

BIRD NEWS FROM CARR VALE NATURE RESERVE

January 2013

January was a cold month with plenty of lying snow, up to six inches deep at times. Needless to say that when the snow thawed we suffered considerable flooding with the water level rising to over five foot in Meadow Flash on the 27th (recent normal winter level has been 30 inches). We had a couple of adverse incidents during the month, firstly when one of the local shoot members entered the reserve pond area complete with his springer spaniel looking for a winged Pheasant. This occurred on the 5th and then the following day it was obvious that we had had an overnight visit from the person who seems to have it in for us, this time we arrived to find oil smeared all over the bench on the mound. Ian had the place to himself mid-month as I was away in Cornwall but between us we maintained our daily coverage, netting 89 species for the month, which is a record start to the year beating the previous best January count of 87 set back in 2009.

Mute Swans were recorded daily with a peak count of 11 on the 19th whilst four **Whooper Swans** (two ads and 2 juveniles) were present for 20 minutes early on the 6th. **Pink-footed Goose** records were few and far between this year but two were with Canada Geese flock on the 2nd, a skein heard in low cloud on the 6th and 150 flew west at dusk on the 9th but there were two good site counts of **Grey Lag Goose** with 15 on the 2nd and ten on the 8th, otherwise one to three birds present on 17 dates. **Canada Geese** numbers were low but did reach 102 on the 21st and they were joined by a **Barnacle Goose** daily between the 18th and 21st and again on the 29th.

A pair of **Shelduck** flew north-west on the 28th having earlier been at Sutton Scarsdale, **Wigeon** numbers fluctuated but eventually rose to reach a maximum count of 133 on the 31st whilst the highest count of **Gadwall** was 22 on the 23rd. **Teal** numbers were lower than to be expected and peaked at 63 on the 26th whilst the peak count for **Mallard** was 60 on the 27th though the only **Shoveler** of the month was a male on the 12th. **Pochard** were present in reasonable numbers by Carr Vale standards and reached a peak of 12 on the 8th, 13th and 14th with daily records to the 14th and again from the 27th and the maximum count of **Tufted Duck** was 31 on the 5th. Two males and a female **Goosander** on 31st were the only birds seen during the month.

Red-legged Partridge were present in good numbers, clearly as a result of birds released for the local shoots and we recorded a maximum of 48 on the 11th but two **Grey Partridge** on the 12th and 18th were the only records for the month whilst the maximum count for **Pheasant** was 11 on 11th. **Cormorant** were logged on 23 dates but the highest count was only three on the 3rd and 17th. The **Bittern** first seen on 26th December was seen on the 3rd and 4th but the highest count of **Heron** was only three on seven dates.

One of the most unexpected records of the month was that of a **Marsh Harrier** when a female flew west on the 11th. The first January record for the site and one of very few for the county. **Sparrowhawks** were recorded on 16 dates during the month (19 birds / days),

Common Buzzards were recorded on 25 dates during the month (53 bird / days) with a maximum count of eight on the 12th and **Kestrels** were recorded on 26 dates during the month (39 bird / days), with a maximum count of four on the 4th. A female **Merlin** was seen on the 3rd and single **Peregrines** were seen on six dates although two birds were involved, an adult male and a juvenile male.

Two **Water Rails** were heard on the 8th with singles heard on four more dates until the 17th whilst the highest count of **Coot** was 49 on the 9th. **Golden Plover** were logged on five dates with a maximum count of 40 on the 9th and **Lapwings** peaked at 225 on the 10th. **Snipe** were recorded on 14 dates with a maximum count of nine on the 7th and a **Woodcock** was reported mid-month by a dog walker. A **Curlew**, which flew north on the 20th was unusual as it was only the second January record for CV.

Black-headed Gulls were ever present with a maximum count of 400 on the 25th but they drew in a Polish ringed (5P4) adult **Mediterranean Gull** on the 26th. The highest count of **Common Gulls** was 41 on the 5th but that included a single flock of 40 north, the largest ever at CV. **Herring Gulls** were seen most days with a maximum count of 200 on the 2nd as were **Great Black-backed Gulls** which peaked at 200 also on the 2nd.

Stock Doves could usually be found in the fields to the west of the reserve and peaked at 35 on the 17th and 18th and the first **Collared Dove** song was heard on the 7th. **Little Owls** were seen on five dates but much more noteworthy was the sighting of a **Short-eared Owl** on the 18th was the first at CV since 1997! This is the bird of the year to date beating Bittern and Cetti's Warbler but then in recent years this species has been almost mythical! A **Kingfisher** was seen on the 11th and 18th, a **Green Woodpecker** was recorded on 11 dates during the month and a **Great-spotted Woodpecker** was on five dates, which when seen was sexed as a male.

The only count of **Magpies** was ten on the 9th, 50 **Jackdaws** were present on the 17th and the peak count of **Rooks** was 200 on the 17th.-MAB. Up to six **Willow Tits** were around the feeding tables all month with a peak count of seven on the 16th and song was noted from 10th. 28 **Skylarks** flew south or south-west on 21st in response to the cold weather but it was good to see that long-staying **Cetti's Warbler** was hanging on in there with the bird heard calling on four dates between the 4th and 10th and again on the 23rd. The maximum count of **Long-tailed Tits** was 22 on the 22nd whilst the **Chiffchaff** from December was seen on five dates between the 1st and 9th. The **Waxwing** from 2012 was still present on the 1st, two were seen on the 3rd, one reported from Valley Road on the 8th and one was seen on the 17th, not quite matching the numbers elsewhere locally but very nice all the same.

Treecreeper song was noted from the 20th, there was a maximum count of 24 **Blackbirds** on the 16th, a low maximum count of 20 **Fieldfare** on the 29th, five **Song Thrush** on the 20th, 61 **Redwing** on the 2nd and four **Mistle Thrush** on 13th. 15 **Robins** were counted on the 18th, **Duncock** song was heard from the 3rd and two **Tree Sparrows** were reported on the 24th. One or two **Grey Wagtails** were seen on 13 dates with a maximum count of three on the 4th and 20th whilst c100 **Pied Wagtails** were seen

on the 2nd with 94 counted out to roost on the 9th. 15 **Chaffinches** in mixed finch flock on the 18th was a good count for this species at CV and hidden amongst them were three **Bramblings** (one male), a good winter record for the area as this species is usually only encountered on autumn passage. The maximum count of **Goldfinch** was 20 on the 3rd, good numbers of **Siskin** were present throughout the month with a maximum count of 40 on the 6th and 24th. In the same area as the Chaffinches there was a flock of 120 **Linnets**, which is a very good number for the area and 32 were still present on the 27th. **Lesser Redpoll** as usual could be very elusive but nevertheless the maximum count was 40 on the 11th with 30 on the 8th and 29th. **Bullfinches** continued to show well at the bird tables and the peak count was 14 on the 1st, whilst **Yellowhammers** peaked at six on the 11th and **Reed Buntings** at 21 on the 10th.

One or two **Hares** were seen on seven dates, a **Stoat** was reported on the 17th and single **Roe Deer** were seen on the 5th and 26th.

Mark Beavers.