

CARR VALE MONTHLY REPORT JANUARY & FEBRUARY 2003

This bulletin covers the first two months of the year, as I didn't return from a five-week trip until 23rd February. My biggest concern whilst I was in Southern Africa was that our continuous run of daily visits would be broken. I needn't have worried because Dave Came, Tony Irons and Kev Navin (assisted by Ian Swain) were all marshalled by Richard Box and the daily coverage was maintained, albeit that the amount of time spent on the reserve was reduced. Nevertheless the January species total reached 73 and 78 species were noted in February. The January total is just above the eight year average for the month of 72.25 whilst the February total is the highest ever for the month beating the 76 in 2000. The yearlist progressed to 82, the second highest end of February total, the highest being 83 in 1996.

The year started well with Pink-footed Goose, Buzzard, Peregrine, Waxwing (5th record), tristis Chiffchaff (5th record from December), Firecrest (3rd record from December) and Brambling in January and Shelduck, Buzzard, Peregrine, Oystercatcher, Woodcock, tristis Chiffchaff (5th record) and Firecrest (3rd record) in February. In early January there was a spell of freezing weather and I am told that many days during February were also cold and frosty.

The first Great-crested Grebe of the year was present between 12th-14th February and Cormorants were a regular feature with records on 24 dates during January with a peak of five on four dates and on 24 dates during February, peaking at ten on the 9th. Herons were seen on 29 January dates and on 27 February dates with 11 on 25th and 27th January and nine on 8th February whilst the wing-tagged bird was still present on 24th February. Mute Swans (one or two) were seen on six dates during January and one to five were seen on 15 dates during February, plus six on the 18th. A Pink-footed Goose was present on 12th-13th January, 100 flew east on 23rd January with 40 north-west the following day. Canada Geese were recorded on 21 January dates with a peak of 98 on the 3rd whilst during February although birds were seen on 17 dates numbers were lower with a peak of 64 on the 13th.

A Shelduck was seen on 13th February and Wigeon continued to be recorded in good numbers with three-figures on all but one January date and daily during February. Numbers were generally above 150 from 14th January reaching a record count of 180 on 2nd and 8th February with 176 still present on 28th February. Gadwall were a bit hit and miss during January with records for 21 dates but with double-figure counts on just two dates, 16 on the 2nd and 12 on the 31st. There were daily records (apart from the 6th) during February with double-figures on 16 dates including 23 on the 11th. Teal numbers during the first half of January were unimpressive; indeed the first three-figure count of the year wasn't until the 16th when 108 were counted. Thereafter there were seven further counts in excess of 100 until the end of the month including 127 on the 17th. During February there were 13 counts in excess of 100 (and there may well have been more but no figures were submitted for another eight dates) the highest of which was 141 on the 10th, almost a site record. Mallard were noted daily during the period but the highest counts were only 98 on 12th January and 86 on 1st February. Up to six Pochard were seen on 21 January dates and up to nine were seen on 18 February dates plus ten on the last two days of the month. Up to eight Tufted Ducks were seen on 21 January dates and up to ten were seen on 14 February dates with 11 on the 13th and 26th. Goosanders were seen on 16 January dates with a peak of five on the 29th whilst during February one to three were seen on 15 dates. After a male Ruddy Duck on 2nd January and again on 20th-21st January, a pair was present on the 23rd, 25th-26th with four on the 27th, three on the 28th and two on the 29th. In February one or two males were seen on four dates between the 8th and 13th and up to three birds were seen daily from the 24th to the month end.

Sparrowhawks were seen on 12 dates in January and on six in February including a record of three

on 1st February, whilst Kestrels were noted on 11 dates during January and on ten during February. Single Common Buzzards were seen on 14th and 24th January and 1st, 19th and 25th February whilst an immature male Peregrine was seen on four dates between 8th-15th January and it or another was seen on 24th February. 14 Grey Partridges were seen on 12th January and three territorial pairs were noted on 23rd February, though a Red-legged Partridge on 15th February was more unusual. Good numbers of Pheasants were about with 28 on 18th January, Moorhens peaked at 25 on 12th January and there was a count of 66 Coot on 27th February, a new site record. One or two Water Rails were recorded on 13 January dates with three on the 14th and one or two were present on 12 February dates with three on the 20th.

An Oystercatcher was present briefly on 28th February and the first Ringed Plover of the year was recorded on 24th February. Golden Plovers were generally scarce with just four records in January, between 6th and 9th peaking at 55 on the 8th and five records between 13th and 21st February, peaking at 48 on the 20th. 70 Lapwings on 16th January was the only count of note for that month but numbers started to increase during February reaching 200 on the 6th and again on the 21st. A Dunlin was seen on 13th February, Snipe were seen on 16 dates during January but the only double-figure count was ten on the 7th whilst during January the highest count was also ten on the 20th with records on a further ten dates. A Woodcock was flushed by a spaniel on February 26th, a Curlew was seen on 28th February and single Redshank were seen on 1st, 3rd and 19th January and daily between 26th-28th February.

The monthly peaks for Black-headed Gull were 480 on 22nd January and 700 on 1st February, Common Gulls were recorded on just three January dates but included a very good count of 18 down on the 29th, whilst during February one or two were seen on five dates. 31 Lesser Black-backed Gulls were noted on 16th February with 310 Herring and 37 Great Black-backed Gulls counted on 15th January but once again no unusual gulls were recorded. 24 Collared Doves flew into roost on 13th January and one was sitting on a nest from mid-February, a Tawny Owl was seen on seven dates between 16th and 23rd February, Kingfishers were noted on five dates during January and on five dates during February including two on the 24th. A Green Woodpecker was recorded on ten dates during January and on nine during February.

On 9th January c220 Skylarks included 200 flying west with between ten and 30 almost daily between 4th-11th January and a flock of 20 Meadow Pipits was noted on 26th February, plus the first of the year flying north. One or two Grey Wagtails were seen on 16 January dates, with a single bird on five February dates and good numbers of Pied Wagtails were present with 42 on 31st January and 66 on 27th February. A Waxwing was present briefly on 8th January, only the fifth record for the site and 40 Blackbirds were noted on 12th-13th January. 400 Fieldfare were present on 6th January with 160 on the 24th, whilst in February the best count was 190 on the 17th. Six Song Thrushes were singing on 24th February, 100 Redwing on 11th January with 80 on the 13th were by far the best counts in the period, although 50 were noted on 27th February. The long-staying tristis Chiffchaff was seen on 11 dates during January and on eight dates during February, it last being seen on the 24th. Meanwhile the ever elusive Firecrest was seen (or at least reported) on 12 dates during January and on seven during February, it been recorded last on the 23rd.

16 Long-tailed Tits were seen on 8th January and Blue Tit Great Tit and Treecreeper were all heard singing on 4th January with Willow Tit song first noted on 15th February. 100+ Jackdaws were noted on 7th January when 100+ Rooks were also seen with 150 Rooks on 24th February and 305 the following day, the highest count since 1997. 20 Chaffinches were seen on 19th and 30th January with 15 present on 6th February and two Bramblings on 17th January were most unusual, this species being most often recorded in October and November at Carr Vale. Siskins were around in reasonable numbers during January with counts of 25 on the 6th and 30 on the 19th but then in

February they became very scarce with records on just two dates. One or two Linnets were seen on four January dates which is unusual and Redpoll were also seen on four January dates, including a flock of 20 on the 29th and then one or two were noted on six February dates. Nine Bullfinches on 4th January was the highest count during the first two months and good numbers of Yellowhammers and Reed Buntings were present during January peaking at 60 of the former on the 23rd and 31 of the latter on the 30th. 40 Yellowhammers and 15 Reed Buntings were still present on 1st February but after the first week numbers started to dwindle.

There was little to report amongst the mammals with regular sightings of Grey Squirrels and Hares. The only other species of note were a Fox on 7th January (plus a dead one), a Water Vole on 24th February and a Weasel on 28th February.

Mark Beevers.

CARR VALE MONTHLY REPORT FEBRUARY 2003

See above report, two months combined.

CARR VALE MONTHLY REPORT MARCH 2003

The daily visits continued as they have done for over three years now and our efforts were rewarded with 85 species, slightly below the eight year average, indeed the third lowest March count ever. The year list dragged it's feet into the nineties and had reached 91 by the end of the month, slightly below the average for the time of the year and generally March was quite a disappointing month. However a few good birds were found including Pink-footed Goose, Common Buzzard, Peregrine, Oystercatcher, Mediterranean Gull (5th record), tristis Chiffchaff (5th or 6th record) and Firecrest (3rd or 4th record). It was a very dry month, which resulted in the water level in Meadow Flash remaining constant at 15-18" although because of the prevailing high pressure early morning mist hampered viewing and visible migration observation.

One or two Little Grebes were recorded on seven dates whilst Great-crested Grebes were a daily feature with five on the 21st and by the end of the month the pair on the reserve pond were incubating. Cormorants were also a daily feature with double-figures on seven dates including a site record of 17 on the 8th, whilst Grey Herons were also seen daily with a peak count of seven on the 5th and 17th, with the wing-tagged bird remaining until at least the 30th. Two or three Mute Swans were seen on 19 dates with higher counts being five on the 26th and seven on the 28th. 18 Pink-footed Geese flew north-west on the 14th and became the latest ever winter flock whilst two Grey Lag Geese were noted on the 11th with two more on the 20th followed by singles on the 21st and 23rd. Canada Geese were present daily and peaked at 45 on the 1st.

