

DECEMBER 2012 BIRD NOTES

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

December found only 85 species, but added 1 species to the year total, taking the 2012 provisional tally to 159 species, which is a little below average for the past ten years. Water levels have risen from 87% to 92% full during the past month, reflecting the excessive rainfall in December, although STW may well have been pumping in from the River Derwent. The adult Great Northern Diver, which arrived in November, stayed all month and a juvenile, which also appeared briefly last month, continued to be recorded occasionally (2nd, 13th, 26th, 27th) and will be assumed to have been present all month. It was still present on 1st January 2013. The adult Slavonian Grebe, found in November, remained until 19th, mainly seen from Wildlife Centre, but it did travel to Paul Stanley Hide and Fishtail Creek. Maximum wildfowl numbers were from the WeBS count on 16th unless dated otherwise: 1 Little Grebe, 44 Great Crested Grebe, 18 Cormorant on 4th, 16 Mute Swan, 1 Pink-footed Goose with Canadas 1-9th and 65 flew over west on 11th, 49 Greylag Goose in flight on 18th, 121 Canada Geese on 4th, 26 feral Barnacle Geese on 1st, 3 Shelduck on 1st, 49 Wigeon on 4th, 5 Gadwall, 115 Teal on 6th, 167 Mallard on 6th, 4 Shoveler on 2nd, 192 Pochard, 220 Tufted Duck, 21 Goldeneye, 3 Goosander on 2nd and 784 Coot.

The only notable raptor records were of a male Sparrowhawk taking a Dunnock from the Wildlife Centre feeders on 14th and a Pied Wagtail from Sheepwash shore on 18th. Waders included a Golden Plover flying over on 8th, 142 Lapwing on 16th, 1 Dunlin on 2-9th, a site rare Jack Snipe 'bobbing' in reedy area to left of Sheepwash Hide on 3rd, 14 Snipe at Wildlife Centre on 31st, a Curlew over on 1st and 2 Redshank all month, with 3 on 31st. The gull roost held 720 Common Gull on 24th, at least 10 Herring Gulls on 30th, an adult Caspian Gull on 30th, 2 Yellow-legged Gull on 24th and 4 Great Black-backed Gull on 30th.

Tawny Owls were reported at several locations after dusk and Kingfisher was seen most days, with 2 at Sheepwash on 1st and 2 at Paul Stanley Hide on 24th. The only Meadow Pipit records were 1 on 4th and 16th with no winter flocks of this species nor of Pied Wagtails and Linnets like last winter. There were 4 Waxwing briefly on Stones Island on 9th and a Chiffchaff was seen on 4th. A flock of Corvids over Sheepwash at dawn on 6th contained 150 Jackdaw and 40 Carrion Crow. The tame Rook, which had become a familiar sight around the Visitor Centre, was sadly found dead in the car park on 24th. It had no apparent physical damage to suggest being hit/run-over and was reported as recently getting lethargic. 5 Raven were noted in the air on 1st. Tree Sparrows, Chaffinch, Bullfinch and Reed Bunting can be regularly seen on the feeders at the Wildlife Centre, Lane End and Sheepwash Car Park and 20 Tree Sparrow plus 15 Chaffinch were around the Wildlife Centre feeders on 14th. A Goldfinch flock, seen around Sheepwash Spit area, held over 20 birds on 7th and Siskin numbered 25 between Sheepwash and Lane End on 9th.

85 species recorded compared with 91 in December 2011, 89 in 2010, 93 in 2009 and 95 in 2008.

NOVEMBER 2008 BIRD NOTES

November Highlights: Ring-billed Gull returns again, Great Northern Divers, Scaup, Common Scoters, Water Rail, Little Gull, Caspian Gull and Waxwing.

Last month's juvenile Great Northern Diver became 2 GNDs from the 1st, then a site record of 4 on 10th, only 3 on 12th and just 2 by 30th. Pink-footed Geese movements were 32 northeast on 2nd, 25 east on 22nd and 3 on the ground on 23rd. A female Scaup was near Big Island on 16th and there were 7 female/immature plus 1 drake Common Scoter on 3rd, the 7 female type stayed and were last reported on 16th. Wildfowl counts included: 88 Little Grebe on 12th, 60 Great Crested Grebe on 12th, 62 Cormorant on 16th, 44 feral Barnacle Geese on 19th, 1 escapee Cackling Goose on 16th, 1 Shelduck on 19th and 27th, 341 Wigeon on 16th, 51 Gadwall on 16th, 75 Teal on 16th, 152 Mallard on 16th, 2 Pintail on 3rd, 2 Shoveler on 7th, 210 Pochard on 16th, 343 Tufted Duck on 16th, 16 Goldeneye on 22nd, 2 Red-breasted Mergansers on 21st, 1 drake Goosander on 12th, 26 Moorhen on 16th, 2175 Coot on 16th, and a Water Rail was heard on 28th in the ditch below the dam wall.

Three Common Buzzards were in the air on 16th, a female Merlin was around Millfields on 22nd and a Peregrine was seen from the Wildlife Centre on 3rd and on several other dates. Lapwings were counted on 16th at 274 and again on 27th at a close matching 275 birds. Snipe numbered 15 from the Wildlife Centre on 16th and a Snipe race Faroensis [more rufous plumage] was photographed here on 15th and seen on subsequent dates. Three Redshank were noted on 4th with individuals seen at most locations during the month and a Turnstone was close in to Sheepwash Hide on 3rd.

Gulls attracted birders this month, with an adult Mediterranean Gull from 6th to 15th at least, the well forecast, and now annual, adult Ring-billed Gull turned-up in the gull roost on 7th and was seen on many evenings up to the end of the month, a first winter Little Gull was also in the roost on 7th, 3 Yellow-legged Gulls were present on 8th and other dates and a second winter Caspian Gull was in the roost on 25th.

