



Independent report on surveys in winter 2022/23 for Eurasian Curlew, Brent Goose, and other wetland bird species at Northney Farm, Hampshire

Authors: Prof Russell B Wynn and Marcus Ward (Directors, Wild New Forest)

Client: Alex Laney (Land and Planning Manager, Dandara Southern Ltd)

Date submitted: 31 March 2023 (final version)

Executive Summary

- Detailed wetland bird surveys were again conducted in winter 2022/23 to support the assessment of Northney Farm as a potential mitigation site for Eurasian Curlew, Dark-bellied Brent Goose, and other wetland species, to offset a proposed development of up to 653 houses and associated infrastructure at nearby Campdown; both sites are linked to the Chichester and Langstone Harbour Special Protection Area (SPA) and are classified as Functionally Linked Land (FLL).
- Survey methodology was identical to the previous two winters and broadly consistent with earlier Solent Wader and Brent Goose Strategy (SWBGS) surveys, but with greater spatial and temporal resolution to ensure a full understanding of the ecological functioning of the potential mitigation site for the target species - the methodology has previously been scrutinised and approved by the SWBGS Steering Group.
- A total of eight full-day surveys were successfully conducted at Northney Farm in the four-month period from Nov 2021 to Feb 2022, totalling about 55 hours of survey effort and mostly targeting spring tidal periods.
- The surveys again confirmed the importance of Northney Farm as a high-tide refuge for Curlews with a peak count of 153 birds (*cf.* 200 in the previous two winters); however, disturbance due to farming operations and wintering raptors meant that the regular high-tide roost was only sporadically occupied, and there were few observations of birds feeding on pasture fields.
- The surveys again confirmed that Northney Farm is of national importance for Brent Geese, with a peak count of 1650 feeding on pasture representing about 1.5% of the UK wintering population; the survey again confirmed a switch from winter wheat as the preferred food source to improved grassland (pasture) as the winter progressed.
- These additional data underline the importance of Northney Farm as an integral part of the network of feeding and roosting sites utilised by Curlew and Brent Goose adjacent to the SPA; they also provide further reassurance that the pasture field at H59A and adjacent coastal grazing marsh and seawall at H59C-3 consistently attract the highest numbers of both species.

- Several notable wetland bird species were again recorded at Northney Farm, including several wildfowl that are qualifying features of the SPA, and three nationally rare wintering species (Cattle Egret, Whimbrel and Sandwich Tern).



Image taken on 08 Feb 2023 showing several hundred Brent Geese flushed from their favoured pasture field (H59A) at Northney Farm, with cattle on the coastal grazing marsh (H59C-3) in the foreground and the pine tree and nesting platform favoured by the wintering Peregrine also visible.

1. Introduction

The client has commissioned independent surveys to support identification of mitigation sites for Eurasian Curlew, Dark-bellied Brent Goose, and other wetland bird species, to offset a proposed development of 653 houses and associated infrastructure at Campdown. This development is expected to negatively impact the integrity of the Chichester and Langstone Harbour Special Protection Area (SPA) through removal of Functionally Linked Land. Concerns have been raised around Curlew numbers using the proposed development site, with previous surveys indicating that over 100 birds have used the site for feeding and roosting, consistent with data provided by local observers; this potentially makes it an important terrestrial site for the species in the SPA catchment. This report outlines the survey results from Northney Farm in winter 2022/23 and builds upon those obtained in the previous two winters (Wynn and Ward, 2021, 2022); together these survey data will inform discussions about the suitability of Northney Farm as a mitigation option for the proposed development site.

2. Background to the survey site at Northney Farm

A previous report (Wynn, 2020) provided independent assessment of a proposed mitigation site for the Campdown development, at Broadmarsh Coastal Park. This report identified several issues regarding the suitability of this site for the target species, consistent with concerns raised by Natural England and other consultees, and consequently a series of six alternative potential mitigation sites were identified, based in part on guidelines provided by the Solent Waders and Brent Goose Strategy (SWBGS, 2020).

Northney Farm on Hayling Island was identified as one of the potential mitigation sites and is listed as H59 in the SWBGS (Fig. 2.1 and Table 2.1); it has been categorised as Functionally Linked Land that contributes to the Chichester and Langstone Harbours SPA. Most of the surveyed area at Northney Farm is <5 km from the proposed development site at Campdown and comprises ~50 ha of lowland pasture and crop fields that are mostly listed as core and primary support areas in the SWBGS; these are located landwards of ~27 ha of coastal grazing marsh and seawall designated as SPA in the Hampshire sector of Chichester Harbour, making a total contiguous area of ~77 ha (roughly 1.5 km x 0.75 km). Although located adjacent to the villages of Northney and North Hayling, there is no formal public access to this area, although there is a permitted path around part of the site. It should be noted that there is a 1.6 ha area of sea defence (listed as H94 in the SWBGS) that also forms part of the SPA and is an integral part of the site.

The site codes used in the SWBGS do not always take account of important field boundaries or variations in habitat type, so a preliminary site visit was conducted at Northney Farm prior to surveys commencing to determine the optimal geographic unit for survey counts; these mostly align with existing SWBGS site codes but contain an additional numeric identifier to allow a greater level of detail to be determined if required, e.g. H59C-3 (Fig. 2.1).

