

Birds on Wareham Common 2020

*Including selected records from 2019 and previous
years*



January 2021

1. Introduction

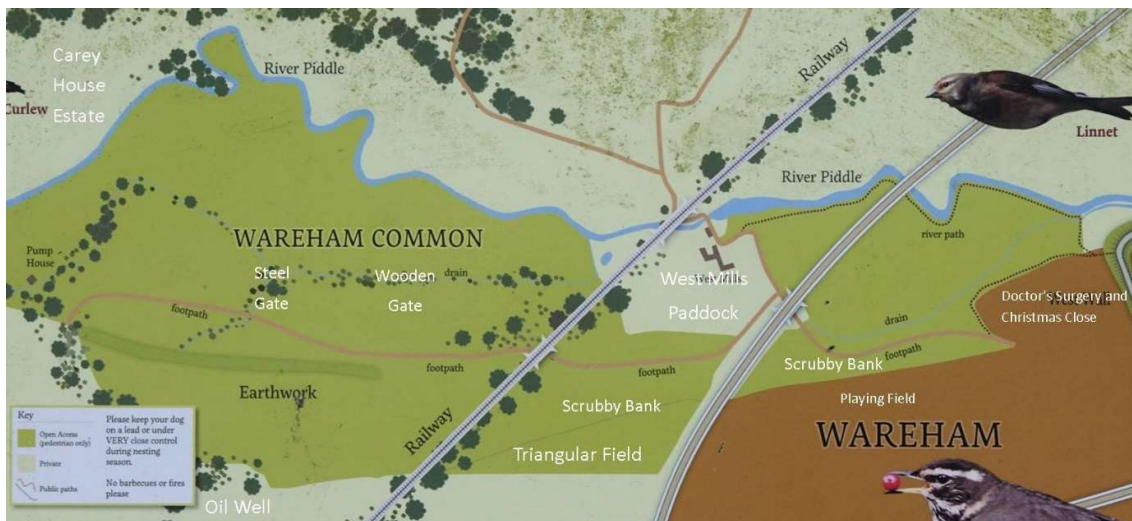
- 1.1 This report describes the birds recorded in the Wareham Common area, primarily during 2020. It includes a systematic list (Section 2) which also contains some earlier records, mainly from the second half of 2019. Records from 2019 (or earlier) are shown *in italics* and the relevant year is also set out in the text. The report includes a summary of breeding birds (Section 3) and a separate section (Section 4) on birds seen in the Wareham Common area in previous years, but not in 2019 / 2020, such as Glossy Ibis in 2012 and Dipper in 2011.
- 1.2 Wareham Common lies to the north-west of Wareham in Dorset. There is a map of the Common on an interpretation board by the River Piddle at West Mills, which is reproduced as a photograph below.



Photo of Wareham Common interpretation board at West Mills

- 1.3 Wareham Common is made up of 3 Common Land units, which all lie south of the River Piddle. North (and west) of the railway the two main units are divided by a 'drain' running east / west. North of the drain is CL 136: Portland Meadow, which lies almost entirely in the floodplain of the River Piddle. South of the drain is CL 23: Wareham Common, which also extends east of the railway and east of the bypass, up to the 'West Wall' of Wareham Walls. The whole of Wareham Walls forms a third unit, CL 22: The Town Walls.
- 1.4 The Common Land units and a map of the wider area can be seen by going to [DorsetExplorer \(geowessex.com\)](http://DorsetExplorer.geowessex.com). Click on 'Base Maps' on the menu on the right-hand side of the screen and select 'Ordnance Survey'. Then zoom in on the Wareham area. Under 'Layer Control' on the right-hand side of the screen, select the 'Countryside' folder and then click on 'Registered Common Land', which should show the 3 areas of Common Land as orange hatching.
- 1.5 The 'Wareham Common area', which has been used for recording purposes, extends beyond the Common itself. The eastern edge of the recording area is defined by the North Causeway and B3075, which becomes North Street as it enters the 'old town' of Wareham from the north. The 3 Common Land units form the southern boundary of the recording area as they run westwards to the 'Pump House' close to the River Piddle at the far western end of the site.

- 1.6 The boundary then follows the River Piddle north-east to a 'wooded meander', beyond which the recording area extends north of the river. The northern boundary follows the ditch at the edge of the floodplain, which also marks the southern edge of Ferncroft Farm. To the east of Ferncroft Farm, the northern boundary follows the edge of the built-up area of Northern Wareham to Causeway Close and North Causeway.
- 1.7 The recording area is crossed not only by the London to Weymouth railway line, but also by the northern part of the A351 Wareham and Stoborough Bypass. For recording purposes, a distinction is drawn between the 'north of the railway' and 'south of the railway' areas. The 'south of the railway' area includes land around West Mills, which is sandwiched between the bypass and the railway.
- 1.8 The Ordnance Survey 1:25,000 Purbeck and South Dorset map shows the areas of Common Land as open access land. There are also public footpaths across other parts of the Wareham Common area, which is used for informal recreation, particularly dog walking, by residents of Wareham. Whilst the report includes records from all of the Wareham Common recording area, birding effort has been concentrated on the areas of Common Land where there is open access. The report makes reference to a number of different locations in the recording area, which are shown on the photo below.



Map showing features within the Wareham Common recording area

- 1.9 As well as recording: different species; the number of birds present; and the dates when seen, the report also aims to provide commentary on how the recording area is used by birds (i.e., for wintering, breeding or on migration). The report includes records of birds seen on, over and from the recording area. It also includes records of birds seen just outside the recording area, especially when this helps to understand how birds use the site. For example, House Martins were regularly recorded feeding over the site and some of these were from a breeding colony on a neighbouring housing estate.
- 1.10 The report has been compiled by Trevor Warrick with records from other local birdwatchers, including Ian Alexander, Adam Day, Peter Hadrill, Garry Hayman, Durwyn Liley, Peter Moore (who also provided photos of Red-legged Partridge and Glossy Ibis) and Joe Parker. The understanding of how birds use the Common has been greatly enhanced by records from the adjacent Carey House Estate, both from the ringing station that operated during the

autumn of 2020 and from sightings during the year from observers including: Brittany Maxted; Mark and Mo Constantine; and Paul Morton.

- 1.11 Ringing evidence of interaction between the Carey House Estate and Lytchett Bay, 11 kilometres to the north east, has been provided by Shaun Robson. The understanding of how birds use the Common has also been enhanced by records from the Swineham / Bestwall area (for example, in relation to the spring migration of Little Ringed Plovers) and from the Trigon Estate (for example, in relation to local breeding populations of Stonechats).
- 1.12 The report covers a particularly unusual period of time, both because of the weather in the early part of 2020 and the Coronavirus pandemic throughout the year.
- 1.13 The winter of 2019/20 was particularly wet, February 2020 being the wettest February on record. This resulted in the Common area, both north and south of the railway being flooded for much of the winter into early spring. Whilst some flooding occurs in most years, the prolonged flooding this winter was very unusual. This was followed by one of the sunniest springs on record, with very little rain.
- 1.14 In late March, the whole country went into 'lockdown' as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic. This had the effect of significantly reducing traffic (and traffic noise) on the Wareham Bypass during the spring migration period and into the early part of the breeding season. It also made it a focus for daily 'exercise walks' by local birders during that time. Although lockdown measures were eased in the summer, there was still an emphasis on staying local, which resulted in the Common receiving far more birding attention during the summer and autumn than would usually be the case. There was also a second lockdown from November with further restrictions until the end of the year, which again increased birding activity on the Common.

2. Birds Recorded in the Wareham Common Area in 2019/2020

- 2.1 This is a systematic list of the birds recorded in the Wareham Common area primarily in 2020, but also including some records from 2019 and earlier.
- 2.2 The list is in taxonomic order, following the order used by Birdtrack in 2020.

Systematic List

Red-legged Partridge

A single bird was seen on the Common south of the railway, in the triangular field south of West Mills on 02 May. It is likely to be a bird wandering from a nearby shoot, such as on the Trigon Estate.



Red-legged Partridge in the Triangular Field 02 May (Peter Moore)

Pheasant

All records relate to the Common north of the railway. At least 1 Pheasant was heard calling from north of the River Piddle on 10 occasions during March and April and on 5 occasions during May and early June. A pair was seen on the Common on 13 May. There were no records from 09 June until 31 August, after which there were a further 12 records to the end of the year. This included 2 birds on 10 October and 04 and 25 November. On all 3 occasions, the 2 birds were on the southern edge of the Common near the oil well. These are likely to be birds wandering from nearby shoots, such as on the Trigon Estate.

Canada Goose

Canada Geese were frequently seen north of the railway in March, with a maximum of 27 birds on the flooded meadows on 05 March. Smaller numbers (less than 10) persisted on the floods during the spring until 12 May, when 4 birds were present. The only subsequent records north of the railway were of 6 birds on 03 June and 2 birds on 28 August.

Monthly Maxima												
Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
North	0	0	27	6	4	6	0	2	0	0	0	0
South	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	29	0	17	0	0

Birds were recorded on the flooded meadows south of the railway on 3 occasions in March, with a maximum of 5 on 21 March. There were no further records until August after which, some movement was noted in the Piddle Valley. On 08 August, 11 birds (in flocks of 4 and 7) flew upstream early morning. On 09 August, 29 birds flew downstream towards Poole Harbour at about 8pm. 10 birds were also noted flying north over the Common on 29 August. 2 birds flew east late on the afternoon of 03 October, with 17 (in flocks of 9 and 8) flying east on 06 October. These are likely to be birds moving between the lakes, pools and meadows at Swineham and water bodies in the Piddle Valley, such as the lakes at Budden's Farm Scout Camp.

In the late winter period 2019, circa 40 birds were recorded on the floods south of the railway on 23 November, increasing to circa 60 on 25 November. 45 geese were seen on these floods on 08 January 2021 with 65 birds recorded on 21 January.

Barnacle Goose

When fly fishing on the River Piddle, one observer saw a single Barnacle Goose with 6 Canada Geese north of the railway on 03 June. Given the date, this is presumed to have been a feral bird.

Greylag Goose

Monthly Maxima												
Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
North	7	0	4	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

All records relate to the Common north of the railway. Birds were recorded on the flooded meadows on 7 occasions in the early winter period and into the spring, with a maximum of 7 birds on 01 January. There were no records after the winter floods disappeared, with the last record being of 2 birds on 12 May. These are likely to be birds from the feral population in Poole Harbour.

Mute Swan

Monthly Maxima												
Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
North	24	0	10	8	4	0	3	9	3	6	10	5
South	6	3	7	5	10	9	6	6	6	4	9	9

North of the railway, birds were regularly recorded on the flooded meadows in the early winter period and into the spring. There was a maximum of 24 birds on 01 January. The only other counts in double figures were 14 on 19 January and 10 on 05 March. Small numbers of birds began feeding on

the meadows again from August onwards, even though there was no floodwater, with 9 birds on 29 August and a maximum of 10 birds on 01 November.

North of the railway, a pair was seen on a nest on the southern bank of the River Piddle close to the edge of the Carey House Estate on 12 May, but no juveniles were recorded. Later, during July and August, a pair with a single cygnet were seen on several occasions, but these were thought to be birds from a nest south of the railway.

South of the railway, birds were regularly recorded on the flooded meadows in the early winter period and into the spring, with a maximum of 7 on 28 March. 1 to 3 non-breeding birds were also observed south of the railway, usually on the River Piddle, on a few occasions during the summer. In the late winter period, a maximum of 9 birds was recorded on several occasions, including a family party of 6.



Mute Swan with 5 cygnets on the River Piddle close to North Mill on 08 May

South of the railway, 2 pairs bred raising 6 (later 5) fledged young. A pair was seen with 5 cygnets on the River Piddle close to North Mill on 08 May, although by 25 May only 4 cygnets were left. This family continued to be seen on the River Piddle south of the railway until 25 July. 2 adults and 4 well-grown cygnets were then regularly seen from 09 November until the end of the year, which was thought to be the same family party. A second pair with a single cygnet was first observed on the River Piddle downstream of the West Mills Weir on 12 May. This family continued to be seen, both north and south of the railway, until 18 September.

[Egyptian Goose](#)

North of the railway, 2 birds were observed on the floodplain of the River Piddle between 17 and 19 February. The only other record north of the railway was of 2 birds on 29 December, which were initially seen on the floods between the by-pass and the railway. These are likely to be the 2 birds that are regularly seen at Swineham.

On 14 May, 2 Egyptian Geese paid a brief visit to the meadows south of the railway opposite North Mill in the early evening, but soon departed. 2 birds were again seen flying over this part of the Common on 13 June. The only other record is of the 2 birds on the floods between the by-pass and the railway on 29 December. These were also thought to be the Swineham birds.



Egyptian Geese on the floods between the bypass and the railway on 29 December

In the late winter period 2019, there were 2 Egyptian Geese on the flooded meadows south of the railway on 29 October 2019, again thought to be the Swineham birds. A single bird was seen flying over Ferncroft Farm, north of the railway on 01 January 2021.

Shelduck

In the early winter period, there was 1 Shelduck on the flooded meadows north of the railway on 05 March, with 2 birds feeding on a muddy pool in this area on 31 March.

Garganey

A pair of Garganey was seen on the flooded meadows south of the railway during the afternoon of 20 March.



The pair of Garganey on the floods south of the railway on 20 March

Shoveler

In the late winter period 2019, on the flooded meadows south of the railway there were 7 Shoveler on 20 November, 5 on 06 December and 2 on 20 December.

Gadwall

North of the railway, a pair of Gadwall was seen on the flooded meadows on 3 occasions between 14 and 22 April, after which there were no subsequent records.

South of the railway, 1 or 2 birds were regularly seen on the flooded meadows during the early winter period and into the spring, with the last record of a single bird on a pool just north of the bypass on 25 April. There was a maximum of 4 birds on 22 January.

On 10 January 2021, there were 2 Gadwall on the flooded meadows south of the railway.

Mallard

Monthly Maxima												
Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
North	0	0	12	2	5	0	4	2	4	2	5	2
South	26	10	9	26	39	34	16	12	12	29	59	40

Small numbers of Mallard were recorded north of the railway from early spring onwards. A maximum of 12 were seen on the flooded meadows on 05 March. After the floods disappeared, birds were generally seen on the River Piddle, with a maximum of 5 on 23 March and 12 May. Small numbers of birds continued to be seen until the end of the year. There was no evidence of breeding north of the railway.

South of the railway, birds were recorded on the flooded meadows throughout the early winter period, with a maximum of 26 birds on 14 January after which numbers decreased to no more than 10, prior to the breeding season.

