

Sheffield Bird Study Group

BULLETIN



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Bulletin

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Dates for your diary

INDOOR MEETINGS

Wednesday 12th September - 7.15 pm – Lecture Theatre 5, The University Arts Tower

Tony Bates will talk to us about "Bourne Woods". Tony is a photographer and lecturer and will be showing us photographs of the wildlife and landscapes of his local patch. Should be an interesting talk about this part of the UK.

Wednesday 10th October - 7.15 pm - Lecture Theatre 5, The University Arts Tower

Graham Bell will give his presentation "Images of Antarctica". Graham is a cruise lecturer worldwide and a photographer and author. In this talk he will be giving his presentation on the sights and sounds of Antarctica. It should be an interesting and enjoyable experience!

FIELD MEETINGS

Tuesday 3rd July, 8.45pm – 11.00 pm. Wharncliffe Heath

Last year's excursion up onto the heath yielded good views of a pair of Nightjars, so another fine, warm evening has been ordered for this year's trip. Nightjars do not show until dusk so this trip may not finish until 10.30/11.00pm; bring along a torch if you want to find your way back to your car! From the A6102 from Hillsborough turn right at the traffic lights in Deepcar. Then, after the road passes under the A616 Stocksbridge by-pass, take the left turn signed to Thurgoland and Green Moor. Park almost immediately on the right, either side of the bridge over the river Don (SK294987). Meet here at 8.30 pm. Non members welcome.

For more information on this field trip, contact Richard Dale on 0114 2862513

The Lecture

Colour-Ringing Studies

The February speaker was Stuart Sharp, a NERC-funded post-doctoral research associate in the Animal and Plant Sciences Department of Sheffield University, where he has conducted ornithological studies for about six years. His work at the department, together with his activities as a member of Sorby Breck Ringing Group, has included several large-scale ringing studies. On this occasion he told us about two such projects, namely studies of Waxwings and of Long-tailed Tits.

Ringing Waxwings requires operating in very public places, such as car parks etc., and therefore involves more interaction with the public than is usually the case when bird ringing. Stuart found that only a tiny minority of people who spoke to him had ever heard of ringing, or had any idea about what was involved. This was a bit worrying, not least because ringers rely on members of the public reporting any ringed birds that they find. (Stuart did however find that minders and owners of car-parks, supermarkets and other urban ringing sites were very happy to help, and he was never refused permission to operate in them.)

In general, most people who are aware of ringing activities think that the main purpose of it is to study migration, and it is sometimes suggested that we already know all about that — so why keep ringing? Although ringing was indeed originally developed for studying migration, the main aim these days is to monitor avian population dynamics and identify the causes and consequences of population trends. Furthermore, migration patterns for many species remain poorly understood, and even in relatively well known species these patterns are changing all the time: it is unlikely that we will ever be able to say that we “know all about” migration.

Ringing studies provide invaluable information about birds on an individual basis, allowing us to study such factors as local movement, longevity, changes in rates of birth and death, dispersal and behaviour. One big snag, however, is that recovery rates are often very low, and any generalisations can only be made with caution. So, how can recovery rates be increased? Answer: by using colour rings. This brings a massive increase in returns because the coloured rings are relatively easy to see with binoculars; the need to recapture individuals is thus removed, and re-sighting data can be collected by members of the public rather than by trained ringers alone. Waxwings are particularly good subjects for colour-ringing studies since they are very charismatic, and often become local celebrities: birdy and not-usually-birdy people will frequently make an effort to go and see them

locally, and subsequently report or photograph them.

It is well known that Waxwings breed in northern Europe, and that they come to the UK in varying numbers each winter in response to poor conditions further north — sometimes just a handful of birds, in other years huge irruptions involving hundreds or even thousands of individuals. However, little is known about the precise breeding origins of these birds, or what factors determine the scale of irruptions; even less is known about what they do after they have arrived. Studying Waxwings therefore provides useful insights into bird movements on both an international and local scale, as well as offering a model for how birds respond to climate change.

It is commonly believed that the birds initially arrive in the north-east, and move gradually south during the winter before migrating directly back to their breeding grounds. It is also known that there are popular hot-spots which are regularly used each winter, Sheffield being one of them. However, we do not know whether the same individuals come back to these hot spots each year, or whether a flock seen daily in one place comprises the same individuals each day. It was Stuart's colleague Raymond Duncan in Aberdeen who first started ringing Waxwings in any numbers, but in spite of much effort, he got very few recoveries, hence his decision to embark upon a colour-ringing project.