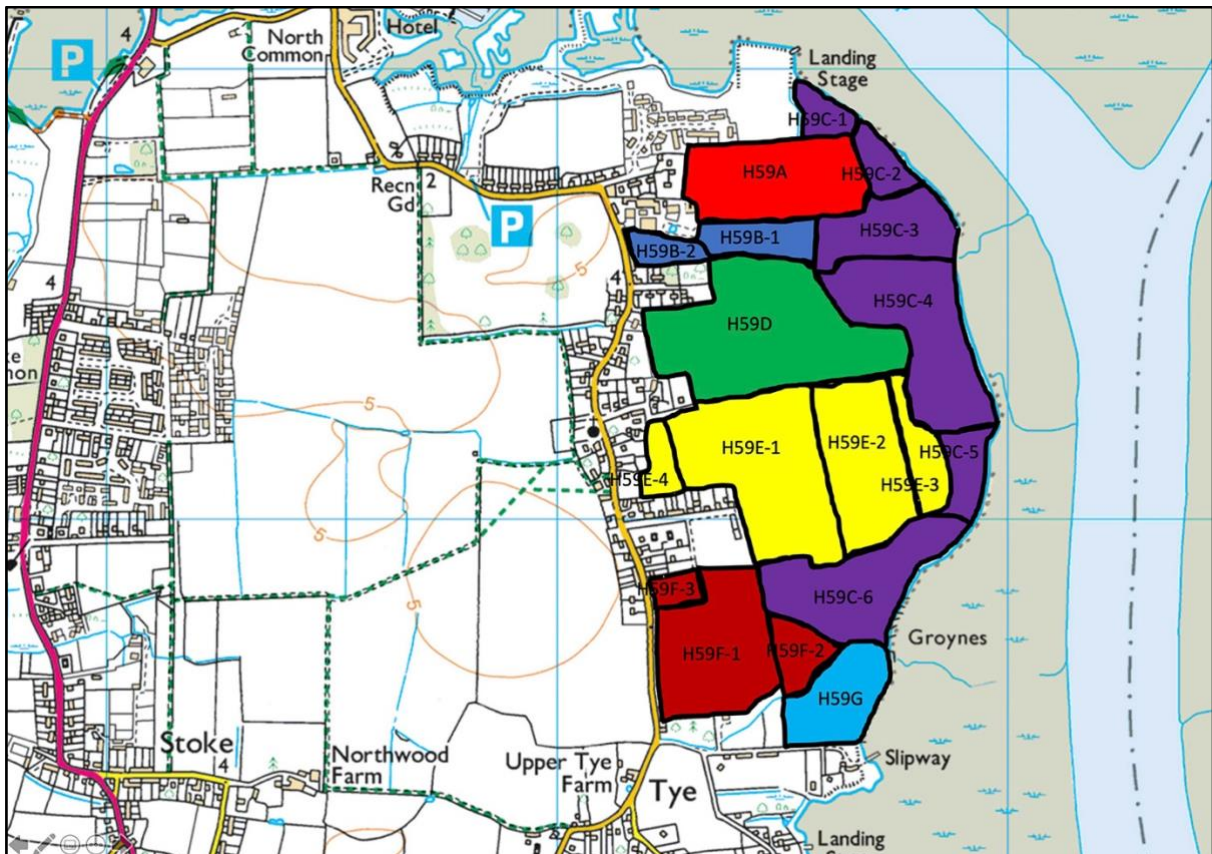


Fig. 2.1: Site map of Northney Farm, showing SWBGS mapping units used for the 2022/23 survey; coloured blocks correspond to sub-sites listed in Table 2.1, but these have been further subdivided for this survey to account for habitat variations such as sward length.

Site code	Area (ha)	Classification	Description
H59A	6.92	Core	Pasture
H59B	2.75	Secondary	Pasture
H59C	22.72	SPA	Coastal grazing marsh
H59D	12.79	Core	Pasture
H59E	19.12	Core	Winter wheat/cereals
H59F	9.03	Primary	Pasture
H59G	3.97	SPA	Coastal grazing marsh

Table 2.1: Details of sub-sites at Northney Farm as listed in the SWBGS.

3. Survey methodology

Survey work at Northney Farm was conducted from November 2022 to February 2023 (Table 3.1). Surveys were completed roughly every two weeks throughout this four-month period (eight surveys in total) amounting to 55.5 hours of survey effort. As the intention was to build upon results obtained in the previous two winters, the primary focus was on identifying fine-scale habitat use of the target species over spring high-tide periods, as previous surveys identified highest numbers of birds using the site at these periods.

Date	Day	Survey time (hrs)	HT time	Height	Phase
09/11/2022	Wednesday	0830-1600 (7.5)	1142	4.9	Spring
25/11/2022	Friday	0800-1430 (6.5)	1151	4.9	Spring
09/12/2022	Friday	0845-1615 (7.5)	1154	4.6	Spring
04/01/2023	Wednesday	0800-1500 (7)	0951	4.2	Neap
11/01/2023	Wednesday	0830-1430 (6)	1348	4.4	Neap
23/01/2023	Monday	0815-1515 (7)	1210	4.9	Spring
08/02/2023	Wednesday	0815-1515 (7)	1253	4.5	Neap
23/02/2023	Thursday	0815-1515 (7)	1336	5.0	Spring

Table 3.1: Completed survey dates at Northney Farm, together with relevant tidal data.

