effort as much as presence. This year there was relatively little effort. Recorded on 5 dates to 1st Mar, Max 2, and on 2 dates from 3rd Oct.

Snipe: (160 – 132 – 32) ↔

Winter visitor and passage migrant. Recorded until 25th Apr, returning on the 13th Jul. Max 50 on 25th Jan and 35 on 19th Dec.

Grey Phalarope: 3 records. 1978, 1999 & 2020.

Common Sandpiper: (18 – 32) ↔

Uncommon passage migrant. 11 bird-days in spring between 17th Apr – 4th May. Autumn passage 30th May – 9th Oct. 193 bird-days, max 13 on 9th Aug. *1 ringed.*

Green Sandpiper: (30 – 32) ↗

Common non-breeding visitor. Lytchett Fields and western most part of the Bay is the favored area. Present until 20th Apr and from 12th Jun. A single bird on 13th May could have been either a very late departer or a very early returner? Max 13 on 9th Aug.

Lesser Yellowlegs: 1 record. 2016 -17.

Redshank: (608 – 436 – 31) ↘

Common winter visitor. The first breeding record since 2018. One pair raised at least 1 young at Lytchett Fields. Nonetheless there is an overall impression that the numbers of migrant and wintering birds are declining gently year on year.

Monthly max:

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
115	92	86	70	2	3	93	110	161	138	163	86

N//NYL (right leg) – present at Lytchett Fields on 16th Mar 2023.



It was ringed as an adult 12 years earlier on 20th Feb 2011 at Fienteira, Sanxenxo (Pontevedra), SPAIN. Since then it has been recorded on 58 occasions, mainly at the ringing site. However it was also seen in The NETHERLANDS in 2016, 2017 & 2021.

© Ian Ballam

Wood Sandpiper: (5 – 20)

Scarce migrant. Only 1 record, a brief bird on 29th Aug. Disappointing given the reasonable showing elsewhere in Dorset.

Spotted Redshank: (68 – 42 – 32)

Scarce passage migrant and scarce winter visitor. Another good year with records on 160 dates with 218 bird-days. Not quite the 90's but we will gratefully welcome the improvement. Present until 21st Apr, Max 3 on 2 dates. From 9th Jul till the year end. Max 3 on several dates.

Greenshank: (49 – 27 – 32) ↔

Common non-breeding visitor. This species is enjoying a series of good years at the Bay. There were no records between 4th Jun and 30th Jun but present almost daily outside that period. Max 24 on 28th Aug. Lytchett Fields was by far the most used habitat.

RN+GB (DT00415) was present from the beginning of the year until at least 6th Apr 2023. It returned for its 9th season on 19th Jul 2023 and continued into 2024.



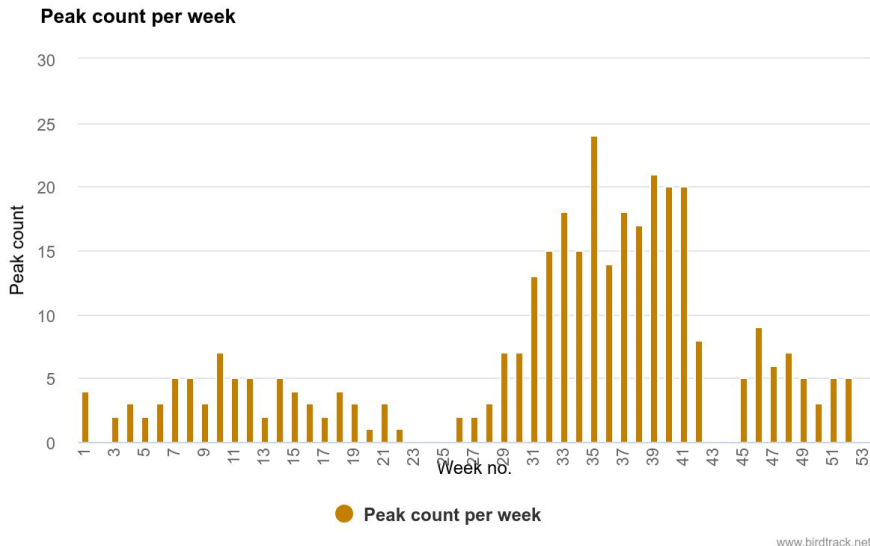
It was ringed as a juvenile at Seabrook, Montrose Basin, Scotland on 29th Sep 2015. A seasoned visitor to Lytchett Bay, it was first encountered on 4th–12th Apr 2016, returning for the non-breeding seasons of 2016-17, 2017-18, 2018-19, 2019-20, 2020-21, 2021-22, 2022-23. It was recorded at Steart, Somerset in Dec 2015.

© Ian Ballam



Our obsession with flying waders continues. Top – Black-tailed Godwit & Redshank © Mark Wright. Bottom – juvenile Spotted Redshank and Green Sandpiper © Peter Corbin.





Kittiwake: (4 – 8)

Scarce visitor. A 2cy in Lytchett Bay on 4th Jan (IB).

Bonaparte's Gull: 1 record. 2022.

Black-headed Gull: (15000 – 32) ↔

A very common visitor. Again excellent numbers visited the Bay pre-roost during mid - late February. Max 10,000 on 27th. The first local juv was seen on 10th Jun.

Little Gull: (2 – 18)

Scarce visitor. 5 individuals on 7 dates represents a remarkable year, probably the best ever. All records listed. Ad 1st May, 2cy 15th May, 2cy 1st - 3rd Jun, Juv 23rd Oct, Ad 7th Dec. Shared between Lytchett Bay and Lytchett Fields.

Mediterranean Gull: (205 – 31) ↔

Spring and early summer visitor, occasional at other times. Assessing actual numbers in spring is very difficult due to the number of calling birds passing overhead. A record count of 329 on 3rd Apr (previously 205 on 27th Feb 2022) achieved by counting birds flying south into the Bay over Sandy Close Pond for 75 mins in late afternoon. It was a very good year for juveniles bathing at Lytchett Fields which peaked at 13 on 15th Jul.

Monthly max:

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
3	117	90	329	10	6	15	1	0	2	0	5

3HY5 (white ring) – present at Turlin Fields, Lytchett Bay on 15th Mar, 9th Apr & 22nd Apr 2023



It was ringed as an Ad on 18th May 2019 at Antwerp, Flanders, BELGIUM.

The bird has also been observed in FRANCE & Cornwall.

© Ian Ballam

3JX5 (White ring) – present at Turlin Fields, Lytchett Bay on 15th Mar & 22nd Apr 2023.



It was ringed as an Ad on 18th May 2019 at Antwerp, Flanders, BELGIUM.

This bird has been seen in Dorset, Sussex and the Isle of Wight.

© Ian Ballam

Common Gull: (3000 – 32) □

A common winter visitor and passage migrant, especially in spring. Max 350 on 27th Feb. Not recorded between 5th May and 14th Jul.

Ring-billed Gull: Rare visitor. Recorded in 10 years since 1992. Last record 2020.

Iceland Gull: Rare visitor. Recorded in 5 years since 1992. Last record 2008.

Great Black-backed Gull: (151 – 32) ↔

Daily visitor throughout the year in small numbers, usually single figures. The max count for the site of 151 was way back in 2003 when Corfe Mullen Tip was in its hey-day. No specific records submitted.

P:30A – was present at Lytchett Bay on 11th Jun 2023.



It was ringed as a pullus at Portland Harbour, Dorset on 11th June 2012 and had previously been seen at Lytchett Fields on 4th Jun 2016 & 4th Feb 2019. However it has not been recorded anywhere else since 2013.

It has also been seen in Guernsey in Jan 2013.

© Ian Ballam

Herring Gull: (2500 – 32) ↔

Common winter visitor and passage migrant. Numbers much lower than 90's/early 00's when Corfe Mullen tip attracted large numbers of gulls to the wider area. Max 271 on 13th Aug.

Herring Gull x Lesser Black-backed Gull hybrid:

The bird first seen in Dec 2020 remained and continued to confuse many throughout the year.

American Herring Gull: 1 record. 2002.

Yellow legged Gull: (65 – 31) ↓

Increasingly uncommon visitor. Recorded on only 10 dates, similar to 2022 (9). All were singles between Jan and Aug. Quite why this species is doing so badly at The Bay remains a mystery, numbers in Poole Harbour are declining but not to the extent that they are here. Record evaluation remains difficult due to the on-going presence of presumed Herring x Lesser Black-backed hybrid (see above) which is a trap for the unwary.



Mediterranean Gulls reached a new peak © Mark Wright. Common Gull in flight showing its distinctive wing tip pattern © Peter Corbin. The ever confusing putative hybrid Herring x Lesser Black-backed Gull © Shaun Robson. 2cy Kittiwake always a surprise at the Bay © Ian Ballam. 2cy Little Gull in summer plumage, this species probably had its best year ever © Ian Ballam

Lesser Black backed Gull: (2128 – 32) ⇔

Common passage migrant and uncommon winter visitor. Numbers are much lower now than they were in the 90's/early 00's when up to 2000 would occur associated with Corfe Mullen Tip. Another very poor year with no counts greater than 20.

Lesser Black-backed Gull (L.f.intermedius)

A very black-backed adult on 19th Apr was considered to be of this race.

Sandwich Tern: (14 – 32) ↗

Summer visitor. 97 bird-days on 53 dates between 30th Mar – 8th Nov. Max 7 on 8th Aug.

Little Tern: Rare visitor. Recorded in 7 years since 1992. Last record 2022.

Common Tern: (26 – 32) ⇔

Uncommon summer visitor. 120 bird-days recorded on 45 dates between 1st May – 2nd Sep. Max 13 on 18th Aug. Records split between the Bay and Lytchett Fields. An excellent year.

Arctic Tern: Rare visitor. Recorded in 4 years since 1992. Last record 2020.

Forster's Tern:

First record. One of the biggest surprises and least expected species to have occurred at the Bay. A 2cy was found feeding off Rock Lea View by sharp eyed observers on 23rd Apr. Having caused a major panic, it flew off before anyone else could get to the site. Kindly it gave itself up the next morning and showed very well until 26th, reappearing briefly on 3rd May, causing the biggest twitch in the site's history (SFS, JW et al). After spending some time around Poole Harbour it set off on a tour of the south coast before returning to Lytchett Fields for 20 minutes on 15th Jul (SR, IHA) and then settling at Arne for the remainder of the summer. See Steve's finders account on page 40.



Rock Lea View was a great location for a close flyby © Simon Craft but the birds favourite perch was a large buoy off South Haven, Turlin Moor © Shaun Robson

Black Tern: Rare visitor. Recorded in 4 years since 1992. Last record 2022.

Arctic Skua: 1 record. 2011.

Common Guillemot: 1 record. 2021.

Red-throated Diver: 4 records. 1985, 1998, 2011 & 2013.

Black-throated Diver: 1 record. 1977.

Great Northern Diver:

7th & 8th records. A record breaking year by some margin. A juv was present following stormy weather on 8th Nov. Further rough weather produced an astonishing 3 together on 13th. 2 were still present the next day and one continued until 28th Nov.



© Ian Ballam

Black Stork: 1 record. 2011

White Stork: Rare visitor, now helped by reintroduction scheme. 1 record. 2021.

Cormorant: (500 – 32) ↗

Daily visitor. Large feeding flocks now occur frequently in autumn. Max 400 on 23rd Oct.

Glossy Ibis: Rare Visitor. Recorded in 4 years since 1992. Last record 2022.

Spoonbill: (25 – 14) ↔

Increasingly frequent visitor. A much better year than 2022. Records on 30 dates. 28 bird-days to 1st Feb, Max 6. 1 on 4th Jul, 92 bird-days from 25th Aug to year end. Max 20 on 13th Sep when a flock flushed by a White-tailed Eagle from Brownsea Lagoon flew west over the Bay.

B(AE)+W(AE) was present on 17th & 19th Oct, 7th Nov and 8th Dec 2023.



© Ian Ballam

It was ringed as a pullus at Schiermonnikoog, NETHERLANDS on 19th Jul 2006, and is now 17 years old! A familiar visitor to Lytchett Bay, it has previously been encountered in 2013, 2015, 2017, 2018, 2020, 2021 & 2022. The bird commutes back and forth between SW England and the Netherlands where it was again recorded breeding at its place of hatching in 2023. In previous years, the bird has also been seen en route at Somme, FRANCE during late Sept and Oct.

Bittern: Rare visitor. Recorded in 7 years since 1992. Last record 2020

Cattle Egret: (5 – 10) ↗

Increasingly frequent visitor. 60 bird-days on 25 dates was again the most ever. Max 9 on 26th Nov (IB) was a new record count (previously 5 on 9th Aug 2020).

Grey Heron: (13 – 32) ↔

Daily visitor in small numbers. Max 5 on 3 dates.



© Peter Corbin captured a series of arresting images of two Grey Herons fighting in front of Rock Lea View. This was our favourite.

Purple Heron: 2 records. 1992 & 1994

Great White Egret: (7 – 11) ↗

Uncommon but increasing visitor. Recorded on 17 dates, the most yet. Max 3 on 25th Nov.



Flyby egret flocks can no longer be dismissed as Little's. Both Cattle and Great White are becoming increasingly likely. This tight group of three Great Whites produced a finely composed image © Alison Copeland

Little Egret: (67 – 31) ⇄

Daily visitor. The largest counts occur in the early morning or late afternoon when birds arrive from or prepare to set off to roost. Max 29 on 30th Aug.

Osprey: (5 – 31) ⇄

Annual passage migrant. Recorded on at least 93 dates! Another brilliant year. The Poole Harbour pair fledged 3 young.

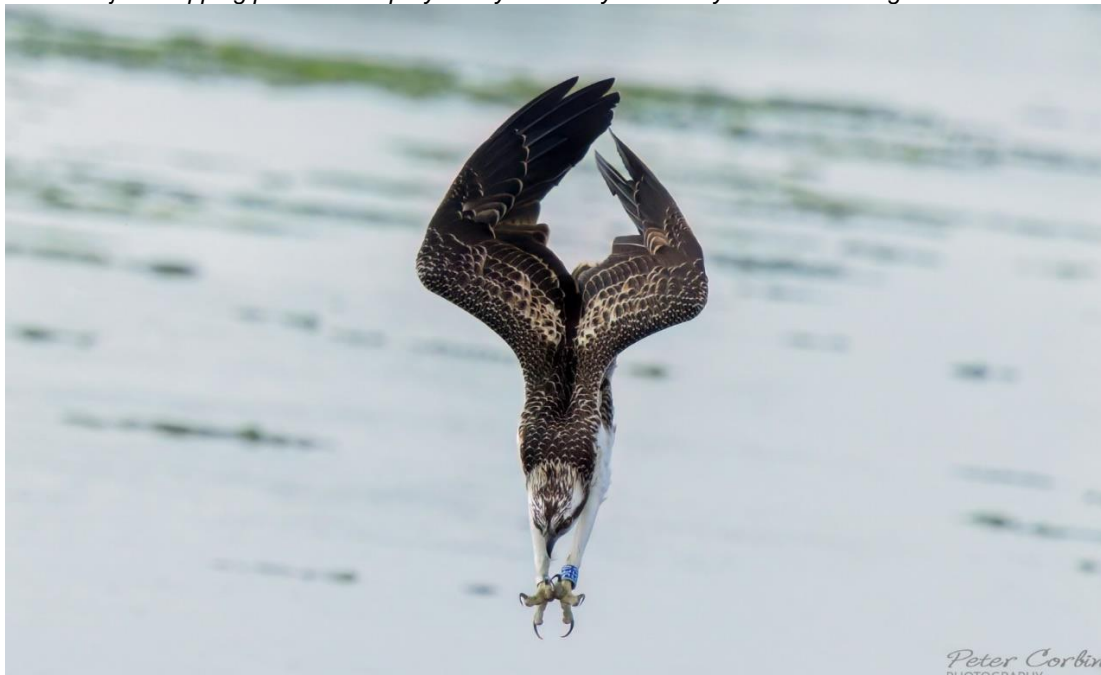
Our first was on 26th Mar, when the local male 022 was seen from Rock Lea View. This set the scene for this location which established itself as one of the primary Osprey watching and photographic locations in Dorset. Seen on 22 further spring dates to the 21st May.

After occasional sightings to 29th July the species became a daily fixture to 29th Sep! Often, several were on view at once, reaching a peak of 5 on 27th Aug. Quite how many individuals were seen on some days can't be answered, probably a good few more than 5.

B(5E0)+m a juvenile hatched in a nest at Morenish, Loch Tay, Perthshire, Scotland on 9th Jul 2023 was seen at Lytchett Bay on 28th Aug & 16th Sep. It remained in Poole Harbour until at least 24th Sep. Typical of Scottish migrants which often stop to use the harbour as a fueling station on their journeys south.



We have seen some jaw dropping photos of Ospreys at Lytchett Bay over the years but this might be the best? © Peter Corbin



Or then again you might prefer this one. Taken from Rock Lea View just before the talons hit the water © Peter Corbin

Honey-buzzard: (1 – 9)

12th record. One flew over Turlin Moor on 19th Aug (DW)

Sparrowhawk: (4 – 32) ↔

Uncommon. Recorded on at least 89 dates throughout the year. A bird carrying food in Jun suggested local breeding. 1 *ringed*.

Goshawk: (1 – 6)

Rapidly increasing visitor. Not quite as many as we had hoped for given 6 records last year (and the Ed still needs to see one!)

1 over Lytchett Fields on 7th Feb, a female over same location on 19th Feb (IB) and one over the Bay on 15th Mar.

