

Carsington Bird Club



FEBRUARY 2014 BIRD NOTES

February Highlights: Great Northern Diver, Whooper Swan, Red Kite, Mediterranean Gull, Little Gull and Kittiwake.

An uneventful month weatherwise, although strong winds on a few days were most probably responsible for bringing in some unexpected gull species but, even these, were not enough to lift the lowest February species count for 12 years. The adult Great Northern Diver had a lonely month and was elusive at times. The sight of the month must have been a magnificent 67 Whooper Swans during the afternoon of 28th. These birds had been seen earlier at Wyver Lane and, when they flew off, Carsington observers were alerted. This herd is a new record for Carsington site, the previous being 56 in 1993. Other significant water bird counts were: 3 Little Grebe on 13th, 42 Great Crested Grebe on 7th, 17 Cormorant on 15th, 28 feral Barnacle Geese on 7th, 3 Shelduck on 11th, 19 Wigeon on 19th, 3 Gadwall, 57 Teal and 100 Mallard on 13th, 217 Pochard and 190 Tufted Duck on the WeBS count on 15th, a first winter drake Scaup 1-16th, 14 Goldeneye on 15th, 1 Goosander on 1st and 391 Coot on 15th.

Raptor activity included a Red Kite flying close to the Wildlife Centre on 2nd, a Sparrowhawk there on 19th and 3 Common Buzzard seen from there in the air on 4th.

Waders included the returning breeding Oystercatchers which increased from 1 on 1st to 9 on 21st. The male wearing a bar-code leg ring returned to the area between Sheepwash and Flat Island for his ninth breeding season, originally being ringed on the Exe Estuary in Devon. The wintering Lapwing flock totalled 391 on 15th but was reducing by the end of the month as some moved on towards their breeding grounds. There was a surprising number of Snipe viewable from the Wildlife Centre all month, with 48 on 1st, 74 on 4th and 77 on 13th. The best counts were during sunshine when the birds came out to sunbathe. They were showing mainly along the creek shore to the left of the Wildlife Centre, with a few on Horseshoe Island and some out of sight to the right, viewable from the windsurfing launch shore. It was presumed that these would be new site record numbers but they fall well short of the abnormal count of 130 in November 2003. Curlew passage started with 1 on 17th, then a few daily and 7 past Sheepwash on 25th. There was also Redshank around all month, with at least 3 from 9th.

An adult Mediterranean Gull was noted in the gull roost on many days, occasionally 2 and there were 3 on 10th. An adult Little Gull was briefly off Stones Island on 16th, this bird was mobile and elusive and was still present the following morning. The gull roost held 4000 Black-headed Gull on 18th, over 1000 Common Gull on 6th, 300 Lesser Black-backed Gull on 18th, 10 Herring Gull on 25th and 2 Yellow-legged Gulls from 13th. An adult Kittiwake was seen flying off southwest on 22nd.

The wintering Kingfisher was seen at many locations throughout the month. There were a few Skylark flying over moving northwards with 2 on 2nd and singles on other dates. A wintering Redwing flock at Sheepwash totalled 120 on 7th and a Brambling was in the same area on 25th.

81 Species compared with 90 in Feb 2013, 91 in 2012, 90 in 2011, 87 in 2010 and 86 in 2009.

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