

DECEMBER 2010 BIRD NOTES

December Highlights: Great Northern Diver, Slavonian Grebe, Smew and Waxwing.

It is hardly surprising that the number of records and bird species recorded this month was relatively low. December started with 2 feet of snow, making virtually everywhere inaccessible, with a lot remaining until Christmas. Ice cover over the water increased relentlessly in constant sub zero temperatures, until there was 95% cover on 20th, following an overnight minimum of minus 17C, leaving four pockets of water for wildfowl. One small pocket off Sailing Club Island held 1000 birds and others were observed from a great distance to avoid any risk of disturbance in these difficult feeding times. To finish off the month, along came many days of fog, during which time ice only reduced to 70% cover.

The juvenile Great Northern Diver, which arrived in November, stayed all month and was joined by another juvenile from 11th. A Slavonian Grebe was found in Millfields Bay on 10th, the first Derbyshire record since 2006, and it kindly remained showy until 21st. Six adult Whooper Swans flew west at 1020hrs on 11th and Pink-footed Geese movement included 240 northeast at 1400hrs on 18th and 44 southwest at 1002hrs on 19th. Maximum counts were: 19 Little Grebe on 12th, a new site record of 95 Great Crested Grebe on the WeBS count on 19th, 1 Greylag Goose on 7th, 54 Canada Geese on 19th, 43 feral Barnacle Geese on 15th, a pair of Mandarin on 13th, 325 Wigeon on 19th, 70 Gadwall on 19th, 99 Teal on 27th, 204 Mallard on 19th, 3 Pintail on 13th, 5 drake Shoveler on 11th, 133 Pochard on 12th, 728 Tufted on 12th, 29 Goldeneye on 15th, 19 Goosander on 11th and 1783 Coot on 19th. A female Smew was found in Shiningford Creek early on 19th but could not be found later in the day. It was refound in the fog on 27th and stayed around Flat Island and Big Island into the New Year.

The only notable raptor records were of Peregrine and one was mobbed by the local Raven pair on 15th. Waders included a Knot on Stones Island on 15th and at Sheepwash on 18th, a Dunlin on 6th and other dates until 20th, 2 Snipe on 13th and 29th and 3 Redshank on 19th. Curlew records in December are unusual here, so fly-overs of 3 then 4, both west on 7th, 5 east on 11th and 1 south on 18th are probably significant and may reflect the current abnormal weather and the curlews' search for food and safe roost.

Not surprisingly either the gull roost or the gull roost watchers gave up this month so there were no big counts of Black-headed and Lesser Black-backed Gulls. Common Gull totalled 150 and Herring Gull 23 on 13th and Great Black-backed Gull 12 on 14th. The winter resident adult Yellow-legged Gull was noted eating another Little Grebe on 23rd, further reducing our abnormally low number of wintering Little Grebe.

A little Owl and a Kingfisher were near the Wildlife Centre on 21st. Waxwings were around with fly-overs of 1 on 7th, 2 on 11th, 1 on 14th, 1 on 19th and, finally, 5 feeding in a hedge on 21st. Species counts include; 9 Collared Dove on 17th, 16 Blackbird, 23 Fieldfare and 6 Song Thrush, all on 24th, 75 Redwing on 15th, 8 Willow Tit on 24th, 110 Jackdaw on 10th, 4 Raven on 19th, 1 Brambling on 5th and 6th, 50 Siskin on 13th and 8 Bullfinch on 24th.

88 species recorded compared with 93 in December 2009, 95 in 2008, 91 in 2007, 99 in 2006, 88 in 2005, 95 in 2004, 97 in 2003 and 89 in 2002.

NOVEMBER 2010 BIRD NOTES

November Highlights: Great Northern Diver, Whooper Swan, Kittiwake, Black Redstart, Bearded Tit and Snow Bunting.

An average November for species numbers at 96, but species quality was superb with Bearded Tit and Snow Bunting being new species for the site, taking our definitive list total to 223 in the 19 year life of Carsington. The male Bearded Tit was found on 1st in the small reedbed to the left of Sheepwash Hide. It was initially heard in disbelief, then a male was clearly seen and stayed long enough for several birders to see it before it flew high west. The Snow Bunting was found on Stones Island on 25th and proved elusive and mobile but at least three birders saw it.

A Great Northern Diver was seen on 7th, too distant to determine age. On 12th, a juvenile GND, which could have been the same bird, was near the dam wall and stayed for the rest of the month. Ten Whooper Swans, including 3 juveniles, flew into Sheepwash on 7th and were still present at dusk. On 25th 2 Whooper Swans were noted off Stones Island, recorded again on 26th and again briefly on 29th before flying off west at dusk. Pink-footed Geese movements were 200 E at 0835hrs on 10th, 55 E at 0900hrs on 10th and 130 NW at 0930hrs on 18th. Wildfowl maximum counts were from the WeBS count on 14th except where stated: 38 Little Grebe on 18th, 58 Great Crested Grebe, 33 Cormorant, 25 Mute Swans, 1 drake Mandarin on 1st, 277 Wigeon, 32 Gadwall, 209 Teal, 263 Mallard, 2 Pintail, 10 Shoveler on 8th, 3 Red-crested Pochard on 8th, 62 Pochard, 578 Tufted Duck, 15 Goldeneye on 10th, 8 Goosander on 15th, 15 Moorhen and 1330 Coot.

Waders included counts of 293 Lapwing on 14th and in flight flocks up to circa 400 on 23rd. Dunlin, Snipe and Redshank were around all month with maximums of 8 Dunlin on 12th, 8 Snipe on 24th, 5 Redshank on 24th and a late Common Sandpiper on 15th.