Surveys were broadly conducted from 'dawn to dusk' to assess diurnal variations in site use, with survey duration averaging about seven hours per visit. Surveys were designed to ensure thorough coverage of the whole site during both the morning and afternoon periods, while minimising disturbance. Weather conditions (e.g. temperature, wind vector and velocity, cloud cover, precipitation) were recorded during both the morning and afternoon periods to assess influence of meteorological parameters, and any incidents of extreme weather.

All sightings of Curlew, Brent Goose and other wetland species were recorded, with standard parameters including date, time, location, species, number and behaviour (e.g. feeding, roosting). Any observed pressures were also recorded, such as recreational disturbance and avian predators, particularly where they directly interacted with and/or influenced the target species.

Although wintering Curlew and Brent Goose were primary target species due to their previous occurrence at the proposed development site, all wetland bird species were included in the survey. Particular attention was focussed on designated features of interest in the SPA (primarily wintering waders and wildfowl) but also on those species that are not listed in the SPA citation but that should be taken into consideration, e.g. recently established breeding species with nationally important populations within the SPA, such as Cattle Egret and Mediterranean Gull.

This methodology has previously been scrutinised and approved by the SWBGS Steering Group, and it has also previously been agreed that the results listed below will be provided to the SWBGS and made available to other stakeholders upon request on an 'open access' basis once cleared by the Client.

4. Survey results

Numbers of the two target species, Curlew and Brent Goose, are tabulated below (Tables 4.1 and 4.2).

Date	Number	HT time	Height	Phase	Notes
09/11/2022	153 (18)	1142	4.9	Spring	Roost on coastal grazing marsh
25/11/2022	11 (33)	1151	4.9	Spring	Roost on coastal grazing marsh
09/12/2022	3 (53)	1154	4.6	Spring	Briefly landed on pasture
04/01/2023	7 (125)	0951	4.2	Neap	Roost on coastal grazing marsh
11/01/2023	1 (96)	1348	4.4	Neap	Roost on coastal grazing marsh
23/01/2023	5 (90)	1210	4.9	Spring	Roost on coastal grazing marsh
08/02/2023	8 (124)	1253	4.5	Neap	Roost on coastal grazing marsh
23/02/2023	91 (24)	1336	5.0	Spring	Roost on coastal grazing marsh

Table 4.1: Peak counts of Curlew at Northney Farm on each survey date (numbers in brackets refer to birds seen offshore of the seawall)

Date	Number	HT time	Height	Phase	Notes
09/11/2022	760	1142	4.9	Spring	Feeding on winter wheat
25/11/2022	935	1151	4.9	Spring	Feeding on winter wheat
09/12/2022	805	1154	4.6	Spring	Feeding on pasture / winter wheat
04/01/2023	74 (102)	0951	4.2	Neap	Feeding on pasture / coastal marsh
11/01/2023	306 (700)	1348	4.4	Neap	Feeding on pasture
23/01/2023	1 (335)	1210	4.9	Spring	Feeding on pasture
08/02/2023	1650	1253	4.5	Neap	Feeding on pasture
23/02/2023	925	1336	5.0	Spring	Feeding on coastal grazing marsh

Table 4.2: Peak counts of Brent Goose at Northney Farm on each survey date (numbers in brackets refer to additional birds seen offshore of the seawall or at nearby North Common)

The Brent Geese referred to above were Dark-bellied Brent Geese (*Branta bernicla bernicla*), although a single Pale-bellied Brent Goose (*B. b. hrota*) was also observed on 09 Dec 2022.

Other waders and wildfowl on site included peak counts of 80 Teal*, 75 Lapwing, 60 Canada Geese, 47 Golden Plover, 20 Wigeon*, ten Redshank*, ten Mallard, 11 Snipe, six Black-tailed Godwits, five Oystercatchers, four Gadwall, two Shelduck*, one Greenshank, and one Whimbrel (very scarce in winter in the UK). Those species marked with an asterisk are SPA Qualifying Features (in addition to Curlew and Brent Goose).

Other notable wetland bird species included up to three Cattle Egrets and four Little Egrets feeding around cattle on pasture fields, and up to 1000 Black-headed Gulls and four adult Mediterranean Gulls (also feeding on pasture fields). Further details are provided in the Appendix.

5. Discussion

New data collected during these additional surveys in winter 2022/23 provide increased confidence in the importance of Northney Farm for Curlew, Brent Goose, and other wetland bird species, while also revealing further evidence for spatial and temporal variations in fine-scale habitat use on and around the site. Details of national and international importance thresholds are available in the survey report for winter 2020/21 (Wynn and Ward, 2021).

