

Rostherne Mere Newsletter Jan-Mar 2024

Welcome to the first newsletter of 2024. Spring is my favourite season at Rostherne as a sense of renewal is characterised by increasing bird song, the emergence of spring flowers and early insects scouting for nectar and nest sites.



Male and Female Wigeon on 27th Jan © Pete Kelly

Wintering wildfowl included counts of 11 Goldeneye, 32 Mandarin, 18 Pochard, 26 Shoveler, 86 Mallard, 232 Teal and 310 Wigeon. A male Pintail was spotted by Steve Collins in Feb, a rare sight at Rostherne these days. Eight Whooper Swans visited in Mar and a pair of Egyptian Geese were often seen in Dolls Meadow. There were around 200 Pink-footed Geese flying over in Jan. Up to 12 Goosanders joined the evening roost. There were 25 Great Crested Grebes with several pairs displaying. Three Little Grebes were also recorded. A Little Egret was seen in Dolls Meadow in Jan and Mar. Cormorants started nest building during the middle of Jan and there were 78 nests by Mar. Several Water Rails squealed from the reed beds throughout the quarter.

There were around 110 Lapwing over Gale Bog and an amazing 11 Woodcock flew into roost during Jan, witnessed by Mike Duckham viewing from Marsh Lane. Eight Snipe were flushed from Dolls Meadow. Four Oystercatchers visited in Mar. Interestingly, a Redshank was seen feeding underneath the Bittern Hide on several dates.

The BTO Winter Gull Survey was undertaken during Jan. This national survey has been scheduled approximately every 10 years at Rostherne since 1953! There were 1200 Black-head Gulls, 185 Common Gulls, 305 Lesser Black-backed Gulls and 120 Herring Gulls counted in the roost. A Caspian Gull and Yellow-legged Gull were also recorded.

Five Buzzards were seen on several dates. Sparrowhawk and Kestrel were frequently recorded. A Marsh Harrier circled the Reserve in Jan and a Peregrine was over Harpers Bank Wood in Feb.

A Barn Owl roosted in the Mere Meadow box. A Little Owl was heard calling near Marsh Lane and a Tawny Owl was heard during the day on several dates.

A special record for Sheelagh Halsey was the arrival of a female Lesser Spotted Woodpecker on the Split Limes in Mar. Another delight was the six Grey Partridges seen in Mere Meadow by Ian McCulloch.

Bullfinches, Lesser Redpoll and Reed Buntings visited the bird tables in front of the Observatory and hides.

Cetti's Warbler was recorded on most days with four in Mar. Malcolm Calvert retrapped a male bird in Mere Covert which was ringed as a juvenile in Aug 2023.

Up to 260 Fieldfare, 60 Redwing and 100 Starlings were seen feeding in Martin's Field behind Egerton Hall, just off the Reserve. Furthermore, it was a pleasant surprise to see up to 10,000 Starlings returning to roost in the reed beds near Shaw Green in Mar.

Mar saw the arrival of the first Sand Martins and Chiffchaffs. Linnets and Skylarks were occasionally seen in the fields surrounding the Reserve.

It was a great quarter to see Brown Hares in several of the fields surrounding the Mere. Butterflies emerging from hibernation included Comma, Brimstone, Red Admiral and Small Tortoiseshell. Pete Kelly recorded several early Hoverflies including the Hairy *Melangyna* (*Melangyna lasiophthalma*) for the first time. He also photographed the fascinating Dark-edged Bee-fly (*Bombylius major*).

The last few months have been very wet and Dolls Meadow resembled a lake for the majority of Jan but hopefully we will see some dry and sunny weather during the spring.

Best Wishes.

Bill Bellamy



Male Shoveler on 3rd Mar © Pete Kelly



Male Reed Bunting on 10th Mar © Jules Hill



Treecreeper on 24th Feb © Pete Kelly



Flooding in Dolls Meadow on 3rd Jan © Rupert Randall



Brown Hare on 29th Feb © Pete Kelly



Brown Hare on 11th Mar © Bill Bellamy



The Hairy Melangyna Hoverfly on 18th Mar © Pete Kelly



The Dark-edged Bee-fly on 16th Mar © Pete Kelly