The wildfowl numbers are significantly down on recent years, which is probably due to the unusually low water levels, losing a massive surface area of water and connecting most of the islands to the shoreline, rendering them an unsafe roost. Another factor could be the winter resident Yellow-legged Gull, which has increased its diet from the Little Grebes last winter to include Tufted Duck this winter. The gull flies low terrorising most birds on the water, even Coot scuttle along the water surface in large numbers as it approaches. It operates by repeatedly landing on the selected bird, trying to drown it. On 20th it was seen to kill and eat a female tufted duck and the following day was seen feeding on a different tufted. An adult and a first winter Mediterranean Gull were in the roost on 2nd. The gull roost also held 4000 Black-headed Gull on 7th, 282 Common Gull on 22nd, 3500 Lesser Black-backed Gull on 7th, 30 Herring Gull on 21st, 6 Yellow-legged Gull on 14th, and a Kittiwake on 8th. The Kittiwake was an adult wearing colour rings, most probably being the French ringed bird seen recently around the Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire areas.

A first winter male Black Redstart was found on 18th at Millfields end of the dam wall. It was last seen on 22nd and is the third record for this site, the previous one being in November last year. Other records included 200 Woodpigeon flying south on 6th, a Barn Owl on 13th and 20th, a Little Owl on 23rd, a Kingfisher on 1st and rest of the month, a Green Woodpecker landed on Sheepwash Hide window sill briefly on 9th, 10 Skylarks flew over 6th, 50 Meadow Pipits on 1st, 25 Blackbirds on 22nd, 75 Redwing on 29th, 200 Starling on 2nd, 18 Tree Sparrow on Sheepwash car park feeder on 28th, 2 Brambling on 6th, 40 Siskin on 1st, 14 Lesser Redpoll on 22nd, 15 Bullfinch on 29th and a Yellowhammer on 7th, 14th and 23rd.

96 species recorded compared with the best November ever of 104 in 2009, 94 in 2008, 98 in 2007, 97 in 2006, 97 in 2005, 95 in 2004 and 92 in 2003.

OCTOBER 2010 BIRD NOTES

October Highlights: Whooper Swan, Red Kite, Osprey, Firecrest and Great Grey Shrike.

Following September's near record month, this month has matched the biggest October ever with some quality birds among the 109 species recorded, and November is looking good with a Bearded Tit on its first day. The formal Wildfowl Count on 17th included: 47 Little Grebe, 49 Great Crested Grebe, 27 Mute Swans, 781 Wigeon, 38 Gadwall, 89 Teal, 103 Mallard, 91 Pochard, 741 Tufted Duck and 972 Coot. Seven Whooper Swans were near the dam at 0800hrs on 22nd and 3 flew south on 28th. Pink-footed Geese movements included 300 west at 1440hrs on 11th, 45 on 13th and 46 west at 1730hrs on 30th. Other wildfowl maximum counts were 61 Great Crested Grebe on 28th, 62 Cormorant on 6th, 26 Barnacle Geese on 30th, 5 Shelduck on 12th, 5 Pintail on 28th, 7 Shoveler on 19th, 2 Red-crested Pochard on 21st, 4 Common Scoter on 25th, 4 Goldeneye on 25th and 17 Goosander on 28th.

Raptors included a Red Kite drifting below the dam at 1015hrs on 19th, a male Goshawk in the wood in Tail Bay on 16th, 2 Sparrow Hawk on 11th and 19th, 8 Buzzard on 4th, a late Osprey on 2nd, a Merlin on 5th and 18th and Peregrine on several dates. A hunting male Sparrow Hawk flew through the open door of the Wildlife Centre at 0930hrs on 27th. He was quickly caught and released outside before he sustained any damage from his attempted exit through closed windows.

A good range of wader sightings included 2 Ringed Plover on Stones Island up to 6th, 17 Golden Plover on Stones Island on 23rd, 2 Grey Plover flying over calling on 3rd, 182 Lapwing on 17th, 1 Knot flying north on 10th, 6 Dunlin on 5th, 2 Snipe at the Wildlife Centre on 4th, a Woodcock on 27th, 1 Curlew on 22nd, a Redshank from 27th, a Common Sandpiper attacked by a Sparrow Hawk on 6th and a Turnstone on Stones Island from 1705hrs on 14th.

The Gull Roost held an adult Mediterranean Gull from 16th, a second winter Little Gull on 12th, 4000 Black-headed Gull and 3500 Lesser Black-backed Gull with one showing characteristics of 'Fuscus' on 28th, a site record 20 Yellow-legged Gull and a Caspian Gull on 16th and 3 Great Black-backed Gull on 20th.

Autumn movement brought a few surprises this year and included 13 Skylark over on 27th, 2 late Swallow on 18th, big numbers of Meadow Pipit with 80 on 28th, 3 Rock Pipit on 5th and lesser numbers on other dates, a White Wagtail on 9th, 1 Fieldfare on 19th and 30 on 27th, 50 Redwing on 10th and 23rd and 4 Chiffchaff on 6th. A Firecrest was found on Stones Island at 1730hrs on 14th and was calling until 1800hrs. At this time of year many firecrests move south, mostly down the east and south coasts. There have been two previous records of this species during 1996 (see annual report for details) and 1997. A week later and a Great Grey Shrike was observed from the Wildlife Centre at 1500hrs on 21st. The bird was on top of the large ash tree to the right of Shiningford Farm for 5 minutes before flying into the wooded creek and lost to sight. This is the third record of the species at Carsington; the second stayed for 5 months and was last seen in April 2005. The first autumn Brambling was on Stones Island on 17th, 20 Siskin were near the Sailing Club on 4th, 8 Linnet and a Lesser Redpoll on 4th and a Yellowhammer flew over on 16th.