Kingfishers were seen most days around the site and 2 were in front of Paul Stanley Hide on 3rd. Great Spotted Woodpeckers and Nuthatch were regularly on the feeders here. Two Skylarks flew over on 4th, 10 Meadow Pipits were at Sheepwash on 4th and 11 were on the other side of the Spit on 13th. A Rock Pipit was seen from Paul Stanley Hide on 3rd and a few lucky observers saw a Waxwing at the Visitor Centre on 16th. Note that many Waxwings have come into this country recently, they can turn up on any berry laden tree and bush, and supermarket car parks are a favourite. Wintering thrushes were moving through in flocks, stopping off to feed, with 50plus Fieldfare in Wildlife Centre Creek on 13th, 50 Redwing at Millfields on 7th and 50 around the Wildlife Centre area on 10th. Four Blackcaps were reported on 10th near the Wildlife Centre. Two flocks of Long-tailed Tits contained 29 birds on 24th and 8 Blue Tits plus 10 Great Tits were noted at Paul Stanley Hide on 19th. Starling flocks totalled 350 birds at dusk on 3rd, flocks of 30 Siskin were noted on 4th and 28th, 6 Lesser Redpoll were on Stones Island on 13th, 15 Chaffinch on Paul Stanley feeders on 19th and 11 Bullfinch were counted on 27th.

94 species recorded compared with 98 in November 2007, 97 in 2006, 97 in 2005, 95 in 2004 and 92 in 2003.

OCTOBER 2012 BIRD NOTES

October Highlights: Slavonian Grebe, Whooper Swan, Merlin, Grey Phalarope and Caspian Gull.

A few good species stopped-off on their autumn migration southwards and wintering bird numbers increased, except for some duck species such as wigeon and tufted, whose numbers were well below those expected by the end of October. Maximum counts of waterbirds were 21 Little Grebe on 12th, 70 Great Crested Grebe on 15th and a Slavonian Grebe on 27th stayed around Stones Island all day but proved elusive for observers. There were 39 Cormorant on 13th, 1 Little Egret on 23rd, 5 Heron on 2nd and 32 Mute Swan on 13th. Winter swan passage was 4 adult Whooper Swan on 26th and a pair with 1 juvenile on 28th. Pink-footed Goose passage was noted, with 350 west on 10th, 65 west on 14th, 80 northwest on 21st and 600 southeast in 14 flocks on 27th. There were 41 Greylag Geese on 8th and 25 feral Barnacle Geese on 1st. Maximum Duck counts were 4 Shelduck on 28th, 1 drake Mandarin on 26th, 125 (335 last year) Wigeon on 12th, 11 (32) Gadwall on 17th, 213 (282) Teal on 29th, 139 (141) Mallard on 13th, 5 Pintail on 12th, 3 Shoveler on 5th, 204 Pochard on 29th, 136 (335) Tufted Duck on 13th, 4 Scaup on 12th and 22nd, 11 Common Scoter on 12th, 9 Goldeneye on 26th, 2 Red-breasted Merganser on 19th, 10 Goosander on 19th and 631 (1016) Coot on the formal WeBS count on 13th.

Raptors included 2 Sparrowhawk on 8th, 11 Common Buzzard seen in the air from Sheepwash Hide on 3rd, 2 Kestrel on 5th, a male Merlin below the dam wall on 16th and a Peregrine on 1st.

Some good wader species this month with 1 Oystercatcher on 13th and other dates, 26 Golden Plover over Stones Island on 8th, 1 Grey Plover in flight on 12th, a maximum 112 Lapwing on 21st, 7 Dunlin on 12th, 4 Snipe on 31st, a Bar-tailed Godwit at Sheepwash on 28th, a Curlew on 25th, the last Common Sandpiper of the year on 13th and a Grey Phalarope from 17th to 20th. This is the fifth Grey Phalarope at Carsington, the last one being in September 2008. The bird was found at Sheepwash and was then mobile between Brown Ale Bay and Lanes End and proved elusive at times during its 4 day stay.

A first winter Little Gull flew towards the dam from Sheepwash on 6th and the Gull Roost held 2000 Black-headed Gull on 8th, 220 Common Gull on 29th, 5000 Lesser Black-backed on 8th, 6 Herring Gull on 15th, a Caspian Gull on 15th and 27th and 4 Yellow-legged Gull on 15th.

Autumn movement pushed 180 Woodpigeon in 5 flocks through westwards on 28th. There were 12 Collared Dove around the Ranger Base on 23rd and a Barn Owl was hunting along Hopton Arm at dusk on 26th. Kingfisher has been seen almost daily at all points between Paul Stanley Hide and Millfields. Skylark were moving southwards, with 9 flying over on 29th and the last 7 Swallow went through on 8th. Meadow Pipit numbered 30 on 5th and a Rock Pipit flew over on 8th and 10th and 1 was finally found on the dam on 19th. For some years Pied Wagtails have roosted in the dam wall rip-rap in summer and autumn but, on 1st, 87 were counted on the Visitor Centre roof at dusk and they then went on to roost in nearby bushes. Dawn walks along the dam wall confirmed that the Pied Wagtails were no longer roosting in there. The last Wheatear was on 18th and winter thrushes passing through were 220 Fieldfare on 26th and 3 Redwing on 5th and 100 on 25th. A Blackcap was still around on 10th and 7 Chiffchaff, also on 10th, were the last of the month. Corvids were active, with 7 Jays in flight together on 13th, 200 Jackdaws passing in half an hour on 6th, the tame Rook again around the Wildlife Centre on 28th and other days and 3 Raven on 8th. Many Starlings have been moving through, with 1700 in 14 flocks all westward on 28th. Other birds coming in were a Brambling on 19th, 35 Siskin on 29th, 7 Linnet on 15th, 40 Lesser Redpoll on 19th, and a Yellowhammer flew over on 28th.

