

BIRD NEWS FROM CARR VALE NATURE RESERVE

March 2013

I was only around for the first ten days of March after which it was left to Ian and co (Tony Adams, Arthur Gee, Kev Navin and Phil Snaith) to carry on with the daily recording until my return on 3rd April and they did a pretty good job adding a new bird to the site list and also finding a number of good birds for the area. A total of 91 species was recorded during the month whilst the year list moved on to 103, four behind the best ever year.

Mute Swans were seen daily with a maximum count of four on the 2nd but the hoped for swan species in March is always **Whooper Swan** as this is the month when birds can often be seen in large herds as they make their way back north. This year was no exception when 13 arrived from the south at 1345 on the 4th. They remained until 1130 on the 7th when they were flushed and flew north but before this happened they were joined by a 14th bird at 1040. Another herd of 29 flew north on the 12th rounding off a very good late winter period for this species. **Grey Lag Geese** seen eight dates but the highest count was only two on five dates whilst **Canada Geese** peaked at 48 on the 6th.

A pair of **Shelduck** was seen on 22 dates during the month with an additional one north on the 4th, a third bird on the 14th and an extra pair on the 30th. **Wigeon** remained in good numbers to the month end with a maximum count of 153 on the 2nd and 125 were still present on the 30th whilst the highest count of **Gadwall** was 12 on the 20th. The peak count of **Teal** was 40 on the 10th but the best species of wildfowl to be recorded was a pair of **Garganey**, which arrived on the 26th and remained into April, allowing great views for all comers. Apart from a female in 2008, this was the first record since 2000 and also they become the earliest ever record for Carr Vale, so their visit was very much appreciated. Two **Shoveler** were seen on the 29th, **Pochard** were present daily until the 22nd and again from the 26th with a peak of 13 on the 9th and **Tufted Duck** reached a high of 16 on the 17th. Two males and a female **Goosander** flew north on 6th at dusk with male north on the 4th and another bird on the 16th.

The highest count of **Red-legged Partridge** was four on the 9th, two **Grey Partridge** were seen on the 4th, 14th and 31st and there was a count of 16 **Pheasants** on the 3rd and 19th. **Cormorants** were seen daily until the 16th but then on just three more dates to the end of the month dates with a maximum count of ten on the 9th. A very good contender for bird of the year was found on 21st March when Phil Snaith noticed that the white shape on the far pond was actually an adult **Spoonbill**. A new species for the site this bird was the 19th county record but also the earliest ever by some six weeks and also the longest stayer given that it then remained on the reserve until the 24th. **Heron**s peaked at five on the 5th. The first **Little Grebe** of the year was seen on the 29th whilst the **Great-crested Grebe** from last month was finally joined by a second bird from the 28th.

Sparrowhawks were recorded on 12 dates, 16 bird / days and **Common Buzzards** were logged on 21 dates 67 bird / days with a peak count of ten on the 31st. **Kestrels** were seen on 19 dates, 26 bird / days but the best raptor of the month was the **Osprey** that flew south-east on the 30th, which equalled the earliest ever date for the species at Carr Vale whilst a **Peregrine** was seen on four dates. A **Water Rail** was heard on four dates between the 6th and 20th and the maximum count of **Coot** was 21 on the 3rd.



The first record of Spoonbill for Carr Vale graced the reserve for four days in late March.
Photograph by Steph Hicklin.

An **Oystercatcher** was present on the 1st and 2nd after which the resident pair was seen daily and the first two **Little Ringed Plovers** of the year were seen on the 29th. Up to 55 **Golden Plover** were seen on seven dates the exception being 200 on the 10th and **Lapwings** were present in three-figures on seven dates with a peak count of 186 on the 6th. The highest count of **Snipe** was 17 on 31st, which is a good count nowadays at Carr Vale, whilst a **Curlew** flew north on the 7th. Another was seen on the 11th followed by two north on the 17th, two north on the 21st and one south on the 31st. The cold spring was probably the reason why a **Redshank** on the 10th was probably our latest ever

returning bird. The next was seen on the 19th after which up to three were present daily to the month end.

A flock of five **Kittiwakes** on the 11th represented the first multiple sighting of this species on the reserve and two more were seen on the 18th. **Black-headed Gulls** were present in large numbers all month with a notable count of 700 on the 2nd and 1000 on the 16th and it was these large numbers that probably attracted a second winter **Little Gull** on the 8th. This was almost certainly the same bird that left Ogston Reservoir ten minutes earlier though they logged it as an adult. Small numbers (up to four) of **Common Gull** were regularly recorded but there was an isolated count of 20 on the 11th whilst the highest count of **Herring Gulls** was 150 on the 2nd. Rarest of the big gulls was a third winter **Iceland Gull** that was seen on the 29th and good numbers of **Great Black-backed Gulls** prevailed with a peak count of 180 on the 19th.

The highest count of **Stock Doves** was only 40 on the 26th but 500 **Wood Pigeons** were present on the 4th. One or two **Little Owls** were seen on eight dates, a **Tawny Owl** with two chicks was discovered in a nest box on the 13th and a **Kingfisher** was seen on 12 dates with two on the 4th and 6th. **Green Woodpeckers** were heard and occasionally seen on eight dates. **Jays** were very scarce with the only records being two on the 2nd and one on the 10th and up to three **Goldcrests** were seen on 14 dates. One or two **Coal Tits** were seen ten dates and the highest count of **Long-tailed Tits** was 13 on the 7th. 30 **Waxwings** were on New Station Road / Castle Lane on the 2nd although just one was present on the 3rd, which proved to be the last of the winter. 50 **Fieldfare** were seen on the 7th whilst **Redwings** were present in small numbers with a peak count of 62 on the 22nd and a **Tree Sparrow** was seen on 2nd, a rare sighting in 2013. Single **Grey Wagtail** were seen on six dates, **Pied Wagtails** peaked at 32 on the 24th, very few **Meadow Pipits** were seen apart from 63 on the 25th but I don't think any dedicated visible migration watches were carried out during the month. One or two **Siskins** were seen on five dates, the highest count of **Lesser Redpoll** was 20 on the 20th whilst **Bullfinches** peaked at nine on the 9th and **Reed Buntings** 12 on the 9th.

Single **Hares** were seen on three dates along with a **Weasel** on the 25th and a **Stoat** on the 29th. Unusually not one butterfly was seen during the month which is hardly surprising given the very cold spring.

Mark Beevers.