South of the railway, a minimum of 5 different pairs with young juveniles were recorded:

- 2 broods of 5 and 6 on the ditch at the base of the gorse bank north of the Doctor's surgery on 03 April;
- An additional brood of 5 in the same area on 04 April;
- A brood of 4 on the River Piddle below the weir at West Mills on 27 April; and
- A brood of 10 on the meadows by North Mill on 02 May.

During the breeding season a maximum of 39 birds were recorded south of the railway, comprising: 2 females, each with 9 juveniles; 3 pairs; a flock of 6 males; a flock of 6 females; and a single male. Up until mid-May a creche of half-grown young birds formed on the pool that remained adjacent to the bypass east of West Mills and south of the River Piddle, often retreating into the cover of the trees and other vegetation at the base of the bypass embankment. Later during the summer, smaller numbers of birds often gathered on the River Piddle below West Mills.

In the late winter period numbers increased again, with high counts generally coinciding with flooding on the meadows south of the bypass. There was a monthly maximum of 29 birds on 04 October, with the highest count of the year being 59 birds on 17 November. Numbers remained high until the end of the year with a monthly maximum of 40 birds on 26 December.

2019 Monthly Maxima			
Site	Oct	Nov	Dec
<i>South</i>	39	54	37

In the late winter period 2019, flocks of Mallard were regularly recorded on the floods south of the railway. There were maxima of 39 on 29 October, 54 on 17 November and 37 on 06 December.

Teal

The only record was of 2 female-type birds on the floods south of the bypass on 04 October.

A single male bird was seen on the floods south of the by-pass on 07 January 2021.

Common Scoter

There is a national mass migration of Common Scoter, including over land, in the early spring when the distinctive calls of this species can be heard at night. 2 flocks were heard calling over West Walls during a 2-hour period during the night of 03 April.

Goosander

A pair of Goosander were seen on the River Piddle on the Carey House Estate on 19 January. Presumably the same pair was seen on the River Piddle on the western edge of the Common north of the railway on 05 March.

Swift

The first Swift of the year was seen on 19 April over North West Walls. Small numbers of birds were regularly seen feeding over the Common during the summer, with a maximum of 19 over the West Mills area on 05 May. Other counts include: 18 over North West Walls on 20 May; 15 over the West Mills area on 04 June; and 18 over the scrubby slope south of West Mills on 06 June. The last record was of a single bird north of the railway on 18 August.

Swifts have been observed entering nest sites in the rooves of buildings in East Street, North Street and West Street, Wareham. During the summer, parties of screaming birds can often be observed over the town and the birds seen over the Common are likely to be birds from the breeding colonies in Wareham.

29 Swifts were recorded over Wareham on 16 July 2017, with 30 recorded on 09 July 2015.

Cuckoo

The first migrant Cuckoo of the year was heard over the Common south of the railway on 16 April, calling from north of the bypass. A bird was heard calling from around the Doctor's Surgery on the southern edge of the Common on 23 April. A bird was heard again over the Common south of the railway on 25 April.

On 11 June a Cuckoo was seen flying from the trees behind the Doctor's Surgery, briefly landing on the Common south of the bypass (where there is a concentration of nesting Reed Warblers) and then heading east. A bird (probably the same bird) was seen in the same area again on 16 June, suggesting possible breeding on site.



Cuckoo on the Common south of the railway on 16 June

Rock Dove (Feral Pigeon)

A small flock of Feral Pigeons is regularly seen in and around Wareham, mostly frequently on the rooves of properties near the Quay. These birds infrequently venture into the northern part of Wareham Old Town and occasionally pass over the Common south of the railway. The first record of the year was of 2 birds on 02 January. Birds were also seen in July, August and November with the last record being of 3 birds on 23 December.

Stock Dove

North of the railway, single birds were recorded flying over the Common on 12 occasions between 31 March and 07 October, with 2 birds seen on 10 October. On 26 December, 3 birds were seen feeding on maize stubble in the field just south of the Common between the railway and the oil well.

South of the railway, birds were recorded on 10 occasions between 22 April and 26 December, most often in the West Mills area and over the scrubby slope to the south. 2 birds were seen on 5 occasions, with a maximum of 3 together on the evening of 13 August.

All these records are thought to be of birds wandering from nearby estates in the Piddle Valley, including the Carey House Estate (where Stock Doves are regularly seen and heard).

Wood Pigeon

Prior to migration in November, the maximum count north of the railway was of 22 birds seen feeding on the dry acid grassland slopes in the early evening of 06 June. 21 birds were also recorded feeding in the floodplain of the River Piddle on 16 September. Much higher counts were made during migration from early November onwards. On 07 November, 137 birds were observed flying over the Common north of the railway, including flocks of 43, 29, 20 and 11. The highest count of the year was of 243 birds on 16 November. 220 of these flew from the woods beyond the western end

of the Common. Numbers subsequently reduced, but 56 were recorded on 20 December and a monthly maximum of 63 was seen on 22 December. Again, these were mostly birds flying from the woods beyond the western end of the Common.

Monthly Maxima												
Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
North	0	0	11	5	0	22	9	7	21	19	243	63
South	8	9	7	10	6	7	39	28	10	10	46	18

Prior to migration in November, the maximum count south of the railway was of 39 birds on 20 July. This included 32 birds feeding in the recently cut field adjacent to Little Farm. 28 birds were recorded on 15 August, including 24 birds on the wires at Little Farm. The only other count of more than 20 birds before November was of 25 on 25 July, which included 16 birds at Little Farm. Migration was less evident south of the railway, with a maximum count of a single flock of 46 birds on 04 November.

Collared Dove

North of the railway, Collared Dove was only recorded 4 times in 2020. Single birds were seen on 19 January, 22 March and 20 December. However, on 29 December 5 birds were seen sitting together in a tree on the edge of the built-up area of Northern Wareham.

South of the railway, this species was regularly recorded from April until the end of the year. 1 or 2 birds were frequently seen in the Little Farm area, particularly during August and September, with a maximum of 3 on 18 August. 3 birds were also seen south of the railway on 02 October and 25 November.

There was no evidence of breeding on the Common, either north or south of the railway, but this species is likely to have bred within the built-up area of Wareham.

Moorhen

Moorhen was not recorded from the Common north of the railway until 25 July, after which birds were regularly seen (usually on the River Piddle) until mid-November, with a maximum of 3 on 26 July.

South of the railway, birds were regularly seen in small numbers on the flooded meadows south of the bypass during the early winter period, with a maximum of 6 birds seen on the floods on 04 March. After the floods disappeared, birds were regularly seen on the River Piddle, but generally in smaller numbers. However, 6 Moorhen were seen on 31 August, including 4 birds having a dispute on the river below West Mills.

Breeding was only confirmed south of the railway, although it is likely that several pairs breed all along the River Piddle, both north and south of the railway. A single juvenile was seen on the river below West Mills on 23 August.

In the late winter period, there were monthly maxima of 6 on 20 October, 7 on 17 November and 8 on 23 December. These high counts included several birds on the seasonal pool just north of the bypass embankment with 5 on the pool on 17 November and 7 there on 23 December.



Juvenile Moorhen on the River Piddle below West Mills on 23 August

Coot

There is just 1 record of Coot from north of the railway. A single bird was seen on the River Piddle, just downstream from the Carey House Estate, on 16 August.

In the early winter period, a single bird was regularly seen on the flooded meadows south of the bypass until 29 March. This increased to 2 birds on 20 and 21 March. There were no further records in 2020.

Little Grebe

The only record north of the railway was of a single bird on the River Piddle opposite the Carey House Estate on 11 October.

In the early winter period, birds were regularly seen in small numbers on the flooded meadows south of the bypass until 26 March. A maximum of 4 birds were seen on the floods on 21 February and 21 and 22 March. There were no further records until the autumn, when 2 birds were seen on the floods south of the bypass on 04 October. From 13 October until the end of the year, a single bird was regularly seen on the River Piddle south of the bypass, with 2 together on 09 November. On 02 December, 1 bird ventured north of the bypass and was seen on the river below West Mills.

In the late winter period 2019 on the floods south of the railway there was a monthly maximum of 7 Little Grebes on 28 November, with a maximum of 5 on 27 December.

Lapwing

North of the railway, small numbers of Lapwing fed on the exposed mud on the flooded meadows during late March and early April. There was a maximum of 6 birds on 22 and 24 March, reducing to 4 birds by 28 March and to 2 by 31 March. 2 birds remained and were possibly holding territory (although there was no obvious sign of nesting) until 14 April, when they departed. These birds were regularly seen chasing off Carrion Crows from the flock of 50 or more birds that were also feeding in the area.

In the early winter period flocks of Lapwing were regularly observed flying up and down the Piddle Valley, with a maximum of 70 seen over the Common south of the railway on 13 January. After the early winter period, the only record south of the railway was of a single Lapwing flying over West Mills on 26 September.

Little Ringed Plover



Little Ringed Plover on mud south of the bypass on 19 April

During spring migration Little Ringed Plover were regularly seen on the flooded meadows on the Common, both north and south of the railway, as well as on the Stilt Pool at Swineham. All spring records in the Wareham area are set out in the table below.

It is highly likely that there is some movement between sites, at least until the Common dried out towards the end of April. When 2 birds were seen to depart the Common around 10.30am on 25 March, 3 birds were observed on the Stilt Pool at Swineham later the same day. Assuming the birds seen at these different sites on 25 March were the same, there was a total of 13 bird days in the Wareham area in March, 19 bird days in April, and 8 in May. This gives 40 spring bird days in total.

Little Ringed Plover Records in the Wareham Area: Spring 2020

Site	Date	No	Notes
Wareham Common N of Railway	22/03	2	2 birds on the mud left by the receding floods
Wareham Common N of Railway	24/03	3	3 together on the mud
Wareham Common N of Railway	25/03	2	2 birds flew towards Poole Harbour at 10.30am
Swineham Meadows and Pools	25/03	3	3 birds on the Stilt Pool late pm. 2 presumed the same as on the Common am
Swineham Meadows and Pools	26/03	3	On the Stilt Pool
Swineham Meadows and Pools	27/03	2	On the Stilt Pool
Wareham Common S of Railway	03/04	2	On the mud
Wareham Common S of Railway	04/04	2	On the mud
Wareham Common S of Railway	05/04	2	On the mud
Swineham Meadows and Pools	05/04	1	On the Stilt Pool. Probably different to the birds on the Common
Swineham Meadows and Pools	06/04	2	On the Stilt Pool
Wareham Common S of Railway	13/04	2	On the mud
Wareham Common S of Railway	14/04	2	2 feeding on the mud
Wareham Common S of Railway	15/04	1	Seen late pm, not present am
Wareham Common S of Railway	16/04	1	On the mud
Wareham Common S of Railway	17/04	1	On the mud
Wareham Common S of Railway	19/04	1	On the mud late pm, not present earlier in the day
Wareham Common S of Railway	22/04	1	On the mud early am, not present late pm
Wareham Common S of Railway	23/04	1	On the mud lunchtime, not present late pm
Swineham Meadows and Pools	01/05	2	On the Stilt Pool
Swineham Meadows and Pools	17/05	1	On the Stilt Pool
Swineham Meadows and Pools	19/05	1	On the Stilt Pool with a Temminck's Stint
Swineham Meadows and Pools	20/05	1	On the Stilt Pool with a Temminck's Stint
Swineham Meadows and Pools	23/05	1	On the Stilt Pool
Swineham Meadows and Pools	29/05	1	On the Stilt Pool
Swineham Meadows and Pools	31/05	1	On the Stilt Pool

There was a gap in the records for over 2 weeks in early May, which raises the question of whether the late May records are of very late stragglers or early returners. On 10 June, it was confirmed that a pair raised at least 1 juvenile at Dorey's Pit, Holme Lane, which also raises the question of whether the bird seen in late May came from this location.

There was no floodwater on the Common during the autumn migration period for Little Ringed Plover and consequently there were no autumn records. Although water appeared on the Stilt Pool on 25 August, there were also no autumn records from Swineham.

Curlew

6 Curlews were seen flying over West Walls on 18 February. On 06 March, 3 Curlews were seen with Black-tailed Godwits on the flooded meadows south of the by-pass.

Black-tailed Godwit

Monthly Maxima												
Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
South	2	0	720	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

In the early winter period Black-tailed Godwits were regularly seen in small numbers on the flooded meadows south of the railway, particularly in March when they were recorded on 11 dates. Earlier in the year the flood water may have been too deep for wading birds to feed. The birds were most frequently seen early morning prior to being disturbed by walkers, or late afternoon when returning to Poole Harbour having fed on flooded areas further upstream. The maximum count of 720 was made late afternoon on 04 March, when the birds stayed for a short period before flying off together at dusk. 108 Black-tailed Godwits were also present on 21 March. Despite there being periodic flooding on the Common south of the bypass in the autumn, there were no further records in 2020. However, a single bird was seen on the floods on 07 January 2021.



Part of the flock of 720 Black-tailed Godwits on floods south of the bypass on 04 March

2019 Monthly Maxima			
Site	Oct	Nov	Dec
South	163	70	20

In the late winter period 2019 on the floods south of the railway there was a maximum of 163 birds on 29 October, with a maximum of circa 70 on 23 November and circa 20 on 06 December.

Ruff

South of the railway, a single bird with a distinctive white head and upper body, was seen early on the morning of 21 March with Black-tailed Godwits. The bird was found by birders searching for the pair of Garganey that were seen late afternoon on 20 March.

Another Ruff was flushed from the flooded meadows south of the bypass on 04 October. The bird was searched for on the meadows north of the railway, but could not be relocated.



The Ruff with Black-tailed Godwits south of the bypass on 21 March

Jack Snipe

A single bird was seen on the Common south of the railway on 20 November 2019.

Snipe

North of the railway, the only record from the early winter period was of a single bird seen on a ditch on 22 March. The first returning bird was flushed from the floodplain on 16 September. 2 birds were flushed on 29 September: 1 from the floodplain; and 1 from the River Piddle itself. 7 birds were flushed from the floodplain on 04 October, with single birds seen on 05 and 14 October. The maximum count was of 11 birds flushed from the damp meadows south of the main east / west ditch across the Common on 22 December.

On 06 January, a Sika Deer was seen running across the Common south of the railway pursued by a dog that was not under control. When the deer jumped a ditch, the dog tried to follow but fell into the water flushing a single Snipe. This was 1 of only two records from the Common south of the railway in 2020. The other record was of a single bird flushed from a small, temporary pool on the scrubby slope south of West Mills near to Little Farm on 20 December.