Meanwhile, Stuart had been ringing small numbers of Waxwings in Sheffield: in the winter of 2002/3, he ringed 7 birds and had one return — a bird recaptured in Norway, 9 months and more than 1000 Km later; in 2003/4, a further 7 birds again gave one return — this time a bird caught in Doncaster, 1 month and 27 Km later. These two returns were interesting in that the first showed an individual in a very different location the following winter, whilst the second showed a local movement during the same winter. However, this was just a tantalising glimpse of what was to come.

In the winter of 2004/5, there was a huge and unprecedented invasion of Waxwings to the UK, starting in October with a flock of over 1500 concentrated in a few trees in the town of Forres in the Highlands. This gave Scottish ringers the opportunity to catch and ring good numbers, but when these birds subsequently moved to Aberdeen, Raymond Duncan and his team started colour-ringing on an even bigger scale. As winter progressed, large flocks began to appear in Sheffield and Stuart also started trapping and ringing more birds than in previous winters (he operated principally in Walkley and Heeley Green

at this early stage). When he found that several of these Sheffield birds had been colour-ringed in Aberdeen, he started searching through flocks with his binoculars and found several more colour-ringed individuals — and realised that here was a unique opportunity to find out a lot more about this species.

During the course of that winter Stuart caught 261 Waxwings and colour-ringed 70 of them, half of which were subsequently re-sighted at least once; 9 birds had already been ringed elsewhere in the UK (mostly Aberdeenshire) earlier in the winter, and he also re-sighted 14 birds that had been colour-ringed by Raymond. One nice thing about Waxwings is that it is relatively easy to distinguish adults from first-year birds, and males from females, by plumage details. This meant that when Stuart received reports or photographs of colour-ringed individuals but exact colour combinations were unclear, his records of age and sex frequently enabled him to identify the individuals involved. So Stuart and Raymond now have a huge amount of data that has not yet been fully analysed; however even a casual inspection gives much interesting information.

It is clear that there was indeed a general southerly movement as winter progressed, but after initial movement in the first half of the season, individual birds were then more likely to stay in the same general area for the remainder of the winter. Thus all birds ringed in Sheffield after 1st February (and subsequently re-sighted) stayed in Sheffield until the spring, whereas birds ringed earlier in the winter were subsequently found elsewhere in the UK. Of the travelling birds, at least two were reported from Nottinghamshire, about 50 Km away, initially in March but then apparently remaining there until May; one was found in Worcestershire, about 140 Km away in March; and one was found in Kent, about 275 Km away in February. Furthermore, some birds moving in early winter soon returned to their original location: one bird colour-ringed in Aberdeen was sighted in Stirling and subsequently returned to Aberdeen in the space of a month; of three birds colour-ringed in Walkley, and re-sighted a few days later in Stockport, one returned to Sheffield (seen on the Parkway) within the same week.

Stuart also found that there were continuous local movements: he checked out a particular tree in Walkley which had about 50 birds in it every day for a week, and found that there was a different set of birds each day. This has clear implications for surveys and reports, with good estimations of the numbers of birds involved in even a local invasion being hard to achieve.

Another finding was that there was some northerly passage in spring within the UK, with several birds being re-sighted as they made their way back to their breeding grounds. However, we still know very little about the precise breeding ranges of

these birds. Although this project produced record numbers of Scandinavian-ringed birds (and British ringed birds re-trapped abroad), most Scandinavian captures were at coastal migration points. However, because about 2000 birds have now been ringed, many hundreds of them colour-ringed also, there is hope that some may be located in their north European conifer forests. Finally, Stuart feels that in addition to the undoubted benefits that colour-ringing brings to our understanding of Waxwing movements, the raising of public awareness of ringing and ornithology more generally was another successful aspect of the project.

In the second part of his talk, Stuart told us about how colour-ringing has enabled us to examine the phenomenon of co-operative breeding. This refers to the behaviour in some species of birds and other animals whereby non-breeders assist other individuals with the raising of young. This has hitherto baffled biologists (including Darwin himself), as it would appear to run counter to the basic tenet of evolution that an individual strives to pass on its own genes, and certainly would not help other individuals to pass on theirs. However, this behaviour can be explained if the non-breeders help close family members whose genetic makeup is up to 50% the same as their own, a phenomenon known as 'kin selection'; the challenge is to prove that this is happening. Colour-ringing enables individuals and their family relationships to be established and large "family trees" to be built up.