104 species recorded this October compared with 103 in 2011, 109 in 2010, 108 in 2009 and 94 in 2008.

SEPTEMBER 2012 BIRD NOTES (to 25th only)

September Highlights: Great White Egret, Red Kite, Marsh Harrier, Osprey and Arctic Skua.

Some really good birds this month but you had to be on site to catch a sight of most. The Great White Egret on Sunday 16th did give a chance for some observers to catch up, being mobile around Sheepwash and Paul Stanley Hide areas from 0850 to 1010hrs. It is only the sixteenth Derbyshire record and the one previous record at Carsington in December 2008 was seen by a lone observer. Very few winter wildfowl have returned so far, the maximum counts were (for WeBS on 16th unless dated otherwise): 19 Little Grebe, 35 Great Crested Grebe, 50 Cormorant, 1 Little Egret on several dates from 2nd, 10 Heron on 4th, 28 Mute Swan on 4th, 200 Pink-footed Geese west on 23rd, 17 Greylag on 21st, 348 Canada Geese on 21st, 14 Barnacle and a Ruddy Shelduck (escapee?) together on 14th, 71 Wigeon on 23rd, 11 Gadwall on 21st, 66 Teal on 18th, 207 Mallard, 6 Pintail on 22nd, 7 Shoveler on 10th, 1 Red-crested Pochard on 3rd, 15 Pochard on 23rd, 120 Tufted Duck, 4 Common Scoter on 25th, 3 Goosander and 606 Coot.

Raptors included a Red Kite over Stones Island on 7th, a juvenile Marsh Harrier southwest past Fishtail Creek on 1st, an Osprey seen heading north on 8th, a Hobby on 11th and 25th and a Peregrine on 12th.

Wader passage has been poor in Derbyshire, with just 9 species here at Carsington compared with 19 in September last year, but 2011 was an exceptional year. The maximum wader counts were: 2 Ringed Plover on 23rd, 5 Golden Plover over on 18th, 75 Lapwing on 7th, 1 Little Stint on 24-25th, 1 Dunlin on 19th and 24-25th, 4 Snipe on 9th, 1 Redshank on 12th and 19th, 3 Common Sandpiper on 16th and 1 Turnstone on 9th.

A disturbance to the gull roost on 21st eventually revealed 4 adult dark morph Arctic Skuas flying around for a few minutes and then leaving together northwest. The gull roost held 225 Black-headed Gulls on 10th, 5 Common Gulls on 24th and 4000 Lesser Black-backed and 5 Yellow-legged Gulls on 7th. There was at least 1 juvenile Common Tern and a juvenile Arctic Tern still around on 24th.

The last Swift went past the Wildlife Centre on 9th, a Kingfisher was seen most days anywhere between Millfields and Brown Ale Bay, a Green Woodpecker was calling at Millfields on 3rd, 290 Swallows went through in 1 hour on 18th, 230 House Martin were present on 3rd, 30 Meadow Pipit on the dam on 17th, a Yellow Wagtail on 16th, 117 Pied Wagtail on the dam early on 17th, a male Redstart was in the Wildlife Centre Creek on 3rd, 2 Wheatear on the dam on 8th, 17 Blackbird on rowan on 6th, 17 Chiffchaff on Stones Island on 17th, a Spotted Flycatcher in Warrington Knob on 6th and 11 Willow Tit noted on 6th. The partly tame Rook was at either the Wildlife Centre or Visitor Centre all month. The Starling roost on Stones Island held 300 birds on 4th but there was no sign of a roost later in the month.

105 Species were recorded this September compared with 124 in 2011, 117 in 2010, 103 in 2009, 108 in 2008, 108 in 2007, 101 in 2006, 101 in 2005, 94 in 2004 and 104 in 2003.

AUGUST 2012 BIRD NOTES

August Highlights: Little Egret, Osprey, Kingfisher and Green Woodpecker.

Only 93 species this month compared with 119 in August last year, due in part to 20 wader species noted in Aug 2011 compared with just 7 this year, and there are fewer records than usual this August, suggesting less observer time and/or nothing to record. There were 1 or 2 fresh grebe and duck broods this month, adding to last month's totals. Waterbird maximums included: 40 Great Crested Grebe on 24th, 43 Cormorants on 28th, 1 Little Egret on 18th and 19th, 8 Heron on 19th, 28 Mute Swan on 28th, a Pink-footed Goose on 29th (escapee?), 18 Greylag on 27th, 306 Canada Geese on 18th, 6 Wigeon on 31st, 6 Gadwall on 28th, 8 Teal on 28th, 124 Mallard on 18th, 2 Shoveler on 1st and 27th, 1 Red-crested Pochard, occasionally, from 1st to 19th, 3 Pochard on 28th, 143 Tufted Duck on 18th and 263 Coot on 18th.

Raptors included a juvenile Sparrowhawk on 28th and 8 Common Buzzard, distant, circling together on 28th. Osprey featured again with 1 heading south, low over the water, flushing all the gathering gulls at 1920hrs on 20th and another flew over Sheepwash and Wildlife Centre, then southwards at 1010hrs on 28th. A Hobby was chasing hirrundines and flushed the Starling roost off Stones Island at 2000hrs on 20th and another Hobby flew south past Sheepwash at 1318hrs on 28th.

Wader passage has been poor, high water levels and tall vegetation adjacent most shore margins will have discouraged landings and has hampered observing. Compared with the 20 species last year, the 7 species for August this year were: 1 Ringed Plover, seen flying towards the dam at 0730hrs on 20th, 37 Lapwing on the WeBS count on 18th, 4 Snipe at the Wildlife Centre on 20th and up to 3 on other days, a Curlew heard flying over on 15th and 18th, a Redshank flying around the gull roost on 20th, a Greenshank on Horseshoe Island from 10th, joined by another on 21st, and 3 Common Sandpiper on 20th, with 1 or 2 around on most days.

