

BIRD NEWS FROM CARR VALE NATURE RESERVE

May 2013

After the magnificent April, what would May bring. I successfully hit my target of an average of five hours a day on site during that month would I be able to keep it up for another 31 days. Well it took some doing but I achieved my target by the end of play on the 30th and so managed over 300 hours recording on the reserve since my return to the UK on the 3rd of April. Not all the records are mine as I am grateful to Ian Swain, Kev Navin, Tony Adams, Arthur Gee and Phil Snaith amongst others for their input and company. So how did the effort pan out. Rather well actually as we recorded a total of 106 species during the month, equalling the record set last year when another determined recording effort was made (indeed we have only recorded 100 or more species twice before in May). As you would imagine the year list progressed nicely to 141, a figure that we have reached three times by the end of September but that we normally achieve in October, so although it wasn't quite up to the standard of April it was still a very good month.

Mute Swans were recorded daily with a maximum count of five on 13 dates and the resident pair had a nest by late month. Four species of geese were logged during the month including a **Pink-footed Goose** on the 25th and a **Barnacle Goose** the day before. Two to six **Grey Lag Geese** were present on 17 dates with a peak count of eight on the 4th whilst **Canada Geese** peaked at 51 on the 11th. By the end of the month five broods of 7,3,3,2 and 1 had appeared. **Shelduck** had been an almost permanent fixture during this spring and we had hoped that they would breed for the first time this year but it was not to be. A pair was present on 11 dates until the 18th with two pairs on the 6th, 8th and 14th. The peak count for **Gadwall** was 16 on the 6th and 9th but up to 11 males and 7 females seen during the month and five **Teal** were still present on the 1st and 2nd May with a pair daily then until the 19th and a final pair on the 22nd. **Mallard** numbers remained low with a maximum count of 22 on the 26th and the only broods so far are two of ten and one of seven that had reduced to seven by 31st. The first brood seen on 21st. The only **Pochard** of the month was a male on the 14th whilst the highest count of **Tufted Duck** was 15 on the 8th.

Three pairs of **Red-legged Partridge** were still present all month and two pairs of **Grey Partridge** were also present in the area though they are very secretive and were actually only seen on eight dates. Also five male **Pheasants** were on territory on the 10th including a black variant. **Cormorants** were seen on 23 dates with a maximum count of three on the 3rd and 17th and whilst generally one or two **Heron**s could be seen the highest count was also three on the 25th. **Little Grebes** have been in extremely short supply so far this year and amazingly there was just one record this month, an adult on the 29th and 30th. Three **Great-crested Grebes** were present on the 4th and the resident pair built nest on the 26th and were still sitting on the 31st.

A **Red Kite** flew north at 0755 on the 27th and a different individual (based on the amount of moult in wings and tail, i.e. the second one had a full tail whereas the one on the 27th had clearly moulted / lost its tail and was just growing it back) flew north at 0755 on 29th. **Sparrowhawks** were recorded on at least 19 dates, 22 bird / days whilst **Common Buzzards** were logged on at least 27 dates, 134 bird / days with a max count of 12 from the mound of the 19th and 26th. An **Osprey** flew north between 0735 and 0752hrs on the 14th and then south again at 0925 later the same day, the third record of the year whilst **Kestrels** were recorded on at least 27 dates, a total of 40 bird / days. As we have come to expect **Hobbies** were to be seen occasionally with records on nine dates, a total of 14 bird days with a pair seen on five dates, often tandem hunting, which is always exciting to watch. Single **Peregrines** were seen on eight dates but again involving two birds at least, an immature male and an adult male as in April.

Water Rails were recorded on 25 dates with two birds heard on the 7th and 25th, which hopefully bodes well for later in the summer. The third and fourth broods of **Coot** were located along with three more nests whilst the breeding pair of **Oystercatchers** hatched two young on the 19th but had lost one by the 20th. They were joined by a third individual on the 4th, 12th and 22nd. The highest count of **Little Ringed Plovers** was four between the 1st and 3rd and on the 15th.-MAB. **Ringed Plovers** continued to be very scarce this year with one heard on the 6th, four north on the 15th, one on the 26th with one of the *tundra* race on the 24th. The last **Golden Plover** of the

winter was one that was reported via the DOS website on the 1st. A first summer **Grey Plover** was present on the "Dotterel Field" on the 12th. This was just the tenth record for the site but the first since 2009. **Lapwings** as to be expected were present in small number with a maximum count of 21 on the 14th. Once again no nests were found within the reserve and I suspect the habitat is no longer suitable for them but three pairs at least were on surrounding farmland. A **Sanderling** flew north on the 22nd, was the first record since 2006 and only the 6th ever. A **Dunlin** was present on the 12th, 18th and 19th with two between 13th and 15th and again on 17th whilst the highest count of **Common Snipe** was two on the 5th with the last of the winter recorded on the 6th. It was a very poor month for **Common Sandpipers** the only records beings singletons on the 15th, 17th and 20th and a late one on the 29th. A **Wood Sandpiper** briefly for 20 minutes on the 25th before it flew off north-west at 1107. It is most likely that this was the bird that left Budby Flash in Nottinghamshire at 1015 heading west, first time we have had a link with that site. This was the 14th record for Carr Vale but first since 2007 and only the third spring record this century. It was amazingly poor for **Redshank** with just a single bird on six dates. To think that in 1979 six pairs bred between Carr Vale and Sutton Scarsdale rearing 17 young.

