

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

**January 2011.**

The year started with the reserve still in the grip of ice, indeed the ponds on the DWT part of the area were not completely free of ice until 16th January and those on Peter Fidler were still iced over ten days later. A couple of unsavoury incidents occurred during the month, the first involving some mindless yob who thought it was entertaining to throw lumps of ice at swans sitting on the ice and the second involving a couple of beaters from the local shoot who thought it perfectly OK to walk across the reserve and when challenged became abusive and threatening. Such is the world we live in. Birdwise the month was far more productive than the bleak December and a number of good birds for the area were seen. Highlight of the month and potentially the bird of the year was a Coues' Arctic Redpoll, that's one for the county rarity committee to ponder over. Other notable records were a very impressive set of Pink-footed Geese flocks, Merlin, Peregrine, Woodcock, Curlew (first January record), Barn Owl, Raven (two), Brambling, Common Redpoll (8th record) and Roe Deer. A number of expected species were missing during January including Water Rail, Snipe and Kingfisher but we still recorded 80 species during the month, an average total.

**Cormorants** were missing until the 9th after which birds were seen on 15 dates with a maximum count of eight on the 16th. **Hérons** were seen on 26 dates but the highest count was only four on five dates whilst **Mute Swans** were seen daily with a peak of six on the 31st. One of the highlights of the month was an impressive movement of **Pink-footed Goose** and skeins were seen on 13 dates with daily records from the 26th. The records were 130 SE on 2nd, 120 NW on 10th, 180 E on 13th, 100 W on 17th, c1000 in c15 skeins W on 18th, 280 W on 21st, 100 W on 24th, 50 W on 26th, 60 W on 27th, 120 W on 28th, 185 W on 29th, 270 on 30th and 160 W on 31st. A **Grey Lag Goose** was seen on the 1st and 2nd with five on the 3rd and two on the 26th whilst **Canada Geese** peaked at 84 on the 17th.

**Wigeon** started the year off on 63 but by the 30th the count has risen to 163, **Gadwall** were recorded in double-figures on all bar one date with a peak of 33 on the 2nd whilst **Teal** reached 118 on the 17th and **Mallard** peaked at 81 on the 15th. One to three **Pochard** were logged on 25 dates with daily records from the 15th and **Tufted Duck** peaked at 15 on the 20th and 27th. The only **Goosander** of the month was seen on the 7th.

**Sparrowhawks** were recorded on at least 21 dates during the month (25 bird / days) and a male was displaying on 31st. **Common Buzzards** were logged on at least 20 dates (26 bird / days) and **Kestrels** were recorded on at least 18 dates (19 bird / days). A female **Merlin** flew south then back north on 12th and a **Peregrine** was seen on the 9th. At least some **Red-legged Partridges** survived the guns with double-figure counts on four dates with a maximum count of 25 on the 18th whilst **Grey Partridge** peaked at seven on the 12th. Good numbers of **Moorhens** frequented the sewage works peaking at 41 on the 4th with 38 on the 12th and following just a single **Coot** during the first 13 days of the month numbers slowly rose, reaching 21 on the 29th.

**Golden Plovers** were scarce with sightings on just five dates with a maximum count of 45 on the 16th but **Lapwings** were present in reasonable numbers with four three-figure counts the highest of which was 117 on the 20th. A **Woodcock** was flushed on the 22nd whilst a **Curlew** that flew north on the 5th was the first January record for this site. **Black-headed Gulls** were often present in three-figures but the highest counts were of birds flying south in the late afternoon with 1185 on the 5th and 700 on the 25th. **Common Gulls** were logged on 20 dates but double-figure counts are scarce so 12 on the 13th were notable.

**Stock Doves** peaked at 41 on 11th and 400 **Wood Pigeons** were seen on the 9th, 21st and 29th. A **Barn Owl** was heard calling on the 18th and another reported on the 30th but the only **Little Owl** of the month was one at Deepdale Farm viewable from the viewing mound on the 2nd. One or two **Green Woodpeckers** were seen on 19 dates and single **Great-spotted Woodpeckers** were seen on five dates with two on the 31st.

A flock of 17 **Skylarks** flew over on the 28th and a few **Meadow Pipits** were around during the month with seven on the 12th and 24th. One or two **Grey Wagtails** were logged on at least 12 dates whilst the maximum count of **Pied Wagtails** was 42 on the 12th. Following on from last years bumper flock of **Waxwings** small numbers continued to appear with 20 on the 9th, five on the 13th and two reported on the 23rd. 11 **Robins** were between the entrance gate and the mound on the 27th when 28 **Blackbirds** were counted. Five three-figure flocks of **Fieldfare** were recorded with a maximum count of 175 on the 12th but the highest count of **Redwing** was only 40 on the 28th whilst the highest count of **Mistle Thrush** was six on 15th.

A flock of 26 **Long-tailed Tits** flew through on the 16th whilst the highest count for **Willow Tit** was nine on the 21st with seven on the 2nd when first song was heard. Seven were also counted on the 18th and 12 **Great Tits** were around the feeding station on the 11th. One or two **Coal Tits** were seen on 12 dates and one or two **Jays** were seen on at least eight dates whilst there was a count of 20 **Magpies** on the 10th. 49 **Jackdaws** flew west to roost on 31st and two **Ravens** flew west on 21st.

150 **Starlings** were counted on the 14th and **Tree Sparrows** were regularly seen at Mill Farm feeding station with a maximum count of eight on the 12th and 23rd. A **Brambling** was present very briefly behind the mound before it flew off north on the 19th and good numbers of **Goldfinch** were around all month with a peak count of 100 on the 10th. **Siskins** were logged on 17 dates with a maximum count of 30 on the 29th and 30th. **Linnets** are generally quite scarce during the winter months so a flock of 100 on the 5th and 8th was notable and 60 were still in the area on the 8th. Like Siskins **Lesser Redpolls** were frequently seen with the first notable count of 30 on the 13th and double-figure counts were made daily during the last week peaking at 50 on the 30th. Diligent searching through the flock produced two **Common (Mealy) Redpolls** on the 11th and one on the 16th. Another was seen on the 24th and then birds were seen daily from the 28th peaking at six on 28th and 30th. Three still present on the 31st. It was whilst searching through this flock that a **Coues' Arctic Redpoll** flew in on the on the 28th, but unfortunately it didn't hang around too long and many hours searching for it subsequently drew a blank. This former national rarity was first recorded in the invasion during the 1995 / 1996 winter when 16 were accepted and the only other record was in 2007. It will be the first record for the area if accepted by the county records committee. Carr Vale is well known as an excellent site for **Bullfinch** and double-figures were logged on 13 dates with maximum counts of 18 on the 14th and 16 on the 10th. A flock of 65 **Yellowhammers** was counted on the 27th with 28 still on the 29th whilst 46 **Reed Buntings** were counted into roost on the 9th with 35 on the 17th. Up to 22 could be seen at one time on the bird table.

A **Hare** was seen on the 9th with two on the 20th below Sutton Scarsdale Hall and a **Fox** was seen on the 19th. On the 24th a pair of **Foxes** was seen mating attracting the attention of two more dog **Foxes**.....at ten o'clock in the morning! A female **Roe Deer** was seen on the 8th with three on the 10th and 25th and two on the 27th.

Mark Beavers.