About 3% of the known 10,000 bird species practise co-operative breeding, although the method of helping varies. For some species (e.g. Florida Scrub Jay and Seychelles Warbler) a large proportion of first-year birds are unable to breed because of a shortage of suitable territories, and these birds stay around their natal sites helping their parents.

A common species that practises co-operative breeding in the UK is the Long-tailed Tit. Their breeding season starts in February, when winter flocks split up into breeding pairs and start nest-building. The female typically lays 9-10 eggs at the rate of one per day, incubates them for 14 days, and both parents then feed the chicks in the nest for 16 days until fledging. Thus the whole breeding process, after completion of the nest, takes about 40 days. The species undergoes a complete moult in late summer, so can only have any chance of success if the eggs are laid before mid-May. Unlike in most other cooperative breeding birds, all individuals attempt to breed each year. However, Long-tailed Tits have a very low success rate, with nest failure, mainly through predation, occurring on average in over 70% of nests. Although they can and do start again, if subsequent nesting attempts after mid-May also fail, they no longer have time to start a new brood — and it is at this stage that

many failed breeders become “helpers”. Thus early in the breeding season, in February and March, there are no helpers, and all nests are supported by the usual two parents but, after May, more than half of all nests typically have at least one helper.

Professor Ben Hatchwell of Sheffield University has been colour-ringing all adult and nestling Long-tailed Tits in the Rivelin Valley since 1994, and has built up a database showing who everyone is, and how they are all related. The research team have found that over 80% of helpers always help a close relative, usually a sibling, offspring or parent. The most common arrangement is for brothers to help each other; this is probably because female offspring are more likely to disperse from the natal area (a common strategy in birds to avoid inbreeding). The team also found that if there was no close relative breeding in the vicinity, then a non-breeder will not normally help anyone. During his PhD, Stuart's research showed that individuals are able to identify their close relatives by learning what they sound like when in the nest. The Rivelin Valley project has also shown that the vast majority of individual Long-tailed Tits never breed successfully themselves, and only pass on their genes indirectly by increasing the breeding success of their close relatives. This therefore provides strong support for the 'kin selection' hypothesis of helping, and social behaviour in general. These findings were only

made possible through intensive use of colour-ringing.

Stuart ended his talk by outlining his next project. This is concerned with natal dispersal, arguably the most important process in biology but also one of the most difficult to study. However, the Dipper offers a unique way forward, spending its entire life in linear territories and therefore reducing many of the traditional problems of studying dispersal in birds, and keeping track of their movements throughout their lives. Stuart has therefore started a Dipper colour-ringing project in the Sheffield area and the eastern Peak District.

So, if you see any Dippers or Waxwings with colour rings, please take note of the pattern on each leg, together with any notes of behaviour (and date, time and location of course) and report it to the BTO or direct to Stuart at s.sharp@sheffield.ac.uk.

Stuart was thanked for this most interesting and entertaining account of two very different ways in which colour-ringing gives important data that would not be available by conventional ringing. We see both species locally, and now we know more about what they are up to. One of the great joys of birds is that there is always more to learn about them.

Wendy Thomson

BEST DAYS' BIRDING

The Barbrook/Big Moor area is my local patch and, since first visiting in March 1974 and seeing my first Hen Harrier, it has been my favourite birding locality (albeit sadly reduced in ornithological value since the reservoir was drained).

Two consecutive week-ends in the autumn of 1982 stand out in my memory. On the evening of 15 October, I received a 'phone call from Jonathan Hartley, a keen young birder at the time. He had been to Barbrook after school, and seen a Rough-legged Buzzard over the moors, which then moved down the Bar Brook valley.

Next morning saw Jonathan, Kev Gould, Roy Frost, Mick Taylor and myself arrive at dawn. However, after a fruitless session on the “south-west corner” scanning the surrounding moorland, there was no sign and we resigned ourselves to the fact that it was a fly-through. Our usual routine was then to walk the reservoir shore clock-wise and this we did. We saw little until, approaching the boathouse at about 8.15, one of the group scanned back across the reservoir and said “what's that”, or something similar. High above the moorland to the south-west, a bird was hovering - a big bird! The buzzard hadn't been a fly-through,

but had probably roosted in Barbrook Plantation. A mad dash ensued, down the Barbrook valley, where good views were obtained before the bird drifted south.

