

CARSINGTON MONTHLY BIRD REPORT - MARCH

March Highlights: Great Northern Diver, Great White Egret, Red Kite, Red Breasted Merganser and Kittiwake but the expected spring migrants are held back by freezing weather.

The prolonged cold easterly weather held back many spring migrants such as sand martin, swallow, wheatear and blackcap so a species tally of 96 this month is reasonable. All 4 Great Northern Divers remained all month, usually found off Stones Island. A Great White Egret flew over at 0745hrs on 30th heading east-northeast. A Whooper Swan resided at Millfields 12-24th and there were also 9 on 26th and 6 on 30th. Maximum waterbird counts this month were; 2 Little Grebe on 10th, 51 Great Crested Grebe on 20th, 8 Cormorant on 3rd, 5 Greylag on 3rd, 77 Canada Geese on 24th, 26 Barnacle on 1st and other days, 3 Shelduck on 17th, 43 Wigeon on 12th, 2 Gadwall on 3rd, 38 Teal on 11th, 93 Mallard on 3rd, 6 Pintail on 8th and 15th, 5 Shoveler on 5th, 13 Pochard on 1st, 129 Tufted Duck on 5th, 19 Goldeneye on 3rd, a drake Red-breasted Merganser on 28th, 4 Goosander on 18th and 275 Coot on 5th.

A Red Kite drifted over the dam wall on 12th and another was seen on 17th. There were 6 Common Buzzards in the air on 30th and a Kestrel was carrying large prey, possibly blackbird, on 24th. Oystercatchers were around their breeding areas all month and at least 11 were seen on 19th. A Golden Plover was heard flying over on 15th, the maximum Lapwing count was 80 on 12th and there were 4 Dunlin flying with the Lapwing flock on 1st. Snipe were regularly seen from the Wildlife Centre, with 16 there on 18th. There were 3 Bar-tailed Godwit at the Wildlife Centre on 7-8th and 2 Black-tailed Godwit there on 15-16th. Curlew passage was building up through the month with 5 on 1st, 37 on 13th and 56 roosted on Stones Island on 24th. Redshank numbered 4 on 17th and 20th.

The gull roost held an adult Mediterranean Gull on 1st, a first winter Med Gull on 14th and another was seen during the daytime on 29th. A full gull roost count from Stones Island was possible in reasonable weather on 1st and found 5000 Black-headed Gull and a new site record of 1500 Common Gull. Counts of 1000 plus Common Gull have been made from Sheepwash where only part of the roost is ever visible. There was a second winter Yellow-legged Gull in the roost on 1st and an adult around the site on 9th. Kittiwakes featured well this month with at least 3 adults on 10th, 1 staying until 15th, 2 flew through on 26th and at least 2 more flew through on 28th.

A Stock Dove flew over on 12th and 200 Woodpigeon were feeding at Hopton End on 11th. A Barn Owl was hunting around Sheepwash from 1430hrs on 12th and again on many other afternoons and a few early mornings up to the end of the month. This activity reflects their desperate search for food stretching into daylight hours during these days of freezing weather and snow covered ground. A Kingfisher was seen, mainly from Paul Stanley Hide, on 20-24th. Occasionally Skylark were noted moving northwards during the month, with a maximum of 5 on 10th and, similarly, Meadow Pipit but in bigger numbers, with 9 on the dam early on 17th and 30 over on 29th. A Rock Pipit was on the dam wall on 10th. A female Stonechat was briefly at Sheepwash on 12th, another or the same was near the Visitor Centre on the same day and a male was on Stones Island on 12th. Thrush numbers included 14 Blackbird on 28th, 8 Fieldfare on 10th, 2 Song Thrush on 28th and 200 Redwing on 31st. The first singing Chiffchaff was on Stones Island on 15th, then 3 on 17th but no more until 31st due to the freezing snowy conditions. There were 3 Raven around on 12th, 120 Starling on

18th, 51 Tree Sparrow on 7th, a female Brambling on the Ranger Base feeder on 13th and 4 Greenfinch on the Visitor Centre entrance feeder on 12th.

96 Species recorded this March compared with 97 in March 2012, 106 in 2011, 101 in 2010, 102 in 2009, 104 in 2008, 95 in 2007 and 100 in 2006.