

## TITTESWORTH BIRD NEWS

Winter 2010 issue

(Covers the period – October to December 2010)

### A Happy New Year to all readers!

Welcome to the 31<sup>st</sup> consecutive quarterly newsletter.

#### Weather and season

OCTOBER: There was heavy rain early in the month with some local roads being flooded. A quieter spell followed, turning quite warm with a local daytime high of 17°C on the 10<sup>th</sup>. There was a frost overnight on the 12<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup>. The second half of the month was unremarkable with some sunny days but severe frosts on the 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>.

NOVEMBER: The first week of the month was unusually warm. There was a local daytime high of 16°C recorded on the 4<sup>th</sup>. Low pressure dominated the first three weeks of the month. There was quite a bit of rain but also regular overnight frosts from the 13<sup>th</sup>. There was a frost earlier in this period on the 8<sup>th</sup> but also snow blocked the Cat and Fiddle road the same day. Northerly and easterly airstreams dominated at end of the month with snow flurries noted from the 25<sup>th</sup>. Six millimetres of snow fell on the 27<sup>th</sup> and then there was a blue sky and a cold wind. It was minus 10°C at Woodford overnight. Four inches of snow fell on the 29<sup>th</sup>.

DECEMBER: Here are some statistics for the month. It was the coldest December in over 100 years. In the last 100 years the UK has experienced five colder months – January 1944, February 1947, January 1963, February 1963 and February 1986. Mean temperatures were 5°C below the 1971 – 2000 average for the month. The number of days of air frost was the highest for over 50 years. It was generally drier and sunnier than normal but then a clear sky at night in the winter normally brings frost. It was the third driest December in 100 years. Locally snow fell on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>, with the heaviest fall on the latter date at two inches. There was a frost most nights with temperatures plunging well below zero. The lowest local overnight recordings were **minus 15 °C**, on the 17<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>, made at Woodford, near Macclesfield. It was the winter solstice on the 21<sup>st</sup> December.

#### WMBC – Staffordshire Branch activities

The next indoor meetings are as follows: Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> February, Jim Almond presents “Shropshire’s Magnificent Peregrines”; Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> March, Colin McShane presents “Desert Birding in Tunisia”. All indoor meetings are held at Perkins Engines Sports & Social Club (ST16 3UB), Tixall Rd, Stafford, starting at 7.30pm. £2 entrance fee.

The first field meeting of the year will be at Blithfield Reservoir on Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> May. Leader: Roger Broadbent. Branch contact numbers for both indoor and outdoor events – 01785 663971 or 01630 673409.

#### The Churnet Valley Masterplan

A blueprint for the sensitive development of miles of the Staffordshire Moorlands countryside looks set to be adopted by the end of 2011. The District Council is leading the preparation of a masterplan to guide regeneration of the Churnet Valley without damaging the environment that makes the area so special. The document will cover the entire Churnet Valley tourism corridor, from Tittesworth Water and Rudyard Lake to Cheadle, following the River Churnet through Leek, Cheddleton, Froghall and Alton. The masterplan will co-ordinate a string of other initiatives including The Churnet Valley Living Landscape Project, being led by the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust to conserve and enrich the area’s rich ecology. For more information about this massive local project visit the following websites:

**[http://www.staffsmoorlands.gov.uk/site/scripts/news\\_article.php?newsID=1262](http://www.staffsmoorlands.gov.uk/site/scripts/news_article.php?newsID=1262) and <http://www.churnet-valley.org.uk/>.** My thanks go to Andy Mabbett, the WMBC Webmaster, for drawing my attention to the websites and the local importance of the articles.

#### Bird reports

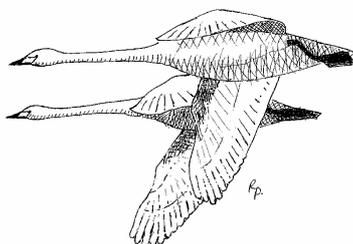
Brenda Scott hopes to have more copies of the 2008 bird report available within a couple of weeks. She is also hoping to have the 2009 report in place by Easter. Look out for notices announcing availability.