5.1. Curlew at Northney Farm

The regular Curlew high-tide roost on the coastal grazing marsh at H59C-3 was only occupied sporadically, with a peak count of 153 birds on 09 Nov 2022 (which is lower than the peak count of ~200 birds in the previous two winters). On most survey dates the local birds were utilising the nearby roost at Gutner Point, which is about 1 km to the south, evidenced by several counts of 90-125 birds seen moving south in the two-hour period prior to high tide. A combination of disturbance (including the local farmer releasing rockets and deploying a gas gun to scare off Brent Geese) and the presence of a juvenile Peregrine occupying a winter territory centred on the regular roost at H59C-3 is thought to be the main reason for the switch. The Peregrine was seen regularly from late Nov 2022 to early Feb 2023; for example, on all three survey dates in Jan 2023, Curlews that landed on the seawall at the regular H59C-3 roost were flushed by the Peregrine and departed south.



Photo from 09 Nov 2022 showing a flock of 150 Curlews roosting on and adjacent to the seawall at H59C-3.

Up to four Curlews were seen roosting on the seawall and adjacent coastal grazing marsh at H59C-6 in Jan-Feb 2023, presumed to be displaced from the regular roost at H59C-3. As with winter 2021/22, there were very few observations of Curlews feeding on pasture, with a peak of just three briefly on H59A on 09 Dec 2022.

6.2. Brent Geese at Northney Farm

The usual early winter focus on winter wheat was again noted, with the first three surveys in Nov-Dec 2022 producing counts of 760-935 birds utilising this food source on H59E. They were flushed several times by a local farmer on 09 Nov and by a gas gun on 25 Nov, although they soon got used to the latter deterrent and were even observed feeding within a few metres of it!



Photo taken on 25 Nov 2022 showing feeding Brent Geese in the vicinity of an active gas gun at H59E-1.

During Dec 2022 and Jan 2023, a total of 250-600 Brent Geese were occasionally seen feeding on pasture at H59A and H59F-1, with the remainder of the local flock apparently feeding off-site to the northwest in the North Common area (as in winter 2021/22). On 08 Feb 2023, a total of 1650 birds were counted moving onshore to feed on pasture at H59A, although they were soon flushed by a tractor chain harrowing and rolling the field that caused them to disperse widely off-site; this is the largest count of Brent Geese on the Northney Farm site in the last three winters and represents ~1.5% of the UK wintering population.

On the final survey date (23 Feb 2023) a total of 925 Brent Geese moved onshore to feed on the coastal grazing marsh at H59C-3 although, as with the roosting Curlews there, they were flushed by two hunting Marsh Harriers. Warlier in the winter, the Brent Geese were also observed being flushed by hunting Buzzards and Peregrines, and on one occasion by walkers on the permitted path.

Observations over the last three winters show that between 1-1.5% of the UK wintering population of Brent Geese regularly occupies the SPA between Gutner Point and North Common, and that Northney Farm is a critical component of this local site network; the flock typically targets winter wheat during the Nov-Dec period, but increasingly uses pasture fields as the winter progresses.

5.3. Other notable wetland bird species at Northney Farm

Several wetland bird species were again seen in locally or regionally significant numbers, as outlined below:

- Up to three Cattle Egrets, four Little Egrets, and five Mediterranean Gulls were seen feeding on pasture fields; these nationally scarce species are presumably birds from nearby breeding colonies. In addition, up to 1000 Black-headed Gulls were seen foraging over pasture fields on several dates, with H59E-1 and H59F-1 being particularly favoured.
- Sandwich Tern and Whimbrel are relatively rare in winter in the UK (probably <<50 individuals), but both species were regularly recorded offshore of Northney Farm. Up to three Sandwich Terns were seen on several dates and one Whimbrel was seen with Curlews at the high-tide roost at H59C-3.

5.4. Other notable bird species at Northney Farm

In addition to regular sightings of Buzzard, Sparrowhawk, and Kestrel, there were also regular sightings of Marsh Harrier and Peregrine (including a wintering juvenile female that was observed chasing Teal, Grey Plover, and Dunlin) and single records of Red Kite and Merlin. A pair of Ravens were seen on several dates, and Kingfisher and Water Pipit were both wintering on site.



Image taken on 09 Dec 2022 showing the juvenile female Peregrine that occupied a winter territory adjacent to H59A and H59C-3, the presence of this bird likely contributed to reduced counts of Curlew and Brent Geese in that area for much of the winter.

5.5. Recreation pressures at Northney Farm



There were few observed incidents of target bird species being flushed other than those related to hunting raptors or farming operations as outlined above, with just one incident of Brent Geese being flushed by walkers on the permitted path. The reduced number of recreational users observed in winter 2022/23 compared to previous winters may be linked to the increasingly treacherous state of the permitted path on the seawall.

References

Solent Waders and Brent Goose Strategy (2020)

<https://solentwbgs.wordpress.com>

Wynn, R.B. (2020) *Independent report on proposed mitigation measures for Eurasian Curlew, Brent Goose and other wetland bird species at Broadmarsh Coastal Park, Hampshire*. Commercial in Confidence Report to Persimmon Homes by Wild New Forest, 14 pp.

Wynn, R.B and Ward, M. (2021) *Independent report on surveys in winter 2020/21 for Eurasian Curlew, Brent Goose, and other wetland bird species at Campdown, Hampshire*. Commercial in Confidence Report to Hampshire Homes by Wild New Forest, 10 pp.

Wynn, R.B. and Ward, M. (2022) *Independent report on surveys in winter 2021/22 for Eurasian Curlew, Brent Goose, and other wetland bird species at Campdown, Hampshire*. Commercial in Confidence Report to Hampshire Homes by Wild New Forest, 13 pp.