There were 55 Black-headed Gulls in front of Sailing Club on 28th. The gull roost started with 2400 Lesser Black-backed, 1 Herring and 4 Yellow-legged Gulls on 20th. The only Terns were 3 Commons on 1st.

Late Swifts through were 2 on 28th. A Kingfisher was regularly seen around the site from 14th, and a Green Woodpecker from 11th, usually heard near the Visitor Centre and then 2 were at Millfields on 28th. Swallows were on passage all month, with 4 Sand Martins on 31st. More records for 28th, a popular day with many birds and many observers, were: 1 Yellow Wagtail, 78 Pied Wagtail on the dam, 2 Redstart in Fishtail Creek, 1 Lesser Whitethroat, 1 Garden Warbler, a Spotted Flycatcher in Hall Wood and 6 Willow Tit. A small Starling flock has been roosting on Stones Island all month, with numbers increasing slowly, totalling 400 on 20th. A Sparrow count on 13th found 38 House Sparrow in the Visitor Centre Courtyard plus another 7 outside and at least 60 Tree Sparrow around the Wildlife Centre feeders and another 25 Tree Sparrow were around Sheepwash Car Park feeders on 28th. Paul Stanley Hide feeders attracted 8 Chaffinch on 23rd, 35 Goldfinch were on Stones Island on 21st and 16 were in Fishtail Creek on 31st, 8 Linnet were on Stones Island on 23rd and a Crossbill flew over Millfields on 3rd.

93 Species were recorded this August compared with 119 in 2011, 94 in 2010, 102 in 2009, 99 in 2008, 109 in 2007, 97 in 2006, 105 in 2005, 113 in 2004 and 110 in 2003.

JULY 2012 BIRD NOTES

Highlights: Common Scoter, Osprey, Turnstone and Cuckoo.

At last some sun, heat and calm during the month, resulting in many water birds bringing out new broods, totalling by the end of July: Little Grebe 1 (1 last year), Great Crested Grebe, a new site record of 14 (3), Mallard 17 (20), Tufted Duck 11 (4), Moorhen 3 (3) and Coot 12 (3). Maximum counts, excluding young, were logged on the WeBS count of 23rd unless dated: 5 Little Grebe, 32 Great Crested Grebe, 24 Cormorant on 27th, 5 Heron on 24th, 26 Mute Swan on 26th, 5 Greylag Geese on 3rd and 8th, 336 Canada Geese on 3rd, 11 Barnacle Geese on 3rd and 5th, 3 Gadwall on 12th, 4 Teal on 5th, 133 Mallard, 1 Pochard on 7-11th, 116 Tufted Duck, 11 Common Scoter on 9th then 13 on 15th and 24 on 20th and 127 Coot.

Raptors included a male Sparrow Hawk inside the Wildlife Centre. This is the third occasion a male has had to be released from here in the past 2 years and is probably due to the hawk chasing tree sparrows and the sparrows having a crafty escape around the Wildlife Centre open door and screen. Osprey sightings this month were: 1 on a pole with a fish near Fishtail Creek on 1st, carrying a fish west over the Wildlife Centre on 12th, flying by the restaurant balcony at lunchtime, mobbed by 5 crows, then southwest over the dam on 18th, over the Visitor Centre on 24th and over the dam wall on 25th. A Hobby was noted on 22nd and 29th and Peregrine on 17th and 27th.

Oystercatcher have been moving away following breeding, with 10 at Sheepwash on 10th and 11th when 4 landed on Sheepwash Hide roof, 7 were noisily flying around together on 20th and only 3 were still on site on 24th. Other waders included: an adult and a well flighted juvenile Little Ringed Plover on 12th, 28 Lapwing on 23rd, a Dunlin on 13th and 20th, 9 Black-tailed Godwit on 27th, 6 Curlew on 7th, 1 Redshank on most days, a Greenshank on 20th, 8 Common Sandpiper on 29th and a Turnstone on 20th.

The juvenile Black-headed Gulls moved from the Wildlife Centre onto Sailing Club Island. Gull numbers were: 42 Black-headed Gull on 23rd, 2 Common Gull on 24th and a juvenile on 27th, 200 Lesser Black-backed Gull on 5th, a Herring Gull on 27th and an adult Yellow-legged Gull appeared from 3rd, the same date as last year. There were 6 Common Terns, including 1 juvenile, from 19th and a maximum of 9 on 22nd and an Arctic Tern was with the Commons on 19th.

Site surprises were a juvenile Cuckoo on 21st, a Kingfisher chased by 2 food carrying Spotted Flycatcher on 11th and an adult and a juvenile Green Woodpecker together at Millfields on 26th. Three pairs of Swallow were feeding young at separate nest sites around Millfields on 4th but the House Martin colony at the Visitor Centre has much less breeding activity than usual. Early southwards passage was noted with 2 Meadow Pipit on 18th and a Yellow Wagtail on 24th. Apart from the common breeding birds at Carsington, breeding was also proven for Redstart, Reed Warbler, Goldcrest and Spotted Flycatcher. Another surprise is a (very early autumn!) flock of Starlings roosting on Stones Island, with 300 there on 24th and 350 on 27th.

96 Species were recorded this July compared with the biggest ever July record of 105 in 2011, 91 in 2010, 95 in 2009, 97 in 2008, 94 in 2007, 94 in 2006 and 97 in 2005.

JUNE 2012 BIRD NOTES

June Highlights: Osprey, Black Tern and 6 singing Reed Warblers.

The wet and cold of April and May continued through June, affecting the whole breeding season. However, the number of broods recorded suggests breeding season has not been such a damp failure as feared. Ground and water feeding birds seem to have had a reasonable season, arboreal insect feeders such as tit families in trees seem to be showing smaller family size, but aerial insect feeders must have been struggling at times and the House Martin flock at the Visitor Centre was well into their usual breeding season before they finally settled to nest.

