

DECEMBER 2007 BIRD NOTES

December Highlights: Great Northern Diver, Whooper Swan, Ring-billed Gull and Merlin.

Following last month's brief appearance by a Great Northern Diver, another was found late on 3rd and stayed for the rest of the month. When good views were finally obtained it was found to be a winter plumage adult, retaining some summer plumage pale markings on its back. Two Whooper Swans were noted on 15th and approximately 50 Pink-footed Geese were flying low on 21st at 1015hrs, rather undecidedly northeast in thick mist. Counts included; 104 little Grebe on 19th, 63 Great Crested Grebe on 19th, 30 Cormorant on 9th, 4 Heron on 28th, 13 Greylag Geese on 13th, 1 escape Cackling Goose with 41 feral Barnacle Geese on 3rd, 450 Wigeon on 9th, 132 Teal on 9th, 202 Mallard on 9th, 1 drake Pintail on 13th, 2 Shoveler on 13th, 217 Pochard on 9th, 783 Tufted Duck on 9th, 16 Goldeneye on 10th, 13 Goosander on 30th, 53 Moorhen on 9th and 1770 Coot on 9th.

Peregrine Falcon has been seen again many times this month, usually sweeping along the water's edge, and 2 were seen from the Wildlife Centre on 18th. A female Merlin was noted in Shiningford Creek on 17th.

Wader sightings included; a Ringed Plover from the Wildlife Centre on 3rd, a Dunlin at Sheepwash on 10th, a Woodcock in Middle Wood on 4th, a Black-tailed Godwit at Sheepwash on 31st and a Curlew chased by a Peregrine near the Wildlife Centre on 16th. Counts of Lapwing reached 343 on 9th, with 334 on 5th and 318 on 21st, and 14 Snipe were seen from Paul Stanley Hide, flushed up off Sheepwash Spit by the farmer rounding-up his sheep on 30th.

The adult Ring-billed Gull was present on 1st and was last seen flying west from Flat Island at 1315hrs on 6th. An adult Mediterranean Gull has been reported on many dates coming to roost, and 2 were seen from Sheepwash on 3rd. The roost also held 2 Yellow-legged Gulls on 9th and a Caspian Gull on 1st and 9th.

Two Little Owls were visible from the Wildlife Centre on 10th and a pair of Tawny Owls was seen on 9th. Kingfisher has been recorded all around the site on many dates and 2 were noted on 9th and 15th. A single Skylark flew over Sheepwash calling on 13th. A Meadow Pipit flock in Tail Bay numbered 19 on 10th and 24 on 19th. These 24 were joined by 3 Reed Bunting, feeding near the footpath on the open ground at the base of the dam slope. 37 Blackbirds were noted on 10th, 1 Fieldfare on 9th, 11 Redwing on 2nd and 2 Mistle Thrush on 18th. Tree Sparrows are regularly seen on the feeding stations at Lane End, Sheepwash Car Park, Paul Stanley Hide, Ranger Base and Wildlife Centre, where 22 were counted on 10th. 26 Chaffinch plus 8 Goldfinch were also around the Wildlife Centre feeders on 3rd. Many small flocks of Siskin have been reported from many locations, the largest being 50 at Sheepwash on 4th plus 20 in Middle Wood on the same day.

90 species recorded compared with 99 in 2006, 88 in 2005, 95 in 2004, 97 in 2003 and 89 in 2002.

NOVEMBER 2007 BIRD NOTES

November Highlights: Ring-billed Gull returns and we get short visits from: Great Northern Diver, Leach's Petrel, Whooper Swan, Common Scoter, Glaucous Gull and Kittiwake.

An adult winter plumage Great Northern Diver was at Sheepwash from 1315hrs to dusk on 10th to the delight of many gull watchers arriving for the roost. A probable Leach's Petrel was seen from Stones Island and Sheepwash by three observers during the morning of 9th and was one of a number seen inland around this date. 15 Whooper Swans were on site on 9th, 4 Shelduck on 13th and a drake Common Scoter 19th to 21st.

Counts included: 107 Little Grebe on 23rd [new site record], 53 Great Crested Grebe on 23rd, 57 Cormorant on 9th, 41 Barnacle Geese [feral] on 25th, 515 Wigeon on 11th, 25 Gadwall on 11th, 177 Teal on 16th, 234 Mallard on 11th, 1 Pintail from 5th, 4 Shoveler on 15th, 1 Red-crested Pochard on 11th and most of the month, 115 Pochard on 11th, 338 Tufted Duck on 11th, 12 Goldeneye on 25th, 1 Goosander on 3rd, 5th and 28th, 71 Moorhen on 11th and 1731 Coot on 11th.

Peregrines have been visiting regularly again this month, with 2 from Wildlife Centre on 24th and 2 over Hall Wood on 6th. They have also been seen taking/carrying prey including a Moorhen on 11th, a Teal on 20th and a Coot on 22nd. They are using the pylons on the left looking out from the Wildlife Centre, as an observation perch and to devour their prey.

Waders included 2 Oystercatchers on 25th, a Ringed Plover flying with Lapwings on 5th, 5 Dunlin on 21st, 8 Snipe at the Wildlife Centre on 4th, 1 Curlew on 14th, 4 Redshank on 6th and a Phalarope Species on 10th. This phalarope was seen distantly to the right of Sheepwash feeding on the waters edge and spinning on the water among the wildfowl before moving out of sight towards Lane End. Subsequent extensive searching failed to relocate the bird.