The excellent flock of Wigeon remained all month although they declined from a high of 166 on the 2nd and 5th to between 122-126 by the month end. Gadwall were also a daily feature with double-figures on 21 dates including a peak count of 21 on the 21st. Teal declined from 72 on the 2nd to between 25 and 35 at the end of the month and the highest count for Mallard was a meagre 29 on the 4th. Ten Pochard were present on the 1st and 2nd but then declined until the last one was seen on the 12th whilst Tufted Ducks were seen daily with a high of 18 on the 27th. The long-staying female Goosander was seen on ten dates between the 3rd and the 15th whilst Ruddy Ducks were seen daily with double-figures on 17 dates and a peak count of 14 on the 19th and 21st-22nd.

Sparrowhawks were recorded on 15 dates with Kestrels noted on 14 dates, a Common Buzzard flew north on the 2nd, two were soaring over the reserve on the 22nd and another was seen on the 30th whilst a male Peregrine flew south on the 16th. Two pairs of Grey Partridge were located one the 16th and Pheasants peaked at 14 on the 23rd. One or two Water Rails were recorded on 22 dates with three on the 15th and 17th. An Oystercatcher was present for just 32 minutes on the 29th before it departed north, the first Little Ringed Plover of the year was seen on the 12th, which although this was the same date as last year it is also the second earliest ever. After two on the 20th birds were noted daily with a peak count of seven on the 28th. Ringed Plovers were quite scarce with singles on the 5th (at Sutton Scarsdale Flash), 15th, 16th, 21st, 25th and 28th with two present on the 22nd. Golden Plovers were recorded on just seven dates and all counts were of 16 or less apart from 100 that flew north-west on the 31st. There were just two three-figure counts of Lapwing on the first two days of the month, the highest of which was 140 on the 2nd. Single Dunlin were noted on the 12th and 15th and Snipe were recorded on 27 dates with a peak count of 13 on the 26th and 29th. A Curlew flew south on the 6th, two were present on the 14th and one flew west on the 30th and after records on two dates during the first week Redshank were present daily from the 8th peaking at five on four dates from the 27th.

A first winter Mediterranean Gull flew north at 1600 on the 12th and what is presumed to be the

same bird was present for 45 minutes the following day before it departed south-east. 790 Black-headed Gulls flew south at dusk on the 11th with 255 the following day after which numbers declined markedly although a flock of 80 dropped in briefly on the 29th. After four Common Gulls on the 2nd one or two were noted on a further six dates and notable March counts of Herring Gull included 170 on the 5th and 100 on the 10th. 400 Wood Pigeons were present on the 13th and a Collared Dove was belatedly reported as nesting from mid-February, although it had deserted by mid-March.

A Tawny Owl was rather predictable on Blue Banks between the 11th and 27th being seen on seven dates whilst one or two Kingfishers were seen on 18 dates. A Green Woodpecker was noted on the 14th and 18th, the first Sand Martin of the year was seen on the 15th with another on the 20th and then one to nine on a further eight dates to the month end. Meadow Pipit passage was slack, probably because of the dominant high-pressure system which meant clear sunny days. A measly total of 161 were logged flying north over 13 dates with peak counts of 46 north on the 25th and 43 north on the 30th. Additionally 50 were "down" on the 21st with 20 on the 28th. A single Grey Wagtail was noted on nine dates up until the 25th and Pied Wagtail counts included 40 on the 13th and 35 on the 28th.

The only three-figure count of Fieldfare was 115 north-west on the 12th whilst the highest count of Redwings was just 34 on the 11th. More interestingly a Redwing was singing on the 25th. A Blackcap was heard calling on the 14th with another very briefly on the 30th and the first Migrant Chiffchaffs appeared on the 12th, when two were present. Numbers gradually increased with five present on the 18th, eight singing on the 25th and 11 singing on the 26th, a new spring record. However this was eclipsed on the 28th when an all area count produced 17 singing males with 15 still singing the following day. The wintering tristis Chiffchaff was last seen on 24th February, so the one that was found on the 15th may well have been a different bird. The winterer had been very site faithful and was not prone to disappearing and the new one was also very site faithful, remaining on the embankment throughout its stay until last seen on the 20th. For the first time at Carr Vale this sub-species was heard singing its quite melodic song on a number of occasions and it was certainly very different from the nominate form of Chiffchaff. Likewise the wintering Firecrest was last seen on 23rd February so that the one which was seen by a single reliable observer on the 13th could have also been a different bird. We'll never know.

A Coal Tit on the 6th was an unusual spring record, Jackdaws peaked at 53 on 13th, a Siskin flew north on the 6th, with single Lesser Redpolls on the 21st and 29th with four on the 28th. 30 Yellowhammers were seen on the 13th with 25 Yellowhammers together with 11 Reed Buntings and nine Chaffinches on a recently sown field on the 28th.

Water Voles were seen at two separate locations during the month, on the 22nd and 30th whilst one or two Hares were seen on 13 dates. A dog Fox was seen on the 18th, single Weasels were seen in different area on the 21st and 22nd and the first Common Frog of the year was seen on the 2nd.

Mark Beevers

CARR VALE MONTHLY REPORT APRIL 2003

The daily visits continued as they have done for 1134 consecutive days and our efforts were rewarded with 97 species, a respectable figure, above the monthly average of 94 but below the best ever April tally set in April 1996. The year list continued to progress slowly and although it was a reasonable month in terms of unusual visitors the total for the year at the end of the month was only 110, which is the equal lowest end of April total. A few good birds were found including Pink-footed Goose, Barnacle Goose (4th record), Common Buzzards, Hobby, Red-legged Partridge, Whimbrel (13th record), Wood Sandpiper (6th record), Scandinavian Rock Pipit (2nd record), Blue-headed Wagtail (2nd record), Whinchat and Grasshopper Warbler. It was a very dry month, which resulted in the water level in Meadow Flash remaining constant at 15" although heavy showers in the last week caused a slight rise in the water levels. Generally the fishermen respected the close season although one on the 18th was caught fishing on the middle flash. Obviously he thought that the notices didn't apply to him and the two fences in the way were for show. Thanks to the Ogston regular who threw him off.

One or two Little Grebes were recorded on ten dates and two pairs of Great-crested Grebes were present daily, one of which hatched three young on the 20th. Cormorants were also a daily feature until the 22nd but the only double-figure was 11 on the 2nd with the last of the month a singleton on the 24th. Grey Herons were also seen daily with a peak count of five on the 6th, 14th and 21st and the wing-tagged bird remained throughout the month. Two to five Mute Swans were seen on 23 dates with higher counts being six on the 17th and eight on the 18th. Three Pink-footed Geese flew north on the 6th and another joined the Canada Geese briefly on the 16th. One or two Grey Lag Geese were noted five dates with three on the 8th (flying north), 17th, 19th and 30th and Canada Geese which were present daily, peaked at 28 on the 1st. A Barnacle Goose, present on the 2nd, represented the fourth site record and was the first since 1999, three Shelduck were noted on the 3rd with a pair daily between the 24th and 26th and one on the 29th.

The flock of Wigeon had declined to 68 by the 1st and further declined to 41 on the 3rd, 17 between the 7th-11th and five between the 12th-13th. Then a pair was noted daily between 12th-21st and finally the female from this pair remained until the 27th. Gadwall were a daily feature with double-figures on all but two dates, the highest count being 17 on the 18th. Teal peaked at 24 on the 6th and 10th but then decreased until the last pair was observed on the 26th. A female Mallard was seen with a brood of seven on the 10th, which is believed to be the earliest ever brood at the site a meagre 29 on the 4th. Further broods of ten and 11 were found on the 18th but by the end of the month just one duckling remained out of the three broods. Tufted Ducks were seen daily with a high of 24 on the 28th, a record count for the reserve whilst Ruddy Ducks were also seen daily with double-figures on 19 dates peaking at 15 on the 24th. It is thought that up to eight pairs were possibly present as eight males have been seen at one time during the month.

Sparrowhawks were recorded on 18 dates (a total of 27 bird/days) including three together on the 18th and 27th and four together on the 26th whilst Kestrels were noted on 22 dates (a total of 31 bird/days). Common Buzzards have started to become a regular feature with birds often visible from the observation mound either south or west of the area, though some fly over the recording area. One was to the south on the 4th and 26th with two over the reserve on the 13th and again on the 16th. Five were seen together to the west of the area on the 14th and four were to the south of the area on the 30th, two of which drifted north being mobbed by a Hobby. A Red-legged Partridge was seen on the 16th and three or four pairs of Grey Partridge were located during a breeding bird survey on the 7th. Water Rails were recorded on 17 dates with two on the 11th and one still present on the 30th. 18 Moorhens were counted on the 17th with 23 Coot noted on the 21st.

Little Ringed Plovers were a daily feature although the highest count was only eight on the 12th and 19th. Ringed Plovers continued to be quite scarce with two on the 6th and 24th and singles on

the 9th-10th, 19th and 29th. A solitary Golden Plover was seen on the 6th and a single Dunlin was noted on the 29th making it a terrible month for both species. Snipe were recorded on all but two dates but the highest count was only eight on the 10th. A Whimbrel, the first since 2000, was heard calling as it flew north ahead of a downpour on the 29th, a Curlew flew north-east on the 12th with another south-east on the 26th, continuing the poor spring for that species. Redshank were present daily peaking at seven on the 6th but the star wader of the month was a Wood Sandpiper, which was present for less than an hour on the 24th before it departed north, leaving just two satisfied observers. Although five of the six records of this species have been in spring this is the first for April. The same day up to four Common Sandpipers were also seen though just one remained to the following day.

