

DECEMBER 2004 BIRD NOTES

December Highlights: Ring-billed Gull and Great Grey Shrike remain, but elusive, Black-necked Grebe and Scaup appear on the same day, a pair of Green Woodpeckers and a Chiffchaff are good records and a Glaucous Gull is added to this season's gull roost tally.

Little Grebe totals at 58 and **Great crested Grebe** numbers at 41 both on 15th. A **Black-necked Grebe** was found at Sheepwash on the 22nd, 2 reported the following day and also 1 on 24th and 2 reported on 28th. This bird [or 2] proved elusive for most observers, any other sightings not recorded in the hide diary will be appreciated, note this record may require a DOS submission. A single **Whooper Swan** was at the Wildlife Centre [WLC] during the afternoon of 19th. Six **Greylag geese** were noted at the WLC on the 1st and the local feral **Barnacle Geese** were around most of the month, with 35 on the 8th.

Wintering wildfowl numbers included 164 **Wigeon** on 9th, 400+ Teal on 19th, 95 **Pochard** on 12th, 21 **Goldeneye** on 15th, 10 **Gadwall** on 21st and 5 **Goosander** on 16th. Others included a single **Shelduck** at the WLC on the 20th, 2 **Red-crested Pochard** on 9th and other dates, 3 female **Scaup** on 22/23rd and 2 female **Common Scoter** on 1st.

The only notable raptor was a **Peregrine** flying over the Visitor Centre car park, otherwise **Common Buzzard**, **Kestrel** and **Sparrow Hawk** were regularly seen.

An **Oystercatcher** around the WLC on 11/12th and a **Woodcock** in Tail Bay [below dam wall] on the 17th boosted wader species for this period. Several records of **Golden Plover** included 85 at the WLC on 15th and **Lapwing** maximum of 770 on 9th. A few **Redshank** were on site all month with 4 on 9th, and **Snipe** numbers have dwindled from last month to 4 at Paul Stanley hide on 1st and 3 at WLC on 4th.

The Gull roost included an adult **Mediterranean Gull** on 1st, 25th and 28th, an adult **Ring-billed Gull** on 1st, 18th and 25th presumed to be the same bird as reported in November, a first winter **Glaucous Gull** on the 28th, and 40+ **Great Black-backed Gulls** on 25th. Throughout this month the gull roost has been difficult to observe mainly due to calm periods when the gulls tend to spread out over the whole water. Consequently only a small portion of the roost can be identified from one location before daylight fails.

Reports of **Kingfisher** are still regular and from many parts of the shore but Paul Stanley and Sheepwash hides or the inlet between Millfields Car Park and Dam Wall should give the best chance of catching up with this favourite of birds. A pair of **Green Woodpeckers** were seen in the Lane End area by birders searching for the **Shrike**. The **Great Grey Shrike** started the month off showing well around Shiningford, by mid-month there were no recorded appearances then, towards the end of the month, it was showing well again, usually near the brick tower. Evidently residents at Shiningford have seen the bird taking small rodents and a 'larder' has been seen on a barbed-wire fence. A wintering **Chiffchaff** was near the WLC on the 13th, a rare record for the site. **Siskins** seem to be very few this winter, only one has been recorded on several dates this month.

89 species reported compared with 97 in Dec 2003, 89 in 2002, 86 in 2001 and 74 in 2000.

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November Bird Notes

November Highlights: Gull roost pulls in goodies with Ring-billed Gull, Iceland Gull, Caspian Gull, Mediterranean Gull and Kittiwake. Hen Harrier and Merlin make flying visits, Great Grey Shrike attracts observers and Barn Owls return.

A total count of 666 Pink-footed Geese flying S.E. during one hour on the 1st started the month off well. The local Barnacle Geese numbered up to 43 including a hybrid on the 8th, and, 5 Whooper Swans on the 5th were followed by 2 more on 21/22nd. Wintering duck numbers reduced slightly with maximum counts of 87 Pochard on the 30th and 162 Tufted Duck on the 10th. Goldeneye were present all month with a max of 11 on the 7th, Goosander 7 on 1st, and 3 female Common Scoter on 21st.

Raptor sightings included a female Hen Harrier [Ringtail] on 19th hunting the grass areas below Hall Wood and being mobbed by two Carrion Crows, and, a Merlin seen on 6th and 7th around Shiningford Creek area.