109 species recorded this October compared with 108 in 2009, 94 in 2008, 109 in 2007, 99 in 2006, 99 in 2005, 91 in 2004, 94 in 2003 and 103 in 2002.

SEPTEMBER 2010 BIRD NOTES

September Highlights: Osprey, Waders, Wryneck and Lapland Bunting.

August found only a mundane 94 species, but September has produced an exciting 116 Species. The wide shoreline and muddy water's edge attracted a variety of waders, and migrant passerines have been showing well. Common wintering wildfowl numbers are increasing and maximum counts totalled: 35 Little Grebe and 47 Great Crested Grebe on 21st, 67 Cormorant on 6th, 8 Heron on 21st, 28 Mute Swans on 21st, 22 Greylag, 450 Canada Geese and 26 Barnacle on 15th, 1 Ruddy Shelduck between 21st to 30th, 406 Wigeon and 45 Gadwall on 29th, 81 Teal and 166 Mallard on 21st, 7 Pintail on 22nd, 3 Shoveler on 2nd, 26 Pochard on 29th, 879 Tufted Duck on 21st, 4 Common Scoter on 29th and 1009 Coot on 21st. An Osprey was around, occasionally fishing, to the delight of many observers, from 12th to 16th. A Hobby was noted on 14th, 23rd and 28th and a Peregrine on 7th and other dates.

Wader passage has been good with 2 Oystercatcher on 15th, a maximum of 4 Ringed Plover on Stones Island on 27th, 87 Lapwing counted on 23rd, a juvenile Knot on Stones Island on 10th, a juvenile Little Stint on 26th, 2 Curlew Sandpiper and 22 Dunlin on 22nd, 3 Juvenile Ruff 3-8th, 1 Snipe at the Wildlife Centre on 13th, 2 Black-tailed Godwit on 29th, 10 Bar-tailed Godwit at the Wildlife Centre on 9th and 2 on 27th, 1 Curlew on 2nd and 23rd, an adult Spotted Redshank briefly on 28th, 11 Redshank on 22nd, 4 Greenshank on 7th and maximum of 4 Common Sandpiper on 8th. The gull roost held 2800 Lesser Black-backed Gulls on 2nd and 17 Yellow-legged Gulls on 20th. An adult Kittiwake flew east over Millfields on 15th and 3 Common Tern were noted on 3rd.

A Barn Owl used Sheepwash Hide as a hunting post around 1800hrs for 35 minutes on 15th, at one stage perching just 3 feet away from the observer behind glass. Two Kingfishers were at Sheepwash on 11th. A Wryneck was found at Millfields at 1740hrs on 13th, attracting many observers and photographers throughout the 14th, but it had gone on 15th. This is a new species for Carsington and there have been only about 40 records for Derbyshire since 1954. Amazingly, this was one of three county records this year. A Green Woodpecker was calling from the wood below Millfields in Tail Bay on 20th, 4 Skylarks flew over southwards on 30th, 2 Sand Martins were noted on 8th, 102 Swallows on 20th and 10 on 29th, 2 House Martins on 24th and a maximum of 50 Meadow Pipits on the Dam Wall at dawn on 14th. A Rock Pipit was located on Stones Island at 1715hrs on 29th. Minutes later 3 observers were looking at it, each observer struggling with the others' descriptions of position and actions. Astonishingly, all 3 were looking at different birds, all 3 birds being Rock Pipits among Meadow Pipits. A Yellow Wagtail was noted on the dam on 14th, 23rd and 25th and 122 Pied Wagtails were there at dawn on 1st. A Redstart on 21st, a Whinchat on Horseshoe Island on 7th, a Stonechat at Paul Stanley Hide on 17th and a Wheatear on 5th and 16th added to passerine totals. Warblers noted were a Sedge Warbler on 14th, a Lesser Whitethroat on 20th, a Whitethroat on 13th, a Blackcap attempting singing on 20th, 12 Chiffchaff on 20th, a Willow Warbler singing on 23rd, and 2 Spotted Flycatcher were in Wildlife Centre Creek on 20th. During the past month many Lapland Buntings have been moving into and down Britain, mainly on the coast, and birders have been eagerly listening for them flying over. Success occurred on the dam at 0830hrs on 22nd with a bird calling and then briefly perching on the ground before disappearing. Another was seen on 30th flying around Stones Island continuously calling before heading high northwards.

116 Species were recorded this September compared with 104 in 2009, 108 in 2008, 108 in 2007, 101 in 2006, 101 in 2005, 94 in 2004 and 104 in 2003.

AUGUST 2010 BIRD NOTES

August Highlights: A dull month with no highlights.

Bird watching at Carsington in August is usually quiet but it is also unpredictable. In 2001 just 86 species were noted. In 2002 a massive 122 species were recorded, the biggest ever month at Carsington. Weather wise, 2001 was an average summer. 2002 saw a lot of hot sun, some stormy rain, a lot of muddy shoreline, and, local birds all showed well, passing migrants called in and passage waders stayed several days. This year, with generally cool wet weather, the local scrub and woodland birds were tucked away in their chosen habitation, most moulting and many fattening in preparation for their flight southwards. There were no extremes of weather to bring in unusual seabirds and no fast moving fronts or sudden storms to bring down passing waders or terns so there was very little for birders to find. However, it is more important that the good breeding season has, hopefully, been followed by healthy maturing birds.