It is hardly surprising that Gulls attracted many birders this month, with an adult Mediterranean Gull from 9th to 30th and 2 on 29th, an adult Ring-billed Gull 9th to 13th and from 17th most evenings to 30th, 5 Yellow-legged Gulls on 3rd, 1 adult Caspian Gull on 3rd, 12th and 21st, a first winter Glaucous Gull on 12th and an adult Kittiwake on 8th. The Ring-billed Gull is most likely to be the previous years' returning bird and, let us hope, could return on 10th Nov in years to come.

Other notable species included a Barn Owl late on 27th near Hopton Pond, 2 Little Owls from the Wildlife Centre on 2nd, a Kingfisher on 5th and many other dates, a Skylark on 15th, a male Blackcap on Stones Island on 27th, 1 Brambling at the Wildlife Centre on 17th and 19th and a Crossbill flew over Millfields on 5th. Counts included 44 Wood Pigeon on 5th, 17 Meadow Pipits on the dam on 5th, 200 Fieldfare at Millfields on 28th, 60 Redwing at Sheepwash on 1st, 20 Magpie on 7th, 1000 Starlings over Stones Island at dusk on 14th, 5 Tree Sparrows on Paul Stanley feeders on 4th, 40 Siskin on 5th and 15 Lesser Redpoll on Stones Island on 14th.

96 species recorded compared with 97 in November 2006, 97 in 2005, 95 in 2004 and 92 in 2003. It should be noted that over the period 8th to 10th several site rare species were recorded, this reflected sightings at other inland waters and was promoted by the weather conditions.

OCTOBER 2007 BIRD NOTES

October Highlights: Hooded Crow and Lapland Bunting, both new species for the site.

A Slavonian Grebe was seen from the Wildlife Centre on 28th and 4 Whooper Swans moved around the site on 18th until finally driven off by the local Mute Swans. 65 Pink-footed Geese flew over southeast on 9th and another 60 flew east on 17th. A female Scaup was at Sheepwash on 8th and 2 were there on 9th. 2 Common Scoter were near Stones Island on 3rd, 1 on 20th and 22nd and 2 on 23rd. The first Goldeneye of the winter appeared on 10th and a Red-breasted Merganser on 3rd was followed by 3 on 31st. Maximum counts included: 83 Little Grebe on 26th, 45 Great Crested Grebe on 7th, 60 Cormorant on 9th, 6 Herons on 7th, 13 Greylag Geese on 21st, 45 Barnacle Geese on 15th, 972 Wigeon on 7th, 45 Gadwall on 2nd, 156 Teal on 7th, 205 Mallard on 7th, 5 Pintail on 4th, 6 Shoveler on 25th, 1 Red-crested Pochard on 11th, 159 Pochard on 26th, 706 Tufted Duck on 7th, 5 Goldeneye on 25th, 1 Goosander on 25th, 122 Moorhen on 7th and 1785 Coot on 7th.

A Common Buzzard was found bathing on 2nd and 5 were in the air on the same day. An Osprey gave good views to many when perched opposite the Wildlife Centre on 2nd and there were further sightings of 1 bird on 21st and 23rd. A Merlin flew past the Wildlife Centre at dusk on 7th and Peregrine was recorded on many dates, including one taking a duck off Horseshoe Island on 27th.

Wader sightings included: 29 Golden Plovers flying through on 17th, a Grey Plover flying northwest past the Wildlife Centre on 8th, 185 Lapwing on 7th, 2 Dunlin on 14th and singles on other dates, a Jack Snipe was flying around Horseshoe Island on 7th, 10 Snipe on 29th, a Black-tailed Godwit flying northeast on 25th, a Bar-tailed Godwit from Paul Stanley Hide on 13th, a Curlew over Shiningford Creek on 19th, 1 Redshank on 10th and on many subsequent dates, a Common Sandpiper until 3rd and a Turnstone landed in front of Sheepwash Hide on 17th. Yellow-legged Gulls have been seen during the daytime from Paul Stanley and Sheepwash Hides, with 3 present on both 13th and 26th and 5 in roost on 13th, and an adult Mediterranean Gull was on Sheepwash Spit late afternoon on 31st.

Late dates for summer migrants were 3 Swallows on 4th, 1 Wheatear on 12th, 2 Blackcap on 9th, 2 Chiffchaff on 1st and 1 Willow Warbler on 6th. Autumn/Winter movement included 3 Skylarks flying over on 14th and 26th, 30 Meadow Pipits on 11th and 14th, 1 Rock Pipit on the Dam Wall on 14th, 2 Stonechats on 5th, 1 Fieldfare on 11th and 32 on 30th, 100 Redwing on 25th, 8 Mistle Thrushes on 15th, 1 Brambling on 14th and 2 on 26th, 8 Siskin on 17th and 7 Lesser Redpoll on 9th. Also, a Green Woodpecker was seen in Middle Wood on 12th and a flock of 300 Jackdaw was noted on 27th from P.S. Hide. And, the highlights: a Hooded Crow was seen flying south over Stones Island at 1000hrs on 21st and a Lapland Bunting flew west over the Dam Wall at 0905hrs on 11th. Both these birds are species new to Carsington and both are subject to submission to Derbyshire Ornithological Society Rarities sub-Committee with full supporting notes for consideration.

So, what a month! 108 species recorded this October compared with 99 in 2006, 99 in 2005, 91 in 2004, 94 in 2003 and the previous October maximum of 103 in 2002.

