

BIRD NEWS FROM CARR VALE NATURE RESERVE
AND SURROUNDING AREA

DECEMBER 2014

Once again the daily cover was maintained for the month, which meant we completed another year of continual daily visits. Once again it was down to Ian Swain to provide a lot of the cover, which he did after the first week, whilst Arthur Gee and Phil Snaith, assisted by Kevin Navin for the first three weeks also put in extra hours. All are thanked for their efforts. The only notable event during the month was a weather event when heavy snow fell during the evening and overnight on Boxing Day. This deposited several inches at Carr Vale and about eight inches in Bolsover. It caused the usual chaos on the roads whilst around the reserves a number of trees, mainly Crack Willows, were brought down blocking paths. The heavy snow also flattened the *phragmites* in the southern reed-bed. 84 species were recorded during December whilst the year list ended on 149, which is the second highest ever tally for the reserve.

One to three Water Rails were recorded on nine dates, a Kingfisher was seen on six dates, between the 8th and 24th, Green Woodpeckers were logged on ten dates whilst Great-spotted Woodpeckers were recorded on 11 dates. Single Common Chiffchaffs were seen on ten dates with two birds on 11 dates. Up to three Grey Wagtails were seen on 27 dates during the month and up to four Roe Deer including a buck were seen on 14 dates whilst up to two Hares were seen on ten dates.

200 Lapwing and 40 Goldfinches were present on the 1st whilst a Dunlin was seen on the 3rd. A Shelduck was present on the 4th (and 5th), 115 Fieldfare flew west on the 7th and an extra Grey Lag Goose arrived on the 8th for a two day stay. Also on the 8th there was a peak count for the month of eight Shoveler, a Little Grebe was the first for over a month, 133 Fieldfare flew south whilst 76 Redwings flew north. The only Peregrine of the month was logged on the 10th and the same day a single observer had a brief Firecrest, the second of the year. The same observer on that day also provided the first record of the Siberian Chiffchaff since the original sighting on the last day of November.

The last Great-crested Grebe of the year was seen on the 11th, 55 Teal on the 12th was the highest count of the month whilst a Little Egret the same day proved to be the latest record for the reserve and a Cetti's Warbler was heard calling. 210 Pink-footed Geese flew west on the 13th but the star of the month and one of the best birds of the year was a first year Ferruginous Duck that graced the reserve for just one day, the 18th record for the county and the first since 2008. A good bird indeed and one that wasn't on anyone's radar! Rather more mundane were three male Goosander that were also seen on the 13th whilst a brief glimpse of a Goshawk by two experienced observers was the first such sighting since 2004 and only the fourth record for the reserve. Also on the 13th 20 Golden Plover were logged, a Woodcock flew over and the previous day's Cetti's Warbler was heard again. On the 14th observers unsuccessfully searching for the Ferruginous Duck were compensated by a Caspian Gull. It just shows what can be found when there is an influx of observers for a rare bird. Three Common Chiffchaffs were seen on the 14th, 115 Fieldfare flew north on the 15th, a female Merlin and the Siberian Chiffchaff were seen on the 16th and 203 Fieldfare were counted on the 17th. More determined searching for the Siberian Chiffchaff between the 19th and 25th produced sightings for six dates.

90 Pink-footed Geese flew east on the 20th, five Willow Tits were located on the 21st and Red-legged Partridges peaked at 26 on the 23rd on which date a Little Grebe arrived for an eight day stay and a Cetti's Warbler was heard whilst two Siskins on the 24th were the only record for the month. Christmas Day produced six Warblers, all seen, these being the Cetti's Warbler, Siberian Chiffchaff and four Common Chiffchaffs, the first time that has been achieved at Carr Vale whilst the same day also produced the highest count (12) of Bullfinches for the month. Three female Goosanders were seen on the 26th as were the four Common Chiffchaffs. On the 27th 21 Golden Plover flew over, a Dunlin flew north-west, there was an excellent count of 20 Snipe and 55 Stock Doves were counted with 11 Sky Larks feeding out in the west fields, the Cetti's Warbler showing from the reed-bed viewing screen and five Hares were also counted. The long-staying injured Grey Lag Goose was last seen on the 29th, a pair of Grey Lag Geese were new in on the 30th and remained to see the year out whilst a determined effort to assess the number of Water Rails on site was also made on that evening producing a count of five, three of which were seen. Also on the 30th three Common Chiffchaffs were seen and the Siberian Chiffchaff reappeared having been missing for four days (no doubt feeding on the filter beds in the sewage works). The sewage works also held 80 Pied Wagtails and 50 Meadow Pipits on the 30th whilst that evening 36 Reed Buntings were counted into roost in the southern reed-bed. Dusk on the 30th saw not one but two Cetti's Warblers (both seen whilst the other was calling), finally confirming what had been suspected for a few days. Wigeon peaked at 121 on the 31st when both Herring and Great-Black-backed Gulls peaked at 350, their highest counts for the winter so far and indeed the highest ever for the latter species.

MARK BEEVERS.