Fresh broods noted this month included the ninth brood of Great-crested Grebe on 3rd, 3 broods of Tufted Duck taking the total to a site record 29, Moorhen up to 10 broods and Coot up to 13 broods. Wildfowl numbers included 25 adult Mute Swan plus 12 cygnets, 6 Shelduck on 24th until flushed by a fox, 8 Wigeon on 29th, 12 Gadwall on 16th, 26 Teal on 29th, 173 Mallard on 16th, 2 Shoveler on 10th, 1 Red-crested Pochard 13-20th, 5 Pochard on 19th, 446 Tufted Duck during WeBS count on 16th and 649 Coot on 16th.

A juvenile Sparrow Hawk flew into the Wildlife Centre window during the RSPB day on 10th. A single Hobby was noted on 2nd, 16th and 20th and there were 2 Peregrines on 1st and 13th, with singles seen on many other dates.

Wader passage has again been poor this year. Records include an Oystercatcher on 1st and 17th, 2 juvenile Little-ringed Plover 22-23rd, 3 Ringed Plover on Stones Island at dusk on 24th, 62 Lapwing on 26th, 4 Dunlin on 6th and 23rd, 4 juvenile Ruff briefly at the Wildlife Centre on 17th, a Curlew on several dates, 4 Redshank on 19th, a Greenshank on 13th and 4 Common Sandpiper on 1st and 13th.

The gull roost started this month with 1500 Lesser Black-backed Gulls, an adult Yellow-legged Gull and a juvenile Herring Gull on 20th. Two other adult Yellow-legged Gulls have been resident all month but they did not join the roost before dark on 20th. One of these adults attacked an adult Moorhen near the Wildlife Centre raft; the moorhen eventually got behind the wire netting on the raft but then died. The only Terns this month were Commons with 3 on 1st, 1 on 17th and 2 adults plus 2 juveniles on 26th.

Two Stock Doves flew over the Wildlife Centre Creek on 4th. A single Kingfisher put on a show at Paul Stanley Hide most days, the record so far is 8 fish caught and consumed in 35 minutes, and 2 Kingfishers were present on 30th and 31st. Two Green Woodpeckers were in Millfields Car Park on 16th, a Yellow wagtail was noted on 17th and 24th, 2 Redstart were in Wildlife Centre Creek from 16th for a few days and the Goldfinch flock on Stones Island was estimated at 80 on 12th.

94 Species were recorded this August compared with 102 in 2009, 99 in 2008, 109 in 2007, 97 in 2006, 105 in 2005, 113 in 2004 and 110 in 2003.

JULY 2010 BIRD NOTES

Highlights: Wildfowl Broods and a Sanderling

By the end of July, numbers of broods totalled: Little Grebe 1 (2 last year), Great Crested Grebe 8 (0), Mallard 20 (20), Tufted Duck 26 (20), Moorhen 7 (12) and Coot 12 (7). Maximum counts, excluding young, were 18 Little Grebe on the official WeBS count carried out on 25th, 36 Great Crested Grebe on 28th, 4 Heron on 23rd and 26th, 25 Mute Swan on 13th plus 4+5+3 cygnets, 273 Canada Geese on 13th, no Barnacle Geese this month, 2 Shelduck on 20th, 3 Gadwall on 6th, 2 Teal on 6th, 158 Mallard on 25th, 1 female Red-crested Pochard 19th-27th, 4 Pochard on 30th, 155 Tufted Duck on 25th and 422 Coot on 25th.

Raptors included 2 Buzzards on 14th, a Hobby chasing hirundines over east bank on 20th and 2 Peregrines on 20th.

Wader numbers were 4 Oystercatchers on 6th, 67 Lapwing on 28th, a Sanderling at the Wildlife Centre in the evening of 26th, 2 Dunlin on 22nd and 30th and singles most days from 12th. Black-tailed Godwit were on passage with 5 on Stones Island on 5th, 6 flew through early on 12th, 1 was on Stones Island on 27th and 3 flew through southwards on 28th. A late Redshank chick showed on Flat Island with 1 adult on 13th and was last recorded on Sheepwash Spit on 24th. Common Sandpipers were also passing through with 2 on 4th and at least 6 on 14th.

Black-headed Gull young were well in evidence with flighted young seen on many shorelines, but surprise was in order when an adult pair marched 3 downy chicks from Flat Island, along the front of Sheepwash and were on Horseshoe Island less than 2 hours later. A pair on the raft by Paul Stanley Hide showed their second brood of at least 1 chick on 26th. Some Lesser Black-backed Gulls were visiting site, with 12 on 27th, but there is no noticeable gull roost yet. An adult Yellow-legged Gull was on site from 12th and 2 from 21st. One of the Yellow-legged Gulls was seen swallowing a Tufted Duck chick whole on 23rd. The pair of Common Terns breeding on Flat Island moved their 2 flighted young onto Watersports pontoon on 7th and they were last seen on 23rd. Three Arctic Terns flew through southeast on 19th.

Three Stock Doves were high over the water on 28th and a Kingfisher returned from 25th, hopefully after successfully breeding elsewhere. Corvids were showing well on 27th with 18 Magpie, 150 Jackdaw, 9 Rook and 4 Raven, all noted during the day. The Wildlife feeder table held 19 Tree Sparrows on 26th and 7 Linnet were on Stones Island on 6th.

91 Species were recorded this month compared with 95 in July 2009, 97 in 2008, 94 in 2007, 94 in 2006, 97 in 2005 and 102 in 2004.

JUNE 2010 BIRD NOTES

June Highlights:

Hobby, Black-tailed Godwit, Spotted Redshank and Pied Flycatcher.

