

# Sheffield Bird Study Group

# BULLETIN



**NUMBER 186, FEBRUARY 2007**

**www.sbsg.org**

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**Bulletin**

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## Dates for your diary

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### INDOOR MEETINGS

**Wednesday 14th March - 7.15pm - Lecture Theatre 5, The University Arts Tower.** As usual the March meeting is the **Annual General Meeting** and we hope that as many of you as are able will attend. After the AGM one of our own members, **Peter Robinson** will talk to us about his experiences in **Uganda**. Peter has shared his experiences in other parts of the world with us and we are sure that this talk will both entertaining and informative.

**Wednesday 11th April - 7.15 pm - Lecture Theatre 7, The University Hicks Building. (PLEASE NOTE CHANGE OF VENUE FOR THIS AND JUNE MEETINGS ONLY)** **Mike Innerdale** from the National Trust will talk to us about the "**Alport Project**". The Alport Project is a 40-year management plan for the Alport Valley and the SBSG is doing the 4-year baseline survey of the bird life. We look forward to an interesting and informative look at this project and its implications.

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### FIELD MEETINGS

**Mini-bus Field Trips.**

**Sunday 25th February – Yorkshire Coast – Meet 7.00 am Paternoster Row.**

*For information and booking on the above trip contact Paul Medforth on 01246 418120 or 07968 092032.*

**Local Field Meetings**

**Saturday, 17th March – 9.00 am Upper Derwent Valley – Raptor Watch.** Meet at 9.00am at Windy Corner but note that parking there is limited. Some parking is also possible in a couple of pull-offs by the dam wall of Howden Res, a couple of hundred metres before Windy Corner. March offers the best chance to see various raptors that are resident in Upper Derwentdale as they display over the surrounding plantations and moorland. Display depends on weather conditions, but if these are right we have a good chance of seeing Peregrine, Goshawk, and Common Buzzard as well as Sparrowhawk and Kestrel. At this time of year there's always the chance of something else on the raptor front, as well as possibilities on the reservoirs themselves. Wrap up warm! **For further information on this trip, to be led by Kevin Gould and David Wood, contact David Wood on 2306928.**

**Sunday, 29th April –8.00 am Thrybergh CP.** Thrybergh CP, to the NE of Rotherham (access off the A630 between Rotherham and Conisbrough, is one of our area's top locations for spring passage, with an enviable record for local rarities and scarcities down the years. Whether or not we are fortunate enough to see anything truly out of the ordinary, Thrybergh CP is a good spot to see a range of wildfowl and warblers, and one of the best places locally to see terns on passage. This is a great chance to get to know this site under the leadership of Paul Leonard, who knows the area and its birds as well as anybody.

## The Lecture

# Little Egrets in the UK

The October speaker was Andy Musgrove, who is Research Manager for the BTO's Wetland and Coastal Ecology Unit, and National Co-ordinator for the Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS). WeBS is a collaborative project between the BTO, RSPB, WWT and JNCC (Joint Nature Conservation Committee). Its principal aims include determining population sizes, together with trends in numbers and distribution, of non-breeding waterbirds in the UK. The main focus is on autumn and winter, but records are collected throughout the year. Synchronised "core counts" are made every month at as many wetland sites as possible (including rivers, estuaries, marshes, reservoirs, etc.), whilst Low Tide Counts are made on about 20 estuaries each winter to identify important feeding areas. Data is collected by 3000 volunteer counters who monitor sites throughout the UK. It was WeBS that first drew attention to a significant increase in Little Egret numbers in the 1990s. Andy is also involved with other work associated with water birds, including monitoring off-shore Scoters, and preparing data for public inquiries such as the Cliffe Airport project. He also fields enquiries from government on issues such as Avian Influenza.

Little Egrets are fairly easy to identify: males are the same as females — snowy white with black legs, yellow feet, dark bill and lores, and are about half the size of a Grey Heron. In the breeding season, the feet and lores go pinkish, and the birds develop plumes on their chests, back of head and scapulars. Their preferred habitat is open water such as lagoons, marshes, gravel pits, river valleys, etc. In spite of their striking appearance, they are easy to miss on saltmarshes as they disappear into the creeks. They feed in shallow water and on mudflats, on frogs and other amphibians, fish, shrimps, worms and other invertebrates, and occasionally small birds and mammals. They sometimes feed amongst cattle, eating the insects disturbed by the animals' feet, but they do not perch on the animals as Cattle Egrets do. They are very widespread in the Old World throughout southern Europe, Asia, and Africa. They can disperse over large distances, and are capable of crossing the Atlantic.