Appendix: Survey Forms

Winter Wetland Bird Survey Form

Site: Northney Farm

Date: 09/11/22

Time: 0830-1600 hrs (7.5 hrs)

Observer: Russell Wynn

Weather: WSW4-5, mild, breezy, and sunny, with increasing cloud and a light shower

Tide: High tide at 1142 (4.9m, spring)

Peak count of Brent Goose: 760 on site

Peak count of Curlew: 153 on site and 18 offshore

Narrative: Curlew began gathering over their usual roost site on the coastal grazing marsh at H59C-3 from 0945 hrs (although one had previously been seen on H59C-1 at 0925 hrs). The first 18 birds to arrive subsequently headed south towards the Gutner Point roost, but the remainder landed on the seawall and reached a peak of 153 birds at 1046 hrs; they remained at roost until 1245 hrs when flushed (see below), with most departing south to Gutner Point and just five remaining until the falling tide.

Brent Geese were observed moving on to winter wheat fields at H59E1/2 from mid-morning onwards, and 600 were counted there at 1010 hrs, including one bird of the pale-bellied race. They were flushed offshore at 1020 hrs by two people walking around the perimeter of the field, but at least 250 had returned by 1100 hrs, increasing to 665 by 1140 hrs. A farmer in a 4x4 truck then flushed all birds on site when releasing a bird-scaring rocket from the corner of H59E-1 at 1245 hrs. Most of the Brent Geese had resettled by 1300 hrs but were again flushed by a Marsh Harrier at 1343 hrs. They again resettled and had built up to a peak of 760 by 1420 hrs. They were then repeatedly (deliberately) flushed by a farmer with a dog at 1450 hrs but returned soon after. Finally, 14 were seen feeding on H59C-3 with Canada Geese at 1520 hrs.

Other notable wildfowl observations included up to 60 Canada Geese moving between H59C-3 and H59E-2, and a flock of mixed dabbling ducks on H59C-2 that included 80 Teal, 20 Wigeon, ten Mallards and four Gadwall, with a further 55 Wigeon seen offshore. Other notable waders included at least six Black-tailed Godwits, one Whimbrel, and one Oystercatcher with the Curlew roost at H59C-3, a Greenshank heard overhead, and 50 Lapwing over (probably flushed from the intertidal on the rising tide). Also of note was a flock of up to 350 Black-headed Gulls feeding on H59E-2 for most of the day, which also included three adult Mediterranean Gulls.

Raptors included an immature male Marsh Harrier moving west at 1343 hrs, two Buzzards, and one Kestrel. Other notable bird species included single Grey Heron, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Green Woodpecker, Water Pipit, Rock Pipit, and Reed Bunting, two Grey Wagtails, two Skylarks, four Stonechats (two pairs), ten Meadow Pipits, and 25 Starlings. Three Sandwich Terns and a Great Crested Grebe were offshore, and at least four Little Egrets were on and around the site.

The most notable mammal sighting was a buck Muntjac Deer persistently pursuing a doe Roe Deer, at one point even venturing across the open expanse of the coastal grazing marsh at H59C-3. Other mammals seen included a further two Roe Deer, Rabbits, and Grey Squirrel. A Red Admiral butterfly was also noted.

Recreational activities: In addition to the flushing incidents recorded above, two people were noted moving along the seawall (off the permitted path) towards the Curlew roost at 1030 hrs but were intercepted and deflected back to the permitted path before they disturbed the birds. A further three walkers were seen on the permitted path on the seawall in the afternoon.

Winter Wetland Bird Survey Form

Site: Northney Farm

Date: 25/11/22

Time: 0800-1430 hrs (6.5 hrs)

Observer: Russell Wynn

Weather: WSW2-3, sunny and mild

Tide: High tide at 1151 (4.9m, spring)

Peak count of Brent Goose: 935 on site

Peak count of Curlew: 11 on site and 33 offshore

Narrative: A group of 11 Curlew landed on the seawall at H59C-3 on the rising tide at 1035 but were notably flighty and soon departed south. In total, 44 Curlew were recorded moving south towards the Gutner Point roost from 1015 onwards - their reluctance to use the regular high-tide roost at H59C-3 may be linked to deployment of a gas gun nearby (see below). In contrast, a Whimbrel and up to five Oystercatchers were seen roosting on the seawall at H59C-3 over the high-tide period.

Brent Geese were observed feeding on winter wheat at H59E1/2 from mid-morning onwards. The deployment of a gas gun in the field initially made them flighty, but they became more relaxed through the day, and by mid-afternoon they ignored its regular discharges. The bulk of the flock was initially feeding on winter wheat off-site to the west of St Peter's Road but were flushed at 0945 and transferred onto H59E-2 where 680 were counted at 1000. A further 245 birds moved onto H59E-2 from offshore, increasing the total to 925 birds at 1025; this flock remained on H59E-1/2 until 1350 when all birds were flushed offshore by a Buzzard.