No Little Grebe young yet, but 5 broods of Great Crested Grebe by the end of the month is an improvement on the past few years. Mute Swans had broods of 5 and 4 by 22nd. Barnacle Geese have failed on Horseshoe and Sailing Club Island and the birds have left site. Mallard broods totalled 9 by 30th compared with 13 and 15 in the past two years and no broods of Tufted Duck yet, always a late breeder on this site. Moorhen showed 3 broods by 23rd and Coot 6 broods by 24th, which compares reasonably with the past few years' performance. The WeBS count on 22nd included 27 Great Crested Grebe, 6 Heron, 504 Canada Geese, 1 Teal, 87 Mallard, 177 Tufted and 195 Coot. Other wildfowl sightings were a Pink-footed Goose with Canadas on 17th and a Shelduck on 14th.

A Hobby was noted over Stones Island on 17th and Fishtail Creek on 27th. There were probably 8 pairs of Oystercatchers present, based on Big Island, Flat Is/Sheepwash Spit, Shiningford Is, Horseshoe Is, Watersports Is, Sailing Club Is, Fishtail Creek and Millfields Is and 4 pairs successfully reached young stage. Other waders recorded include a Dunlin on Flat Island on 9th, a surprisingly early Snipe flushed by a balloon on 30th, a Black-tailed Godwit at the Wildlife Centre on 26th and a Spotted Redshank on 22nd. This Spotted Redshank was seen at Millfields during the WeBS count at 0600hrs and then flew west. It is 5 years since the last record and several others were reported in the Midlands and North on the same day.

11 young Black-headed Gulls could be seen from the Wildlife Centre on 6th. On 8th, there were 5 nests with young, 3 others probably on eggs and the only nest on Horseshoe Island had failed. The pair on the raft by Paul Stanley Hide had 3 young and another 2 or 3 pairs had nests on Flat Island, also on 8th. By 26th there were 4 big young/juveniles on Flat Island, at least 1 of which was well flighted. During thunderstorms on 6th there were a further 14 Common Terns on site, obviously taking refuge.

Two Little Owls were seen in fields near Fishtail on 25th and 2 separate groups of young Tawny Owls were noted on 18th and 25th. Great Spotted Woodpeckers were feeding at least 3 young in a hole in a tree in Middle Wood on 4th and 2 family parties were seen on 18th. A Swallow pair was feeding young in the Stone Barn on 4th, another pair was around the draw-off tower and House Martins have at least 24 active nests around the Visitor Centre. Juvenile Pied Wagtails were on Stones Island and Flat Island on 9th, a Sedge Warbler was singing at the ponds in Tail Bay on 15th and a Reed Warbler singing at Hopton Pond on 9th and Hopton Arm Reedbed on 22nd. A Spotted Flycatcher was in the woodland strip north of Hall Wood on 9th and 2 in Tail Bay on 15th. The lonely Pied Flycatcher was again singing in Warrington Knob on 4th but no sign later in the month. A pair of Great Tit was feeding young in the unmarked bird box among the display of bird boxes by the Wildlife Centre on 4th and many other dates. They obviously failed to notice the box marked Great Tit. Two family parties of Nuthatch were noted on 28th, a family party of Willow Tit on 30th, 25 House Sparrows, including this year's young, were around the Visitor Centre on 28th and 12 Tree Sparrows including young, were on the Wildlife Centre feeders on 18th.

87 Species this month compared with 93 in June 2009, 91 in 2008, 93 in 2007, 89 in 2006 and 84 in 2003. The low number is mainly due to few passage species calling in during a calm hot month.

MAY 2010 BIRD NOTES

May Highlights: Great Northern Diver, Red Kite, Osprey, Hobby, Sanderling, Turnstone, Mediterranean Gull, Black Tern, Cuckoo and Pied Flycatcher.

The long staying adult Great Northern Diver was last seen flying around in full summer plumage on 8th. There are no broods of Grebe, Swan, Barnacle Geese, Moorhen or Coot yet but, hopefully, this is only due to the late Spring, and June will be catch-up time. There was only 1 further brood of Mallard to add to last month's total of 4 broods, probably another indicator of delayed breeding for these water birds. Significant wildfowl counts were all from the WeBS survey on 16th and included 16 Little Grebe, 40 Great Crested Grebe, 40 Mallard, 147 Tufted Duck and 57 Coot. Additionally, there was a Shelduck on 8th, 10th and 17th and a female Scaup, present from April, was last seen on 7th.

A Red Kite drifted over Sheepwash on 2nd and an Osprey perched on a buoy for an hour consuming a fish before flying up Fishtail Creek on 26th. The first Hobby was noted on 2nd and a Peregrine flew over on 1st. There has been little Buzzard activity recorded and there are no signs of breeding, which is not surprising following the well publicised local find of 6 dead buzzards, suspected of being poisoned.

At least 6 pairs of Oystercatchers have so far only produced 1 brood of 3, first noted on 5th on Millfields Island. Last month's Lapwing brood on Big Island showed 2 well grown young on 17th and there were further broods of 4 on 16th and 3 on 26th, both on Horseshoe Island. A pair of Redshank with 2 young were on Big Island on 12th. Passage waders included a Ringed Plover on 12th and 20th, 2 Sanderling on 12th, a Dunlin on 1st and following days, 3 Black-tailed Godwit on 5th, 1 Bar-tailed Godwit on 21st, 15 Whimbrel on 8th, 2 Curlew on 10th, a Greenshank flying through on 10th, 3 Common Sandpiper on 7th and a Turnstone from 7th to 11th.

A first summer Mediterranean Gull on Horseshoe Island on 1st obviously stayed over from 30th May and an adult Little Gull was also on the island on 22nd. The Black-headed Gull colony at the Wildlife Centre took over the tern raft again, forcing off a nesting Moorhen. These gulls seem to have squeezed what looks like 8 nests onto the raft and 2 young were noted on 29th. A pair also have a nest on Horseshoe Island and another pair have bred on the raft at Paul Stanley Hide, showing 3 young on 31st. Three Common Terns were noted from 1st and a pair have settled on Flat Island again this year. The maximum number of Arctic Terns was 6 feeding off Stones Island on 7th and a Black Tern was present on 27-28th.