The early history of the Little Egret in the UK is uncertain. A 14th century document showing the prices of "poultry" gives "Egret 18 pence" but there are no fully documented records of Little Egret until a Yorkshire record in 1826. It is known that Bitterns and Spoonbills were common in the Middle Ages, and possible that Little Egret was too. A record that "many white herons do breed" in Dousdale Holt in Huntingdonshire in about 1600 is thought to refer to Spoonbills which we know did nest there at that time. It is possible that the species was present in the Middle Ages, and disappeared in the so-called "Little Ice Age" (c1550-1850).

Throughout most of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, Little Egret populations in Europe were at a very low ebb, due to the popularity of their plumes with the fashion industry; indeed they were totally wiped out in France. However the recolonisation of France started in the Camargue, where there were about 1000 pairs by the early 1950s. They spread from there in the mid 1970s, moving up the western French

coast. Their expansion took the form of wintering for a few years in a new territory, then starting to breed there, and then dispersing again northwards. The expansion is still continuing: the French breeding bird surveys show that the species occupied 110 of the French survey squares in 2003, and 190 (an increase of 73%) in 2004. The reasons for this increase are not entirely understood, but it is believed to be linked to increased protection since 1962 coupled with fewer harsh winters (there were no harsh winters in the west coast of France in the whole of the 1970s). It is estimated that the mid-winter population in western France is 8000 birds.

For the UK the spread has recently been equally dramatic. After that first Yorkshire record in 1826, there were then very few until the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Some counties had a long wait for their first records, for example, 1952 for both Sussex and Norfolk, 1957 for Kent and Hampshire, and 1965 for Somerset. Numbers then steadily increased and by 1988 there were about 40 records annually in the UK, virtually all of which were in the months April to August with a big peak in May. The first big influxes occurred in both 1989 and 1990 when there were about 120 records in each of those years. These birds were believed to come from post-breeding dispersal from French colonies, as most records were coming in August with now a much smaller May peak. At this stage, the status of the species was still summer non-breeding visitor.

The WeBS project as we know it today started in 1993 as an amalgamation of other schemes including the National Wildfowl Count and the Birds of Estuaries Enquiry. That year there was a peak total of 185 Little Egrets with over half of them coming from three sites: the Tamar complex (48), Chichester Harbour (44) and the Taw-Torridge estuary (11). The increase continued from 1993-2000, with peak numbers in August to October, and an increase in numbers staying throughout the winter.

It was known that daytime counts give an underestimate of numbers, because of the difficulty in locating birds in creeks and gullies, so attempts were made to count them at their roosts. In September 1999, the estimated total number in Britain was 1650 birds, and in January 2000 the count was still as high as 850.

The first successful breeding record of Little Egret was on Brownsea Island in Poole Harbour in 1996 when they raised 3 young. In 1997 came the first successful nest in Eire, with unconfirmed breeding elsewhere. By 2004 there were 30 confirmed breeding colonies, totalling 366 pairs. It is predicted that there could be 600 pairs in 2006 (this compares with 10,000 pairs of Grey Heron). Breeding is moving northwards, up to Frodsham in Cheshire in the west and Holkham in Norfolk in the east. They are also spreading inland. There are no breeding Little Egrets in Yorkshire yet but it is only a matter of time before they arrive. Holkham is one of the most northerly colonies, and is also one of the biggest, with 30 pairs. Little Egrets nest in trees either deciduous or evergreen, and can be very difficult to see.

The WeBS core counts take place every month, and gave nearly 3000 Little Egrets in January 2004. In the winter of 2004/5 it was found that the counts at most sites on the west and east coasts were reaching new peaks, whereas counts along the south coast appeared to have stabilised. The northern boundary for winter colonies in the UK at present seems to be south of the

Humber estuary in the east and the Ribble in the west. It is not known whether or not these boundaries will be breached. Inland spread is quite rapid, particularly along river valleys.

The following table summarises the progress of Little Egrets:

1800-1950	Virtually non-existent
1950-1988	Rare visitor, increasing to c 40 annually
1989	Approx 120 records; birds always present in UK from this year onwards
1996	One pair nesting
1999	Approx 1650 birds present at autumn count
2003	Approx 250 pairs nesting
2003	Estimated 4000 birds counted in autumn
2006	Projected 5000-6000 birds at autumn count

The expansion is thought to be due to increased protection and warmer winters. Where will they stop? If they reach the Humber, there is then a big step to the next major estuary, namely the Tees. On the west coast, there are more river estuaries, so expansion beyond the Ribble could be easier.