A flock of 60 Canada Geese and two Brent Geese that were on H59E-2 at 0910 were flushed by the gas gun and transferred to H59C-3 where they remained for the rest of the day. They were joined in the afternoon by a further eight Brent Geese. Other wildfowl on site included up to six Teal and seven Mallards, while a flock of up to 120 Black-headed Gulls were seen feeding on H59F-1 and up to 12 Moorhens were on the ponds bordering H59B1/2.

Notable sightings offshore included two Avocets feeding on the intertidal, a female Eider that departed south, and two each of Great Crested Grebe, Red-breasted Merganser, and Sandwich Tern.

Raptors included a female or immature Marsh Harrier moving east at 0845, and one Buzzard. Other notable bird species included single Grey Heron, Water Rail, Kingfisher, Green Woodpecker, Grey Wagtail, Reed Bunting, two Rock Pipits, two Goldcrests, four Little Egrets, four Stonechats, six Skylarks, and 25 Meadow Pipits.

A buck Muntjac Deer was again seen crossing the coastal grazing marsh at H59C-3 early in the morning. Other mammals seen included two Roe Deer, Fox, Rabbit, and Grey Squirrel, and an immature Common Seal was offshore.

Recreational activities: A total of five people and four dogs were observed on the permitted path during the day, but no disturbance incidents were observed.

Winter Wetland Bird Survey Form

Site: Northney Farm

Date: 09/12/22

Time: 0845-1615 hrs (7.5 hrs)

Observer: Russell Wynn

Weather: NNE2-3, cold and bright

Tide: High tide at 1154 (4.6m, spring)

Peak count of Brent Goose: 805 on site

Peak count of Curlew: 3 on site and 53 offshore

Narrative: A total of 53 Curlew were seen flying south towards the Gutner Point roost on the rising tide from 1020, but none were seen using the on-site roost at H59C-3 (there was no obvious reason for this, as the gas gun that was on site last month was not present). Three Curlew landed briefly in H59A at 1426, but soon departed offshore.

A total of 270 Brent Geese were offshore on the rising tide at 0945 but departed north. A flock of 165 Brent Geese grazing on H59F-1 at 1300 moved on to H59E-1 at 1340. An estimated 600 Brent Geese that had been feeding on H59A were flushed by a Peregrine at 1400, with about 300 of these heading north offshore and 300 moving south, with the latter no doubt contributing to the 480 counted back on H59F-1 at 1515 (with just 25 remaining on H59E-1). A flock of 300 was back on H59A at 1530 but were flushed soon after, with 170 moving offshore, four moving onto H59C-3, and the rest departing north (a single Pale-bellied Brent Geese was among this flock).

Other wildfowl on site included six Mallards and 25 Teal, mostly in ponds and ditches bordering H59B, while other waders seen on site included up to 65 Lapwing and 47 Golden Plover on H59E1/2 during the day, a further ten Lapwing on H59B-1 at 1545, ten Snipe flushed from H59C-6, and a single Snipe flushed from H59C-3. In addition, single Whimbrel and Greenshank were heard offshore.

Raptors on site included a female or immature Merlin flying east, a juvenile female Peregrine that was observed chasing a Teal, and two Buzzards, Sparrowhawk and Kestrel. Two Cattle Egrets were seen with cattle on H59C-3 in the morning. Other notable bird species included single Grey Heron, Water Rail, Green Woodpecker, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Rock Pipit, and Reed Bunting, two Grey Wagtails, three Stonechats, four Little Egrets, and five Skylarks. A Song Thrush found freshly dead on H59C-6 was thought to be a cold weather victim.

Notable sightings offshore included 41 immature Cormorants feeding in two large flocks, two Red-breasted Mergansers, and a Sandwich Tern. Mammals included five doe Roe Deer and a Grey Squirrel.

Recreational activities: A total of three people and two dogs were observed on the permitted path during the day, but no disturbance incidents were observed.

Winter Wetland Bird Survey Form

Site: Northney Farm

Date: 04/01/23

Time: 0800-1500 hrs (7 hrs)

Observer: Marcus Ward

Weather: WSW6-7, dull, cloudy, and mild

Tide: High tide at 0951 (4.2m, neap)

Peak count of Brent Goose: 74 on site and 102 offshore

Peak count of Curlew: 7 on site and 125 offshore

Narrative: A group of seven Curlew landed on the seawall at H59C-3 as the tide started to rise at 0817 but were flushed by a young female Peregrine and departed south. A total of 48 Curlew were then recorded moving south towards Gutner Point on the rising tide, while at the same time 77 Curlew were counted roosting on the seawall on the opposite side of the channel at Wickor Point. No waders were subsequently recorded roosting on site over the high tide period - their reluctance to use the regular high tide roost may be due to the presence of the Peregrine and/or exposure to the strong WSW breeze.

Brent Geese remained offshore for most of the day, with a peak count of 102 on the intertidal at 1315; in addition, an estimated 500 were feeding on the saltmarsh at Gutner Point for most of the day. At high tide, 22 Brent Geese joined eight Shelduck at the high tide roost at H59C-3 but were also flushed by the juvenile female Peregrine and departed south towards Gutner Point. At 1350, six Brent Geese landed in area H59A and started feeding, and by 1415 numbers had increased to 74 (including 10 juveniles); these birds were still present when the survey concluded at 1500.

