

DECEMBER 2005 BIRD NOTES

December Highlights: Wildfowl Counts set new County records. **Red-necked** and **Black-necked Grebes** attract observers, **Chiffchaff** and **Blackcap** seen and **Hawfinch** and **Common Redpoll** extend the site list.

Another excellent month for wildfowl numbers, with new county records for a single site being set on 18th [RWK,RMRJ,TD] at 1248 **Tufted Duck**, 105 **Little Grebe** and 2048 **Coot**. Other counts included 61 **Great Crested Grebe** on 18th, 26 **Mute Swan** on 13th, 40 **Barnacle Geese** on 13th, 1020 **Wigeon** on 18th, 104 **Gadwall** [site record] on 18th, 4 **Shoveler** on 15th, 165 **Pochard** on 23rd, 9 **Goosander** on 18th, 22 **Goldeneye** on 18th and 188 **Ruddy Duck** on 18th. Last month's **Red-necked Grebe** stayed all this month, usually found at Lane End but occasionally at Millfields. On the 20th two **Black-necked Grebes** were found at Sheepwash [DBT]. These grebes moved round to Paul Stanley Hide and stayed for the rest of the month.

Very few records of raptors included up to 4 **Common Buzzard** in the air over Hall Wood on 12th and a male **Goshawk** briefly on 6th and 7th. An elusive **Water Rail** was seen at Sheepwash on 1st and 8th and at Lane End on 29th. Waders included 2 **Golden Plover** over the Wildlife Centre on 5th, 900plus **Lapwing** on 21st, 6 **Snipe** at Paul Stanley Hide on 8th and 23rd, 4 **Snipe** at WLC on 10th [these numbers are significantly less than in the past few winters], **Redshank** most days with 3 **Redshank** on 5th, a **Dunlin** at the WLC on 22nd and a **Green Sandpiper** around Stones Island on 18th.

Two **Little Owls** were showing in Shiningford Creek on 7th and on other dates. A **Kingfisher** seen at Paul Stanley Hide on 19th was also at other locations on many dates. A **Green Woodpecker** was heard/seen around the Sheepwash area on 7th and 11th and 3 **Meadow Pipits** were on the dam wall on 9th. There are no records of big flocks or roosts of wintering thrushes, and their winter berries have gone already, 17 **Fieldfare** were over Stones Island on 23rd, 20 **Fieldfare** in Shiningford Creek on 28th and 25 **Redwing** over Sheepwash on 22nd. Winter warblers are a rarer sight at Carsington but, on the 18th, a female **Blackcap** was at Hopton End and a **Chiffchaff** was on Stones Island. Several flocks of **Siskin** were recorded, the largest being 100plus at Millfields on 22nd, and 16 **Lesser Redpoll** were in Shiningford Creek on 4th and 25 on Stones Island on 21st.

Two significant records of finch species are new for this site. A **Common [Mealy] Redpoll**[RC]** was feeding on willow herb seed heads near the boardwalk to the WLC on 14th. This species has been reported on two previous occasions, both without sufficient supportive detail to submit to DOS for formal identification but, on this occasion, close views and copious notes were obtained, hopefully leading to a new species on our list. Sadly, after several searches, this bird has not been refound. The other finch was the large **Hawfinch** [TW] coming to the popular feeding station on Stones Island on 29th. This is the first record of Hawfinch at Carsington Water and, again, the bird could not be refound the following day but it should be noted that there are several other records from around the country of Hawfinches attending feeding tables, so watch yours.

Only 87 species recorded [but superb quality] compared with 95 in December 2004, 97 in 2003, 89 in 2002 and 86 in 2001.

NOVEMBER 2005 BIRD NOTES

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November Highlights: **Ring-necked Duck, Great Northern Diver, Red-necked and Slavonian Grebes, Water Rail, Woodcock, Spotted Redshank, Mediterranean Gull and Caspian Gull.**

Certainly a good month. One wise birder [TS], armed with the knowledge that the Staffordshire Ring-necked Ducks had moved on, went looking for them and was rewarded early afternoon on the 8th by finding a first winter **Ring-necked Duck**** at the mouth of Fishtail Creek. Using modern information systems at least three other birders were mobilised and saw the bird before dusk. So far there were no reports of the bird made the following day. This is the first record for the species at Carsington. Just four days later on the 12th a juvenile **Great Northern Diver**** was found [SLH] mid-afternoon in front of Sheepwash Hide. Having been seen by several birders, this bird also left overnight. Then, on the 17th, a first winter **Red-necked Grebe**** was found [DN] from Lane End hide. This bird was still present and being admired at the end of the month. All three species are Derbyshire rarities denoted**, requiring full description for consideration by the Derbyshire Ornithological Society's Rarities Sub-committee and the finders' initials are shown in brackets.