Andy finished his talk with a summary of the fortunes of other members of the heron family in the UK. The Bittern is now doing quite well: after being reduced to 11 booming males in 1997, there were about 55 in 2004. Spoonbills historically bred in the fens, but is thought to have disappeared in the seventeenth century. Of recent years there has been the odd breeding pair, but the expected increase in their population has not happened. Cattle Egrets are spreading northwards through France quite quickly, whilst the Great White Egret has increased dramatically in the Netherlands, where it is much more common than the Little Egret. There are increasing numbers of both

these species in the UK, and it now seems possible that they may overtake Spoonbills as the next colonisers of the UK.

Andy was thanked for his most interesting account of the long absence of this attractive species from the UK, and its rapid northward march. His talk amply illustrated the value of monitoring bird populations, and he asked us to get out there and do our bits. The BTO has an enviable reputation for its independent and accurate research, and this is only possible with the help of the literally thousands of volunteers who work with the BTO staff to do the fieldwork. The BTO runs many and diverse surveys, not just the general ones like WeBS, the Breeding Bird Survey, Nest Record Scheme, etc. but also surveys of individual species such as Barn Owls and Herons. Our regional representative is Chris Falshaw who would be delighted to hear from you (tel: 0114 2303857 or email [chris@falshaw.f9.co.uk](mailto:chris@falshaw.f9.co.uk)).

**Wendy Thomson**

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## HERON CONSERVATION

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A recent publication entitled "Heron Conservation" edited by James A Kushlan and Heinz Hafner has been donated to the Group. The book sets out the worldwide agenda for conservation of the herons of the world. It gathers together known details about the populations and distribution of the world's herons and, based on this, what is known about their conservation needs. We have decided to make it available to any member for a donation to SBSG funds. Please contact Margaret Miller if you are interested.

## THE NEW SHEFFIELD BREEDING ATLAS

With the breeding season just around the corner (or already under way for some resident species), it's time to get involved in the Breeding Atlas project, which we hope is in its final year. Assuming that all those who took to a tetrad last year have completed them, there are some 45 tetrads (of 300!) left to complete coverage of our area's breeding birds. The Atlas recording form has been included in various *Bulletins* and includes instructions for the method being used. The form is also available on the Group's website ([www.sbsg.org](http://www.sbsg.org)). Below are details of the tetrads that remain to be covered, with an indication of their location. If a third of the membership can take a tetrad, with a commitment of 3 mornings over the spring-early summer to visit each tetrad, we'll be home and dry: this is the biggest project the Group's undertaken in recent years and its success depends entirely on our efforts. The results are already throwing up some revealing findings, presented at some recent indoor meetings. If you have any questions, talk to me at

an indoor meeting, give me a call (2306928) or e-mail me ([david.wood@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:david.wood@sheffield.ac.uk)). Forms with the appropriate map attached are available at indoor meetings, or can be sent by post. And if you have covered one of the tetrads below, please let me know, and let us have any completed recording forms that have not yet made their way back in: either submit at an indoor meeting, or send to David Wood at 23 Crimicar Drive, Sheffield, S10 4EF.

Please get involved: the experience of those who've been doing the survey to date is that it is thoroughly rewarding in terms of what you learn about our local breeding birds, and it certainly adds another dimension to birding through the spring and summer.

Many thanks,

**David Wood**

SK17R – Cressbrook + Miller's Dale	SK47J – East Eckington	SK48V – Harthill
SK18B – Rushup Edge	SK47L – Duckmanton + Woodside	SK48W – Kiveton Park
SK18M – Lose Hill	SK47P – Spinkhill	SK48X – Todwick
SK37Q – Brampton, Chesterfield	SK47Q – Bolsover	SK49C – Kimberworth Park + Wingfield
SK37R – Newbold, Chesterfield	SK47R – Shuttlewood	SK49H – Greasbrough + Parkgate
SK38E – Stannington	SK47S – Stanfroo + Clowne Common	SK49I – Rawmarsh + Upper Haugh
SK38K – Greenhill + Lowedges	SK47V – Bolsover Moor	SK49J – Wathwood + Abdy
SK39Q – Firth Park	SK47W – Oxcroft	SK49L – Herringthorpe
SK39V – Meadowhall + Tinsley	SK47X – Clowne	SK49N – Ryecroft + Kilnhurst
SK47A – Calow	SK48A – Plumbley + Ridgeway Moor	SK49P – Swinton
SK47B – Brimington	SK48B – Hackenthorpe	SK49T – Thrybergh Park + Hooton Common
SK47F – Arkwright Town	SK48F – Halfway + Mosborough	SK49U – Swinton Bridge + Denaby Common
SK47H – R. Rother nr Staveley	SK48G – Waterthorpe + Crystal Peaks	SK49W – Bramley
	SK48Q – Norwood	