Returning to the reservoir, we had walked a short distance along the dam wall when a passerine was flushed from the tide line. It gave a series of long “teu” calls, before flying over the water to near the north-east side, showing the generally pale plumage, with white wing flashes, of a snow bunting.

The following Saturday morning saw the same motley crew assembled at Barbrook, recounting the previous week's events. A reasonable “vis mig” was taking place, with good numbers of passerines on the move. As I watched meadow pipits flying south-west, a bird not much bigger attempted to catch it. Great Grey Shrike. A few minutes later, it succeeded in taking a skylark, hitting it like a missile, and having great difficulty in carrying it! Since that date, our knick-name for this species has been *Lanius exocetus* (note the year).

Local patch work can be hard work, but there is nothing like finding good birds locally.

Ron Blagden

PROFILE

Although a relative newcomer to birdwatching, looking back over the years, I suppose I have always taken an interest in birds. Born in Bradford, both my parents were keen on natural history: my father on birds in particular, my mother on botany (in her schooldays women were not allowed to do zoology). I remember many a trip into the Yorkshire Dales, and further afield, being shown birds and wild flowers. A moorland walk with dad and the magic of seeing my first Wheatear is still clear in my mind. I don't think I had binoculars then but was given some in my early teens. We also fed peanuts and scraps to the garden birds, mostly House Sparrows with the odd Tit or Greenfinch. I never dreamed that many years later House Sparrows would be a rarity in my Sheffield garden. Another childhood memory is collecting cards from packets of tea. These showed marvellous birds and animals from exotic places, places that in those days I never thought to visit.

Then came university and a training in biology, followed by a career in archaeological science, first in Belfast and then in 1977 in Sheffield. A heavy workload, other interests and later a non-birding husband kept me away from birdwatching during that time. However there was the odd spark of interest, particularly when attending conferences where field trips afforded glimpses of fascinating birds. In 1994 came my first experience of real "birding" when a conference in Arizona offered the chance of a pre-breakfast birding trip. After working out that birding equalled birdwatching, and clutching a pair of compact binoculars which always seemed to travel with me, I dragged myself out of bed and was introduced to my first - and so far only - American birds. I didn't record birds at that time of course and so have forgotten many of them. I remember the brilliant red of a Cardinal and the bright yellow of an Oriole. There were also Roadrunner and Burrowing Owls. I promised myself that one day I would go back and have a better look.

Soon after this I decided there was more to life than working and managed to get early retirement in 1999. By this time I'd been introduced to recording by the BTO's Garden BirdWatch. On retirement I joined the BTO and rashly volunteered to do some local surveying, having been told that I would be accompanied by someone who knew what they were doing. Enter Chris Falshaw who gave me a Common Bird Census plot near Wiremill Dam in the Porter Valley. My fellow surveyor turned out to be another newcomer to survey work. "Never mind" said Chris "this is the best way to learn" and left us to it. I think we fulfilled the objective of the survey because it showed just how many birds had been lost since the 70's, the only other time

the plot had been surveyed. Then there had been birds such as Hawfinch and Tree Sparrow, birds I've never seen in the Porter Valley. The following year I started doing the Waterways Bird Survey along the Porter from Forge Dam down to Hunter's Bar, an area familiar to me because my house overlooks Endcliffe Park. At the same time, keen to improve identification skills and learn more about bird song, I joined a WEA class on Birds and Natural History run by Allan and Susan Parker. They were brilliant teachers who inspired people with their love of birds. I learnt a lot from them, both on the field trips and at the indoor meetings.

After retirement my husband and I had become keen walkers so we started taking walking holidays in France. We walked and looked at the wildlife (mostly me) and buildings (mostly Peter) and then we ate and drank wine in the evening. It was a good compromise for people with different interests and would probably have continued if I hadn't suddenly found myself widowed in 2001. Shared holidays then had to be replaced by something else and so I looked for alternatives. I signed up to a birdwatching break in Norfolk and a Raptor Workshop in Wales, the latter led by Keith Offord, a raptor enthusiast and another excellent teacher. My aim at this stage was to become familiar with British birds, then move on to Europe before finally branching out to other continents. But over a couple of glasses of wine Keith enthused about Namibia and I was hooked! I realised I could now go to those places I'd seen on the tea cards. So I had my first taste of raptor watching over the Straits of Gibraltar before moving on to The Gambia where I was overwhelmed by the diversity of the bird life, most of which I couldn't even identify down to family level. When I got to Namibia I knew a few birds and a few months ago in Tanzania I felt I was slowly getting to grips with the African avifauna. In India I had to start all over again. Although birds were my main interest, I also enjoy other aspects of natural history, and have been known to miss the odd bird because I've been looking at a mammal, a flower or a tree. I'm also fascinated by landscapes so it is often the complete picture that remains in my memory rather than an individual bird: the Scottish loch with its Black-throated Divers and the Ospreys fishing overhead, Kipling's jungle with its exotic flycatchers, or rice fields in southern Spain being quartered by Montagu's harriers.

