

January 2010 summary

Introduction

This report on birds seen in Hertfordshire during January 2010 is produced using records sent in to the website and to the BTO Birdtrack recording scheme. It does not include any records submitted after 8 February, these will automatically be added to the sightings archive and will be considered for inclusion in the Herts Bird Report in due course.. All of these records need to be considered as provisional particularly in the case of species for which a full description is required.

January weather

The month was dominated by the cold weather and heavy snowfall overnight on 5th /6th January and further snowfall in subsequent days. The ice and snow did not clear until 16th or later. Standing open water was frozen for over a week. The temperature was below average staying in single figures all month.

January highlights

Eight **Little Grebes** were seen in Brocket Park on 8th during the snowy weather and **Great Crested Grebes** were seen at Tring Res all month with a high of 18 on 2nd. Roost counts of Cormorants were 71 at Amwell NR on 12th and 63 at Tring Res on 26th. **Bitterns** were showing well during the freezing conditions at Amwell NR as they struggled to find food, with one or two reported most days and three seen together from the viewpoint late pm on 24th. Singles were seen at Marsworth Res on 2nd and 24th and at Rye Meads from 17-24th. **Little Egrets** were reported from 30 different locations with 22 at Stockers Lake, Rickmansworth on 2nd, 12 at Radwell, Baldock and 8 at Stanborough Lakes, Welwyn Garden City on 20th and 12 in the Chess Valley at Sarratt on 23rd. A Whooper Swan was seen flying over Marshalswick on 23rd, seven **Bewick's/Whooper Swans** were reported at Garston on 9th and max 36 **Mute Swans** at Stockers Lake on 10th. There were a maximum of 40 Greylag Geese at Tring on 19th and 10 At Amwell on 16th. Three dark-bellied **Brent Geese** were seen at Hardmead Lake Amwell on 19th. Two **Egyptian Geese** were at frozen Batchworth Lake, Rickmansworth on 5th, at East Hyde on 9th and 10th and at Amwell and Kings Meads on 23rd. A single **Shelduck** was seen at both Amwell and Hilfield on 3rd, with three at Tyttenhanger on 30th.

There was the usual modest number of records of **Mandarins** with 11 at Oylers Farm near Cheshunt on 11th. The highest counts of **Wigeon** were 615 at Wilstone Res on 16th and of **Gadwall**, 114 at Kings Meads on 26th, 60 at Rye Meads on 16th and max 42 on Lee Navigation at Ware Lock during the freezing spell 8-13th. Teal were seen favouring the flowing water at water cress beds during the freezing weather, highest numbers elsewhere were 220 at Wilstone Res on 16th and 140 at Ryemeads on 18th. Three **Pintails** were seen at Kings Meads on 29th with singles at Tring Reservoirs on 2nd, 3rd and 16th. A maximum of 16 **Red-crested Pochards** were seen at both Stockers Lake and Bury Lake in the first half of the month and three females were seen regularly at Amwell all month. There were unusually high numbers of **Pochard** at Kings Meads with max 52 on 20th, including an aythya hybrid (see photo on website photos page). Numerous records of **Goldeneye** were received from Amwell (max 5), Bury Lake (max 9), Stockers Lake (max 22 on 23rd), Tyttenhanger (1) and Wilstone Res (max 5). There were good views of **Smew** at Amwell NR all month with max five (2m,3f) on 17th and 27th with max three at both Bury Lake and Stockers Lake from 10th and two at Bowyers Water. There were good numbers of **Goosanders** with up to four seen at Stockers Lake from 10th, up to six on the river at Troy Mill Lake, and

two at Helicon Lake, Maple Cross; 12 (5m,7f) were at Cheshunt GP from 24-29th and singles at Amwell NR, Hampermill Lake nr Watford, Tyttenhanger GPs - fishing lake, Verulamium Park, Waterford Marsh and Tring Res; three flew over at Leasey Bridge nr Wheathampstead on 17th.

