

REPORT ON BIRDS AT VÄRMDÖ CHURCH

by Tom Arnbom, Värmdö Bird Club
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Background

Värmdö Skjärgård Rotary Club has initiated and is funding a new wetland, 'Kyrkviken', next to Värmdö Church. This is a collaboration with the Church of Sweden and Värmdö Parish, which has consulted with the County Administrative Board of Stockholm and Värmdö Bird Club. Sören Eriksson is leading the work, which is being carried out by tenant farmer Lennart Andersson. Work on the wetland began in late summer 2026 and is due to be completed by autumn 2027.

Surveys conducted in May 2026

In order to see whether any change occurs in the bird fauna once the wetland has been established, Värmdö Bird Club carried out two standardised surveys, on 17 and 23 May 2026 respectively, i.e. before the construction work had started. The method chosen was line transect counts with six five-minute count points, at which all birds were recorded within the time interval. Birds recorded between the various points were also noted – see Map 1. After each survey, the number of individuals was totalled, with any bird recorded from different points recounted as a single individual. The totals were then reported to the public database Artportalen. During the two surveys (Table 1, columns 4 and 5), 33 and 32 species respectively were observed, with 45 species noted in total. This means it is important to carry out several surveys on different occasions in order to obtain a better picture of the bird fauna, as not all species and individuals are recorded on any single survey.

Map 1. The numbering shows the six different points at which all birds are recorded over five minutes. The red line shows the route taken by the surveyor between the points.

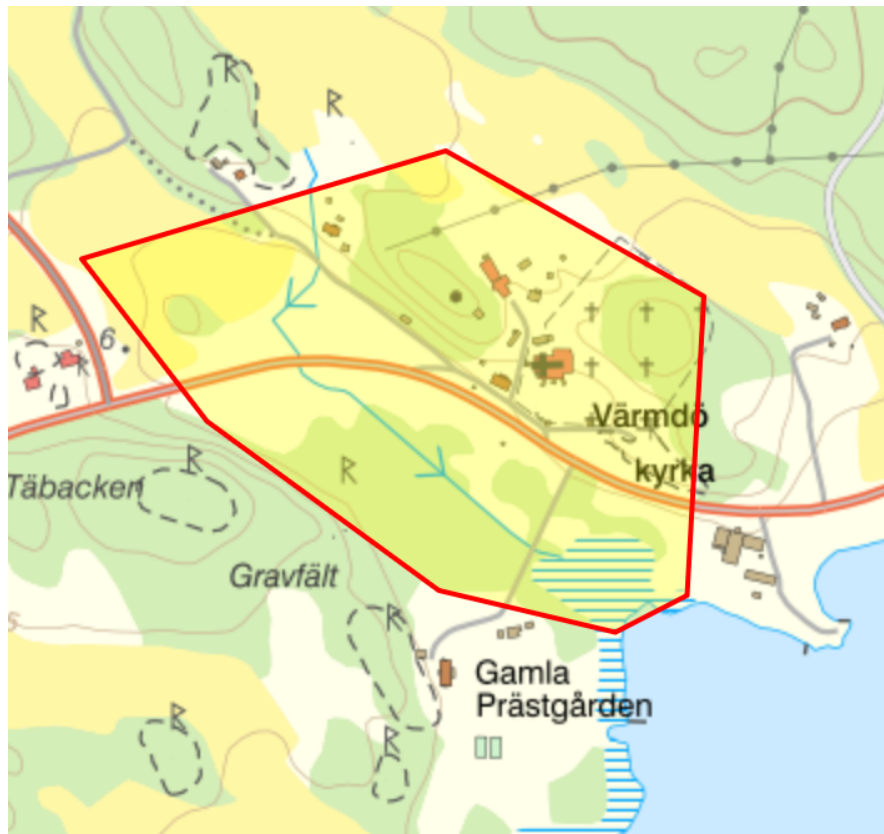


During the surveys, several species classed as wetland birds were observed, for example Common Snipe and Green Sandpiper, as well as Mallard. In the alder swamp forest and surrounding terrain there is a range of different warblers. The most notable are 2 Icterine Warblers, 2 Thrush Nightingales and 1 Marsh Warbler, but also 4 Blackcaps. During the survey, several birds were seen that probably breed up at the churchyard and fly down to the considerably damper alder swamp forest to forage, for example Icterine Warbler and Fieldfare.