Marsh Harrier: (6 – 31) ↗

Increasingly regular visitor. Noted on at least 202 dates. Not surprising as this species continues to prosper in Poole Harbour and Dorset. Recorded in every month of the year. Max 5 on 4th Jan. 1 roosted occasionally at both ends of the year.

Hen Harrier: (2 – 31) ↔

Irregular Visitor. Recorded on at least 21 dates, probably the best since intensive recording began in 1992. Hopefully a sign of the improving fortunes of this sadly still much persecuted species. Recorded on 3 dates in Jan and then 18 dates from 3rd Nov. 2 were seen on 4 dates, a grey male and a ringtail on each.

Montagu's Harrier: 2 records. 1995 & 2017

Red Kite: (29 – 18) ↗

Scarce migrant, increasingly expected on spring migration. Recorded on at least 32 dates between 16th Jan & 1st Dec. Max 5 on 22nd & 28th May.

White-tailed Eagle: (3 – 3)

Scarce wanderer from Isle of Wight reintroduction scheme. This scheme started in 2019 and 25 birds had been released by the summer of 2021. Further releases are currently curtailed by the prevalence of avian-flu in the UK. These birds have satellite tags and are tracked. Many have made prolonged explorations away from the release area before returning to the island, one as far as Germany. Wild European birds are also possible vagrants. The European population is doing well and expanding towards the North Sea coast. In 2020, 2 untagged birds were recorded in Dorset. 2023 witnessed the first breeding by the introduced birds, in West Sussex, when 1 chick fledged.

After an incredible 44 dates in 2022 we enjoyed them on 59 this year! 2 were seen on many dates and they were recorded in every month except June. Rock Lea View is a prime eagle watching location.

The future looks bright and hopefully this magnificent creature will be a regular feature in these reports. The project can be followed at [White-tailed Eagle Reintroduction on the Isle of Wight - Roy Dennis Wildlife Foundation](#)

Rough-legged Buzzard: 1 record. 2005.

Common Buzzard: (15 – 32) ↔

The commonest raptor of the area. Breeds widely in the vicinity. Max 8 on 3rd Apr.

Barn Owl: (2 – 22)

Bred at French's Farm until 2009. Shortly after this the nest box was removed. Since then the species has been hard to see. One at the Bakers Arms roundabout on 16th Jun was the only sighting of the year. Nocturnal sound monitoring at our Listening Station recorded them on a surprising 18 dates in spring and autumn confirming that there are birds in the area but that they are strictly nocturnal.

Little Owl: Previously resident breeder. Now very rare. Recorded in 12 years since 1992. Last record 2003.

Short Eared Owl: Scarce visitor. Recorded in 9 years since 1992. Last record 2022.

Tawny Owl: (2 territories – 32) ↔

Uncommon resident. Heard occasionally throughout the year from 3 locations – Sandy Close Pond, Lytchett Heath and Rock Lea View. A record from Turlin Moor in Nov was new. Successful breeding thought likely but not proven. 1 was seen flying from tree to tree in daylight on 16th May.

Hoopoe: Rare visitor. Recorded in 4 years since 1992. Last record 2021.

Kingfisher: (5 – 32) ↔

Passage migrant and uncommon, but frequently seen, winter visitor. Bred in 2000, 2020, 2021 and possibly in other years. Recorded from all round the Bay until 6th Mar and from 17th Jul. 4 ringed.

SH05655 – A 1cy ringed at Lytchett Bay on 28th Aug 2022 was re-trapped there on 4th Oct 2022 before being re-trapped on 14th Oct 2022 at Carey Flood Plain, Wareham, Dorset. By the 6th Nov it had returned to Lytchett Bay. The bird was re-trapped as an Ad F with a re-feathering brood patch on 9th Aug 2023 suggesting that it bred somewhere locally, probably on the Sherford River?

Wryneck: (1 – 6)

7th record. 1 was at Lytchett Fields on 23rd Sep. Found in flight, it briefly landed in a hedge before disappearing into the arable field (IB).

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker: Scarce visitor. Recorded in 11 years since 1992. Last record 2021.

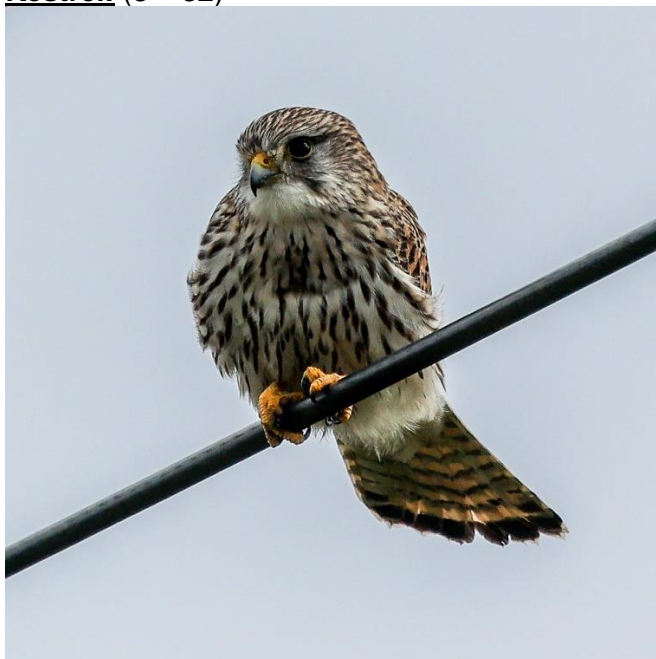
Great Spotted Woodpecker: ↗

Breeding Resident. Seen regularly in most parts of the Bay. Drumming heard in most areas during spring. 1 ringed.

Green Woodpecker: ↓

Declining catastrophically. We noticed this change in 2021 but never expected it to be so quick or severe. This species has gone from uncommon breeder to locally very rare in the space of 3 years. We thought that 17 dates in 2022 was poor but in 2023 we only have two records! Singles on 27th Mar & 1st Jun. Will 2023 be our first ever blank year?

Kestrel: (3 – 32) ↔



Uncommon resident. Recorded on at least 38 dates (probably under recorded) in every month except Dec. The nest box was not used and there was no evidence of local breeding. 2 birds were seen occasionally.

Juvenile Kestrel © Pete Davies

Merlin: (2 – 28) ⇄

Scarce visitor. Recorded on only 6 dates, a decline after a series of good years. 4 dates until 7th Feb and 2 from 15th Oct.

Hobby: (4 – 30) ⇄

Irregular summer visitor. 14 bird-days on 13 dates between 16th Apr – 1st Sep. Max 2 on last date. Almost identical to 2022 and a relatively poor showing by recent standards.

Peregrine: (3 – 31) ⇄

Frequent visitor. Noted in every month of the year on at least 52 dates, a very typical year.



Juvenile Peregrine © Mark Wright

Ring-necked Parakeet: 3 records. 1993, 2002 & 2020

Red-backed Shrike: 1 record. 1988.

Great Grey Shrike:

First record and a fabulous event. A presumed migrant flew across the Whimbrel Field, landed in the hedge and within seconds dropped into an open mist net on 3rd Nov (SR et al). After release it soon moved on. A ringed 1cy subsequently seen at both Morden Bog and Wild Woodbury during late November, almost certainly this bird. (see finders account on page 43). *1 ringed.*



The first view as the shrike landed in the old hedge. The sharp eyed will notice the ringing pole and net loops to the right.
© Shaun Robson. In the hand © Phil Saunders

Woodchat Shrike: 1 record. 2011.

Golden Oriole: 1 record. 1993.

Jay: (20 – 32) ↔

Resident. Regularly seen throughout the year but most often in autumn.

Magpie: ↔

Common Resident.

Jackdaw: (750 – 32) ↔

Resident. Recorded throughout the year. In autumn a strong flight at the beginning and end of the day was noted flying towards a roost in Holes Bay. This peaked with a record of 750 on 1st Nov (previously 610 on 31st Jul 2017).

Rook: (185 – 32) ↗

Breeds on edge of recording area. 22 nests were found at the Watery Lane colony (11 – 25 nests 2010 – 2023).

Carrion Crow: (100 – 32) ↔

Common Resident. Breeds widely across the area.

Raven: (15 – 29) ↗

Uncommon but increasing. Recorded throughout the year, in particular during autumn.

Waxwing: Rare visitor. Recorded in 1996, 2010, 2011, 2013.

Coal Tit: ↗

Uncommon resident, increasing. Recorded from most sites across the calendar. *1 ringed.*

Marsh Tit: Rare visitor. Recorded in 7 years since 1992. Last 2022.

Willow Tit: 2 records. 1982 & 1998.

Blue Tit: ↔

Common resident. *45 ringed.*

Great Tit: ↔

Common resident. *13 ringed.*

Penduline Tit: 2 records. 1998 & 2015.

Bearded Tit: (40 – 32) ↗

Scarce breeder and uncommon passage migrant. The survey in 2019 found at least 4, and possibly 8, pairs east of the Sherford. Bred successfully but no survey undertaken. Max 10 on 22nd Oct. *17 ringed.*

AJB2840 - a unaged F ringed at Lytchett Bay on 4th Dec 2018 was re-trapped at the same location on 22nd Oct 2023 showing that the bird was at least 5 years old. The oldest known bird is 7 yrs 3mths and the typical lifespan is 3yrs.

Woodlark: Previous winter visitor. Now scarce migrant. Recorded in 20 years since 1992. Last record 2021.

Skylark: (781 - 32) ↔

Scarce breeder and passage migrant. A singing male was recorded in Mar - Jun but breeding success is unknown. Rather scarce in each winter period, Max 3. Autumn passage was obvious during Oct, Max 15 on 20th.

Sand Martin: (5000 – 32) ↘

Common passage migrant. Recorded from 25th Mar until 4th Oct. Numbers were poor throughout, not exceeding 20 on any one day.

Swallow: (10750+ – 32) ↔

Common passage migrant, breeds at French’s Farm. Recorded from 24th Mar until 21st Nov. A record year. Spring migration peaked with an ordinary 134 on 25th Apr. Late Sep and early Oct saw a huge wave of migrants. In 3 hours on the morning 27th an incredible 10,000 flew SW over the Lytchett Fields viewpoints. Birds were moving all day and a further 750 roosted in the evening (previous record was 1000 on 7th Aug 1984). The day total is anyone’s guess! 612 flew through Lytchett Way in 20 minutes on 2nd.

Red-rumped Swallow:

First record. A long anticipated addition to the Bay list. As feared and expected it was a 20 second bird. Observers watching the Forster’s Tern from the Turlin Shore on the morning 25th Apr were treated to a migrant fly by (JSP, LB, RS et al). (See finders account on page 42)

House Martin: (1800 – 32) ↔

Common passage migrant, breeding colony on edge of recording area at Watery Lane. Present from 4th Apr until 19th Oct.

The colony at Watery Lane continued spread into Seaview Road and has extended into Slough Lane / Beach Road thanks to the provision of nest boxes. Access to a private garden also found 4 nests on a house which may have been used for several years? A good year but numbers are not directly comparable. The newly installed House Martin nest tower attracted some interest when sound lures were played but the only bird that nested was House Sparrow.

No of House Martin nests at the Watery Lane colony 2009 – 2023. No of nest collapsed or destroyed in brackets.

2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
15	8	13	2	4	?	7	10	18	17	12	18	11	10	20
(5)	(7)	(4)	(0)	(1)		(3)	(4)	(?)	(?)	(4)	(-)	(-)	(-)	(3)

Cetti's Warbler: (11 males – 30) ↔

Breeding resident. Despite this specie’s rapid and continuing expansion across the UK it is struggling at Lytchett Bay. Sika deer grazing seems to be limiting habitat with low scrub being browsed out or severely disturbed. Singing birds were found at only 4 locations around the recording area and some of these were quite sporadic. At this species peak in 2005 & 2015 it occupied 7 locations with up to 11 singing birds. 7 *ringed*.

Long tailed Tit: ↗

Common resident. Regularly recorded from most sites at the Bay. 8 *ringed*.

Wood Warbler: 2 records. 1998 & 2013

Yellow-browed Warbler: Rare visitor. Recorded in 8 years since the first record in 2003. Last record 2022

Willow Warbler: (60 – 32) ↔

Passage migrant. This species has been lost as a regular breeder. Recorded between 27th Mar & 4th Oct. Numbers were poor but in autumn this may have been a reflection of the hugely reduced ringing effort due to the poor weather in late Jul and early Aug. 32 *ringed*.

Chiffchaff: (142 – 32) ↗

Breeding summer visitor and passage migrant. No breeding survey was undertaken but the population seemed stable at 7 – 10 territories east of the Sherford found in 2019.

Typically singles were seen at Lytchett Bay View, Lytchett Fields, Sandy Close Pond occasionally in Jan & Feb. 3 on 16th Mar suggested the start of spring migration. The measurement of autumn migration was influenced by the reduced ringing effort. Max 55 at Lytchett Heath on 22nd Sep and 30 at Lytchett Fields on

26th Sep. 2 were seen regularly at Rock Lea View in Dec. 91 ringed.

Siberian Chiffchaff: Rare visitor. 14 records in 10 years. Last record 2022.

Aquatic Warbler: Rare visitor. 10 records involving 12 individuals. Last record 2022

Sedge Warbler: (219 – 32) ↔

Passage migrant. No sign of a good spring. 9 recorded on only 7 dates between 17th Apr & 5th May. Monitoring of autumn passage was limited due to the poor weather in the peak period. Commencing on 24th Jul and continuing to 22nd Sep. Max 34 on 16th Aug. 153 ringed.

A typical series of recoveries from western France of birds ringed at Lytchett. Information on the older ones has only just been received.

Z807094 – A 1cy ringed on 5th Aug 2016 at Lytchett Bay was re-trapped 5 days later on 10th Aug 2016 at Le Bonhomme, Saint-Philbert-de-Grand-Leiu, Loire-Atlantique, FRANCE. A S movement 406km.

ABE8014 – An AdF ringed on 3rd Aug 2019 at Lytchett Bay was re-trapped 8 days later on 11th Aug 2019 at Donges, Loire-Atlantique, FRANCE. A S movement of 378km.

AYR3162 – A 1cy ringed on 19th Aug 2021 at Lytchett Bay was re-trapped 342 days later on 27th Jul 2022 at Plaisance, Saint-Froult, Charente-Maritime, FRANCE. A S movement of 540km.

AYR7622 – A 1cy ringed on 14th Aug 2022 at Lytchett Bay was re-trapped 386 days later on 17th Aug 2023 at Chenal, Chenac-Saint-Seurin-d'Uzet, Charente-Maritime, FRANCE. A S movement of 587km.

T634398 – A 1cy ringed on 12th Aug 2022 at Lytchett Bay was re-trapped 11 days later on 23rd Aug 2023 at Mars-Ouest, Sant-Philbert-de-Grand-Lieu, Loire-Atlantique, FRANCE. A S movement of 401km.

ABX6398 – A 1cy ringed on 29th Aug 2023 at Lytchett Bay was re-trapped 11 days later on 9th Sep 2023 at Noyant, Soulaire-et-Bourg, Maine-et-Loire, FRANCE. A SSE movement of 369km.

Reed Warbler: (107 males – 32) ↔

Common summer visitor. Present between 15th Apr and 15th Oct. 107 singing males were recorded in a full survey in 2019. 108 ringed.

S391531 – a juvenile ringed on 18th Jul 2018 at Lytchett Bay was re-trapped on 17th Apr 2023, 1734 days later, at Lepe CP, Hampshire. A E movement of 54km.

Melodious Warbler: 1 record. 2015

Grasshopper Warbler: (33 – 25) ↔

Passage migrant, predominantly in autumn. Under recorded. Bred in 1986.

No spring records. 35 between 28th Jul & 6th Sep. All ringed. Max 9 on 16th Aug. 35 ringed.

Blackcap: (75 – 32) ↗

Passage migrant, summer visitor and scarce winter visitor. No breeding survey undertaken but population felt stable at 14 - 18 territories found in 2019.

Seen regularly at Sandy Close Pond, Lytchett Way and Lytchett Fields in the first two months.

9 at Lytchett Bay View on 17th Apr was the best day of spring. Good autumns continue with Max 39 on 22nd Sep in a year with limited ringing coverage. 55 ringed.

ABX6034 – A 1cyM ringed on 3rd Oct 2022 at Lytchett Bay was re-trapped 222 days later on 13th May 2023 at Alton Farm, East Dunbartonshire, Scotland. A N movement of 599km.

Garden Warbler: (7 – 30) ↔

Scarce passage migrant. 2 in spring, singles 22nd Apr at Lytchett Fields and 23rd Apr at Lytchett Bay View. A poor 4 bird-days in autumn between 10th – 21st Aug. 2 *ringed*.

Lesser Whitethroat: (3 – 29) ↔

Scarce passage migrant, which occasionally breeds or holds territory.

Another thin year. Singles on 24th Apr, 7th Sep and 22nd Sep (equal latest ever with 2014). 1 *ringed*.

Whitethroat: (18 – 30) ↔

Uncommon passage migrant. Bred in 2013. 12 bird-days in spring between 17th Apr – 1st May. In autumn, 34 bird-days between 11th Aug – 22nd Sep. Max 5 on 16th Aug. 11 *ringed*.

Dartford Warbler: (2 pairs – 29)

1 pair present at Lytchett Heath, bred successfully. The only other record was a migrant at Lytchett Fields 27th Aug. 1 *ringed*.

Firecrest: (9 – 20) ↗

Recent colonist, previously scarce migrant. Hard to find during the breeding season this year but it is thought that 1 pair bred.



Always a difficult species to photograph. © Ian Ballam's picture nicely illustrates the bronze shoulder patch a subtle but beautiful characteristic of this gorgeous species.

