

# TITTESWORTH BIRD NEWS

## Spring 2012 issue

(Covers the period – January to March 2012)

Welcome to the 36<sup>th</sup> quarterly newsletter in the current series.

### Weather

**JANUARY:** It was the 4<sup>th</sup> sunniest January since 1929. Overall it was quite a mild month with temperatures reaching 9/10°C on six occasions. The mean UK temperature was 1.3°C above the 1971-2000 average. Locally overnight frosts occurred on six occasions. Sleet was noted for a few minutes on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and hail fell in the afternoon of the 27<sup>th</sup>. Snow fell on the last day of the month but it did not settle.

**FEBRUARY:** The month was generally much cooler than January although a high of 13°C was noted on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. Four inches of snow fell on the 4<sup>th</sup> but fortunately a slow thaw started on the following day. There was also a light dusting of snow on the 18<sup>th</sup>. There were fewer overnight frosts than in January but temperatures plummeted to minus 8/10°C on a couple of occasions.

**MARCH:** Most of the month was influenced by high pressure and reasonably high temperatures ensued. It was mainly sunny from the 20<sup>th</sup> until the 29<sup>th</sup> reaching 18°C on two days. In spite of it being a dry, warm and at times a sunny month there were a couple of overnight frosts. The UK mean temperature was 2.5°C above the 1971-2000 average ranking it as the 3<sup>rd</sup> warmest in a series since 1910 and the warmest March since 1957. It was the driest March in the UK since 1953 and the 5<sup>th</sup> driest since 1910.

### WMBC meetings

The field trips for this year are as given in the last newsletter. If you are in any doubt please ring 0889 880100 for details.

Indoor meetings for later this year are as follows: Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> October – The Nature of Namibia by Paul Bingham: Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> November – Charles Tunnicliffe's Birds by Ken Broughton: Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> December – The Snowy Owl – King of the Arctic by Gordon Yates. Indoor meetings are held at Perkins Engines Sport & Social Club, Tixall Rd, Stafford – starting at 7,30pm.

### BIRD and other nature news

The appropriate day date in each month is shown first followed by the sightings and comments. As usual only selected data are given. Where days are missing, then this means that no entries were made in the logbook or only very common resident species were logged. Some of these common species are flagged up from time to time so that we have some idea of their site status. In the appropriate season young bird numbers are reported in the newsletters whether resident or migrant.

#### JANUARY:

**1:** Ducks: 51 Tufted Ducks, 36 Wigeon, 55 Teal, 8 Goosanders, 2 female Common Pochards, 7 Mandarins and a female Pintail. Also 6 Great Crested Grebes, 3 Snipe, 12 Common Gulls, a Herring Gull, 2 Common Buzzards, a pair of Kestrels, 2 Willow Tits, 6 Long-tailed Tits, 4 Bullfinches, 15 Greenfinches, 2 Nuthatches, 2 Great Spotted Woodpeckers, 3 Mistle Thrushes and 2 Jays.

**2:** Of note: 4 Snipe, 2 Willow Tits, a Siskin, 3 Collared Doves and a Reed Bunting.

**3:** The best record of the day was a probable KITTIWAKE.

**7:** Ducks: 4 Shelducks, 102 Wigeon, 66 Teal, 4 male Common Pochards, 81 Tufted Ducks, a single female Shoveler, 12 Goosanders and the long staying female Pintail. Also noted: 2 Snipe, a pair of Kestrels, 2 Willow Tits, 18 Redwings, 10 Fieldfares, 2 Mistle Thrushes and 4 Bullfinches.

**8:** Of particular note: 2 Siskin, 6 Lesser Redpolls, a Sparrowhawk, a Treecreeper, a Song Thrush, 2 Willow Tits, a Coal Tit, 2 Jays, 2 Stock Doves and a male Reed Bunting.

**11:** Ducks: 68 Tufted Ducks, 5 Common Pochards, 63 Teal, a Wigeon and a Goosander. Also 114 Canada Geese, 7 Lapwings, a Snipe and 3 Common Buzzards.

**12:** Ducks: 114 Tufted Ducks, 6 male Common Pochards, 86 Wigeon, 48 Teal, 12 Goosanders and the

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female Pintail. Others: 8 Snipe, 9 Lapwings 2 Willow Tits, 16 Long-tailed Tits, a Coal Tit, 40 Fieldfares, 25 Redwings and 4 Treecreepers. A Mink was seen and photographed. The Ranger Service has been informed and will set traps.

**14:** A Barn Owl was seen in a Kestrel nest box. It was also seen to catch a vole. This action was observed again on the 15<sup>th</sup>.

**17:** Ducks: 102 Teal, 23 Wigeon, 7 Common Pochards, 85 Tufted Ducks and 11 Goosanders. Worth mentioning: 2 Common Buzzards, a Kestrel, a female Sparrowhawk, a Tawny Owl, 3 Song Thrushes and 3 Jays.