Gulls are always scarce during April so a first summer Common Gull that flew north on the 29th was notable as it is the second latest spring record and an unusual number of Herring Gulls were noted with records on 11 dates including 11 south on the 26th. A first winter Great Black-backed Gull flying north on the 15th was also notable for the time of the year.

The Tawny Owl from last month was again on Blue Banks on the 3rd and the first Swift of the year was seen on the 24th. The first double-figure count was made on the 27th when 15+ were present and by the 30th the flock had risen to 60, a record count for April. A Kingfisher was seen on 13 dates, a Green Woodpecker was noted on nine dates and 11 Skylark territories were found early in the month. Sand Martins, although recorded on 21 dates, were actually quite scarce with just two counts in double-figures, 13 on the 28th and ten on the 29th. The first Swallow of the year was seen on the 7th and then they were recorded daily with a peak count of 130 on the 30th. The first House Martins were two on the 14th and like Swallows they peaked on the 30th when 70 were over the sewage works.

Meadow Pipit passage remained slack with total of 183 logged flying north over eight dates the bulk of which (161) going through prior to the 8th. 84 on the 5th was the peak count with 48 the following day. One of the best birds of the month was a Scandinavian Rock Pipit, which was present daily between the 9th and 11th. When it did show it showed well but generally the bird was elusive. A male Yellow Wagtail flew north on the 7th and another was present on the 13th. Ten (including eight singles flying north) were counted on the 14th after which birds were seen daily. There were several counts of five, seven were seen on the 18th, nine were present on the 19th and there is a record of ten one evening towards the end of April, the latter record illustrating perfectly why observers should keep notebooks! A female Blue-headed Wagtail, only the second site record like the Scandinavian Rock Pipit, graced the sheep field in front of the observation mound between the 19th and 21st and although it disappeared for hours on end when it did show it gave superb views. All this interest in Wagtails and Pipits produced a count of 60 Pied Wagtails on the 6th and eventually the checking produced a White Wagtail, present on the 27th-28th.

Two all area counts of singing birds were made on the 7th and 23rd and produced some good totals i.e. Wrens 25 and 32, Dunnocks 13 and 13 and Robins 25 and 16, the count of 32 Wrens being one short of the all time high. Two male Whinchats were present on the 24th with one the following day and then a female was seen on the 30th. A pair of Wheatears was present on the 12th and 13th a single female was noted on the 24th and then a male was seen during the morning of the 30th, being replaced by a female in the evening. Nine male Blackbirds were found on the 7th with 13 on the 23rd, 150 Fieldfares were seen on the 1st and 60 flew north-west on the 6th with 56 on the 8th. The only others after this date were eight on the 10th and the last of the spring were three on the 24th. Three Song Thrushes were singing on the 23rd and 15 Redwings flew north-west on the 2nd with three seen on the 3rd and the last of the winter, a single bird, on the 6th.

A Grasshopper Warbler was reeling from the 19th with two on the 23rd and the earliest ever Sedge Warbler was found on the 6th, remaining to the 8th. (This is the second earliest ever for the county as far as I can make out). Two Sedgies were singing on the 11th with three on the 15th after which there were daily records. The first Reed Warbler of the year was also our earliest ever

and is I believe the third earliest ever for the county. Two were singing on the 18th with one or two daily to the month end. Although 400 yards south of the recording area a singing Lesser Whitethroat was exceptionally early on the 18th, indeed it is the earliest ever for the area. Surprisingly no more had been found before the end of the month. the A Blackcap was heard calling on the 14th with another very briefly on the 30th and the first Migrant Chiffchaffs appeared on the 12th, when two were present. Numbers gradually increased with five present on the 18th, eight singing on the 25h and 11 singing on the 26th, a new spring record. However this was eclipsed on the 28th when an all area count produced 17 singing males with 15 still singing the following day. The wintering tristis Chiffchaff was last seen on 24th February, so the one that was found on the 15th may well have been a different bird. The winterer had been very site faithful and was not prone to disappearing and the new one was also very site faithful, remaining on the embankment throughout its stay until last seen on the 20th. For the first time at Carr Vale this sub-species was heard singing its quite melodic song on a number of occasions and it was certainly very different from the nominate form of Chiffchaff. Likewise the wintering Firecrest was last seen on 23rd February so that the one which was seen by a single reliable observer on the 13th could have also been a different bird. We'll never know.

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Water Voles were seen at two separate locations during the month, on the 22nd and 30th whilst one or two Hares were seen on 13 dates. A dog Fox was seen on the 18th, single Weasels were seen in different area on the 21st and 22nd and the first Common Frog of the year was seen on the 2nd.

Mark Beevers

CARR VALE MONTHLY REPORT MAY 2003

The daily visits continued as they have done for 1165 consecutive days and our efforts were rewarded with 93 species, a respectable figure, well above the monthly average of 90 but below the best ever May tally of 96 set in 1999 and 2000. The year list continued to progress slowly and although it was again a reasonable month in terms of unusual visitors the total for the year at the end of the month was only 117. This is the lowest ever end of May total and, in terms of the number of species recorded, 2003 is now our worst year ever. A few good birds were found including Little Egret (2nd record), Pink-footed Goose, Marsh Harrier (15th /17th record), Common Buzzards, Hobbies, Quail (2nd record), Turtle Dove, White Wagtail and Wheatear. It was quite wet at the beginning of the month with the water level rising to 18" in Meadow Flash by the 3rd but then became mainly dry ensuring that the level remained constant at 15" to the month end.

Little Grebes were very scarce with singles on just five dates, although one of these was a fledged juvenile from elsewhere on the 26th. The Reserve Pond's pair of Great-crested Grebes was present daily but the three young had reduced by one by the 8th. The second pair's nest was lost to flooding on 5th May but a change of ponds enabled them to start rebuilding by the 17th and the nest was still active at the end of the month. Cormorants were thin on the ground with single birds noted on the 6th, 17th and 29th. The bird of the month was an adult Little Egret, which stayed for most of the day on the 8th. Grey Herons were noted on all but one date, peaking at six on the 23rd and 25th and the wing-tagged bird remained throughout the month. Two to four Mute Swans were seen on 23 dates with a higher count being six on the 15th. A Pink-footed Goose was present on the 11th-12th, a Grey Lag Goose was seen on 24 dates with two on the 26th and three daily between the 1st and 3rd and again on the 17th. Canada Geese, which were present daily, peaked at 30 on the 7th and broods of seven, six and five were noted by the 16th, although the crèche had reduced to 15 by the 21st. This is the first time that three pairs have bred at Carr Vale

A pair of Shelduck was seen on the 1st, followed by two pairs on the 14th, a single bird on the 18th, two on the 19th and two on the 29th. Gadwall were a daily feature with double-figures on 20 dates, the highest count being 14 on the 3rd and 6th, although up to ten males and seven females were recorded. For the first year since 1998 we failed to record a Teal during the month, six more broods of Mallard were located and the peak count of adults was 34. A male Pochard was seen on the 20th, Tufted Ducks were seen daily with double-figures on 25 dates and a high of 24 on the 1st whilst Ruddy Ducks were also seen daily with double-figures on 16 dates peaking at 17 on the 11th.

A female Marsh Harrier flew west on the 25th, Sparrowhawks were recorded on just six dates (a total of seven bird/days) and Kestrels were noted on 21 dates (a total of 28 bird/days). Common Buzzards continued to be visible from the observation mound either south or west of the area with records on ten dates. Most were south of the recording area but birds over the reserve included two on the 1st, one west on the 4th, one on the 12th, one south on the 15th and one west on the 25th. A belated record of a Hobby came from 30th April with it or another seen on the 1st, then one on the 9th and one on the 21st.

A Quail was heard calling early on the 11th along the northern edge of the recording area, becoming the 2nd earliest site record and four pairs of Grey Partridge were thought to be present during the month. A Water Rail was recorded on the 2nd, 11th and 13th and the first brood of Coot was noted on the 3rd.

An Oystercatcher was present between 5th and 7th with two on the 8th followed by single birds on the 11th, 18th, 25th and 31st. Little Ringed Plovers were a daily feature but the peak count was only five on several dates. A single Ringed Plover was present daily between the 6th and 12th with

three on the 13th and one on the 15th. A Golden Plover was seen daily between the 5th and 21st thus becoming the latest ever spring bird. Although it seemed to have a damaged wing it was capable of flight and presumably stayed so long to recuperate. Two Dunlin were present on the 8th with singles on the 9th, 11th, 13th and 18th. Three Snipe were seen on the 1st with a single bird remaining until the 3rd, up to four Redshanks were present on 27 dates and single Common Sandpipers were seen on the 1st, 7th-8th and 19th. All in all May was a very disappointing month for waders.

The only gulls of note were a first summer Common Gull on the 24th and single Herring Gulls were noted on the 8th, 14th, 16th and 21st. Common Terns were very scarce with just two north on the 5th, one north on the 21st and two on the 23rd. The only Turtle Dove so far this year flew north pausing briefly on the 16th, whilst a Cuckoo seen on the 25th and heard bubbling on the 29th made a welcome return after last years blank showing. Tawny Owls fledged three young as usual, Swifts peaked at 70 on the 17th and a Kingfisher was seen on nine dates. A Green Woodpecker was noted on six dates and an early Great-spotted Woodpecker was seen on the 26th and 28th.