Three Stock Doves were feeding on spilled seed in Sheepwash car park on 13th, a Cuckoo was noted near Middle Wood on 19th, and a Barn Owl on 15th and a Tawny Owl on 16th were both around Sheepwash. The first Grey Wagtail since early January was recorded on 2nd. A Redstart was singing near the Wildlife Centre on 1st and there was a male Whinchat on the dam wall on 5th. A Greenland race female Wheatear, a Sedge and a Reed Warbler were all seen on 1st and 13 Garden Warblers plus 42 Blackcaps plus 29 Willow Warblers were counted on a circular walk on 17th. A Spotted Flycatcher was noted from 23rd, 2 singing Pied Flycatchers on 13th, a pair of Raven with 3 young on 20th, 4 Linnet on 2nd and a Bullfinch was heard singing on the Club Dawn Chorus Walk on 8th.

106 Species recorded compared with 108 in May 2009, 112 in 2008, 103 in 2007, 107 in 2006, 107 in 2005, 114 in 2004 and 110 in 2003.

APRIL 2010 BIRD NOTES (to 28th April only)

April Highlights: Great Northern Diver, Whooper Swan, Osprey, Sanderling, Godwits, Little Gull, Sandwich Tern, Pied Flycatcher and Common Spring Migrants.

The adult Great Northern Diver stayed all month and was in mostly summer plumage by 29th. A Whooper Swan was around the Wildlife Centre and Stones Island all Saturday 17th, 2 Red-crested Pochard on 6th and 8th, a female Scaup stayed close in to the Wildlife Centre from 26th and 4 Common Scoter were seen off Stones Island on 13th. Counts included 12 Little Grebe on 18th, 42 Great Crested Grebe on 18th, 16 Cormorant on 2nd, 3 Heron on 15th, 3 Greylag Geese on 7th and 24th, 80 Canadas on 18th, 38 Barnacles on 6th, 5 Shelduck on 10th, 7 Wigeon on 7th and 8th, 3 Gadwall on 17th, 48 Mallard on 18th, 3 Shoveler on 22nd, 1 Pochard on 8th, 189 Tufted Duck on 18th, 13 Goldeneye on 13th, 3 Goosander on 5th, 19 Moorhen on 18th and 106 Coot on 18th. Four broods of Mallard were noted by 28th.

Ospreys were seen again from Sheepwash, 1 at 1400hrs on 2nd and another 1230-1305hrs on 19th. An immature male Sparrow Hawk was perched close to Sheepwash Hide on 20th, 14 Buzzards were in the air on 3rd and 2 Peregrines were over Hall Wood on 26th, with singles noted on other dates.

Wader passage included 1 Ringed Plover from 19th to 21st, 1 Sanderling on 28th, 2 Black-tailed Godwit on 21st and 5 on 26th, 1 Bar-tailed Godwit on 6th to 11th, 2 Whimbrel on 21st and 6 on 27th, 4 Curlew on 18th, 4 Common Sandpiper on 19th and 28th and 1 Turnstone flew through northwards on 7th. Breeding Oystercatcher, Redshank and Lapwing were busy and a Lapwing showed 3 chicks on Big Island on 29th.

An adult Little Gull on 18th was followed a week later on 25th by 2 adults and 4 first summer birds. Other gulls were a first summer Herring Gull on 14th, an adult Yellow-legged on 23rd, an immature Great Black-backed on 17th and the breeding Black-headed Gulls, 60 present on 27th, were busily arguing about space on the tern raft. Tern passage included a Sandwich Tern early on 7th, 3 Common Terns early on 25th with the flock of Little Gulls, 4 Common Terns on 28th and single Arctic Terns on 15th, 19th, 24th and 27th.

The first Swift was on 19th but only small numbers have been seen since. Hirundine passage continued with 50 Sand Martin on 20th and over 500 Swallow feeding close to the water on a drizzly morning on 19th. The first House Martin was on 6th and, by the end of the month; some birds were around the Visitor Centre breeding colony. A Tree Pipit flew over on 24th and 40 Meadow Pipits were on the dam on 2nd. Migrant wagtail species were in low numbers again this year, with the first Yellow Wagtail on Sheepwash Spit on 3rd, 3 on the dam wall on 11th and 4 on 19th. White Wagtail numbers peaked at 9 on Stones Island in the evening of 7th and Pied Wagtails totalled 37 there on 15th. There are no records of resident Grey Wagtails since January 1st. This species is susceptible to long spells of freezing winter weather when they cannot feed along the waters edge and, in case you have forgotten, we have just had an unusually severe winter, so please look out for this species at Carsington. Their former locations were Millfields, Tail Bay outlet stream, Fishtail Creek and Paul Stanley Hide. A Redstart was singing distantly upstream from WLC Creek from 24th and a male Whinchat was in the Creek on 25th. Single Wheatears were noted 3rd and many other dates. Warbler species kept arriving, with 2 Sedge on 24th, the earliest ever Reed at Carsington on 24th, 2 Lesser Whitethroat on 18th, 1 Whitethroat on 17th and 1 Garden Warbler on 24th. A count of warblers on 8th included 13 Blackcap, 52 Chiffchaff and 8 Willow Warbler. A Pied Flycatcher was singing in Warrington Knob on 29th, 100 Jackdaw were recorded on 3rd, a female Brambling was in Hall Wood on 22nd and a site rare Yellowhammer flew over Millfields on 18th.