I love the prospect of going to a new area – the start of a jigsaw where the pieces are added one by one, or sometimes a few at a time, as one sees and gets to know its birds. I suppose that is why after joining the SBSG about four years ago, I soon found myself hooked on the Breeding Atlas.

I tentatively took on my first tetrad in 2005 and started birdwatching in the Tideswell and Miller's Dale area. It's a wonderful region for a birdwatcher who likes walking.

So far, most of my local birding has been done in the valleys so this year I volunteered to do BBS square for the BTO up on the moors above Ringinglow. Here I was soon treated to the calls of Curlew and Golden Plover, but I still have a lot more to discover up there.

I did a token twitch a few years ago to see a Richard's Pipit near Grenoside and decided that twitching wasn't for me. Nor am I not much of a

lister, and so far I've not found a rarity. However, I've learnt a lot, made many new friends and had a lot of fun. Highlights are too numerous to list but one of the most satisfactory must be finding my own Lesser Spotted Woodpecker. As for the future, Africa has become addictive so I want to go back and explore more countries. This winter I'm having my promised trip back to the New World, not to Arizona but to Florida, and later it's Costa Rica. After that there's South America to be fitted in and then Well, the list is endless, but I shall always enjoy coming back to my local patches around Sheffield.

Jenny Kingsland

COMMITTEE

We welcome Jenny Kingsland and Simon Bailey who have both consented to join the Committee. They have both written their respective profiles and Jenny's is printed above. Other Committee matters will be sorted out soon and we hope to bring you more news in the October issue.

THANKS

Thank you to all those members who kindly signed the 'Get Well' card at the last meeting. I am making progress in a +ve direction! **Chris**

BTO REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE VACANCY

I have now retired as Regional Representative for SE and SW Yorkshire, so those posts are now vacant. If you feel that you could contribute more to the work of the BTO, by stepping into my shoes for either or both of these posts, then please get in touch with Jeff Baker Head of Membership at the BTO jeff.baker@bto.org. Jeff would be pleased to send you a full job description, or if you want to find out a bit more from a local angle feel free to contact me, Chris Falshaw (chris@falshaw.f9.co.uk)

THE IMPORTANCE OF HABITAT RECORDING

The following article by Harold Smith first appeared in the Sorby Newsletter recently issued for June 2007

“Although primarily addressed to birdwatchers the message applies to all branches of natural history although the detailed requirements may not be the same. The early part of the bird breeding season is an appropriate time to raise the matter when field work is at its peak. The system of habitat classification recommended to Sorby birdwatchers is that put forward by the British Trust for Ornithology. Details of the method are set out on the Sorby web page under “Recording Birds – Procedure – Habitat”. The importance of habitat recording has been clearly shown in an article by David Noble and Juliet Vickery in the March-April 2007 issue of *BTO News*. These authors show how habitat recording in surveys of certain species has been used as a basis for their conservation management.

“In the case of the Skylark the cause of its decline is attributed to the change from spring to autumn sown cereal crops. This is because crop height in excess of ca 30 cm inhibits successful breeding. This crop height is achieved earlier from autumn sowing so fewer birds are able to breed.

“The Lapwing provides another case where changed farming practice, namely autumn tillage in favour of spring tillage, is largely responsible for the decline of the species. The Lapwing prefers fields which are cultivated in the spring. Fields tilled in autumn as well as improved pasture are avoided. Also the choice of nesting in fields of spring tillage is strongly influenced by the proximity of grass fields to provide a source of

invertebrate food for the chicks. The loss of mixed farming has inevitably reduced the association of these habitats in the landscape.

