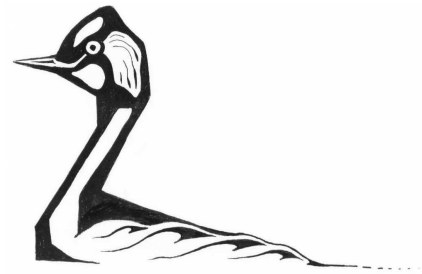


FEBRUARY 2010 BIRD NOTES



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.