Just six species of wader were recorded including a Knot on the 9th, a max count of 400 Lapwing on 14th and 2 Dunlin on 22nd. Redshank were present all month with a max of 3 on 3rd, and Snipe numbers reached 26 on 8th, currently Snipe can usually be viewed closely through the left hand window of Paul Stanley Hide.

Gull roost watchers were rewarded for their endeavours in the cold, dull, damp, dusk encroaching observations of 8000 or so gulls with: an adult Ring-billed Gull on the 10th and several evenings following [this is the third record for the site], an adult Iceland Gull from the 6th to 27th, a third winter Caspian Gull on the 7th, up to 6 Yellow-legged Gulls nightly, a Kittiwake on the 19th, and an adult Mediterranean Gull on 26th and 30th.

A passage of 250 Wood Pigeon was reported from Paul Stanley Hide on 6th and 6 Stock Doves on 14th. A Barn Owl on the 17th and 2 on the 24th is encouraging after the loss of the breeding pair last year, and 4 pairs of Little Owl calling at dusk were noted on the 28th.

Four [3+1] Skylarks were reported flying over calling on the 19th and a dunnock singing on the 23rd. Wintering thrushes built up early in the month with a max of 345 Redwing on the 2nd and 188 Fieldfare on the 6th, all roosting in Shiningford area

Following the second site record for Great Grey Shrike earlier this year in April, November has provided the third. On the 13th one was reported just off site at nearby Carsington Pastures until the 17th, then an on site record of one at Millfields on the 22nd, and then one in the Shiningford area on 29th and still present on 2nd Dec. Probability is that they are the same bird but any information on this and who the original observers were will be most welcome.

A large flock of 44 Lesser Redpoll was reported at Millfields on the 11th, and smaller numbers were elsewhere with 12 on Stones Island on 24th. An unseasonal Linnet was calling and flying around Stones Island on 24th, 15 Bullfinches were counted around the site on the 19th, and a flock of 8 Yellowhammers on the 1st is a rare event for this site at any time of year.

94 species recorded this month compared with 92 in 2003, 95 in 2002, 84 in 2001 and 70 in 2000.

October Bird Notes

October Highlights: Manx Shearwater seeks refuge with STWA Rangers. Whooper Swans, Red-breasted Merganser and Common Scoter each show for a day. Gull roost numbers continue to increase, and a Rock Pipit spends 6 days touring the site.

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A **Manx Shearwater** was found by STWA Rangers at their base near the Visitor Centre on 5/10. The bird was in poor state and Ranger Ben Young voluntarily took it into his own care, fed it back into flying condition and successfully released it on the Welsh Coast later in October.

Cormorant numbers increased through the month to 46 on 23/10. 12 **Whooper Swans** were found at lunchtime near Lane End hide on 18/10, by dusk they had drifted along to Flat Island, presumably to roost, but there were no records of their presence the following morning.

A few wildfowl counts totalled 380 **Wigeon** on 5/10, 26 **Gadwall** on 17/10, 143 **Teal** on 29/10 and 167 **Pochard** on 15/10. A **Pink-footed Goose** [unknown origin] was with **Canada Geese** at the Visitor Centre on 18/10 and the regular **Red-crested Pochard** were present most days, with 7 on 10/10. An eclipse drake **Red-breasted Merganser** was near the dam wall on 15/10, a **Shelduck** on 28/10, female **Common Scoter** on 9/10 and 4 **Goosanders** reported on 23/10.

Raptor sightings included a **Hobby** on 5/10, several sightings of the juv **Peregrine** early in the month and an adult on 31/10 over Hall Wood. **Buzzards** are regularly seen with 3 together on 18/10 over Hall Wood, and **Sparrow Hawk** were reported at Paul Stanley Hide and the WLC on a few dates.

Only six species of wader were recorded compared with twelve in the same period last year. **Dunlin** were present most days with a maximum of 6 on 15/10, 3 **Redshank** [one with a BTO ring] on 18/10 and 1 or 2 most days, a juv **Ruff** 1-2/10, a juv **Ringed Plover** 2-4/10, up to 8 **Snipe** at the WLC, and 3 **Golden Plover** were a good sight at the WLC on 29/10.

The well established gull roost increased in size through the month with an estimated 6000 **Lesser Black-backed**, 2000 **Black-headed**, 50 **Common**, 4 **Herring** and 4 **Yellow-legged Gulls** on 23/10. An immature **Mediterranean Gull** visited the roost briefly on 14/10 and it was also seen in the roost on 16/10.