Bird observations in Artportalen for the period 1981–August 2026

Members of Värmdö Bird Club have recorded bird observations at Värmdö Church since 1981; see Map 2. In total, 102 bird species have been observed at Värmdö Church over this period. Several typical wetland birds have been observed on a number of occasions, such as Water Rail and Gadwall. In the damp alder forest, both Lesser Spotted Woodpecker and Marsh Tit have been recorded on several occasions. Other species that have been observed include River Warbler, Common Grasshopper Warbler, Little Ringed Plover and the now extremely rare Ortolan Bunting. Birds reported to Artportalen tend to be rarer species, and this is also reflected in the Värmdö Church bird locality, where Thrush Nightingale, Tawny Owl and Icterine Warbler are the species most frequently reported, although these species are certainly not as common as, for example, Fieldfare and Great Tit.

Map 2. The area corresponding to the Värmdö Church bird locality in Artportalen and Table 1.



The bird fauna at Värmdö Church has in all likelihood changed over time. Previously there was considerably less vegetation in the alder swamp forest, and the land was much more open, with ditches that overflowed and formed flood meadows with relatively low vegetation at the edges, as reflected in the bird observations from around 40 years ago.

Threatened birds observed at Värmdö Church

The Red List of threatened species is compiled by the Swedish Species Information Centre (ArtDatabanken) at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU). The criteria for assigning the correct threat category include estimates of population size, occurrence, distribution and trends, and take into account changes in the past, present and future. This means, for example, that a common species can be Red-listed because its population has declined sharply, while species that are not declining but are rare and have a very limited range can also be Red-listed. The relevant threat categories for birds observed at Värmdö Church are: NT Near Threatened, VU Vulnerable, EN Endangered and CR Critically Endangered; see Table 1.

Fifteen threatened species regularly forage or breed in the area, namely Common Snipe, Common Swift, Long-eared Owl, Eurasian Wryneck, Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, Hooded Crow, Common Reed Warbler, Barn Swallow, Common House Martin, Wood Warbler, Common Starling, Fieldfare, White Wagtail, European Greenfinch and Yellowhammer. The most threatened species observed at Värmdö Church is the Critically Endangered Ortolan Bunting, last recorded over 45 years ago.

The Future

Värmdö Bird Club will carry out several standardised surveys during the winter of 2026/2027 and up to the summer of 2027, in order to be able to assess whether the bird fauna is affected by the newly established wetlands. Based on experience from, among other places, Hemmesta sjöäng, we expect the number of bird species that thrive in wetlands to increase gradually before levelling out after a few years. The number of individuals of the various wetland species is also expected to

increase.

Since it is not only birds that benefit, but also insects and other small creatures, amphibians and reptiles, and mammals such as bats, the overall number of species is likely to increase here as well. In addition to open water and shorelines, which attract different species, the growing number of visitors (people) to the wetland also contributes, meaning more eyes and ears observing, which increases the reporting of more individuals and new species for the locality.

Table 1. The first column lists all the bird species observed in the vicinity of Värmdö Church. The 'Number of Observation Occasions' column shows the number of times a particular species has been reported to Artportalen. Columns four and five show the number of individuals observed during the bird surveys in May 2026.

