

BIRD NEWS FROM CARR VALE NATURE RESERVE  
AND SURROUNDING AREA  
DECEMBER 2013

It was in the main a very mild month with frosts noted on just a couple of days. The mild weather encouraged people out and on a couple of occasions the flashes were flushed by walkers and in one instance by a photographer. Two youths were caught trying to fish Meadow Flash and delivered a load of abuse when asked to leave, though they did move on begrudgingly. A run of depressions with lots of rain caused the river to burst its banks mid-month which resulted in the Southern Flash reforming. Hopefully it will remain well into spring. Disappointingly no new species were added to the year list which remained at 150. This is particularly disappointing given the excellent spring we had and indeed during the last six months of the year we only added eight species to the year list. Just 79 species were seen in December.

The single Pink-footed Goose was with the Canada Geese on most days during the month and nominate Chiffchaffs were seen on most dates from the 2nd until the last on the 25th with two seen on eight dates from the 2nd. 180 Pink-footed Geese flew south-east on the 4th but the bird of the day was a Little Egret (the latest ever at Carr Vale) that flew in from the south-west and appeared to go down on the Reserve Pond, although it wasn't seen again after its arrival. That evening 800 Black-headed Gulls flew south at dusk and 16 Reed Buntings dropped into roost. A Jack Snipe was below the mound on the 5th (and 6th), 180 Pink-footed Geese flew south-east on the 8th on which date a Siberian Chiffchaff commenced an extended stay. A Dunlin flew west on the 9th when a Stoat was seen whilst two male Goosanders and 15 Lesser Redpolls were seen on the 10th.

17 Cormorants on the 11th was a good count for the reserve and a Peregrine was also seen on that date, the first of five sightings during the month. A male Shoveler was seen on the 12th and three Roe Deer were reported on an unspecified date mid-month. A male Goosander flew south and 16 Bullfinches were seen on the 13th, 40 Pink-footed Geese flew east on the 15th when a Stoat was reported, nine Snipe were flushed on the 16th when 140 Herring and 100 Great Black-backed Gulls were counted in fields to the west of the reserve. 270 Pink-footed Geese flew south-east on the 17th whilst 110 Jackdaws on the 18th was a good count for the site. 65 Teal on the 19th was the highest count of the winter so far, 18 Red-legged Partridges were counted the same day and two Water Rails were heard calling (with single birds recorded on seven more dates).

A male Shoveler was seen on the 20th on which date three male Pochard arrived for a six day stay. Also on the 20th a walk across a stubble field produced a pair of Grey Partridges, 100+ Sky Larks and 200 Linnets. 18 Bullfinches were counted on the 21st, 242 Wigeon on the 23rd was a record count for the site and two female Roe Deer were disturbed on the 24th. 121 Pink-footed Geese flew north-west and 70 Golden Plover flew south on the 25th and one of the nominate Chiffchaffs put in a Christmas Day appearance. The Wigeon record was broken again on the 26th and 30th when 246 were counted but whilst the year ended in a wet and windy way the birding year went out with a whimper.

MARK BEEVERS