Birds were found frequently at either end of the year at Rock Lea View, Lytchett Heath and Lytchett Bay View. Max 6 on 6th Oct. 4 *ringed*.

Goldcrest: (27 – 32) ↔

Passage migrant, which occasionally breeds. Present during the breeding season at Lytchett Fields and Turlin Moor. Autumn migration was fairly typical with widespread records of up to 5 on any one date at one location. 18 *ringed*.



Both Goldcrest and Firecrest are best found in Holly around the recording area © Ian ballam

Wren: ↔

Common resident. *6 ringed.*

Nuthatch: ↔

Uncommon. Seen occasionally throughout the year from sites stretching from Lytchett Fields to Sandy Close Pond, seen frequently in the summer and autumn.

Treecreeper: ↔

Scarce resident. Recorded occasionally across the year from Lytchett Way to Kingsbridge. Probably present throughout but the population is obviously small.

Rose-coloured Starling. 1 record. 2008.

Starling: (35000 – 5600 – 32) ↔

Common resident. No notable counts submitted which suggests that there were no significant gatherings during the year. *3 ringed.*

Song Thrush: (1256 – 32) ↔

Breeding resident and passage migrant. Estimated population 11 pairs. No diurnal migration witnessed, though 71 calls were recorded at the Listening Station overnight on 9th - 10th Oct. *3 ringed.*

Mistle Thrush: (60 - 20 – 32) ↔

Uncommon resident. 1 pr present throughout the spring at Lytchett Fields & Kingsbridge, probably bred. There were records throughout the year but no single count greater than 4.

Redwing: (1000 – 514 – 32) ↔

Winter visitor and passage migrant. Recorded until 23rd Apr when one was sound recorded (latest departure date, previously 20th Apr 2003) and from 9th Oct.

Small numbers around Lytchett Fields in the first two months. Noc-mig recordings were frequent at Lytchett Way Listening Station, peaking with 161 – between 21:01hrs - 05:42hrs on 18th – 19th Mar.

Diurnal migration was weak due to the lack of N winds during migration period. Max 52 at Lytchett Bay View on 17th Oct, though 170 calls were recorded at the Listening Station overnight on 9th - 10th Oct. Up to 60 were around Lytchett Fields in Dec. *7 ringed.*

Blackbird: (45 – 32) ↔

Common Resident. No significant records submitted. *6 ringed.*

Fieldfare: (559 – 32) ↘

Uncommon winter visitor. Seen on two dates early in the year, 1 on 21st Jan & 9 on 22nd Feb. One was sound recorded on 18th Mar. The first of autumn was 3n on 17th Oct. After which recorded on at least 9 dates, Max 19 on 15th Dec.

Ring Ouzel: (3 – 14)

Scarce migrant. A male was on Turlin Moor mound on 16th Apr before flying north.

Spotted Flycatcher: (8 – 6 – 32) ↔

Passage migrant, previously bred. In spring 2 at Lytchett Fields on 30th Apr. 22 bird-days in autumn, a decent number, between 20th Aug & 26th Sep. Max 4 on 2 dates. Records from all parts of the recording area.

Robin: ↔

Common resident. *11 ringed.*

Bluethroat: 2 records. 1971 & 2015.

Nightingale: 3 records. 1970, 1991 & 2012.

Pied Flycatcher: (1 - 13)

Scarce migrant. 1 at Turlin Moor on 11th Aug was the first since 2018 when a nocturnal migrant was sound recorded. The last field record was in 2015.

Black Redstart: Rare visitor. Recorded in 8 years since 1992. Last record 2022.

Common Redstart: (2 – 26) ↔

Scarce migrant. 2 singles in spring – 21st Apr & 17th May. 2 in autumn, one on 21st Aug & 2 on 3rd Sep. 1 ringed.

Whinchat: (11 – 30) ↔

Scarce passage migrant. None in spring. 22 bird-days in autumn between 16th Aug – 29th Sep. Max 3 on 26th Sep.

Stonechat: (23 – 31) ↗

Returning breeding resident (7 pairs in 2002). We never understood why this species disappeared as a breeding species in 2006 and now we don't understand why they are coming back. After a gap of 12 years, they bred again in 2018 and each year since. Probably only 1 pr but these had 2 broods.

Present in every month of the year and recorded at a wide range of sites around the bay. Max 10 in autumn at Lytchett Fields. 2 ringed.

Northern Wheatear: (39 – 32) ↔

Uncommon passage migrant. Almost every record of this species occurs in the north-west of the recording area. The preferred short grass habitat has declined in recent years.



© Ian Ballam

23 bird-days in spring from 17th Mar – 28th Apr. Max 10 on 17th Apr.
8 bird-days between 2nd Aug – 25th Sep. All singles.

Tree Sparrow: 2 records. 1981 & 1995

House Sparrow: (101++ – 32) ↔

Resident. Usually recorded around the urban fringe, seems to be doing well in many areas around the Bay. A good season at Turlin Moor produced a post breeding flock in excess of 100 at the LNR on 11th Aug. 3 ringed.

Duncock: ↔

Common resident. 7 ringed.

Yellow Wagtail: (150 – 32) ↔

Uncommon passage migrant. 11 bird-days in spring between 20th Apr – 10th May. Max 4 on two dates. Autumn migration was very poor with only 56 bird-days between 15th Aug – 17th Sep. Max 15 on 25th Aug. Almost exclusively at Lytchett Fields.

Blue-headed Wagtail: 4 records. 1983, 2013 (2) & 2014

Grey Wagtail: (15 – 32) ↔

Winter visitor, passage migrant and occasional breeder. 1 pair raised two broods at the Water Works.

Pied Wagtail: (650 – 32) ↔

Recorded throughout the year, common in autumn. A surprising and very poor year. Out of the blue this species was very scarce at its usual stronghold of Lytchett Fields. We had become accustomed to large flocks on the fields from early autumn but this year it did not happen. Further, occasional monitoring of the roost at Lytchett Heath also produced very small numbers. Max 30 in Oct. We are not aware that other local sites witnessed this change so we hope that things return to “normal” in 2024.

White Wagtail: Scarce migrant. 4 bird-days between 8th Apr – 1st May. All singles

Meadow Pipit: (460 – 32) ↔

Historic breeder, now common passage migrant and winter visitor. Spring migration peaked with a miserly 23 on 30th Mar. Max in autumn 100 on 22nd Sep. 103 ringed.

Tree Pipit: (18 – 28) ↔

Scarce passage migrant, rare in spring. 18 bird-days between 15th Aug – 3rd Sep, Max 9 on 21st Aug. 4 ringed.

Water Pipit: (20 – 26) ↔

Uncommon winter visitor. Records have returned to the previous levels since the creation of Lytchett Fields. A reasonable year with records on at least 56 dates (likely that birds were present throughout the winter). Present until 26th Mar, Max 4 on several dates. The first returning bird on 26th Oct. After which birds were encountered regularly until the year end. Max 3 on several dates.

Six individuals ringed and colour marked as part of a national project. A total of 21 birds have now been colour-marked at Lytchett Bay since Nov 2020!

1K (yellow ring) - A 1cy ringed at Lytchett Bay on 7th Nov 2020 which had returned in autumn 2021 & 2022 remained until 11th Mar & returned for a fourth consecutive season on 10th Dec.

Scandinavian Rock Pipit: (50 – 32) ↔

Common winter visitor. All Rock Pipits at Lytchett Bay are considered to be from Scandinavia of the race *littoralis*. Recorded until 7th Mar and from 5th Sep, earliest return date (previously 16th Sep 2022). However this disguises what was a very poor year for this species. The autumn was very wet everywhere and it can only be concluded that birds were thinly spread across a wide area rather than being concentrated in the historically favoured locations. Max 5 on 7th Nov. 2 ringed and colour marked.

BT (white ring) – An Ad ringed at Lytchett Bay on 20th Nov 2021 was seen on 3 dates up to 6th Mar. Another nice example of winter site fidelity.

Chaffinch: (450 – 32) ↔

Breeding resident and winter visitor. Max 50 on 13th Feb around the arable field. 3 ringed.

Brambling: (10 – 28)

Scarce winter visitor. Singles on 9th Jan and 9th – 11th Dec at the feeding station.



© Aspen Stobart

Hawfinch: (2 – 6)

Rare visitor. One was sound recorded at 01:30 on 27th Apr over the Listening Station continuing our remarkable run following the first during the influx of autumn 2017. Three calls can be heard on the following recording (best with headphones).

[Hawfinch 2023 - 04 - 27 by Two Owls \(soundcloud.com\)](#)

Bullfinch: (20 – 32) ↘

Uncommon, in decline after an increase earlier in the century. Very few records this year (records only received for 10 dates, though this seems an understatement?) and never more than 2 recorded together. Turlin Moor and Lytchett Fields just about hanging on to birds.

Greenfinch: (60 – 32) ↔

Uncommon breeding resident, which has declined due to on-going Trichomoniasis disease in the population. This arrived in late summer 2006 and has had a severe impact on English Greenfinch populations. Bred widely in small numbers and the small signs of a recovery first noted in 2020 continued. Seen widely around the Bay. Max 30 in Jan at Lytchett Fields and 8 on several dates at Turlin Moor.

Twite: 1 record. 1983.

Linnet: (475 – 32) ↔

Uncommon breeding resident. Probably bred at Lytchett Heath. The arable field proved increasingly attractive in both winter periods. Record numbers were present in the first winter period peaking at 475 on 26th Feb (previously 250 on 1st Jan 2002). 103 on 16th Oct was the peak count in the second half of the year.

Lesser Redpoll: (40 – 26) ↔

Scarce passage migrant. Only recorded in Oct when numbers were excellent. 76 bird-days between 6th - 31st. Max 20 on 22nd. 34 ringed.

Crossbill: (21 – 17)

Scarce passage migrant. 3 on 11th Jul, 2 on 29th Sep, 3 on 3rd Nov and 8 on 29th Nov. All overhead migrants.

Goldfinch: (120 – 32) ↔

Common breeding resident and passage migrant. Notable counts included 53 at Lytchett Bay View on 16th Oct and 61 at Lytchett Fields on 16th Dec. *5 ringed.*

Siskin: (280 – 29) ↔

Uncommon resident. Recorded throughout the year in very small numbers. 90 over Rock Lea View on 13th Sep was an excellent migration record.

Lapland Bunting: 2 records. 2006 & 2015.

Snow Bunting: 1 record. 1993.

Yellowhammer: (13 – 21)

Extinct breeding species. Scarce passage visitor. 1 over Rock Lea View on 8th Dec was the only record.

Ortolan Bunting: 2 records. 2018 & 2021.

Reed Bunting: (110 – 32) ↔

Breeding resident, c23 prs found in 2019 survey. Regularly seen at Lytchett Fields and Sandy Close Pond feeding stations. *45 ringed.*

Category E species:

White-cheeked Pintail, South American & Caribbean species: With Wigeon off Rock Lea View on 13th Dec.

Red-breasted Goose: 1 record 2020.

Great Bustard: 1 record 2014. Wiltshire reintroduction project.

Records received from: I.Ballam (IB), N Beswick, L Bissell (LB), M Brookes, M Buglar, S Colenut (SC), A.Collyer, A.Copeland, P.Corbin, T.Elborn, D.Foster, T.Furnell, R.Gifford, R.Goad, A.N. Gould, S.Haggett P.V.Harvey M&L Highfield, C Hilder, F.Hockey, J.Hull, N.Hull, S.Isherwood-Harris, P.Kirby, I.M.Lewis, B.Maxted, P.Morton, D Nash, G.Owen, J.S.Parker (JSP), R.Pitts, S.Robson (SR), P Saunders, R.Stephenson (RS), A Stobart, L Stobart, W. Stobart, P.Sutton, P.Swann, A.Taylor, S Utting, C.Walker, S.Walls, J. Westacott, J Whitall (JW), D.White (DW), C Wilcox, M.Wood, L.Woodford, M.Wright. With additional information from Bird Track, e-Bird, Birds of Poole Harbour, Rare Bird Alert and the Dorset Bird Club. Apologies for any omissions.



Kestrel against the rising moon © Daniel Nash

Appendix 1 – Finders accounts

Forster's Tern - 23rd April – Stephen F Smith

I was standing with Julia Whittall on the new Rock Lea viewing platform scanning Lytchett Bay at high tide at about 12:15 on 23rd April 2023, when we picked up a tern heading northwards across the Bay from Otter Island towards the small bays and spits on the Lytchett Heath shore. We both immediately said 'Common Tern', but as the bird came closer [to within about 100 metres], I began to have serious doubts about the head pattern. As the bird passed at its closest, it was clear that it did not have a black cap but the black oval eye-patches characteristic of Forster's Tern. Alarm-bells immediately started ringing in my mind, but as this was the first tern of any species that I had seen for several weeks, I was conscious that I had not really 'got my eye in', and I exercised caution before voicing my opinion that this was a Forster's.

For the next five minutes or so, the tern patrolled in and out of the bays on the Lytchett Heath shore, diving for food now and again. The diving action was the low-level 'flop' into the water with raised wings, similar to that of Common Tern, and I was glad to eliminate the 'vertical dive' of Sandwich Tern, always being conscious of possible confusion with winter-plumage Sandwich.

The bird then turned south again and headed back across the Bay the way it had come. This gave me the opportunity to check the head pattern again [this time from the other side of course], and to verify that the eye-patches did not join at the nape. I also checked the primary pattern as far as I could, but could not see any dark areas on the under-primaries. The upper primaries and mantle seemed paler than I would have expected on Common Tern.

The bird continued southwards and I was torn between following it and getting the news out. At this point I told my co-observer, Julia, that I thought this was a Forster's Tern, but as she was not familiar with the species, she could offer no comment. I then texted Shaun Robson and in the process lost track of the by now distant bird. When I had finished texting, I picked up the bird again, flying back and forth over the reedbeds on Otter Island with some Black-headed Gulls. It was still diving at intervals into some pools which were hidden by the reeds, and by then the only pointers that I could pick up were the forked tail and the size, which was noticeably smaller than the Black-headed Gulls. I continued watching it for perhaps another ten minutes, but as it did not get any closer I moved to the French's and Sherford Viewpoints but did not see the bird again.



Our eye-patched visitor, head on © Peter Corbin

[Postscript – after considerable effort on the 23rd there was no sighting of the bird until it turned up on the Brownsea Island webcam just before dusk. At this point it seemed that there was little prospect of the bird returning to Lytchett Bay. The following morning it was re-found sitting on a marker buoy off Ham Common, however no sooner than it had been found then it flew towards Lytchett Bay. With running commentary from Paul Morton, who was watching the bird from a boat, it flew over the Black Bridge and back into the Bay where Ian Ballam was waiting for it at Rock Lea View. Shaun Robson and Nick Hopper were both soon enjoying it from Rockley Park as it fed in the Turlin Channel. The bird remained until 26th April and became the subject of the biggest twitch ever at the Bay. It reappeared briefly on 3rd May before going on a tour of the south coast. After an absence of more than 2 months it was re-found at Lytchett Fields on 15th July by SR and Ian Alexander. After which it relocated to Arne where it spent the rest of the summer and autumn. The 2nd Dorset record]



Glistening upperparts. © Peter Corbin

Red-rumped Swallow, 25th April 2023 – Joe Parker

A group of 11 birders were gathered at South Haven Viewpoint, Lytchett Bay on the morning of 25th April. Skies were clear, winds a light north easterly and the crowd were in good spirits as they enjoyed the Forster's Tern actively feeding around the Bay. Four Yellow Wagtail had just pushed north and a couple of vocal Whimbrel were moving around locally.

Small flocks of Barn Swallow had been moving through and at 10:15 came a relaxed "swallow" call from within the group. In unison, binoculars were casually lifted towards the hirundine at 10 metres and hurtling closer still, immediately revealing the long body, pale rump, rusty collar and squared-off, uniformly dark undertail coverts.

Although only visible for no more than 10 seconds, views were excellent and perfectly lit before being lost to the treeline to the east. A phone call was promptly made to Shaun Robson who moved into position at Lytchett Bay View. All hirundines were scrutinised for the next hour from South Haven, and while Barn Swallow, Sand and House Martin were all encountered, the bird could not be re-located.



*"A picture says a thousand words" or in this case, two do. Quick on the trigger
© Richard Stephenson.*

Great Grey Shrike, 3rd November 2023 – Shaun Robson

I had long dreamt of finding Great Grey Shrike at Lytchett but had always assumed it would involve scoping from Lytchett Fields across the Sherford River to Holton Lee where it would be sitting in a distant pine.....

I was continuing with my colour ringing project for Water and Rock Pipits and had just erected the nets. I returned to my base and poured a cup of tea when I looked toward the nets to see a large pale passerine land in the top of the hedge. Lifted bins....OMG a GREAT GREY SHRIKE!

A quick pic and I rang patcher Ian B. He was on a boat IN Poole Harbour! At that moment it dropped from the hedge into my pipit nets. I yelled into the phone "It's in the net!!" and started sprinting, a distance which was far too far for a person of my age, a little bit of blood (mine not the shrikes) and it was safely extracted.

A 1cy ringed and released in front of people who were close by and able to arrive quickly, it showed briefly in an oak on the edge of the arable field before flying up the hedge and out of sight.

One of my best ever mornings in 32 years at Lytchett.



The white tips to the greater coverts age the bird as a 1cy. © Phil Saunders

Appendix 2 – The growth of the Lytchett Bay list 1992 to 2023 – What will be next?

Shaun Robson

As of the 31st Dec 2023, the Lytchett Bay list stands at 237 species. 65 species have been added since the 7th April 1992 when the list was 172.