Water bird breeding found: 5 pairs of Great Crested Grebe with broods this month, Mute Swan pair with 4 cygnets, 5 broods of Mallard, taking this season's total to 13, 2 broods of Moorhen and 3 of Coot. Notable counts were from the WeBS count on 23rd except where stated otherwise: 25 Great Crested Grebe (excluding chicks/young), 13 Mute Swan, 347 Canada Geese on 26th, a drake Wigeon from 4th, 42 Mallard, a drake Pochard on 10th, 67 Tufted Duck and 97 Coot.

Raptors included a Red Kite over Hopton village on 14th, yet more Osprey records with 1 on 12th and another on 25th and a Peregrine on 9th.

Wader breeding so far this year is: 3 Oystercatcher broods of 2 young each successfully fledging, 3 broods each of Lapwing and Redshank, which is a little down, and fledging success may well be very low. Other waders recorded include 2 Dunlin on 14th, 3 Black-tailed Godwit on 28th and a Curlew on 5th and other dates.

Black-headed Gull pairs at the Wildlife Centre showed at least 9 young on the tern raft plus 1 on Horseshoe Island. Another pair had 1 chick on the raft at Paul Stanley Hide on 17th and a further nest was on Sailing Club Island. There are no breeding Common Tern this year but a pair were looking at the Wildlife Centre raft on 20th and 15 adult Common Tern were resting from heavy rain on Watersports raft early on 24th. A Black Tern was around early on 4th and was last seen mid-morning feeding off Lane End.

Swifts were still passing through all month with 30 on 4th and 50 on 12th. A Green Woodpecker was at Millfields on 12th and 7 Great Spotted Woodpecker were noted on site on 27th. There were 70 Swallows off Sheepwash on 4th, a pair breeding in the Stone Barn on 8th and 12 of the House Martin nests around the Visitor Centre seemed active by 20th. At least 2 young families of Pied Wagtails were being fed on 5th, 4 locations of young Robin noted during the month and male Redstarts were still present in Wildlife Centre Creek on 17th and Warrington Knob on 18th. Singing Reed Warblers totalled 6 on 12th with regularly 3 in Hopton Arm Reedbed, 2 at the Wildlife Centre and 1 in Brown Ale Bay throughout the month. A pair of Spotted Flycatcher was in Wildlife Centre Creek on 15th with singles there on other dates and another in Hall Wood on 18th. Separate families of tits noted throughout the month included 1 Long-tailed, 2 Willow, 7 Blue and 4 Great. Other fledged families noted were 2 Nuthatch, 1 Jay, 1 Magpie, 2 Carrion Crow and 2 Bullfinch. Several House and Tree Sparrows were still feeding young in nests. Also of note this month was a Meadow Pipit on 10th, 2 Siskin in Tail Bay on 14th and a Linnet in Fishtail Creek on 18th.

88 Species this month compared with 95 in June 2011, 88 in 2010, 93 in 2009, 91 in 2008, 93 in 2007 and 89 in 2006.

MAY 2012 BIRD NOTES

May Highlights: Great Northern Diver, Red Kite, Osprey, Sandwich Tern, Black Tern and Cuckoo.

April was an exceptionally wet and cold month and May continued the same until a hot calm spell started on 21st. Hopefully, this suitable breeding weather came soon enough to save some of the early broods, especially tits, who usually only have one brood. Many other species commonly have subsequent broods and these may be more successful this year. The wintering adult Great Northern Diver in splendid summer plumage departed early on 4th. Fresh broods of Wildfowl were few, with 2 Barnacle Goose broods, 1 Mallard and 1 Coot brood. Notable counts were 38 Great Crested Grebe on 21st, 2 Greylag on 10th, 3 Shelduck on 5th and 16th, a drake Mandarin on 6th, 3 drake Wigeon on 5th, 3 Teal on 31st, 72 Mallard on 21st, a drake Pochard on 18th, 85 Tufted Duck on 21st, a pair of Common Scoter on 17th, the latest ever spring Goldeneye on 6th and 41 Coot on 21st.

Raptors included a Red Kite low over Sailing Club on 9th and Ospreys on 8th, 18th-20th, 27th and 29th. The bird on 18th-20th roosted on Lane Ends Osprey platform. Sparrow Hawk was seen carrying prey on 3rd and 12th and 5 Buzzards were in the air on 8th. A Hobby was noted on 12th and 16th and a Peregrine on 8th.

Wader breeding so far is 2 broods each from Oystercatcher, Lapwing and Redshank, but survival rates look poor at the Wildlife Centre. A reasonable selection of passage waders included 3 Little Ringed Plover on 2nd, 1 Ringed Plover from 8th, 2 Sanderling on 19th, 6 Dunlin on 19th, 2 Bar-tailed Godwit on 4-7th, 12 Whimbrel on 2nd, 4 Curlew on 16th, 6 Common Sandpiper on 5th and 5 Turnstone on 19th.

The Black-headed Gull colony at the Wildlife Centre had 8 nests on the raft and 16 on Horseshoe Island on 1st, but 12 nests were lost on Horseshoe Island on 23rd together with Oystercatcher, Grebe and Coot nests. A first summer Mediterranean Gull was in Shiningford Creek late on 15th, 40 Common Gulls present on 3rd, a first summer Yellow-legged Gull on 16th and an adult Kittiwake flew through early on 19th. Tern passage included a Sandwich Tern on 12th and 3 Common Tern on 19th. Arctic Tern went through most days up to 15th with notable counts of 23 on 3rd, 55 on 4th, 31 on 5th and 10 on 12th. A Black Tern left with Arctic Terns early on 3rd and another arrived later at 1300hrs and stayed until dawn on 4th.