Sand Martins, although recorded on 13 dates, were actually quite scarce, with a peak count of just four on the 8th, Swallows reached 55 on the 16th and the highest count of House Martins was 40 on the 2nd. A pair of Meadow Pipits held territory on the Peter Fidler Reserve until at least the 28th, up to three Yellow Wagtails were noted on 18 dates, 17 Pied Wagtails were present on the 2nd with a White Wagtail noted on the 2nd-3rd.

An all area count of singing birds was made on the 28th and produced some good totals i.e. Wrens 20, Dunnocks seven and Robins 15. A female Wheatear was present on the 4th, 16 male Blackbirds were found on the 28th when four Song Thrushes were singing.

Unusually we failed to record a Grasshopper Warbler during the month but it was a good month for Sedge Warblers with ten territories located during the month, although the highest daily count was only eight on the 12th, 15th and 28th. Reed Warblers were also present in good numbers with a peak of 11 singing on the 28th and a Lesser Whitethroat was heard singing on ten dates with two noted on the 5th. Whitethroats peaked at a lowly nine on the 28th and single Garden Warblers were present between 6th-8th and again on the 21st and 26th. 12 Chiffchaffs were still singing on the 28th when 17 singing Willow Warblers were also counted.

Long-tailed Tits had fledged young by the 20th, a Jay on the 26th was most unusual, 14 Chaffinches were singing on the 28th when three Goldfinch territories were found. A Lesser Redpoll flew west on the 9th and six singing Yellowhammers were seen on the 28th.

Two Water Voles were seen on the 9th and up to six Hares were seen on 22 dates. A Brimstone was seen on 4th and 28th with three Commas on the latter date. The first Wall Brown of the year was present on the 7th-8th, a Painted Lady was seen on the 15th, three Common Blues were seen on the 28th and a Speckled Wood was seen on the 9th. The first dragonflies and damselflies appeared on the 28th when two Large Red Damselflies, a Blue-tailed Damselfly and two Four-spotted Chasers were logged. It has to be said that May was a disappointing month this year.

Mark Beevers

CARR VALE MONTHLY REPORT JUNE 2003

June was a very average month with 79 species recorded the lowest total since 1998. The daily visits continued but it became very hard for the regulars to stay motivated as we were rewarded with very little and no new birds were added to the yearlist, which remained at 117, four behind the lowest ever end of June total. The only notable species were a Wood Sandpiper (8th record) and an unusually late Whinchat. Dry weather during the month ensured that the wader habitat looked superb for most of the month. That was until heavy rain on the 30th caused water levels to rise significantly, to just under two feet in Meadow Flash, the net result being that at the start of the autumn passage we were left with no mud at all!

Little Grebes were very scarce with one on the 16th-17th, the Reserve Pond's pair of Great-crested Grebes was present daily with their remaining two young and the second pair hatched a single chick on the 15th. This is the first time that two pairs have hatched young at the site. Cormorants were again thin on the ground with single birds noted on the 3rd and 13th with two flying west on the 29th. Grey Herons were noted daily, peaking at ten on the 10th and the wing-tagged bird remained throughout the month. Two to four Mute Swans were seen daily with six on three dates between the 11th and 15th. The highest count of Canada Geese was 31 on the 1st, which included 17 flying north-east, two partial albino ones were present the following day but by the 9th the only birds that remained were five adults and a creche of 15 goslings.

Gadwall were a daily feature with double-figures on 17 dates, the highest count being 19 on the 9th (17 males), although up to five females were also recorded during the month. Teal returned on the 28th when two males were seen with a single male daily to the month end. Two more broods of Mallard were located and the peak count of adults was 31 on the 10th. Tufted Ducks were seen daily with double-figures on just five dates peaking at 12 on the 1st and Ruddy Ducks were also seen daily but only in single figures with a high of nine on the 17th.

Sparrowhawks were recorded on just six dates (six bird/days) and Kestrels were noted on 16 dates (20 bird/days). Two Common Buzzards flew north-west over the reserve on the 13th, with single distant birds to the south of the area on the 3rd and 28th. Unusually we failed to record a Hobby during the month. A Water Rail was seen on the 14th and heard on the 17th and six out of nine Coot nests had hatched chicks by the end of the month.

Single Oystercatchers were present on the 3rd and 5th, Little Ringed Plovers were a daily feature with a peak count of ten on the 22nd and 28th, although up to 12 different birds were seen during the month. A single Ringed Plover was seen on the 17th, Lapwing numbers started to rise towards the end of the month and had reached 98 by the 30th and a Dunlin were present on the 9th-10th. Redshanks were noted on all bar two dates with four on five dates, five on the 15th and six on the 19th. Bird of the month was a Wood Sandpiper, the second for the site this year, which was present until 1115 hours on the 21st. It or another was also present on the 25th and 27th and these represented the first June sightings of this species.

Gulls were typically scarce with Black-headed Gulls being noted on six dates, as were Lesser Black-backed Gulls, although a first summer Herring Gull was more noteworthy on the 1st. Common Terns continued to be very scarce with two on the 4th, one north on the 13th and singles on the 25th and 30th. 200 Wood Pigeons were counted on the 28th, a Cuckoo was seen on the 1st and 9th, the highest count of Swifts was 70 on the 1st, a Kingfisher was seen on five dates and a Green Woodpecker was noted on the 28th.

Sand Martins, although recorded on 12 dates, were again quite scarce, with a peak count of ten on the 30th and the highest count of House Martins was 50 on the 6th. A pair of Meadow Pipits was

still on the Peter Fidler Reserve on the 17th, Yellow Wagtails were noted on eight dates with fledged young from the 29th, whilst a male Whinchat, reported on the 3rd was an unusually late spring bird.

After a blank May Grasshopper Warblers started to sing again with a single reeling bird noted on six dates from the 9th and three heard on the 10th. A Lesser Whitethroat was heard singing on the 1st and 30th, two Garden Warblers were present on the 2nd, five Chiffchaffs were still singing on the 9th and an out-of-season Jay was noted on the 1st. Finally amongst the birds a Budgerigar was noted from the mound on the 24th.

Up to six Hares were seen on 11 dates and Common Toads were proved to have bred. A small influx of Painted Ladies occurred with one on the 13th, two on the 14th, three on the 16th and two on the 17th. Three Red Admirals were seen on the 28th, the first Meadow Brown and Small Skippers were noted on the 13th, with Small Heaths from the 9th and Large Skipper from the 17th. Good numbers of Common Blues were about mid month and up to three Speckled Woods were seen on three dates. Two Large Red Damselflies were noted on the 9th, when two Emperors and two Four-spotted Chasers were also logged. Subsequently three Emperors were seen on the 13th and 21st with six males and an egg-laying female on the 16th. A male Broad-bodied Chaser was seen on the 21st, good numbers of Four-spotted Chasers were about with 20 on the 16th and 15 on the 21st and Black-tailed Skimmers were also noted in good numbers with six on the 13th, 11 on the 16th and ten plus on the 21st.

Mark Beevers

CARR VALE MONTHLY REPORT JULY 2003

July was a slightly above average month with 86 species recorded, well below the record for the month, which was 96 set in 2000. The daily visits continued but it remained very hard for the regulars to stay motivated as we were rewarded with very little although the yearlist moved on to 121, two behind the lowest ever end of July total, so things are improving slightly. Unfortunately the bird of the month was only seen briefly by a single observer and the identification has not been clinched. This concerns the male grey Harrier sp. that flew south on the 20th. The observer is certain that the bird was not a Montague's Harrier as first reported. However despite his initial thoughts that it was a Pallid Harrier he has decided that it is best left as a Harrier sp. So that is one that has got away I'm afraid. Apart from that bit of excitement there was little else to shout about. The only other notable species were three Grey Lag Geese, Buzzards, Hobbies, two Peregrines, Water Rail, Oystercatcher, Greenshank, an early Whinchat and two Ravens. The heavy rain at the beginning of the month meant that the water levels remained high ensuring a lack of mud and just as the mud started to reappear more heavy rain on the 18th meant that we were back to square one-most frustrating.

Little Grebes were only seen on three dates although a pair with three young was found on the 22nd, the four adult and three juvenile Great-crested Grebes remained until the 11th after which one of the adults and a juvenile from the Reserve Pond left the area. Single Cormorants were noted on 12 dates with two on the 10th. Grey Herons were noted daily, peaking at 12 on the 29th and the wing-tagged bird remained throughout the month. Herons have been a bit of a problem this year with birds noted taking young Gadwall, Ruddy Duck and Coot. Two Mute Swans were seen on 10 dates until the 15th, three Grey Lag Geese flew south-east on the 27th (only the second record for July) and Canada Geese started their autumn build up on the 19th reaching 132 on the 31st, a record count for July.

Gadwall were a daily feature with a peak count of 37 (including unfledged young), one to three Teal were present daily until the 4th and then on nine dates between the 15th and 24th. Mallard numbers started to rise reaching three-figures by the 25th with 110 on the 31st. Tufted Ducks were noted on 22 dates but only in single figures and Ruddy Ducks were seen daily with a peak count of 21 on the 27th.