On 19 February 2012, 12 Snipe were flushed from the Common north of the railway when viewing the Glossy Ibis that was present at the time.

Common Sandpiper

The only record for 2020 is of a single bird seen on the bank of the River Piddle below the weir at West Mills (south of the railway) on 27 June.

Green Sandpiper

The only record north of the railway in 2020 was of a single bird that flew up calling from Mill Meadow on the Carey House Estate (and over the Common) on 16 September.

There were two records south of the railway in 2020. A single bird was seen when an observer was fly fishing on the River Piddle in early (either 09 or 12) June. A single bird was also seen at West Mills on 19 October.

Redshank

A single Redshank was seen on the flooded meadows north of North West Walls on 19 January. 2 birds were seen with Black-tailed Godwits on the flooded meadows north of the Doctor's Surgery on 06 March. On 14 March, a single Redshank was seen north of the by-pass on the flooded meadows east of West Mills.

Black-headed Gull

Monthly Maxima												
Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
North	100	0	46	168	15	1	0	2	1	5	29	42
South	42	31	236	116	41	5	3	11	94	244	148	208

In the early winter period, Black-headed Gulls gathered to feed on the flooded meadows north of the railway. About 100 were present on 01 January, with no more than 46 (on 09 March) recorded until the end of March. Numbers peaked the following month with 117 on 07 April, 123 on 11 April and a maximum of 168 on 19 April. Numbers declined rapidly with very few birds seen during the summer months. However, numbers picked up again in the late winter period with monthly maxima of 29 on 01 November and 42 on 29 December.

In the early winter period, large numbers of Black-headed Gulls also gathered to feed on the flooded meadows south of the railway. Up until the end of February numbers did not exceed 42 (on 19 January), but more than 100 birds were recorded on 6 occasions in March, with a maximum of 236 on 30 March. Following a count of 116 birds on 01 April, numbers declined rapidly as spring progressed.

South of the railway, the monthly maxima during the summer often related to flying birds, with 41 going east towards Poole Harbour on 03 May, 11 overhead on 31 August and 94 circling and presumably feeding overhead on 29 September. The highest count of birds on the ground during the summer was 21 on the former Middle School Playing Field on 26 September.

Numbers picked up again in autumn and with flooding in the winter. The highest count of the year south of the railway was of 244 birds on 03 October. There were also 105 birds on 04 October and 218 birds on 06 October. More than 100 birds were recorded 3 times in December, with a maximum of 208 on 29 December. On this date, there were also 42 birds north of the railway, giving a yearly maximum for the Common as a whole of 250 birds.

Mediterranean Gull

North of the railway, the first record was of 2 Mediterranean Gulls feeding with Black-headed Gulls on the floodplain of the River Piddle on 07 April. Birds were then regularly recorded in small numbers during April and early May, with a maximum of 5 on 19 April. North of the railway Mediterranean Gulls were not recorded after 15 May.

North of the railway, the birds favoured the meadow immediately west of the railway and south of the river. On 08 and 10 April, 2 birds showed courtship behaviour including bill rubbing and on 11 April a pair was observed mating. It is thought that the birds nesting in Poole Harbour travel up the Piddle Valley to feed (and mate) early in the breeding season, with a small number dropping in on Wareham Common.

South of the railway 1 or 2 birds were recorded flying overhead on 5 occasions between 10 and 28 April, presumably visiting sites further up the Piddle Valley.

Common Gull

Monthly Maxima												
Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
South	7	22	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	8



Common Gull in the paddock at West Mills on 06 December

In the early winter period, single birds were seen on the Common north of the railway on 05 and 09 March. There were no further sightings until a flurry of records in late December. 2 birds were seen on 21 December, with a yearly maximum of 7 on 22, followed by a single bird on 26 and 2 on 29 December.

Small numbers of Common Gulls joined the Black-headed Gulls on the Common south of the railway from the beginning of the year until 22 March, with a maximum count of 22 birds on 21 February. There were no further sightings until 2 birds were seen on the former Middle School Playing Field on 03 October, with a single bird there the next day. A single bird appeared in the paddock at West Mills on 04 November and was seen there again on 16 November and into December. A single bird (possibly the same bird) was also seen in the triangular field south of West Mills on 25 November and 02 December.

Common Gulls began appearing regularly on the floods south of the bypass from 06 December when 7 were present. The maximum late winter period count south of the railway was 8 birds on 26 December: 6 on the former Middle School Playing Field and 2 on the floods.

In the late winter period 2019, there were 20 Common Gulls on the flooded Common south of the railway on 27 December with 16 birds present on 31 December.

Great Black-backed Gull

Single Great Black-backed Gulls passed over the Common north of the railway on 08 April, 25 July and 29 November.

Single birds were seen on the floods south of the railway on 04 and 15 January, but there were no further records until 04 October when a single bird was seen. Single birds were seen on the floods again on 21 and 29 December, but the maximum count was 5 birds flying east over the Common on 28 November.

4 Great Black-backed Gulls were seen on the Common south of the railway on 19 December 2019.

Herring Gull

Monthly Maxima												
Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
North	0	0	36	3	4	3	8	21	2	7	10	3
South	6	7	15	3	4	5	2	5	1	2	16	6

In the early winter period, small numbers of Herring Gulls joined the Black-headed Gulls on the flooded meadows north of the railway. There was a maximum of 36 birds on 31 March, although 34 of these were passing overhead. On 10 August, 21 birds flew east towards Poole Harbour in the evening, in flocks of 4 and 17. 7 birds were loafing on the dry acid grassland on 04 October with 10 overhead on 28 November. Small numbers continued to be seen until the end of the year.

In the early winter period, small numbers of Herring Gulls joined the Black-headed Gulls on the flooded meadows south of the railway. There was a maximum count of 15 birds on 01 March, with no more than 5 birds recorded on any day until the end of October. 16 birds were seen flying over the Common on 28 November and 6 birds were seen on the floods on 20 December.

Lesser Black-backed Gull

In the early winter period, single birds were recorded north of the railway on 15 January and 22 and 31 March. There was only 1 autumn record, when a single bird was seen loafing with 7 Herring Gulls on the dry acid grassland on 04 October.

South of the railway, 2 birds were recorded on 21 February and 26 March, with single birds recorded on 2 other occasions during the early winter period. There were another 4 records of single birds flying over between 11 April and 26 July.

White Stork

A White Stork was seen to drift high over the Common south of the railway on 06 April, heading towards East Stoke (Joe Parker). On 09 April what was presumed to be the same bird was seen in the Frome Valley near Holmebridge. A White Stork was also reported in the Wool area on 24 and 25 May and at Silverlake near Crossways on 26 May.

There is a re-introduction scheme on the Knepp Estate in Sussex and so it is possible that this bird was from that (or another similar) scheme, although it was not obviously ringed or tagged. On the assumption this was a wild bird, the record will be subject to acceptance by the Dorset Rarities Panel upon receipt of supporting documentation.

Cormorant

Single birds were seen flying over the Common north of the railway on 01 January, 29 March and 14 April. There were no further records until 02 October when a single bird flew east. After that, single birds continued to be seen flying over until the end of the year. In addition, single birds were seen sitting on the bank of the River Piddle north of the railway on 16 November and 22 and 23 December.

In the early winter period, a single bird was seen on the floods south of the railway on 01 March with 2 birds flying over on 19 January and 1 bird flying over on 07 April. There were no further records until 01 August when a single bird flew over the site. After that small numbers of Cormorants were regularly seen until the end of the year. There was a maximum of 4 birds flying over the Common south of the railway on 15 August and 05 and 06 October. Single birds were seen sitting on the ground by the floods on 22 and 24 December.

Cattle Egret

The only record is of a flock of 4 Cattle Egrets flying over West Walls on 17 April (Adam Day).

Although Cattle Egret did not visit the Common in 2020, there were numerous records of birds seen nearby. In the spring, birds were regularly seen in the Frome Valley west of the Wareham and Stoborough Bypass. During the summer birds were recorded loafing with Little Egrets on the island on the main lake at Swineham. Birds were also recorded with the cattle in the Frome Valley, with a maximum of 6 on 26 August.

Grey Heron

North of the railway, single birds were regularly seen on or flying over the Common throughout the year. On 31 March, 2 birds were seen feeding on the River Piddle. At about 8.30pm on 10 August, 2 birds were seen going to roost in trees on the Carey House Estate. A single bird was also seen at roost on 12 August. Single birds continued to be seen on the floodplain throughout the autumn and winter, with 2 birds present on 04, 05 and 13 October, 16 November and 22 December.

1 or 2 birds were regularly seen south of the railway, on or flying over the Common throughout the year. On 28 August, 4 birds were seen flying up the Piddle Valley at dusk, presumably to roost. 1 or 2 birds were also often seen moving east towards Poole Harbour early in the morning, presumably to feed.

On 03 September 2019 a flock of 17 Grey Herons was observed flying down the River Piddle over the Common south of the railway towards Poole Harbour, presumably to feed.

Little Egret

Monthly Maxima												
Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
North	0	0	1	4	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	0
South	0	0	8	5	1	0	2	1	0	1	0	0

North of the railway, Little Egrets were absent from the Common at the start of the early winter period, but began to appear in late March, as the winter flood water began to go down. Typically, these birds would feed in the shallow pools and channels. North of the railway, there was a maximum of 4 birds on 07 April, with a further 5 birds south of the railway (i.e., 9 in total) on that date. The last spring record was of a single bird on 14 April. Little Egrets did not reappear until 27 August when a single bird was seen flying east down the Piddle Valley. There were no records after 20 October, when 2 birds flew west up the Piddle Valley.

Little Egrets were also absent from the Common south of the railway at the start of the early winter period, with the first record of 2 birds at West Mills on 05 March. From late March, birds began feeding on the flooded meadows south of the bypass, with a maximum of 8 birds on 30 March. The last spring record was of a single bird on 06 May. Records from July and August were of 1 or 2 birds flying over the site. The last record was of a single bird on 04 October.

Osprey

On 04 April an Osprey was seen flying over the Common south of the railway carrying a twig. The bird was flying down the Piddle Valley heading toward Poole Harbour. An Osprey ringed as 'CJ7', was seen flying over the Common south of the railway on 06 April, which was thought to be the same bird.

CJ7 was born at Rutland Water and subsequently stayed in Poole Harbour all summer. She built a nest on a platform close to Poole Harbour, laid (unfertilised) eggs, but failed to attract a mate. All of this was captured on the Birds of Poole Harbour 'nest cam', giving many thousands of people a great deal of enjoyment, both during the first Coronavirus lockdown and beyond.

On 19 August an adult female Osprey was seen from North West Walls flying towards Wareham.

Sparrowhawk

There were only 5 records of Sparrowhawk north of the railway: all of single birds. On 18 August and 13 September, a bird was seen hunting over Ferncroft Farm. There were 3 records in October and the last record was on 17 November.

Sparrowhawks were seen much more frequently south of the railway, with single birds regularly recorded from early March until the end of the year. 2 birds were thought to be present on 13 September; 1 north and 1 south of the railway. 2 birds were present south of the railway on 26 September, with 1 circling high over the Common and 1 hunting through the scrub on the slope south of West Mills.

On 02 April, a Sparrowhawk tried (unsuccessfully) to prey on House Sparrows in a garden at the northern end of Mill Lane, Wareham – see photograph below.



Sparrowhawk in a Wareham garden on 02 April

Marsh Harrier

On 06 April a migrating Marsh Harrier, which had earlier been seen over Lytchett Bay, passed over the Common south of the railway and was seen from North West Walls.

On 24 June 2019 a Marsh Harrier flew off the Common south of the railway and then low over Wareham via Ropers Lane.

Hen Harrier

On 04 November a ringtail flew from the Carey House Estate across the Common north of the railway.

Red Kite

9 birds were seen on migration during the spring, which were:

- 07 April: 1 drifted over the Common north of the railway from the west, but soon left after receiving attention from 5 Buzzards;
- 08 April: 2 birds high over Wareham;
- 13 April: 1 over Wareham around lunchtime;
- 06 May: 2 birds high over West Mills moving south towards Wareham;
- 10 May: 1 drifting over Wareham at about 10.45am, with a further 2 birds drifting in from the south at about 1.30pm.

The birds on 10 May were part of a huge influx of birds into Dorset, which mostly seemed to be heading west ahead of colder, northerly winds. This influx included: 112+ birds at West Bexington; 87 birds at Bridport; 63 birds over Westbourne; and 34 birds over Lodmoor. After 10 May, there were no further records.



Red Kite over Wareham Common on 07 April

White-tailed Eagle

A juvenile White-tailed Eagle was seen over a house on West Walls late morning on 07 September. The observer (Adam Day) tweeted *"just went outside to check the commotion in the garden from the birds to see a juvenile White-tailed Eagle slowly drifting over the house with Ravens in hot pursuit!"*

There is a re-introduction scheme on the Isle of Wight. These birds are satellite tagged and none of the released birds were recorded passing through Dorset on that date, suggesting that this may be a wild bird. If so, the record will be subject to acceptance by the Dorset Rarities Panel upon receipt of supporting documentation.

Buzzard

1 or 2 birds were recorded in all months (except February), both north and south of the railway. North of the railway there was a maximum of 5 birds together in the air at once on 07 April, seeing off a Red Kite. Also 4 birds were seen on 22 December, with 3 birds present on 26 July, 18 and 29 August and 07 and 11 October.

South of the railway, there was a maximum of 4 birds together on 01 April. Also 3 birds were seen on 07 April, 01 June and 04 November.

There are few trees on Wareham Common, so it is unlikely that Buzzards breed on site. However, breeding was confirmed on the Carey House Estate in 2019 and Buzzards also breed on the Trigon Estate. Some of the birds visiting the Common were clearly juveniles, probably from nests on these estates further up the Piddle Valley.

Barn Owl

A pair of Barn Owls bred in a nest box on the Carey House Estate during the summer of 2020, producing 4 juveniles. The 2 adults were regularly seen hunting over the Common north of the railway in the evenings during August and September and into early October.

On 10 October, a Barn Owl was observed roosting in an ivy-clad tree at the western end of the Common north of the railway. It continued to use the tree as a daytime roost until 06 December. Although the roost seemed to be abandoned after that date, at least 1 bird continued to be present into 2021, with a single bird seen hunting over the Common on 16 January.



Barn Owl over the River Piddle floodplain on 10 August

On 25 August 2018 a Barn Owl was flushed from the trees along the stream west of the ford where the track across the northern part of the Common heads up to Ferncroft Farm. This was probably also a daytime roost and suggests that Barn Owls have bred on or near the Common in previous years.