Little Owl was seen on several occasions between the WLC and Shiningford, and daytime sightings of **Tawny Owl** reported on 15/10 at Shiningford and 17/10 below the dam wall.

Kingfisher was seen on many days at various locations including Paul Stanley Hide, Sheepwash, WLC, dam wall and Millfields. 6 **Skylarks** were seen flying low and calling over Shiningford Creek. Latest dates reported for **Swallow** was 1 on 5/10 and **House Martin** 1 on 6/10. A **Rock Pipit** was found on 10/10 and, by the 16/10 it had been seen in several locations, ranging from Sheepwash to the dam wall.

A few **Redwing** flocks were recorded, with 86 birds over Stones Island on 10/10, but only 1 flock of 50 **Fieldfare** were noted. Late warbler records included a **Garden Warbler** attempting singing on 17/10, and a **Chiffchaff** singing on 21/10. The feeding station at Paul Stanley Hide has been attracting a good display of birds during the month including **Nuthatch**, up to two **Treecreeper** together, **Great Spotted Woodpecker**, **coal tit**, several **willow tit** and **Goldcrest**.

95 species have been recorded this month compared with **94 in 2003, 103 in 2002, 91 in 2001 and 87 in 2000.**

September 2004 Bird Notes

September Highlights: The long staying **Long-tailed Duck** gains its flight feathers and departs. **Osprey, Peregrine, Ruff, Turnstone, Little Gull and Black Tern** make brief visits. Some warblers stay nearly to the end of the month, a wren feeds young on the 28/09 but no wintering thrushes yet.

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Little Grebe numbers reached 48 on 12/09, and 39 **Cormorant** were still present close to roosting time on 30/09. A **Greylag Goose** and 29 **Barnacle Geese** were noted on 12/09 and 32 **Barnacles** present on 20/09. 2 **Shelduck** and 11 **Pintail** dropped in at teatime on 30/09, in addition to the 2 **Pintail** already on site. Early in the month **Wigeon** movement was noted, with a maximum count of 460 on site on 04/09. **Tufted Duck** numbers were up to 500 later in the month, 61 **Pochard** noted in front of Sheepwash on 26/09 and **Coot** numbers reached 1450 on 23/09. **Red-crested Pochard** were noted throughout the month, with 7 on 04/09 and 15/09. The female **Long-tailed Duck** completed her moult and was seen flying strongly on 03/09. She was first recorded on 15/06 and the last report was on 19/09. A single drake **Common Scoter** was noted diving in mid-water on 28/09 and was still present on 30/09.

An **Osprey** showed at midday on 11/04 to observers in Paul Stanley Hide and, for the second consecutive month, a juvenile **Peregrine** has been hunting around the site.

During the early autumn passage waders have stayed far too briefly and in small numbers only, with; 2 **Ringed Plover** on 07/09 and singles on other dates, 4 **Dunlin** on 09/09 and singles on a few other dates, 1 **Ruff** on 16/09 and 28/09 and a juvenile on 30/09, 1 **Greenshank** on 28/09 and 2 **Turnstone** flew through southwards on 02/09.

A juvenile **Little Gull** joined the gull roost briefly on 07/09. By the end of the month this gull roost had grown to in excess of 4000 **Lesser Black-backed Gulls**, 500 **Black-headed Gulls**, a few **Herring Gulls** and up to 5 **Yellow-legged Gulls**. 4 **Black Terns** were noted on 13/09.

No Swifts have been recorded this month, and latest dates for others are; **Sand Martin** on 19/09, **Swallow** on 23/09, **House martin** still present on 30/09, and a late **Yellow Wagtail** on 28/09. An adult **wren** was seen feeding 2 begging young out of the nest on Stones Island on 28/09.

Late warbler sightings were: 2 **Sedge Warblers** on 05/09 and 1 at the WLC on 19/09, 2 **Lesser Whitethroat** on 23/09, 2 **Willow Warbler** also on 23/09, 1 **Whitethroat** on 16/09, and **Chiffchaff** are still present. **Spotted Flycatcher** were reported several times during the month with 3 near the WLC on 23/09 being the latest. But where are the wintering thrushes, they are in Derbyshire but not yet seen at Carsington.

96 species have been recorded this month compared with 104 in September 2003, 118 in 2002, 87 in 2001 and 97 in 2000.

August 2004 Bird Notes

August Highlights: Long-tailed Duck stays another month, wader visits far too brief, and the Bonxie enigma continues.