Sparrowhawks were recorded on 14 dates (17 bird/days) and Kestrels were noted on 24 dates (40 bird/days) with counts of four on the 10th, 21st and 26th. The unidentified grey male Harrier sp. flew south on the 20th at 1115, three Common Buzzards were seen on the 27th but all were distant, single Hobbies were seen on the 2nd and 3rd and again on the 20th. A Peregrine was seen from the mound on 12 dates from the 8th, usually sat on the pylons to the west of the reserve. Although the regular bird was an adult on the 29th a juvenile unsuccessfully attacked a Common Tern over the reserve. A Water Rail was heard on the 15th and 31st.

An Oystercatcher, present daily between the 22nd and 26th and again on the 28th, was only the second July record. Four Little Ringed Plovers were seen on the 1st with on or two on seven dates up to the 17th although there is a report on the DOS Website of five being present on the 21st. An adult Ringed Plover was seen on the 17th and 21st, Lapwing numbers continued to rise and three-figure counts were made on nine dates peaking at 175 on the 15th. A Snipe was seen on the 8th, a Curlew flew west on the 6th and a Redshank was noted daily between the 1st and 3rd with another on the 13th. A Greenshank was reported on the 21st (DOS website), the only Green Sandpiper of the year so far departed north on the 1st and one to four Common Sandpipers were seen on ten dates between the 11th and 25th. There is a record of seven shown on the DOS Website for the 21st but the observer is not known. This is a pity as this represents a record count for the site.

Black-headed Gulls peaked at 50 on the 22nd and 29th, 320 Lesser Black-backed Gulls, flying south-east at dusk on the 14th, was a good count with 140 noted on the 21st. Herring Gulls were noted on six dates and at last Common Terns became a regular feature with records for 13 dates including four adults on the 3rd and two adults with two dependant young on the 26th. The highest count of Swifts was 100 on the 4th, Kingfishers were seen on 17 dates although there was only one record of two birds on the 24th, a Green Woodpecker was noted on the 27th and a Great-spotted Woodpecker was seen on the 13th.

Sand Martins were recorded on 18 dates, but all records were in single figures apart from a count of 18+ on 8th. Yellow Wagtails were scarce with one or two noted on just seven dates, one or two Grey Wagtails were noted on five dates and there was a party of four seen on the 23rd on which date a male Whinchat was an unusually early autumn bird.

Grasshopper Warblers continued to sing, being heard on 18 dates until the 31st, with two birds present on the 6th, 10th and 13th, a Lesser Whitethroat was seen on the 18th and 19th and four Chiffchaffs were still singing on the 1st. Two distant Ravens were seen soaring with a Buzzard south of the area on the 27th and Bullfinches were found with fledged young on the 15th. Finally amongst the birds a Cockatiel was noted from the mound on the 22nd

Up to four Hares were seen on eight dates, a Fox was seen on the 4th, a Stoat was reported on the 15th and a Water Vole was seen on the 27th. Commas were noted on six dates with three on the 10th and 15th, single Painted Ladies were seen on the 22nd and 26th and one or two Red Admirals were seen on seven dates. Good numbers of Gatekeepers and Meadow Browns were about and one or two Speckled Woods were seen on four dates.

Four Emperors and five each of Black-tailed Skimmer and Four-spotted Chasers were seen on the 7th, the first Brown Hawker of the year was seen on the 10th and a Broad-bodied Chaser was seen on the 15th. Later in the month a male Banded Demoiselle was seen on the 27th and the first Common Darter of the year was seen the following day.

Mark Beevers

CARR VALE MONTHLY REPORT AUGUST 2003

At last a month that produced a few notable species and an above average species total for the month. August was mainly a very hot month with very little rainfall allowing good muddy fringes to the pools to reform. 94 Species were recorded during our daily visits, well above the monthly average of 90.8 and the year list progressed to 128, back on track although still the equal lowest end of August figure. A number of site rarities were seen including the second Little Egret of the year (3rd record), seven Grey Lag Geese, Barnacle Goose (5th record), a record count of Gadwall, Common Buzzards, Merlin, Hobbies and two Peregrines almost daily. Waders were represented by Golden Plover, Ruff (18th and 19th records), Black-tailed Godwit (10th record) and a Turnstone (2nd record). Notable passerines included two Tree Pipits, Grasshopper Warbler, Spotted Flycatcher and Raven (7th record) as well as the only Tree Sparrows of the year so far.

Single Little Grebes were seen on 11 dates with two on the 19th, three adult and a juvenile Great-crested Grebe were seen on the 4th and 5th with two adults and a single juvenile daily until the month end. Five Cormorants were seen on the 8th with one on the 10th and 12th after which one to three were noted daily from the 14th to the month end. The bird of the month was the juvenile Little Egret that flew in at 0920 on the 16th. It was very flighty however and despite landing briefly several times it departed high to the north-west at 0945. 11 Grey Herons on the 3rd was the only double-figure count of the month and two Mute Swans were present daily from the 26th. Seven Grey Lag Geese present on Meadow Flash represented only the second August record for the species and Canada Geese continued their autumn build up on the 19th reaching 341 on the 24th. The Canada Geese were joined by a Barnacle Goose on the 5th, which was then seen again between 12th-14th, 19th-20th, 23rd-24th and on the 28th. A Bar-headed Goose also joined the flock on the 8th, 10th-12th, 14th, 20th, 23rd, 25th and 28th. Gadwall were noted in good numbers throughout the month reaching a record equalling 43 on the 9th and again on the 20th-21st. However numbers continued to increase reaching a new high of 54 on the 25th and then peaking at 59 on the 28th. Teal were present daily from the 4th with double-figures daily from the 19th peaking at 23 on the 21st, 26th and 28th. Mallard numbers continued to rise with three-figure counts on 26 dates the highest of which was 212 on the 25th. A male Shoveler on the 7th was joined by a female the following day, both remaining until the 12th and being seen again on the 14th. The female was further seen on three other dates between the 13th and 17th and on all bar one date between the 22nd and 29th. One to three Tufted Ducks were noted on 26 dates and Ruddy Ducks were seen daily with a peak count of 22 on the 2nd.

It was a good month for the quantity of raptor sightings with Sparrowhawks recorded on 19 dates (25 bird/days), including four on the 4th whilst Kestrels were noted on 26 dates (48 bird/days) with a record count of six on the 2nd. Common Buzzards were seen within the recording area on seven dates including three on the 16th and 29th with more distant sightings of birds outside the area either south or west of the reserve on two further dates including three on the 31st. An adult female Merlin gave very good views for five minutes on the 24th before departing south and a Hobby was seen on the 18th. Two Hobbies were seen on the 19th with further singles on the 21st and 24th (with an additional sighting of one to the south of the recording area on the 22nd). Peregrines have been a regular feature since early July and during August there were sightings on 24 dates. Two birds have been present, an adult male and (juvenile?) female and they were seen together on 16 dates. Their favoured perches are on the pylons to the west of the recording area, though still easily visible from the mound but they were recorded over the area on 11 dates (20 bird / days).

12 Grey Partridge were noted on the 20th and 23 Pheasants were counted on the 17th. A Water Rail was heard on seven dates between the 4th and 29th, 36 Moorhens were counted on the 25th and Coot Peaked at 62 the same day. It was a reasonable month-at last- for waders. Five Golden

Plovers flew north on the 11th followed by one on the 25th, two on the 27th and six on the 29th. Lapwing numbers remained fairly constant with three-figure counts 18 dates the highest of which was 200 on the 8th. The only Dunlin of the month was two on the 10th and single Ruff were present briefly on the 20th and for slightly longer on the 31st. One to four Snipe were seen on the 21 dates, a Black-tailed Godwit flew east at 0850 on the 3rd and single Greenshank were seen on the 10th and 25th. A Green Sandpiper was seen on the 16th with another on the 25th-26th and one to three Common Sandpipers were present daily from the 15th to the month end. However the best wader of the month was seen on the 16th when a Turnstone, only the second site record, flew around the flashes at the same time as the sites third Little Egret. Unfortunately it only stayed a few minutes and its direction of departure was not noticed.

Black-headed Gulls peaked at 175 on the 18th and Lesser Black-backed Gulls were noted on 14 dates including 143 south on the 7th and 275 north on the 19th. The site record was smashed for this species on the 31st when c1050 flew south and south-west at dusk. Common Terns were noted on six dates including an adult and three juveniles on the 2nd and 3rd and the last two of the year flew south on the 24th. A Tawny Owl was present on the 11th and 14th, small numbers of Swifts were still present on the 31st and one or two Kingfishers were present on 25 dates. A Green Woodpecker was noted on seven dates and a Great-spotted Woodpecker was seen on eight dates whilst one to six Sand Martins were recorded on 24 dates. There is no Swallow roost so far this year although 100 were present in a pre-roost gathering on the 30th and 31st before they departed north and 50+ House Martins were seen on the 9th.