116 Species were recorded compared with 110 in April 2009, 118 in 2008, 103 in 2007, 118 in 2006, 117 in 2005, 116 in 2004, 120 in 2003 and 107 in 2002.

MARCH 2010 BIRD NOTES

March Highlights: Red Throated Diver, Great Northern Divers, Whooper Swans, Garganey, Osprey and early summer migrants return.

A Red Throated Diver was off Stones Island from 1630hrs until dusk on 22nd and the Great Northern Diver count was a juvenile from last month to 5th plus an adult which remained all month. A Sunday treat for observers on 7th was 24 Whooper Swans landing at 0930hrs and a single Pink-footed Goose was with Canadas from 8th. The big surprise of the month was a very early Drake Garganey at the Wildlife Centre on 2nd March, a day when several were found around England. The earliest record at Carsington previously was 16th April but the extreme earliest Derbyshire record was on 1st March 1978. Maximum counts this month total 25 Little Grebe on 14th, 35 Great Crested Grebe on 14th, 8 Greylag on 6th, 46 Barnacle on 1st and 14th, 3 Shelduck on 17th, 53 Wigeon on 5th, 3 Gadwall on 14th, 21 Teal on 8th, 109 Mallard on 8th, 4 Pintail on 5th, 5 drake Shoveler on 21st, 325 Tufted Duck on 14th, a female Scaup on 2nd, 28 Goldeneye on 21st, 8 Goosander on 15th, a Water Rail on 7th, 18 Moorhen on 19th and 247 Coot on 14th.

Four Sparrowhawks were noted on 21st and 8 Buzzards were in the air on 14th, with 10 on 21st. An Osprey was on site from 1550hrs on 26th, one day earlier than previous records at Carsington. It was seen from Stones Island and the Wildlife Centre and later it caught a fish and went to dine and roost in Blackbrook Plantation. An immature Peregrine flew north over Sheepwash on 28th.

At least 5 pairs of Oystercatcher were noted on 8th and the first Little Ringed Plover record of the year was 1 on Stones Island with a Dunlin on 26th. The first Dunlin of the year was 1 on 7th then 2 at the Wildlife Centre on 10th. Snipe totalled 8 on Horseshoe Island on 20th and 6 Snipe were seen in flight at Warrington Knob on 7th. A Woodcock was flushed near Paul Stanley Hide on 24th. The largest Curlew numbers were 12 at Sheepwash on 9th, 16 on 11th and 11 were in a field near Lane Ends on 13th. 6 Redshank were noted around the Wildlife Centre, Stones Island and Sheepwash on 8th, 23rd and 31st.

An adult Mediterranean Gull was at the Wildlife Centre on 10th and was subsequently seen in the gull roost on several evenings up to 24th. Counts of the gull roost proved difficult due to the spread of the roost this month but 242 Common and 65 Lesser Black-backed Gulls were counted in an early roost on 1st. There was a first winter plus a second winter Herring Gull on 20th and an adult Yellow-legged on 10th and 23rd.

A Little Owl was seen in the field on the left between the main car park and Wildlife Centre on 2nd, 7th and 30th. As expected, the first Sand Martins flew through, with 4 on 18th and a flock of 12 the following morning. Swallows started slowly with 1 on 25th then 1 on 28th. Meadow Pipit records have been unusually low for this time of year with 1 on 19th and several singles since. A Rock Pipit was on Sheepwash Spit for at least 2 hours on 19th, 2 White Wagtails were on Horseshoe Island on 31st and a female Stonechat was on Stones Island on 5th. The first Wheatear was on the dam wall early on 19th and 3 were at the Wildlife Centre on 22nd. A wintering Blackcap was near the Wildlife Centre on 10th and a pair there on 24th. Chiffchaff were first noted on 19th with 5 singing and 12 were singing between Millfields and Sheepwash on 31st. Two Willow Tits were singing on 8th and 2 Linnets flew over Sheepwash on 10th.

102 Species recorded this March compared with 103 in March 2009, 104 in 2008, 95 in 2007, 100 in 2006, 107 in 2005 and 98 in 2004.

FEBRUARY 2010 BIRD NOTES

February Highlights: Great Northern Divers, Red-necked Grebes and Jack Snipe.

A juvenile and an adult Great Northern Diver were present all month, quite often together at dawn and dusk. Early on 23rd the adult was calling while the juvenile was close by diving. As the mist cleared at 1320hrs on 15th a Red-necked Grebe was seen and photographed from Sheepwash and Lane End Hides and then lost to view. Searches were made by several birders and the bird was eventually relocated in Hopton Arm, in the rain and near to dusk. It was there that a second bird was noted. One bird remained in Hopton Arm, as far as the ice allowed, until 23rd, while the second bird was elusive, wandering as far as Millfields. Counts for February included: 27 Little Grebe on 8th, 41 Great Crested Grebe on 8th, 45 Cormorant on 15th, 6 Mute Swans on 23rd, 46 Barnacle Geese on 1st, 5 Shelduck on 25th, 48 Wigeon on 28th, 6 Gadwall on 22nd, 59 Teal on 1st, 141 Mallard on 23rd, 2 Pintail on 18th and 28th, 5 Shoveler on 20th, 2 Red-crested Pochard on 18th, 2 Pochard on 28th, 442 Tufted Duck on 23rd, 19 Goldeneye on 23rd, 5 Goosander on 13th, 5 Moorhen on 23rd and 401 Coot on 23rd. These counts were low for winter but similar to or slightly less than those in February last year demonstrating that many of the wintering wildfowl had gone by the end of the month.