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## PROFILE

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The water thrown by a Tunisian guide on to a small patch of Roman mosaic paving, enhanced the many colours of the subject, a multi coloured bird. I thought the representation must have been a figment of the of the artists' imagination. I marvelled at that imagination along with the many things Roman in general. Then I looked up; and there, on the telephone wire, was the living bird. I had no idea what it was but I was thrilled by the sight. That was in 1968. Years later I realized I had seen my first Bee-eater.

Later the same year, at the very top of a pass near Llanberis in North Wales, an adult male Merlin perched on top of a stone gatepost, less than 3 metres from the car. The staggeringly beautiful bird was there for four or five minutes... and we left first.

Obviously, I needed a bird book; so I bought the *Readers Digest Book of Birds*. I now know that the illustrations in that book are appalling, but (I think) I have kept that book as an example of just how bad bird art can get. Nevertheless I looked at those illustrations time and time again and began to think that things like Bar tailed Godwit, Great Crested Grebe and even Nuthatch must be extremely rare if not... extinct.

In time, I bought myself a pair of 8x 20 Trinovids, not especially for birding, but I did take them on walks and started looking at the easy, obvious things like Rooks and Kestrels. Gill decided she needed her own pair because everything seemed to have ...gone by the time I handed mine over to her. So we added a pair of 8x 25's to the inventory. The library started to grow.

Now we found ourselves looking closely at the stuff in the garden and found rarities such as Greenfinch and Coal Tit. We realised that a Dunnock was not a female House Sparrow and that the plumage of a Wren was so much more when viewed up close. The courting ritual of Great Crested Grebes, on T.V. encouraged me to try and find the real thing. I can't remember why, but we went to Eyebrook reservoir, and along with a wonderful flock of Wigeon and a Pintail, we found Great Crested Grebe. A seemingly wildly experienced birder was happy to confirm our identifications in his *Fitter Parslow*.

The fire was stoked by a friend who bought us membership of the RSPB for Christmas, which led us to Blacktoft, where some kind soul let us peep through his 'scope. I still clearly remember the glorious image which was my first close look at a Pochard.

Trips to other reserves followed and eventually after finding a copy of an SBSG annual report in the foyer of Weston Park Museum, we joined the group and began to go on Mike Fenner's Sunday field trips. It soon became clear that the tiny Trinovids were not really up to the job, so two pairs of 8x 32s were bought and shortly after that an 80mm Optolyth was acquired. A bit

of sea watching meant that once again, the bird had often gone before someone was on to it, so an 80mm Kowa was added to the kit, to keep her smiling.

Mild twitching was pursued for a while and the garden suffered badly. I found myself planning the route to some of my jobs so that I was able to spend an hour here and there on some reserve or other. During this period the bookcases began to groan and still do, for that matter.

Kevin nearly twisted my arm off, in getting me to take up a bit of committee work, *bless* him, and for while I did the bulletin and then was (an unbelievably inefficient) secretary for a while.

Spending time in hides or at Gull roosts, means hearing much talk of birding worldwide. That, together with SBSG lecturers (and some mild twitching) started the huge carbon footprint that our subsequent birding represents. A couple of Israel trips, Lesbos, Portugal, Southern Morocco, Nepal, Trinidad and Tobago, Tanzania, South Africa, Southern India and Madagascar. That's an awful lot of miles, but with many unforgettable sights ...and quite a few dips. Next, we're off to Bhutan. I know that there are people who are just not interested in birds that occur outside their (often quite local) area and for whom trends are perhaps the most important element of their birding. But I'm afraid that is not me. My boat gets floated by the very sight of something like a Reed Warblers Gape, a Desert Warblers eye, the plumage of a Rubythroat, or of a Black Bittern; it could be the flight of a Red Kite or a White Winged Black Tern or, (once so far) a Wallcreeper; or it might be an Osprey's dive and subsequent take off. For me birding is an aesthetic thing, it is eye and soul food and I still can't get enough of it. There are of course the other visual joys represented by the Photographers, SteveYoung, Chris Gomasall and Dave Cottridge. The artists like Lars Jonsson and the more technical Ian Lewington are a source of much delight and add to the enjoyment of the, more often than not, very wet, Rutland Bird Fair. The Fair is a great place to ogle new kit and meet up with (or in some cases, dodge) people we haven't seen for ages.