- 173. Purple Heron 8th April 1992 (GJA et al)
- 174. Dartford Warbler 28th June 1992 (unknown)
- 175. Pectoral Sandpiper 11th September 1992 (ESB et al)
- 176. Honey Buzzard 15th September 1992 (ESB)
- 177. Garganey 28th September 1992 (ESB et al)
- 178. Yellow-legged Gull 12th May 1993 (ESB)
- 179. Golden Oriole 20th May 1993 (ESB, NHa)
- 180. Osprey 13th August 1993 (SR, SFS)
- 181. Ring-necked Parakeet 30th August 1993 (per DBR93)
- 182. Red Kite 1st November 1993 (NS)
- 183. Snow Bunting 23rd December 1993 (per DBR93)

At the end of 1993 I predicted what the next 10 additions might be....

- I. Brent Goose
- II. Shag
- III. Turnstone
- IV. Firecrest
- V. Nightingale (It was subsequently discovered that it had already occurred in 1970)
- VI. Iceland Gull
- VII. Black Redstart
- VIII. Woodlark
- IX. Black-necked Grebe
- X. Glaucous Gull

The 8 species in green had been recorded by the time I made my next prediction at the end of 2003.

- 184. Goshawk 4th April 1994 (ESB, RH)
- 185. Ring-billed Gull 6th April 1994 (SR et al)
- 186. Hoopoe 6th May 1994 (ESB) *Two previous records now discovered from 1980's.*
- 187. Spoonbill 3rd July 1994 (IML)
- 188. Brent Goose 6th November 1994 (SR et al)
- 189. Black-necked Grebe November 1994 (per WEBS, date unknown)
- 190. Raven 12th April 1995 (TE, AM)
- 191. Montagu's Harrier 26th April 1995 (AM, SR, NS)
- 192. Turnstone 4th May 1995 (SR)
- 193. Waxwing 3rd February 1996 (GJA, ESB, IP, SR)
- 194. Firecrest 23rd September 1996 (SR)
- 195. Corncrake 25th September 1996 (SR)
- 196. Black Redstart 9th November 1996 (SR)
- 197. Iceland Gull 15th March 1997 (SR)
- 198. Woodlark 9th April 1997 (GJA)
- 199. Penduline Tit 20th January 1998 (ND, CW et al)
- 200. Wood Warbler 18th August 1998 (SR)
- 201. Green-winged Teal 14th Apr 2000 (SR et al)

- 202. Ruddy Duck 1st January 2001 (SR, MS)
- 203. American Herring Gull 18th March 2002 (DT)
- 204. Mandarin Duck 26th October 2003 (SR, MS)
- 205. Yellow-browed Warbler 5th December 2003 (SR et al)

The following 10 predictions were made by me at the end of 2003

- I. Shag
- II. Glaucous Gull
- III. Wryneck
- IV. Red-necked Grebe
- V. Great White Egret
- VI. Woodchat Shrike
- VII. Red-legged Partridge
- VIII. Serin
- IX. Pallas's Warbler
- X. Red-rumped Swallow

Despite 9 additions between then and 2011 when I made my next set of predictions, only the 2 species in green had been recorded!

- 206. Red-legged Partridge 23rd March 2005 (BC, SR et al)
- 207. Rough-legged Buzzard 16th October 2005 (TE, RG, SR)
- 208. Lapland Bunting 14th October 2006 (IML)
- 209. Cattle Egret 3rd November 2007 (MG, SR et al)
- 210. Rosy Starling 10th September 2008 (SR)
- 211. Whooper Swan 27th October 2010 (SR et al)
- 212. Woodchat Shrike 10th April 2011 (DB et al)
- 213. Black Stork 1st May 2011 (SR)
- 214. Egyptian Goose 5th May 2011 (SR)

In mid-2011 I made a new set of predictions for the next 10 species.....(I had given up on Shag). This was made just as Lytchett Fields was changing and once again water would inundate the site. At the time I had no idea of how profound this change would be or what it would mean for the future of birding at Lytchett Bay!

- I. Great White Egret
- II. Wryneck
- III. Glaucous Gull
- IV. Pallas's Warbler
- V. *Red-rumped Swallow*
- VI. *Temminck's Stint*
- VII. Black Kite
- VIII. Quail
- IX. *White Stork*
- X. *Hawfinch*

3 of the above species occurred before the next prediction in 2016 and another 3 have occurred since despite not being in the 2016 list of predictions (in italics).

- 215. Arctic Skua 25th October 2011 (SR)
- 216. *Bluethroat 1971 – added at end of 2011 following discovery of old record in DBR71.*
- 217. Great White Egret 15th April 2012 (PM)

- 218. Black-winged Stilt 21st May 2014 (IB et al)
- 219. Temminck's Stint 17th May 2014 (PM et al)
- 220. Wryneck 16th Apr 2015 (DJ et al)
- 221. Sanderling 12th May 2015 (IB, SR)
- 222. Melodious Warbler 14th Aug 2015 (IB, IML)

The next set of predictions occurred in February 2016 instigated by Ian Ballam who collected suggestions from 9 observers including myself. This list was completely unfiltered and is reproduced in full. It included some extremely optimistic suggestions.

- I. **Stilt Sandpiper**
- II. Red-footed Falcon
- III. Marsh Warbler
- IV. Collared Pratincole
- V. White-rumped Sandpiper
- VI. Citrine Wagtail
- VII. Little Bunting
- VIII. Greater Yellowlegs
- IX. Solitary Sandpiper
- X. Alpine Swift
- XI. **Ortolan**
- XII. Greenish Warbler
- XIII. Whiskered Tern
- XIV. White-winged Black Tern
- XV. Least Sandpiper
- XVI. Savis' warbler
- XVII. Dusky Warbler
- XVIII. **Long-billed Dowitcher**
- XIX. White-tailed Lapwing
- XX. American Wigeon
- XXI. Red-throated Pipit
- XXII. **White-tailed Eagle**
- XXIII. Pallas's Warbler
- XXIV. Killdeer
- XXV. Red-breasted Flycatcher

Not surprisingly only 4 have put in an appearance and I don't know anyone who would have put serious money on Stilt Sandpiper which has! 15 species have been added in the 8 years since the last prediction.

- 223. Lesser Yellowlegs 18th September 2016 (IB et al)
- 224. Buff-breasted Sandpiper 15th June 2017 (IB, LW)
- 225. Stilt Sandpiper 21st September 2017 (IB, SR et al)
- 226. Hawfinch 26th October 2017 (JH, Nhu)
- 227. Ortolan 27th August 2018 (noc mig, per PM)
- 228. Stone Curlew 18th June 2019 (SR)
- 229. Long-billed Dowitcher 29th September 2020 (IB et al)
- 230. White-tailed Eagle 16th March 2021 (LW)
- 231. White Stork 14th July 2021 (JH)
- 232. Common Guillemot 23rd December 2021 (PVH et al)
- 233. Tundra Bean Goose 29th January 2022 (IB et al)
- 234. Bonaparte's Gull 9th February 2022 (PVH, SR et al)
- 235. Forster's Tern 23rd April 2023 (SFS, JW et al)

236. Red-rumped Swallow 25th April 2023 (LB, JSP, RS et al)
237. Great Grey Shrike 3rd November 2023 (SR et al)

With the occurrence of Forster's Tern outstripping even Stilt Sandpiper in its unexpectedness and the list growing more rapidly than we ever dared to consider I thought it time to predict the next ten. Given that 7 of my previous predictions have still yet to put in an appearance (Shag, Glaucous Gull, Red-necked Grebe, Serin, Pallas's Warbler, Black Kite and Quail) I thought I'd again widen the input and have asked 6 other keen Lytchett listers to suggest their next 5 additions.

Remarkably and optimistically 22 species have been suggested. These have been ranked by votes.....

- I. Caspian Gull (3 votes)
- II. Bee-eater (3 votes)
- III. White-rumped Sandpiper (3 votes)
- IV. Red-necked Phalarope (2 votes)
- V. Eider (2 votes)

The following species all received 1 vote.

- VI. Kentish Plover
- VII. Shag
- VIII. Blue-winged Teal
- IX. Pallas's Warbler
- X. White-winged Black Tern
- XI. Marsh Sandpiper
- XII. Collared Pratincole
- XIII. Marsh Warbler
- XIV. Pallid Harrier
- XV. Savi's Warbler
- XVI. American Wigeon
- XVII. Long-tailed Duck
- XVIII. Red-necked Grebe
- XIX. Citrine Wagtail
- XX. Great Reed Warbler
- XXI. Dusky Warbler
- XXII. Black Kite

Here is to dreaming about the next additions to our growing list.....

The Bird finders; GJ Armstrong, I Ballam, D Banfield, L Bissle, E S Brodie, B Chard, N Douglas, T Elborn, R Gifford, M Gould, N Haggard, PV Harvey, R Howell, J Hull, N Hull, D Jones, IM Lewis, A Morris, P Morton, JS Parker, I Prophet, S Robson, M Smith, SF Smith, R Stephenson, N Symes, D Thewlis, J Whittall, C Whitbourne, L Woodford.

Appendix 3 – Bird ringing at Lytchett Bay 2023

Species Name	New	Retrap /control	Total
Common Sandpiper	1	0	1
Sparrowhawk	1	0	1
Kingfisher	4	2	6
Great Spotted Woodpecker	1	0	1
Great Grey Shrike	1	0	1
Coal Tit	1	0	1
Blue Tit	45	15	60
Great Tit	13	1	14
Bearded Tit	17	3	20
Cetti's Warbler	7	1	8
Long-tailed Tit	8	6	14
Willow Warbler	32	0	32
Chiffchaff	91	0	91
Sedge Warbler	153	1	154
Reed Warbler	108	10	118
Grasshopper Warbler	35	0	35
Blackcap	55	1	56
Garden Warbler	2	0	2
Lesser Whitethroat	1	0	1
Whitethroat	11	1	12
Dartford Warbler	1	1	2
Firecrest	4	0	4
Goldcrest	18	4	23
Wren	6	2	8
Starling	3	0	3
Song Thrush	3	0	3
Redwing	7	0	7
Blackbird	6	0	6
Robin	11	1	12
Redstart	1	0	1
Stonechat	2	1	3
House Sparrow	3	0	3
Dunnock	7	2	8
Meadow Pipit	103	1	104
Tree Pipit	4	0	4
Water Pipit	6	0	6
Rock Pipit	2	0	2
Chaffinch	3	0	3
Lesser Redpoll	34	0	34
Goldfinch	5	0	5
Reed Bunting	45	5	50
Total	863	58	921

Appendix 4 – The Thompson’s Clay Canal

“Shortly before 1831, a canal was built to transport clay from clay pits in Upton to Lytchett Bay in Poole Harbour. Interest in the canal, which is the first and only canal in Dorset, began when local historian Bryan Gambier discovered two newspaper reports from 1831 and 1834, giving information on the canal’s purpose and opening ceremony”. This is the opening paragraph of a fascinating paper published in the Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society, Volume 136, 2015.

Further investigation by Alan Hawkins found the canal marked on an 1880 Ordinance Survey map, though he concluded that by this time it was probably out of use. Field work by AH and Keith Jarvis discovered that approximately 300m of the canal is still visible after which it had been destroyed by housing development.

The extract for the Dorset and Somerset Herald for 3rd August 1831 gives us a flavour of the enterprise:

“A vein of very excellent pipe clay having been lately discovered on the estate of Wm Thompson Esq. (...) that gentleman has prepared pits for working and cutting a canal from the spot to Lytchett Bay which opened yesterday with more than ordinary ceremony and festivities. A great number of Mr. Thompsons friends having been invited, (...) and after partaking of refreshments in the garden, a band playing at intervals, they embarked in eight boats for the canal under salute of fire from the Duke of Gloucester yacht (...) To prove the depth of water in Lytchett Bay, the Anna, one of the largest class coastal vessels, lay at anchor at the mouth of the canal, which had been excavated 10 yards wide and 700 yards long”

In 1834 it was reported that a boat was loaded with thirty tons of clay and towed down the canal “by the people”.

The authors conclude that the enterprise was short lived and probably overtaken by the railway age which soon followed.



Today the outline of vertical sided cutting can still be made out even though they are now heavily vegetated. The bottom of the canal is soft mud filled with saltmarsh plants. © Shaun Robson

To read the full story go to “*The Thompson’s clay canal - A clay working enterprise near Lytchett Bay, Poole in the 1830’s*” B Gambier, A Hawkins, K Jarvis. *Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society, Volume 136, 2015*. We are very grateful to Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society for permission to reproduce extracts from the original paper and to Ray Griffin for bringing it to our attention and solving a long standing puzzle.

Appendix 4 – Plant survey of wet fields at Lytchett Bay RSPB Reserve, 2023. Stephen F Smith

Tetrad reference: SY 99R
Centre of site: SY 970 926

Surveyor: Stephen F. Smith thesmiths@southroad.plus.com

I am very grateful to Trevor Warrick for sharing his knowledge of wetland plants.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The area surveyed consists of four adjacent low-lying fields on the SE side of Slough Lane, which were accessed via the metal farm gate in Slough Lane, opposite Old Qoins cottage.

Field A: The largest of the four fields, it includes a large U-shaped open pond, referred to here as 'the dragonfly pool' and fed by the 'shallow channel' which drains water off Slough Lane. The channel quickly dried out after even short periods of dry weather, and by the end of June even the dragonfly pool was reduced to the state shown here:



Field B: includes extensive areas of mire, covered in parts by up to 5 cm of water. Bordered by sallow carr on SE border.

Field C: drier than field B; notable for a stand of 26 Southern Marsh Orchids near the centre.

Field D: the driest of the four fields, bordered to the south-east by woodland / scrub, which is thickly overgrown with Rhododendron.

FIELD A

Meadow Buttercup *Ranunculus acris*

Several scattered plants noted.

Creeping Buttercup *Ranunculus repens*

Scattered plants.

Hairy Buttercup *Ranunculus sardous*

A few plants in the shallow channel in May.

Lesser Spearwort *Ranunculus flammula*

Present.

Greater Spearwort *Ranunculus lingua*

Fairly numerous in the shallow channel. The species is now rare in the truly wild state in Dorset, and plants are likely to be escapes from garden ponds [Bowen 2000].

Common Nettle *Urtica dioica*

Present in hedgerows.

Common Mouse-ear *Cerastium fontanum*

Several plants noted.

Lesser Stitchwort *Stellaria graminea*

Widespread.

Procumbent Pearlwort *Sagina procumbens*

Present in shallow channel.

Common Sorrel *Rumex acetosa*

Present.

Cuckooflower / Lady's Smock *Cardamine pratensis*

Fairly numerous throughout the field, flowering in May.

Common Vetch *Vicia sativa*

Fairly widespread in drier parts of field.

Meadow Vetchling *Lathyrus pratensis*

One plant noted near Slough Lane boundary.

Lesser Trefoil *Trifolium dubium*

Present in drier parts of field.

Slender Trefoil *Trifolium micranthum*

A few patches in western parts of field.

White Clover *Trifolium repens*

A few plants noted.

Silverweed *Potentilla anserina*

Present throughout the drier parts of the field.

Thyme-leaved Speedwell *Veronica serpyllifolia*

Numerous beside shallow channel.

Ragwort *Senecio jacobaea*

Present in drier parts of field.

Daisy *Bellis perennis*

Present in grass.

Bristly Ox-tongue *Picris echioides*

One plant found in shallow channel.

Marsh Thistle *Cirsium palustre*

Scattered plants.

Creeping Thistle *Cirsium arvense*

Fairly numerous in western corner of field.

Common Water-starwort *Callitriche stagnalis*

Numerous in dragonfly pond in April and May [photo right].



Broad-leaved Pondweed *Potamogeton natans*

Present in dragonfly pond until late May, when it mysteriously disappeared.

Bog Pondweed *Potamogeton polygonifolius*

Present in dragonfly pond until late May, when it disappeared like the Round-leaved Pondweed.

Some grasses [identified by Trevor Warrick]:

Crested Dog's-tail
Sweet Vernal-grass
Yorkshire Fog

Cynosurus cristatus
Anthoxanthum odoratum
Holcus lanatus

FIELD B

Lesser Spearwort *Ranunculus flammula*

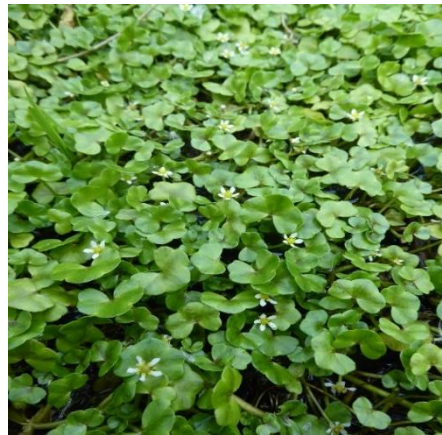
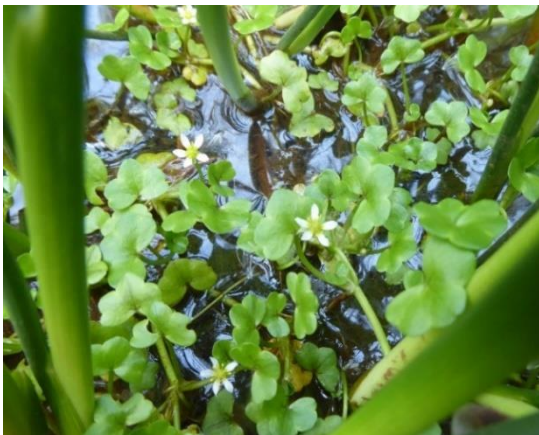
Scattered plants present.

