

Sheffield Bird Study Group

BULLETIN



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www.sbsg.org

Bulletin

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Dates for your diary

INDOOR MEETINGS

Wednesday 12th March - 7.15 pm – Lecture Theatre 5, Arts Tower, Sheffield University

The March Meeting is the Annual General Meeting of the Group. **Andy Deighton**, who is a long time member of the SBSG, will give us a talk after the AGM on his three-week trip to **Madagascar** in August/September 2007. While concentrating on the avian endemics, he also tried to see as much of the unique mammal and reptile life as possible, especially the Lemurs and Chameleons, so this promises to be a varied and colourful evening.

Wednesday 9th April – 7.15 pm - Lecture Theatre 5, Arts Tower, Sheffield University

Tim Appleton, is the Reserve Manager of the Leicester and Rutland Wildlife Trust's Rutland Water Nature Reserve, host to the Annual British Birdwatching Fair and the site chosen for the re-introduction programme for Ospreys in England. The reserve is important for Winter Wildfowl and wader passage as well as resident and summer visitors. His talk will cover the Reserve itself and also the Osprey re-introduction programme.

FIELD MEETINGS

For details of Minibus Field Meetings please contact Paul Medforth at meetings or on 01246 418120 or 07968 092032.

Sunday 24th February - Meet 7:30 am on Station Lane bridge over the R Don at Oughtibridge, by Coronation Park, grid ref SK 308934

Starting from Oughtibridge, we will walk alongside the River Don, looking out for Dippers, Grey Wagtails and possibly Kingfisher before heading into Beeley Wood to search for the ever elusive Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers that should by now be beginning to call and drum to proclaim their territories. Beeley Wood is a particular stronghold for this species – I recorded four individuals in a morning here last spring. In addition, other residents of this mature woodland that we should encounter include Green and Great Spotted Woodpeckers, Nuthatch, Treecreeper, and perhaps Siskin and Redpolls along the river.

Saturday 8th March - 8:30 am Upper Derwent Valley Raptor Watch - 8:30 - 11:00 am at Windy Corner

Note that parking is limited at Windy Corner itself, but further parking is also possible in a couple of pull-offs by the dam wall of Howden Reservoir, a couple of hundred metres before Windy Corner. March offers the best chance to see various raptors resident in the valley, since they display over the surrounding plantations and moorland. Display is affected by weather conditions, but if these are right we have a good chance of seeing Peregrine, Goshawk and Common Buzzard as well as Kestrel and Sparrowhawk. At this time of year there's always the chance of something scarcer on the raptor front, as well as on the reservoirs themselves. Wrap up warm!

For information on this trip contact Ron Blagden on 01246 583522

For information on any other local field trip, contact Richard Dale by email.

The Lecture

Wild Goose Chase

The December speaker was Trevor Gunton, previous long-term employee of RSPB, and now enjoying his "retirement" as RSPB volunteer, freelance consultant, course lecturer, bird recorder at Paxton Pits reserve in Cambridgeshire, and leading authority on Vikings. This evening's talk covered all species of geese that are regular winter visitors to the UK in substantial numbers. All population sizes, breeding and wintering, refer to individuals and not pairs.

The Pink-footed Goose gave Trevor his first goose experiences when they wintered in the area south of the Humber that has now become the Blacktoft Sands RSPB reserve. In the 1950s and 1960s there were quite large numbers in the fields there but now there are only ever a few hundred, using the area as a staging post as they make their way south. The world population of Pink Feet numbers about 300,000, of which about 85% winter in the UK. Most of the UK birds come from Iceland and north-east Greenland, and winter in south and south-east Scotland, north-west England, and north Norfolk; they feed mainly on sugar beet tops, carrots and potatoes. The birds are commercially hunted, and it is estimated that 10,000 - 15,000 are killed each year. Nevertheless their population seems to be steadily increasing.

Brent Geese come in two sub-species, namely Dark-bellied and Light-bellied. Dark-bellied breed in western Siberia and some 215,000 winter in coastal Europe, with about 100,000 in the UK. Their UK wintering range is on the Norfolk and Suffolk coasts, and along the English south coast. Light-bellied Brents breed in Spitsbergen and arctic Canada: the Canadian birds number about 25,000, and most winter in Ireland where fields in a south Dublin suburban housing estate have proved to be very popular.