SEPTEMBER 2007 BIRD NOTES

September Highlights: Pink-footed Geese, Common Scoter, Water Rail, Goshawk, Grey Plover, Little Stint, Curlew and Wood Sandpiper, Mediterranean Gull, Little Gull, Little Tern and Redwing.

Pink-footed Geese were noted on their early autumn passage south to Norfolk this year, with 42 over Stones Island at 1900hrs on 25th, 60 at 0845hrs on 27th and 150 at 0950hrs, again on 27th. The record at 1900hrs is unusual as southward records are usually 2hrs after first light, which is the flight time from the Lancashire feeding grounds of Marshside and Martin Mere. Their northward journey is usually at least 4hrs after first light Jan-Mar, reflecting the hundred miles from Norfolk. A male and 3 female Common Scoters were seen from Stones Island on 26th. Common wintering wildfowl numbers are now increasing and maximum counts included: 41 Little Grebe on 5th, 28 Great Crested Grebe on 13th, 48 Cormorant on 7th, 9 Heron on 4th, 36 Mute Swans on 23rd, 2 Greylag on 7th, 28 Barnacle on 23rd, 4 Shelduck on 12th, 318 Wigeon on 23rd and 306 in a single flock at Sheepwash on 30th, 39 Gadwall on 23rd, 95 Teal on 23rd, 203 Mallard on 23rd, 3 Pintail on 10th and 23rd, 3 Shoveler on 21st, 5 Red-crested Pochard on 15th, at least 100 Pochard on 24th, 650 Tufted Duck on 23rd, 1 Water Rail at Hopton End on 30th, 61 Moorhen on 23rd and 1611 Coot on 23rd.

Raptor records this month can be summed up by the records from one observer, on 26th in Paul Stanley Hide, enjoying one of those exceptional sessions, recording 1 Goshawk, 1 Sparrow Hawk, 5 Buzzard, 2 Kestrel, 2 Hobby, 1 Peregrine and 2 Raven.

Following August's good mix of waders, this month has kept up the standard, even if their visits were again brief, including: 1 Ringed Plover on 4th and 8th, 1 Grey Plover flying past the Wildlife Centre on 27th demonstrating its distinctive call, 1 juv Little Stint on Watersports shoreline on 19th, a juv Curlew Sandpiper on Stones Island on 29th, 3 Snipe on 27th, 2 Curlew on 25th, 3 Redshank on 8th, a Greenshank at Sheepwash on 4th, 1 Green Sandpiper from last month until the 23rd, mainly around the Wildlife Centre Creeks and Paul Stanley Hide area, 1 Wood Sandpiper on 9th and 1 Common Sandpiper up to 27th.

The gull roost reached 7000 Lesser Black-backed Gulls by the 20th and contained a first winter Mediterranean Gull on 24th, an adult plus a juv/first winter Little Gull on 28th and 14 Yellow-legged Gulls of various ages on 14th. Re Tern passage southward included 1 juv Common Tern on 1st, 2 adults on 11-12th, 1 juv on 14th and 1 adult on 28th, 1 adult Arctic Tern on 7th, 2 juv on 12th and 1 juv 16-17th and an elusive juvenile Little Tern from 1st to 4th.

A leucistic Collared Dove was among 14 on the Wildlife Centre Feeders on 12th and an albino Starling was seen around the Visitor Centre on 23rd. A Barn Owl was seen early morning or late evening from Sheepwash Hide on 3rd, 4th, 8th and 13th, and a Tawny Owl was being chased by a Jay and a Blackbird behind Sheepwash Hide at 1100hrs on 30th. A flock of 18 Skylarks were noted flying south on 24th, single Yellow Wagtails were seen on 5th, 8th, 16th and 19th, a Pair of Stonechat were in front of Paul Stanley Hide for most of 30th, 2 Wheatear on 3rd and 13th and 2 early Redwings were recorded on 27th, brought in nationally by the strong north winds over the past 24hrs. Other records include 50 House Martin on 25th, 76 Pied Wagtails on 5th, 20 Chiffchaff on 2nd, 2 Spotted Flycatchers on 3rd, 80 Jackdaws on 28th, 70 Goldfinch on 2nd, 3 Siskin on 27th and 2 Linnets on 30th.

107 Species recorded this September compared with 101 in 2006, 101 in 2005, 94 in 2004 and 104 in 2003.

AUGUST 2007 BIRD NOTES

August Highlights: Black-necked Grebe, Garganey, Osprey and a variety of Waders all visit briefly.

A juvenile Black-necked Grebe was in front of the Wildlife Centre on 28th at 0930hrs but was not seen again until 1700hrs and has not been seen since. Similarly, a Garganey was there on 30th but could not be found later that evening. Cormorant numbers increased through the month to 36 on 30th, 38 Mute Swans on 1st included broods of 2 and 7, 2 Shelduck were near Lane End on 23rd, 111 Mallard on 16th, 1 Shoveler on 19th, a pair of Red-crested Pochard on 25th, 248 Tufted Duck on 16th, 1 Goosander on 29th and 487 Coot on 16th. Wintering ducks started returning at the end of the month with 20 Wigeon on 31st, 23 Gadwall on 30th, 41 Teal on 30th, and 8 Pochard on 30th. The number of broods counted this year included: 5 of Little Grebe, 6 Great Crested Grebe, 22 Mallard, 20 Tufted Duck, 9 Moorhen and 15 of Coot.