Tawny Owl

North of the railway, a Tawny Owl was heard calling towards 9pm from the woods on the Carey House Estate. Breeding was confirmed on the estate in May 2019, when young birds were photographed.

South of the railway, a Tawny Owl was heard calling from the conifers behind the Doctor's Surgery on 01 and 21 February and on 4 dates in October.

Tawny Owl was heard calling from a property at the northern end of Mill Lane, Wareham on 28 August 2019 and on 06 September 2015. These birds would either have been calling from gardens within the town, or from trees on the Common south of the railway.

Hoopoe

A Hoopoe was seen by Joe Parker at the base of North West Walls, south of the River Piddle on 06 April. It was disturbed and then flew over the houses in Wareham. Despite searching, the bird was not relocated.

Kingfisher



Kingfisher on the River Piddle below West Mills on 17 September

Kingfisher was not seen north of the railway until 16 September, when a bird was seen in scrub by the railway, where it was thought to be fishing on the ditch at the base of the embankment. A single bird was seen on the River Piddle just north of West Mills on the evening of 18 September and another single bird was seen on the River Piddle near the Carey House Estate on 29 September.

South of the railway, a single Kingfisher was seen on the River Piddle below West Mills on 22 March but there were no further sightings until 28 July, after which single birds were regularly seen until the end of the year. Birds were seen to fish in the pool below the weir at West Mills on several occasions. Otherwise, they were seen: on the River Piddle south of the bypass; at the base of North West Walls (often on or by the barbed wire fence across the river); flying under the Wareham Bypass (on 1 occasion); and downstream of North Mill (also on 1 occasion).

Breeding was confirmed on the Carey House Estate in 2019 where it is thought that 2 broods were raised. There are also thought to be 3 pairs along the River Piddle on the Trigon Estate. The birds seen in the autumn are likely to be dispersing from nest sites further upstream. There is also ringing evidence that birds from elsewhere visit the Piddle Valley. A bird ringed at Lytchett Bay (11 kilometres to the north-east) on 17 August was recovered on the Carey House Estate on 23 August.

Great Spotted Woodpecker

North of the railway, Great Spotted Woodpecker was not recorded until 08 June, when a bird flew into the wooded meander on the southern edge of the Carey House Estate. On 04 June, a bird was seen just off the site on feeders at Worgret Hill Cottages and another bird was seen flying into

woodland beyond the western end of the Common on 10 August. A single bird was seen in trees at the western end of the Common on 13 October and 2 birds were seen flying over the Common on 29 December.

South of the railway, a single bird was seen in the trees behind the Christmas Close flats on 26 March. A bird was drumming in the same location on 03 May. Single birds were seen in dead trees by the River Piddle below West Mills on 08 August and 05 September and the last record was of a single bird calling from the trees behind the Doctor's Surgery on 01 October. A single bird also visited a garden in Mill Lane, Wareham on 13 September – see photograph below.

Given the lack of woodland habitat, it is unlikely that this species breeds on the Common, but it is known to breed nearby, for example on the Carey House Estate.



Great Spotted Woodpecker in a Mill Lane garden on 13 September

[Green Woodpecker](#)

North of the railway, Green Woodpecker was not recorded until 26 July, when a single bird was heard calling from trees at the far western end of the Common. Birds were heard on 3 further occasions in the same area during August.

South of the railway, there is just a single record of Green Woodpecker on 10 August.

[Kestrel](#)

During the early winter period, the only record north of the railway was of a single bird on 31 March. 1 or 2 birds were then recorded regularly until the end of the year. On 27 June 2 birds were seen, which were thought to be an adult and a juvenile and on 05 July, 3 birds were observed hunting together: 2 adults and a juvenile. Given the lack of trees, it is thought that these birds bred nearby,

rather than on the Common itself, either in the Worgret area or on the Carey House Estate, where breeding was confirmed in 2020.

South of the railway, in the early winter period, single birds were seen between January and April. On 04 April, 2 birds were calling and flying together from the mature conifers behind the Doctor's Surgery. Similar behaviour was also observed on 06 April, suggesting that this may be a breeding pair, but after that date no further breeding activity was noted. However, single birds were seen in subsequent months (both male and female), regularly hunting along North West and West Walls. The male and female were seen together on 06 December hunting around the paddock at West Mills.



Kestrel in a hedge near West Mills on 06 December

Merlin

A Merlin flew across the Carey House Estate and then across the Common north of the railway on 02 November.

A Merlin was seen over the flooded Common south of the railway on 19 December 2019.

Peregrine

The only record north of the railway was of a Peregrine hunting over the meadows on 17 April.

South of the railway, a Peregrine was seen on hunting over the floodplain south of the railway (and bypass) on 03 and 16 February, 31 March and 23 April. On 16 February it was seen feeding on a Black-headed Gull in the rain south of the bypass and on 23 April it was hunting the waders. In the summer and early autumn, a single bird was seen high over West Walls on 19 June, 01 and 23 August and 06 September. The last record was of a single bird flying over the floodplain south of the bypass on 30 December.

On 22 December 2019, a Peregrine hunting south of the bypass was seen to take a Black-headed Gull from the flooded meadows.

Ring-necked Parakeet

On 25 March a single Ring-necked Parakeet flew across the Common and into the trees behind the Doctor's Surgery, but could not be relocated. This is thought to be one of the birds from the Studland area.

Jay



Juvenile Jay at the western end of the Common north of the railway on 31 August

North of the railway, Jay was not recorded until 08 August, when 2 birds were seen in trees by the pumping station at the western end of the site. 1 or 2 birds were then seen regularly at the western end of the Common until the end of the year, most frequently in trees by the oil well and on 1 occasion in trees on the wooded meander.

On 31 August, 2 adults and a juvenile were seen together at the far western end of the site, confirming breeding in the area. Given the lack of trees on the Common, it is likely that the birds bred just off the site. A maximum of 3 birds were also seen north of the railway on 28 November and 06 December.

South of the railway, Jay was only recorded on 2 occasions. On 11 April, there were 2 birds on the scrubby slope south of West Mills, with a single bird recorded in the same location on 25 May.

Magpie

North of the railway, small numbers of Magpies were recorded from early March onwards, with a maximum of 6 birds on 05 and 25 March. At dusk on 28 August, 15 birds flew into the trees behind West Mills, presumably to roost. At least some of the birds seemed to come from the built-up area of Northern Wareham. 14 birds were also seen going to roost in the same location on 18 September. Small numbers of Magpies continued to be seen until the end of the year, with 5 on 29 December and a late winter maximum of 7 feeding on the floodplain on 30 December.

South of the railway, small numbers of Magpies were seen from the beginning of the year, with a maximum of 7 on 21 February, 08 August, 18 August (when all 7 birds were in the paddock next to West Mills) and 09 September. Breeding was confirmed south of the railway on 01 June, when 2 juveniles were seen with 2 adult birds in the paddock at West Mills. The juveniles were also seen on several subsequent occasions. In the late winter period, small numbers of birds (up to 6) continued to be seen until the end of the year.



1 of 2 juvenile Magpies at West Mills on 01 June

Jackdaw

In the early winter period small numbers of Jackdaws were recorded north of the railway with a noticeable increase in numbers during March when a large mixed flock of corvids fed on the flooded meadows. There was an early winter maximum of 24 birds on 24 and 25 March. Numbers then declined with no more than 8 birds recorded in April and May and there were then no further records until 07 October, when 2 birds were seen.

Jackdaws were then regularly seen until the end of the year, often in a mixed corvid flock feeding on the floodplain. There was a maximum of 39 birds north of the railway on 10 October, with 38 on 22 December. 33 birds were seen on 17 November, but with a further 101 birds south of the railway, that gave a maximum for the Common as a whole of 134 birds.

South of the railway, Jackdaws were recorded in every month. Sometimes there were relatively few birds, but often there were larger numbers, typically feeding on the meadows. More than 20 birds were recorded on 12 occasions, with 44 on 21 February, 30 on 27 April, 57 (all in the paddock at West Mills) on 16 August, a maximum south of the railway of 101 on 17 November, 33 on 28 November and 44 on 16 December.

An adult was seen feeding a juvenile on a bird table in a garden in Mill Lane, Wareham on 30 June confirming breeding in the local area, although probably not on the Common itself



Juvenile Jackdaw being fed by an adult at a bird table in Mill Lane on 30 June

Rook

In the early winter period small numbers of Rooks were recorded north of the railway, which were occasionally swelled by additional birds. There was an early winter maximum of 24 birds on 09 March. Rooks were not recorded between 20 April and 29 August, when 2 birds were seen. Small numbers continued to be seen during the autumn, with a maximum of 29 birds on 22 September feeding in a recently cut maize field adjacent to the Common. Numbers increased again in the late winter period, when a mixed corvid flock was often seen feeding on the floodplain. 38 birds were recorded on 28 November and 29 December, with a maximum of 67 seen on 22 December.

South of the railway, Rooks were generally less numerous. There was an early winter maximum of 5 birds feeding on the flooded meadows on 05 March. During the summer, records were typically of 1 or 2 birds flying over the Common, although 3 were seen on 16 September with 4 observed on 26 September. There was a late winter maximum of 12 birds flying over the site on 11 October, with 11 birds feeding on the floods south of the bypass on 17 November.

Carrion Crow

Carrion Crows were recorded north of the railway in every month. There was a noticeable increase in numbers during March and April, when a large mixed flock of corvids fed on the flooded meadows. There was a maximum of 57 birds on 28 March with 55 on 31 March. More than 20 birds were recorded on 10 occasions during March and April. Although Carrion Crows were seen in every subsequent month, numbers were much lower with a late year maximum of 11 birds on 10 October and 26 December.

Small numbers of Carrion Crows were recorded south of the railway in every month. There was a maximum of 11 on 01 November, including 4 birds on the former Middle School Playing Field. 7 birds were also seen on the Common itself on 31 August.

Raven

In the early winter period single Ravens were recorded north of the railway on 22 and 28 March and 11 April. There were no further records until 16 August when a single bird was seen flying over Ferncroft Farm. 1 or 2 birds were then regularly seen during August and September, with a maximum of 3 together on 20 September. 1 or 2 birds continued to be seen until the end of the year.

South of the railway, single birds were recorded on 22 March and 25 April with a maximum count of 6 birds flying east down the Piddle Valley and over North West Walls on 26 March. There were no further records until 04 November when 2 birds were seen, together with a third bird north of the railway. 1 or 2 birds continued to be seen until the end of the year and on 23 December a pair was seen prospecting the tall conifers behind the Doctor's Surgery as a nest site.



6 Ravens together over North West Walls on 26 March

Coal Tit

North of the railway, Coal Tit was not recorded until 15 August when a single bird was seen in the line of mature trees between the main Common and Portland Meadow at the western end of the site. A single bird was seen in the same location on 23 August. A single bird was also seen in the trees around the oil well on 20 September and 16 November, with 2 birds there on 11 October.

A single Coal Tit was seen in gardens on the northern edge of Wareham on 13 February with 2 birds present on 27 March. A single bird was seen on the Common south of the railway on 01 November.

On 28 November 2019 a Coal Tit was seen on the ditch at the base of North West Walls, south of the railway.

Blue Tit

North of the railway, up to 3 birds were recorded in March and April, with up to 4 birds from July onwards. There was a maximum of 11 birds north of the railway on 29 September, including 6 in trees around the oil well and 5 elsewhere. With 3 birds also recorded south of the railway, there

were 14 in total seen on the Common on that date. Birds continued to be seen in small numbers until the end of the year, with 6 recorded on 13 October.

South of the railway, Blue Tits were recorded in every month (except February). Birds were most frequently being seen along the ditch at the base of North West Walls, in the trees behind the Doctor's Surgery and Christmas Close and in the trees around West Mills. There was a maximum of 8 birds on 31 August, with 7 seen on 01 October and 6 seen on 22 April, 01 August, 05 September and 02 and 06 December.



Blue tits in a nest box in a Wareham Garden

A single juvenile bird was seen in the trees around West Mills on 04 June, confirming breeding on site. A pair with a juvenile were also seen at the base of North West Walls on 31 July. A pair nested in a nest box in a garden close to the northern edge of Wareham, where at least 1 young bird fledged.

Great Tit

North of the railway, Great Tits were recorded infrequently until October, after which birds were often seen until the end of the year. Single birds were seen on 07 and 11 April, with 2 recorded on 12 May. There were then no records until a single bird was seen on 05 September. On 20 and 29 September, 2 birds were seen in the trees around the oil well. 1 or 2 birds were then seen regularly until the end of the year, with 3 on 29 December and a maximum of 4 on 10 October.

South of the railway, Great Tits were recorded in every month with birds most frequently being seen along the ditch at the base of North West Walls, in the trees behind the Doctor's Surgery and Christmas Close and in the trees around West Mills. 4 birds were seen on 16 March, 10 September and 02 and 29 December. There was a maximum count of 6 on 22 December, with 3 at the base of North West Walls and 3 on the scrubby slope south of West Mills.

On 08 June, 2 adults were seen with at least 1 juvenile on the ditch at the base of North West Walls confirming breeding on site. An adult with a juvenile were also seen on 31 July.

Woodlark

2 Woodlarks flew over the Common north of the railway on 19 March. These are likely to be birds from nearby breeding or overwintering populations. Woodlarks bred on the Carey House Estate in 2020. There was also a significant overwintering population between the Common and Wareham Forest in 2020, with 38 recorded on 08 September: 21 on the Carey House Estate; and 17 on the Trigon Estate.

Skylark



Juvenile Skylark at Ferncroft Farm on 24 June

A Skylark was first heard singing over the floodplain of the River Piddle north of the railway on 15 January. Single singing Skylarks were regularly recorded north of the railway during March and April, with 2 singing birds heard on 14 April. A singing bird was heard on 25 May and a pair were observed on the ground and flying on 08 June suggesting that they stayed to breed on the site. In the autumn single birds were recorded on 25 July, 26 September and 04 November, with 3 birds singing over the floodplain on 07 October and 2 birds singing on 09 November.

South of the railway, single singing Skylarks were recorded in the spring over the West Mills area on 22 and 25 April and again on 08 June, but may have been the birds north of the railway wandering. The maximum count south of the railway was of 3 birds singing over the scrubby slope south of West Mills on 14 October, with single singing birds also recorded on 09 November and 20 December.

A juvenile was seen just north of the recording area on the lane to Ferncroft Farm on 24 June, confirming breeding in the area.