A **Slavonian Grebe** was seen near the bank below Middle Wood on 24th, and was briefly present in front of Lane End hide for two birders on 25th. Sixteen **Pink-footed Geese** were noted flying over the Wildlife Centre on 20th. Wintering wildfowl are maintaining high numbers: 461 **Wigeon** on 8th, 55 **Gadwall** on 8th, 160 **Teal** on 11th, 240 **Mallard** on 13th, 308 **Pochard** on 8th, 734 **Tufted** on 8th, 17 **Goldeneye** on 17th, 96 **Ruddy Duck** on 23rd, 1682 **Coot** on 8th, 70 **Little Grebe** on 15th, 43 **Great Crested Grebe** on 15th and 62 **Cormorant** on 7th. Some Cormorants are now roosting overnight. Usually they can be seen at dusk, circling to gain height before travelling south, but, on 1st, 25 were counted at dusk, perched in the white guano coated trees opposite Sheepwash hide. Other duck records include 3 **Shelduck** from Lane End on 19th, a mobile Drake **Mandarin** at Hopton End on 8th, Fishtail Creek on 10th and Green Pond on 11th [or were there three?], a pair of **Pintail** on 17th and 20th, 3 **Shoveler** on 6th and 3 **Goosander** at Millfields on 20th.

A **Water Rail** at Sheepwash was seen 4 times between 9th-16th, but it remained elusive, even invisible, to most eager observers. Waders proved interesting this month, with 2 **Oystercatchers** at the Wildlife Centre on 14th, 25 **Golden Plover** on 28th, 510 **Lapwing** on 15th, a **Woodcock** on 28th, 5 **Redshank** on 25th and a **Spotted Redshank** flying over Lane End on 19th.

The Gull roost is now massive, numbering over 10,000 birds, and included an adult **Mediterranean Gull** on 19th and a first winter **Caspian Gull**** on 25th and 26th. A **Green Woodpecker** was in fields behind the Wildlife Centre on 23rd, 2 **Peregrines** on 25th, a **Stonechat** from Paul Stanley Hide on 6th and, probably, the same bird was seen the same day in WLC Creek, 55 **Siskin** on 2nd, 57 **Lesser Redpoll** on Stones Island on 1st, 21 **Bullfinch** between Stones Island and Sheepwash on 30th, 5 **Brambling** on 7th, a male **Blackcap** at Sheepwash car park entrance on 2nd, and **Chiffchaff** sightings included 1 in Sheepwash area on 1st, 6th and 13th and 1 at Millfields on 27th.

95 species recorded compared with 95 in Nov 2004, 92 in 2003, 95 in 2002 and 84 in 2001.

OCTOBER 2005 BIRD NOTES

October Highlights: Wildfowl numbers reach near record levels and winter Thrushes and Finches move in and through in good numbers. **Egyptian Geese, Goshawk, Merlin,**

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Peregrine, Bar-tailed Godwit, Rock Pipit, Stonechat, Brambling and Yellowhammer swell the records.

Cormorants perched on Sheepwash Spit hit a high of 72 on 20th, and there are definite signs of them now roosting in numbers overnight. Five **Egyptian Geese** on Millfields Spit on 14th is the first record of this species since 2002 and probably only the third for the site. Up to 56 **Barnacle Geese** have been recorded and the same flock may well have been on fly-about to Ogston Reservoir. So far this month the only total duck counts available are 654 **Tufted** on 30th, 46 **Ruddy** on 30th, 5 **Shoveler** on 2nd and for most of the month, 3 **Pintail** on 13th, 3 **Goldeneye** on 28th, 2 **Goosander** on 2nd, 49 **Gadwall** on 20th, 1 drake **Mandarin** on 10th, 100 **Mallard** in the Sheepwash area on 4th, 1 drake **Common Scoter** on 4th to 6th, but, when figures for the massive number of **Wigeon, Pochard, Teal, Mallard** and **Coot** are obtained, it should prove to be an exceptional month's record.

Raptor records included a male **Goshawk** over Sheepwash on 22nd, 2 **Sparrowhawks** from PS Hide on 20th and Oldfield Lane on 27th, 4 **Buzzards** in the air from PS Hide on 14th, a male **Merlin** perched on a post near the Wildlife Centre on 2nd and again, with Blackbird prey, near Hall Wood on 17th and a **Peregrine** from PS Hide on 11th.

Wader species reported totalled a good ten, including a **Golden Plover** flying over Sheepwash on 23rd, an **Oystercatcher** in front of PS Hide on 28th, 2 **Dunlin** on 9th and many other days, up to 12 **Snipe** on Sheepwash Spit on 17th, 3 **Bar-tailed Godwits** flew in from the north and landed at the Wildlife Centre around 3pm on 8th, **Redshank** were reported throughout the month, with 3 at the Wildlife Centre on 25th and a **Common Sandpiper** was present up to 15th.

The Gull roost produced a second winter **Mediterranean Gull** on 16th and 6 adult **Yellow-legged Gulls** on 16th. A **Sandwich Tern** was on site from 7th to 10th, and the juvenile **Arctic Tern** from the end of last month stayed on until 2nd and was joined, on the 2nd, by a smaller predominantly **white tern** on the 2nd which, sadly, remained too briefly and too distant to positively identify.