After last years absence it was pleasing to note single Tree Pipits on the 8th flying south-west and on the 24th flying south whilst towards the end of the month odd migrant Meadow Pipits started to appear. One to three Yellow Wagtails were noted on eight dates plus five on the 24th and one or two Grey Wagtails were noted on 11 dates. A flock of 20 Mistle Thrushes was seen on the 6th with 12 on the 30th, the reeling Grasshopper Warbler was last heard on the 1st, a Sedge Warbler was still present on the 28th and c15 Reed Warblers were noted on the 9th with four still on the 28th. A Lesser Whitethroat was seen on the 2nd with two on the 15th and a Garden Warbler was noted on the 17th. C20 Chiffchaffs and six Willow Warblers were noted on the 26th, the first Goldcrest of the autumn was seen on the 20th with another on the 28th and the only Spotted Flycatcher of the year so far was seen on the 29th. A Tit flock on the 28th contained 14 Long-tailed, five Willow and 22 Blue Tits as well as the phylosocs outlined above. A Raven flew east calling on the 28th, six Tree Sparrows flew north on the 10th and a finch flock on the 20th contained c100 each of Greenfinch and Linnet whilst nearby there was a charm of 40 Goldfinches. Amongst the exotica last months Cockatiel was on three dates.

Hares were quite scarce with one or two on ten dates, a Fox was seen on the 25th and two Stoats were reported on the 24th. Commas were noted on three dates until the 5th with two on that date and the early part of the month was good for Painted Ladies with six on the 2nd, nine on the 5th and 9th and 29 on the 5th, the second highest count ever. Single Red Admirals were seen on four dates and the usual suspects such as Speckled Wood, Common Blue etc were noted early in the month. Black-tailed Skimmers were seen on four dates until the 5th, five Brown Hawkers were seen on the 4th with one or two on at least four other dates and one or two Southern Hawkers were seen on four dates. There was a good count of Common Darters on the 4th when 35 were recorded. All in all a much better month than of late.

Mark Beevers

CARR VALE MONTHLY REPORT SEPTEMBER 2003

September was another month that produced a few notable species including a new bird for the site and the 102 species recorded during the month was well above the average species total for the month. Indeed it is the fourth time that more than 100 species have been logged for during September. The long summer continued with little, if any rainfall allowing good muddy fringes to the pools to remain throughout. The daily visits continued unabated and the year list progressed to 132, very much back on track. The bird of the month was a juvenile PECTORAL SANDPIPER found by Kevin Navin, one of four in the county, which stayed all day allowing all but one of the regulars to catch up with it. A number of other site rarities were seen including the first Pink-footed Geese of the autumn, Pintail, Marsh Harrier (16th, possibly 18th record), many Common Buzzards, Osprey (14th record), several Hobbies and up to three Peregrines almost daily. In addition to the Pec. Sand. a number of other waders graced the flashes including Ruff (19th record), Spotted Redshank (3rd record), Greenshank and a Green Sandpiper. Other notable species included a long staying juvenile Mediterranean Gull (6th record), two Tree Pipits, Whinchat, Spotted Flycatcher, Raven (8th record) and an early Brambling.

Two Little Grebes were seen on the 4th with singles on a further ten dates, three Great-crested Grebes were present until the 12th with two to the month end and Cormorants were seen daily with a peak count of eight on the 21st. Grey Herons were present daily, but in smaller numbers than in recent years with a high of six on seven dates and two Mute Swans were present daily from the 26th. The first Pink-footed Geese of the autumn were four that unusually flew west with a further skein of 25 geese west but more distantly (almost certainly Pink-feet), both on the 21st. Another Pink-footed Goose flew south-west the following day and the first easterly movement was on the 28th when a flock of 60 were noted. Unfortunately another five skeins were missed by the observers on the mound but were seen by a local, all going south east and mirroring a large movement noted both at Pleasley and Rother Valley CP. Canada Geese were unusually irregular and also present in much lower numbers with only double figure counts until the 24th after which the flock climbed into three-figures peaking at 163 on the 29th.

The first returning Wigeon were two on the 9th after which birds were seen daily reaching 32 by the 26th, a record count for September. 56 Gadwall were counted on the 1st and double-figure counts were made daily throughout the month with 50 on the 18th and six counts in excess of 40, although numbers did start to decline towards the end of the month. Teal were also present daily in double-figures peaking at 57 on the 18th-19th. Three figure counts of Mallard were made on 22 dates with a peak count of 205 on the 19th. An eclipse drake Pintail was on the Reserve Pond on the 14th and three female / first winters were present on the 24th. A female Shoveler was seen on the 1st, 8th and 18th with two males and a female daily between the 19th and 22nd and then two males on the 23rd. Two male Pochard were seen on the 13th with a single male on the 15th-16th and one to three Tufted Ducks were noted on 14 dates. Ruddy Ducks were seen daily until the 23rd with double-figures on five dates during the first half of the month peaking at 11 on the 9th, after which numbers reduced so that during the last ten days only one or two were seen apart from four on the 27th.

It was again a good month for the quantity of raptor sightings with 13 dates when four species were noted, three dates when five species were logged and one date when six species were seen in just 15 minutes. A juvenile Marsh Harrier flew north on the 3rd, Sparrowhawks recorded on 24 dates (35 bird/days), including three on the 4th and 20th whilst Kestrels were noted on 26 dates (42 bird/days). Common Buzzards were noted from the mound on 25 dates with records of birds in or over the recording area on 19 dates. Birds were recorded on a total of 59 bird / days of which 34 were from within the recording area. Notable counts were six on the 4th, six - eight on the 7th, five on the 16th and eight on the 21st. An Osprey circled the reserve for 15 minutes on the 16th

before it drifted south and single Hobbies were seen on the 2nd, 5th, 11th, 20th and 21st with two on the 4th. Just to the south of the recording area two were seen on the 13th and 15th with one on the 16th. Peregrines continued to be a regular bird and during the month there were sightings on 25 dates with birds over the area on 12 dates. Two birds remained and they were seen together on 15 dates. They continued to use their favoured perches on the pylons to the west of the recording area (still easily visible from the mound) but frequently hunted over the reserve often putting on a spectacular show. They were recorded on a total of 43 bird / days (14 bird / days within the recording area) and on the 6th and 15th a juvenile male was also present.

29 Grey Partridge noted on the 16th was the highest count since 1996 and single Water Rails were noted on 12 dates with two on the 15th-16th. 32 Moorhens were present on the 4th-5th and Coot Peaked at 67 on the 4th setting a new record for the reserve. An Oystercatcher was present on the 2nd and a Ringed Plover was heard calling as it flew south on the 16th. Golden Plovers were recorded on 16 dates with double-figure counts on seven dates the highest of which was 65 on the 21st. Lapwings were present in the low-hundreds on at least 24 dates with a high of 370 on the 20th and the bird of the year, a juvenile Pectoral Sandpiper, was found late morning on the 16th, the 14th county record. Although the first record for the current recording area this is actually the second record for the area as another juvenile was present between 20th September -5th October 1979 on the now rarely forming Sutton Scarsdale Flash. Hopefully it will not be another 24 years before we get another! The only Dunlin of the month was seen on the 24th and a Ruff was present daily between the 2nd and 5th, this possibly being the bird from the last day of August. Snipe were a daily feature but numbers were low and the highest count was just six on the 17th and 27th. A contender for the bird of the month until it was eclipsed by the Pec. was a juvenile Spotted Redshank (also found by Kevin Navin) present on the 3rd and only the third record for the site. Single Greenshank were seen on the 11th and 18th, a Green Sandpiper departed north on the 4th and the last Common Sandpiper of the year was seen on the early date of the 1st.

A juvenile Mediterranean Gull was found on the 1st and was subsequently seen on 12 more dates between the 4th and 21st during which time it moulted into first winter plumage. Black-headed Gulls were present in good numbers peaking at 500 on the 19th, the first Common Gull for several months was seen on the 10th after which singles were logged on six dates with three on the 17th. Lesser Black-backed Gulls also remained in the area in good numbers with counts of 300 on the 1st and 17th whilst one or two Herring Gulls were noted daily between the 16th and 19th. 30 Stock Doves were seen on the 16th, the last Swift of the year was seen on the 6th (an early date) and a Kingfisher was seen on all bar two dates during the month. A Green Woodpecker was noted on eight dates and a Great-spotted Woodpecker was seen on ten dates. Skylark passage was rather limited with a total of 18 noted flying south-west over four dates (max. 14 on the 28th) although 32 were present on the fields west of the reserve on the 25th. Six Sand Martins flew south on the 1st with nine south on the 11th and 20 were logged for the 10th with the last of the year on the 20th. A total of 266 Swallows were recorded flying south over 11 dates with 67 on the 20th and 78 on the 23rd. 100 House Martins were seen on the 4th and southerly passage was noted on eight dates between the 14th and 26th (a total of 224 birds) but the highest count was only 36 on the 24th.

Single Tree Pipits flew south on the 4th and 6th and between the 2nd and 30th a total of 1041 Meadow Pipits flew south including 281 on the 20th and 482 on the 21st, 150 were also grounded on the 10th. One or two Yellow Wagtails were noted on five dates with six on the 7th and the last of the year was seen on the 16th. One to three Grey Wagtails were noted on 20 dates with four together on the 25th and a total of 22 Pied Wagtails were recorded flying south over seven dates from the 21st. A juvenile Whinchat was present on the 14th, 15 Song Thrushes flew south on the 30th on which date the first six Redwings of the autumn were noted. A flock of 26 Mistle Thrushes was seen on the 3rd with 32 on the 5th, the last Sedge Warbler was noted on the 14th with the

last Reed Warbler on the 11th. Other last dates were the 9th for both Lesser Whitethroat and Common Whitethroat and the 5th for Willow Warbler. Chiffchaffs remained in good numbers throughout the month with ten on the 10th and a Spotted Flycatcher was reported on the 15th. Coal Tits were seen 12 dates with a group of five noted on the 30th and four Treecreepers were logged on the 1st. It was a good month for Jays with one to three noted on 18 dates and 11 (nine of which flew south) on the 25th whilst two Ravens over the area on the 20th were the third record of the year.

