

CARSINGTON MONTHLY BIRD REPORT - FEBRUARY

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

More snow, occasional fog, 80% ice covered on 19th and then sunshine on 27/28th and the birds were singing. Water levels were fairly constant at 95% full but the water surface seemed bare as most of the wintering wildfowl had moved on as usual in February. The 3 Great Northern Divers were still around from January until 2nd when 4 birds were seen at one time, 1 adult plus 3 juveniles. All 4 were also seen on 3rd, 8th, 9th, 15th, 19th and 28th so it is reasonable to assume 4 from 2nd to 28th. Significant water bird counts included 59 Great Crested Grebe on 19th, 57 of which were together on an ice free patch, 15 Cormorant on 12th, 2 Whooper Swan on 7th and on 20th, 150 Pink-footed Geese flying northwest on 28th, 26 Barnacle Geese on 28th, 2 Egyptian Geese on 5th, 4 Shelduck on 20th, 23 Wigeon on 17th, 60 Teal and 83 Mallard on the WeBS count on 9th, a pair of Pintail on 20th, 4 Red-crested Pochard on 1st, 22 Pochard on 17th, 152 Tufted Duck on 15th, 18 Goldeneye on 9th and 28th, 1 Goosander on 9th and 464 Coot on 15th.

There was very little Raptor activity: single Kestrel and Sparrowhawk regularly, 2 Sparrowhawk on 15th, 6 Common Buzzard in the air on 15th and a male Peregrine on 6th. There were also very few Waders. Oystercatchers had been returning to claim their breeding islands, and they totalled 7 by 15th, including the male wearing a bar-code leg ring returning for his eighth breeding season, originally being ringed on the Exe Estuary in Devon. The maximum Lapwing count was 165 on 28th. There was a Dunlin on 20th, 6 Snipe at the Wildlife Centre on 28th and a Woodcock on 8th and 28th. Curlew passage started with 2 on 9th but very few followed and there were 4 Redshank on 9th.

An adult Mediterranean Gull was around the gull roost on several days from 9th to 20th. The first winter Little Gull found on 27th Jan was still present on 1st Feb and was last seen on 9th, a long stay of 2 weeks. The gull roost held at least 4000 Black-headed Gulls on 28th, at least 800 Common Gulls on 12th, 35 Lesser Black-backed Gulls on 9th, 16 Herring Gulls on 3rd, 2 Yellow-legged Gulls from 1st to 14th and 4 Great Black-backed Gulls on 3rd.

There were 80 Woodpigeon together in trees near Hays Lane on 24th and a Kingfisher was seen at Sheepwash on 7th and at several other locations later in the month. A few Skylark were flying over on 1st but a more significant movement occurred on 15th when small groups, totalling 24 birds, were counted flying north during the morning. Two species that were not recorded last month were a Grey Wagtail in Brown Ale Bay on 15th and 17th and 2 Goldcrest singing in Hall Wood in the sunshine on 28th. Five Fieldfare were feeding in Sheepwash car park on 1st, 40 Redwing flew over on 26th and a pair of Mistle Thrush were around Sheepwash all month. Feeders were popular, with 9 Long-tailed Tit on Paul Stanley feeder on 10th, 2 Willow Tit on Wildlife Centre feeder on 24th, 24 Tree Sparrow crowded onto Sheepwash car park feeder on 24th and 5 Reed Bunting were on Paul Stanley feeder on 6th. The local pair of Raven was active and very vocal on many days and a Brambling flew over Sheepwash on 15th and 19th.

91 Species this Feb compared with 91 in Feb 2012, 90 in 2011, 87 in 2010, 86 in 2009 and 86 in 2008.