Sand Martin

The first record north of the railway was of a single bird on 12 May. Birds were then recorded in every month until October, usually in small numbers. On 25 July, a scan over the recently cut

meadows recorded a maximum of 32 birds. 21 birds were also recorded feeding over the river on 29 August. The last record for the Common as a whole, was of a single bird with House Martins over the River Piddle by the Carey House Estate on 05 October.

The first record south of the railway was of 2 birds over the northern part of Wareham on 12 March. However, there were no further sightings until 13 April, when 4 birds were observed. Birds were then recorded in every month until late September, usually in small numbers. There was a maximum of 96 birds feeding over the meadows and the River Piddle on 12 May, with 55 birds seen on 06 May.

Swallow

North of the railway, the first record was of 3 Swallows on 13 April. Birds were then seen throughout the summer and into October. More than 10 birds were recorded on only 7 occasions. During the summer there was a maximum of 27 birds sat on overhead wires on 31 August, but the highest counts were recorded during autumn migration.

49 birds were seen feeding over the floodplain on 02 October. With 19 south of the railway, 61 birds were recorded for the Common as a whole. On 05 October 54 birds were seen, including 46 sat on overhead wires. With 16 south of the railway, 70 birds were recorded for the Common as a whole. The last record north of the railway was of a single bird on 14 October.

South of the railway, the first record was of a single bird on 17 April. Birds were then seen throughout the summer and into October. During the summer, there was a maximum of 14 birds around Little Farm on 20 September. The only other records in double figures during the summer were of 14 moving up the Piddle Valley in 1s and 2s on 02 September and of 10 birds feeding together over the river below West Mills on 28 April.

The highest counts were recorded during autumn migration. More than 10 birds were seen on 5 occasions during the month, with 53 seen on 04 October and a maximum of at least 100 birds feeding over the floodplain on 03 October. The last record south of the railway was of a single bird on 14 October.

House Martin

House Martins were not seen north of the railway until 05 July when 3 were recorded. Birds were then seen throughout the summer until October, usually in small numbers with 12 seen on 15 August. On 20 September it was estimated that there were about 200 House Martins feeding over the floodplain and the Carey House Estate. The last record north of the railway was of 23 birds on 05 October.

The first spring record south of the railway was of 3 House Martin on 06 May with a large flock of Sand Martins. Subsequently this species was seen in small numbers, until early June when slightly larger numbers were seen over the scrubby slope south of West Mills, with a maximum of 17 birds on 04 June. 10 or more birds were seen on 8 subsequent occasions until the end of September, but the highest count was during autumn migration, when 37 birds were seen on 03 October. The last record south of the railway was of 5 birds on 10 October.

A minimum of 6 House Martin nests were found on the new Westgate housing development, immediately adjacent to the southern edge of the Common south of the railway on 17 June. 5 of the 6 nests were on the same block of houses (17 to 31 Westerman Way overlooking a mini park area). Birds feeding over the Common during the summer were likely to include birds from this colony.

Cetti's Warbler



Cetti's Warbler on the ditch at the base of North West Walls on 01 August

Cetti's Warblers are present on the Common all year, both north and south of the railway, but are more difficult to detect during the winter when they are often silent. Singing males during May and June suggested breeding on the site, which was confirmed with juveniles seen in late July.

Cetti's Warbler was not seen north of the railway until 09 March, when 3 birds were heard singing distantly from the path between West Mills and Ferncroft Farm. 1 to 3 birds were subsequently recorded in every month.

Up to 3 birds were seen on the Common south of the railway between January and mid-March and after the breeding season until the end of the year. Often these were birds on the ditch at the base of North West Walls, which would be disturbed when walking along the path.

In mid-May there were 7 singing males on the Common, which were thought to be territorial breeding birds: 2 north of the railway; and 5 to the south (see map with the commentary on Reed Warbler).

North of the railway a singing male was recorded in the waterside trees immediately adjacent to the railway line behind West Mills on 15 May (and subsequently). On the same date (and subsequently) another singing male was recorded on the tree-lined stream on the edge of the Common, left of the track through the ford to Ferncroft Farm.

South of the railway 5 singing males were recorded on 13 May (and subsequently). 3 of these were south of the bypass. 1 was in the reeds just west of North Street bridge on the River Piddle; 1 was along the ditch at the base of the Walls by a mature tree half way along; and another was at the far western end. 2 were north of the bypass. 1 was in trees on the embankment on the northern side of the road; and 1 was in the trees and the fenced-off emergent vegetation on the northern bank of the River Piddle just below West Mills. On 13 June an adult was seen carrying food on the ditch at the base of North West Walls and on 26 July a family party of 4 birds, with at least 2 juveniles, was seen in the same area, confirming breeding on the site.

Long-tailed Tit



Long-tailed tit south of the railway on 05 February

North of the railway 1 or 2 birds were regularly recorded during March and April, with 3 birds present on 22 April. Birds were not then recorded north of the railway until 26 July, when 2 birds were seen. 1 or 2 birds were seen during August and September, with a noticeable increase in numbers later in the year. There was a maximum count north of the railway of 10 birds on 16 November, with 9 on 26 December and 8 on 20 December. On that date, there were also 7 birds south of the railway giving a total of 15 for the Common as a whole.



Long-tailed tit lacking the dark 'eyebrows' typical of British birds on 01 April

On 01 April a bird lacking the dark 'eyebrows' typical of British birds was seen north of the railway. However, this bird still showed some black flecks on the head and was therefore thought not to be of the continental race 'caudatus'.



Juvenile Long-tailed Tit seen near West Mills on 20 July

Long-tailed Tits were much more frequently seen south of the railway being recorded in every month. They were often seen on the ditch at the base of North West Walls, in the trees behind the Doctor's Surgery and Christmas Close and around West Mills. A summer maximum of 5 birds was seen on 03 May. Numbers south of the railway increased later in the year. The maximum yearly count was of a flock of 16 birds in the trees around West Mills on 17 November. A total of 16 birds was also recorded for the Common as a whole on 13 October: with 10 birds south of the railway and 6 to the north.

In April and May, a pair was regularly seen in the same location along the ditch at the base of North West Walls suggesting nest building in that area. On 20 July a juvenile was seen in a flock of 5 birds in the scrub on the northern edge of the bypass, south of West Mills confirming breeding on site.

Willow Warbler

Willow Warblers were only seen on migration on the Common, but were recorded both north and south of the railway. Few birds were seen in the spring, with larger numbers on return migration peaking in August.

North of the railway, the only spring records were of 3 birds singing on 08 April, with a single bird present on 11 April. There were then no records until 25 July when 3 birds were seen: 1 in the trees behind West Mills; 1 in scrub by the railway; and 1 in trees on the wooded meander on the Carey House Estate. A further 2 birds were seen south of the railway on that date giving a total of 5 on the Common as a whole. A total of 10 birds were recorded on 6 dates during July and August, with the last 2 birds seen on 31 August.



Willow Warbler on the ditch at the base of North West Walls on 06 August

South of the railway, the only spring records were of single birds seen on 06 April and 06 May. Both these birds were along the ditch at the base of North West Walls. There were then no records until 25 July when 2 birds were seen. A total of 29 birds were recorded on 12 dates between 25 July and 05 September, when 5 birds were seen: 4 in the tit flock in the trees around West Mills with 1 on the scrubby slope to the south of West Mills.

For the Common as a whole, there were 4 bird-days in the spring between 06 April and 06 May and 39 bird-days in the autumn from 25 July to 05 September. On the adjacent Carey House Estate, 34 Willow Warblers were ringed in the autumn between 17 July and 18 September.

Chiffchaff

Chiffchaffs overwinter on the Common in very small numbers. They also occur on migration in both spring and autumn, with a few birds staying to breed. They were regularly recorded throughout the summer and into the autumn, when there was a noticeable increase in numbers.

Chiffchaffs were first recorded north of the railway on 22 March, when 4 birds were singing. Later in April, there were typically 2 singing birds north of the railway: 1 in the scrub close to the railway at the eastern end of the Common; and 1 at the far western end of the common in the Portland Meadow area. However, after 4 birds were seen on 22 April, there were no further records until 06 June, when a single bird was seen.



Chiffchaff seen on the scrubby slope south of West Mills on 20 July

Chiffchaffs were more frequently recorded as autumn progressed with a notable 'fall' of birds on 22 September. Across the Common as a whole 30 birds were seen, with 21 north of the railway, mostly in the hedges and trees along the southern boundary of the site. The only other count in double figures was of 12 birds on 29 September, 9 of which were north of the railway. The last autumn record north of the railway was of a single bird on 14 October. The influx on birds in the autumn was

also reflected in the ringing totals from the adjacent Carey House Estate where a total of 146 birds were ringed between 17 July and 17 October, including 61 in September and 77 in October.

South of the railway, Chiffchaffs were recorded in every month of the year. The first record was of a singing bird along the River Piddle at the base of North West Walls on 28 January. Overwintering birds were then occasionally seen until mid-March. 3 or 4 singing birds were regularly heard during late March and early April. These were likely to be a mixture of migrating birds passing through and birds staying to breed.

South of the railway, there was a maximum of 6 singing birds on 03 May, although more typically there were 4 singing birds: 2 south of the bypass and 2 in the West Mills area, although the total number of breeding pairs may be higher.

During autumn migration there was a maximum of 9 birds on 22 September (part of the fall of 30 on the Common as a whole) and 01 October, with 8 seen on 13 August and 7 seen on 14 August. 7 birds were also seen on 20 August, all at the base of North West Walls. The last autumn record was of a single bird on 11 October. Single wintering birds were then seen in scrub on the railway embankment by the paddock at West Mills on 28 November and 20 December.

[Siberian Chiffchaff]



Siberian Chiffchaff on the ditch at the base of North West Walls on 20 December 2019

[In the early winter period, a single Siberian Chiffchaff was present from 01 January until 26 March. This was the overwintering bird that had been present since mid-December 2019. It was joined by a second bird towards the end of its stay with 2 birds being seen on 16 and 22 March. The original bird was first heard to call on 02 January and occasionally called throughout the rest of its stay. On 16 March, 1 of the 2 birds (probably the original bird) also sang.]

[Until late February the original bird was most frequently found on the ditch at the base of North West Walls, presumably to feed on insects on the ditch and along the River Piddle. From March onwards the original bird ranged more widely and towards the end of its stay it was most frequently found in the trees behind Christmas Close flats.]

[In the second winter period 2019, a Siberian Chiffchaff was first seen on the ditch at the base of North West Walls on 19 December 2019. This bird stayed until the end of the year and into 2020.]

Sedge Warbler



Sedge Warbler in vegetation on the River Piddle north of the railway on 16 August

Sedge Warblers were only seen on migration on the Common but were recorded both north and south of the railway.

North of the railway, there were only 2 records, both during autumn migration. A single bird was seen on 15 August, with 2 juveniles (although probably migrants) in vegetation in the River Piddle, just downstream from the wooded meander seen on 16 August.

South of the railway, the first spring record was of a singing Sedge Warbler on the River Piddle at the base of North West Walls on 16 April. In total, Sedge Warbler was recorded on 5 occasions in April. They were all records of single birds except on 18 April when 2 birds were present. All birds were seen on the River Piddle at the base of North West Walls, except the single bird on 22 April, which was in scrub by the River Piddle below West Mills. South of the railway, there was only 1 autumn record: of a bird at the base of North West Walls on 23 August.

For the Common as a whole, there were 6 bird-days in the spring between 16 and 22 April and 4 bird-days in the autumn from 15 to 23 August. On the adjacent Carey House Estate, 33 Sedge Warblers were ringed in the autumn between 17 July and 16 September.

Reed Warbler

Reed Warblers occur on migration and as a breeding species on the Common. In mid-May there were 7 singing males on the Common, which were thought to be territorial breeding birds: 1 north of the railway; and 6 to the south (see map).



Map Showing Locations of Breeding Reed Warbler, Cetti's Warbler and Reed Bunting in May 2020

North of the railway, the first record was of a singing male on 12 May towards the eastern end of the main east / west ditch across the meadows, between the railway line and the wooden gate. On 26 July, 3 birds (including at least 1 juvenile) were seen on the same location confirming breeding on the site.



Reed Warbler carrying food on the ditch between the railway and the wooden gate on 26 July

North of the railway, the only evidence of autumn migration was of a single bird by the River Piddle at the western end of the site on 08 August. On the adjacent Carey House Estate, 7 Reed Warblers were ringed in the autumn between 02 August and 06 September.

South of the railway, the first spring record was of a singing Reed Warbler on the River Piddle at the base of North West Walls on 08 May. On 13 May, 5 singing males were recorded on the meadows south of the bypass: 2 in reeds along the River Piddle just west of North Street bridge; and 3 on the main east / west ditch, 2 of which were at junctions with other (north / south) ditches where there are clusters of reeds. On 15 May a further singing male was recorded in the fenced-off emergent vegetation on the northern bank of the River Piddle below West Mills, north of the bypass.

South of the railway, there were 19 bird-days during autumn migration between 25 July and 23 August.

Blackcap



Female Blackcap on the scrubby slope south of West Mills on 02 September

Blackcaps are thought to breed on the Common and are also seen on migration in spring and autumn. Sightings and ringing records both show a peak of migration in September.

North of the railway, the first Blackcap was recorded on 07 April. On 14 April a male was singing in trees close to Portland Meadow at the far western end of the Common. 3 birds were heard singing on 22 April, but just 1 singing bird was recorded subsequently on 08 June. It is unlikely that Blackcap bred north of the railway, as there were no further records until 15 August when 2 females were seen. The last record north of the railway was of a single female on 13 October. On the adjacent Carey House Estate, 39 Blackcaps were ringed in the autumn between 16 July and 12 October (18 during September).

South of the railway, the first Blackcap was recorded on 16 March. On subsequent visits during April and May 2 or 3 singing birds were regularly recorded, with a maximum of 6 singing birds on 03 May.

It is likely that Blackcap bred on the Common south of the railway (although this was not proven) in suitable habitat such as: the trees and scrub behind the doctor's surgery and Christmas Close; the scrubby bank on the southern edge of the Common north of the Middle School site; and the scrubby bank south of West Mills. In the latter location a female was seen taking food into a bush on 06 June, suggesting that there was a nest with young. Birds continued to be seen into October, the last record south of the railway being 2 males on 07 October.

South of the railway there were 43 bird-days between 31 July and 26 September (30 during September), with a maximum of 5 birds (3 males and 2 females) on 16 September.

Garden Warbler

There were no records of Garden Warbler north of the railway. However, 5 birds were ringed during the autumn on the adjacent Carey House Estate between 17 July and 18 September.