“The loss of winter stubbles resulting from these changes in farming practice has removed a valuable source of food for finches and buntings. In the winter survey of farmland birds it seems that the decline of species like the Skylark was less where stubble had been retained in the winter.

“The recently published paper on farmland birds in *Sorby Record* No. 41 2005 refers to other correlations between species distribution and habitats using data collected by some Sorby members. The recording of habitat information is simple but if coded systems appear difficult a verbal comment is better than nothing. Why not make your records more valuable?

“If you would like to develop your skills at habitat recording try investigating the woodland habitats associated with the occurrence of the Marsh Tit and Willow Tit. The reasons for their distributions are uncertain.

Harold Smith

NOTE: I think that as much information as possible on any record slip or whatever is very important and should be documented. I recently received a 70+ page publication on “Local Wildlife Sites Selection Guidelines for Rotherham” in which the need and importance of recording habitat as well as species is crucial and should be encouraged. **Kevin Gould SBSG Recorder.**

LOCAL FIELD TRIPS

Thrybergh Country Park with Paul Leonard, Sunday 29th April 2007

Thrybergh Country Park is one of our area's most productive and well-watched sites at any time of the year, but it has particular appeal in spring as migrants flood back into the area, potentially harbouring scarcities, overshoots and vagrants amongst them. The previous day a Honey Buzzard had been reported moving through, so hopes were high for a good morning's birding as a small but eager group gathered at the side of the reservoir. We failed to produce the hoped for vagrant, but good numbers of more common migrants included several Yellow Wagtails moving through, a single Cuckoo and a number of passage waders of which the highlight was a Bar-tailed Godwit – an overdue Sheffield tick for the Group's secretary.

After we had completed a circuit of the reservoir and spent some time watching the Common Terns floating elegantly above the considerably less elegantly floating anglers, we moved on to nearby Thrybergh Tip – an inauspicious sounding

name for a promising looking expanse of various scrubby habitats alongside the river Don. Recently arrived Hirundines and Swifts hawked above the reed-lined flash, a Garden Warbler bubbled joyfully from the mature scrub and a Grasshopper Warbler reeled away unseen from the already waist-high grass and nettles. A fine morning was rounded off nicely with the spectacle of three male Kestrels noisily competing for the attentions of a single female.

This field trip was in stark contrast to much of my usual birding – in the woods and on the moors to the west of Sheffield, and I enjoyed it all the more for that. It proved to be a most interesting and informative morning, not least for the chance to soak up the wealth local knowledge from one of our most active and enthusiastic birders. Many thanks to Paul, and may I recommend you make a point of venturing out to furthest Rotherham for this field trip next year.

Richard Dale

Padley Gorge, Saturday 12 May 2007

About a dozen members and non-members assembled on the Fox House –Grindleford road at 8.30 am in traditional Peak District spring weather; temperatures in single figures, strong winds and the threat of rain!

Dropping into the valley, however, there was some shelter and everyone soon had good views of a pair of Stonechats, as well as brief views of a male Redstart around the old millstone quarry.

Skirting the edge of Lawrence Field failed to produce the Tree Pipit present the previous week, but Cuckoo and Green Woodpecker were heard, although not seen. Dropping back into the woods, however, we soon had excellent views of Pied Flycatchers; they were literally everywhere, with the best showing for some years. This area also produced good views of Nuthatch and Great Spotted Woodpecker. Once again, however, there

were no Wood Warblers, and they now seem to have deserted this upper part of the gorge.

The walk back up the main path revealed yet more Pied Flycatchers, and far better views of two male Redstarts, evidently none too happy at each other's presence.

A brief continuation into Longshaw by three "diehard" members of the group just before the rains came added Blackcap, Tree Pipit and an obliging Cuckoo to the list, as well as introducing me to the field ID of mammal droppings!

All in all, a good morning with over 30 species seen in total.

Ron Blagden

FIELD TRIP

Rutland Water- April 14th, 2007.

On a warm misty morning a full mini-bus with 17 members left Sheffield heading for this Leicestershire and Rutland Trust for Nature Conservation Reserve. The reserve contains over 3000 acres of open water plus 3 lagoons as well as mixed woodland habitat. The prospect of seeing some early Spring migrants was very inviting.

The mist persisted until we had almost reached Oakham when Paul spotted a Kingfisher by the side of the road and then Janet's expert navigation led us to a good view of an Osprey sitting atop an isolated tree near Eyebrook Reservoir. On reaching Eyebrook, a Yellow Wagtail and Little Ringed Plover both showed obligingly and we quickly found the reported Green-winged Teal. An aerial display over nearby woods was provided by an Osprey and a Red Kite warily circling one-another, before the Kite drifted away.

