

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.