

BIRD NEWS FROM CARR VALE NATURE RESERVE AND SURROUNDING AREA

May 2010

Firstly an apology for the brevity of the last four months' newsletters, a combination of several foreign trips with pre-tour prep and post tour admin and the compilation of the Carr Vale annual report has meant time has been at a premium during the first part of this year. However with nothing planned for several months I am able to produce a more detailed report for May. To bring people up to speed for the first four months of the year in January we recorded 79 species, the lowest total since 2007. In February the monthly species total was 77, the lowest total since 2002 and the year list moved on to a lowly 86, so quite a poor start to the year. We got back on track during March when 94 species were logged and the yearlist was 102, just four off the pace set during 2009. For only the second time in seven years we failed to record 100 species during April when the count was 97 but nevertheless the yearlist was a creditable 120 by the end of the month.

This brings us to the end of May when for the first time we logged a three-figure count for the month, 101 and the yearlist moved on to 129, the second highest end of May total. Some notable species were recorded during the month including **Little Egret** (two singles), **Shelduck**, **Goosander**, possibly as many as eight **Marsh Harriers**, **Hobby**, **Peregrine**, **Bar-tailed Godwit** (8th record), **Whimbrel** (four over three dates), **Greenshank**, **Arctic Tern**, **Turtle Dove** (first since 2006), **Whinchat**, **Greenland Wheatears** (three), **Wood Warbler** (3rd record), **Spotted Flycatcher**, breeding **Tree Sparrows** and **Dingy Skipper** (new for the area). A few problems were experienced during the month including trespassing within the fenced area of the reserve and even canoeing on Meadow Flash. We'd be grateful if any similar incidents are witnessed that a quick call be made to the Wildlife Trust office on 01773-881-188 so that the incidents can be collated.

Little Grebes having been very scarce during the first four months of the year were so again until the 20th with just two singles being recorded on the 11th and 14th. Then a pair was present from the 20th until the 29th. Two pairs of **Great-crested Grebe** were present all month and **Cormorants** were recorded on ten dates with a peak count of five (four south-east) on the 9th. Always nice to see, and still quite a rarity in the north-east of the county, a **Little Egret** was present on 19th and another dropped in on the 30th whilst **Herons** were only recorded on 23 dates with a maximum of three on 16th and 17th.

Mute Swans were present daily, generally just the resident pair but with a maximum count of nine on the 30th-31st. The long-staying **Pink-footed Goose** finally disappeared on the 16th, **Grey Lag Geese** were recorded on five dates with a peak of four on the 16th and adult **Canada Geese** peaked at 57 on the 29th. Additionally six small broods, totalling 15, were found during the month, two of which joined forces so that it looked like there were just four broods. A pair of **Shelduck** was present on ten dates with an additional three on the 8th whilst one flew south-east on the 20th. It's not known if it was the same pair all the time. **Gadwall** were present daily with a high of 31 on the 4th and a male **Teal** was present daily until the 13th. So far it has been a poor breeding season for **Mallard** with just three broods so far of ten, four and three. A pair of **Shoveler** was present between the 1st and 2nd and again between the 4th and 6th with two males and a female present on the 3rd. Additionally a lone male was seen on the 8th and 15th. A pair **Pochard** was present on the 1st and 3rd with a lone male on four dates until the 9th whilst **Tufted Duck** reached 21 on the 24th and a female **Goosander** flew north on the 9th.

It was a fantastic month for **Marsh Harriers**, better than we have ever experienced at Carr Vale. A female flew north at 0715 on the 1st and a female was present for most of the morning on the 12th but then later in the day a pair was reported on the DOS website. The description of the female differed from the one in the morning so it looks like three were present on that day. A female flew south at 0810 on the 15th, a female flew south-east on the 23rd, a female left north-west high at

0750 on the 25th and finally a female came in from the west, spent 15 minutes on the reserve then flew north-west at 1105 on the 26th. A fine selection of records and based on wing and tail moult and also density of the crown colour most were thought to be different birds. **Sparrowhawks** were recorded on 12 bird / days, **Common Buzzard** were logged on 28 dates (83 bird / days) with a peak count of 13 on the 1st and **Kestrels** were recorded on 30 dates (45 bird / days). Single **Hobbies** were seen on the 4th, 8th, 16th, 17th, 28th, 29th and 30th, a **Peregrine** was seen on 5th and a male **Peregrine** took a **House Martin** on the 26th.

