

BIRD NEWS FROM CARR VALE NATURE RESERVE AND
AND SURROUNDING AREA.

APRIL 2014

115 species were logged during the month, which is the second highest species total for any month for the site and the year list rose to 125. The month was not without its problems with firstly fire damage to the dipping platform and then more worryingly the theft and butchering of one of our old Herdwick sheep. It was a fairly dry month which meant we were hampered by early morning fog but the end of the month produced a north-easterly airflow, just perfect for the time of year.

The two Pink-footed Geese from March remained throughout the month and Grey Lag Geese were seen daily with double figure-counts on 11 dates. One or two Pochard were seen on five dates as were a pair of Red-legged Partridges and Cormorants continued to be seen daily as did Herons with up to three and Great-crested Grebes with up to five. Sparrowhawks were logged on 19 dates, Buzzards were recorded on all but one date with double-figure counts on nine dates. Water Rails were heard on 16 dates and seen on two more during the month, the pair of Oystercatchers were present daily with a third bird on seven dates and up to five Little ringed Plovers were seen on 26 dates. Snipe were logged on 19 dates until the last on the 23rd, also an unusually early last date in April. Redshanks were unusually scarce with one to three birds on just 11 dates and up to four Common Gulls were seen on eight dates until the 24th. A Kingfisher was seen on nine dates, one or two Green Woodpeckers were recorded on 23 dates, a pair of Great-spotted Woodpeckers took up territory by the reserve pond and Bullfinches continued to be seen daily. Up to five Hares were logged on 13 dates, one or two Roe deer were seen on nine dates a Stoat was seen on three of the first four days of the month whilst a Weasel was seen on the 1st and 4th.

On the 1st two hybrid Barnacle / Canada Geese arrived and the same day a male Mandarin started a five day stay whilst 47 Wigeon was a high count for April. Also on the 1st 150 each of Herring and Great Black-backed Gulls were present hidden amongst which there was a second winter Iceland Gull. The 2nd saw the arrival of an impressive flock of Whooper Swans, which numbered eighty, equalling the largest ever flock for the county. The same day a male Goosander was seen, two Ruff circled the flashes before flying north, the first two Swallows of the year finally turned up, there was an impressive count of 28 singing Chiffchaffs, the first two Willow Warblers were also logged whilst counts of 43 singing Wrens and 36 singing Robins were pretty high for the area. The last two Fieldfares of the winter were also logged on the 2nd. Another Whooper Swan joined the flock on the 3rd when 15 Grey Lag Geese was the highest count of the month, a pair of Shoveler started a three day stay and 20 Redwings were seen. Yet another Whopper Swan joined the flock on the 4th making the count of 82 the stand alone largest flock for the county. Also on the 4th four Golden Plover were seen but the calling Grey Plover that circled the reserve in the mist could not be located and during the afternoon a Curlew dropped in. 46 Sand Martins also flew north on the 4th. A female Goosander that flew south on the 5th proved to be the last of the winter whilst the Peregrine seen the same day proved to be the only one for the month and the House Martin seen that day was the first of the year.

11 Cormorants on the 6th included seven that flew south-east, an adult Kittiwake was also present on that date, the first (and only) Grasshopper Warbler was heard reeling for a few minutes and a Grass Snake was seen. Broods of Mallard and Coot on the 7th were the earliest

ever and the same day a Dunlin was seen, two Curlew flew north and the earliest ever Arctic Tern for the reserve flew east. Also on the 7th a Tawny Owl nest containing three eggs was found in a nest box and seven Redwings were the last of the winter. A pair of Shelduck was seen on the 8th when two Curlew came in in the afternoon and 45 Meadow Pipits flew north in an hour and a half. A Curlew left north on the 9th on which date 62 Sand Martins flew north, a pair of Tree Sparrows was located and a Fox was seen around the reserve pool. A pair of Shoveler, a Curlew and the first Common Sandpiper of the year was seen on the 10th when another 66 Sand Martins flew north.

A pair of Shelduck started a ten day visit from the 11th which also happened to be the last date for the final three Wigeon. Nine Cormorants on this date included four which flew west and also the first Yellow Wagtail of the year was seen. A Little Owl on the 12th was one of only two sightings during the month the other being on the 15th (same bird), the first Sedge Warbler of the year was found as was the first White Wagtail. Two Ravens flew west and 15 singing Blackcaps were found on the 13th, the male Mandarin reappeared on the 14th and then remained to the month end whilst the same day saw 35 Sand Martins flying north. A male Wheatear was found on the 15th (and probably the same bird was seen again on the 17th) and the same day there was a good count of 30 Peacock Butterflies.

The last pair of Teal was seen on the 16th, a very early last date for this species and a pair of Shoveler was also present on the same date. Three Dunlin flew south and a White Wagtail were present on the 17th, a Common Sandpiper started a five day stay on the 18th on which date three singing Willow Tits were found and the last Lesser Redpoll of the winter was seen (another early last date). The first Common Whitethroat of the year was seen on the 19th, a Ringed Plover flew north on the 20th when the (or another) Common Sandpiper was seen and circa 24 Arctic Terns flew north-east (the largest number ever seen at Carr Vale).

Another Ringed Plover was seen on the 21st when the first two Common Terns and Lesser Whitethroat of the year were found. Two Ringed Plovers left north on the 22nd as did a Dunlin whilst an adult Little Gull flew east, three groups of Arctic Terns totalling 20 birds flew north-east, the first Reed Warbler of the year was singing, there was a count of 12 Yellow Wagtails which were accompanied by a White Wagtail (the latter remaining until the following day). A female Merlin was seen perched in a distant field on the 23rd, becoming the latest spring date for that species but that was superseded on the 26th when she was present again. Another Curlew was also present on the 23rd and another male Wheatear was found. Four Oystercatchers were seen on the 24th when another Dunlin flew north, the first two Garden Warblers of the year were singing and a different Wheatear was found. Six Whimbrel on the 25th were the start of an amazing series of records for this species and the same day a total of 15 Arctic Terns flew north-east whilst the following day a Fox was seen.

A pair of Little Grebes was seen on the 27th (with singles between 12th and 16th and 19th and 22nd) and the same day a Ringed Plover went north as did two Whimbrel whilst a Black Tern, which was for a time accompanied by an Arctic Tern, went east after 20 minutes late in the afternoon. A pair of Garganey was a nice find on the 28th and they remained to the month end and the first Cuckoo and Redstart (a female) of the year was also logged on the 28th. Ten Cormorants flew north-east on the 29th but bird of the day was a Great White Egret that flew straight through the reserve in misty conditions and four Whimbrel provided back up. Also on the 29th two adult Kittiwakes left east. Little Ringed Plovers peaked at five on the 30th on which date a Dunlin joined them and three Whimbrel appeared at lunchtime. 100 Great Black-backed Gulls were still present on the 30th when Tawny Owl young were found at

Mill Farm (second site), 25 Sand Martins flew north (a total of 319 were logged flying north during the month), three Garden Warblers were singing and a Grey Wagtail that flew south was unusually late.

Mark Beevers