SPECIES	SCIENTIFIC NAME	NUMBER OF OBSERVATION OCCASIONS 1981–AUGUST 2026	SURVEY 17 MAY 2026. NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS	SURVEY 23 MAY 2026. NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS
Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>	2		1
Whooper Swan	<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>	1		
Canada Goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>	1		
Goosander	<i>Mergus merganser</i>	1	1	
Gadwall	<i>Mareca strepera</i>	3		
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	6	2	
Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>	4	1	2
Corncrake	<i>Crex crex</i>	1, in 1997		
Common Quail	<i>Coturnix coturnix</i>	1, in 2003		
Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>	2	1	3
Common Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>	5		
Woodpigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	9	3	4
Rock Dove / Feral Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	1		
Stock Dove	<i>Columba oenas</i>	2		
Common Crane	<i>Grus grus</i>	3		
Water Rail	<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>	4		
Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	1, in 2014		
Little Ringed Plover	<i>Thinornis dubius</i>	1, in 1998		
Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	1		
Eurasian Woodcock	<i>Scolopax rusticola</i>	2		
Common Snipe NT	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	13	1	1
Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>	2		1
Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>	2		
Common Gull	<i>Larus canus</i>	4	1	
European Herring Gull VU	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	2		
Lesser Black-backed Gull NT	<i>Larus fuscus</i>	1		
Great Black-backed Gull EN	<i>Larus marinus</i>	1		
Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	2	1	
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	8		2
Common Swift VU	<i>Apus apus</i>	8		
Long-eared Owl EN	<i>Asio otus</i>	1, in 2026 (H)		
Tawny Owl	<i>Strix aluco</i>	38 (H)		
Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	1		
Western Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	1, in 2007		

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Red Kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>	1, in 2026		
White-tailed Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>	9		
Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	22		
Eurasian Wryneck NT	<i>Jynx torquilla</i>	10		
European Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus viridis</i>	7		
Black Woodpecker	<i>Dryocopus martius</i>	2		
Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>	8	1	
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker NT	<i>Dryobates minor</i>	7		
Eurasian Hobby	<i>Falco subbuteo</i>	1, in 2025		
Great Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius excubitor</i>	2		
Red-backed Shrike	<i>Lanius collurio</i>	1		
Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	1		
Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>	3		
Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone corone</i>	1, in 2001		
Western Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>	3		3
Common Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	7	1	
Hooded Crow NE	<i>Corvus corone cornix</i>	5	3	3
Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>	8	2	1
Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	12	4	3
Coal Tit	<i>Periparus ater</i>	1	1	
Marsh Tit NT	<i>Poecile palustris</i>	4		
Icterine Warbler	<i>Hippolais icterina</i>	32	2	2
Sedge Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>	6	3	
Marsh Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus palustris</i>	17		1
Common Reed Warbler NT	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>	21		2
River Warbler NT	<i>Locustella fluviatilis</i>	1, in 1992		
Common Grasshopper Warbler VU	<i>Locustella naevia</i>	1, in 1981		
Barn Swallow NT	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	5		1
Common House Martin VU	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>	3	1	
Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>	5		
Wood Warbler NT	<i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i>	2		1
Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	12		2
Garden Warbler	<i>Sylvia borin</i>	14	2	4
Eurasian Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	15	3	4
Lesser Whitethroat	<i>Curruca curruca</i>	3		1
Common Whitethroat	<i>Curruca communis</i>	10	1	1
Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>	1		
Eurasian Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>	5		
Eurasian Treecreeper	<i>Certhia familiaris</i>	5		
Eurasian Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	19	2	2
Common Starling VU	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	7	5	4
Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>	8		
Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	4	1	
Redwing NT	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>	8		
Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	17	2	3

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Fieldfare NT	<i>Turdus pilaris</i>	12	4	6
Spotted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>	10		
European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	6		1
Thrush Nightingale	<i>Luscinia luscinia</i>	74	2	2
European Pied Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula hypoleuca</i>	11	2	1
Black Redstart VU	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>	1, in 1981		
Common Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>	6	1	1
Eurasian Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>	1		
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	1		
White Wagtail NT	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	11		2
Tree Pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>	1		
Common Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	16	2	2
Hawfinch	<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>	4		
Common Rosefinch	<i>Carpodacus erythrinus</i>	4		
European Greenfinch VU	<i>Chloris chloris</i>	14	4	5
Common Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>	1		
Common Redpoll	<i>Acanthis flammea</i>	1		
Common Crossbill	<i>Loxia curvirostra</i>	1		
European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	14		1
Eurasian Siskin	<i>Spinus spinus</i>	8	1	
Common Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>	7	2	
Ortolan Bunting CR	<i>Emberiza hortulana</i>	1, in 1981		
Yellowhammer NT	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>	2		1
Total 102 species			33 species	32 species