So, as decrepitude begins to bite, (Madagascar for instance, was *unbelievably* hard work), and as the garden and in my case photography, impose greater and greater demands on time, I'm afraid passion for the local scene has waned somewhat.

These days, I meet people who are just starting out, who are excited by something like their first Redshank and I am quite envious of them and of all they will discover.

**Ron Walker**

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## LONG-EARED OWL SURVEY

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This year the World Owl Trust is co-ordinating a survey of Long-eared Owls in the UK in order to improve knowledge of population size and distribution. They are looking for volunteers to visit a site of their choice during evenings in March to listen out for the birds calling. Time commitment to this survey is very flexible. Anyone interested in taking part can find out more about the project and get a survey form at the website ([http://www.owls.org/Whatis/long\\_eared\\_project.htm](http://www.owls.org/Whatis/long_eared_project.htm)), at the indoor meeting, or contact the SBSG secretary.

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## ARTWORK RAFFLE

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Congratulations to **Sean Ashton**, the winner of the Richard's Pipit painting in the December meeting. Thanks to everyone who took part.

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## LOCAL FIELD MEETINGS

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### **Chapelton Park, 19th November**

On a cold but bright and sunny autumn morning 8 local residents, 2 Sheffield countryside rangers, 1 SBSG member and myself gathered at the park entrance in anticipation of spotting some of the local woodland residents. A 2 hour walk around the park produced a couple of good size tit flocks, good views of Nuthatch and Treecreeper and a large group of Chaffinches feeding on the abundant beech mast. However, lingering around some of the favourite haunts of the Lesser Spotted Woodpecker proved fruitless, and none of the Chaffinches could be turned into Bramblings. Despite these two previous residents eluding us a good morning was had with a total of twenty species seen. Thanks to the park rangers for their input.

### **Porter Valley, 3rd December**

6.30am. The alarm goes off. The wind is howling and rain is pounding against the bedroom window. I did **not** want to get up. However, dragging myself up for the pre-dawn meeting time at Whiteley Woods was immediately rewarding, with a calling Tawny Owl being one of the first birds of the day. The sun now rising, thrushes start to sing from all directions as the group for the walk assembles – two Sheffield Park Rangers, Brian Wilkinson, Chris Falshaw and myself. We set off up the valley under the now clear skies. A good array of woodland and water birds were seen – 26 species in total – with good views of Dippers and a large flock of Long-tailed Tits highlights of the morning. Thanks again to the Park Rangers and to Brian and Chris for sharing their knowledge of the area.

*Helen Hipperson*

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## COMMITTEE NOMINATIONS

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The Annual General Meeting will be held at our Indoor Meeting in March. As you will know, Matthew Capper left for "Pastures" new last autumn and this left us with two vacancies on the Committee. The position of Chair has been shared by other members of the committee since the departure of Pete Brown. There is therefore an opportunity for two members who feel they would like to contribute fresh ideas to join the committee and put those ideas into practice. The Committee meets approximately two weeks before indoor meetings and tries to provide the membership with an organisation which promotes the study of birds (such as the Atlas project), and gives value for money for the subscription! If you feel you have the time, inclination and energy to contribute, or can persuade any other member who has, please contact any committee member.

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## BEST DAY'S BIRDING IN BRITAIN

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Getting people to write Profiles has become increasingly difficult and maybe we have come near to the end of people who are willing to write these. It was therefore decided to introduce a different subject which we hope will persuade some of you to write an article for the Bulletin and we came up with the above. Everyone must have a good day which they remember particularly, maybe a really good sighting of an elusive bird or, perhaps, the sheer number of a particular species or different species (maybe for some it could be difficult to decide – they have so many!). For whatever reason you remember it, if you would like to share the memory of such a day with the Group please send it to the Bulletin Editor for inclusion in a future Bulletin.

And, don't forget, we would still like to hear from you on any other subject you would like to share with other members.

*Margaret Miller*

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## GOOD WISHES

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Betty East, a long time member of the SBSG but who through ill-health cannot attend meetings these days has asked me to pass on her thanks to all those from the Bird Study Group who have visited, sent cards, flowers and best wishes while she was in hospital in the autumn and since she is convalescing in a nursing home. She is still birdwatching as two feeders have been attached to her window and these are attracting blue tits and great tits so far, and she watches a regular fly-over of corvids just before dusk!

She is making good progress and is hoping to be able to walk her local "patch" in the Porter Valley in the Spring!