Three Osprey records this month. One Osprey was chased away from the Wildlife Centre area at 1630hrs on 2nd by adult Black-headed Gulls, another was seen from Sheepwash at 1745hrs on 5th and a further one was reported over Stones Island on 24th. Other raptors included young Sparrow Hawks calling from 2 regular nest sites and a young Common Buzzard calling, and later flying, which is the second breeding record for this site [previously bred in 2004]. A probable family group of 3 Kestrels were over Middle Wood on 1st, a Hobby was seen insecting from Paul Stanley Hide on 3rd and single Peregrines were noted on 7th and 20th and then, on 30th, an adult male took a juvenile Moorhen from Horseshoe Island up onto one of the pylons.

A good mix of wader species were recorded this month, mainly on Horseshoe Island but, sadly, most stayed less than a day. These included: 2 Oystercatchers on 17th, 1 Ringed Plover on 21st, 6 Golden Plover flying south on 14th, Lapwing all month, with 107 counted on 15th, 1 Little Stint on 21st and another on 26th, 1 Curlew Sandpiper on 26th, 1 Dunlin on 21st and 29th-31st, 3 Snipe on 29th, 1 Black-tailed Godwit on 15th, 5 Curlew flew over on 21st, 1 Redshank on 3rd, 26th and 28th, 1 Greenshank on 20th and 23rd, 1 Green Sandpiper on Sheepwash Spit on 30-31st, Common Sandpiper all month with 2 on 15th and 21st and 2 Turnstones on 3rd.

The gull roost started this month with 1200 Lesser Black-backed Gulls on 17th, an adult and a juvenile Common Gull on 17th, a juvenile Herring Gull on 28th and 7 Yellow-legged Gulls of various ages on 28th. The only Terns recorded were Common Terns with an adult on 3rd and single juveniles on 23rd, 26th and 28th.

Two Stock Doves were feeding on Hopton Bypass grass verge on 1st, 3 Little Owls were on view from the Wildlife Centre on 1st and a single Swift noted on 22nd. In a very rare event, all 3 woodpecker species were recorded this month: 1 Green Woodpecker on 3rd near Hopton End, 1 Lesser Spotted Woodpecker at Paul Stanley Hide on 11th and Great Spotted there most days and 1 at the Wildlife Centre on 11th. Sand Martin passage numbers have dwindled, with just 1 on 30th. Swallows, 45 on 19th, and House Martins, 50 plus on 12th, are still on passage in good numbers. Other migrants included a Yellow Wagtail on 11th, 2 Redstarts on 23rd and on 26th, a Wheatear on 12th, 1 Sedge Warbler on 1st, 1 Reed Warbler on 29th, 1 Lesser Whitethroat on 3rd, 4 Whitethroat on 7th and 5 Spotted Flycatchers on 7th and again on 17th. A Kingfisher is now visiting many locations on site; Jays are regularly around Paul Stanley Hide with 2 near the feeders on 19th, 150 Jackdaws were over Hall Wood on 7th and 2 Raven on 19th. A Goldfinch flock on Stones Island all month totalled 70 on 28th, 40 Tree Sparrows were around the Wildlife Centre feeders on 5th, 7 Linnets were noted on 28th and an adult Linnet was feeding a juvenile on Sheepwash Spit on 30th which is the only sign of breeding this year.

109 Species were recorded this August compared with 98 in 2006, 105 in 2005, 113 in 2004 and 110 in 2003.

July 2007 Highlights: Yellow-nosed Albatross!

Casual birdwatchers Cyril and Shirley Wood visit Carsington several times a week to enjoy the birds. Little did they realise the significance of a sighting they had from Millfields car park on 2nd July between 1500-1510hrs. Evidently all the Coot moved to the side, and even Canada Geese moved away from what seemed to be a large Great Black-backed Gull type bird with a big black bill which landed on the water only 80 metres away from the observers [40metres out from the shoreline]. The bird had black wings/back, a white head, a large black bill and a dark eye. The bird twice did short flights on long narrow wings and landed, keeping close inshore and occasionally behind trees to the observers. The bird then flew on low past Millfields Island and was lost to sight northeast over the water. C&S then spent some time looking for the bird but no sign. Reference to their ID book did not help identify what they had seen and the incident would have been forgotten, except that they opened their newspaper the following morning to see a picture of exactly what they both agreed they had seen the previous day, especially the black bill shape. The photograph was of a Yellow-nosed Albatross taken into care and subsequently released on the Somerset coast two days earlier. They returned to Carsington to report their sighting to surprised recipients, who found it difficult to believe an Albatross would fly this far inland but, realising C&S had certainly seen something interesting, asked them for a description. A week later, photographs appeared of the YNA on a fishing pond in north Lincolnshire. It apparently arrived there about 7pm on 2nd, within easy time from Carsington. Hence C&S's sighting took on an increased significance, but it is a first for Britain and the description has a long way to run for acceptance.

Other sightings include: 7 Greylag Geese on 3rd, a Ruddy Shelduck in flight over the Wildlife Centre on 5th, 7 Shoveler on 8th, a pair of Red-crested Pochard on 20-22nd, 6 Pochard on 20th, a Hobby over the dam wall on 2nd, Peregrine on 2nd, 6th, 17th, 23rd and 30th, 3 Little Ringed Plover on 6th and a Dunlin on 15th. There were 4 Black-tailed Godwit at the Wildlife Centre on 2nd, 9 flew over there on 10th and another 3 on 16th. The first Greenshank of the year was at the Wildlife Centre on 16th, 5 Common Sandpipers on Dam Wall on 10th, 12 Collared Doves around the Wildlife Centre feeders on 30th, a Kingfisher on 18th and 30th, a male Redstart on 6th, 2 Reed Warblers singing in Hopton Arm reed bed on 12th and 4 linnets on 14th.