Three Canada Geese were on H59C-3 from 1230 where they remained for the rest of the day. Other wildfowl on site included 56 Teal and six Mallards, and up to four Moorhens were also recorded. A large flock of over 1000 Black-headed Gulls were seen feeding on H59E-1 for most of the afternoon, and two Snipe were flushed from area H59C-6.

Raptors included a female or immature Marsh Harrier hunting across the area from 0815 to 0850 before moving west (probably the same individual was seen later in the day over Thorney Island). Two Buzzards were also recorded, and the immature female Peregrine was observed making several unsuccessful attempts to take Grey Plover and Dunlin on the foreshore. Other notable bird species included Kingfisher, Green and Great Spotted Woodpecker, Grey Wagtail, Rock Pipit, two Little Egrets, two Grey Herons, three Skylarks, and four Stonechats. Notable sightings offshore included two Great Crested Grebes, three Sandwich Terns, and eight Red-breasted Mergansers.

A buck Muntjac Deer was seen together with a Roe Deer in area H59G early morning. Other mammals included Rabbit, Grey Squirrel, and a Common Seal offshore.

Recreational activities: No people or dogs were recorded site during the day, most likely due to the strong wind making conditions rather uncomfortable!

Winter Wetland Bird Survey Form

Site: Northney Farm

Date: 11/01/23

Time: 0830-1430 hrs (6 hrs)

Observer: Russell Wynn

Weather: WSW4-7, mild, breezy, and bright, then heavy showers and strong gusty winds

Tide: High tide at 1348 (4.4m, neap)

Peak count of Brent Goose: 306 on site and up to 700 offshore

Peak count of Curlew: 1 on site and 96 offshore

Narrative: A total of 96 Curlew were seen flying south offshore towards the Gutner Point roost on the rising tide from 1200-1300, but only one was seen using the on-site roost at H59C-3 and that was flushed by the regular Peregrine prior to high tide and departed south.

A total of 500 Brent Geese were offshore on the exposed intertidal mid-morning, with many of these heading northwest off-site towards North Common. Two were briefly on H59C-3 at 0900 and five were on H59A at 0934, when an estimated 250 were seen apparently landing on H59F-1. However, only 18 were seen when H59F-1 was checked at 1015, and these were flushed by a Buzzard shortly after. A singleton was on H59E-2 at 1100, and then 280 arrived on H59A at 1336 from Thorney Island, with a further 200 over northwest.

Other wildfowl on site included at least 15 Mallards and 75 Teal, mostly in ponds and ditches bordering H59A and H59B, up to 15 Canada Geese including 11 that landed on H59C-3, and two Shelduck that briefly landed on H59C-2 on the rising tide, while other waders seen on site included a single Oystercatcher briefly on the seawall at H59C-3 at high tide.

Raptors on site included the regular juvenile female Peregrine around H59A, an adult female Peregrine, and single Buzzard and Sparrowhawk. Other notable bird species included single Kingfisher and Reed Bunting, two Skylarks, and 20 Meadow Pipits.

Notable sightings offshore included three Red-breasted Mergansers, a Great Crested Grebe, and a Sandwich Tern. Mammals included the regular buck Muntjac Deer again accompanying a doe Roe Deer, as well as a further three Roe Deer.

Recreational activities: One walker was seen on the permitted path on the seawall.

Winter Wetland Bird Survey Form

Site: Northney Farm

Date: 23/01/23

Time: 0815-1515 hrs (7 hrs)

Observer: Russell Wynn

Weather: NNE1-3, cold and sunny with scattered high cloud arriving

Tide: High tide at 1210 (4.9m, spring)

Peak count of Brent Goose: 1 on site and 335 offshore

Peak count of Curlew: 2 on site and 90 offshore

Narrative: A total of 90 Curlew were seen flying south offshore towards the Gutner Point roost on the rising tide from 1030-1200 (where at least 120 could be seen roosting at 1330), but only one was seen using the on-site roost at H59C-3 and that was flushed by the regular Peregrine prior to high tide and departed south. In addition, one was seen feeding on H59D from 1050-1135, and three were roosting on the seawall at H59C-6 at 1205.

A total of 335 Brent Geese were offshore on the exposed intertidal mid-morning, with many of these heading northwest off-site towards North Common. The only Brent Goose on site was one on H59A with Mallards in the morning.

Other wildfowl on site included at least five Moorhens, 15 Mallards and 50 Teal, mostly in ponds and ditches bordering H59A and H59B, a flock of 28 Canada Geese on H59C-3, a further two Canada Geese on H59B-1, and 81 Shelduck on the water offshore at high tide. Other waders included at least eight Snipe (mostly on H59C-6), at least 49 Lapwing (mostly on H59E), five Oystercatcher roosting on the seawall at H59C-3, and seven Golden Plover that departed west from H59E at 1440.

Raptors on site included the regular juvenile female Peregrine around H59A, as well as two Buzzards, single Sparrowhawk and Kestrel, and a Red Kite to the north. Other notable bird species included single Grey Wagtail and Reed Bunting, two Little Egrets, two Grey Herons, two Green Woodpeckers, two Great Spotted Woodpeckers, two Rock Pipits, two Stonechats, two Ravens flying west, 11 Skylarks and 15 Meadow Pipits. In addition, two Cattle Egrets were seen flying north over Thorney Island.