South of the railway, 2 birds were seen together on the scrubby slope south of West Mills. On 02 September a single bird was seen in the scrub by the bypass opposite the paddocks at West Mills.

Lesser Whitethroat



Lesser Whitethroat on the scrubby bank south of West Mills on 04 May

A singing male was first recorded on 02 May on the scrubby slope south of West Mills. This bird was frequently seen (and heard) on subsequent days ranging widely along the scrubby bank. On 13 May it was confirmed that 2 singing birds were present in that area: 1 at the eastern end of the scrubby slope; and 1 at the far western end sometimes moving over to north of the railway. It is assumed

that both birds were territorial males. Both birds were still present on 27 June and it is likely that both pairs bred, although this was not proven.

From July onwards there were 9 further sightings all of a single bird, except on 16 August when 2 birds were seen together. These sightings were thought to be of one (or more) of the resident birds, rather than migrants. The last sighting was on 18 September.

Whitethroat

North of the railway, Whitethroat was first recorded on 11 April in gorse and other scrub immediately south of the floodplain. On 27 April, a bird was holding territory along the main east / west ditch north of the railway, west of the steel gate. On 12 May there was a singing male in the scrub by the railway and another bird in the gorse in the meadows, with Stonechats but not singing. Whitethroat is likely to have bred on the Common north of the railway (possibly 1 or 2 pairs), although this was not proven. The last record was on 18 September.

South of the railway, 3 Whitethroats were recorded on 12 May on the scrubby bank south of West Mills. 1 of these moved between the Common and a scrubby hedgerow at Little Farm immediately south of the Common. Whitethroat is likely to have bred on the Common south of the railway (possibly 1 or 2 pairs on the scrubby bank south of West Mills, with potentially another pair in the hedge at Little Farm), although this was not proven. The last record was on 09 September.

For the Common as a whole, there were 14 bird-days in the autumn from 05 August to 18 September. On the adjacent Carey House Estate, 5 Whitethroats were ringed in the autumn between 09 August and 18 September.

Dartford Warbler



A single bird was seen in Gorse on the floodplain meadows north of the railway on 01 November until 09 November. This is likely to be an individual dispersing after the breeding season from a nearby heathland site.

A single bird was also seen on the part of the Common north of the River Piddle on 01 January 2021. In the very cold conditions, the Dartford Warbler was on a ditch associating with a Stonechat and Reed Buntings.

Dartford Warbler on the Common north of the Railway on 04 November

Firecrest

North of the railway, Firecrest was not recorded until 31 August when a single bird was seen in the tit flock in trees at the far western end of the Common. There were six further records of single birds until 16 November. Most of these were from the trees around the oil well, although the last record was of a bird in trees and scrub by the railway. Firecrest has been confirmed as breeding on the adjacent Carey House Estate, where 2 birds were ringed in September. Records from the Common north of the railway are likely to be of local birds dispersing after the breeding season.

South of the railway, Firecrest was first seen on 01 January, when 2 birds were recorded on the ditch at the base of North West Walls. 2 birds were also seen on 22 January with single birds being seen on a number of occasions until 04 March. There were no further records until 25 November, when a single bird was seen in the hedge by the paddock at West Mills.

During the early winter period birds were most frequently seen in the scrub behind the Doctor's Surgery on the southern edge of the Common, but also ranged further west into the trees behind the Christmas Close flats and further east along the ditch at the base of North West Walls. On 15 January, a single Firecrest was seen in a garden at the northern end of Mill Lane. After 04 March, it is likely that these wintering birds moved into woodlands in the local area to breed.

In the second winter period a Firecrest was first seen on 21 December 2019 on the Common south of the railway, with 2 birds present on 22 December. 1 or 2 birds were then seen regularly until the end of the year.



Firecrest on the Common south of the railway on 21 December 2019

Goldcrest

North of the railway, the only record during the early winter period was of a single bird on 09 March. There were no further records until the autumn, when a single bird was seen in the trees around the oil well on 20 September. There were 9 further late year records, suggesting an autumn influx with a

maximum of 3 birds on 25 November. Although ringing started on the Carey House Estate in July, Goldcrest was not ringed until 07 October. 9 birds were ringed between 07 and 17 October, also suggesting an autumn influx into the area.

South of the railway, Goldcrest was regularly recorded between 01 January and 04 March with a maximum of 5 birds on 19 January. The birds were most frequently seen in the trees and scrub behind the Doctor's Surgery. There were no further records until late summer, when 2 birds were seen on 18 August. 1 or 2 birds were then regularly seen from 01 October until the end of the year, with 3 birds present on 25 November.

Wren

Wrens were regularly recorded throughout the year north of the railway, with a maximum of 5 birds on 25 November and 4 birds noted on 4 occasions. It is likely that Wren bred north of the railway, but this was not proven. A total of 56 Wrens were ringed on the adjacent Carey House Estate between 17 July and 17 October.

Wrens were also regularly recorded throughout the year south of the railway, with a maximum of 6 birds on 06 March and 5 birds noted on 3 occasions. Breeding was proven south of the railway when a juvenile bird was seen being fed by adults on the ditch at the base of North West Walls on 02 May.



Juvenile Wren on North West Walls on 02 May

Nuthatch

Nuthatch was not recorded north of the railway until 08 August when a bird was heard calling from the Carey House Estate, where there is a confirmed breeding population. Nuthatch was first seen on the site on 31 August, when a single bird was seen in trees at the far western end of the Common. Birds were then regularly seen and heard at the western end of the site and in the trees around the oil well until 28 November, with a maximum of 3 birds on 22 September. These are likely to be birds dispersing after the breeding season from nearby woods, including those on the Carey House Estate.

South of the railway, there is just a single record of a bird calling from the trees behind Christmas Close on 02 September.

Treecreeper

North of the railway, a Treecreeper was seen in the trees around the oil well on 04 November and in the line of trees between Portland Meadow and the main part of the Common on 25 November.

A Treecreeper was seen in trees on the northern edge of the Common, adjacent to Ferncroft Farm on 09 January 2021. A Treecreeper was seen in trees close to the Doctor's Surgery, south of the railway (and bypass) on 05 September 1999 during an ecological survey of Wareham Walls. At that time the section of the Walls adjacent to the Doctor's Surgery was covered with open woodland dominated by a few mature Ash trees, making it more suitable for woodland species.

Rose-coloured Starling

A Rose-coloured Starling was reported from a garden on West Walls on 11 June, having been seen the previous evening. Despite a search on 11 June and subsequent days, the bird was not re-found. The lady reporting it noted the pink on the sides and back and that it was visiting feeders with other Starlings. This strongly suggests that the identification was correct, although no photograph was taken. This record is subject to acceptance by the Dorset Rarities Panel, upon receipt of supporting documentation.

Starling

North of the railway, the only record in the early winter period was of a flock of 15 Starlings on 09 March. There were no further records until the 04 October when 9 birds were seen. Birds were regularly seen in small flocks until the end of the year with a maximum of 42 flying west on 04 November. 40 birds were seen on 29 December, with more than 10 birds seen on only 3 other occasions. Starlings are also considered to be 'surprisingly uncommon' on the adjacent Carey House Estate.

Starlings were regularly recorded south of the railway throughout the year in varying numbers and in different locations. A 'mini-murmuration' formed during evenings in mid-January around the North Mill area, which seemed to go down into the reeds in the Piddle Valley east of road into Wareham: 212 were counted on 19 January. Otherwise, there was a maximum of 90 birds in the early winter period, seen on 04 March.

Up to 50 birds were seen roosting in trees behind the houses on West Walls during June. Prior to roosting the birds would gather to feed on the Walls, including on anthills. In the autumn, birds would gather on the wires at Little Farm, with a maximum of 83 on 22 September. The wires at Little Farm also held 76 birds on 28 November, 43 on 17 September, 36 on 14 October and 31 on 13 August.

Starlings nested in the roof of a property in Mill Lane, Wareham and breeding was confirmed on 08 May when a juvenile was seen. Starlings are also likely to breed on the Common itself.

Blackbird

Blackbirds were regularly recorded throughout the year both north and south of the railway.

Only small numbers were seen north of the railway during spring and summer, with a maximum of 4 birds on 15 May and 29 September. Later in the year there was a slight increase in numbers with a maximum of 8 birds feeding on berries in trees around the oil well on 07 October. 7 birds were seen north of the railway on 16 November.

There is a larger population south of the railway, reflecting the greater availability of suitable habitat. During the spring and summer, a maximum of 14 birds was seen on 03 May, with 11 on 24

April and 10 on 25 July and 29 September. There were similar counts later in the year with a maximum of 15 birds on 01 October and 02 December and 10 or more birds being seen on 3 other occasions. There was a maximum of 20 birds for the Common as a whole on 02 December, as 5 birds were seen north of the railway in addition to the 15 to the south.

Breeding was confirmed south of the railway when a single juvenile was seen in brambles on the banks of the River Piddle at the base of Wareham Walls. However, it is likely that Blackbird bred both north and south of the railway in greater numbers, but this was not proven.

Fieldfare

Fieldfare was not recorded north of the railway until 09 November, when a flock of 120 birds was seen feeding on berries in the Holly trees at the far western end of the Common. Fieldfare were still present in this area on 16 November, although the flock had reduced to about 40 birds.

South of the railway, 3 Fieldfares were seen with Redwings in the pines behind the Doctor's Surgery on 12 January. 2 Fieldfares were seen in an Oak tree on West Walls on 10 February and 4 were seen in vegetation at the base of North West Walls on 18 February.

Redwing

In the early winter period, a flock of 30 Redwing were seen at the far western end of the Common in the trees close to the oil well on 01 January. There were no further records until 14 October when 3 birds were seen in the same location. Redwing were then seen regularly until the end of the year, with more than 20 birds recorded on 3 occasions. There was a maximum of 31 birds on 16 November, with 24 seen on 17 November. On 09 November, 22 were noted feeding on berries in a Holly tree at the far western end of the Common.

Single birds were seen south of the railway on three occasions from January to March. There were no further records until a single bird was recorded on 01 November. Small numbers were subsequently seen in and around the paddock at West Mills, with a maximum of 8 birds on 24 December.

Song Thrush

North of the railway, a single bird was seen on 19 January, but there were no further sightings until 13 April. 1 or 2 birds were then seen regularly until the end of the year, with a maximum of 3 on 15 May. A total of 17 birds were ringed on the adjacent Carey House Estate between 23 July and 15 October.

South of the railway, 1 or 2 Song Thrush were frequently seen during the early winter period. In early spring a pair was seen regularly at the base of the slope behind Christmas Close and it was suspected, although not proven, that the birds nested in the trees or scrub behind the flats. 1 or 2 birds continued to be seen until the 07 October when 3 birds were recorded. There was a maximum of 6 birds seen on 02 December and 3 birds were together with 5 Redwing in the paddock at West Mills on 29 December.

Mistle Thrush

Single birds were seen on the Common north of the railway on 19 January, 31 March and 12 May. There were no further records until 05 October when a single bird was seen in the trees by the oil well. 2 birds were seen on 07 October with a maximum of 3 birds (together) on 10 and 20 October. After that single birds continued to be seen until the end of the year.

There were no records of Mistle Thrush from the Common south of the railway.

Spotted Flycatcher

North of the railway, there were no records of Spotted Flycatcher in the spring, but 14 birds were recorded in the autumn. The first bird was seen on 08 August with the last record on 29 September. Most records were from the far western end of the Common, either in trees on the wooded meander opposite the Carey House Estate, or in trees and scrub by the pumping station on the edge of Portland Meadow. The maximum count north of the railway was of 3 birds on 23 August. Just 1 bird was ringed on the adjacent Carey House Estate on 09 August.

1 Spotted Flycatcher was seen in Alders on the bank of the River Piddle at the base of North West Walls (on the Common south of the railway) on 27 April. This was the only spring record for the Common as a whole. There were 6 records in the autumn, all from the scrubby slope south of West Mills and the Little Farm area. The last record was of a single bird on 03 October.

The 14 birds north of the railway and 6 birds south of the railway make 20 bird days in total for the site as a whole. The maximum count for the site as a whole was 4 birds, with 2 north and 2 south of the railway on 31 August.



Spotted Flycatcher on the scrubby slope south of West Mills on 05 September

Robin

Robins were seen throughout the year and are confirmed breeders both north and south of the railway.

Robins were regularly recorded north of the railway with a maximum early year count of 3 birds on 22 March. A juvenile was seen in the trees behind West Mills on 25 July confirming breeding north of the railway. Robins were more numerous in the autumn with a maximum of 7 recorded north of the

railway on 07 December, with 6 birds seen on 29 September. A total of 17 Robins were ringed on the adjacent Carey House Estate between 23 July and 17 October.

Robins were also regularly recorded south of the railway, where they are more numerous, with a maximum spring count of 8 on 02 May. A single juvenile was seen at West Mills on 11 June confirming breeding south of the railway. 2 adults were also seen with a recently fledged juvenile on 12 August, although it is likely that many more pairs breed, both north and south of the railway.

South of the railway, numbers increased in the autumn with a maximum of 12 birds recorded on 13 October. The maximum for the Common as a whole was 17 birds: 10 south of the railway and 7 to the north, on 06 December.

Pied Flycatcher

A female Pied Flycatcher was seen (and heard calling a lot) in the line of trees between the main Common and Portland Meadow on 18 August. This was the only record for 2020.

A female Pied Flycatcher was seen in trees close to the Doctor's Surgery on 05 September 1999 during an ecological survey of Wareham Walls. At that time the section of the Walls adjacent to the Doctor's Surgery was covered with open woodland dominated by a few mature Ash trees, making it more suitable for woodland species.

Redstart

North of the railway, the only record was of a single Redstart on 02 September. A single bird was also seen south of the railway on that date making a maximum daily count of 2 for the Common as a whole. 2 single Redstarts were ringed on the adjacent Carey House Estate: on 30 August and 06 September.

In addition to the bird seen on 02 September, the only other record south of the railway was of a single bird on 23 August. Both birds were seen on the scrubby slope south of West Mills.

Whinchat



Male Whinchat on the Common north of the railway on 22 April

The only record for the Common as a whole was of a spring male seen north of the railway on 22 April. It frequented the main east-west ditch across the site between the railway line and the wooden gate.

Stonechat



Adult Stonechat feeding a juvenile at the base of North West Walls on 15 May

During the early winter period, 4 birds were regularly recorded on the Common north of the railway. During this time, it was not possible to visit Portland Meadow, due to the flooding, so a further pair may have wintered there. South of the river 2 birds were regularly recorded in the early winter period with 4 birds present on 18 January. These numbers broadly reflect the numbers that subsequently nested on the site. In total it is estimated that there were 4 pairs breeding on the Common: 3 north of the railway; and 1 to the south.