By the time we reached Rutland Water at Egleton the weather had improved to bright sunshine and the temperature rose steadily during the day. In the car-park, Chiffchaffs could be heard singing and were soon located in the tops of bushes giving fine views.

The group then split up and proceeded round the reserve's many hides, old and new. Our group first visited the hides to the North of the Information Centre. Blackcaps and Willow Warblers were seen and heard throughout the bushes and trees. Skirting the field which is the

usual site for the annual Bird Fair, brief views of a Sparrowhawk were obtained and a pale morph Buzzard glided immediately overhead with the terminal tail band and carpal patches showing well.

Several Brimstone butterflies were also observed. However a reported Great Northern Diver could not be found.

After lunch we explored the area South of the Centre. From the first hide further migrants were found including at least one Little Gull flying erratically over the water surface seeking small insects. Several Common Terns and small numbers of Swallows and Sand Martins were present. In contrast to the migrants a pair of Egyptian Geese paraded 7 goslings, which were already 1-2 weeks old.

Further round the reserve, en route to Laxhill woodlands, an early Sedge Warbler was seen. Orange-tip and Speckled Wood butterflies were both spotted.

One member saw a Grass Snake swimming across some water whilst several found a Muntjac Deer in Laxhill woods. The weather was unseasonably warm.

Once again many thanks to Paul (and Janet) for organising the trip and driving the bus.

Bob Bartlett

NEW MEMBERS

The Group is happy to welcome the following new members:

Chris Measures

Alan and Christine Tomlinson

Dermot Smyth

We hope you will find membership of the Group rewarding. Please make yourself known to any member of the committee at any meeting.

DATES TO NOTE – OTHER GROUPS

Time/Date	Group	Location	Speaker	Title
7.30 pm 6 September	RSPB Local Group	Central United Reformed Church	Mike Wilkes	Birds of Southern Texas
7.30 pm 4 October	RSPB Local Group	Central United Reformed Church	Paul Hobson	Scotland – Top to Bottom (and AGM)

COPY DATE FOR OCTOBER BULLETIN

As you will all know we have a two-month break for the Summer and the next Bulletin will therefore be issued in at the October meeting. The closing date for items to be included in the October Bulletin will therefore be **30th September**. Please send by email to margmiller@talktalk.net or by post to Margaret Miller, 14 Worcester Close, Sheffield S10 4JF. **PLEASE NOTE NEW EMAIL ADDRESS.**

