

BIRD NEWS FROM CARR VALE NATURE RESERVE

JANUARY 2009

The year started with quite a bang with no less than six Carr Vale rarities being seen including a new bird for the site, Ring-billed Gull, which takes the list of species recorded to 204. 87 species were recorded during the month which is a record count for January and this is undoubtedly our best ever start to the year, lets hope this run of form continues. Needless to say the daily visits continued. One or two problems occurred during the month with youths skating on the ice on the Middle Flash and an occasion when five unidentified males were Hare coursing. On a more positive note there was a short article in the Sunday Telegraph about the reserve which produced an influx of visitors over the following ten days, a Barn Owl nest box was put up and Mick Reed collected three sacks of rubbish from around the paths.

Cormorants were recorded on 30 dates with a maximum of ten on the 12th, 19th and 22nd. The **Bittern** found by Ian on the 1st December was seen again on the 3rd, 4th, 9th and 13th but not many people managed to catch up with it as it remained extremely elusive. This is the 6th record for the reserve. **Herons** were seen daily with a peak of six on the 23rd. A **Pink-footed Goose** was with the Canada Geese on 15 dates between 5th and 23rd whilst skeins moving included 100 NW on the 14th, 150 NW on the 15th, 11 SE on the 17th and 250 NW on the 21st. A **Grey Lag Goose** was with the Canada Geese on 26 dates and another two joined it from the east on the 30th. **Canada Geese** were seen daily, often in three-figures with a peak count of 213 on the 20th whilst the rarest goose was an adult **Dark-bellied Brent Goose**, which flew south at 1205 on the 26th, the 7th record for the reserve.

Shelducks are rare in winter so one on the 7th and two on the 17th were unusual records. **Wigeon** were recorded daily in three-figures with a maximum count of 159 on the 7th whilst **Gadwall** peaked at of 54 on the 14th. Star performers amongst the wildfowl were **Teal**. The previous highest count was 180 on 9th January 2004 but this record was broken on the 2nd when 190 were counted only to be bettered again on the 5th when 213 were present. The previous record of 180 was beaten again on four more dates and then on the 14th a new record was posted when 217 were counted. Three-figure counts were a daily feature until the 23rd after which numbers fell away rapidly. The highest count for **Mallard** was a lowly 81 on the 7th whilst **Pochard** were recorded on seven dates with a maximum of 12 on the 29th-a good count for Carr Vale. **Tufted Ducks** were recorded on 25 dates but the only double-figure count was ten on the 17th. **Goosanders** have been scarce this winter and they were recorded on just four dates with a peak of three on the 23rd.

One of the highlights if the month was a cracking **Red Kite** which flew west at 1155 on the 21st-the 8th record for the site whilst one to three **Common Buzzards** were seen on 27 dates with five on the 18th and 30th and seven viewable from the mound on the 31st. **Sparrowhawks** were recorded on nine dates and **Kestrels** were logged on 17 dates. A **Peregrine** was seen on six dates with two on the 2nd and 24th and three (a pair of adults and imm male sat together) on the 23rd. Another good raptor was an immature male **Merlin** which perched up nicely on the 31st. The first since December 2007.

Five **Red-legged Partridges** were seen on the 17th and 18th with four on the 21st and 25th. whilst a pair of **Grey Partridge** were seen on the 2nd, 5th and 31st. One or two **Water Rails** were logged on 14 dates with four heard on the 3rd, ten **Moorhen** on the 28th was a low count as was 54 **Coot** on the 7th. **Golden Plovers** were recorded on 12 dates with a peak count of 115 flying south on the 22nd whilst **Lapwings** peaked at 220 on the 30th. A **Dunlin**

on the 2nd was quite unusual for the time of the year and there was an unconfirmed report of a **Jack Snipe** on the 10th. **Snipe** were recorded on 26 dates with a max count of 11 on the 26th and it was a good month for **Woodcock** with at least one on the 11th, one on 15th and one on 28th.

It's been a very poor winter for gulls due to disturbance on the local tip and as a consequence **Black-headed Gulls** peaked at a low 400 on the 12th, one to three **Common Gulls** were logged on six dates with three on the 29th and the maximum count of **Herring Gulls** was 100 on the 5th and the 26th. Bucking the trend slightly was a count of 141 **Great Black-backed Gull** on the 5th. Of the rarer gulls an adult **Caspian Gull** was present on the 5th when a first winter **RING-BILLED GULL**, present for just 15 minutes, became a good candidate for the bird of the year as it was a very welcome first record for the reserve.

Stock Doves peaked at 25 on the 22nd and 800 **Wood Pigeons** were present on the 18th and 23rd. One or two **Little Owls** were recorded on 13 dates and a **Tawny Owl** was found roosting on the 21st. The only **Kingfisher** so far this year was seen on the 14th, single **Green Woodpeckers** were noted on six dates with two on the 6th and 13th and single **Great-spotted Woodpecker** were seen on the 1st, 13th and 31st.

Early **Skylark** song was heard on the 13th, a flock of 50 **Meadow Pipits** was counted on the 15th with 38 on the 24th, a **Grey Wagtail** was seen on four dates with two on six dates and **Pied Wagtails** peaked at 35 on the 24th. A **Waxwing** was seen on or about the 13th and another dozen or so flew over on the 20th (12th and 13th records). **Fieldfare** were present in good numbers with a maximum count of 300 on the 19th whilst **Redwings** peaked at 90 on the 27th and 29th. A **Chiffchaff** came out of the reedbed briefly on the 14th but promptly disappeared into thick scrub.

Long-tailed Tits peaked at 12 on the 18th and **Willow Tits** were present daily with six counted on the 7th and 15th. After the Ring-billed Gull the next rarest bird was a **Nuthatch** on the 21st, only the 5th record for the reserve. A count of the **Magpie** roost revealed 44 birds on the 20th and **Ravens** were recorded on three dates with one on the 12th and three on the 18th and the 31st. Small numbers of **Goldfinches** were logged throughout the month with a high of 25 on the 29th on which date **Siskins** also peaked at 25. The ever elusive **Redpoll** flock was estimated to be 50 strong on the 26th (a record count) but remained very difficult to pin down and **Bullfinches** peaked at 11 on the 5th. 28 **Yellowhammers** were counted into roost on the 20th but where are they during the day as we never see more than the odd one at the tables. Up to 20 **Reed Buntings** attended the bird table on the mound on the 10th but a more accurate picture of the numbers in the area came from a roost count on the 6th when 29 were counted into the reedbed and on the 19th when 38 were counted in. Finally a **Muscovey Duck** was present between the 5th and 7th at least.

January is often quiet in terms of animal sightings but this month single **Foxes** were seen on three dates with two on the 12th, two **Roe Deer** were seen on the 2nd with one the following day whilst a **Stoat** was seen on the 21st.

Mark Beevers