Late breeding records include: Little Grebe only 2 broods so far this year, Great Crested Grebe only 2 broods, Mallard total 21 broods, Tufted Duck total 9 broods, 8 of which appeared this month, Moorhen 7 and Coot 12 broods this year. By the 30th, all the breeding and juvenile Redshank and Oystercatchers had left site. Sadly the pair of Common Terns lost their single chick early in the month, while there are now 3 pairs of Black-headed Gulls, each with 2 young, some of which took their first short flights on 24th. Spotted Flycatchers were noted carrying food in Hall Wood on 19th and feeding recently fledged young next to Sheepwash Hide on 30th.

95 Species recorded this very wet July compared with 94 in 2006, 97 in 2005, 102 in 2004 and 95 in 2003.

JUNE 2007 BIRD NOTES

June Highlights: First breeding record for Black-headed Gulls but rain stopped play for some other species.

Maximum count of Little Grebe was 12 on 17th and, so far, only one brood of 2 young near Paul Stanley Hide have been noted. Great Crested Grebe totalled 28 on 4th and produced only one brood of 1 young so far. Both these species will have been adversely affected by the weather. On the 25th there was torrential rain which, rapidly raised water levels several inches and, the wind whipped up waves, which, washed away two Great Crested Grebe nests at Millfields, and probably many others. A pair of Mute Swans showed 4 cygnets at Paul Stanley Hide on 7th, these were reduced to 2 by 10th but from the 17th another pair with 7 cygnets were in front of the Wildlife Centre for the rest of the month. Other wildfowl breeding so far this year includes 5 broods of Barnacle Geese, 18 broods of Mallard, 5 of Moorhen, 6 of Coot and only 1 of Tufted Duck, which bred on Green Pond and sadly died crossing the road. Maximum counts total 786 Canada Geese, 86 Mallard, 28 Moorhen and 215 Coot, all on 17th. Other duck species recorded include a Shelduck and a Ruddy Shelduck in flight together from the Wildlife Centre on 18th, 4 Gadwall on 5th, a drake Teal on 5th and 3 Pochard on 19th.

Wader breeding has been reasonably successful, with juveniles from at least 4 pairs of Oystercatchers flying around the site and at least 4 small broods of Lapwing and 3 of Redshank have been noted. The largest single counts include 16 Oystercatchers on 28th, 3 Little Ringed Plover on 9th, 2 Ringed Plover on 6th, 16 Lapwing on 17th, 1 Dunlin on 9th, 1 Whimbrel on 1st, 6 Curlew on 26th, 10 Redshank on 18th, 1 Common Sandpiper on 7th and 22nd and 1 Turnstone on 1st.

The pair of first summer [just 1 year old] Black-headed Gulls proved they can breed by showing 2 chicks on 26th, from the Wildlife Centre. Information states that first breeding takes place at year 2 but can occur at year 1 or 3. Also incubation is up to 27 days so, as these birds have been sitting since 18th May, they were just sitting on pebbles for the initial 2 weeks. However, practice obviously paid off and their record represents the first breeding record of this species at Carsington, appropriately from a pair of first summer birds. There are now 2 other pairs of Black-headed Gulls probably breeding on the rafts. The pair of Common Terns also showed their first chick on their raft from the Wildlife Centre on the same day, 26th.

Swift movements this month seemed to suggest they were still coming in early in the month, moving northeast, and leaving southwest by the end. There were 40 recorded on 5th and 14th and 100 House Martins on 14th. Also on 14th 23 House Martin nests were recorded around the main buildings. The Great Spotted Woodpecker was seen feeding young in a hole on 4th and young were on Paul Stanley feeders on 13th. An early Kingfisher was on Green Pond on 20th, this species is not usually seen here until well after breeding. Five Spotted Flycatchers have been noted in Hall Wood and Tail Bay and 2 family parties of Willow Tit seen. The heavy rains and occasional cold days will have affected breeding success and family parties of Tits, Robins, Thrushes, Sparrows and Finches have been using feeding stations instead of the more nutritious insects, which were difficult to find at times.

93 Species recorded this June compared with 89 in 2006, 94 in 2005, 96 in 2004 and 84 in 2003.

MAY 2007 BIRD NOTES

May Highlights: Great Northern Diver finally departs. Garganey, Hobby, Bar-tailed Godwit, Black Tern and Lesser Spotted Woodpecker call in briefly and Hobby, Spotted Flycatcher and Reed Warbler arrive.

The Great Northern Diver was last recorded on 25th. This departure time coincided with the northward coastal movement of this species. No broods of Grebe or Swan have yet been recorded but there are 4 broods of Barnacle Geese around Stones Island area, 2 broods of Moorhen, 2 broods of Coot and 12 broods of Mallard around the site. Four Shelduck were off Sheepwash on 4th and a drake Garganey gave excellent views from The Wildlife Centre on 18th. Other wildfowl included a drake Shoveler on 31st, 6 male plus 1 female Pochard on 28th, 115 Tufted on 13th, an Aythya hybrid, probably PochardxTufted, at the Wildlife Centre from 13th, a Goldeneye on 5th and a Goosander on 31st.