White-fronted Geese are the commonest goose worldwide, numbering over two million individuals. Their breeding range is extensive, and includes Siberia and Greenland. The Siberian birds winter mainly in the Severn and Swale estuaries, whilst the Greenland birds winter in Ireland and western Scotland; between them they number about 25,000. There are sometimes a few Lesser White Fronts in amongst the flocks.

The Bean Goose is often confused with Pink-footed, but is now recognised as a separate

species with a world population of rather less than 300,000, and they breed in northern Scandinavia and Russia. They were formerly common in fenland arable fields in the UK, but are now reduced to just a small group in the Strumpshaw Fen area.

The world population of Barnacle Geese is estimated to be about 430,000 individuals, distributed over Greenland, Spitsbergen and western Siberia. The Spitsbergen ones winter almost exclusively on the Solway, where the population has risen to about 30,000; the reason for the increase is not known but may be due to better conservation in Spitsbergen or less shooting on the Solway. The Greenland birds mostly winter in the Western Isles, with up to 40,000 on Islay. There are a few pairs breeding in the UK, mainly in gravel pits, mixed in with Canada and Greylags.

Since the early 1960s, Trevor has been leading groups to the Netherlands where wintering wildfowl can be found in huge numbers. He has also taken groups to Bulgaria and Romania, again rich in wildfowl. The special attraction for Trevor are the big flocks of Red-breasted Geese which, alas, are not to be found in the UK.

As usual with the World, there are good and bad signs for the future. On the plus side is the Great Fen project which aims to create a vast fenland of about 3,700 hectares in an area between Huntington and Peterborough, and should provide a highly spectacular wildfowl habitat. On the minus side, eastern Europe is likely to undergo much intensification of farming, as the western Europe shows them how (they think) things should be done ...

In addition to telling us about the geese we may see wintering in the UK and Ireland, Trevor also showed many wonderful photographs of the Netherlands and elsewhere in Europe where wildfowl gather in spectacular numbers. He was thanked for his most interesting and entertaining talk, and his winter scenes reminded us that there are places that are even colder than we were experiencing on a frosty Sheffield December evening.

Wendy Thomson

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

At the AGM in March two positions on the committee will become vacant as Margaret Miller and Wendy Thomson stand down after serving the Group admirably in a variety of roles over recent years. The group's Constitution encourages renewal of the general membership of the committee, and the benefits of new blood last year are very evident in the leading role Simon Bailey has assumed in taking the website forward, with Jenny Kingsland doing sterling work on the Atlas and also taking over as membership secretary.

We meet once a month, two weeks ahead of the indoor meeting (so no meetings over the summer), to make arrangements for the indoor meetings, move projects forward (e.g. website and Breeding Atlas) and consider how the Group should respond to any issues that arise.

It's an exciting time for the Group, with the award-winning Annual Report going from strength to strength, the website rapidly gathering speed again and the analysis of the Breeding Atlas data ready to roll. Without a full complement of members on the committee, there is a danger that momentum on these projects will be lost, and that the quality of the indoor meetings will not be maintained.

If you are interested in joining the committee, please speak to any of the current committee members, or contact me as acting chair (david.wood@sheff.ac.uk) or by phone on 0114 2306928).

David Wood

CHRIS FALSHAW

It was with tremendous sadness that I learned today that Chris passed away peacefully on 31st January. When I arrived in Sheffield in 1992, he was one of the first of the Group to make me welcome, always affable, enthusiastic and encouraging. A few years later he recruited me to the committee on which he served for many years, one small example of how he constantly sought to keep things moving for the benefit of our local birds and wildlife more generally, as well as their habitats. After stepping down from the committee on his retirement from the Department of Chemistry at the University of Sheffield, he continued to make a tremendous contribution to local conservation as the link between national organisations (such as the BTO) and the many local organisations in which he continued to be involved.