Two Sparrow Hawks were noted on 10th, 6 Buzzard were in the air at the same time on 10th and, on 1st, a Buzzard was perched on the cairn on Flat Island while another searched the island for food. Peregrine were noted on several days with a female on 13th, 1 over Hopton Arm on 16th, an immature on 23rd and 1 from Sheepwash on 28th.

Oystercatchers have been returning and claiming their breeding island and, by 28th, numbered 10 including a pair mating on Millfields Island and the male with a bar-code leg ring returning to Flat Island and Sheepwash area. A Jacksnipe flew in to Hopton Arm on 19th for 2 hours and temporarily stole the red-necked grebe's show, see photograph on our website. Snipe numbers have been low this winter with just 4 recorded on 13th and 22nd. A Woodcock was flushed from the path behind Sheepwash Hide on 23rd. Curlew are now moving through, with the first heard on 24th, 2 on 27th and 5 on 28th including 3 which landed to the right of Sheepwash Hide. Redshank were seen in singles at many locations but the maximum count was only 3 on 22nd and 24th.

The gull roost was larger than in mid-February last year, with at least 3000 Black-headed Gulls, 550 Common Gulls and 300 Lesser Black-backed Gulls on 13th. The daytime resident, little grebe eating adult Yellow-legged Gull has not been recorded since 6th, and a heron was noted struggling to swallow a gull carcass on 16th!

A roost of 60 Woodpigeon was noted at Sheepwash on 8th and 16th, a Kingfisher regularly between 14th and 24th, 3 Great Spotted Woodpeckers on 16th, 2 Skylark flew over on 16th, a singing wren on 28th highlighted how few were seen this month, in excess of 50 Fieldfare at Sheepwash on 16th, 4 Song Thrush singing on 28th, 8 Long-tailed Tits squeezed onto Paul Stanley feeders on 23rd, 4 Willow Tits on 24th, 15 Magpie on 11th, 50 Jackdaw over Sheepwash on 12th, 6 Rooks on the dam wall fields on 23rd, 2 Raven on 6th and other dates, 4 Brambling in the Visitor Centre car park on 14th, 13 Siskin at Sheepwash on 15th and 10 Lesser Redpoll near the Wildlife Centre on 17th.

87 Species this month compared with 86 in Feb 2009, 86 in 2008, 88 in 2007, 89 in 2006 and 90 in 2005.

JANUARY 2010 BIRD NOTES

January Highlights: Great Northern Diver, Little Egret, Scaup, Caspian Gull and Kittiwake.

One of last month's Great Northern Divers, a juvenile, remained all month and December's Little Egret was around the Wildlife Centre area until 24th, with 2 present on Horseshoe Island from 1415hrs to 1500hrs on 18th. 150 Pink-footed Geese flew low east over the water at 1130hrs on 8th. Site counts this month were mainly the WeBS count on 17th, unless dated otherwise, and included 46 Little Grebe, 45 Great Crested Grebe, 45 Cormorant on 24th, 4 Heron on 27th, 28 Mute Swans, 5 Greylag on 20th, 45 feral Barnacle Geese on 20th, 6 Shelduck on 24th, 23 Wigeon (218 in Jan last year), 36 Gadwall, 49 Teal, 122 Mallard, 1 female Pintail on 11th and other dates, 134 Pochard, 596 Tufted Duck, an elusive first winter female Scaup on 10th and possibly all month, 12 Goldeneye, 11 Goosander on 31st, 11 Moorhen and 1424 Coot (1844 in Jan last year). Some of these counts are significantly down compared with recent years, probably due to the abnormally cold weather. Certainly any geese and ducks seeking grazing would have been struggling with the depth of snow. Escapee ducks seen were 2 Speckled Teal on 27th and a Chiloe Wigeon on 29th, both South American species.

Raptor records were few, with 4 Common Buzzards in the air on 1st, a Peregrine on the pylon observed from the Wildlife Centre on 17th and 24th, elsewhere on site on 18th, 19th and 20th, and a pair of Peregrine mobbing a Buzzard on 28th.

An Oystercatcher was seen on 11th and 16th, Snipe numbered 12 at the Wildlife Centre on 24th, a Woodcock was near Lane End Hide on 4th and 3 Redshank were on site on 1st and subsequent dates.

The gull roost, visible from Lane End Hide, on 24th included 4000 Black-headed Gulls, 600 Common Gulls and 500 Lesser Black-backed Gulls. Other gull records included 20 Herring Gulls on 18th, an adult Caspian Gull in front of Sheepwash Hide from 1430hrs on 18th, 17 Great Black-backed Gulls on Sheepwash Spit early on 1st, an adult Kittiwake near Millfields at 1000hrs on 28th, and the resident Yellow-legged Gull was seen eating a Little Grebe on 18th and a dead fish on 25th.

The freezing weather and thick snow lying on the ground prevented much activity by non-water birds. Two Barn Owls were out hunting near the Wildlife Centre on 14th and another near Fishtail Creek later in the month. A Kingfisher was in Penn Carr on 16th and at other locations later in the month and 2 Skylark flew east over Millfields on 18th. The annual wintering Meadow Pipit flock, which can usually be located around the Dam Wall and Tail Bay area, has not been seen this January. Presumably this flock has gone south or to the coast where ground feeding is possible. Two Nuthatch were on Paul Stanley feeders on 1st and other subsequent dates and Siskin flocks have been regularly noted, with the largest totalling 40 on 11th and 27th. Four Linnets were near the Wildlife Centre on 1st and 68 Lesser Redpoll were noted at in the same area on 17th.

86 Species this month comparing well with 86 in January 2009, 85 in 2008, 89 in 2007, 89 in 2006, 95 in 2005, 91 in 2004, 87 in 2003 and 75 in 2002.