I am sure we all wish her a speedy recovery and look forward to getting her record slips from her local patch again!

*Margaret Miller*

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## FOR SALE

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Opticron Universal Digital Camera Adaptor mint condition Cost £98.00 accept £55.00 telephone 01142 303 857

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## PAPUA NEW GUINEA

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I am leading a small group on a budget tour of PNG for 3 weeks or so in July. Due to someone dropping out recently, I can take one or two more keen birders. This is a rare opportunity to see some fabulous birds including over 20 birds of paradise, in the company of legendary South Yorks birders. If interested, please contact me on jonhornbuckle at yahoo.com or 2666887.

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## COPY DATE FOR APRIL BULLETIN

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**The next Bulletin will be issued at the April Meeting on 11th April. As this is Easter week the Bulletin will have to be printed the previous week. Please note that any items for inclusion in Bulletin must be received by Margaret Miller, at 14 Worcester Close, Sheffield S10 4JF, or by email to [margaret@margaret6.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:margaret@margaret6.fsnet.co.uk) by FRIDAY 31ST MARCH.**



## RECENT HIGHLIGHTS

### December 2006-January 2007

These records are largely unchecked. Those in bold require submission of full supporting details

<b>Great Crested Grebe</b>	WeBS counts at RVCP had 45 in Dec; down to just 20 in Jan.
<b>Leach's Petrel</b>	<b>Found dead outside a beauticians in Sunnyside, Rotherham on 10<sup>th</sup> Dec (per RDRW).</b>
<b>Bittern</b>	The bird at Pit-house West, RVCP, noted on various dates to 21 <sup>st</sup> Jan at least.
<b>Bean Goose</b>	<b>2 flew north, mid-morning at RVCP on Christmas Day (RG+KRG)</b>
<b>Pink-footed Goose</b>	130 flew SE at Grindleford on 2 <sup>nd</sup> Dec. 200 flew SE at RVCP on 16 <sup>th</sup> Dec; 160+ flew over Dore Moor on 7 <sup>th</sup> Jan; 150 flew NW over Poolsbrook CP on 14 <sup>th</sup> ; 270 flew west over Hackenthorpe on 15 <sup>th</sup> with c.110 west over Bradway later the same day. A massive NW movement of c.3000 was noted over both Aston and Hollow Meadows mid-morning on 30 <sup>th</sup> Jan, with skeins of 300 and 60 noted over Aston and Bradway respectively in the early afternoon.
<b>Snow Goose</b>	<b>an adult white phase flew W/NW over Poolsbrook CP with 150 Pinkfeet, on 14<sup>th</sup> Jan was no doubt same as bird seen heading west, with Pink-feet, over Frampton Lincolnshire at 10:15 having previously resided in Norfolk for several weeks (PW+KRG)</b>
<b>Wigeon</b>	WeBS counts at RVCP of 143 and 186 in Dec and Jan respectively. 3 on R Derwent at Chatsworth on 30 <sup>th</sup> Dec were unusual.
<b>Gadwall</b>	WeBS counts at RVCP of 36 and 48 in Dec and Jan respectively.
<b>Teal</b>	WeBS counts at RVCP of 65 and 81 in Dec and Jan respectively.
<b>Shoveler</b>	WeBS counts at RVCP of 12 and 32 in Dec and Jan respectively.