Widely known and respected, and universally liked, Chris combined many qualities: a true stalwart of local and national bird conservation, a devoted husband, father and grandfather, as well as always being thoroughly good company, he will be greatly missed. The world is poorer for his departure, but much enriched by his presence.

David Wood

NEW MEMBERS

The Group welcomes Peter Mella as a member of the SBSG. We hope you enjoy your membership!

GARDEN BIRDS

I was interested to read my good friend Dave Herringshaw's letter in the last issue, comparing his garden birds with the BTO's Garden Birdwatch rank order. I keep a weekly list of species and numbers, though I cannot match Dave's daily list!

My garden has lawns, borders, rowan and birch trees, plenty of feeders, but no pond; it is in South-west Sheffield on the edge of Poynton Woods, which occupy the very steep slopes south of the Sheaf just after its formation at the confluence of the Old Hay and Totley Brooks.

I believe the BTO ranking order relates not to total numbers, but to the percentage of gardens recording a species, so that Robin nationally occurred in the highest proportion of gardens, but not necessarily in the highest numbers. Bearing that in mind, the winter quarter 06/07, and the months November/December 07 had a host of first equals, in that plenty of species were there in every week:

1= (Robin
 (Blackbird
 (House Sparrow
 (Wood Pigeon
 (Collared Dove
 (Great Tit
 (Blue Tit
 (Coal Tit
 (Chaffinch
 Greenfinch
 Dunnock
 Nuthatch
 Carrion Crow
 Magpie
 Great-spotted Woodpecker

This gives a total of 15 rock-solid birds. Nearly but not quite every week sees Jay, Wren, Starling. I am amazed that Dave never records Chaffinch, because in winter we always record in double figures; I think we are visited by European migrants, but have breeding Chaffinches in Spring, when the totals drop into single figures.

If the ranking is in numerical occurrences in the winter quarter, the ranking would be:

1.	House Sparrow, average	24
2.	Chaffinch	14
3=	Blackbird	8
3=	Blue Tit	8
5=	Dunnock	6
5=	Wood Pigeon	6

For the first year, House Sparrows have been hit by the national decline. Autumn totals were 30-50 until this year, and now they are in the twenties. Starlings used to be in every week. There are local flocks, but they have fallen from 50 to 15 since 2005, and appear in my garden in two weeks in three. House roofs are still being made bird- and bat- proof, gardens paved in the most inhospitable manner (sorry, enough on that one!)

Goldfinches thrive locally, but appear in my garden only occasionally, despite the presence of nyger seed. Wrens are here nearly every week in winter, but disappear from April to October, so I assume they prefer to breed in Poynton Woods.

Nuthatches, a bird I had to travel to see in my youth, are a fixture, and feed in the trees, on the patio, and even in a box under a metre from the kitchen window.

Long-tailed Tit flocks grace us for one week in two, and in winter are usually accompanied by Goldcrests. Only a little less frequent are Sparrowhawks, which glare at us from the washing post and killed our long-standing Stock Dove visitor in November.

We have had a juvenile Grey Wagtail, but not for ten years, and a Heron on both hedge and roof, despite the lack of a pond.

The total averages 20 species through the year. The biggest changes have been falling Sparrow and Starling occurrences and numbers, together with the rise to never-failing attendance by Woodpecker and Nuthatch.

John Kirkman

OLD REPORTS AND MAGPIE

I am repeating the request I made some months ago for any old reports and "Magpies" that anyone still has lurking in the attic and which they no longer want. As I said before in dealing with requests for the current Annual Report I often get requests for previous years. Whilst we do have some copies left of some years there are some which were completely sold out! Please get in touch with me if you have any old copies which you no longer want to keep.