North of the railway 1 pair nested in the gorse on the meadows between the wooden gate and the steel gate. On 12 May this pair was seen with 3 juveniles. 1 pair was slightly further west and moved between the gorse on the meadows to the small amount of scrub along the archaeological earthwork, which was more likely to be the nesting location. 2 fledged young were seen in this location on 06 June. The third pair was frequently seen by the River Piddle on Portland Meadow and most probably had a nest north of the river on the Carey House Estate.

South of the railway a pair nested in the gorse on the north-facing slope behind the Doctor's Surgery. This slope was cleared of vegetation in early May, but the young managed to fledge and 2 juveniles were seen with the adults at the base of North West Walls on 15 May and subsequently.

There was a significant influx of birds after the breeding season, presumably of birds that bred locally. In spring, it was estimated that there were 10 breeding pairs on heathland on the nearby Trigon Estate.

The maximum count for the Common as whole was of 18 birds on 13 September. On this date there were 10 Stonechats together in the triangular field hedge on the southern edge of the Common, with a further 8 birds north of the railway. 16 were present on the Common on 07 October (10 north and 6 south of the railway), with 14 recorded on 16 September (including 9 in the triangular field). The maximum count north of the railway was of 12 birds (including 4 by the River Piddle) on 20 September. With 1 additional Stonechat south of the railway, there were 13 birds on the Common as a whole on that date.

The autumn influx was also reflected in the ringing totals on the adjacent Carey House Estate. A total of 52 different birds were ringed between 16 July and 17 October. 34 of these birds were ringed in July. Numbers reduced after mid-October, with maxima later in the year of: 6 north of the railway on 06 December; with just 2 recorded south of the railway on a number of occasions.

Wheatear

A female-type Wheatear was seen on the Common north of the railway on 05 April, which was the first bird of the spring. Wheatears were also seen on 8 occasions (10 individuals) during autumn migration between 18 August and 03 October.

During spring migration, south of the railway single birds were seen on 25 April and 02 May. During autumn migration 3 single birds were seen on 31 August, 26 September and 05 October. These records were all of birds on the scrubby slope and / or the triangular field south of West Mills apart from on 05 October, when a single bird was seen on the former Middle School Playing Field.

During autumn migration there were a total of 13 bird days (10 north of the railway and 3 to the south) for the Common as a whole, but only 3 bird days (1 north and 2 south) in the spring.

On 16 October 2019 a Wheatear was seen on West Walls.



Wheatear on the Common North of the Railway on 05 September

House Sparrow



Juvenile House Sparrow on the edge of the River Piddle 08 June

House Sparrow was not recorded north of the railway until 29 September when 4 were seen, but this is more likely to be due to this species being overlooked, rather than because it was absent. A maximum of 10 birds was recorded on 29 December.

House Sparrows were much more frequently recorded on the Common south of the railway, where they are present throughout the year. Early in the year, counts were in single figures until 22 April when 11 birds were seen. All through the summer and autumn counts were regularly in double figures and on occasion, considerably higher. On 01 June, 30 birds were seen with the summer count peaking at 33 on 26 July. In the autumn, numbers increased further with a maximum of 50 birds in the paddock by West Mills on 15 August, with 49 birds in the same area on 13 September and 45 birds present on 17 November.

As well as the paddock at West Mills, House Sparrows are frequently seen in the scrub along the River Piddle at the base of North West Walls and breeding was confirmed in this area on 01 June, when at least 1 juvenile was seen. Birds from the built-up area of Wareham town also visit North West Walls to feed.

Dunnock

Dunnock were regularly seen throughout the year in small numbers, both north and south of the railway and were confirmed to breed.

North of the railway, a maximum of 6 birds was seen on 16 November with 5 birds observed on 25 July. Only 4 birds were ringed on the adjacent Carey House Estate between 27 September and 17 October.

South of the railway, a family party of 6 birds were seen near Little Farm on 16 August, including at least 1 juvenile confirming breeding on the site. A maximum of 7 birds was seen south of the railway on 02 December. 2 birds were also seen north of the railway on that date giving a maximum of 9 for

the Common as a whole. 5 birds were also seen south of the railway on 10 September and 22 December.

Yellow Wagtail

There were no records of Yellow Wagtail on the Common during the spring, but this species was recorded in good numbers on migration during the autumn, both north and south of the railway.



2 of the 78 Yellow Wagtails in the Triangular Field on 09 September

North of the railway, the first autumn record was of a single bird on 18 August, which was briefly on the ground, but mostly flying above the meadows calling. Numbers increased with a maximum of 11 birds with the cattle in the floodplain on 18 September. The last of 9 records north of the railway was of a single bird on 01 October. A total of 5 birds were ringed on the adjacent Carey House Estate between 10 and 12 September.

South of the railway, the first autumn record was of 2 birds over the Little Farm area on 31 August. The maximum count was of 78 birds on 09 September, when many birds were seen in the triangular field beyond the scrubby slope south of West Mills, including 1 very grey bird (see photo). When the birds were spooked 58 flew onto the Common proper, but 20 remained in the original field. The last of 8 records south of the railway was of a single bird on the former Middle School Playing Field on 05 October.

In the autumn, there were a total of 43 bird days north of the railway and 99 bird days south of the railway, giving a total of 142 bird days for the Common as a whole.

There were 10 Yellow Wagtails with the cattle on the Common north of the railway on 25 August 2018.

Grey Wagtail

Grey Wagtail was not recorded north of the railway until 08 June, when 2 birds were seen by the wooded meander on the River Piddle opposite the Carey House Estate. Single birds were regularly seen into October, with 2 birds seen again on the wooded meander on 26 September.

North of the railway, a maximum of 3 birds was seen on 11 October, with 2 birds on the River Piddle at the western end of the site and a third bird just beyond the railway bridge on the overflowing ditch by the railway embankment. There was a maximum of 4 birds for the Common as a whole on 17 November when there were 2 birds by the ford to Ferncroft Farm as well as 2 birds south of the railway.

2 birds were ringed on the Carey House Estate on 28 September, where this species bred both in 2019 and 2020.



Juvenile Grey Wagtail at North Mill on 15 June

Grey Wagtails were seen much more frequently south of the railway, being recorded in every month. 2 pairs also bred south of the railway. 1 pair nested at North Mill and on 27 April a single juvenile was first seen. The female bird of this pair was ringed and the same pair were observed mating at North Mill on 12 May. On 15 May, 2 juveniles were being fed by 2 adults, neither of which were ringed, just upstream of the weir on the River Piddle (between the weir and the railway bridge) at West Mills.

After the breeding season there was a maximum of 3 birds on 17 September with 2 birds on the River Piddle below West Mills and a single bird on the river at the base of North West Walls.



Adult Grey Wagtail on the River Piddle below West Mills on 22 September

Pied Wagtail

During the early winter period single birds were recorded north of the railway on 3 dates in March. Pied Wagtails were not then recorded north of the railway until 25 July when a single bird was seen. 1 or 2 birds continued to be seen until the end of the year with a maximum of 3 birds on 07 and 14 October.

Pied Wagtails were much more frequently recorded south of the railway and, on occasion, in much higher numbers. Small numbers were regularly recorded until the end of March, with a maximum of 4 birds on 22 March. During April numbers increased as the floods began to recede, with several birds feeding on the muddy grassland south of the bypass. There was a spring maximum of 17 on 05 April with 10 birds on 04 and 17 April.

On 13 May a juvenile Pied Wagtail was seen feeding with an adult bird on the muddy seasonal pool on the northern side of the bypass embankment. This confirmed breeding on site. The location of the nest is not known but is suspected to be on the banks of the River Piddle.

In the autumn and winter Pied Wagtails were seen in higher numbers in different locations, with more than 30 birds recorded on 4 occasions.

Birds occasionally gathered on the Former Middle School Playing Field just south of the Common, with a maximum of 53 on 26 September (with 1 north of the railway, a maximum of 54 for the Common as a whole). 29 birds were also seen on the playing field on 05 October. A maximum of 38 birds was seen in the paddock at West Mills on 01 November and a maximum of 35 birds was seen on the floods south of the bypass on 17 November.



Juvenile Pied Wagtail in the West Mills area on 13 May

Meadow Pipit

The only record for the Common before the autumn was of 2 Meadow Pipits feeding on the muddy meadows south of the bypass on 04 April. Meadow Pipits were frequently recorded during the autumn, sometimes in high numbers both north and south of the railway.

North of the railway, the first autumn record was of 53 birds (51 on the floodplain) on 16 September. 50 or more birds were seen north of the railway on 4 subsequent occasions. The maximum was 167 on 05 October: 156 of which were on the floodplain. With 3 more birds south of the railway, that gave a maximum of 170 for the Common as a whole. The other 50+ counts were: 63 on 04 October; 55 on 26 September and 50 on 01 October.

The high counts on the Common north of the railway coincided with ringing success on the adjacent Carey House Estate, where 26 birds were ringed between 06 September and 12 October.

South of the railway, the first autumn record was of a single bird feeding with Linnets and Stonechats at Little Farm on 08 August. The highest count was of 104 birds on 26 September, including 84 on the meadows south of the bypass, 12 on the former Middle School Playing Field and 8 at Little Farm. On this date there were also 55 Meadow Pipits in various locations north of the railway, making 159 on the Common as a whole. Other counts of 20 or more were: 31 on the floods south of the bypass on 06 December; 25 on 14 October; 24 in the triangular field south of West Mills on 22 September; and 20 mostly on the meadows south of the bypass on 29 September and 16 November.

Tree Pipit

There were no records of Tree Pipit on the Common north of the railway. However, 19 birds were ringed during the autumn on the adjacent Carey House Estate, suggesting that birds have passed through the site. The 19 birds were ringed between 21 July and 06 September, 15 of which were ringed in August, suggesting that these were probably local breeders.

There was only 1 record south of the railway of a single Tree Pipit with 3 Meadow Pipits in the triangular field south of West Mills on 16 September. The later date suggests that this bird was probably a migrant.

Chaffinch

Chaffinch were regularly recorded on the Common north of the railway during the early winter period, with a maximum of 4 on 05 March. Chaffinch continued to be seen in small numbers throughout the spring, summer and autumn with a maximum of 4 being seen again on 08 June. Numbers increased in the late winter period with a maximum of 15 on 04 November. There were also 5 birds south of the railway on that date, making 20 in total. 8 birds were seen north of the railway on 28 November and 29 December.

South of the railway, Chaffinch were regularly recorded from the beginning of the year with a spring / summer maximum of 5 on 01 June. Chaffinch continued to be seen in small numbers throughout the summer with 5 being seen again on 02 September. A maximum of 7 birds was seen on 01 November, with 6 recorded on 3 other occasions in the autumn and late winter period.

Chaffinches are likely to breed on the site, both north and south of the railway. Although breeding was not proven a male was seen taking food into a bush, presumably to a nest, on the scrubby slope south of West Mills on 17 June.

Bullfinch



Bullfinch north of the railway on 04 November

North of the railway, the first record was of a male on 25 March. There were no further records until 05 August when a single bird was seen. Birds then continued to be seen in 1s and 2s throughout the autumn, with an increase in numbers from November onwards. There was a maximum of 5 birds on 23 December, with 4 on 02 December. These higher counts were on occasions when there were birds both in the scrub along the railway at the eastern end of the Common as well as birds in the trees and scrub at the far western end of the site.

South of the railway, the first record was of a male on 01 January. There were no further records until 24 April, when another single bird was seen. Birds were then regularly seen throughout the summer and autumn until the end of the year. A pair was first seen on the scrubby bank south of West Mills on 12 May and heard calling on many subsequent visits. It was not until 13 August when 2 juveniles were seen with 2 adults confirming breeding on the site. This family party was also seen again on 18 and 27 August.

Numbers increased later in the year, with 3 or more Bullfinches recorded on 10 occasions between October and the end of the year. The maximum was 7 birds on 09 November, when 2 more birds were seen north of the railway making 9 in total. South of the railway, the birds favoured the scrubby bank south of West Mills, sometimes moving into the hedges and trees around West Mills, particularly towards the end of the year.

Greenfinch

North of the railway a single Greenfinch was seen on 05 March, with 2 birds present on 22 April. There were no further sightings until 15 August when 2 birds were seen. Birds continued to be seen during the autumn and until the end of the year. There was a maximum of 7 birds on 07 November. 2 more birds were seen south of the railway on that date, giving a maximum count for the Common as a whole of 9 birds.

17 birds were ringed on the adjacent Carey House Estate, between 21 July and 10 September indicating that the local population may be larger than the sightings suggest.

South of the railway 2 birds were first seen on 15 January with 2 being seen on several dates in April and May with a maximum of 3 on 03 May. Birds were heard singing on the scrubby bank south of West Mills on 12 May and calling from the same area on 17 June. However, breeding was not proven. Birds were more frequently seen in August and September, both on the scrubby slope south of West Mills and on the scrubby slope south of the bypass adjacent to the Westgate housing development. There was a maximum of 4 birds south of the railway on 10 and 17 September and birds continued to be seen in small numbers until the end of the year.

Linnet

Linnet was first recorded on the Common north of the railway on 25 March when 2 birds were seen. 2 birds were regularly seen during April and into May, with a maximum of 5 birds seen on 14 April. It is thought that a pair may have stayed to breed, but this was not proven. Birds continued to be seen throughout the summer with a maximum of 7 on 27 June and 5 birds seen on 6 occasions in August and September. There were no further sighting north of the railway, after 2 birds were seen on 01 October.

In the early part of the year, the only record south of the railway was of 2 birds at the foot of the gorse slope behind the Doctor's Surgery on 05 May. On 04 June a flock of at least 12 Linnets was seen feeding on weeds at Little Farm, just south of the Common, including adults feeding juveniles. On 06 June, 24 birds were counted, also including juveniles. This is thought to be a post-breeding flock but could also have included birds that bred on the Common north of the railway.

Small numbers of Linnets continued to be seen during the summer and autumn with 10 feeding on the weeds at Little Farm on 08 August. There were also 4 birds north of the railway on that date, making 14 in total on the Common. However, the maximum count was of 45 birds feeding on the ground at Little Farm on 14 October. The last record was of 6 birds on 01 November.

Lesser Redpoll

There is just a single record from north of the railway of 3 birds feeding in the line of trees between Portland Meadow and the main part of the Common on 25 November. Earlier in the autumn, 5 birds were ringed on the adjacent Carey House Estate between 05 and 12 October.