**18:** Many species recorded including a Grey Heron, 3 Coots, a PEREGRINE, a Pheasant and a Tawny Owl.

**21:** The long staying female Pintail was seen diving for food. This species is normally a surface feeder occasionally upending but with tail still showing. It is rare for it to dive.

**22:** Ducks: 99 Tufted Ducks, 68 Teal, 28 Wigeon, the female Pintail, 6 Common Pochards and 4 Goosanders. Also of interest – 3 Snipe, 9 Lapwings, 2 Tawny Owls, 2 Common Buzzards, a Kestrel, a Sparrowhawk, a Great Spotted Woodpecker, a Barn Owl, 23 Fieldfares, 36 Redwings, 17 Long-tailed Tits, 2 Willow Tits, 4 Lesser Redpolls and a ringed male Reed Bunting. The ring number showed that the Reed Bunting had been first identified on the 27<sup>th</sup> February 2011.

**23:** The long staying female Pintail was still diving for food.

**26:** Of particular note: 4 Snipe, 2 Collared Doves, 12 Log-tailed Tits, 4 Siskins, 240 Black-headed Gulls, 67 Common Gulls and a Tawny Owl.

**27:** Ducks: 114 Tufted Ducks, 12 Common Pochards, 52 Teal and the female Pintail. Others: 124 Lapwings and 5 Great Crested Grebes.

**29:** Ducks: 147 Tufted Ducks, 22 Common Pochards, 9 Goosanders and the female Pintail. Also present: 2 Grey Herons, 5 Snipe, a Nuthatch, a Stock Dove, 2 Great Spotted Woodpeckers, a Treecreeper and 3 Coal Tits.

**30:** Of note: 62 Teal, a single Wigeon, 10 Goosanders, 42 Fieldfares, 48 Redwings, 2 Song Thrushes, 2 Goldcrests and a Willow Tit.

**31:** Goosanders now up to 13. Other duck numbers: 56 Teal, 118 Tufted Ducks and 17 Common Pochards. Please note that Mallards have not been counted this month. Others: a single Snipe, 17 Long-tailed Tits, 7 Siskins, a pair of Bullfinches and the ringed male Reed Bunting.

## FEBRUARY:

**1:** The female Pintail still present. There was a Peregrine on Hen Cloud. Three Dunlin found but 2 flew away. Two Snipe and 4 female Goosanders also present.

**4:** Ducks: 2 male Goldeneye, 181 Teal – a big increase, 48 Wigeon, 16 Common Pochard (13 males and 3 females), 34 Tufted Ducks, 12 Goosanders but Mallards uncounted. Others: a Curlew, 2 Lapwings, 4 Nuthatches, 8 Long-tailed Tits, 22 Greenfinches, 3 male Bullfinches, 12 Lesser Redpolls, a Common Buzzard, a male Kestrel, a Song Thrush, 3 Willow Tits and a Red Fox.

**8:** Ducks: 87 Teal, 63 Wigeon, 7 Common Pochards, 11 Tufted Ducks, 18 Goosanders – an increase of 6 from the 4<sup>th</sup> and a pair of Mandarins. Others: Three Great Crested Grebes, 2 Pheasants, a Stock Dove, 2 Collared Doves, a Goldcrest, 7 Siskins, 2 Common Buzzards, a Kestrel, 4 Coot, a Pied Wagtail, 4 Bullfinches, a Reed Bunting, a Jay, 3 Willow Tits and a Coal Tit.

**9:** Ducks: The same species as the 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> but with a variation in the numbers + the female Pintail. Others: Ten Great Crested Grebes, 4 Great Spotted Woodpeckers, 10 Long-tailed Tits, 5 Bullfinches, 3 Willow Tits again, 3 Jays and 2 Song Thrushes.

**12:** Ducks: 37 Teal, 132 Wigeon, 13 Common Pochards, 42 Tufted Ducks, 17 Goosanders and a pair of Mandarins. Others: 227 Canada Geese, 5 Great Crested Grebes, 3 Coots, 3 Common Gulls, 3 Coal Tits, a Nuthatch, a Treecreeper, a Jay, 2 Reed Buntings and a female Brambling.

**14:** Fifteen Pochards, 82 Teal and a Snipe.

**15:** Of note: Seventy Fieldfares.

**16:** Of note: a Pheasant and 2 Rooks on the west hide feeding table. Also worth a mention – a Grey Heron, 3 Common Buzzards, 3 Great Spotted Woodpeckers, the female Brambling and an Oystercatcher.