Margaret Miller, 14 Worcester Close, Sheffield S10 4JF or email margmiller@talktalk.net

RECENT HIGHLIGHTS

Mid-November 2007 – 27th January 2008

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

Red-throated Diver Cormorant	single at Thrybergh CP on 12th Dec. 1-15 regularly at Thrybergh CP in Nov (max 49 on 25 th); 6-40 regularly there in Dec (max 64 on 23 rd).
Pink-footed Goose	13 records between 12 th Dec and 26 th Jan, incl: 12 th Dec 340 NW at Thrybergh CP; 13 th Dec 100 W at Leadmill; 30 th Dec 150+ SW at Heeley City Farm; 31 st Dec 650 NW at Inkersall; 2 nd Jan 100 NW at Ulley CP, and 284 WNW at Waverley Opencast; 23 rd Jan 650 NW at Win Gardens, 100+ SE at Catcliffe, and 162 NW at Crookes Valley Park.
White-fronted Goose Pintail	1 at Renishaw Park on 3 rd Jan. 2 at Carr Vale NR on 20 th Nov, and singles at Thrybergh CP on 15 th Dec, and Catcliffe Flash on 22 nd Dec.
Scaup Long-tailed Duck Black Grouse Water Rail	1-2 at Ulley CP on 13 dates between 4 th and 26 th Jan. ad male at Broomhead Res on 25th Dec. 1 at Bradfield Dale on 11th Dec. singles at Thrybergh CP probably throughout Dec, and on 13 th and 27 th Jan, at Blackburn Meadows on 16 th Jan, and at Kilmhurst Ings on 23 rd Jan.
Knot Dunlin	singles at Carr Vale NR on 20 th and 22 nd Nov. 1 at Silverwood Pit Top on 20 th Nov, and 1-2 at Thrybergh CP on 26 th and 30 th Nov.
Jack Snipe Woodcock Redshank Green Sandpiper	singles at Blackburn Meadows NR on 21 st and 23 rd Jan. 1 at General Cemetery, Sharrow on 2 nd Jan. 1 at Thrybergh CP on 4 th Dec. singles at Blackburn Meadows NR on 16 th and 30 th Dec; singles at Ulley CP on 7 dates between 22 nd Dec and 19 th Jan, also 7 there on 12 th Jan; 2 at Aldwarke SF on 20 th Jan.
Mediterranean Gull	Singles at Thrybergh CP on 13 th Jan, and at Broomhead Res on 20 th Jan.
Little Gull Black-headed Gull Yellow-legged Gull	1 at Ulley Res on 4 th Jan. 1 at Thrybergh CP on 20 th Nov. 2 at Poolsbrook CP on 23 rd Nov, 1 there on 23 rd Jan, 1 at Duckmanton on 18 th Dec.
Iceland Gull Glaucous Gull	1-2 at Markham Pit on 23 rd , 24 th and 26 th Jan. 1-2 at Poolsbrook CP on 7 dates between 26 th Nov and 27 th Jan; 2 at Duckmanton on 18 th Dec, 1-3+ at Markham on 23 rd , 24 th and 26 th Jan.
Ring-necked Parakeet	Singles at: Highfield on 20 th and 26 th Nov; Heeley City Farm on 22 nd , 24 th and 28 th Nov; Lowfield on 27 th and 28 th Nov; a Sharrow garden on 4 th and 10 th Dec; General Cemetery at Sharrow on 10 th to 12 th Dec, and 9 th and 11 th Jan; Millhouses on 12 th Jan.
Short-eared Owl	Up to 3 at Silverwood Pit Tip on 14 th and 20 th Nov, 31 st Dec and 15 th Jan; 1 at Wardlow Mires on 26 th Dec.
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker Pied Wagtail Waxwing Stonechat	singles at Woolley Wood on 1 st Dec and Wadsley Common on 13 th Jan. 20+ at Millhouses roosting on 19 th Dec. 2 at Handsworth 23 rd to 26 th Jan. 14 records of 1-4 birds between 11 th Nov and 15 th Jan from Wet Shaw (SK2590), Silverwood Pit Top, White Edge Moor, High Bradfield, Catcliffe, Cowell Flat and Calver.
Ring Ouzel Blackcap	singles at Burbage on 11 th Nov, and Stubble Hollows on 12 th Jan. singles at Scholes Village on 28 th Nov, Sharrow on 22 nd Dec and Millhouses on 8 th Jan.
Firecrest Great Grey Shrike	1 at Rivelin Dams on 22nd Dec. Singles at Ouzelden Clough (SK1591) on 23 rd Nov, and Howden Res on 22 nd Jan.