RECENT HIGHLIGHTS

April-May 2007

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

Little Egret	One briefly at RVCP on 26 th May
White Stork	At Blue Man's Bower on 15 th Apr then flew north. Identified as a mobile Dutch ringed bird that has been around the country since Aug 2006.
Pink-footed Goose	4 at Middleton Moor on 1 st Apr. A single at Ladybower Res on 18 th May.
Teal	18 at Barbrook Pools on 5 th Apr was 'a large count here nowadays'; 21 were at Middleton Moor on 6 th Apr.
Ring-necked Duck	A male at RVCP from 29th Apr to 5th May.
Scaup	A drake at RVCP from 28 th Apr to 5 th May.
Common Scoter	A pair at Thrybergh CP on 2 nd Apr and a drake at Ulley CP on 7 th .
Honey Buzzard	One at Thrybergh CP on 28 th Apr.
Red Kite	One reported over Higger Tor on 14 th Apr. One flew north at Tapton Lock on 29 th May.
Marsh Harrier	An imm flew north over Wharnccliffe Chase on 22 nd Apr,
Osprey	Singles reported over Big Moor (5 th Apr), Redmires (15 th Apr) and Strines Res (22 nd Apr).
Hobby	First were two at RVCP on 30 th Apr.
Peregrine	A pair feeding young at Alport Castles, 21 st May.
Quail	One singing in cereal at Denaby Common on 19 th May.
Avocet	One flew north at RVCP on 29 th Apr.
Sanderling	Three at Redmires Res on 18 th May with singles there on 19 th and 30 th . Two at RVCP on 25 th .
Jack Snipe	One at Blackburn Meadows NR on 4 th Apr.
Black-tailed Godwit	A party of 4 at Blue Man's Bower on 12 th April
Bar-tailed Godwit	One flew north at Thrybergh CP on 29 th Apr and one was at RVCP on 5 th May.
Whimbrel	Largest parties were 11 east at Thrybergh CP on 28 th Apr and 13 north at RVCP on 11 th May.
Wood Sandpiper	One feeding on the margins of Redmires Top Res on 6 th May; one at Carr Vale NR on 23 rd .
Yellow-legged Gull	A third-summer at Redmires Res on 22 nd Apr. A second-summer at Barrow Hill Tip on 19 th May.
Iceland Gull	A juv flew south at RVCP on 9 th Apr.
Glaucous Gull	A first-year flew north at RVCP on 1 st Apr.
Common Tern	First were two at Thrybergh CP on 14 th Apr.
Arctic Tern	Two at RVCP on 30 th Apr followed by 6 there on 4 th May and 8 on 5 th .
Black Tern	Four at RVCP on 1 st May.
Turtle Dove	No reports received
Cuckoo	First was reported on 16 th Apr at Cattis Side. Quite widely reported from 20 th Apr.
Nightjar	Just one report from Wharnccliffe Heath on 23rd May.
Swift	First reported on 19 th May at RVCP with 100+ there on 23 rd
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	Adults feeding young at Beeley Wood and Hall Wood
Swallow	After 2 at Thrybergh CP on 30 th March, none reported until 8 th April when a single flew north at Middleton Moor.
House Martin	First was on at Thrybergh CP on 9 th Apr.
Tree Pipit	First was at Pit-house West on 11 th Apr.
Yellow Wagtail	First was at Thrybergh CP on 15 th Apr.
Black Redstart	Only one male reported singing.
Redstart	First was a male singing at Barbrook Plantation on 15 th Apr.
Whinchat	First were singles at Ulley CP and Thrybergh CP on 25 th Apr.
Fieldfare	First upland report was from Cowell Flats on 2 nd May.
Grasshopper Warbler	Last flocks were 80+ at Burrs Wood on 7 th Apr followed by 21 north at Thrybergh CP on 16 th .
Sedge Warbler	First was one reeling at RVCP on 21 st Apr.
Reed Warbler	First were two at Thrybergh Banks on 29 th Apr.
	First was one at Pit-house West on 24 th Apr, with 5 there on

	28 th .
Lesser Whitethroat	First were on 15 th Apr when 2 were at Pit-house West and 3 were at Thrybergh CP.
Whitethroat	First was one at Ulley CP on 18 th Apr. Rather thinly reported thereafter.
Garden Warbler	First were 4+ at Hall Wood on 27 th Apr.
Wood Warbler	First was one at Strines on 22 nd Apr. Later reports came from Derwentdale and Wyming Brook. At least 8 were singing between Fox Hagg and Wyming Brook on 24 th May.
Willow Warbler	First reported on 9 th April with singles at Ulley CP and Pit-house West but 4 singing at Bradwell.
Spotted Flycatcher	Three singing at Barbrook Plantation on 21 st May were the first, with three reported back on territory at Wheata Wood on 22 nd . A good total of 5 were noted between Fox Hagg and Wyming Brook on 24 th .
Pied Flycatcher	First was a male at Padley Gorge on 13 th April, followed by a female carrying nest material at North Lees on 16 th . Recent poor weather is believed to have severely affected breeding success for this species.
Golden Oriole	A fem/imm was reported at Carr Vale NR on 31st May.
Brambling	50 at Wiseman Hey Clough Plantation on 10 th April were the last reported.
Crossbill	At least 6 were at Wiseman Hey Clough Plantation on 10 th April. A pair were feeding fledged young at Slippery Stones on 8 th May.
Corn Bunting	Desperately hanging on right on our border with singing males reported just to the east of Harthill on 16 th Apr and 17 th May.

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

MG Archer, S Ashton, S Bailey, O Biddulph, RP Blagden, K Bower, PL Brown, DM Bye, J Colclough, MR Cross, R Dale, A Deighton, S Draper, CP Falshaw, D Gains, F&B Gordon, KR Gould, R Greasley, A Hill, RD Hill, J Hornbuckle, Ann Johnson, J Kingsland, K Knowles, P Leonard, P License, J Marriott, J Middleton, PH Pearsall, B Priest, MN Reeder, P Ridsdale, S Samworth, J Sherwin, M Sherwin, DW Smith, JM Swift, R Twigg, 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