A site rare Cuckoo was clearly heard by many observers in Sheepwash Hide on 6th, soon followed by an even rarer sight of an otter, but mink could not be eliminated. Another sighting on 6th was an unseasonal Kingfisher at Millfields, probably displaced by high river levels and/or failed breeding. A Green Woodpecker was in Tail Bay on 16th with 2 there on 21st and 6 Great Spotted Woodpecker were noted on 16th. Yellow Wagtails were present up to 20th with a maximum of 5 on 6th and 1 White Wagtail on 8th. A Pied Flycatcher was singing at Shiningford on 16th and another site rare Marsh Tit was seen and heard on 5th. There were many big counts of common passerines this month, mainly from circular walks, a selection are: 135 Swift and 215 Swallow on 3rd, 85 House Martin on 5th, 66 Wren, 21 Dunnock, 59 Robin and 73 Blackbird on 16th, 150 Fieldfare on 5th, 3 Reed Warbler on 21st, 3 Lesser and 11 Whitethroat on 16th, 75 Blackcap, 70 Chiffchaff and 39 Willow Warbler on 16th, 4 Spotted Flycatcher on 22nd, 14 Rook on 2nd, 65 Chaffinch on 16th, 8 Linnet on 2nd, 10 Lesser Redpoll on 5th and 16 Bullfinch on 16th.

A big 116 Species this month compared with 111 in May 2011, 106 in 2010, 108 in 2009, 112 in 2008 and bettered only in May 1996 with 119 species.

APRIL 2012 BIRD NOTES

April Highlights: Great Northern Diver, Osprey, Little Gull, Kittiwake and Black Tern.

Summer migrants had been held back by the cold, wet and windy weather. Some warbler species, expected before the 20th finally arrived on 30th. Early breeders also suffered with Oystercatchers, Lapwings and probably Raven losing their clutches to the weather, but some wet and windy days did bring a good passage of terns and gulls for those observers who braved the conditions.

The adult Great Northern Diver stayed all month and attained full summer plumage by 25th, a similar date to last year and that bird stayed on until 18th May. A presumed escapee Sacred Ibis flew over Shiningford at 1145hrs on 10th, coincidentally a Sacred Ibis was at the Wildlife Centre on 25th last year. Another escapee, a drake Cape Shelduck, was on site on 17th. Wildfowl counts were; 41 Great Crested Grebe on 8th, 10 Mute Swan on 30th, 1 Whooper Swan on 20th, 1 Pink-footed Goose of unknown origin from 11th, 9 Greylag Geese on 8th, 88 Canadas on 8th, 22 Barnacles on 13th, 2 Shelduck on 11th, 2 Mandarin on 24th, 2 Wigeon on 3rd, 1 Gadwall on 23rd, 19 Teal and 98 adult Mallard on 8th, 1 Pintail on 16th, a pair of Shoveler on 30th, 68 Tufted Duck on 8th, 3 Common Scoter on 7th, 2 Goldeneye still present on 30th, a drake Red-breasted Merganser on 3rd and 25th and 72 Coot on 8th. There were 7 broods of Mallard noted by the end of the month, nearly matching last year's 8. A Red-legged Partridge was in Fishtail Creek on 5th and 12 pheasants noted on 6th.

Raptors included a pair of Sparrowhawk on 12th, a male carrying prey in Hall Wood on 13th and 11 Buzzards in the air on 8th. Ospreys were the big attraction with at least 5 different birds seen between 2nd and 12th and another on 26th. Two were flying around together on Sunday 8th and were reported from all ends of Carsington Water. A Hobby was seen from Sheepwash Hide on 27th and Peregrine noted on 6th and 11th.

Wader passage was limited with water levels close to maximum leaving little suitable shore margins and breeding had mixed fortunes with the poor weather. Of the 6 (or possibly 7) pairs of breeding Oystercatchers, at least 2 pairs lost nests in the foul weather on 29th and 2 pairs were known to be OK still on 30th. A brood of Lapwing chicks were seen from the Wildlife Centre on 21st, sadly 2 were killed by Coot the next day, but the remaining 2 chicks were still active at the end of the month. Maximum counts of passage waders were 2 Dunlin on 27th, 2 Ruff 1st-10th, 6 Black-tailed Godwit on 12th, 1 Bar-tailed Godwit on 28th and 30th, 4 Whimbrel on 23rd, 6 Curlew on 27th and 3 Common Sandpiper on 27th.

Gull numbers included 13 Little Gull through on the wet and windy 25th, 216 Black-headed at the Wildlife Centre on 9th, 90 Common Gull at Sheepwash on 11th and 2 Kittiwake through on the wet and windy 29th. Tern passage maximums were 2 Common on 25th, 29 Arctic on 18th, 130 Arctic on 25th and 2 Black Tern on 25th and 30th.

Many good counts of passerines, including migrant first dates, were reported this month. Briefly, 1 Swift on 24th and 50plus on 30th, 1 Green Woodpecker on 23rd, 100plus Sand Martin on 18th, 1 Swallow on 5th and 500 on 25th, 2 House Martin on 9th, 9 Yellow Wagtail on 18th, 5 White Wagtail on 11th, 43 Wren on 6th, female Redstart on 15th, 49 Blackbird on 6th, 200 Fieldfare on 18th, first Garden Warbler on 23rd, first Sedge Warbler, Lesser and Whitethroat all on 30th, 34 Blackcap and 64 Chiffchaff on 15th, a Pied Flycatcher on 22nd, a site rare Marsh Tit on 24th, a Magpie took a bat in mid-air on 20th and 28 Bullfinch on 15th.

114 Species were recorded compared with 111 in April 2011, 116 in 2010, 110 in 2009 and 118 in 2008.

MARCH 2012 BIRD NOTES

March Highlights: Whooper Swan, Garganey, Red Kite, Ruff and early summer migrants return.