Jackdaw Brambling	1 'Nordic' on 24th Jan at Markham, and 26th Jan at Erin Tip. 180 at Ouzelden Clough on 20 th Nov, and 10 at a Lodge Moor garden on 26 th Jan.
Siskin	80+ at Ouzelden Clough on 28 th Nov and 100 there on 3 rd Jan; 60 at RVCP on 29 th Nov; 40 at Leadmill on 16 th Dec; 50 in City Centre on 18 th Dec; 80 at Ladybower Res on 30 th Dec; 130 at Waverley Opencast on 2 nd Jan, and 50+ at Hope on 13 th Jan.
Crossbill	9 records incl: 18 at Ouzelden Clough on 20 th Nov; 15 at Wooler Knoll (SK1786) on 30 th Dec; 30 at Hollingdale Plantation on 7 th Jan; 20 at Redmires on 14 th Jan, and 24 there on 17 th Jan; 14 at Fairthorn Plantation on 19 th Jan.

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

MG Archer, S Ashton, D Booth, K Bower, SJ Branch, PL Brown, D Buxton, DM Bye, ID Chapman, D Curtis, A Deighton, NP Dummigan, M Earle, G Featherstone, M Garner, DG Gravenor, M Greenland, RD Hill, D Hodgkinson, J Hornbuckle, D Hursthouse, G James, A Kydd, P Leonard, P Lockwood, M Miller, DR Pickering, N Porter, M Reeder, P Ridsdale, SJ Roddis, J Sherwin, M Sherwin, MA Smethurst, D Stables, G Stride, R Twigg, E Whitehead, RDR Williams, D Wood, P Wragg, BTO Bird Track, Derbyshire OS, Sorby-Breck Ringing Group, Thrybergh CP Bird Log

Wendy Thomson

MALCOLM CROSS

Many of you will be aware that Malcolm was taken ill in November and has spent some time in hospital recovering. He has now moved to a nursing home, Lea Hyrst in Upperthorpe, before moving, hopefully soon, back to his home. I am sure that all our members wish him well.

DATES TO NOTE – OTHER GROUPS

Time/Date	Group	Location	Speaker	Title
7.30pm 29 th February	DOS	Friends Meeting House, Chesterfield	Dr Brian Barnes	The Birds of Bass Rock
7.30pm 6 th March	RSPB Sheffield Local Group	Central United Reformed Church	Hilary Sills	The Birds of Trinidad and Tobago
7.30pm 14 th March	DOS	Evergreen Club Allestree	AGM plus Mick Muddiman	An Evening with Mudders
7.30pm 15 th March	DOS	St John's Methodist Church Hall, Buxton	Brian Hobson	The River and its Wildlife
7.30pm 3 rd April	RSPB Sheffield Local Group	Central United Reformed Church	Peter Robinson	A Journey through Uganda

COPY DATE FOR APRIL BULLETIN

**The next Bulletin will be issued at the APRIL Meeting.
The last date for articles for the APRIL Bulletin is 3rd APRIL.
Please send by email to margmiller@talktalk.net, or by post to Margaret Miller,
14 Worcester Close, Sheffield S10 4JF.**

GIFT AID AND MEMBERSHIP

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 are about to pay your 2008 subscription and have not already filled in a Gift Aid form, please complete the tear off slip below, and return it to any committee member at an indoor meeting or send with subs to Jenny Kingsland 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 taxpayer, 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*

GIFT AID FORM

NAME

Are you a basic rate taxpayer? YES/NO

Do you agree to Sheffield Bird Study Group treating your membership payment for 2008 and future membership payments, as a Gift Aid contribution?
YES/NO

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS

Subscriptions for 2008 became due in January. Some subscriptions remain unpaid!

As you will have seen from the list on Page 12 of the December Bulletin we have a good programme of speakers planned for next year, and many local and more distant field trips are also in the pipeline. A copy of the Annual Report for the year prior to membership is also included. 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 Jenny Kingsland 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 Jenny Kingsland, 52A Riverdale Road, Sheffield S10 3FB. For new members an application form is available at meetings, on the website, by phone to 0114 2660759 or by e-mail to jkingsland@tiscali.co.uk

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION 2008 RENEWAL FORM

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