A first summer **Mediterranean Gull** that was present for the last three days of the month was a nice surprise given that it was just the second record of that species in May. **Black-headed Gull** numbers were much reduced peaking at only 56 on the 16th but the colony has increased this year to at least nine nests, probably ten with the tenth occupied by an adult and 1st summer female which has yet to lay eggs laid. The first two young were seen on the 29th with three more in a second nest on the 30th and at least one young in a third nest on 31st. Our second **Little Gull** of the year, a first year still in mainly winter plumage was present for at least half an hour on the 9th before flying off north at 1630. **Common Gulls** are a scarce bird during the summer months at Carr Vale so it was pleasing to see a first summer bird on the 1st, even more unusual were two first summers that were present on the 22nd, that is a late date for this species. **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** were present in small numbers throughout the month with a peak count of 40 on the 12th with 25 still present on the 31st. A leucistic bird was present on the 19th. **Herring Gulls** were also present until the 22nd with a maximum count of five on the 1st with one to three on 13 other dates until the last on 22nd. Needless to say with unusual numbers of big gulls around there was always the chance of a rarity and that turned up in the form of a first year **Caspian Gull**, which came on with other large gulls on the 29th but it only spent 15 minutes on the reserve before it flew off north. Extraordinary numbers of **Great Black-backed Gulls** for May were present all month with a maximum count 60 on the 1st with 38 still on the 26th and still 30 on the 29th. June records are very rare but that shouldn't be a problem this year.

Three species of tern had been recorded during April but we added a fourth in the form of two **Little Terns**, which spent a few minutes on the reserve before flying off south at 1115 on the 15th. Earlier they had been at Orgreave Lagoon (Sheffield) between 1010 and 1030 after which they flew south. This is only the second record for Carr Vale, the first being in June 2010. A pair of **Common Terns** was present all month with one sitting by the end of the month on a raft occupied by a pair of Black-headed Gulls, let's hope they can live side by side in peace. A third bird was seen on ten dates. Finishing off a good spring for terns a flock of seven **Arctic Terns** seven flew north on the 29th at 0700 having earlier been through Ogston at 0635, these being our latest ever spring birds. This is our latest spring date for this species and it was also another record of a species that had been recorded elsewhere prior to arriving at Carr Vale, there's been a few of those this year.

A count of 48 **Stock Doves** on the 26th was unusual for the time of the year with 41 present the day before and 40 still on the evening of the 29th. A **Little Owl** was seen from the mound around Deepdale Farm on seven dates and two individual **Tawny Owls** were located on the 2nd. The highest count of **Swifts** was 100 on the 18th, single **Kingfishers** were seen on seven dates and single **Green Woodpeckers** were seen on six dates. The maximum count of **Swallows** was 120 on the 15th and **House Martins** remained very scarce even at the end of the month with a maximum count of 50 on the 30th.

Warbler numbers were unremarkable with a peak count for **Chiffchaffs** of only six on the 19th and no notable count of **Willow Warbler**. The first **Garden Warbler** of the year was on the 6th after which one or two were logged on six dates from the 12th with three singing on the 22nd. Two **Lesser Whitethroats** were singing on the 1st with one to the 4th but that was it for the month whilst the highest count of **Common Whitethroats** was seven (six singing) on the 6th. Two **Grasshopper Warblers** were heard reeling on the 1st and 5th, with one

heard on the 2nd, 3rd and 6th after which they went quiet, hopefully because they have settled down to breed. 11 **Sedge Warblers** were singing on the 7th and although the peak daily count for **Reed Warblers** was ten singing on the 7th but by the 27th 15 territories had been located.

A female **Wheatear** was seen daily between the 1st and 6th, one was seen distantly in flight on the 9th and a male Greenland Wheatear on was seen on the 17th. Two male Greenlanders were at Sutton Scarsdale on the 16th. Five **Yellow Wagtails** were present on the 1st with up to three daily thereafter and four **White Wagtails** were also present on the 1st, with two on the 2nd, one on the 3rd and one on the 13th and 14th. A light passage of **Lesser Redpolls** was noted over eight dates between the 1st and 17th (this being the latest ever spring date for Carr Vale) with a total of 12 birds logged and a max count of four on 1st and the maximum count for **Bullfinches** was six on the 2nd.

A few more butterflies put in first appearances during early May with the first dates as follows; **Orangetip** (1st), **Green-veined White** and the only **Comma** so far this year (2nd) and **Large White** and **Speckled Wood** (7th). Two **Brimstones** were seen on the 1st and 7th with one on the 2nd and the highest count of **Peacocks** was four, also on the 1st and 7th, otherwise there was little to report on the butterfly front. Dragonflies fared even worse with five **Large Red Damsels** on the 7th with seven on the 31st and c30 **Azure Damsels** on the 31st. Up to five **Hares** were logged on 23 dates, a **Weasel** was seen on the mound on the 22nd and a **Stoat** was seen on the 6th and 7th. It was an excellent month for **Roe Deer** with sightings on 17 dates. Generally one or two were seen but three were seen on the 8th and four including a new born fawn on the 30th whilst there was a report of eight together on the 12th, which is the highest number ever recorded at Carr Vale. Two **Grass Snakes** were seen by the football pitch on the 6th and three largish females were on the Peter Fidler Reserve on the 7th.

Mark Beevers.