The **Kingfisher** continued to give fishing displays from various perches all month. The last records of **Swallow** and **House Martin** were both of 2 on 2nd. A single **Skylark** was heard calling, flying south on 2nd and on other dates up to 22nd, **Meadow pipits** continued passing through, with 21 on Stones Island on 25th, and two specials were a **Rock Pipit** on the Dam Wall on 21st and 22nd and a **Stonechat** on fence posts in the Shiningford area on 27th. Winter Thrushes started arriving with 11 **Redwing** on 15th, rising to 100 plus near the Wildlife Centre on 30th and **Fieldfare** were not far behind, with 50 on 25th. Flocks of **Starlings** have been moving into the country also, with 200 birds reported on 20th and 140 noted in three flocks moving through on 30th. A late **Chiffchaff** was singing on Stones Island on the 11th, but its song must have been drowned by the flighty buzzing flock of **Redpoll** which has taken up residence there this month and numbered 40 plus on 22nd. **Siskin** have also arrived, with 30 noted in Hall Wood on 21st. More recent arrivals are **Brambling** with 8 noted feeding in bushes between the main car park and Wildlife Centre on 30th and a site rare once resident breeding bird, a **Yellowhammer**, was heard over PS Hide on 2nd. Also rumoured, a **Black-necked Grebe** at the tower on 4th, any information please.

98 species recorded compared with 91 in Oct 2004, 94 in 2003, 103 in 2002, 91 in 2001 and 87 in 2000.

SEPTEMBER 2005 BIRD NOTES

September Highlights: Wintering Wildfowl move in, Warblers move out southwards and migrating waders move through too quickly. **Kittiwake, Green Woodpecker, Whinchat, Wheatear** swell the list and **Siskin** and **Redpoll** move in with Autumn.

Grebe numbers are increasing and 54 **Cormorants** were noted on 30th, one or two **Hérons** were on site daily, with 5 on 9th. Three **Greylag** Geese were present on 1st and 10th and 387 **Canada** Geese were in front of Sheepwash on 2nd. Wintering wildfowl increased throughout the month, with 152 **Wigeon** and 250 **Teal** by 15th, 28 **Gadwall** on 10th, 2 **Pintail** on 2nd, 7 **Shoveler** on 17th, 69 **Pochard** on 30th and a drake **Common Scoter** from 4th to 7th. Four **Red Crested Pochard** were noted on 19th, with at least 1 daily, and a probable **Tufted/Pochard** hybrid was determined on 8th.

Following last month's **Osprey** sightings on 26th and 30th [missed off the early completed August Bird Notes], this month's raptors include a **Hobby** over Hall Wood on 11th, **Peregrine** on 20th and 24th and the **Kestrels** which regularly perch on the camera on Horseshoe Island.

Wader passage has included some good species but, even with plenty of suitable foreshore, they are not staying long. Species include 1 **Knot** in flight towards the Visitor Centre on 10th, **Green Sandpiper** on Stones Island early on 15th but no sign later, a juvenile **Little Ringed Plover** on 1st, 1 **Ringed Plover** on 14th, 16th and 22nd, and a maximum **Dunlin** count of 7 on 25th. There were **Snipe** daily, with 5 on 5th, a **Woodcock** was flushed into cover near Sheepwash Car Park on 10th, 2 **Redshank** on 7th and **Common Sandpiper** daily, with 2 on 13th.

The gull roost was well established by the start of the month, with 5000 **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** on 9th, 600 **Black-headed Gulls** on 30th and **Yellow-legged Gulls** were in the roost all month, with a maximum of 8 on 21st. A juvenile **Kittiwake** flew in from the west during mid-morning of 10th, a juvenile **Arctic Tern** was noted on 18th and 19th, another took up residence from 25th to the month end and 2 other **Arctic Terns** flew through on 30th.

Kingfishers have been giving excellent views at various locations all month. There must be several on site but the maximum seen together was 2 on 20th. The favourite locations to watch them fishing include the fence posts in the water at Paul Stanley and Sheepwash Hides. The only sighting of **Green Woodpecker** this year was on the dead tree from Sheepwash Hide on 25th. 2 **Skylark** were noted over Tail Bay on 14th, 5 **Meadow Pipits** were on the dam wall on 26th and, during a 25 minute period the same morning, 27 were noted flying high south over Stones Island. A **Sand Martin** was recorded on 10th and **Swallows** and **House Martins** were still present on 30th. There were 3 **Yellow Wagtails** on the dam wall early on 15th, the male **Redstart** in Wildlife Centre Creek was last seen on 13th, a female **Whinchat** was near the Wildlife Centre on 12th [the only record this year of this species which previously bred on site] and 2 **Wheatear** were on the dam wall on 14th, with singles present there on other dates. Warbler numbers diminished through the month, with last records of **Lesser Whitethroat** on Stones Island on 15th, **Garden Warbler** singing in Shiningford Creek on 6th, a female **Blackcap** in Sheepwash car park on 26th, a **Willow Warbler** at Millfields on 22nd and **Chiffchaff** still present beyond the end of the month. The first **Siskin** of the autumn were 2 on 16th, with 1 **Lesser Redpoll** on the same day.

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101 species recorded compared with 94 in Sept 2004, 104 in 2003, 118 in 2002, 87 in 2001

AUGUST 2005 BIRD NOTES

August Highlights: Sandwich Terns, 47 Common Scoter and an Osprey call in following a heavy rain front, Little Egret, Kittiwake and Green Sandpiper seen, and better news on breeding birds.

Sightings, associated with a heavy rain front from the west, late on the 18th through into the 19th, included an early drake Goldeneye in the evening of 18th, 6 Sandwich Terns early on 19th, some staying most of the day, a site record of 47 Common Scoter flying in just before lunchtime, 43 of which flew off at 1330hrs, leaving 4 which stayed the rest of the day, then late evening an Osprey flew slowly past Stones Island towards Millfields and was lost to sight behind trees.