<b>Pochard</b>	WeBS counts at RVCP of 108 and 114 in Dec and Jan respectively.
<b>Tufted Duck</b>	WeBS counts at RVCP of 61 and 40 in Dec and Jan respectively. A count of 204 at Thrybergh CP on 24 <sup>th</sup> Dec.
<b>Scaup</b>	an imm present at Thrybergh CP from 8 <sup>th</sup> to 28 <sup>th</sup> Dec.
<b>Goldeneye</b>	WeBS counts at RVCP of 21 and 25 in Dec and Jan respectively.
<b>Goosander</b>	WeBS counts at RVCP of 77 and 36 in Dec and Jan respectively (though up to 70 in late afternoon counts).
<b>Ruddy Duck</b>	WeBS counts at RVCP of 25 and 35 in Dec and Jan respectively.
<b>Hen Harrier</b>	A wing-tagged juv ar Ringinglow Bog on 2 <sup>nd</sup> and 15 <sup>th</sup> Dec and a grey male at Big Moor on 2 <sup>nd</sup> Dec. A ringtail reported at Townend Common, Deepcar on 22 <sup>nd</sup> Jan.
<b>Merlin</b>	One at Blacka Moor on 3 <sup>rd</sup> Dec. Singles at RVCP on 23 <sup>rd</sup> and 26 <sup>th</sup> Dec.
<b>Peregrine</b>	2 at Big Moor on 19 <sup>th</sup> Dec. Up to 2 at Tinsley on cooling towers on several dates. One near the University Arts Tower on 11 <sup>th</sup> Jan.
<b>Water Rail</b>	2-3 regular at Pit-house West and one regular at Thrybergh CP. One on a small flash at Wharnccliffe Chase on 28 <sup>th</sup> Dec was unusual. One at Thrybergh Banks on 21 <sup>st</sup> Jan.
<b>Coot</b>	Numbers thought to be lower than usual at several sites.
<b>Knot</b>	A 1 <sup>st</sup> -winter at RVCP from 24 <sup>th</sup> Dec was still present to 3 <sup>rd</sup> Jan at least.
<b>Jack Snipe</b>	5 at Big Moor on 11 <sup>th</sup> Dec. One at Waverley Opencast on 3 <sup>rd</sup> Jan and 2 at Thrybergh Banks on 21 <sup>st</sup> .
<b>Bar-tailed Godwit</b>	One at RVCP from 25 <sup>th</sup> to 29 <sup>th</sup> Dec.
<b>Green Sandpiper</b>	3-4 reported from Blackburn Meadows NR.
<b>Yellow-legged Gull</b>	6+ at Poolsbrook CP on 1 <sup>st</sup> Dec; 6-10 there on 13 <sup>th</sup> ; 6 on 15 <sup>th</sup> and 1-2 on various other December dates.
<b>Caspian Gull</b>	1-2 on various December dates at Poolsbrook CP.
<b>Mediterranean Gull</b>	A 1st-winter briefly at Poolsbrook CP on 24 <sup>th</sup> Dec (KRG).
<b>Little Gull</b>	A 1st-winter flew north at RVCP on 30 <sup>th</sup> Dec.
<b>Iceland Gull</b>	Reported regularly from Poolsbrook CP with at least 4 different birds in late January with three there together on 28 <sup>th</sup> .
<b>Glaucous Gull</b>	Singles reported occasionally from Poolsbrook CP from 8 <sup>th</sup> Dec to 31 <sup>st</sup> Jan. A 1 <sup>st</sup> winter at Carr Vale on 9 <sup>th</sup> -11 <sup>th</sup> Jan
<b>Lesser Spotted Woodpecker</b>	Reported from Bingham Park on 22 <sup>nd</sup> Dec; Greno Wood on 28 <sup>th</sup> Dec and Linacre Res on 10 <sup>th</sup> Jan.
<b>Pied Wagtail</b>	Up to 120 roosting at Tesco's, Millhouses.
<b>Stonechat</b>	A male at Thrybergh CP from 2 <sup>nd</sup> to 4 <sup>th</sup> Dec. Singles at Redmires on 3 <sup>rd</sup> and 17 <sup>th</sup> Dec, with 3 there on 10 <sup>th</sup> Dec. Singles at Ramsley Moor on 10 <sup>th</sup> Dec; Barbrook Filters on 19 <sup>th</sup> Dec and Owler Bar, also on 19 <sup>th</sup> .