Ivy-leaved / Round-leaved Crowfoot *Ranunculus hederaceus / omiophyllus*

Abundant in the wetter parts of Field B in late spring, forming large mats with its rounded fleshy leaves and five-petalled white flowers [photos 2 and 3 below]. This plant posed an identification problem:

- The leaves were three-lobed, with each lobe being widest at the base.
- Each petal was clearly less than 4.5 mm long.

These two features indicate Ivy-leaved Crowfoot. However, the petals were something approaching twice the length of the semi-transparent sepals, which is a feature of Round-leaved Crowfoot *Ranunculus omiophyllus*. The identification as Ivy-leaved Crowfoot therefore remains tentative. By the end of June, the plants had shrunk to the desiccated state shown on the righthand photo:



Common Sorrel *Rumex acetosa*

Several plants noted.

Common Nettle *Urtica dioica*

Present in grass.

Greater Stitchwort *Stellaria holostea*

Numerous along hedge beside Slough Lane.

Lesser Stitchwort *Stellaria graminea*

Common in drier parts of field.

Bog Stitchwort *Stellaria alsine*

One plant found in eastern parts of field [photo right].



Ragged Robin *Silene flos-cuculi*

Three plants present at south-eastern end of field, growing among roots of a long-dead Sallow; in flower from mid-May until 18th June.

Cuckooflower / Lady's Smock *Cardamine pratense*

Present in moderate numbers.

Watercress *Rorippa nasturtium-aquaticum*

Present at south-eastern edge of field.

Tormentil *Potentilla erecta*

Numerous in south-eastern parts of field.

Greater Birdsfoot-trefoil *Lotus pedunculatus*

Widespread in grass, flowering throughout June.

Hemlock Water-dropwort [poisonous] *Oenanthe crocata*

Numerous plants present.

Fools'-watercress *Apium nodiflorum*

Fairly numerous in wetter parts of field.

Marsh Pennywort *Hydrocotyle vulgaris*

Abundant in south-eastern parts of field.

Water Mint *Mentha aquatica*

Abundant in wetter parts of field.

Common Marsh-bedstraw *Galium palustre*

Widespread among sedges.

Marsh Thistle *Cirsium palustre*

Present in drier parts of field.

Hemp-agrimony *Eupatorium cannabinum*

A few plants at edge of reedbed, flowering in July.

Reedmace / Bulrush *Typha latifolia*

A sizeable patch at south-eastern end of field.

Yellow Iris *Iris pseudacorus*

Present in south-eastern end of field, but leaves heavily nibbled, presumably by Sika Deer.

Grasses: Southern Reed *Phragmites australis*
Spiked-rush *Elyocharis palustris*

FIELD C

Ragged Robin *Silene flos-cuculi*

One plant present on 29th May.

Tormentil *Potentilla erecta*

Scattered plants present.

Bramble *Rubus fruticosus*

Present in boundary hedge.

Marsh Pennywort *Hydrocotyle vulgaris*

Present in wetter parts of field.

Southern Marsh Orchid *Dactylorhiza praetermissa*



An impressive stand of 26 flower-heads found near centre of field on 29th May [photo right]; flowers had gone over by 18th June.

FIELD D

This was the driest and least varied of the four fields, but the following common species were noted:

Broad-leaved Dock *Rumex obtusifolius*

Water Mint *Mentha aquatica*

Greater Stitchwort *Stellaria holostea*

Greater Birdsfoot-trefoil *Lotus pedunculatus*

Silverweed *Potentilla anserina*

Cuckooflower / Lady's Smock *Cardamine pratense*

Monkeyflower *Mimulus guttatus*

One plant near northern edge [non-native].



Sunrise from Rock Lea View © Ian Ballam

Lytchett Bay Non-Avian Wildlife Report



Clifden Nonpareil *Catocala fraxini* © Nick Hull
Tachinid Fly *Ectophasia crassipennis* © Paul Swann
Jumping Spider *Evarcha arcuata* © David Foster

The wet and unsettled start to 2023 had I think quite a detrimental effect on invertebrates in spring and early summer but there seemed to be an increase from mid-summer on through to autumn.

In 2023 we received 978 records of 459 species across the Lytchett Bay recording area. This is slightly down from last year. This is most likely due to everyone going back to their normal lives after covid and visiting other places and not confining themselves to the local patch as much as they have been over the last three years. Nonetheless 79 new species have been added to the database in 2023.

I've been recording since 2012 but the Lytchett Bay official database started in 2014 which means this is our tenth year. In those ten years we have recorded 1,179 species and I've entered 7,915 records, which when I think there is only a small number of people contributing each year is pretty amazing. This doesn't take into account the 237 species of birds that have also been recorded for Lytchett Bay.

If you would like to submit your sightings it's never too late, you can email me, Nick Hull, at nickh4142@gmail.com or you can post sightings and photographs on the Lytchett Bay Facebook page:-

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/2469123376495268> or on X (formerly Twitter) Lytchett Bay Nature to @LytchettP, it's getting so easy to let us know what you're seeing. The more we know about the patch and its wildlife, no matter how small, it is valuable to keep Lytchett Bay and its heathland, fields and green space for us all to enjoy whatever your interest.

As always I have to thank the following contributors for sending in their records. Especially Ian Ballam who's contribution has been invaluable over the last 10 years. Also to thank all the others of you who have contributed in some way throughout the period and I hope will continue in the future. Thanks go to, Jackie Hull, Shaun Robson, Marie Smith, David Foster, Paul Morton, Liz Woodford, David White, Martin Wood, Alison Copland, Stephen Smith, John Westacott, Colin Lamond, Frazer Hockey, Paul Swann, Jem Bee, Wayne Copperthwaite, Mark Wright, Lynda Lambert, Pete Davies, Denise Cuthbert, and Glyn Owen. Hopefully I haven't left anyone out, I apologise now if I have.

I also like to thank the following people for their help in verifying identification of various species groups. Tony Allen (Beetles); Paul Harris and Phil Sterling (Moths) and British and FaceBook groups of Diptera, Ichneumon Wasps, British Hoverfly and Britain Arachnid Society (B.A.S); Various expert from BWARS (Bees Wasps & Ants) & Steven Falk via X (Twitter); whose help has been invaluable with identifying and advise on some of the more difficult and rare species of bee.

A number of species listed in the species account below may have 'agg' written next to the name, this means for a definitive identification the species requires to be dissected to determine the species. I do not 'gen-det' as we do not believe in killing something that has a purpose on this earth and it should be able to fulfil that purpose before it dies. If I find a dead specimen, I have no problem in carrying out any procedure to find a definitive identification. There may come a time where one or two species may have to be collected to prove identification. If work is required for their conservation we would need to know what species they are to provide the best habitat they require to help the species.

As in last year's report where a species is rare or scarce in Dorset or Nationally I have included the species designation/s.

Thank you, Nick Hull

Photograph Acknowledgements

Big thank you to all who have allowed me to use their photographs in this report. Unless stated otherwise all photographs are copyright of the individual photographer.

The Species Accounts

As with previous years I have summarised the main families that have been recorded and have only included the species that have been recorded for the first time or those species that have a designation which have been seen in the current year even if recorded in previous years within the recording area, otherwise this report would be extremely large.

Mammals

Since recording began we have recorded 14 species of mammal excluding bats. Six species can be considered regularly seen Sika and Roe Deer though the latter has been scarce in 2023 with no sighting reported. Fox, Brown Rat, Grey Squirrel, Wood Mouse and Hedgehog are regularly seen. Weasel and Otter are recorded almost annually but Stoat has only been recorded on three occasions and Badger once in ten years. Water Vole has been recorded in 7 years out of the ten. Bank and Field Vole, Common and Water Shrew also Harvest Mouse are rarely seen though probably are more common than we are aware due to their secretive habits and lifestyles.

In 2023 only nine species were reported, Common Seal, Sika Deer, Fox, Otter, Weasel, Hedgehog, Wood Mouse, Rabbit, Grey Squirrel and Brown Rat.

Common Seal - *Phoca vitulina* - Hab (1992); HR (2010); UK(2007); NERC (2006) S41

Just two records both off Turlin Point in the main channel on 13th November and 27th December 2023. This is the fourth and fifth bay records, previous records were 2 in 2016, and 1 in 2017.

Hedgehog - *Erinaceus europaeus* - UK(2007); NERC (2006) S41

A number of records of animals in Sandy Close and two sites in Lytchett Way. Hedgehogs have been recorded annually at these three sites since recording began..

Otter - *Lutra lutra* - Hab (1992); HR (2010); W&C (1981); UK(2007); NERC (2006) S41; Near Threatened-GB

Sighting of this species is rare but tracks and signs (spraint) have been seen by the sluice on the Sherford River. We do not believe they have a holt in the patch area but come down river in search of food.

Bats

Seven species of bat have been recorded around the Frenches Farm area, except for the more common pipistrelle, when an impact assessment was carried out prior to the new building that took place in 2020. A more in depth survey would be a good project to be undertaken to see which species are still present and how numbers differ over the area and to find out the population size of the species involved.

Common / Soprano Pipistrelle - *pipistrellus sp.* HR (2010)

In 2023 regularly observed from Sandy Close and one from the corner of Lytchett Way both were of a pipistrelle species it was not determined if they were Common or Soprano.

Reptiles & Amphibians

Nine species of Reptiles and Amphibian have been regularly recorded and most have been annually reported around the Lytchett Bay patch being found in gardens and garden ponds, under sheds, in compost heaps, in the woodland and on the heathland. Adder, Grass Snake and Common Frog have been recorded in all ten years. Common Lizard, Palmate Newt recorded in nine years followed closely by Sand Lizard and Slow Worm being reported in eight of the ten years. Smooth Newt has been found in seven of the ten and the rarest is Common Toad which in fact seems not to be common in the area at all, only being recorded in a single year.

Adder - *Vipera berus* - (W&C (1981); UK(2007); NERC(2006)S41)

2023 saw a slight increase in Adder sightings mainly from the RSPB Lytchett Fields area with a handful of reports coming from the ARC/DWT reserves. They have attracted some attention from photographers over this year, whilst we understand and welcome people taking an interest and wanting a photograph please can you keep your distance and use a long lens to take your photograph to prevent disturbing the basking snakes. It has been found that too much disturbance affects the Adder's health and breeding success and they will also leave to find a quieter place to bask and then we will not see them at all.

Sand Lizard *Lacerta agilis* - (Hab (1992); HR (2010); W&C (1981); UK (2007); NERC (2006)S41)

This species seems to be doing well on our heathland with more sightings this year though it is hard to work out numbers as few people are giving a map reference or What3Words to the individual sighting. The first sighting this year was on the 18th May which is two months later than in 2022. The largest count was 8 on the 8th August and on the 11th August a report of an adult with a juvenile was received.

Common Lizard *Zootoca (Lacerta) vivipara* - (W&C (1981); UK (2007); NERC (2006)S41).

This species is causing some concern as there has only been a single report received in 2023. It's hard to know how this species is doing other than to say they are still present in what appears to be dangerously low numbers. This is another species if you live in the Lytchett Bay recording area and have Common Lizards in your garden we would love to hear from you.

Slow Worm - *Anguis fragilis* - (W&C (1981); UK (2007); NERC (2006)S41)

As with previous years this species seems to be reported most from garden compost heaps though there has been the odd record i.e. one on the road by the Sewage works, one from Footpath 12 and I unfortunately found a dead individual outside my house on the road.

Common Frog - *Rana temporaria* - W&C (1981)

Only a few reports of Frog spawning in the local garden ponds this year. In my own pond I recorded no spawn at all for the second year in succession though adult frogs were present. This may be due to the following two species present in the pond.

Palmate Newt - *Lissotriton helveticus* - W&C (1981)

Smooth Newt - *Lissotriton vulgaris* - W&C (1981)

Both of these species were recorded in my pond and the Sandy Close pond in 2023.

It would be nice to know if any of you that live in the recording area who have ponds are seeing newts or frogs in your ponds during the breeding season. If you notice them present you can report them to me by e-mail at nickh4142@gmail.com

Odonata - Dragonflies and Damselflies

In general the Lytchett Bay recording area is very good for odonata with 30 species having been recorded in the area since 2014. 2022 was a very poor year here on the patch but this year there has been a slight increase in numbers but less species recorded which is a little worrying particularly when there haven't been any habitat changes. In fact a dragonfly pond has been developed in one of the RSPB's fields which recorded Broad-bodied Chaser this year so we are very hopeful that it will attract other species in the future once the pond settles in and becomes established.

Of the 30 species which have been recorded in the area only 17 species were recorded in 2023 though that is eight more than 2022. One of these was new for the Lytchett Bay recording area.

Lesser Emperor Dragonfly - *Anax parthenope*

Migrant and scarce breeding species

Seen by Ian Ballam on the 17th July in the Approach Field. This species was first recorded in the UK in Gloucestershire in 1996 and since has become more common especially in England. It was first proved breeding in Cornwall in 1999. Since then, breeding has been scattered in various sites across southern England.



Lesser Emperor Dragonfly *Anax parthenope* internet photo

Designated Odonata recorded in 2023 which have been recorded in previous years.

Scarce Chaser - *Libellula fulva* - (Near Threatened-GB)

Recorded from the Turlin Moor Screen on 26th May and from Lytchett Heath on 30th May, these are the third and fourth records; and the first sighting of this species since 2021.

Orthoptera & Allied Insects

Sixteen species of Grasshopper and Crickets including two species of Groundhopper have been found in the Fields, Woodland or on the heathland over the ten years. One of which is a notable species in Dorset Short-winged Cone-head which was confirmed in 2022. Other than Slender Groundhopper, Southern Oak Bush Cricket and Short-winged Cone-head which have only been recorded once, plus Oak Bush Cricket and Woodland Grasshopper which have only been recorded twice the remainder have been found almost annually.

In 2023 Seven species were recorded Common Groundhopper, Field and Meadow Grasshopper and Speckled, Roesel's, and Dark Bush Cricket and Long-winged Cone-head. All of which are fairly commonly found in the area, which is probably why we do not receive many reports.

Hemiptera - Bugs

In the ten years we have recorded 68 species of bug, though many of these have only been recorded in a single year only Dock Bug *Coreus marginatus* and Red-legged Shieldbug *Pentatoma rufipes* which have been seen in eight of the ten years.

In 2023 we recorded 27 species of bug 11 of which were new species for the recording area.

Woundwort Shieldbug - *Stagonomus venustissimus*

2 records one on 10th May Footpath 12 the second on 1st September Lytchett Field's RSPB.

This species is pretty widespread in southern Britain but it's the first time it has been recorded on the Lytchett patch. They have a single generation each year, adults mating and laying eggs in spring/early summer. The larvae feed on Hedge Woundwort and White Dead-nettle.

Small Grass Shieldbug - *Neottiglossa pusilla*

Found on Lytchett Heath on 30th May.

This species is a small brown shieldbug with paler margins to the pronotum and abdomen, and a pale central stripe running down the pronotum and scutellum. The short head is rather flattened at the front. They feed on various grasses in dry open grassland.

Plant Bug - *Rhopalus subrufus*

Recorded on Lytchett Fields RSPB on 18th May.

One of four species in the UK all are rather hairy bugs with largely membranous forewings, which are usually reddish in colour. *R. subrufus* can be distinguished by the alternate dark and light bands on the connexivum, and the whitish tip to the scutellum which ends in two points. Widely distributed in southern Britain, this species is often found on low vegetation in scrubby areas and woodland clearings. It is associated with many plants, particularly St John's Wort (*Hypericum*), and overwinters as an adult, the new generation appearing in August.

Mirid Bug - *Phytocoris dimidiatus* agg.

Found in my garden on 5th October.

Widespread across Britain on a range of deciduous trees, particularly oak.

Phytocoris species have a distinctive appearance due to the long hind femora and long 1st antennal segment. This species is very similar to *P. reuteri* and separation ideally requires examination of the male genitalia (hence the agg). The outer margin of the forewings is less convex and there is usually just a single pale band on the 2nd antennal segment, at the base.

Mirid Bug - *Heterotoma planicornis*

Found on 11th July in the Approach Field.

This species is abundant throughout most of Britain on various plants and trees, in particular nettles. Both adults and the reddish nymphs feed on small insects as well as plant buds and unripe fruits.

Reedmace Bug - *Chilacis typhae*

Recorded on the 26th June along Watery Lane.

Often known as the bulrush bug, this species is associated with Greater Reedmace and found across much of England, although less commonly in northern and western areas. Recently recorded from Scotland.

They have several generations a year, and adults may be found pairing (often on bulrush heads) any time between spring and autumn, at least in the south. Adults overwinter inside the seedheads.

Striped Oak Bug - *Rhabdomiris striatellus*

Found on Lytchett Heath 2nd June.

A very striking bug which is frequently found on or near oak across Britain, but particularly in the south. Females are usually paler, than males. The only possible confusion risk is the larger and more elongate *Miris striatus*, which has a completely yellow/orange cuneus and an entirely dark head. Overwintered eggs hatch in April, the larvae feeding on unripe catkins and becoming adult from mid-May onwards.

Cinnamon Bug - *Corizus hyoscyami*

Recorded on the 7th August on Lytchett Heath

Although historically confined to the coasts of southern Britain, this species is now found inland throughout England and Wales as far north as Yorkshire. It is associated with a range of plants, and overwinters as an adult, the new generation appearing in August-September. Nymphs are yellow/red-brown in colour and also rather hairy.



Cinnamon Bug - *Corizus hyoscyami* © Nick Hull

Common Lacehopper - *Cixius nervosus*

Recorded on 27th July in the Approach Field.

A widespread and common species found on deciduous trees and shrubs. This is by far the most common and is one of the larger species in the *Cixius* family. The postclypeus is brownish yellow, much lighter than the frons. The spots along the costal margin are larger than those on veins, and there is usually a brown transverse band on the forewings in the basal half, with faint dark markings posteriorly.