35 Little Grebes were counted on 14th and 43 Great Crested Grebe on 12th, including this year's young. Flat Island and Sheepwash Spit are popular with Cormorants and 33 were on the Spit on 26th. A Little Egret was found on Sailing Club Island on 25th, at last an egret this year, but it only stayed for the day, whereas nearby Ogston seems to have had 1 or 2 for most of the year. Mute Swans totalled 27 on the 17th, including 3+1 juveniles and a group of 14 adults which seem to have stuck together all month. A few winter ducks have returned, with 20 Wigeon on 28th, 29 Teal on 28th and 6 Pochard on 26th. A second pair of Ruddy Duck have young, Mallard totalled 186 on 12th, 4 juvenile Shelduck were flying around on 21st and 1 adult plus 1 juv Shelduck were on Flat Island on 24th and, apart from the 47 Common Scoter on 19th, there were also 2 on the 4th, 3 on 13th and 4 on 22nd. A count of 750 Coot on 24th suggests big numbers may be present through the winter again. There have been 2 further Tufted Duck broods this month and a report on breeding on the islands and remote shorelines shows even more pairs of Tufted bred.

Even with lower water levels and mud, wader passage so far has been poor, the only notable species being a Green Sandpiper on 21st, but encouraging news on breeding, taken from a survey of off-shore islands and remote shorelines carried out by boat access, is that 1 pair of Little Ringed Plover and 1 pair of Redshank successfully bred. The gull roost is building slowly with 600 Lesser Black-backed Gulls and a Yellow Legged Gull present on 19th, that is until flushed by the Osprey. An immature Kittiwake was present in the afternoon of 24th and the only tern recorded, apart from the Sandwich terns on 19th, was a distant Commic, again on 19th.

Two Kingfishers were seen at the Wildlife Centre on 19th [a popular date] and single Kingfishers were reported on most dates covering all locations. There were 70 Swallows on the draw-off tower in the early morning of 17th before moving off south, 60 House Martins from the local breeding colony were on the Visitor Centre roof on 24th, 300 House Martins were noted on the morning of 26th and, during the evening, good numbers were still passing through southbound, and what was probably the last Swift record of the year was 1 on 25th. A good record was the only Grasshopper Warbler of the year on this site, found near Sheepwash Car Park gate on 18th, and two family parties of Spotted Flycatcher were recorded, 5 birds in Tail Bay on 2nd and 4 near Paul Stanley hide on 15th. Also a male Redstart was in the Wildlife Centre Creek on 2nd and again on 23rd and 26th, a female/immature Wheatear was on the dam wall early morning on 4th, 7th and 19th, and a large flock of Jackdaws, measuring 200 on 12th, has been regularly seen in the Hopton End and Hall Wood area.

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98 species recorded compared with 110 in August 2004 and 2003, 122 in 2002 and 86 in 2001.

JULY 2005 BIRD NOTES

July Highlights: Hobby, Peregrine and Osprey, Ruff, Black-tailed Godwit, Whimbrel and Greenshank, Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, Pied Flycatcher and Crossbills.

Following on from June, July is also a quiet month, with the main bird activity being late breeders showing their offspring. Four pairs of **Little Grebe** and seven pairs of **Great Crested Grebe** bred, which is similar to last year. Just two pairs of **Mute Swan** bred compared with three pairs last year. To date, only four broods of **Tufted Duck** have been recorded, well down on last year's 17 broods, surprising when 290 birds were noted on 16th, with a minimum of 100 in previous months. So far one pair of **Ruddy Duck** have bred. Three pairs of **Sparrow Hawk** are known to have bred, which is encouraging for this secretive woodland raptor. Five pairs of **Lapwing** and two pairs of **Oystercatchers** successfully reared young but **Redshank** and **Little Ringed Plover** failed. Some of the breeding failure was due to the continuous very high water levels, which kept the former water edge margins under water and also significantly reduced the nesting space on Horseshoe Island. In addition, there was a cold northerly airflow during the season which will have affected breeding success.

Forty **Barnacle Geese**, including juveniles, were noted on the 1st, six **Shelduck** took refuge on Flat Island during a rainstorm on 28th, eight **Pochard** were noted at Sheepwash on 13th and, later in the month, they were at Hopton End, and a single **Shoveler** was at the Wildlife Centre on 18th.

A **Hobby** was seen on the 14th and again on 29th, a **Peregrine** on the 6th and 27th and two **Ospreys** were recorded flying north at 1730hrs on the 16th. Wader records included 10 **Oystercatchers** on 16th, 6 **Little Ringed Plovers**, including 2 fully flighted juveniles, on the 8th, 1 **Ruff** on 13th, 1 **Black-tailed Godwit** on 6th, 3 on 13th and 2 on 15th, 1 **Whimbrel** on 20th and another on 24th, 2 **Curlew** on 4th and 15th, 12 adult **Redshank** together at the Wildlife Centre on 15th, 6 **Common Sandpipers** there on 20th, the first **Greenshank** of the year flying over Sheepwash on 12th, and a **Bar-tailed Godwit** was reported at the Wildlife Centre on 5th. The record of 2 **Ospreys** northwards is unusual and unsigned, more information on these and the Bar-tailed would be most helpful in confidently separating these records from the recently noted puffin, penguin and great grey shrike categories.