Although Brenda likes producing the annual bird report, it is a big undertaking, and she has many other commitments to fulfil with family, charity and volunteer work. Is there anyone (or more) out there who is willing to help her in the production of this interesting and important publication? If you have a bit of time to offer, please contact Brenda by telephone or email as follows: Tel: 01298 71141 or email – [bsaquarnemetiae@aol.com](mailto:bsaquarnemetiae@aol.com).

### **BIRD and other nature NEWS: selected highlights**

#### **OCTOBER:**

Many species of bird were recorded on the second day of the month including a Common Sandpiper, two Snipe, 15 Wigeon, 25 Teal, three Mandarins, three Jays, three Nuthatches, 45 Meadow Pipits and a Chiffchaff. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> a Tawny Owl landed on the west hide feeding station. There were lots of birds about on the 4<sup>th</sup> including 55 Lapwings, eight Snipe, two Swallows, five Pheasants, Painted Lady and Red Admiral butterflies and a Red Darter dragonfly. The best find on the 8<sup>th</sup> was a Marsh Harrier very aptly seen near Marsh Farm! There was also a Kingfisher present. On the 9<sup>th</sup> the following were of interest: 15 Cormorants, 10 Great Crested Grebes, 67 Teal, two Treecreepers, 14 Long-tailed Tits, three Coal Tits, a Chiffchaff, four Goldcrests and three Siskins. The 10<sup>th</sup> yielded 48 Teal, 13 Wigeon, three female Mandarins and a male Pochard. The best finds of the day on the 12<sup>th</sup> were two WHOOPER SWANS.



*Whooper Swans*

Also present on the 12<sup>th</sup> were two Gadwall, eight Snipe and a Sparrowhawk.

On the 15<sup>th</sup> the Whooper Swans were still present but Wigeon numbers had risen to 38. Pink-footed Geese over flew the site as follows: 350 at 8.30am, 130 at 9.45am and 170 at 9.55am. Twenty-three Redwings were counted – the first of this second winter season. It was noted that on the 19<sup>th</sup> Snipe numbers had edged up to 13. Five skeins of Pink-footed Geese flew over between 8.40 and 9.10am on the 24<sup>th</sup>. Approximate numbers were – 210, 700, 320, 190 and 370, giving a total of close to 1800 birds. The first Fieldfare of the second winter season was observed. Also of note on the 24<sup>th</sup> – a Dipper, a Willow Tit, a Barn Owl, a Kingfisher and a Moorhen – incredibly rare on this site. Twenty six Fieldfares flew over the site on the 26<sup>th</sup>. Of note on the 30<sup>th</sup>: Three Pochards – two males and a female, 32 Teal, two Ravens, 83 Lapwings, 35 Snipe, a Grey Wagtail, eight Siskins a Kingfisher, a Blackcap and a BARN OWL



*Barn Owl*

On the last day of the month a juvenile Great Crested Grebe was noticed plus a mixed flock of 50 Fieldfares and Redwings, 13 Woodpigeons, two Jays and a pair of Great Spotted Woodpeckers.

#### **NOVEMBER:**

Of note on the 2<sup>nd</sup>: 15 Snipe, 40 Lapwings, four Pochards, three Goosanders, two Common Buzzards, a Kestrel, one Great Black-backed Gull – quite uncommon at Tittesworth, a Kingfisher, three Great Spotted Woodpeckers, 200 Fieldfares, two Nuthatches, two Coal Tits and two Lesser Redpolls – a small selection of the many species seen. On the 4<sup>th</sup> there were 33 Teal, a pair of Sparrowhawks, two

Collared Doves, six Pheasants and a GREY HERON.