Horned Treehopper - *Centrotus cornutus*

Found on Lytchett Heath on the 15th May.

One of only two UK treehoppers, *C. cornutus* can be found locally on a range of plants in woodland rides and similar habitats.

Designated hemiptera recorded in 2023 which have been recorded in previous years.

***Lygus pratensis* - Nationally Rare**

Recorded on 13th September 2023 - 2nd record first on the 28th August 2022.

Armadillidiidae - Woodlice

We have only identified 1 species up till now bringing our total to three species found in the recording area in the ten years.

Common Rough Woodlouse - *Porcellio scaber*

Found on the 12th of June on Lytchett Heath

This species is a large (to 17 mm body length) woodlouse with a rough, heavily tuberculate body with a continuous/smooth outline, the antennal flagella comprising two segments and with two pairs of pleopodal lungs. Although usually slate-grey in colour there are numerous colour forms including brightly mottled varieties. In these forms the pattern is random, and not arranged longitudinally as seen in the similar looking species.

Common Shiny Woodlouse - *Oniscus asellus*

My wife Jackie found eggs and larvae, also adults, in our garden on 16th November.

Occurs in moist places in many habitats through Britain, and is frequently found under bark and amongst leaf litter in gardens and woodlands. This species avoids dry habitats, and unlike many woodlice, it can tolerate acid soils. Feeds on dead organic matter, which it detects by means of taste and smell. Mating tends to take place at night, and for this reason is very rarely observed. When a male finds a receptive female, he climbs onto her back and drums her with his front legs whilst 'licking' her head with his mouthparts.

Neuroptera - Lacewings & Ant-lions

Only two species within this group have been recorded: Green Lacewing *Chrysopa perla* and Common Wax-fly *Conwentzia psociformis* agg. The first is recorded annually, the latter has only been recorded once in 2021.

Coleoptera – Beetles

This is a large group which we have only recorded 125 species so far, five of which are designated species and I'm sure as time goes on we will be able to enlarge this group.

Ground Beetle sp. - *Harpalus rubripes*

Found on Lytchett Heath on 18th May.

This black ground beetle of which the males are shiny and the females dull. Males usually have some degree of blue or green colouration. *Harpalus rubripes* is a widespread beetle, found in open dry habitats. Which is present in much of Europe, Siberia, Central Asia and Anatolia. It has also, since 1987, been introduced into North America.

Thistle Tortoise Beetle nymph - *Cassida rubiginosa*

Found on Lytchett Fields on 28th June.

Often known as the Green Tortoise Beetle is a common leaf beetle found on Creeping Thistle and Knapweed and is certainly the most likely of all the *Cassida* species to be found. The body of the adult is totally covered by the extensive elytra and pronotum, helping eliminate all shadows and aid camouflage on the leaf surface. The flat, almost slug-like larva has rows of branched spines along its outer edge and has the habit of defecating onto its back. Larvae are easily found during June and the adults appear from mid-July onwards and over winter.



Thistle Tortoise Beetle nymph © Ian Ballam

Brown Chafer. - *Serica brunnea*

Found on Lytchett Heath on 28th June.

Adults occur from May until September although specimens are occasionally recorded earlier or later in the year, they peak in abundance during July and August and usually occur in numbers. Breeding occurs in the summer and females lay batches of eggs into the ground among roots on which the larvae will develop, larvae have been recorded feeding on a wide range of herbaceous and woody plants but they seem to prefer various grasses and often in sheltered situations such as wooded margins and along hedgerows etc. Larval development lasts two years, they feed during the first summer, move deeper into the soil to overwinter and complete their development the following summer, pupation occurs in late summer and adults are fully formed by the autumn but remain in situ until the following spring or summer. Adults are mostly crepuscular and nocturnal although they are often active in warm sun when they may be found feeding on foliage or visiting umbel flowers etc.

Jewel Reed Beetle - *Plateumaris sericea*

Recorded near Quoins Cottage on 29th May.

Common throughout the Palearctic region from Europe through Asia Minor, Kazakhstan and Russia to Mongolia, China, Korea and Japan; it occurs throughout Europe from the Mediterranean to the far north of Fennoscandia and the UK and is often the most common member of the subfamily. Adults have been recorded throughout the year but are generally active from April until September, peaking in abundance from May until July, they occur in well-vegetated wetland marginal situations, usually beside still or slow-flowing neutral or basic waters beside ponds, river margins, marshes, gravel pits and drainage ditches etc. and are also recorded from reed beds and saline swamps and pools, and they are almost always present in numbers.

Chequered Weevil - *Liophloeus tessulatus*

Recorded from Footpath 12 on the 10th May.

This locally common weevil occurs from lowland to low mountain altitudes throughout Europe from the Mediterranean north to the UK and several southern provinces of Fennoscandia, it extends east into Ukraine and western parts of Russia but is absent from adjacent parts of Asia and North Africa, it is generally common across Wales and the south west of England, although it is mostly coastal in the south west, and more local and rare further north to Edinburgh and across northern Ireland.

Common Leaf Weevil - *Phyllobius pyri*

Recorded on Lytchett Heath on 18th May.

A generally common and often abundant weevil occurring throughout the Palearctic region and east through Asia, in the U.K. it is common throughout England and Wales while in Scotland records are scattered to the far north. Adults occur early in the year, generally appearing in March or April, and are soon abundant among low vegetation e.g. nettles, grass or heather.

Weevil sp. - *Ceutorhynchus pallidactylus*

Found on Lytchett Heath on 25th July.

This native and widespread Palearctic species of weevil, notorious for the damage it causes to cultivated Brassica crops, is now virtually cosmopolitan and established as a pest wherever suitable crops are grown; it is a serious pest of spring-sown oilseed rape in many European countries, North Africa, Asia, Canada and America. In the UK it occurs commonly throughout England and Wales on both cultivated and wild Brassicas and has also been recorded on various Resedaceae and occasionally Hemp, *Cannabis sativa*.

Mecoptera & Trichoptera

14 of the 40 species of Caddisfly, have been found in my moth trap, seven are almost annual, the others have only been recorded once. Though they may have been more regular as they are very time consuming to identify. I have not always had time to key them out whenever I have caught them. In 2023 I managed to identify nine species within this family 5 of which were new for the recording area.

Caddis Fly - *Grammotaulius nigropunctatus*

Recorded on 22nd April in Lytchett Way moth trap.

This species is common in Britain, breeding in marshy areas from August till October. The forewing is pointed. The hindwing has an indented outer margin, which has a dark streak just before it.

Caddis Fly - *Limnephilus affinis*

Recorded on 22nd April in my moth trap.

One of 24 members of the genus *Limnephilus*. It is a species whose larvae can be found in pools, lakes and slow-flowing ditches, as well as brackish habitats such as saltmarsh pools and lagoons. *Limnephilus affinis* has a straight case made from abutted or overlapping pieces of plant material, or may be slightly curved where sand grains are incorporated. Its larvae can occur in brackish water, adults can be found on the wing from April to October, with a summer diapause.

Caddis Fly - *Limnephilus lunatus*

Recorded on two dates 21st May and 5th October found in my moth trap.

It is a species whose larvae can be found in rivers, streams, ponds, lakes, turloughs, fens and marshes. Its substratum preference includes plant material, particulate organic matter, mud and sand, in mainly standing water. *Limnephilus lunatus* has a straight case made of plant fragments and/or mineral particles. Its larvae can occur in brackish water and shows no preference in terms of pH. The feeding ecology of the larvae of *Limnephilus lunatus* is

predominantly shredding, with some predation and grazing. The species lives for up to one year and is univoltine (one generation per year) in temperate regions.

Caddis Fly - *Limnephilus marmoratus*

Recorded on 21st May found in my Moth Trap

A fairly large caddisfly with brown forewings with several whitish markings, including larger blotches. Seen June to October in various habitats, including near ponds, lakes, pools and flowing water courses like streams and rivers.

Caddis Fly - *Stenophylax permistus*

Recorded on two dates: 25th March and 5th April.

A large yellowish brown caddis fly with darker speckles all over. April to June and August to November with a summer diapause. It is often attracted to light traps. Breeds in ditches etc.

Strepsiptera - Stylops

Only a single species has been identified in this group the Scorpion Fly *Panorpa communis* which as its scientific name suggests common on the Lytchett patch and is regularly seen.

Lepidoptera – Butterflies & Moths

Butterflies

31 species of butterfly have now been recorded within the Lytchett Bay recording area 19 of which have been reported in all ten years of recording. Ringlet in nine years; Grayling, Purple Hairstreak and Essex Skipper in 8 out of 10, Clouded Yellow 7 of 10, Green Hairstreak 6 of 10; Silver-studded Blue 5 of 10; Wall Brown 4 of 10; Small Blue 3 of 10 and Brown Argus which was recently recorded for the first time in 2021 has made another appearance in 2023 leaving Dingy Skipper recorded for the first time this year and vagrant Clouded Yellow ssp. *helice* just once in 2015.

Dingy Skipper - *Erynnis tages* - (UK(2007); NERC(2006)S41; Vulnerable-GB).

A single record of one found on the 30th May in the Approach Field by Ian Ballam.

Despite its name, a freshly-emerged Dingy Skipper reveals a subtle pattern of browns and greys that is quite beautiful. However, this butterfly does live up to its name as scales are lost over time, resulting in a lacklustre and drab appearance. This is a widely-distributed skipper, despite its decline due to changes in farming practice. Colonies can be found throughout the British Isles, including northern Scotland and Ireland where, although scarce, is found on outcrops of limestone. This butterfly's strongholds, however, are in central and southern England. This butterfly lives in discrete colonies with little interchange between them.



Dingy Skipper - *Erynnis tages* © Nick Hull

Silver-studded Blue - *Plebes argus* - (W&C (1981); UK(2007); NERC(2006)S41; Vulnerable-GB).

This species has inadvertently had a bit of a setback when ARC carried out some conservation work to clear an area of gorse and mature heather in the early part of the year and I think combined with the wet spring had a detrimental effect on the best area of the heath for this species. Several visits were made by myself with my wife and also by Ian Ballam to look for them and only three females and a single male were found. Hopefully they will survive and 2024 will be better.

Wall Brown - *Lasiommata megera* - (UK(2007); NERC(2006)S41); Near Threatened-GB).

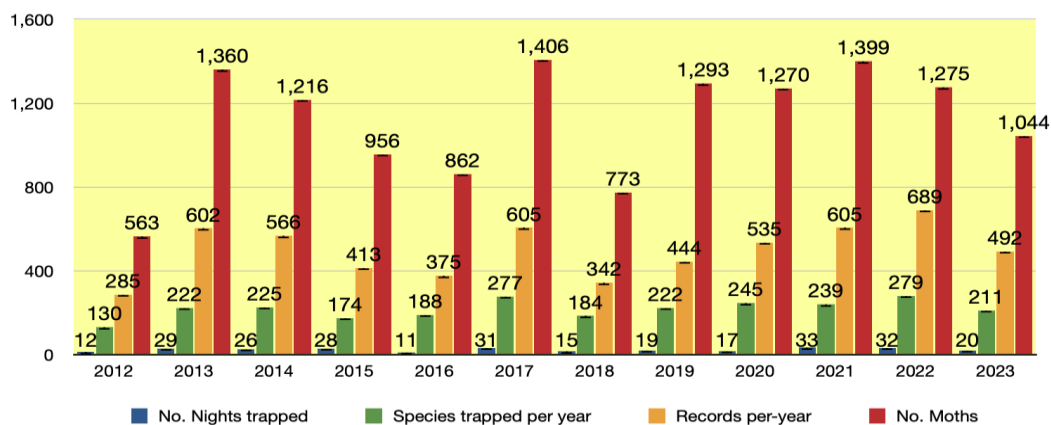
Recorded 25th July and on the 4th Aug, these were the 4th and 5th records for the recording area. Previously recorded in 2019, 2020 and 2022. This species remains one of the rarest to be found on the Lytchett patch.

Grayling - *Hipparchia semele* - (UK(2007); NERC(2006)S41; Vulnerable-GB)

First recorded in 2015 in my garden this species has been recorded in seven of the ten years and seems to be increasing in numbers vary slightly on Lytchett Heath.

Moths

In my moth trap in 2023 I trapped 1,044 moths of 223 species. There is a further 15 of which were new for the garden and the patch; these were mainly micro moths. Three of these were species that I had hoped to see in the trap one day, a micro called *Palpita vitrealis*, two macro's Portland Ribbon Wave *Idaea aversata* and Clifden Nonpareil *Catocala fraxini* for me were the best moths of the year.



The graph above shows in blue the number of nights I trapped in the year. Green is the number of species caught that year. Orange is the number of records entered into the database and red is the number of moths that were caught and identified in the trap in the particular year.

Species recorded for the first time in 2023

Azalea Leaf Miner - Caloptilia azaleella - 15.007

Trapped on 9th August and on 25th September.

This moth is an adventive species, probably introduced with azalea and rhododendron plants, that is now spreading throughout southern Britain. The larvae initially form mines in azalea leaves, later forming a cone by rolling the leaf downwards from the tip.

Caloptilia stigmatella - 15.010

Trapped on three occasions: 25th March, 9th August and 14th December.

A small but distinctive species, resting in the characteristic erect posture typical of the Genus *Caloptilia*. The forelegs are thickly scaled at the base, appearing 'feathered'. Fairly common throughout Britain, it flies in late June and July, and again from September onwards. The larva is a leaf-miner and feeds on willow and poplar.

Ypsolopha sequella - 17.012

Trapped on 20th and 26th June.

This highly distinctive species, with its pied appearance, is locally widespread in wooded areas over England and Wales. They fly at night in July and August and come too light. The larvae feed mostly on species of *Acer*, particularly field maple.

Agonopterix umbellana - 32.029

Trapped on 11th August.

is well distributed throughout the British Isles and can be locally common among gorse in coastal localities. The adult stage lasts from August to April. It hibernates over winter and can reappear in the early spring. The larvae feed from late May to early August on gorse and greenweed from obvious silk tubes as thick as a pencil.

Black-spotted Snout - *Dichomeris alacella* 35.025 - (Nationally Scarce B)

Trapped 2nd September 2023

A scarce species, distributed rather locally in the southern half of England, with occasional records north to Yorkshire. The adults, which can be attracted to light, fly during July and August. The early stages are relatively poorly described, but the larvae are known to feed on lichens on tree-trunks.



Black-spotted Snout *Dichomeris alacella* © Nick Hull

***Eudemis profundana* - 49.144**

Trapped on 19th July.

This is a variable species which generally shows a rich mixture of reddish ground-colour overlaid with darker and pale marbling. The whitish dorsal blotch can be large and conspicuous. Found throughout England and Wales, and in Ireland, though generally uncommon. The adults are on the wing in July and August. They feed on oak, the larva feeding in a rolled leaf.

Common Lance - *Bactra lancealana* 49.194

Trapped on 23rd August 2023

Rather common throughout Britain, it occupies marshes and heaths, and the larvae feed on various rushes including *Juncus* and *Scirpus*. The adults are readily attracted to light and are on the wing in two generations between July and October.

Cock's-head Bell - *Zeiraphera isertana* 49.260

Trapped 26th June 2023

This is a fairly common species throughout much of the British Isles where oak woodland is to be found. The adults' main flight time is July and August.

Red Piercer - *Lathronympha strigana* 49.345

Trapped 11th August 2023

A distinctive species with bright orange-rufous forewings and several greyish metallic markings towards the rear of the wing, this moth is locally common in the south of Britain, becoming scarcer further north. The adults fly at sunrise, and later from dusk onwards. They are on the wing in June and July, sometimes with a second brood in late August/September. It frequents open woodland and similar areas, and feeds on St. John's-wort.

Goat Moth - *Cossus cossus* 50.001* - (UK(2007); NERC(2006)S41)

4 records received in 2023 of caterpillars of this species. All found in and around the Slough Lane Sewage works. The first by Ian Ballam on 9th August and again on the 10th and Mark Wright recorded another on 27th August, then Ian came across another on 4th September 2023.

This moth gets its name from the goatly smell of the caterpillar, which burrows into the trunks of various deciduous trees, and feeds on the wood. Because of the long digestion period required for this food matter, the larvae often live for up to five years before pupating.

The adults fly in June and July and are among the heaviest of British moths. It is locally widespread in the south, and scarcer further north in Britain. In Dorset it appears to be decreasing but this year As well as here at Lytchett caterpillars have also been found at Arne RSPB and on Brownsea Island. I've still yet to catch the adult moth in one of my traps in the UK.



Goat Moth *Cossus cossus* caterpillar © Ian Ballam

Brown Knot-horn - *Matilella fusca* 62.012

Trapped 11th August 2023

In Dorset, the moth is at low density on heathland throughout the Poole Basin. The national norm is for a single brood in June and July, but in Dorset the data suggests a partial bivoltine cycle in June and August in addition to the July brood. The species tends to disperse, as evidenced by the following that were found well away from heather habitat:

Olive-tree Pearl - *Palpita vitrealis 63.048 (Rare Migrant)**

Trapped 23rd August 2023

This is a stunningly beautiful moth and one I've always wanted to find in my trap.

Although widespread in southern Europe, this is an immigrant to the British Isles, appearing most often in the South and south-west of England. Autumn is the most likely period to encounter this species. The wings are translucent with a slight sheen and an orange or brown leading edge. Abroad, the species feeds on jasmine and olive.



Olive-tree Pearl - *Palpita vitrealis* © Nick Hull

In Dorset this moth has been recorded in nineteen of the past twenty-one years in varying small numbers, although one hundred and twenty were seen in 2006 and in one case, egg-laying was observed: The data suggests a bivoltine cycle abroad but with a significantly larger population of second brood examples observed during the autumn.