The Gull roost is already established with 400 **Lesser Black-backed Gulls**, 3 **Common Gulls** and 3 **Yellow-legged Gulls** on 28th. A juvenile **Black-headed Gull** was on Sheepwash Spit on 13th, 4 **Great Black-backed Gulls** in the roost on 29th and a single **Common Tern** was present from 25th to 28th.

A **Kingfisher** has been noted in several locations from 16th, a **Lesser Spotted Woodpecker** reported at Sheepwash on 31st, 2 **Redstarts** in Shiningford Creek on 19th, a female **Pied Flycatcher** in Shiningford Creek on 10th, but sadly, no sign of breeding and 2 **Crossbills** flying over Millfields. A family party of **Spotted Flycatchers** was in Hall Wood on 27th, so far these are the only breeding pair reported this year, four pairs bred last year and, evidently, numbers are significantly down nationally this year.

99 species recorded this month, which is average for July, compared with 101 in July last year, 95 in 2003 and 100 in 2002.

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JUNE 2005 BIRD NOTES

June Highlights: Red-crested Pochards arrive, Red Kite and Osprey make brief visits, 11 wader species reported including Sanderling and Black-tailed Godwits, Pied Flycatcher seen twice and Crossbills found.

June is traditionally a quiet month as far as vagrant species are concerned, most birds are in some stage of breeding and stay local to their breeding site. **Great Crested Grebes** have so far produced three broods, but, with 46 adults counted on the 20th, more broods should be appearing although 24 inactive birds in Millfields Bay on the 1st suggested these were non-breeding or failed breeders. Two pairs of **Mute Swan** had 4 + 3 young on 11th, but, sadly, the 4 young at Paul Stanley hide had reduced to 2 by the 29th. Two male **Red-crested Pochard** arrived on the 14th and were seen for the rest of the month anywhere between Stones Island and Sheepwash. Eight pairs of **Mallard** had produced young by the month end but no **Tufted Duck** broods yet.

A **Red Kite** was noted on 6th and an **Osprey** seen circling over Millfields and the Dam Wall on the 11th, otherwise **Common Buzzards** were regularly seen, with three in the air on 20th.

Eleven wader species included a **Sanderling** on 17th, Ruff on 1st and 5 **Black-tailed Godwits** on 27th. Breeding **Oystercatchers** have raised 3 + 1 young at least, **Little Ringed Plovers** have shown signs of breeding but no proof, 4 adults were on Horseshoe Island on 21st. No **Redshank** young have been recorded and the young **Lapwings** are now nearly fully grown.

A **Barn Owl** has been seen from the 10th, and **Tawny Owls** were widely recorded. A **Yellow Wagtail** seen flying over Oldfield Lane area on 7th suggests possible breeding nearby. A fine set of records from an observer walking around the Water on the 20th yielded 47 **Wren**, 9 **Dunnock**, 23 **Robin**, 38 **Blackbird**, 4 **Song Thrush**, 4 **Whitethroat**, 6 **Garden Warbler**, 31 **Chiffchaff**, 48 **Willow Warbler**, 41 **Blue Tit**, 18 **Tree Sparrow**, 21 **Chaffinch** and many more species. A **Spotted Flycatcher** was in Hall Wood on 7th, this species seem down in numbers this year, in recent years there have been 3 to 5 pairs. The **Pied Flycatcher**, present for most of last month, may still be around as there have been two further sightings this month in the same area, one in early June and another on 18th. Up to 9 **Crossbills** were seen on 21st and 27th at Penn Carr near Millfields. These birds may be feeding in the nearby private Blackwall conifer plantation and coming down to drink at Penn Carr. They are most easily found by their distinctive call and they regularly drop to ground for a drink, usually leaving a lookout on top of the tree. Also note that, in the past month, Crossbills have been reported at many locations nationwide, suggesting a large movement into the country so check conifers anywhere.

94 species recorded this month, which is reasonable for June and compares well with 93 last year and 84 in June 2003

MAY 2005 BIRD NOTES

May Highlights: Wader passage turns-up two **Temminck's Stint**, **Knot**, **Sanderling**, **Ruff** and **Turnstone**. **Red Kite**, **Hen Harrier**, **Hobby**, **Kittiwake** and **Black Tern** are seen passing through, **Pied Flycatcher** sings for most of the month, **Spotted Flycatchers** arrive, and many breeding species fledge by the end of the month.

Three **Hérons** were at Hopton End on 17th, one **Greylag Goose** seen on 1st was present for most of the month, and on the 31st six pairs of **Barnacle Geese** were Creche parading

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19 young on Stones Island and at least one other pair were still on nest. A **Mallard** pair and ten young were in front of Paul Stanley hide on 3rd, four **Shelduck** were noted on 22nd with singles on 1st, 11th and 25th, and 132 **Tufted Duck** visible on 23rd show this to be a late breeding species.

Two **Hen Harriers** were seen during the month, a male north over Stones Island on 6th and a **ringtail** low northwards at Hopton End on the 28th. A **Red Kite** flew over Hopton End at 1500hrs on 27th and two **Hobbys** flew over Stones Island in the evening of 16th.