The return of the migratory Hobby was well noted with 4 records of 1 bird on 7th, 15th, 16th and 31st and a Peregrine was noted from Sheepwash on 8th. Four pairs of Oystercatchers have young, including 1 pair at Wildlife Centre with 4 chicks, but the pair in front of Paul Stanley Hide had failed at egg stage by the 7th. A pair of Little Ringed Plovers keep trying to breed at the Wildlife Centre, and so far, only 1 Lapwing chick and no Redshank young have been reported. Other waders included 1 Ringed Plover at PS hide on 8th, another on Stones Island on 14th and 2 at the WLC on 29th, 22 Dunlin on Sailing Club Island on 19th, 2 Snipe at WLC on 1st, a Bar-tailed Godwit at the WLC on 1st, Whimbrel most days, with a maximum of 4 on 22nd, and 2 Turnstone on Flat Island on 10th and another on Watersports Island on 31st.

For most of the month there were 4 Black-headed Gulls at the Wildlife Centre, 2 Adults and 2 first summer birds. Apart from disturbing other breeding species, the first summer birds paired-up and were seen mating on 18th, they built a nest and were still sitting on it on 31st. The nest may be eggless and further information is needed on whether these young birds are capable of breeding. A Common Tern was looking at the Wildlife Centre tern rafts from the 1st and a mate arrived on 16th. Even with the hassle the Black-headed Gulls were giving them, by the end of the month they had settled with a nest on the new raft. Arctic Terns were present or passing through in small numbers most of the month, with a maximum of 11 on 3rd. Two Black Terns were present with 2 Commons and 1 Arctic on 2nd.

Five Hundred Swift were counted on passage over a 6 hour period on 4th and 300 Swallows were feeding over the water during rain on 28th. A Lesser Spotted Woodpecker was reported at Paul Stanley Hide on 26th, 2 Yellow Wagtails were on the Dam Wall on 3rd, a White Wagtail at Watersports on 9th, single Redstarts singing in Wildlife Centre Creek on 7th, in the field above Sheepwash car park on 20th and in Tail Bay on 22nd and a Wheatear was on Sheepwash Spit on 15th. A Reed Warbler has been singing in Hopton Arm new reedbed since 24th, 8 Garden Warblers were noted on 15th, 12 Blackcap on 24th, and the first Spotted Flycatcher was seen near the brick tower on 15th and 2 were on breeding territory in Hall Wood by 24th. The local pair of Raven successfully reared 3 young and have now left site.

104 Species recorded this May compared with 107 in 2006, 107 in 2005, 114 in 2004 and 110 in 2003.

APRIL 2007 BIRD NOTES

April Highlights: Great Northern Diver, Common Scoter, Godwits, Whimbrel, Turnstone, Sandwich Tern and other spring migrants.

One Great Northern Diver was present all month, proving very mobile and even seen in flight. Several Shelduck have visited with 1 on 5-6th from Paul Stanley Hide, 2 from Sheepwash on 10th and 1 there on 12th and 28th. Generally the winter wildfowl have gone north so a flock of 52 Teal on 5th from Paul Stanley hide was probably on passage. A drake Common Scoter was found on 15th and stayed a surprising 3 days. No unexpected raptor records this month. A Peregrine was sighted on 3rd, 6th and 16th. The first Red-legged Partridge for 2 years occurred on 18th with 2 in the field between Sheepwash and Paul Stanley Hides. The first Moorhen brood was noted on 27th with 2 adults feeding 4 young just left from the Wildlife Centre.

On to waders and 7 pairs of Oystercatchers established their breeding territories simply by one pair per island. The pair with a multi leg-ringed male finally settled in front of Paul Stanley Hide. The first Little Ringed Plover appeared on 7th and 5 were counted on 8th. One pair was clearly nesting on 27th, sadly they had lost the nest by the 29th, but they will try again. Six Black-tailed Godwits put on a show at the Aren't Birds Brilliant day on 17th and a Bar-tailed Godwit was around the Wildlife Centre and Stones Island on 28-29th [see photos on our website]. Whimbrel passage has been in small numbers only with 1 on 15th, 1 on 20th and 2 on 26-27th. Redshank numbers have been difficult to determine as they establish breeding pairs and locations, the highest count was 9 on 8th. Single Common Sandpipers have been noted most of the month and there were 2 at Paul Stanley Hide on 11th and 4 on the dam wall on 22nd. The small stone mound, built by the Ranger Service on the side of Sailing Club Island as a high water level wader attraction and refuge, showed its worth when it seemingly came alive on 19th, there were 5 Turnstones crawling on it.

Immature gulls seem to be staying on site longer, which is bad news for our breeding birds, as they scavenge anything that may be edible. The gull roost, at Sheepwash end only, on 30th consisted of mainly immature birds with 300 Great Black-backed Gulls and well over 1000 Lesser Black-backed Gulls plus another raft of gulls distant towards Millfields. Tern passage, so far, has included 1 Arctic Tern on 18th and 30th, 1 Common Tern on 23rd and 30th and a good spring record of 2 Sandwich Terns on 23-24th.

The first Swift record was 1 on 21st, then 5 on 22nd and 33 on 25th. Sand Martin and Swallow have been passing through since last month but House Martin was late with the first record on the Club Walk on 17th of 1, another 1 on 18th and 20 on 23rd. The colourful spectacle of wagtails on Stones Island on an April evening failed this year with the first Yellow Wagtail on 13th, rising to a maximum of 2 on 16th. The first White Wagtail was on the dam wall on 14th, followed by singles on 28th and 29th and none on Stones Island. A Redstart was singing in the Wildlife Centre Creek on 15th, the only Wheatear record was 1 on the dam wall on 21st and the last Redwing sighting was 3 on 3rd near Lane End.