A Brambling flew north-west on the 28th, 25 Goldfinches were seen on the 11th and a total of 51 Siskins flew south over eight dates from the 12th with a peak count of 19 on the 24th. A flock of 85 Linnets was present on the 6th and 27 flew south on the 20th. Lesser Redpolls were very scarce with records on just seven dates, hardly any southerly passage and a peak count of 15 (north) on the 27th.

There was little of note amongst the mammal sightings apart from single Weasels on the 5th and 24th. Single Commas were noted on the 20th and 25th, single Painted Ladies were seen on the 5th and 23rd and one or two Red Admirals were seen on 12 dates. The only dragonflies noted were Southern and Brown Hawker and Common Darter.

Mark Beevers

CARR VALE MONTHLY REPORT OCTOBER 2003

I always feel that the site doesn't live up to its potential during October as three of the main observers migrate to either Norfolk or Scilly during the middle two weeks. Despite the lack of observers available to cover the site the daily coverage was maintained for which I am grateful to Ian Swain and Kevin Navin and also to Richard Box for marshalling the coverage whilst I was absent. However even with the reduced coverage we still managed to log 89 species during the month, just one short of the best October tally and we pushed the year list on to 135 which is about right for the time of the year. A number of notable species were seen including a record number of Cormorants, Whooper Swans (22nd and 23rd records), Pink-footed Geese, Goldeneye (10th record), many Common Buzzards, three Merlins, two very late Hobbies and two Peregrines almost daily. Other notable species were Jack Snipe, Woodcock, Redshank, the long staying juvenile Mediterranean Gull (6th record) and later in the month an adult winter Mediterranean Gull, Rock Pipit, the latest ever Yellow Wagtail and Brambling. October was a warm and dry month in the main with the first slight frosts towards the end of the month and as a result the flashes retained their good muddy margins, unfortunately these didn't attract much in the way of waders despite looking perfect.

Single Little Grebes were seen 11 dates with up to three Great-crested Grebes on 25 dates until the last one was seen on the 29th. Cormorants were seen daily with single figures until the 17th and double-figures from the 20th until the month end peaking at a site record 22 on the 24th. Grey Herons were present daily, with a peak count of eight on the 2nd (the wing-tagged bird was present throughout the month) and Mute Swans were present daily peaking at nine on the 8th. An adult Whooper Swan was an extremely brief visitor on the 6th and two more adults remained for 30 minutes on the 22nd. Pink-footed Geese were noted flying east or south-east on a number of dates including 200 on the 3rd, 31 on the 4th, 40 on the 7th, 70 on the 12th, 150 on the 27th and 400 on the 28th. Additionally a skein of geese reported flying east on the 26th was almost certainly this species, especially as one of the regular observers heard Pink-feet calling but couldn't pick them up. Canada Geese were present daily with three-figure counts noted on ten dates including 221 on the 7th, a record count for October.

A Shelduck was present briefly on the 23rd before it departed north, Wigeon were seen daily with counts reaching high double-figures by the 20th and a record October count of 110 on the 30th. Gadwall were a daily feature with 24 noted on the 1st and double-figures on a further 14 dates, although at times they could be very elusive whilst Teal, which were also present daily in double-figures peaked at 83 on the 29th. Mallard were generally recorded in double-figures although three-figure counts were made on five dates, the highest of which was 133 on the 31st. Two Shovelers were present on the 13th with one on the 15th and four Pochard were seen on the 17th with one on the 23rd. Tufted Ducks were scarce during the first half of the month with just four records but they were noted daily from the 14th peaking at 13 on the 31st. Two female / immature Goldeneye on the 22nd were a welcome addition to the year list as not only were they just the tenth site record they were also the first since 2000. One bird remained being seen on the 24th-25th and 27th-30th but it could be very elusive and rounding off the wildfowl single Ruddy Ducks were seen on the 3rd-4th and 11th.

It was again a good month for the quantity of raptor sightings with seven dates when four species were noted and two dates when five species were logged. Sparrowhawks recorded on 21 dates (25 bird/days) and Kestrels were noted on 19 dates (21 bird/days). Common Buzzards were seen from the mound on 20 dates with records of birds in or over the recording area on 17 dates. Birds were recorded on a total of 44 bird / days of which 24 were from within the recording area. Notable counts were a minimum of eight, probably ten, on the 5th and five on the 21st. A male Merlin flew south on the 3rd and immediately after that a female was found perched on a hedge,

remaining for almost an hour. Another female Merlin flew south over the mound on the 29th. Two very late Hobbies (the latest ever) were seen on the 13th and Peregrines continued to be a regular bird. During the month there were sightings on 22 dates with birds over the area on 13 dates. Two birds remained in the area and they were seen together on 15 dates. They continued to use their favoured perches on the pylons to the west of the recording area (easily visible from the mound) but have now also taken to using the telegraph poles just to the west of the flashes. They were recorded on a total of 37 bird / days (19 bird / days within the recording area).

50 Grey Partridge noted on the 6th was a record count for the site, single Water Rails were noted on the 1st and 4th with one on nine dates from the 18th and two on four dates from the 22nd. 31 Moorhens were present on the 2nd and 24th whilst 52 Coot were counted on the 20th. Golden Plovers were recorded on 20 dates with double-figure counts on 13 dates including 48 on the 12th and 46 on the 24th. Lapwings peaked at 335 on the 2nd and three-figure counts were made on another nine dates during the month. A Dunlin was present on the 20th and two more left north on the 23rd. A Jack Snipe that sat out in the open for three hours on the 21st was only the second since 1997, Snipe were recorded on 28 dates but numbers were again low and the highest count was just six on the 4th. A Woodcock was reported by a dog walker early in the month and another dropped into Blue-banks on the 28th. A Redshank on the 17th was probably only the third October record.

Last month's first winter Mediterranean Gull was last seen on the 1st and an adult winter bird was seen on the 19th (and reported again on the 20th). Black-headed Gulls were present in good numbers with 560 logged flying south to roost on the 26th. Common Gulls were regular with up to five noted on 14 dates and a more notable eight on the 15th. 40 Stock Doves were seen on the 7th, one or two Kingfishers were seen on 22 dates during the month, a Green Woodpecker was noted on 14 dates and a Great-spotted Woodpecker was seen on five dates. Skylark passage was poor with a total of 86 noted flying south-west over six dates although 52 on the 10th was a reasonable count. 75 Swallows flew south on the 2nd but other than that there was hardly any southerly passage and the total for the autumn was a meagre 347. The last Swallow of the year was seen flying south on the 20th and the last House Martins of the year were three on the 7th.

54 Meadow Pipits flew south over five dates taking the autumn's total to 1095, a Rock Pipit flew east on the 23rd and the latest ever Yellow Wagtail was seen on the 6th. One or two Grey Wagtails were noted on 19 dates but just 11 more Pied Wagtails were recorded flying south over three dates taking the autumn's total of passage birds to a very poor 33. 30 Blackbirds present on the 9th and 11th were indicative of an arrival, as were seven Song Thrushes on the first date. The first Fieldfares of the autumn were seen on the 12th with good numbers noted from the 19th when 305 flew north-west. Other north-westerly movements were 295 on the 20th, 190 on the 21st 105 on the 23rd and 175 on the 28th. Additionally 300 were grounded on the 24th with 800 the following day. Redwings were noted on 20 dates but the only counts of note were 75 on the 19th and 70 west on the 28th. Eight Mistle Thrushes were seen on the 2nd, a female Blackcap was present on the 24th, one or two Chiffchaffs were noted on seven dates until the 14th with a late bird on the 31st and seven Goldcrests on the 20th coincided with the first thrush arrivals. Single Coal Tits were seen nine dates, three Treecreepers were seen on the 26th and one or two Jays were seen on seven dates. 300 Rooks were present on the 9th and there was a flock of 21 Carrion Crows on the 24th. Starlings were present in good numbers with a feeding flock of 800 on the 25th-26th and westerly passage noted on the 21st (250) and 28th (125).

A total of 40 Chaffinches flew south over three dates between the 1st and 4th including 27 on the 1st and single Bramblings were noted on the 20th, 22nd and 28th. Siskin passage was very limited with a total of 32 noted flying south over seven dates, with a high of 11 on the 19th and 27 Linnets flew south on the 3rd. Lesser Redpoll passage was as poor as Siskins with a total of 33 birds noted

flying south over six dates with a peak count of 15 on the 22nd and 12 Bullfinches were logged on the 9th. Finally amongst the birds the stubble field behind the observation mound held a flock of 26 Yellowhammers and four Reed Buntings on the 11th.

The only mammal of note was a Weasel on the 30th. A late Migrant Hawker was seen on the 30th whilst two Common Darters were seen on the 23rd with one on the 30th.

Mark Beevers

CARR VALE MONTHLY REPORT NOVEMBER 2003

As the nights draw in and the weather becomes more inclement it is always difficult to ensure that daily coverage is maintained. However maintained it was and during the month we managed to log 86 species, a record total for November the previous highest monthly total being 84 in 1998. The year list climbed to 137 and a number of notable species were seen including another record count of Cormorants, Whooper Swans (two, 24th record), Pink-footed Geese, Pintail (three and one), Goldeneye (the long staying 10th record), many Common Buzzards, Merlin and two Peregrines. Other notable species were Dunlin, Black-tailed Godwit (12th record and latest ever), Redshank, Ring-necked Parakeet (2nd record), Chiffchaff, Firecrest (4th record), Brambling and Snow Buntings (2nd and 3rd records). It was a dry month with occasional slight frosts towards the end of the month and as a result the flashes retained their good muddy margins.