Sixteen species of wader were recorded in the month, the best being a **Temminck's Stint** found early morning on 11th at the Wildlife Centre, only to be chased and flushed away by breeding **Lapwings** ten minutes later and, despite searching, the bird could not be relocated. This is the second record for the site. Then on the 18th another was found, seen by at least two observers already on site, also photographed, but shortly afterwards was flushed by a military helicopter flying low over the Wildlife Centre, and subsequently could not be relocated. Other waders included three **Ringed Plovers** on 13th, one **Golden Plover** on 1st, a **Knot** on 6th, 11th and 23rd, one **Sanderling** on 12th and 16th, a female **Ruff** on 31st, a **Bar-tailed Godwit** on 15th and eight **Turnstones** on 11th. So far **Lapwings** have produced three broods at the Wildlife Centre and one brood at Millfields but survival rate is poor.

An adult **Kittiwake** was near Stones Island on 7th, up to 3 **Common Terns** were looking at the tern rafts on 25th and 26th without any take-up and a single **Black Tern** was present on 12th. Notably 300 **Great Black-backed Gulls**, mainly immatures, roosted on 26th with similar numbers roosting throughout the month.

Four **White Wagtails** were on the dam wall on 17th, a pair of **Redstart** were feeding young by 27th, single **Wheatears** were on the dam wall on 4th and 9th and the first **Spotted Flycatcher** was spotted on 16th, with 3 present on 17th. A **Pied Flycatcher** found singing on the 30th of last month continued until at least the 25th, during which time it attracted a female on the 1st and showed her into a breeding box which already contained a nest of **Great Tit** young. She obviously moved on in search of a more resourceful male with a detached empty home to offer. On the 7th a first summer male was also in the same area and, on the 8th, another singing male was found well away from the original. This makes in all four different **Pied Flycatchers** seen this year and still there is no sign of breeding on this site. Warblers have settled down to breeding, with numbers about usual, although first signs suggest **Whitethroat** may be down and **Sedge Warblers** remain at last years low. **Raven** bred again, raising two young and have now left site.

103 species recorded, which is low compared with 113 in May last year and 110 in 2003.

APRIL 2005 BIRD NOTES

April Highlights: **Four Black-necked Grebes** and a **Little Gull** turn up on a Sunday, migrant Warblers announce their arrival, **Yellow and White Wagtails** brighten up Stones Island, **Water Pipit** and **Scandinavian Rock Pipit** make brief stops, a few good Raptors and Gulls visit and the **Great Grey Shrike** departs.

Sunday the 24th was a memorable birding day for new arrivals and a few good birds. It was the first date for **Whitethroat** and **lesser Whitethroat**, an adult **Little Gull** appeared with seven **Arctic Terns** in the morning and there were **27 Arctic Terns** in the afternoon. Four summer plumage **Black-necked Grebes** were found at lunchtime near Lane End and they

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later drifted to the Wildlife Centre. In supporting roles were: **Yellow and White Wagtails**, one **Redstart**, first wave of **Swifts** [although a single had been seen on 17th], **Whimbrel**, one **Common Sandpiper**, two **Little Ringed Plover**, one **Shelduck**, one female **Common Scoter** and possibly 2 **Red Kite**.

3 **Greylag Geese** were present on 11th, with 1 or 2 throughout the month. **Shelduck** were recorded on several dates, with 7 on Millfields Spit on 29th and 4 near Stones Island on 17th. **Wigeon** numbers dwindled from 109 on 3rd to 2 on 25th, **Mallard** maximum was 101 on the 1st, 2 female **Pintail** were at Sheepwash on 4th, a pair of **Shoveler** on 4th, 4 **Common Scoter** on 1st near the dam wall, and a **Water Rail** was heard on 5th at Paul Stanley hide.

A good spread of raptor species were seen, with a female **Marsh Harrier** on 10th, just 20 minutes after it had left Ogston Reservoir in the direction of Carsington, and an immature male flew north-east past Stones Island on 19th. An **Osprey** was seen leaving over the dam wall on 12th, **Peregrine** recorded on 5th and 10th, up to 10 **Buzzards** in the air on 10th and possibly **Kites**, for which more information is sought.

Waders included 10 **Oyster Catchers** on 17th and 19th, **Little-ringed Plovers** most days, with a maximum of 3 on 11th, a single **Golden Plover** on 20th, 1 **Dunlin** on 25th, 1 summer plumage **Black-tailed Godwit** 19-21st, 1 **Whimbrel** on 16th and 2 on 24th, 10 **Redshank** on 25th and 1 **Common Sandpiper** from 12th on Stones Island with 3 on 29th.

Other Gull news, apart from the **Little Gull**, is 2 immature **Mediterranean Gulls** on 2nd, an immature **Iceland Gull** on 5th, an adult **Kittiwake** on 6th and 10th and over 600 **Great Black-backed Gulls** in the roost on 14th. The first **Tern** of the year was a **Common** flying straight through on 11th and another on 18th, **Arctic Terns** followed, with up to 27 on 24th and two flocks on 25th of 38 and 15.

Yellow Wagtails started with 1 on 3rd and 5 by 18th, **White wagtails** were up to 12 by the 8th and 15 on 14th. A **Water Pipit** was found on Stones Island on 7th but it flew and could not be relocated and a **Scandinavian Rock Pipit** was seen on 9th but was flushed by visitors on Stones Island. The first **Redstart** of the year was on Stones Island on 8th, and a male **Pied Flycatcher** in Shiningford Creek on 30th.