**19:** Two Oystercatchers were noted. A ringed Black-headed Gull was observed – code HA10 650. In addition the following were of note: four Common Buzzards, a Sparrowhawk, a Skylark, a Snipe, a Siskin, 22 Fieldfares but just 3 Redwings and 3 Reed Buntings.

**20:** The female Pintail, 42 Wigeon, 20 Common Pochards, 12 Teal, 59 Tufted Ducks and an enormous count of 32 Goosanders. Others: 2 Curlews, 5 Song Thrushes, 100 each of Fieldfares and Redwings, a Tawny Owl, 2 Willow Tits, a Peregrine and a Weasel.

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**21:** Two Peregrines (at Hen Cloud), 2 Oystercatchers, 46 Tufted Ducks, 4 Goldfinches and 4 Song Thrushes.

**22:** The 2 Oystercatchers were still present plus 4 Lapwings, a Curlew, a Snipe, 53 Tufted Ducks, 13 Common Pochards, 5 Coots and 2 Willow Tits.

**23:** There was a Sparrowhawk in a tree close to one of the feeders. Also of note: 46 Goosanders, 2 Oystercatchers, 2 Greylag Geese, 6 Great Crested Grebes and 9 Lapwings.

**25:** Two Oystercatchers copulating on raft and nest prospecting. A selection of other observations: the female Pintail, 53 Tufted Ducks, 25 Goosanders, **92** Curlews and a Greylag Goose.

**26:** Of note: a Tawny Owl, 2 Nuthatches, a Treecreeper, 12 Common Gulls, 3 Reed Buntings, 3 Grey Herons (two on nests), 2 Oystercatchers, 8 Cormorants, a Willow Tit and a Raven.

**28:** 16 Lapwings, 2 Oystercatchers, 32 Curlews, 17 Coots – a high count for the site but other observations similar to the last few days.

**29:** The 2 Oystercatchers still present, 60+ Curlews, 3 Grey Herons now on nests, a Green Woodpecker, a pair of Bullfinches, 5 Lesser Redpolls, 4 Song Thrushes, 3 male Reed Buntings, a Willow Tit, 23 Common Gulls and the first spawn of Common Frogs in the ponds.

#### MARCH:

**2:** Best find – 63 Curlews. Others of particular interest: 10 Great Crested Grebes, 12 Common Pochards, 56 Tufted Ducks, 4 Goosanders, 2 Snipe, 4 Oystercatchers, 22 Common Gulls, 4 Herring Gulls, a Treecreeper, 3 Nuthatches, 80+ Redwings, 6 Fieldfares, 2 Mistle Thrushes, 2 Song Thrushes, 3

Bullfinches, 15 Siskin, 4 Lesser Redpolls, a Goldcrest and 2 Reed Buntings.

**3:** Ducks: 16 Common Pochards, the female Pintail, 7 Goosanders and 44 Tufted Ducks.

Waders: a Redshank, 79 Curlews – 13 up from yesterday and 4 Lapwings. Others: 2 Willow Tits, 3 Coal Tits, a Jay, 5 Grey Herons, 3 Reed Buntings and a Stock Dove.

**4:** Seven Great Crested Grebes, a pair of Mandarin, 12 Wigeon, 11 Teal, 17 Coots, 3 Great Spotted Woodpeckers and 3 Collared Doves.

**6:** Twenty two Coots, 2 Jays, 3 Pheasants, the long staying female Pintail, a Grey Wagtail and 4 House Sparrows.

**8:** Two Oystercatchers, 45 Curlews, 6 Goosanders, a Tawny Owl, 6 Long-tailed Tits, 24 Goldfinches, 84 Redwings, 5 Fieldfares, 4 Song Thrushes, 2 Mistle Thrushes, 3 Kestrels, a pair of Peregrines and 3 male Reed Buntings.

**9:** Three Lesser Redpolls, 8 Siskin, 85 Curlews – a further rise in numbers, a female and 4 male Reed Buntings, 110 Redwings, 4 Stock Doves and some Common Frogs.

**10:** The female Pintail was still present. A Merseyside ringed Reed Bunting was also present. Others: 48 Curlews, 8 Long-tailed Tits and a Barn Owl.

**11:** Fifty-eight Curlews, 2 Common Buzzards, 10 Lapwings and a drumming Great Spotted Woodpecker.

**14:** An immature GOLDENEYE was probably the most interesting find + four Greylag Geese, 3 Tawny Owls, 4 Mandarin, 7 Song Thrushes, a pair of Bullfinches and 8 Reed Buntings.

**16:** A great find – a pair of Peregrines on Hen Cloud. Regrettably no warning signs of their presence had been erected. Eleven Great Crested Grebes and a single Little Grebe were present.

**17:** A CHIFFCHAFF was found at Marsh Farm, the first of the year. Others: a Little Grebe, 25 Tufted Ducks, 9 Common Pochards, 17 Teal, a pair of Goosanders, 2 Oystercatchers, 15 Lapwings, 31 Curlews and a female Peregrine.