With Chiffchaff in last month, the arrival of other warblers was out of usual sequence in some cases. Arrivals included 1 singing Blackcap on 3rd and 16 on 25th, 1 late singing Willow Warbler on 9th and 27 on 25th, an early Lesser Whitethroat singing on 15th and 3 on 25th, a Sedge Warbler on 22nd and 2 on 25th, a Garden Warbler on 23rd and 4 on 25th and finally 2 Whitethroats singing on 24th.

Only 104 Species recorded this April compared with 118 in 2006, 117 in 2005, 116 in 2004 and 107 in 2003.

MARCH 2007 BIRD NOTES

March Highlights: Great Northern Divers, Bewick's and Whooper Swans, Merlin and Peregrine, Godwits, Glaucous Gull, Sand Martin and Swallow.

The 2 long staying Great Northern Divers were still both present on 29th and presumed present all month. Bewick's Swan are now a rare event at Carsington, so 24 on the water near Stones Island on 9th attracted some attention before they were disturbed by boat activity at 1020hrs. The whole flock lifted, then circled for half an hour gaining height before flying on southwards. It was way back in December 2003 when Bewick's were last recorded here. Thankfully Whoopers are a more regular sight, with a flock of 33 first over Sheepwash, then over the Ranger Base on 24th, and another flock of 12 over the Visitor Centre on 25th. Wildfowl counts showed that many ducks have left site to journey to their breeding grounds. Maximum numbers this month were: Wigeon 106 on 8th, Gadwall 3 on 18th, Teal 7 on 24th, Mallard 62 on 18th, Shoveler 3 on 3rd, Tufted 236 on 18th, Goldeneye 12 on 18th, Goosander 2 on 5th, Moorhen 39 on 18th and Coot 215 on 18th.

Raptors have shown relatively well this month, with 2 Sparrowhawks from Sheepwash on 8th, 6 Common Buzzards over Hall Wood on 13th, a female Merlin near Hall Wood on 20th, an immature Peregrine on 5th and 30th and a Peregrine from the Wildlife Centre on 19th.

Oystercatchers have claimed breeding territory, which is usually a whole island per pair at Carsington where the islands are small. They were seen mating from 11th, and 10 individuals were noted on 18th and on 26th. During operational work on 26th, over 20 Snipe were flushed up from Sheepwash Spit. This probably helped the following day count of 22 total between the Wildlife Centre and Paul Stanley hide. Other wader records included 1 Dunlin at Sheepwash on 7th, 1 Woodcock in Warrington Knob on 13th, 1 Black-tailed Godwit at the Wildlife Centre on 10th, 1 Bar-tailed Godwit at Paul Stanley Hide on 19th, 51 Curlew at dusk at the Wildlife Centre on 1st with 34 still there on 27th, 9 Redshank on 26th and a Common Sandpiper on 25th, presumed to be a wintering bird.

A first winter Glaucous Gull on 5th was the only notable gull this month. On 16th March there were 2 records of 2 Sand Martins, which is consistent with other sites. There were no further records of Sand Martin until the 29th when 2 were noted. This gap was obviously due to adverse weather halting the migration progress. Swallows also started passage, with the first record being 10 on 29th. A presumed wintering male Blackcap was near the main car park on 31st and presumed spring migrant Chiffchaff were in evidence, with 8 singing on 14th and 11 singing on 26th. The Starling roost at Kirk Ireton quite rightly drew in many observers, with up to 50,000 birds, and with balls of birds being targeted by sparrowhawk and peregrine, it was well worth experiencing. By the end of the month it had all finished. On the 2nd, 30,000 starlings, in various sized flocks, were counted flying over Carsington Water towards the roost. The bird feeders around the site have been attracting the colourful Bullfinch, with 6 on Sheepwash feeders on 10th. Also a female Yellowhammer, which is now a rare sight at Carsington, was on these feeders on 28th, together with male and female Reed Bunting and other finches.

93 species were recorded this March compared with 100 in 2006, 107 in 2005, 98 in 2004 101 in 2003 and 96 in 2002. The low species number is due to some migrants which usually arrive in late March delaying to April and very few gull species were seen this month.

FEBRUARY 2007 BIRD NOTES

February Highlights: 2 or 3 Great Northern Divers, Black-necked Grebe, Curlew passage, Mediterranean and Glaucous Gulls, Stonechat, Blackcap and Chiffchaffs.

Two Great Northern Divers were regularly recorded throughout the month and three were noted near the draw-off tower on 27th. Last month's Black-necked Grebe stayed around the Paul Stanley Hide area until 20th. Little Grebes numbered 77 and Great Crested Grebes 50, both on 18th. Wildfowl counts included 13 Greylag on 5th, 48 Barnacle Geese on 19th, 4 Shelduck on 2nd, 124 Wigeon on 11th, 11 Pintail on 13th, 4 Shoveler on 16th, 327 Tufted Duck on 18th, 4 Goosander on 3rd and 486 Coot on 18th.

Curlew numbers showed intensity of passage when heading towards their up-country breeding grounds with just 1 on 19th, 25 on 24th, 30 on 25th, 48 on 26th and topping out at 57 on 28th. Other waders included 7 Oystercatchers on 22nd, 227 Lapwing on 18th, 1 Dunlin on 24th, 9 Snipe on 6th and 2 Redshank on 18th.

The gull roost held an adult Mediterranean Gull on 4th and 19th to 26th and a first winter Glaucous Gull on 11th.