With **Chiffchaff** and **Willow Warblers** having arrived last month, this month saw first arrivals of 4 **Blackcap** on 3rd, increasing to 17 by 27th, 1 **Garden Warbler** on 21st rising to 13 by 29th, 2 **Lesser Whitethroats** on 24th, 2 **Whitethroats** on 24th and 2 **Sedge Warblers** on 26th. Several **Wheatear** passed through, with 3 on the dam wall on 27th and a **Brambling** was near Millfields stone shelter on 4th. Finally the much admired and photographed **Great grey Shrike** left site after the 8th, having stayed since 29th November last year.

117 species were recorded in April compared with 112 in April last year, 120 in 2003 and 107 in 2002.

MARCH 2005 BIRD NOTES

March Highlights: **Black-necked Grebe** departs after 79 day stay, **Great Grey Shrike** stays another month and sings, **Red Kite**, **Waxwing**, **Little Ringed Plover**, **Godwits** and **Common Scoter** visit, and summer migrants begin to return with **Chiffchaff**, **Willow Warbler**, **Wheatear**, **White Wagtail**, **Sand Martin** and **Swallow**.

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Hopes of seeing the long staying **Black-necked Grebe** moult into summer plumage were dashed when it disappeared after the 10th. But lucky for some observers an almost full summer plumage bird appeared on Stones Island early on 25th and was seen from Sheepwash later in the day. A single **Pink-footed Goose** spent all month with the Canadas, and 172 were noted flying west on the 6th. **Shelduck** were recorded on several days, with the maximum being 6 on 15th. A drake **Mandarin** was reported in front of the Wildlife Centre on 19th, a pair of **Red-breasted Mergansers** were there on 20th and a pair of **Common Scoter** were out over deep water on 31st.

A **Red Kite** appeared out of the mist at Sheepwash on 30th to the surprise of other birdlife and observers alike. A **Peregrine** was recorded on the 4th, 10th and 18th and **Common Buzzard** were recorded throughout the month, with 4 on 8th and 13th.

Curlews were noted passing through, with some roosting overnight, usually on Horseshoe Island. The maximum count of Curlew was 52 on 12th. One **Little Ringed Plover** was at the Wildlife Centre on 19th, a **Ringed Plover** on 2nd and 5th, two **Black-tailed Godwits** at the north end on 12th and a **Bar-tailed Godwit** was reported flying through on 20th. There were two records of **Jack Snipe** for which more information would be most welcome.

The number of **Lesser Black-backed gulls** reduced dramatically in the roost but **Common Gull** numbers reached 488 on 9th. Rarer gulls included a second winter **Iceland Gull** on 14th, 2 adult summer plumage **Mediterranean Gulls** on 15th and a **Kittiwake** on 20th.

Summer migrants started with a **Wheatear** on the dam wall and a **Chiffchaff** on Stones Island, both on the 18th. Two **Wheatears** were in the Shiningford area on 19th and there were 6 **Chiffchaff** by the 22nd, with 13 being noted singing on a walk around the site perimeter on the 28th. The first **Willow Warblers** were 2 singing on 25th with up to 4 by the end of the month and a **White Wagtail** was on Stones Island on 26th. Two **Sand Martin** were seen on the 20th, 17 on 25th and 1 **Swallow** on 27th, 20 on 29th.

Redwing were present all month with 80 on 2nd and one singing on 15th. Only one record of **Fieldfare** which was 9 on 6th flying over the north end. A **Skylark** was singing over the dam wall on 15th, 62 **Robin** were noted on 14th and 53 were counted singing on 15th. A pair of **Mistle Thrush** were busy nest building from the 25th near Sheepwash, a **Brambling** was seen feeding with the **Chaffinches** at Paul Stanley hide on 19th and 27th, a **Yellowhammer** was at the same location on 13th and a **Waxwing** was seen in the main car park on 19th.

105 species were recorded, which is excellent for March, compared with 92 in March last year, 101 in 2003 and 96 in 2002.

FEBRUARY 2005 BIRD NOTES

February Highlights: **Black-necked Grebe** and **Great Grey Shrike** show well all month and **Goshawk**, **Merlin**, **Short-eared Owl** and **Jack Snipe** show just once.

The long stay **Black-necked Grebe** spent most of the month diving and feeding to the right of Sheepwash Hide. **Little Grebe** numbers reached 64 on 15th and **Great Crested Grebe** totalled 49 on 6th.

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Twenty **Pink-footed Geese** were, surprisingly, flying east on the 1st and a single joined the resident **Canadas** from 2nd to 25th at least. There was a **Greylag** at the Wildlife Centre on 3rd and 37 feral **Barnacles** on the 28th. A pair of **Red-breasted Mergansers** were in front of the Sailing Club on 26th, a **Shoveler** at the WLC on 13th and 2 **Shelduck** were noted on 6th and 3 on the 10th. Other duck numbers include 240 **Wigeon** on 24th, 116 **Teal** on 13th, 141 **Mallard** on 14th, 337 **Tufted** on 13th, 21 **Goldeneye** on 18th, 9 **Goosander** on 6th and separate counts of 157 **Ruddy Duck** on 5th and 158 on 18th. **Coot** numbered 723 on the 21st, with **Moorhen** at 55 on the 5th.