**18:** There were 11 Great Crested Grebes and the Little Grebe had remained. The number of Coot present was high at 23. The pair of Peregrines was again seen on Hen Cloud but still no warning notices. A Mute Swan was noted, an occasional visitor to the site.

**21:** Ducks: 7 Goosanders 8 Wigeon, 3 Common Pochards, 27 Tufted Ducks and 8 Teal. Mallards were not counted. Waders: 5 Lapwings, 2 Curlews and one Snipe. Others: 2 Grey Wagtails, 5 Lesser Redpolls, 4 Linnets, 2 Bullfinches, 3 Greylag Geese, 12 Fieldfares, 4 Stock Doves and a Peregrine over the Roaches.

**22:** The number of Greylag Geese had risen to 9. A selection of other sightings: 6 Chiffchaffs, 3 Nuthatches, 4 Coal Tits, 8 Lesser Redpolls, 5 Song Thrushes, 2 Mistle Thrushes, 7 Reed Buntings, a solitary Common Pochard, 2 Oystercatchers, 46 Curlews, 4 Pied Wagtails, 4 Snipe and a Mute Swan. Also a pair of Goosanders appeared to be prospecting for a nesting site on the Conservation Pool.

**23:** Of note: Tortoiseshell butterflies.

**24:** A Little Ringed Plover was noted on the water-sports jetty.

**25:** Two Little Ringed Plovers now present.

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**26:** A Sacred Ibis was observed. Was it a genuine wild bird or an escapee? Others: A Green Woodpecker, 8 Chiffchaffs, an adult Mute Swan + an immature offspring.

**27:** Butterflies: Peacock, Tortoiseshell, Brimstone and Small Skipper. A Peregrine was seen below Hen Cloud mobbing Common Buzzards! An OSPREY was seen opposite the west hide taking a fish and then eating it! Others: 2 Moorhens, 10 Lesser Redpolls, 30 Tufted Ducks, 4 Little Ringed Plovers, 2 Willow Tits, 9 Chiffchaffs and a Skylark.

**28:** Of note: 3 Little Ringed Plovers, 2 Oystercatchers, 4 Snipe, 8 Lapwings, 2 Curlews, a Grey Heron, 2 Grey Wagtails, 3 Common Buzzards, a Sparrowhawk, 3 Greylag Geese, 2 Great Spotted Woodpeckers, 3 Stock Doves and 3 Collared Doves.

**31:** A pair of Oystercatchers was seen mating. Four pairs of Teal were seen on the Conservation Pool and another 3 pairs observed on the west shore of the main reservoir. Three Little Ringed Plovers noted near the boating centre.

## **The future of bird reports and newsletters**

Brenda Scott hopes to produce a bird report for 2011 but without help in compiling the data then this will be her last report. As indicated in the last newsletter I am now giving up producing the quarterly newsletter. I have issued 36 newsletters in the last 10 years, following 15 produced by Phil Wain & John Oakes and two issued by Bob Higginbotham. Prior to getting involved with the newsletters I produced two pamphlets, one was a basic guide about birds on the site and the other about biodiversity - explaining the policy of Severn Trent Water. These pamphlets were produced with the encouragement of Fiona Draisey, the then Head Ranger at Tittesworth. I also produced five bird reports before Brenda took over so successfully.

It's now time for me to bow out. I have many reasons for doing this including only rare visits to the site these days. If anybody would like to pick up the reins then I will be happy to help somebody to get started if required.

## **The consequences of the Tittesworth publications**

The obvious one is giving back to logbook contributors a summary and analysis of recorded data. Also providing information to the Severn Trent Water Ranger Service, which they cannot generate for themselves because of pressing site duties. Such data can influence the way the site is managed and upgraded to the benefit of birds and other wildlife and plant life. Another equally important consequence of publishing data is the money raised through sales of reports and newsletters, and then distributing it to worthy wildlife and conservation organisations. The amount raised to date is over **£1500** The main beneficiary has been the World Owl Trust, based at Muncaster Castle, Ravenglass, Cumbria. The trust has always gratefully acknowledged receipt of donations to help with their important rescue and conservation work

It would be most helpful if logbook recorders would let Nick Pomiankowski, the Staffordshire Recorder, know of any unusual or interesting bird sightings found at Tittesworth. He can be contacted as follows:-

Tel: 01782 849682. Email: n.pomiankowski@mis.keele.ac.uk. Postal address: 22 The Villas,  
West End, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire, ST4 5AQ.

**And finally**

Thanks to everybody who has contributed to the logbook entries, particularly stalwarts Steve  
Gibson and John Oakes. Publications would have been impossible without you all.

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