There were 2 records south of the railway, both of birds feeding in the trees on the railway embankment. On 01 October there was a flock of 25 birds and on 28 November, 12 birds were observed in the same location.

The early October sighting and ringing records were part of an influx of birds from the continent, with large numbers being seen at a variety of coastal watchpoints in Dorset and an unprecedented 25 being trapped and ringed at Lytchett Bay on 10 October.



Lesser Redpoll in trees on the railway embankment on 01 October

Goldfinch

Goldfinch were recorded in single figures on the Common north of the railway during March and April, the only higher count being a flock of 32 birds on 05 March. Low numbers continued to be seen during the summer, but from mid-August onwards a much larger flock was seen regularly, mostly feeding on the ground. 20 or more birds were seen on 12 occasions between 16 August and 13 October. The maximum count was 70 birds on 01 October. On that date there were also 9 birds south of the railway giving a total of 79 for the Common as a whole. Other counts of more than 50 birds were: 60 on 13 October; 59 on 02 October; and 54 on 04 October.

South of the railway a flock of 20 birds was seen in the Alders along the River Piddle just west from North Mill on 01 January with 15 birds there on 14 January. Smaller numbers were seen during the spring with a maximum of 7 birds on 18 April. An adult was seen feeding 3 juveniles on North West Walls on 06 June. The birds either bred on site or in a garden of a property within Wareham town. Small numbers continued to be seen during the summer, but numbers increased during October and

November, with more than 20 birds seen on 4 occasions. The maximum was 51 birds on 05 October, mostly at Little Farm. There were also 35 birds on 07 October, 30 on 07 November and 22 on 17 November.



Juvenile Goldfinch on North West Walls on 06 June

Siskin

Siskin was not recorded north of the railway until 13 September when 10 birds were seen in the woods at the western end of the Common. On 22 September flocks of 21 and 14 birds (35 in total) passed over the Common. The only other records are of: 3 birds on 20 and 29 September; 1 on 01 October; 2 on 02 October; and 2 on 26 December at the far western end of the Common. 4 Siskin were ringed on the adjacent Carey House Estate between 02 and 21 September.

On 01 January, a single Siskin was seen with Goldfinches in the Alders along the River Piddle west of North Mill. A single bird was seen flying over the trees at the base of North West Walls on 05 July with birds regularly heard calling over the gardens in Mill Lane in early July. It is thought that the July records are the post-breeding dispersal of birds from Wareham Forest.

Siskins continued to be scarce south of the railway during the autumn, with just a single bird seen in the trees by the Doctor's Surgery on 14 August and 4 birds seen in that area on 09 September. Birds were seen on 4 occasions in December feeding in the Alders along the River Piddle, either at North Mill or West Mills. There was a maximum of 16 birds at West Mills on 02 December.

Reed Bunting

In the early winter period, 1 or 2 birds were regularly recorded on the Common north of the railway with 3 seen on 31 March. Reed Buntings were not seen south of the railway until 01 April. It is estimated that there were 6 pairs breeding on the Common: 5 north of the railway; and 1 to the south (see map in the commentary on Reed Warbler).

North of the railway 4 of the pairs were on the banks of the River Piddle: 1 pair was at the western end of Portland Meadow, with another pair at the eastern end by the wooded meander in the river.

These pairs may have nested on the Carey House Estate on the other side of the river. 2 further pairs were located further east along the river. A pair was also seen on the main ditch south of the river between the railway line and the wooden gate.

South of the railway, the single pair was in the fenced-off emergent vegetation on the northern bank of the River Piddle below West Mills, north of the bypass. In early spring there seemed to be a pair on the ditch at the western edge of the Common by the road under the bypass, but they were not seen subsequently and may have relocated to the bank of the River Piddle at West Mills.

The ringing records from the adjacent Carey House Estate show a significant local population. 108 birds were ringed between 17 July and 17 October, including 85 in August, although only 3 pairs were thought to have bred on the estate. These may be breeding birds from Poole Harbour dispersing to habitats further up the Piddle Valley and beyond, where Reed Buntings are known to winter around arable stubble on the Trigon Estate and on damper heathland areas in Wareham Forest. However, there is also evidence that Reed Buntings move in the opposite direction, as 2 of the birds ringed on the Carey House Estate in August were recovered later in the year at Lytchett Bay, 11 kilometres to the north east. One bird ringed on 02 August was recovered on 10 October and another bird ringed on 11 August was recovered on 28 November.

Birds also stayed to use other habitats on the Common in late autumn and winter, with a maximum of 8 seen on 01 October. 6 birds were seen on the edge of the arable field at the southern edge of the Common north of the railway, between the railway line and the oil well on 04 November, with 4 or 5 birds regularly recorded in that location. Numbers dropped to 1 or 2 birds by the end of the year. South of the railway, 1 or 2 birds were also seen regularly on the scrubby slope south of West Mills and around Little Farm in the autumn and winter.



Reed Bunting in vegetation in the River Piddle opposite the Carey House Estate on 15 August

3. Breeding Birds Summary

- 3.1 A summary of breeding birds recorded on, or very close to, the Common in 2020 is set out in the table below. Records are categorised as: possible, probable or confirmed breeders. All confirmed breeders were observed with fledged young, except House Martin where adults were seen visiting young on the nest. A brief summary of the evidence for the assigned status is given, with more detail provided in the systematic list.
- 3.2 In summary, 36 species were recorded breeding on Wareham Common in 2020. 26 species were confirmed breeders; 9 species probably bred; and 1 species possibly bred. The summary table below also includes a couple of species (Lapwing and Mediterranean Gull) that showed breeding behaviour, but definitely did not breed on site.

BREEDING BIRDS ON WAREHAM COMMON IN 2020		
Species	Breeding Status	Evidence
Mute Swan	Confirmed	3 pairs bred with 2 raising 1 and 5 (later 4) cygnets
Mallard	Confirmed	A minimum of 5 pairs bred with at least 5 broods
Cuckoo	Possible	Adult bird observed into mid-June
Lapwing	Did not breed	1 pair was seen holding territory in early spring
Moorhen	Confirmed	1 juvenile seen on the River Piddle
Mediterranean Gull	Did not breed	Courtship (2 pairs) and mating (1 pair) observed on site. Thought to be birds nesting in Poole Harbour
Barn Owl	Confirmed	A pair nested upstream in the Piddle Valley
Kestrel	Confirmed	A pair with 1 juvenile seen. May have bred off site
Jay	Confirmed	1 juvenile seen on the edge of the site
Magpie	Confirmed	A pair with 2 juveniles seen
Jackdaw	Confirmed	1 juvenile seen being fed in nearby garden
Blue Tit	Confirmed	1 juvenile seen on site. Also 1 pair bred in a nearby garden nest box
Great Tit	Confirmed	1 juvenile seen, but more pairs may have bred
Skylark	Confirmed	1 juvenile seen on farm adjoining the site in June. A pair seen on site into mid-June
House Martin	Confirmed	6 nests on new housing estate adjoining the site
Cetti's Warbler	Confirmed	2 juveniles seen in July. Singing males in May suggest 7 pairs
Long-tailed Tit	Confirmed	1 juvenile seen. Also nestbuilding seen in spring
Chiffchaff	Probable	5 or 6 singing birds recorded into early June
Reed Warbler	Confirmed	1 juvenile seen in late July. 7 singing males heard into late May
Blackcap	Probable	Singing birds recorded into June. A female was carrying food maybe to a nest with young in June
Lesser Whitethroat	Probable	2 singing males heard into late June
Whitethroat	Probable	Up to 4 singing males, with 2 staying into June
Wren	Confirmed	1 juvenile seen, but likely to have been several pairs
Starling	Confirmed	2 juveniles in a nearby garden in May. Probably bred on site, where juveniles were also seen
Blackbird	Confirmed	1 juvenile seen, but several pairs likely to have bred
Song Thrush	Probable	Likely to have been at least 1 pair nesting on site

Robin	Confirmed	1 juvenile seen, but several pairs likely to have bred
Stonechat	Confirmed	4 pairs bred and at least 3 were successful with broods of 2, 2 and 3 juveniles seen
House Sparrow	Confirmed	1 juvenile seen, but several pairs likely to have bred
Dunnock	Probable	Likely to have been several pairs nesting on site
Grey Wagtail	Confirmed	2 pairs, both successful with 1 and 2 juveniles seen
Pied Wagtail	Confirmed	1 juvenile seen with an adult
Chaffinch	Probable	A male was seen carrying food, maybe to a nest, in June. Likely to be several pairs nesting on site
Bullfinch	Confirmed	1 pair seen with 2 juveniles
Greenfinch	Probable	Singing birds heard into mid-June
Linnet	Confirmed	Adults feeding juveniles in a flock of 24 birds in early June. 1 pair likely to have bred on site
Goldfinch	Confirmed	3 juveniles seen, from a nest either on site or in a nearby garden. Several pairs likely to have bred
Reed Bunting	Probable	6 pairs seen into early June

3.3 Juvenile Goldcrests were seen on North West Walls in July 1999 during an ecological study of Wareham Walls increasing the total number of breeding species recorded on the Common to 37. Juvenile Dunnocks were also recorded during the same survey on 14 August 1999. This (together with Goldcrest) increases the number of species confirmed breeding on the site to 28 (with 8 probable breeders and 1 possible breeder).



Sunset over Wareham Common north of the railway on 10 August

4. Birds Recorded in Previous Years and the Wareham Common List

4.1 Five species were recorded in previous years, but were not seen in late 2019 or 2020. These species are listed below, with some commentary where relevant.

Goldeneye

Year listing got off to a good start with a male Goldeneye on the Common south of the railway on 06 January 2001. The bird was on the River Piddle below North Mill.

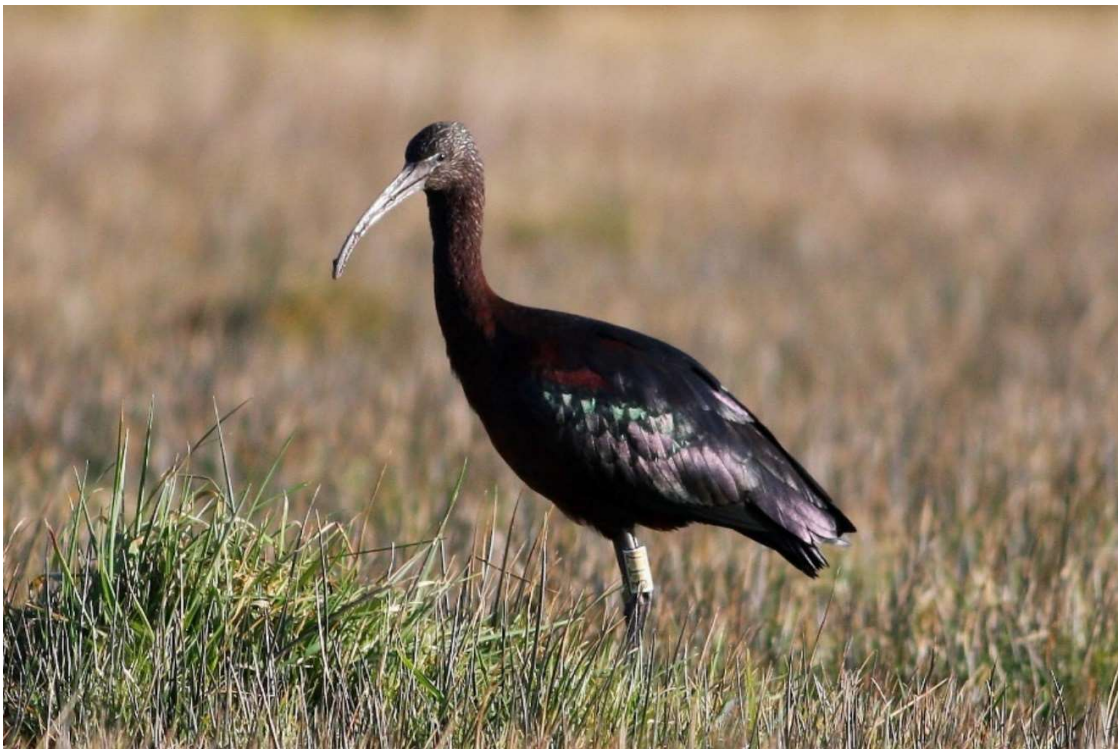
Little Gull

A first winter bird was seen on the Common south of the railway on 24 November 2008.

This is the text from the original e-mail: *"First winter type Little Gull on Wareham Common this morning with about 20 Black Headed Gulls. The birds are just south of the by-pass where it crosses the River Piddle to the north west of the town. Drive thru year tick a distinct possibility!! The birds seemed fairly settled and stayed put when dog walkers went past. You can also drive onto the top end of the Common if you carry on through Stretche Road car park (off West Street opposite Purbeck Council offices) bear left and keep going past the health centre / hospital. From here you can also probably twitch it without getting out of the car!"*

Glossy Ibis

A Glossy Ibis was first seen on the Common north of the railway on 12 February 2012. It re-appeared on 18 February and stayed until 26 February 2012. The bird was ringed (3T7) on the Donana Biological Reserve in Spain in May 2004 as a first-year bird. It was seen at Oued Massa, Morocco on 29 April 2005. Before arriving at Wareham Common it was seen at Lower Tamar Lakes in Devon on 20 January 2012.



Glossy Ibis 3T7 in February 2012 (Peter Moore)

Dipper

A Dipper was flushed close to the weir at North Mill on the Common south of the railway on 20 March 2011.

Red-backed Shrike

A female Red-backed Shrike was recorded on the 'Piddle Water Meadows' north of the railway on 06 June 2007.

- 4.2 In 2020 (and late 2019) a total of 121 species were recorded on the Common. 3 of these species (White Stork, White-tailed Eagle and Rose-coloured Starling) are subject to acceptance by the Dorset Rarities Panel, upon receipt of supporting documentation. Together with the 5 birds listed above, the 'all time' Wareham Common List stood at 126 species at the end of 2020.
- 4.3 In January 2021, 2 additional species were added to the 'all time' Wareham Common list.
- 4.4 On 01 January, a Great White Egret was seen flying west over the Common south of the railway, later returning east over the Common north of the railway. On 04 January, a Great White Egret was seen next to the River Frome near Holmebridge, which may have been the same bird.
- 4.5 On 10 January, a male Wigeon was with the Mallard on the floods south of the bypass.
- 4.6 These additional 2 species brought the 'all time' Wareham Common list to 128 by the end of January 2021.



Sunset over the floods south of the bypass on 31 December