Only 97 species this month, a month of mainly calm, warm and sometimes hot and sunny weather. Maybe migrants have been finding travel and food easy and passing straight through or passing high overhead, or, maybe some species, such as Willow Warbler, are just a few days late. The adult Great Northern Diver remained all month, usually found off Stones Island. Six Whooper Swans, looking like a family party of adult pair plus 4 first winter birds, were present briefly from 1730hrs on 24th and a pair of Garganey in Fishtail Creek was an early morning surprise on 17th and flew off north. Maximum counts this month; 8 Little Grebe on 18th, 33 Great Crested Grebe on 5th, 23 Cormorant on 8th, 3 Greylag on 27th, 108 Canada Geese on 4th, 23 Barnacle on 14th, 5 Shelduck on 29th, 148 Wigeon on 11th, 10 Gadwall on 1st, 373 Teal on 1st, 143 Mallard on 1st, 2 Pintail on 19th, 5 Shoveler on 26th, 1 Pochard on 14th, 78 Tufted Duck on 11th, 9 Goldeneye on 1st, 1 Goosander on 11th, 6 Moorhen on 16th and 108 Coot on 5th.

Two Red Kite were seen drifting south over Hall Wood at 1705hrs on 21st during a month of many Red Kite sightings in this area of Derbyshire. Eleven Common Buzzards were in the air, but distant and spread, on 19th and a Peregrine was noted on 3rd and many other dates. A Red-legged Partridge was singing from a gate perch near the Wildlife Centre on 11th and again from a picnic bench on Stones Island on 21st and 11 Pheasants were around Sheepwash car park feeders at dusk on 12th. At least 12 Oystercatchers were noted on 19th and the total is probably 7 pairs but, as they are so mobile and spread, an accurate count is impossible. The first Little Ringed Plover of the year was on Sailing Club Island on 30th only. Three Dunlin were in front of the Wildlife Centre on 10th and 4 Ruff landed at Sheepwash for 2hrs on 28th and another 2 were around Stones Island on 31st. Three Snipe were seen from the Wildlife Centre on 4th, with 1 or 2 noted on other days, and a Black-tailed Godwit, there on 25th, moved onto Sheepwash for the 26-27th. Curlew were passing through all month, with flocks of 11 on 1st, 23 on 8th and 11 on 22nd.

An adult Mediterranean Gull was in front of Sheepwash at 1000hrs and later in the roost on 7th, coincidentally the same single date as March last year. The gull roost was well spread across the whole water and counts were 2000 Black-headed Gull on 12th, 400 Common Gull on 12th, 210 Lesser Black-backed Gull on 17th, 5 Herring Gull on 15th and 4 Great Black-backed Gull on 14th. There was an adult Yellow-legged Gull on 1st, 4th and 11th, but probably not the little grebe killer which has not been specifically noted since early February.

Little Owl and Tawny Owl were noted at dusk on 21st. A Green Woodpecker was heard from Millfields on 21st and 4 Great Spotted Woodpecker were drumming on 16th. The first Sand Martin was an earliest ever on site on 11th, but few hirundines followed, with just 2 Sand Martin on 21st, 1 on 31st and 1 Swallow on 30th does not make a summer, yet. Meadow Pipit numbers on the dam early morning were best mid-month with 24 on 21st and 24 Pied Wagtail at the same time. A walk around the reservoir on 16th noted 42 Wren, 26 Dunnock, 38 Robin, 30 Blackbird, 12 Song Thrush, 32 Redwing, 6 Willow Tit, 5 Nuthatch, 14 Magpie, 22 Carrion Crow, 53 Chaffinch, 22 Goldfinch, 9 Siskin, 1 Crossbill, 10 Bullfinch and 5 Reed Bunting. The first Wheatear arrived at Millfields on 17th and there were 2 on 19th but none since. The first Blackcap singing was in Sheepwash car park on 27th and 6 were noted on 28th at various locations. Chiffchaff were first noted with 3 on 16th increasing to 19 between Millfields via Stones Island to Hopton on 23rd.

97 Species recorded this March compared with 106 in March 2010, 101 in 2010, 102 in 2009, 104 in 2008, 95 in 2007 and 100 in 2006.

FEBRUARY 2012 BIRD NOTES

February Highlights: Great Northern Diver, Whooper Swan, Sanderling and Mealy Redpoll.

A few days of moderate easterly winds at the end of January brought in some surprise waders for the start of February during an otherwise uneventful month. Water levels are now approaching normal, at 85% on 27th. The wintering adult Great Northern Diver was around all month, a Little Egret was reported at Sheepwash on 25th and a Whooper Swan at the Wildlife Centre at 1450hrs on 6th. Significant water bird counts included 40 Great Crested Grebe on 12th, 1 Pink-footed Goose on 8-14th, 322 Canada Geese on 12th, 23 Barnacle Geese on 16th, 2 Shelduck on 27th, 170 Wigeon, 37 Gadwall, 488 Teal and 249 Mallard, all on the WeBS count on 12th, 4 Pintail from 8th, 16 Pochard on 7th, 197 Tufted Duck on 12th, 14 Goldeneye on 12th, 2 Goosander on 2nd and 143 Coot on 12th. Raptor activity was limited, with 5 Common Buzzard in the air on 15th and 2 Peregrine, also on 15th, with singles around on many days.

Waders were a winter treat this month. Oystercatchers have been returning to claim their breeding islands, and they totalled 9 by 23rd. One of the Sheepwash area Oystercatchers has returned for its seventh consecutive year, it has a bar-code leg ring from the Exe Estuary Devon. A Ringed Plover was on Stones Island on 13th and on later dates and a Grey Plover was there, early morning only, on 14th. The maximum Lapwing count was 180 on 23rd. A surprising 6 Sanderling were on Stones Island on 1st, still present but scattered about the site on 2nd, and 2 remained up to 17th. With the Sanderling was a massive flock of 62 Dunlin which must be a site record, if not a Derbyshire record, for this time of year. There were still 58 to be found scattered about the site on the following day, then they rapidly reduced in numbers to 7 by 10th and to just 1, occasionally, by the end of the month. Snipe have been elusive this winter so 4 on 22nd was a welcome record and a Woodcock in Fishtail Creek on 10th was the first since December 2010. Curlew passage started with 1 on 22nd, gradually increasing, with 11 on 27th and 12 on 29th. There were 3 Redshank around site all month.