Portland Ribbon Wave - *Idaea degeneraria 70.017 - (Nationally Rare)**

Trapped 23rd August 2023 and again on 8th September.

This is another moth that I've waited a long time to trap though I have caught them in Europe. The first British moth was discovered on the Isle of Portland by E Curtis on 24 June 1831. The xerothermic species is only found in the UK in Dorset, the larva feeding on the dry and withered leaves of many herbaceous plants including yarrow, field bindweed, and bramble. They are single-brooded and are found in grassy, scrubby undercliffs on Portland, St Albans Head and at Winspit on The Isle of Purbeck. Occasionally moths are observed more widely along the coastal belt, and outside the resident flight period, primarily in September, but on one occasion in May. These are likely to refer to double-brooded immigrants from abroad.



Portland Ribbon Wave *Idaea degeneraria* © Nick Hull

Clifden Nonpareil - *Catocala fraxini 72.076 - (Rare migrant)**

Trapped 2nd September 2023

Sometimes called the Blue Underwing this was my personal moth of the year. They are an irregular immigrant species to Britain and extinct resident, the larva feeding on aspen. The species was resident in Orlestone Forest in Kent between 1935 and 1955 before the aspen trees within the wood were felled to make way for conifers. In Dorset, this spectacular moth has been recorded on nineteen occasions in the past twenty-seven years either at sugar, at light or during the day. More recently there have been many more records and I think it's very possible that they have recolonised.

Designated species of moth recorded in 2023 which have been recorded in previous years

Rosy Knot-horn - *Oncocera semirubella* 62.021 - (Nationally Scarce B)

Two records in 2023 on 23rd August and 25th September, 5th and 6th record for this species all recorded since 2018.

Long-legged Tabby - *Synaphe punctalis* 62.070 - (Nationally Scarce B)

Recorded on three nights in 2023 on the 26th June, 17th and 19th July. They have been recorded annually since 2014.

Pied Grey - *Eudonia delunella* 63.072 - (Nationally Scarce B)

Single record for 2023 on 26th June, with only three previous records on singles in 2014, 2017, 2022.

Bulrush Veneer - *Calamotropha paludella* 63.079 - (Nationally Scarce B)

Three records of four individuals were recorded for 2023; on 20th, (2) on 26th and another on 28th June; They have been recorded annually since 2012.

Oak Hook-tip - *Watsonalla binaria* 65.002 - (UK(2007); NERC(2006)S41)

Two records for this species in 2023 on 17th July and 8th September which brings the total to 13 records since first being recorded in 2018.

Buff Ermine - *Spilosoma lutea* 72.019 - (UK(2007); NERC(2006)S41)

Recorded twice in 2023 with two caught on 26th June and another on 17th July. This species has been recorded annually since 2012.

Jersey Tiger - *Euplagia quadripunctaria* 72.030 - (Hab (1992)

2023 has been the best year so far for this species with nine records. Between 26th July and 2nd September. Since 2020 this species has been recorded annually and is possibly now breeding.

Cinnabar - *Tyria jacobaeae* 72.031 - (UK(2007); NERC(2006)S41)

Just two records reported on 4th July, 26th July, for 2023 with only five previous records.

Mottled Rustic - *Caradrina morpheus* 73.092 - (UK(2007); NERC(2006)S41)

Three records for 2023 on 20th June, 17th July and 5th October which brings the annual total to 35 records since 2012.

Sallow - *Cirrhia icteritia* 73.182 - (UK(2007); NERC(2006)S41)

Recorded on three nights in 2023 on 8th and 25th September and 5th October making 21 records with a total of 37 individuals caught. Recorded in all years since 2012.

Beaded Chestnut - *Agrochola lychnidis* 73.186 - (UK(2007); NERC(2006)S41)

Recorded 5th October this is the second record of this species the first being 26th October 2017.

Diptera - Flies & Relatives

We have now recorded 189 species of fly and relatives. This is one of the largest groups and one that there are many more out there we haven't managed to identify as yet. In 2023 we managed to identify 17 new species, two of which are recent colonists to the UK.

Crane Fly sp. - *Nephrotoma appendiculata*

Recorded on 29th May along Watery Lane.

This well marked Crane Fly is one of the so-called Tiger Crane flies, through its combination of yellow and black markings. There are numerous species, all very similarly marked and difficult to identify correctly. Often found on Cow Parsley.

Dull Four-spined Legionnaire - *Chorisops tibialis*

Recorded on 10th July in the Approach Field.

The commoner of the two *Chorisops* species, and is widespread and fairly frequent in southern England becoming scarcer in the north and west. It is associated with woodland, mature scrub and isolated trees, with adults often seeking out shady places. Males can sometimes swarm in large numbers beneath tree foliage. The larvae seem to be mainly saproxylic, using rotted holes and other areas of decay, though there is no particular association with veteran trees and broad habitat types vary from brownfield sites and suburban locations to fen-woodland. Adults peak in July.

Black Colonel - *Odontomyia tigrina** (Nationally Scarce)

Recorded 30th May Lytchett Heath

This is a widespread but generally rare species, the exceptions being some stretches of coastal grazing marsh in counties like Sussex (e.g. Pevensey and Pett Levels) where it is one of the commonest soldier flies. It will also occur inland in association with swampy water margins, ditches and canals but is much rarer here. The larvae develop in ditches and other wet areas with plentiful emergent and floating vegetation. They appear to prefer relatively small and narrow ditches. Adults peak in May and June and like the flowers of umbellifers like Hemlock Water-dropwort and Cow Parsley. They are perhaps most easily recorded by sweeping ditches.



Black Colonel *Odontomyia tigrina* @ internet photo

Common Red-legged Robberfly - *Dioctria rufipes*

Recorded on 29th May near Quoins Cottage.

This species is the 6th species of robberfly which has been found at Lytchett Bay. This species mainly inhabit scrubby grassland, and well wooded areas, woodland edge and hedgerows. Adults can be found from May to July–August. These insects are predators on other insects. They mainly feed on parasitic wasps, such as ichneumonids, sawflies, empidid flies and a few small species (*Phora*, *Oscinis*, *Opius* species). The larvae develop as predators in the ground.

Golden-haired Robberfly - *Choerades marginatus*

Recorded on 25th July at Lytchett Heath

This is the 7th species of Robberfly which has been recorded on the Lytchett patch predominantly a fly of ancient broadleaved woodland in the southern half of England, with records extending north to Cheshire and Nottinghamshire. It can also turn up in the wooded parts of fens. The larvae are predatory on saproxylic beetle larvae in the tunnels the prey makes in dead wood. Adults fly from mid May into early autumn and are most often observed sitting on sunlit foliage and tree trunks of woodland rides/clearings and woodland edges.

Parsley Blacklet - *Cheilosia pagana*

Recorded on 19th July on Lytchett Heath.

Possibly our commonest *Cheilosia* and found in a wide variety of habitats. The flight period is very long and involves at least two generations. Spring males are often relatively large with a long, pale body pile (var. *floccosa* of some literature). They characteristically sunbathe on tree trunks and visit spring blossoms such as Blackthorn and Sallows/Willows, sometimes hovering in small swarms nearby. They also like the flowers of Lesser Celandine, Dandelion and speedwells. The summer generation is more likely to be seen on flowers such as Hogweed, Oxeye Daisy and Fleabane. The larvae have been reared from the roots of Cow Parsley, though it is suspected that other umbellifers such as Hogweed are also used.

Gold-spotted Meligramma - *Meligramma euchromum*

Recorded on 18th May on Lytchett Heath

This is a scarce, mostly southern species with records extending north to Morecambe Bay. The larvae are aphidophagous and abroad have been recorded feeding upon aphids on Spindle and Wild Cherry. Adults are recorded from April to June and have been found on Blackthorn blossoms and the flowers of Wood Spurge. usually in mature woodland.

Heath Ant Fly - *Microdon analis* - (Nationally Scarce)

Recorded on two occasions by me on 4th May and by Ian Ballam on 18th May.

This is a scarce hoverfly associated with open-structured heathy woodland in the south of England (mainly the New Forest, Dorset heaths and Western Weald) and also in the open-structured native pine woodland of the Scottish Highlands (especially the Cairngorms). In the latter it likes areas with plenty of sheltered Heather, Bilberry and fallen trunks/branches/stumps between trees. The larvae develop in the nests of ants such as *Lasius niger* or *L. platythorax* in well-rotted fallen trunks and tree stumps. Adults fly from May until August and are usually encountered sitting on, or flying around, low vegetation or dead wood. They do not visit flowers. The closely related continental species *M. major* is scarcely separable from *analis* as an adult other than the significantly larger size (wing length up to 13 mm as opposed to 10 mm). It attacks *Formica* ants.



Heath Ant Fly - *Microdon analis* © Ian Ballam

Bridged Clubtail - *Neoscia tenur*

Recorded on the 7th July along FP12

This species is widespread and often abundant in a wide range of wetlands and water margins including the swampy margins of mesotrophic pools, reedbeds through to the relatively acidic parts of valley mire and upland fen. The larvae develop amongst submerged dead stems of emergent plants. Adults fly from April to November and visit a variety of flowers including Marsh Marigold and buttercups.

Long-horned Orthonevra - *Orthonevra nobilis*

Recorded on 18th May at Lytchett Heath

This is a fairly common species in and around marshes, damp meadows and damp woodland rides and clearings. Adults are particularly fond of umbellifer flowers. Larvae develop in wet, organically-enriched mud, especially that associated with springs and flushes. It's odd that we have not recorded it before.

Marsh Boxer - *Platycheirus clypeatus*

Recorded 26th July on Lytchett Fields

One of our most common and widespread Hoverflies which occurs in a wide range of wetlands and damp grasslands but seems able to wander some distance from breeding habitat. The larvae have been found on sedges and bulrushes and are presumed to be aphidophagous. Adults fly from April to October.

Waisted Beegrabber - *Physocephala rufipes*

Recorded on two occasions one on 20th July on Lytchett Heath and the second on 26th July in the Approach Field.

Physocephala rufipes is widespread and frequent over much of southern Britain with records extending north to Lancashire and Yorkshire. It occurs in a variety of flowery habitats where bumblebees are plentiful, including grasslands, heathland, coastal habitats, brownfield sites, road verges, open woodland, and sometimes gardens. It has been reared from a variety of bumblebee species and apparently also the Red Wasp *Vespula rufa*.

Adults fly from June to October and can be seen basking on foliage or visiting flowers such as thistles, knapweeds, ragworts, Hemp-agrimony, scabiouses, Wild Parsnip, mints and Marjoram.

Small Beegrabber - *Thecophora atra*

Recorded on 12th June on Lytchett Heath

is widespread and fairly frequent with records extending to Scotland, though it is rarely abundant. It can be found on downland, heathland, coastal dunes, brownfield sites and flowery arable margins. Adults fly from May until October and will visit flowers such as ragworts, thistles umbellifers like Wild Parsnip, Rough Hawkbit, Water Mint, Common Rock-rose and speedwells but can also be found around host nesting areas. The hosts are *Lasioglossum* or *Halictus* bees. In Warwickshire, it is often found at calcareous sites where *L. albipes* and *L. fulvicorne* are abundant. In Surrey, a possible association with *L. morio* has been noted.

Dark Waspgrabber - *Leopoldius Calceatus*

Recorded 5th October in my garden moth trap and again on 9th October at Turlin rugby pitch by Ian Ballam. Oddly this species was first recorded from a moth trap near Ipswich, Suffolk on 5 October 2018. Further 2019 records have appeared from Rye Harbour, Sussex and a second site in Suffolk, also Purfleet Essex. It appears this species has quickly become established without doubt due to the change in climate. They are attracted to Ivy flowers in early autumn in much the same way as *L. signatus*. The host is presumed to be a vespine wasp but this is not confirmed and there is always the possibility that the Ivy Bee *Colletes hederæ* could be targeted.



Dark Waspgrabber - *Leopoldius Calceatus* © Nick Hull

Celery-leaf Fly - *Euleia heraclei*

Recorded from Lytchett Heath on 10th May.

This species is fairly frequent and widespread in England and Wales from April to November. They can be found in Gardens and allotments where Celery and Parsnips are grown, although it will also use plants such as Hogweed for its larvae.

Locust Blowfly - *Stomorhina lunata* - Vagrant

Recorded 6th October near to Turlin Rugby pitch.

This is a highly mobile and migratory species that is being found increasingly frequently in southern England. Records extend to Sutherland but are most frequent south of the Thames.

The larvae develop as predators of locust egg pods, and it is not thought that it can use any British grasshopper, so is best regarded as a pure vagrant in Britain. Adults visit the flowers of umbellifers, composites, mints etc.

Ectophasia crassipennis

Paul Swann Recorded a male on 17th July and found a female 24th July both in the Approach Field. This is a species that only arrived in mainland Britain in 2019. They have been found in several sites along the south east coast in 2023 they were recorded in Norfolk Brecks and here in Lytchett Bay. This species is a medium to large-sized phasiine tachinid (body length 7-12.5 mm) that is highly variable in appearance. It is a flattened species with a broad head and closely resembles one of the larger Phasia species e.g. *P. hemiptera*. Up until 2019 *E. crassipennis* has been only found in the Channel Islands where it occurs in a variety of flowery habitats. Adults fly from May to October and are usually seen on the flowers of umbellifers (e.g. Fennel, Wild Carrot, Rock Samphire) and composites (e.g. Common Fleabane, ragworts, goldenrods, Yarrow, Hemp Agrimony, Oxeye Daisy and Tansy). The larvae develop within pentatomid and acanthosomatid shieldbugs of various sorts (e.g. *Elasmucha grisea* and *Carpocoris purpureipennis*) and also some lygeids and coreids

Golden Horsefly - *Atylotus fulvus* - (Nationally Scarce)

Recorded on Lytchett Heath on 26th and 29th June 2023 this is the second and third records for this species on the Lytchett patch the first was found on the salt Marsh at the end of Footpath 12 on the 12th June 2020. It is likely that we have a small breeding population of this scarce horsefly in and around the reed bed and salt Marsh area between FP12 and Lytchett Heath.

Designated diptera recorded in 2023 which have been recorded in previous years.

Hornet Robberfly *Asilus crabroniformis* - (UK(2007); NERC(2006)S41; Nationally Scarce)

Recorded on 20th July and 10th August 2023. This species has been recorded in six of the last seven years.

Flecked General *Stratiomys singularior* - (Nationally Scarce)

Recorded 4th July 2023, This is the fourth record for this species which was first recorded in 2019.

Hornet Hoverfly *Volucella zonaria* - (Nationally Scarce)

Five records for 2023 24th and 28th June and 8th, 25th July and 6th August. This species has been recorded in nine of the last ten years. The photograph below shows the *V.zonaria* on the left and European Hornet *V. crabro* on the right. When you see the mimic next to the real thing there isn't any way you can really mix them up.



Hornet Hoverfly *Volucella zonaria* & European Hornet *Vespa crabro* © Nick Hull

Hymenoptera - Ants, Bee, Wasps & Relatives

This is a large order with many sub-families, some of which are very hard to identify which often means I have to refer to experts for help with identifying some of these groups. Such as the ichneumon wasps, as Dorset doesn't have a County Recorder for this sub-family but fortunately the FaceBook group is very helpful but for some species it is impossible to identify from photographs. None-the-less we have recorded 172 species of Hymenoptera, including all the sub-families we have identified over the ten year period. We have a long way to go as there are 7764 species within the 62 families in the UK.

Sawflies - Symphyta

There are 537 species of Sawfly on the British and Irish list. We have recorded 17 species in the Lytchett Bay recording area adding 3 species in 2023.

Gooseberry Sawfly - *Nematus ribesii*

Recorded by Jackie Hull on 1st June 2023 in our garden which consisted of eight larvae and by the time we returned from holiday most of one side of our Gooseberry bush was bare, Hopefully it will survive.



Gooseberry Sawfly *Nematus ribesii* caterpillar © Nick Hull

Small Yellow-girdled - *Tenthredo temula*

Recorded on 26th June 2023 in Lytchett Fields

Recorded throughout most of England and Wales, with a few records in Scotland north to Edinburgh. *T. temula* larvae are polyphagous and feed on Common Cow-wheat, Privet, Roses, Rowans and Blackthorn.

Blotch-winged Honeysuckle Sawfly - *Abia fasciata*

Recorded on 1st May 2023 on Lytchett Heath

This species is widespread and fairly frequent species. The caterpillar-like larvae are pale grey with scattered dark spots, yellow bars along the lower flanks and a darker grey head capsule. They feed on the foliage of honeysuckle, snowberry and Flowering Nutmeg. Adults can be recorded from April to August and seem to be bivoltine in some areas. It seems to be mainly parthenogenetic and males are rarely recorded.

Chalcididae - Chalcid Wasps

There are around 19 sub-families of around 111 species on the checklist for the British Isles.

We have found just two species over the ten year period, one in 2020 and another in 2022. No new species were identified in 2023.

Gall Wasp/Flies - Cynipidae

There are around 220 species of Gall Wasp/flies that have been identified in Britain and Ireland. We have identified 11 species since 2017 when I made an effort to try and identify the commoner species. No new species were recorded in 2023.

Ichneumon Wasps

These family groups are somewhat problematic for me as the recorder of the Lytchett Bay project as there isn't a county recorder to verify our records and many are extremely difficult to identify. Of the 490 genera of ichneumon wasps many of which we have to refer to experts on the FaceBook page who are very helpful but some species cannot be identified from photograph alone. We have so far recorded 30 of the 2,586 species on the British List so we have plenty to look out for. In 2023 we added a single species

Netelia tarsata

Recorded on 7th May in the Approach Field by Paul Swann

This species is parasitic on moths and is diurnal. They lay their egg by attaching it externally on the host, which continues its development normally until it is overwhelmed by the *Netelia* larva after the caterpillar has prepared its pupation retreat.