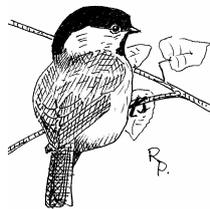
Grey Heron

The 6<sup>th</sup> yielded six Great Crested Grebes, 11 Cormorants, three Grey Herons, seven Pochards, 53 Wigeon, 32 Teal, two Tawny Owls, two Mistle Thrushes, three Goldcrests, five Coal Tits, five Long-tailed Tits and a Grey Wagtail. On the 7<sup>th</sup> the following were found: two Shovelers, 49 Teal – an increase of 16 from the previous day, 21 Goosanders, a female Goldeneye, a Dunlin, 23 Lesser Black-backed Gulls, two Common Gulls, a Kingfisher, a Song Thrush, a Jay, a Stock Dove, 75 Jackdaws and 180 Pink-footed Geese flying NW – an interesting mix on a good day for birding. Of note on the 13<sup>th</sup> – ten Pochards, 19 Tufted Ducks, a Raven, a Treecreeper and a Bullfinch. There were two male and three female Goldeneyes and a SKYLARK present on the 14<sup>th</sup>.



Skylark

The number of Pochards present crept up to 12 by the 20<sup>th</sup>. Tufted Duck numbers also increased to 23 birds. A selection of birds from the 23<sup>rd</sup>: 202 Canada Geese, 55 Teal, a female Sparrowhawk, a pair of Great Spotted Woodpeckers and a Nuthatch. Lapwings had increased to 56 by the 24<sup>th</sup> and a Kingfisher was found again. A few of the birds noted on the 28<sup>th</sup>: three Gadwall, 57 Teal, 24 Wigeon, 25 Goosanders – a goodly haul, four Coots, a Moorhen, a Siskin, a Grey Wagtail, a Jay, two Nuthatches, a Bullfinch and two WILLOW TITS - a Red listed species.



Willow Tit

#### DECEMBER:

On the 4<sup>th</sup> there were 56 Wigeon and 57 Tufted Ducks. Also present were - a female Goldeneye, a pair of Mandarins, 18 Long-tailed Tits and a Little Grebe, a scarce species on this site. By the 5<sup>th</sup> the number of Teal present had lifted to 108. In addition a Raven passed by and the following species logged: three Goldeneye, nine Goosanders, eight Bullfinches, three Willow Tits, five Coots, a Moorhen, two Jays, four Mute Swans – somewhat scarce at Tittesworth, a Brambling a Lesser Redpoll and a Barn Owl.

On the 11<sup>th</sup> 132 Teal were counted, an increase of 24 since the 5<sup>th</sup>. One hundred and fifty four Mallards were also counted plus 55 Fieldfares and a Curlew. On the 12<sup>th</sup> 12 Goosanders, a Treecreeper, two Common Buzzards, a Dipper, a Mistle Thrush and a SONG THRUSH were recorded. The Song Thrush is a red listed species.



*Song Thrush*

The highlight of the day on the 19<sup>th</sup> was the passage of 12 Whooper Swans, flying NW. The number of Teal present was still high at 125. One hundred and sixty five Canada Geese were counted, a task done on a regular basis. Also reported – 48 Wigeon, 17 Goosanders, five Bullfinches, three Jays and two Brown Hares. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> it was noticed that there had been a great leap in the number of Wigeon, now up to 203! More Mallards were counted, this time now totalling 252. Also noted: 12 Pochards, two Dippers, a Willow Tit, 18 Goldfinches, a Tawny Owl and 36 SISKINS.



*Siskin*

On Boxing Day there were two good finds on the top of Gun. A confiding Little Owl and two Red Deer were observed. On the site the Wigeon count rose to 215 and 257 Canada Geese were logged, but the best find of the day was a Green Woodpecker. On the 29<sup>th</sup> two Red-crested Pochards graced the reservoir. The Wigeon count reached a new high at 249 on the 30<sup>th</sup>. Also present – a pair of Goldeneye, three Willow Tits – Tittesworth is a good site for this scarce species, three Nuthatches, three Great Spotted Woodpeckers and a female Reed Bunting. The best find on the last day of the year was a Water Vole.

The number of sightings recorded for this quarter was around 1000, significantly down on previous quarterly periods where the total recorded observations has usually been around 1500. Less people would have visited the site during the dreadful weather we experienced in late November and most of December, so this probably explains the drop in records made. This means that the observations displayed above represent a higher proportion of the total logged sightings than normal. The data given above is 13% of the current quarter's recorded sightings.

#### **And finally**

Once again a big thank you to all those who took the trouble to record their sightings. They are all of great value.

*Ray Perry*

26<sup>th</sup> January 2011

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