Notable bird sightings offshore included four Red-breasted Mergansers and three Great Crested Grebes. Mammals on site included the regular buck Muntjac Deer, at least five Roe Deer, two Foxes, Grey Squirrel, and Rabbit.

Recreational activities: None noted.

Winter Wetland Bird Survey Form

Site: Northney Farm

Date: 08/02/23

Time: 0815-1515 hrs (7 hrs)

Observer: Russell Wynn

Weather: ESE1-3, cold but sunny all day

Tide: High tide at 1253 (4.5m, neap)

Peak count of Brent Goose: 1650 feeding on pasture

Peak count of Curlew: Eight on coastal grazing marsh and 124 offshore

Narrative: A total of 124 Curlew were seen flying south offshore towards the Gutner Point roost on the rising tide, but none were seen using the main on-site roost at H59C-3. However, up to eight were roosting on the seawall or feeding on adjacent coastal grazing marsh with Brent Geese at H59C-6 at 1240.

A total of 1650 Brent Geese were offshore on the exposed intertidal at 0900, and these quickly transferred on to H59A where they fed from 0915 to 1000 before being flushed by a tractor; about 1100 birds settled just offshore and 600 flew north towards Warblington. The offshore birds returned to H59A soon after and continued feeding until 1100 when they were again flushed by a tractor, after which they dispersed more widely offshore or towards North Common. The tractor continued with chain harrowing and rolling on H59A for the remainder of the survey period, so the geese didn't return. Other Brent Goose records included two on H59C-3 at 0830, accompanying six Canada Geese, and 450 feeding on coastal grazing marsh at H59C-6 at high tide.

Other wildfowl on site included at least six Mallards, ten Moorhens, and 40 Teal, mostly in ponds and ditches bordering H59A and H59B, while other waders included at least six Snipe (mostly on H59C-6).

Raptors on site included a fem/imm Marsh Harrier moving high east at 1123, two Buzzards, and two Kestrels. Other notable bird species included single Grey Heron, Green Woodpecker, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Grey Wagtail, Water Pipit, and Reed Bunting, two Cattle Egrets, three Little Egrets, three Stonechats, 11 Skylarks, and 11 Meadow Pipits. In addition, a Raven was heard calling distantly over Thorney Island.

Notable bird sightings offshore included single Shoveler and Gadwall, and 11 Red-breasted Mergansers. Mammals on site included at least three Roe Deer, two Foxes, and Rabbit. A Red Admiral butterfly was also of note.

Recreational activities: Two walkers were seen on the permitted path at H59E, and a litter picker was seen working along the shoreline off H59C-2, but no disturbance events were noted.

Winter Wetland Bird Survey Form

Site: Northney Farm

Date: 23/02/23

Time: 0815-1515 hrs (7 hrs)

Observer: Russell Wynn

Weather: NNE4-5, cloudy with drizzle then sunny spells, with a cold northerly breeze

Tide: High tide at 1336 (5.0m, spring)

Peak count of Brent Goose: 925 on coastal grazing marsh

Peak count of Curlew: 91 at high-tide roost and 24 south offshore

Narrative: A peak of 91 Curlew were seen using the high-tide roost at H59C-3, although 24 were flushed at 1315 by two Marsh Harriers hunting nearby and departed south (additional to 24 that were seen earlier heading south towards the Gutner Point roost). Four Curlew seen roosting on the seawall at H59C-6 at 1328 may have been displaced birds from H59C-3. The only observation of a bird feeding onshore was of one on H59C-3 at 0840.

A total of 925 Brent Geese were resting and feeding offshore on the intertidal at 0906, and these had moved onto the coastal grazing marsh at H59C-3 by 1045 (where a separate moribund bird was present throughout the day). The goose flock was flushed by a hunting Marsh Harrier at 1144, and about half departed to the north and half to the south. A flock of 115 birds was back on H59C-3 at 1154 and remained there over the high-tide period.

Other wildfowl on site included at least ten Mallards, four Moorhens, and 30 Teal, mostly in ponds and ditches bordering H59A and H59B, as well as two Canada Geese and two Shelduck on H59C-3. Other waders included at least six Snipe (mostly on H59C-6), three Lapwing offshore, and a Greenshank on H59C-2. In addition, over the high-tide period, three Oystercatchers were roosting on the seawall at H59C-3 and ten Redshank were roosting on the seawall at H59C-6.

Raptors on site included two fem/imm Marsh Harriers seen hunting on several occasions, a Red Kite moving northwest at 1115, two Buzzards, and one Kestrel. Other notable bird species included single Grey Heron, Raven (flying north), Great Spotted Woodpecker, Stonechat, Grey Wagtail, Water Pipit, Chiffchaff, and Reed Bunting, two Skylarks, three Cattle Egrets, three Little Egrets, 15 Linnets, and 25 Meadow Pipits. In addition, five adult Mediterranean Gulls flew over and 25 Black-headed Gulls were feeding on H59F-1.

Notable bird sightings offshore included a Red-breasted Mergansers and five Sandwich Terns. Mammals on site included a buck Muntjac Deer associating with five Roe Deer, and a Grey Squirrel.

Recreational activities: Two individual walkers with one dog each were seen on the permitted path at H59E, but no disturbance was noted.