Great Crested Grebe count of 54 maintains a good level but a maximum of only 27 **Little Grebe** suggests some may still be nurturing young out of sight. With 28 adult **Mute Swans**, breeding success seems to be limited. Up to 12 feral **Barnacle Geese** were noted and 2 **Greylag Geese** present on 20/8, with 1 on 26/8.

A single male **Shelduck** made a brief stay on 9/8, the first **Wigeon** was at the WLC on 12/8 and numbers reached 6 by the end of the month. **Gadwall** were around the WLC all month, with a maximum of 10 on 6/8 and, following eclipse, most of these ducks are now

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showing in full plumage. **Teal** increased from 2 on 1/8 to 14 by 26/8, and a single **Shoveler** was seen at various locations between 11-25/8. **Pochard** numbers peaked at 9, and the feral **Red Crested Pochards** were up to 5 on 30/8. A **Tufted Duck** count on 1/8 totalled 461 and 19 broods have been recorded. The **Long-tailed Duck** remained around WLC and Stones Island all month, a female/juv **Common Scoter** was present during the rain storm on 10/8, and 2 males plus a female on 26/8, the 2 males still present the following day. **Ruddy Duck** numbers totalled 27 on 1/8 and a pair with young at Paul Staley hide on 11/8 proved at least 3 broods for the water.

A **Red Kite** was seen over nearby Hognaston on 1/8 [PHJ], and a female **Goshawk** was seen chasing wood pigeon at Hall Wood by the same observer on 13/8. **Sparrow Hawk** young could be heard calling for food from a wooded area near Sheepwash during the month, and another raptor success was the first record of breeding **Common Buzzard** for the site. Sadly one juv was found dead on the road but indications suggest two other young are safely flying. Hirundines were seen to be chased by a **Hobby** on 2/8, and a juv **Peregrine** was recorded on many dates, mainly between the WLC and Sheepwash. The high water levels throughout the month have covered most mud margins so most wader sightings have been brief or fly-throughs. No **Oystercatchers** have been recorded since the breeding pairs left site in July. **Ringed Plovers** were noted in singles and usually in flight from 10/8, with 2 on 26/8. **Lapwing** flocks have been present all month with 75 at WLC on 2/8 and 63 at Sheepwash on the same day. A juv **Little Stint** was on Horseshoe Island for the evening of 27/8 [RC], and a single **Dunlin** at the same location most days, with 2 on 15/8. 2 **Ruff** were found at WLC on 5/8 [PHJ], 1 still there the following day. Up to 5 snipe were on Horseshoe Island between 4 and 15/8, a single **Black Tailed Godwit** on 8/8 [NH], and a **Spotted Redshank** on 1/8 [PHJ]. Whimbrel movement was 1 plus 7 southwest on the 2/8 and 10 south on 8/8. **Common Sandpipers** peaked at 5, **Curlew** only 2, **Redshank** just 3, 2 **Greenshank** on the 9/8 only, 2 **Green Sandpipers** on 11/8 and 1 on 17/8, and a **Wood Sandpiper** was heard calling over Stones Island on 19/8 [JB,RC].

To continue the **Bonxie** enigma, a juv **Great Skua** was found during the rainstormy morning of 10/8 [NLo,NH], later joined by an adult [RMRJ]. These birds flew high north at 1435 as the storm clouds cleared. These are the ninth record of Bonxie at Carsington, involving 11 birds in total, and national reports over the past few years suggest no other English inland water has this level of records.

The roost of **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** was up to 3000 by the end of the month, joined by up to 6 **Yellow-legged Gulls** and a juv **Common Gull** on 26/8. There were 2 **Sandwich Terns** on 2/8 [RC] and a single on 13/8 [JB,AS]. **Common Terns** included 3 on 3/8, 13 and a 2 on 9/8 and 3 on 10/8. A good movement of **Black Terns** seen were 2 on 2/8, flock of 13 on 9/8 [NLo], 3 more later that day, and 1 on 23/4.

A lone **Swift** was noted on 27/8, **Kingfisher** has been seen most days in all areas of the water, a **Tree Pipit** on 15/4 [JB], single **Yellow wagtails** from 15/8, and **Wheatear** on 17,21 and 22/8. So far the latest dates for **Sedge Warbler** is 12/8, **Lesser Whitethroat** 26/8, **Spotted Flycatcher** 26/8, **Whitethroat** ?

110 species were recorded compared with 110 in Aug 2003, 122 in 2002, 86 in 2001, 97 in 2000.