The Gull Roost held nothing unusual, with 3000 Black-headed, 250 Common and 70 Lesser Black-backed Gulls, all on 27th, 9 Herring and 2 Yellow-legged Gulls on 15th and 4 Great Black-backed Gulls on 28th.

A Barn Owl was hunting Sheepwash car park at dusk on 10th and the local pair of Great Spotted Woodpecker at Paul Stanley Hide chased off an intruding pair on 22nd. Meadow Pipit counts were 30 on Stones Island on 2nd and 20th. Thrushes included a flock of 70 Fieldfare on 23rd, 6 Song Thrush and a Redwing singing on the warm morning of 17th, a flock of 35 Redwing over Shiningford on 21st and 4 Mistle Thrush around Sheepwash car park on 16th. There were possibly two flocks of Linnet, 60 at Sheepwash on 3rd and other records of 50 to 60 throughout the month in that area. Also, 30 were reported at the Wildlife Centre on 14th and many other records of 25 to 30 birds around Stones Island and the Wildlife Centre throughout the month. A Mealy Redpoll was reported on Stones Island on 11th. This report was by pager only so the observer is not known, which is a shame as it is only the third record for the site.

90 Species this month compared with 90 in Feb 2011, 87 in 2010, 86 in 2009, 86 in 2008, 88 in 2007, 89 in 2006 and 90 in 2005.

JANUARY 2012 BIRD NOTES

January Highlights: Great Northern Diver, White-fronted Goose, Sanderling, Caspian Gull, Kittiwake and Snow Bunting.

92 is a reasonable species count for January when, except for a few skeins of geese heading northwest, there is usually very little bird movement, Water levels have risen from 63% to 74% full this month but duck and coot numbers remain generally low except teal which can be found in good numbers along most of the shoreline. A small wintering dunlin flock is still roosting with lapwings near the Sailing Club and the numbers of larger gulls in the roost has much reduced, as is usual for this time of year.

The adult Great Northern Diver, which arrived last month, stayed all January and a White-fronted Goose was with Canada Geese on 1st and 2nd. A Pink-footed Goose was with Canadas from 14th and skeins of Pinkfeet over were 400 west at 1100hrs on 13th and 30 northwest at 1010hrs on 29th. Site count maximums this month included: 2 Little Grebe on 14th, 25 Great Crested Grebe on 19th, 10 Cormorant on 4th, 2 Heron on 14th, 50 Greylag Geese on 19th, 23 feral Barnacle Geese on 31st, 3 Shelduck on 2nd and 4th, 166 Wigeon on 4th, 13 Gadwall on 22nd, a massive 505 Teal on 22nd, 212 Mallard on 14th, 5 Pintail on 7th, 1 Red-crested Pochard on 11th, 11 Pochard on 2nd and 14th, 160 Tufted Duck on 4th, 12 Goldeneye on 14th, 4 Goosander on 16th and 3 Moorhen and 104 Coot on 14th.

There was little Raptor activity recorded but notables were 9 Common Buzzard visible from Sheepwash Hide and spread about the sky on 8th and a pair of Peregrine from Paul Stanley Hide on 27th. A Red-legged Partridge on 21st and 17 Pheasants on 16th suggests Carsington, with feeding stations, to be a safe haven from local shoots. Waders included an Oystercatcher taking possession of Shiningford Island from 6th, 37 Golden Plover early on 1st and 600 Lapwing on 25th. A Sanderling flew into Sheepwash at dusk on 31st, an unusual appearance for January. It flew in with 2 Dunlin and landed near 21 Dunlin which had been feeding along the shoreline for a few hours. Also seen were a Snipe on 22nd and 25th and 3 Redshank from 11th.

The Gull Roost held an adult Mediterranean Gull on 24th, 1000 Black-headed Gull on 3rd, 700 Common Gull on 31st, a colour ringed Lesser Black-backed Gull on 30th (ring details submitted), 160 Lesser Black-backed Gull and 10 Herring Gull on 3rd, a Caspian Gull on 5th, 3 Yellow-legged Gull on 12th, 4 Great Black-backed Gull on 1st and, following 2 days of strong winds, an adult Kittiwake on 23rd.

A Stock Dove flew over the dam on 6th and a Barn Owl was hunting over fields near our recording area on 14th. The wintering flocks of Meadow Pipit numbered 50 on Stones Island plus 20 at Sheepwash on 16th and Pied Wagtails 97 in the same areas on 10th. A Marsh Tit was noted with a mixed flock of tits passing by Paul Stanley Hide while the local Willow Tits were still present on 19th and the feeders there also attracted 2 Coal Tit and 2 Nuthatch on 2nd. A House Sparrow was collecting nest material around the Visitor Centre on 10th and 46 Tree Sparrow were also noted on 10th. The wintering Linnet flock, seen last month and early this month, was estimated at 80 on 4th and 75 on 6th. And, finally, a Snow Bunting was feeding on the ground in front of the Wildlife Centre on 8th, it then went under the feeder tables before flying over to the shore where Pied Wagtails flushed it away. This bird was seen by several observers and one took photographs. As this species is a Derbyshire rarity, a formal DOS rarity submission is required and a photograph would be most helpful. Please contact me if you have any photograph of this bird.

92 Species this month comparing well with 89 in January 2011, 86 in 2010, 86 in 2009, 85 in 2008, 89 in 2007, 89 in 2006, 95 in 2005, 91 in 2004, 87 in 2003 and 75 in 2002.