Plenty of raptor activity this month with a **Goshawk** on the 14th which was also seen on nearby Carsington Pastures on the 18th, a **Sparrowhawk** displaying over Hall Wood on 1st and 15th, 6 **Common Buzzards** thermalling together on 1st and 2 seen talon grappling on the same day, a **Merlin** flew in front of the WLC mobbed by **Oystercatchers** on the 14th and a **Peregrine** was present on 11th and 24th.

Returning **Oystercatchers** totalled 8 on 14th and 5 **Redshank** on 21st. Other wader sightings included; 9 **Curlow** on 21st, 1 **Dunlin** on 10th, 5 **Golden Plover** on 21st and a rare sighting of a **Jack Snipe** on the 13th between Sheepwash and Paul Stanley Hide.

Two different adult **Mediterranean Gulls** were seen, but not on the same night, on 3rd, 5th, 6th, 15th and 19th. A first winter **Iceland Gull** was seen flying east with 25 **Herring Gulls** on 23rd and an adult **Iceland** was present on 27th.

Four pairs of **Little Owls** were noted settling into their breeding area on the 17th and a **Short-eared Owl** was reported briefly on a post at Sheepwash car park on the 16th. A male and a female **Lesser Spotted Woodpecker** were seen separately on the 7th and single **Skylarks** were over Stones Island on 1st and 7th. A flock of **Meadow Pipits** has been present all month on the dam wall, usually below the road. 24 were noted on 1st and a total of 31 on the 23rd included birds around the Visitor Centre/ Stones Island area.

The ever-popular **Great Grey Shrike** was present from last month to the 27th Feb at least. The bird increased its hunting range to include Stones Island and Sheepwash car park. There were some very welcome Corvid counts this month: approx 100 **Jackdaws** on 10th and 97 on 18th, 52 **Rooks** on a dam wall field on 21st and a total of 77 **Carrion Crow** on 23rd.

JANUARY 2005 BIRD NOTES

January Highlights: Great Grey Shrike attracts birders throughout another month, Black-necked Grebe plays 'find me' with admirers, star find of a rare Ferruginous Duck proves a one day stand and the end of the month sees skeins of pinkfeet travelling west.

The Black-necked Grebe, presumably last December's bird was not refound until the 3rd and then it proved elusive and mobile between the Wildlife Centre, Lane End, Sheepwash and Paul Stanley hides. Towards the end of the month it settled more to Sheepwash, or were we just improving our identification performance?

The feral Barnacle Geese totalled 34 including a hybrid and were usually found around the WLC and nearby fields. Skeins of Pink-footed Geese were noted from the 22nd, some very low, sounding like a winter morning in Norfolk. Numbers were; 130 on 22nd, 230 on 23rd, 500 on 25th, 1300 on 29th. All skeins were travelling west or northwest which is their route

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from Norfolk grazing to Lancashire grazing. Some skeins are noted most years but do not expect these numbers each year as their path is traditionally a few miles north of Carsington. The time of these skeins was from 11:00 to a late 13:50hrs compared with a usual timing of 4hrs from first light for W/NW and 2hrs for E/SE.

The star find of the month was a drake Ferruginous Duck on the 2nd, the second record for the site. It stayed only that day and was relocated later that week on a water near Alton Towers. Other wildfowl include; 6 Shelduck on 16th, 249 Wigeon 23rd, 20 Gadwall 23rd, 261 Teal 7th, 3 Pintail 18th, 2 Shoveler 15th, 94 Pochard 23rd, 477 Tufted 23rd, 2 female Common Scoter 16th, 14 Goldeneye 15th and 20 Goosander on the 1st. Coot numbers at 1287 on the 23rd are less than last winter. A Water Rail was seen at Green Pond on 23rd. Very little raptor activity noted, 4 Common Buzzard on the 13th, a female Peregrine on the 7th and 11th, and a Sparrowhawk displaying on the 25th with vertical climbs and falls with over emphasized wing flaps.

A count of 1083 Lapwing on the 5th brought the site into a category of being nationally important for these wintering birds. The first Oystercatcher returned on the 19th and there were 3 by the 23rd. Redshank were present all month with a maximum count of 5 on the 23rd. A Woodcock was seen in Millfields Car Park on the 3rd and 5th, and Snipe numbers are really low for this time of year at 2 at WLC on 1st and 3 at PS hide on 3rd. A pager report of a Common Sandpiper mid month is an interesting and unseasonal record for which more information is requested.

There were only a few records from the gull roost, most observers choosing the easier Ogston Reservoir option. An adult Mediterranean Gull was present on the 2nd and 22nd, 1 adult Yellow-legged gull on 1st, an adult Caspian Gull on 12th, an adult Iceland gull on 2nd and 20 Greater Black-backed Gulls on 3rd. A surprising total of 95 Common Gulls were counted on Flat Island early afternoon of the 14th.

A Waxwing was found on the 1st in Shiningford Creek but it was obviously a brief visit. A flock of 16 Meadow Pipits was below the Dam embankment plus 1 more on Stones Island on the 16th. The Great Grey Shrike remained in the Brick Tower area all month, seen feeding on our Blue Tit flock and attracting many observers from way outside the county. 2 Brambling were in Shiningfod Creek area on 22nd, a flock of 15 Lesser Redpoll were near Lane End hide on the 9th but Siskin numbers reached just 2 on the 14th.

89 species recorded compared with: 87 in 2004, 87 in 2003, 75 in 2002, 73 in 2001 and 80 in 2000.