<b>Fieldfare</b>	250 flew west to roost at Broomhead Res on 4 <sup>th</sup> Dec. 160 at Pebleygrove Farm on 19 <sup>th</sup> Dec.
<b>Redwing</b>	149 at Stublely Hollow on 31 <sup>st</sup> Dec. 150 at RVCP on 3 <sup>rd</sup> Jan.
<b>Blackcap</b>	2 at Beighton Marsh on 1 <sup>st</sup> Dec and at least 5 there on 6 <sup>th</sup> . A female at Renishaw Park on 9 <sup>th</sup> Dec.
<b>Chiffchaff</b>	One at Ulley CP on 26 <sup>th</sup> Dec. One at RVCP on 20 <sup>th</sup> Jan.
<b>Brambling</b>	30 flew SE at Strines on 2 <sup>nd</sup> Dec. 100+ feeding on beechmast at Edge Mount on 27 <sup>th</sup> Dec and 150 there in early Jan. 100+ reported on pagers at Porter Clough on 23 <sup>rd</sup> Jan
<b>Mealy Redpoll</b>	<b>One at Barbrook Plantation on 3<sup>rd</sup> Dec (DWO).</b> One at Wyming Brook on 17 <sup>th</sup> Dec (RDH).

*Records were received from the following observers, with apologies for any omissions*

S Ashton, S Bailey, O Biddulph, RP Blagden, K Bower, SJ Branch, PL Brown, EO Chafer, K Clarkson, J Colclough, RJ Croxton, NP Dummigan, CP Falshaw, D Gains, KR Gould, R Greasley, RD Hill, Ann Johnson, J Kingsland, S Kitchen, K Knowles, P Lockwood, J Marriott, H Nicholls, MN Reeder, J Sherwin, M Sherwin, M Snook, M Thomas, R Twigg, EC Vincent, RDR Williams, D Wood, D Woodriff, Derbyshire OS, Rother Valley Study Group, Rotherham and District O.S., Sorby-Breck Ringing Group, Thrybergh CP Bird Log

**David Williams**

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## LESSER SPOTTED WOODPECKER

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I was pleasantly surprised to hear the sound of a Lesser Spotted Woodpecker drumming whilst in my kitchen at 09.15 this morning (Feb 2). I popped outside - the drumming followed by calls came from a tree just beyond my small garden but the bird was invisible. It was answered by another, drumming some 200m away in Bingham Park. I soon walked there, through the Stainton Road entrance, and located the bird, but after a few minutes it flew to the upper edge of the park. More drumming came, this time from a Greater Spotted Woodpecker. A brief foray into nearby Endcliffe park woodland was only rewarded by 2 Greater Spots drumming.

I saw and heard Lesser Spotted in Bingham Park early last spring but could not find its nest. Its an elusive bird, best located by the drumming - a little quieter than Great Spotted, at a constant frequency, not tailing off like the latter's does. The sunny, relatively warm conditions probably induced the woodpeckers to start territorial activities on the early side.

**Jon Hornbuckle**

### DATES TO NOTE – OTHER GROUPS

Time/Date	Group	Location	Speaker	Title
7.15 pm 22nd February	Sorby Natural History Society	Sheffield City Museum Weston Park	Dave Hazard	Bird Ringing in Russian, Bulgaria and Spain
7.30 pm 23rd February	DOS	Evergreen Club Allestree, Derby	Richard Brooks	The Lesvos Experience
7.30 pm 3rd March	DOS	St John's Methodist Church Hall, Buxton	John Gardner	Wings over Wales
7.30 pm 1st March	RSPB Local Group Sheffield	Central United Reformed Church	Trevor Gunton	In search of Vikings – an Empire in the Atlantic
7.30 pm 12th April	RSPB Local Group	Central United Reformed Church	Tony Hamblin	Winter Wonderland

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# GIFT AID AND MEMBERSHIP

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In recent years there have been changes to Gift Aid legislation, making it easier for charitable organisations to reclaim income tax on the contributions, including subscriptions, made by members.

The group is constantly looking for sources of income to offset the increasing costs of running the group, such as printing the excellent Annual Report, (the better it gets, in terms of photos etc, the more it costs) and also room hire for our Indoor Meetings.

Gift Aid is a means by which every basic rate tax-paying member can contribute to the group's income, courtesy of the Inland Revenue (what an incentive!). If you have paid your 2007 subscription, or are about to pay, please complete the tear off slip below, and return it to any committee member at an indoor meeting or send with unpaid subs to Margaret Miller by post. Alternatively, please send it to me at:

Anselm,  
White Edge Drive,  
Baslow  
Derbyshire  
DE45 1SJ

At the end of the tax year I can then recover 22/78 of your subscription (£3.95). If you are a higher rate tax payer, you can include the payment on your tax return, and get higher rate tax relief yourself.

Please take the time to do this, as we can potentially raise hundreds of pounds for the group.

Ron Blagden  
*Treasurer*

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# GIFT AID FORM

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NAME .....

Are you a basic rate taxpayer? YES/NO

Do you agree to Sheffield Bird Study Group treating your membership payment for 2007, and future membership payments, as a Gift Aid contribution?  
YES/NO

# ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS

Subscriptions for 2007 became due in January and many remain unpaid.

We have a good programme of speakers planned for next year, and many local and more distant field trips are also in the pipeline. The subscriptions remain the same at £14 for individual members, £16 for family membership, and £7 for juniors (up to age 16), which I am sure you will see as good value for money. A subscription form is below. To renew, please see Margaret Miller at any meeting, or send your cheque payable to Sheffield Bird Study Group, together with a stamped addressed envelope for return of your membership card, to Margaret Miller, 14 Worcester Close, Sheffield S10 4JF. For new members an application form is available at meetings, on the website, by phone to 0114 2304110 or by e-mail to [margaret@margaret6.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:margaret@margaret6.fsnet.co.uk).

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