Sightings of one or two **Red Kites** were reported from 27 locations throughout the county, with particularly good views during the snowy weather. A **Rough-legged Buzzard** was reported at Cromer, Walkern on 24th. A female **Merlin** was reported from the watchpoint along the Baldock/Wallington road on 2nd, 3rd and 24th and over the A1 at Knebworth on 21st. An adult female **Peregrine** was roosting and showing well in Hemel Hempstead town centre from 19-29th, two were seen at Rye Meads on 3rd and 19th, and one was perched on the pylon near the hide at Tyttenhanger main GP on 19th, 25th and 30th. A total of 37 **Grey Partridge** in pairs or small coveys were seen in the Therfield area on the 18th. **Water Rails** were showing well in the open in many places during the freezing weather with reports from 24 locations involving over 50 birds. A flock of 105 **Golden Plover** was seen at Tring Res on 2nd but no flocks were seen once the ground was covered with snow on 6th. There were few reports of Lapwing, the biggest flock was 339 at Tyttenhanger GP on 8th. A male **Ruff** was at King's Meads from 11-21st and one was roosting on the ice at Wilstone Res on 19th. There were excellent views of up to 5 **Jack Snipe** at East Hyde from 1-11th, two were at Lemsford Springs NR from 8-12th and a single on 17th, singles were in the watercress beds at Park Street on 8th and at Amwell NR on 25th three were seen in the Chess valley (SE of M25) on 15th. Good numbers of **Snipe** were reported from 23 locations, with max 37 at King's Meads, 20 at Lemsford Springs NR, 18 at the Commons LNR, Welwyn Garden City and 26 at Redbournbury during the snowy weather and 23 at Amwell NR on 27th. Single **Woodcock** were reported from 15 locations with two seen in the Tyttenhanger area on 4th. A **Redshank** was seen at King's Meads on 7th and from 18-29th, two were at Wilstone res on 3rd and 19th and one in the river Red at Redbourn on 9th. Green Sandpiper were seen at nine locations with max three at Lemsford Springs during the freezing weather and three at East Hyde on 1st.

The body of a recently dead 1st year **Kittiwake** was found at Tyttenhanger on 16th. **Mediterranean Gulls** were seen in the gull roost at Wilstone Res, an adult on 23rd, a 2nd winter on 24th and 28th, and three (ad, two 2nd winter) there on 26th; there were over 4000 **Black-headed Gulls** in the roost. Two adult **Yellow-legged Gulls** were reported at Amwell NR on 1st and a single in the gull roost there on 4th. Groups of up to 15 **Ring-necked Parakeets** were reported in the Watford/Rickmansworth area. **Barn Owls** were seen at Hertford, Kingsbourn Green, South Mimms and Stevenage. Little Owls were reported from 18 locations with two heard calling at Sarratt Mill, Scotsbridge Mill, Stockers Farm and KGV playing fields in Watford. A **Long-eared Owl** was flushed at dusk on 3rd from a thicket near the reed bed at Wilstone Res.

A female **Lesser Spotted Woodpecker** was seen in Lilley park wood, Lilley on 3rd, one was seen in Hatfield on 17th and a male in Frogmore NR, Chess valley on 23rd. **Great Spotted Woodpeckers** were heard drumming even in the freezing weather. **Stonechats** were seen at King's Meads, up to four (2 prs) all month, and singles at Woodoaks Farm (Maple Cross), Northchurch (Berkhamsted), Sarratt Bottom and Hartham (Hertford). A Firecrest was found in Stevenage on 29th and was still in Pryors wood at the end of the month.

Single **Cetti's Warblers** were seen at Amwell NR, Rye Meads and Tring Reservoirs (in song) on 2nd. There were a large number of **Blackcap** records from gardens and at least 12 **Chiffchaffs** seen at Troy Mill Lake on 19th.

Ravens were seen in the Berkhamsted area, three seen rolling and tumbling over Gadebridge Park, Hemel Hempstead on 24th; Two were seen in Chess Valley on 21st, and in Hatfield Park on 24th, singles reported from Lilley, Kings Walden and Welwyn. There were reports of **Fieldfares** and **Redwings** moving into gardens during the freezing weather, numbers built up during the month with flocks of 200 **Fieldfares** seen on fields at Maple Cross on 19th and 250 with 30 **Redwings** at Hertford on 26th. Low numbers of **Bramblings** but **Siskins** were seen in good numbers. Flocks of **Linnets** were seen at Redbourn (250) and Tyttenhamger (150) and there were small numbers of **Lesser Redpolls**. One **Crossbill** was also seen on Hatfield Aerodrome with a flock of 19 at Home Park, Hatfield on the 24th.