Single Little Grebes were seen 12 dates between the 2nd and 16th with two on the 6th and 7th and two Great-crested Grebes were present daily between the 9th and 15th with one remaining until the 16th. Cormorants were seen daily with double-figures on 13 dates until the 17th and with a site record count of 24 on the 1st. One ringed bird was present on the 1st bearing the ring number S2K on its left leg but at the time of writing the B.T.O. hadn't got back to me with any information about it. Grey Herons were present daily with a peak count of nine on the 20th and the wing-tagged bird was present throughout the month. Two to four Mute Swans were present on 17 dates with seven noted on the 30th. Two adult Whooper Swans flew north-west on the 6th and three Wild Swans (thought by the observer to be Bewick's) flew west on the 8th. Pink-footed Geese were noted flying east or south-east on a number of dates including 150 on the 12th, 210 in four skeins on the 16th, 70 on the 19th and 300 on the 27th. Canada Geese were present daily with three-figure counts noted on 28 dates including 150 on the 19th though generally the flock numbered around 135.

The Wigeon flock proved difficult to count on many dates but there were still 22 counts in excess of 100 the highest of which was 158 on the 28th, a record count for November. Gadwall were noted on all bar two dates with double-figures on 13 dates peaking at 15 on the 14th and good numbers of Teal included 13 counts of 100+ with an impressive 140 on the 11th. There were just nine counts of Mallard that exceeded 100 the highest being 142 on the 14th but there were also ten dates when no counts were attempted and several more dates when the counts were aborted. Three female / immature Pintail were present on the 12th with one remaining until the 14th and a first winter male was seen on the 22nd, the first November records since 1999 and only the third and fourth ever for the month. A first winter male Shoveler was present on the 13th and 14th and a female was seen on the 26th. Pochard were seen on all bar one date between the 8th and 30th with a gradual increase in numbers peaking at 17 on the 20th, the highest count since 1996 and the second highest total seen at Carr Vale. Tufted Ducks were present daily with double-figures on nine dates including 15 on the 15th and the long-staying female Goldeneye was seen daily throughout the month, although she was missing though presumed to be present on two dates. The first Goosander of the winter was recorded with a female south on the 17th and a male present on the reserve on the 22nd and 23rd.

It was again a good month for the quantity of raptor sightings with seven dates when four species were noted. Sparrowhawks were recorded on 13 dates (14 bird/days) and Kestrels were noted on 20 dates (22 bird/days). Common Buzzards were seen from the mound on 17 dates with records of birds in or over the recording area on all dates (a total of 20 bird / days). Generally just one bird was seen but three were present on the 20th with two the following day. A female Merlin was watched on the 30th as it made repeated attacks at a passing Skylark. The pair of Peregrines continued to be regular visitors with sightings on 16 dates and the birds were seen in or over the area on 12 dates (a total of 23 bird / days).

Nine Red-legged Partridges were seen on the 7th followed by counts of 27 on the 10th, six on the 12th and 24 on the 13th and 15 Grey Partridges were noted on the 12th. Single Water Rails were

noted on 15 with two on a further eight dates, although it is likely that as many as four are wintering in the area. 22 Moorhens were present on the 3rd with 23 on the 17th whilst 43 Coot were also counted on the 3rd. Golden Plovers remained scarce with records on nine dates but the highest count was only 46 on the 7th. Lapwings were also present in reduced numbers with double-figures on just 11 dates the highest count being 72 on the 10th. A Dunlin flew south on the 7th and four flew south on the 17th. Snipe were recorded on 20 dates but numbers were again low and the highest count was just eight on the 7th. A Black-tailed Godwit, present on the 10th was only the second record this year but became the latest ever to be recorded at Carr Vale and a Redshank was seen on the 1st.

A leucistic (almost white) Black-headed Gull was first seen on the 5th then occasionally until the end of the month and counts of birds flying south or south-east to roost included 430 on the 9th and 800 on the 13th. One or two Common Gulls were noted on eight dates between the 8th and 24th, 100 Herring Gulls flew south on the 20th on which date the first Great-black-backed Gulls of the autumn (four) were also noted. 360 Wood Pigeons flew west on the 20th and a Ring-necked Parakeet flew north on the 2nd. This is only the second record of this species for Carr Vale. A Kingfisher was seen on 19 dates during the month, a Green Woodpecker was noted on 14 dates with two together on the 6th and Great-spotted Woodpeckers were seen on six dates plus two on the 15th-16th. 26 Skylarks flew south-east on the 12th and 37 were over the fields west of the reserve on the 16th.

One or two Grey Wagtails were noted on 27 dates and a maximum of 34 Pied Wagtails was recorded flying south to roost on the 9th. The highest count of Fieldfares was 200 on the 20th although 140 flew south on the 2nd and 155 flew south on the 10th whilst the only notable count of Redwings was 110 south on the 6th. A Chiffchaff, heard calling on the 1st was probably a late migrant whereas the one that was found on the 13th was likely to be a wintering bird. Indeed the latter was seen again on the 15th, daily between the 20th and 22nd and on three dates from the 27th to the end of the month. Goldcrests were a daily feature with up to nine on the embankment (30th) and a Firecrest was found on the 2nd. This bird was then logged on 16 other dates and was still present in early December. This is the fourth winter since 1996 that one of these delightful birds has taken up residence on the embankment and this one can be very obliging, though it can also be very elusive. 20 Long-tailed Tits were logged on the 2nd and 20th and single Coal Tits were seen five dates. A Treecreeper was singing on the 11th and the only Jay of the month was reported on the 21st

Single Bramblings were noted on the 8th, 10th, 18th, 20th and 27th and one to eight Siskins were seen on ten dates. Lesser Redpolls were more common than Siskins with records for 21 dates but the highest count was only ten on the 28th. Eight Bullfinches were logged on the 2nd and five flew south on the 27th. The bird of the month was undoubtedly the female Snow Bunting that flew south on the 6th. Another Snow Bunting, either a female or immature, flew north on the 12th and 19 Yellowhammers were counted on the 28th.

The only mammal sightings of note were a Weasel on the 15th and a Hare on the 19th whilst an indication of how mild the month was came in the form of four Common Darters still on the wing on the 12th. This is the latest ever date for this species at Carr Vale.

Mark Beevers

CARR VALE MONTHLY REPORT DECEMBER 2003

New Years Eve saw the end of another year during which daily visits were made to the reserve and during December two new species for the year were added to the list taking the final tally to 139, a respectable total. Moderate rainfall was a feature of several dates during the month resulting in the water level in Meadow Flash reaching 27" on the 21st, the highest it had been since New Years Day. A couple of cold spells mid-month saw the flashes partially frozen but this did not affect the wildfowl population and both Wigeon and Teal reached their highest ever totals during the month. Later in the month however a very cold snap saw the waters freeze over, wildfowl numbers decline and the apparent disappearance of the Firecrest and Chiffchaff.

The female Goldeneye remained until the 29th, Buzzards were recorded on 20 dates with Peregrines on 19 dates and one or two Water Rails were logged on 13 dates. The long-staying Chiffchaff was seen on 25 dates whilst the wintering Firecrest was noted on 17 dates.

Seven Red-legged Partridges were seen on the 1st when a Mistle Thrush and the Chiffchaff were heard singing. Two Grey Lag Geese dropped in on the 2nd when three Shovelers were present and a Merlin was seen. Also on the 3rd 37 Magpies were counted as they flew into roost. The female Shelduck first seen on the 4th remained until the following day whilst on the 6th 70+ Pied Wagtails and 44 Yellowhammers were noted on the field to the south of the Sewage Works. On the 6th nine Pink-footed Geese flew south-east and a female Shoveler was on Middle Flash and 40 Golden Plover flew north on the 7th.

Two female Shovelers were logged on the 8th and then, after a lull, 197 Wigeon were counted on the 12th, a record for the site. A female Shoveler, a Merlin and a Redshank were seen on the 13th on which date 37 Collared Doves came in to roost, whilst the Redshank remained to the following day. 21 Grey Partridges were counted on the 18th on which date 800 Black-headed Gulls flew south at dusk and a first winter Yellow-legged Gull was found amongst the loafing Gulls. Five Bramblings were by the Reserve Pond on the 19th, a Redshank was seen on the 20th, on the 21st a Pink-footed Goose dropped in and a Common (Mealy) Redpoll was found, this being the first since 1997.

C300 Pink-footed Geese flew east on the 22nd on which date a male Goosander arrived (remaining until the following day), 37 Golden Plover were seen and a count of 400 Herring Gulls and 95 Great-Black-backed Gulls was made. Following a period of rain Teal peaked at a record 162 on the 23rd, c200 Pink-footed Geese flew south-east on the 24th and an adult Yellow-legged Gull was on the point on the 25th. A female Merlin was seen on the 26th and 800 Black-headed Gulls flew south on the 27th. The Firecrest was last seen on the 28th with the Chiffchaff last noted on the 29th. Finally the cold spell at the end of the year induced c325 Pink-footed Geese to fly west along with 200 Lapwings whilst 18 Golden Plover flew east.