Cuckoo Wasps - Chrysididae

There are 35 genera of 35 species, they are some of the most colourful of the British and Irish wasps being mostly metallic blue or green and red. They are small to medium sized 4mm-11mm and they are often referred to as Jewel or Ruby-tailed Wasps. They are parasitoids, the female has a small ovipositor which she uses to lay her eggs in the host's nest where on hatching the larvae will eat the eggs of the host and then the host's food.

We have identified five species on our heathland; only two species *Hedychrum Neimelai* / *H. nobile* have been recorded annually since 2018 and the only species recorded in 2023.

Formicidae - Ants

There are 51 species in the 13 genera and we have only identified two species of Ant *Lasius nigra* and *Myrmica rubra* both from my garden both have been recorded annually since starting recording.

Velvet Ants - Mutillidae

There are just 3 genera of 3 species in this family. Though their name suggests they are ants, in fact they are ant-like wasps. The females are wingless, the male have wings, the larvae are parasitoids on ground-nesting bees and wasps. Both the Large and Small Velvet Ant are Nationally Scarce and we have recorded both species almost annually since 2019. Both species were recorded in 2023. (Warning **do not** pick the females up as they have a very painful sting that is worse they say than that of a Hornet).

Spider hunting Wasps - Pompilidae

Red-legged Spider hunting Wasp - Episyron rufipes

Recorded 27th June on Lytchett Heath

This species occurs in a variety of sandy habitats including heathland, dunes, soft rock cliffs, sandy brownfield sites and sandy rides in woods. It is fairly frequent in the south with records extending north to the Cumbrian coast. The prey seems to comprise largely of orbweavers, but there are some records for pardosids. Both sexes visit flowers, especially umbellifers such as Wild Carrot.

Club-horned Wasps - Sapygidae

Just 2 genera of 2 species they are medium to large 6mm-13mm in length they are elongated black wasps with red, yellow or white markings with distinctive clubbed antennae. The larvae are cleptoparasitic on solitary bees.

Five-spotted Club-horned Wasp - *Sapyga quinquepunctata*

Recorded 23rd May on the bee hotel in my garden.

In the UK, it has a largely southern distribution, but occurs in scattered localities as far north as Yorkshire. Univoltine. Males are found during May and June, and rarely in July. Females occur mainly during June, often during May and July, or more rarely in April and August. Cleptoparasitic on bees of the genus *Osmia*. The female enters the nest of the host and lays an egg on or near the egg of the host. On hatching, the first instar larva, which has large mandibles, eats the egg of the host. Later instars have smaller mandibles and feed on the stored food of the host.



Five-spotted Club-horned Wasp *Sapyga quinquepunctata* © Nick Hull

Social, Potter & Mason Wasps - Vespidae

12 genera consisting of 33 species. This is a group which are medium to large wasps ranging from 6mm to 35mm in size and quite brightly coloured yellow and black and live in colonies which can comprise of several hundred wasps serving a queen. With the queens the only one to over winter and have a reputation for stinging. The Potter and Mason Wasps can build amazing structures which can be built in a very short time.

European Hornet - *Vespa crabro*

Hornets have been recorded in the Lytchett Bay recording area in 8 out of the 10 years usually we have found the nest but in 2023 the nest wasn't found but was in the vicinity of French's Farm.

Vespula Wasps

The Lytchett Patch has recorded three species in this family since recording began Common, German and Red Wasp. Common and German Wasps are annually seen, the third on the list is Red Wasp which I only recorded once in 2014 when I had a plum tree in my garden which has since died.

Dolichovespula Wasps

Median Wasp - *Dolichovespula media (Nationally Scarce A)**

Recorded on three occasions 7th May in my garden and 17th July and 18th July from the Approach Field. This is the first record of this large wasp species which sometimes has been called the False Hornet. This species only arrived in England in the 1980s and is slowly expanding its range northwards and becoming more common. It has now been recorded over the border in Scotland. This European social wasp builds its hanging nest in trees and bushes. The workers collect nectar for themselves to eat but hunt other insects to feed to the queen and to the larvae. Like most wasps, only the queens survive the winter to start up new colonies in the spring.



Median Wasp - *Dolichovespula media* © Nick Hull

Mason Wasps - *Ancistrocerus*

Just two pre 2014 records of *Ancistrocerus oviventris* and *Ancistrocerus parietinus* and one record of Little Mason Wasp *Microdynerus exilis* and a single record of Box-headed Mason Wasp *Gymnomerus laevipes* both recorded in 2021.

Sphecidae - Sand Wasps

Seven species occur in the British Isles, but three of these are only known from the Channel Islands (*Ammophila campestris*, *Podalonia luffii* and *Sphex funerarius*).

We have identified two species on the Lytchett Bay heathland. Red-banded Sand Wasp *Ammophila sabulosa* and Hairy Sand Wasp *Podalonia hirsuta*. Both species have only been recorded in the last five years. This is because it was in 2019 when I was able to identify them in the field. Both species were recorded in 2023 on Lytchett Heath.

Crabronidae - Digger Wasps

Digger wasps tend to nest in soil, usually in open sandy areas or vertical banks of light soil or sand. In areas of bare ground with several female digger wasps nesting in the same area, nesting holes may be numerous. The spoil heaps left beside their holes by some species look a little like a volcano. Solitary bees nest in similar situations to solitary Digger wasps and nest aggregations between them are hard to distinguish when there are no adult insects about.

The females of some species of Digger wasps nest in the same area, forming colonies which may include 50 or 100 nests and extend over several square metres. Different species of Digger wasp have also been known to nest in the same area. Although this is typical across Digger wasps there is some variation between species. Not all species of Digger Wasp make nests in bare ground, some nest in hollow stems and other similar cavities. There are other species of Digger Wasps that act like the bird the Cuckoo and lay their eggs in other solitary wasp species, nesting holes.

There are 33 genera of 120 species in this family; we have recorded in the Lytchett patch 13 species since 2015. 3 *Crabro*, 3 *Ectemnius*, 1 *Millinus*, 2 *Cerceris*, 1 *Philanthus* (Bee-wolf), 1 *Astata*, 2 *Oxybelus*. Two new species were identified in 2023.

Armed Crabro Digger Wasp - *Crabro peltarius*

Recorded on 26th June and 29th June on Lytchett Heath

This species is locally common and abundant throughout much of Britain and Ireland. Mainly they are associated with light, sandy soils. Their prey consist of the paralysed Diptera of the families *Therevidae*, *Stratiomyidae* and the superfamily *Muscoidea*. The nest burrows are about 28 cm in length and are excavated in the soil. A nest consists of up to seven cells, each being provisioned with about nine flies. The species visits wild parsnip, hogweed and wild carrot, also creeping thistle.

Large Ectemnius - *Ectemnius cephalotes*

Recorded on the 26th June on Lytchett Fields

This species is widely distributed in England and Wales, and frequent in many areas though rare in Scotland. Can be encountered in a wide variety of situations including rides and clearings in woodland, open countryside of many sorts, coastal habitats and urban locations. Usually most apparent around large pieces of deadwood or on umbellifer flowers nearby. Univoltine; early June to late September, with a peak from late June to late August. Medium-sized flies, such as *syrrhids*, *tabanids* and various *calypterate* and *acalypterate* groups. Nest tunnels are excavated in fairly large pieces of dead wood such as stumps, fallen tree trunks, rotting logs and occasionally building timbers. Nesting aggregations can be large and dense, and this is one of several wood-nesting *sphecids* where more than one female has been recorded using a common nest entrance.

Bees - Apidae

29 genera and 259 species, of these we have recorded 76 species of 19 sub-families not all are recorded annually. There has been 5 *Colletes*, 4 *Hylaeus*, 18 *Andrena*, 2 *Panurgus*, 8 *Lasioglossum*, 2 *Melitta*, 1 *Macropis*, 1 *Dasypoda*, 2 *Anthidium*, 1 *Stelis*, 4 *Osmia*, 6 *Megachile*, 1 *Hoplitis*, 2 *Coelioxys*, 5 *Nomada*, 2 *Epeolus*, 4 *Anthophora*, 8 *Bombus* and 1 *Apis*. over the ten year period identified. In 2023 we managed to add 6 species as follows.

Trimmer's Mining Bee - *Andrena trimmerana** (Nationally Scarce B)

Recorded 20th June on Lytchett Heath

A Honey Bee-sized mining bee with two generations. The first typically flies from March until May and the second from late June until August.

This species is widespread and locally common along the southern coast of England and Wales and on southern chalk downland. It occurs more sparingly inland north to the Midlands (where it seems to be increasing). They can be found in a variety of habitats from soft rock cliffs, chalk downland, brownfield sites, farmland with blossom/bramble-rich hedges and occasionally urban green space. The spring generation forages heavily on willows and *Prunus* species, the summer generation on brambles and umbellifers.



Trimmer's Mining Bee - *Andrena trimmerana*
© Ian Ballam

Grey-banded Mining Bee - *Andrena denticulata*

Recorded 11th July Lytchett Fields

This species can be found throughout Britain but is localised and rarely common at a site. They are a species of composite rich-habitats, especially heathland, coastal dune and sandy brownfield sites. Foraging is mainly on ragworts, thistles and knapweeds.

Wilk's Mining Bee - *Andrena Wilkella*

Recorded 20th June on Lytchett Heath

This bee is widespread and locally common over much of the British Isles and occurs in a variety of legume-rich habitats, especially unimproved grasslands, heathland, brownfield sites and soft rock cliffs. They are univoltine, flying from April to July and peaking between the two generations of *A. ovatula*.

Wetted Lesser Mason Bee - *Hoplitis claviventris*

Recorded on 16th June Lytchett Heath

Is widespread and locally frequent in southern Britain, extending as far north as Cumbria. It exploits a wide variety of habitats, including calcareous grasslands, heathland, coastal dunes, vegetated shingle and brownfield land. An abundance of bird's-foot trefoils is a feature of most of its sites, and these seem to be the main pollen source, though various other flowers seem to be visited as nectar sources. Nesting typically occurs in hollow stems, both woody stems of brambles and roses, plus those of herbaceous species like ragworts and thistles. Adults mainly fly from late May until August.



Wetted Lesser Mason Bee - *Hoplitis claviventris* © Ian Ballam

Blunt-horned Nomad Bee - *Nomada flavopicta* - (Nationally Scarce; Notable B)

Recorded on 28th June on Lytchett Heath

This species has been recorded as far north as southern Scotland but is scarce in most districts except places like the North and South Downs. Adults fly from June to September. They are known to attack bees from the *Militta* family.

Four-banded Flower Bee - *Anthophora quadrimaculata** (Nationally Scarce; Notable B)

Recorded on 4th July on Lytchett Heath (Pending acceptance)

One of two smaller *Anthophora* species with pale bands on the abdomen. It averages a little larger than the other species (*A. bimaculata*). They are a rather scarce species mainly recorded from south-east England with records extending north to Northants and Norfolk. It is most frequent in flowery gardens, especially where lamiales such as cat-mints and garden lavenders are present. It will also occur in habitats such as chalk downland and soft-rock cliffs

foraging on flowers such as Black Horehound. Nesting occurs in sandy ground, usually in aggregations, and sometimes in mixed colonies with *A. bimaculata*. Adults fly between June and August.

Designated Hymenoptera recorded in 2023 which have been recorded in previous years.

Crabro scutellatus - (Nationally Scarce A)

Recorded on 28th June 2023 second record first was on 14th July 2021.

Pantaloony Bee *Dasypoda hirtipes* - (Nationally Scarce B)

Third and fourth records 26th June and 21st July 2023. First recorded in 2021.

Cuckoo Wasp - *Hedychrum niemelai* / *H. nobile* agg. - (Nationally Rare)

There has been some discussion on the identification of these two species of Jewel/Ruby-tailed Wasp on their field identification due to feature in a recent identification guide. It appears we may have both species on our heathland which we have recorded annually since 2018.



Cuckoo Wasp *Hedychrum niemelai/nobile* agg. © Nick Hull

Yellow-loosestrife Bee - *Macropis europaea* - (Nationally Scarce A)

Recorded on the 3rd, 5th and 26th July 2023 first recorded in 2020.

Large Velvet Ant - *Mutilla europaea* (Nationally Scarce B)

Recorded on 2nd June and 3rd and 4th July 2023. We have been recording them annually since 2019

Small Velvet Ant - *Smicromyrme rufipes* - (Nationally Scarce B)

A single record on 15th June is the third record for the Lytchett Patch.

Bee-wolf - *Philanthus triangulum* - (Vulnerable-GB)

Recorded on 19th June and 13th and 17th July 2023. This species has been recorded annually since 2019 and are present in good numbers.

Hairy Sand Wasp - *Podalonia hirsuta* - (Nationally Scarce B)

Recorded on the 4th July this is a species we record annually since 2019 though usually one or two a year.

Arachnids - Spiders

There are 37 genera with approximately 670 species have been found in Britain. We are only touching the edge of this amazing group of the insect world. Which some fear and others like me find absolutely fascinating. There are 48 species which we have found and identified in the Lytchett Bay recording area. In 2023 we added the following five species to the list.

Purse Web Spider - *Atypus affinis**

Recorded on 3rd July in Lytchett Fields

The species is widely distributed in southern Britain but there are scattered coastal records as far north as south-west Scotland. There has been a large apparent decline, hence a Watching Brief should be kept on this species. It is generally scarce and very local. Large populations have been recorded but it is likely that much of our modern landscape supports only small isolated colonies.

Common Cucumber Spider - *Araniella opisthographa*

Recorded on 25th May Lytchett Fields

The species is widespread in much of southern England from Yorkshire southwards, but it is much more scattered in the west and north as far as central Scotland. It is more sparsely distributed in Wales, Scotland and south-west England than the similar *A. curcurbitina*. The spider is found in a wide variety of situations, but most commonly on trees (particularly oaks) and bushes in woodland, scrub and hedgerows, as well as on nearby low vegetation. It occurs in similar habitats to *A. curcurbitina*, with which it is often, but not always, found.

Fox Spider - *Alopecosa pulverulenta*

Recorded on 19th March from Footpath 12

This is a common widespread spider throughout most of Britain. The spider is found in many open habitats, including heathland, grasslands, moorland, dunes and old quarries and pits. It ascends to considerable altitudes (over 700 m in Dumfries-shire) where unusually large specimens are often found. Large and distinctively marked specimens have also been found in Orkney and in Caithness. Adults of both sexes are found from spring to mid-summer, occasionally later.

Running Crab Spider - *Philodromus aureolus* agg.

Recorded on the 8th July from Footpath 12

The species is common widespread in most of Britain, apparently more scattered in the west and north. The species is found in a variety of wooded habitats including broad-leaved, mixed and coniferous woods, thickets, hedgerows and scrub. It also, not infrequently enter houses. It is usually beaten from bushes and the lower branches of trees but may also be swept from adjacent herbage. Although sometimes found on old trees, the spider is more often collected from younger trees, both broad-leaved and coniferous. The spider probably over-winters in the leaf litter that accumulates in various woodland situations. Adults of both sexes occur mainly in early to mid-summer.

White-palped Jumping Spider - *Euophrys frontalis*

Recorded on 19th June on Lytchett Heath

The species is widespread in the southern half of Britain, with a few mainly coastal records further north. This is the fifth jumping spider species that we have recorded, three of which live around my property. The others all have been found on Lytchett Heath. Only the Zebra Spider *Salticus scenicus* has been recorded in all 10 years; all the others were found in 2020.



White-palped Jumping Spider *Euophrys frontalis*
© Ian Ballam

Harvestman - Opiliones

There are 25 species of harvestman in the UK; we have only recorded three species so far on the Lytchett Patch, *Phalangium opilio*, *Odiellus spinosus* and *Leiobunum rotundum*. This is a group that is probably under-recorded and no records were received in 2023.

Ray-finned fish - Anguillidae

European eels are normally around 45–65 cm and rarely reach more than 1m, but can reach a length of up to 1.33m in exceptional cases. In addition, they range from having 110 to 120 vertebrates. While European eels tend to live approximately 15-20 years in the wild, captive specimens have lived over 80 years.

European Eel - *Anguilla anguilla - (Near threatened - Appendix II of the CITES Convention).**

Recorded in the stream in Watery Lane on 27th February. 4 elvers were seen whilst carrying work to relieve the flooding to allow access to the Lytchett Fields reserve.

The European eel is a critically endangered species. Since the 1970s, the numbers of eels reaching Europe is thought to have declined by around 90% (possibly even 98%). Contributing factors include overfishing, and parasites, barriers to migration such as hydroelectric dams, and natural changes in the North Atlantic oscillation, Gulf Stream, and North Atlantic drift. Recent work suggests polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB) pollution may be a factor in the decline. TRAFFIC is introducing traceability and legality systems throughout trade change to control and reverse the decline of the species.



European Eel - *Anguilla anguilla* © Nick Hull

Distribution of Records

As many of the historic records haven't been added to the database yet the figures shown are not accurate but it does show where most records have been received from. It also allows us to see the areas where perhaps more effort should be put in to see if these areas have species which have been missed. As you can see the area from Border Drive out along the Turlin Shoreline and the boundaries of recreation ground has very few records and must hold many more invertebrates which we haven't recorded yet particularly now that the council does not cut the grass during the summer and must attract many species. You'll notice that there is a very high figure over my garden. The reason for this is the number of moth records since I moved to Upton in 2012. Of course this doesn't include the bird records.