A pair of **Red-legged Partridges** were seen on the 14th with one the following day and a pair of **Grey Partridges** was seen on the 1st and 13th. A **Water Rail** was heard calling on the 11th. The resident pair of **Oystercatchers** was present daily and hatched two young on the tern raft on the 6th. Other birds occasionally came onto the reserve with three on three dates, four on three dates and five on four dates but the highest count was six on 18th but that may have included the young. **Little Ringed Plovers** were present daily but the highest count was only five on the 8th whilst the only **Ringed Plover** of the month was seen on the 29th. A **Dunlin** flew north on the 8th, two more flew south-east on the 23rd and one was present on the 26th. Then two were present daily between the 27th and 30th. A **Snipe** was seen daily between 8th and 10th and the **Bar-tailed Godwit** from April remained to the 4th. It was a good month for **Whimbrel** with one north on the 5th, two leaving to the north on the 8th and one present on the 11th. One to three **Redshank** were seen most days with a count of four on the on the 26th and a **Greenshank** dropped in very briefly on the 19th. Finally amongst the waders a **Common Sandpipers** were seen on 11 dates but with no more than two seen on any date.

For the first time ever a pair of **Black-headed Gulls** is nesting on the reserve and they have encouraged up to 20 first summer birds to hang around too. The resident pair of **Common Terns** quickly moved on to the tern raft from the 16th, the day after the **Oystercatchers** vacated it and they were still sitting at the end of the month. An additional bird was seen on 11 dates and two extra birds were present on the 10th and 28th. An **Arctic Tern** flew north on the 8th. A **Turtle Dove** found on the Stockley Trail just south of the recording area was notable as it was the first in the area since 2006. Single **Cuckoos** were seen on the 18th and 21st and **Little Owls** were noted from three sites in the area, all viewable from the mound. Small numbers of **Swift** were present during the month with a peak count of 150 on the 29th. **Kingfishers** have been very scarce this year but one was seen on 9th and 18th whilst single **Green Woodpeckers** were seen on the 9th, 19th and 25th.

Sand Martins were logged on 23 dates with a maximum count of 30 on the 2nd whilst **Swallows** peaked at 60 on the 19th and **House Martins** reached 50 on the 26th. Two pairs of **Yellow Wagtail** are breeding this year and they were frequently seen around the flashes. A male **Whinchat** was present on the 1st whilst single **Wheatears**, males of the Greenland race, were present on 5th, 10th and 17th and a pair of **Mistle Thrushes** fledged two young on the 21st.

One or two **Grasshopper Warblers** were heard reeling on eight dates, 14 **Sedge Warblers** were singing on 1st with 12 singing on 4th and 11 still singing on the 17th. It's certainly a good year for this species. 15 **Reed Warblers** were singing on the 1st. and 15 territories were located later in the month. One or two **Lesser Whitethroats** were logged on five dates until the 17th with late song recorded on the 27th. 12 singing **Whitethroats** were located on the 17th with a further two new males found on the 19th (different areas). Three singing **Garden Warblers** were found on the 13th with one or two heard on 16 other dates during the month. However the rarest warbler of the month was a singing **Wood Warbler** on the 3rd, only the 3rd record for Carr Vale whilst another good spring bird was a **Spotted Flycatcher**, which was seen on the 26th. A family party of **Treecreepers** on the 17th was indicative of local breeding and **Tree Sparrows** were proved breeding for the first time in about ten years when a pair bred in a nest box successfully fledging an unknown number of young. One or two **Jays** were seen on four dates, **Bullfinches** were seen daily with a maximum

count of eight on the 8th and 11 singing **Reed Buntings** were located during the month.

The highlight amongst the insect world was the first record of **Dingy Skipper** for the area. An expected addition to the butterfly list, it is still a pleasing record and it was seen on three dates between the 21st and 28th. Other butterflies of note included single **Brimstones** on the 19th and 24th and a **Holly Blue** on the 21st. The first **Large Red Damselfly** of the year were seen on the 20th and the following day 12 were counted along with 30 **Azure Damselflies** and two **Four-spotted Chasers**. 15 **Large Red Damselflies** (seven copulating pairs), two **Blue-tailed Damselflies**, 70 **Azure Damselflies** and 11 **Four-spotted Chasers** were counted on the 24th and the first **Broad-bodied Chasers** (male and two females) and ten **Common Blue Damselflies** were seen on the 28th.

Two more pleasing records were of a **Water Vole** on the river, which was seen twice during the month adjacent to the southern flash and a **Water Shrew**, which was seen on the Peter Fidler Reserve on the 18th. Two **Stoats** were reported on the 18th and **Roe Deer** were noted on at least seven dates with one male and three females frequenting the area. A number of **Grass Snakes** were reported during the month including three on the 21st and the **Red-eared Slider** (Terrapin) was seen on at least four occasions.

Mark Beavers