A Barn Owl flew into the Wildlife Centre window on 26th at dusk and, thankfully, flew off unharmed. Two Little Owls were noted from the Wildlife Centre on 5th and 2 Tawny Owls were seen elsewhere on 24th. A Kingfisher was at Sheepwash on 5th and at many other locations on other dates. Four Skylarks flew over the dam wall calling on 11th, a male Stonechat was in Tail Bay on 24th, 150 Redwing were noted on 24th but there were no records of Fieldfare this month.

Confusion over whether Chiffchaffs are wintering or migrating seems to have increased along with the number of winter records during recent years. With records of 1 on Stones Island on 4th, which must be wintering, to 1 in Wildlife Centre Creek on 22nd and 4 between Stones Island and Lane End on 23rd, which maybe? The position with Blackcaps can also be complicated, with 1 appearing near the Wildlife Centre on 22nd, although this bird would definitely be wintering as it may be 5 or 6 weeks before these migrants start returning into Britain. Maybe the answer lies in whether they are calling and/or singing or not? and maybe we should always record these facts with these early bird records.

Other sightings included 4 Willow Tit on 23rd, 1 Marsh Tit on 25th, 4 Jays on 15th, 3 Raven on 25th, 20 Lesser Redpoll on 20th, 20 Bullfinch on feeders on 2nd, 4 Reed Bunting on feeders on 2nd and, on 22nd, 4 male Reed Buntings were singing. Feral/escapee birds included 3 Cackling Geese on 24th and other dates, 1 Black Swan at Hopton End on 14th and 18th and 2 Muscovy Ducks near Lane End on 26th.

87 species were recorded during this uninspiring February, compared with 89 in 2006, 90 in 2005, 96 in 2004, 92 in 2003 and 78 in 2002.

JANUARY 2007 BIRD NOTES

January Highlights: Wildfowl numbers drop from December's high, 2 Great Northern Divers and Black-necked Grebe stay on, Peregrine puts on several good shows, Mediterranean Gull, Kittiwake, Lesser Spotted Woodpecker and Blackcap all put in a short show, and then there's a Starling swarm.

Two Great Northern Divers were seen most days of the month and the Black-necked Grebe stayed all month, usually in front of Paul Stanley Hide but occasionally hiding in Hopton Arm. The formal monthly wildfowl count showed numbers had dropped from December's high, this also occurred last winter. Bird counts included 82 Little Grebe on 17th, 55 Great Crested Grebe on 21st, 15 Mute Swans on 21st, 7 Greylag on 31st, 38 Barnacle on 3rd and 7th, and, 192 Wigeon, 36 Gadwall, 93 Teal, 88 Mallard, 145 Pochard, 242 Tufted, 16 Goldeneye, 37 Moorhen and 1174 Coot, all on 21st. Pink-footed Geese were noted, with 400 high southwest on 15th at 1045hrs, and 120 northwest on 22nd. Two Shelduck on 6th were followed by a single on many dates between 15th and 25th, 7 Pintail on 4th, 6 Shoveler on 27th and 7 Goosander on Millfields Island on 27th.

A Peregrine Falcon was recorded on 5 days, including taking a Moorhen and dropping it in front of an audience in the Wildlife Centre on 4th, carrying a Blackbird over Shiningford Creek on 8th, and giving an excellent flying display attacking Lapwings on Sheepwash Spit on 31st.

Some Oystercatchers have already returned, with 3 noted on 21st, 2 of them displaying on Big Island. 317 Lapwing were roosting in front of the Sailing Club early on 12th, 18 Snipe were over Sheepwash Spit on 8th, a Woodcock was flushed in Tail Bay on 22nd and 5 Redshank, in singles at various locations, were counted on 21st and again on 25th.

The gull roost maxima were 5000 Black-headed Gulls on 15th and 250 Common Gulls plus 2000 Lesser Black-backed and 150 Herring Gulls on 21st. A Kittiwake was present during the morning of 21st and an adult Mediterranean Gull was on Sheepwash Spit from 1430hrs on 27th and again on 29th before joining the roost.

Three observers watched a Lesser Spotted Woodpecker in the wood behind Sheepwash Hide on 17th, 20 Fieldfare were noted on 13th, 200 Redwing were in Shiningford Creek area on 10th and 13th, a male Blackcap was reported between Sheepwash and the Visitor Centre on 26th, 4 Raven were over Hall Wood on 13th and 27th, 4 Willow Tit near Sheepwash on 29th, 4 Treecreepers at Sheepwash on 15th, 10 Siskin at Paul Stanley Hide on 1st and 2nd, 19 Lesser Redpoll on Stones Island on 8th, and Reed Buntings were widely reported, with 2 on Paul Stanley feeders on 4th, 2 on Stones Island on 8th and 3 on Sheepwash car park feeders on 19th.

Starlings have been swarming across the water at dawn and dusk, with early morning estimates of 5,000 on 1st and 10,000 on 19th. They are known to be roosting around Moor Lane and Gorse Bank at Kirk Ireton. Various estimates have been made of numbers roosting. On 2nd February, flocks were counted in at dusk distantly from Sheepwash Hide, followed by a Sparrow Hawk attacking the distant swarm in the sky, estimated at 30,000 birds. If you visit the roost site, please park very carefully as the lanes are very narrow. Please respect residents' privacy and any reasonably determined estimates of bird numbers would be appreciated.

89 Species recorded compared with 90 in January 2006, 95 in 2005, 91 in 2004, 87 in 2003 and 75 in 2002.