



SHEFFIELD BIRD STUDY GROUP
BULLETIN

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MAY 2012

www.sbsg.org.uk



STEEL CITY
PEREGRINES

The status of peregrines in the City Centre

RAPTOR REPORT

The fortunes of Peak District raptors in 2011

PLUS!

**Eastern Moors update, world birding, 2011 highlights,
latest news, recent sightings and more!**

Atlas Sponsorship—the final chapter!

It was a close-run thing but Red-legged Partridge just edged Greylag Goose by a beak to be the last species to attract a sponsor.

Yes, we've reached an important milestone. All 137 species covered in the breeding Atlas now have a sponsor and with donations we've got something in the region of £3,300 towards publication.

A very big thank you then to everyone who has sponsored a species and in some cases more than one species.

And a plea for help to solve a mystery. At the November 2011 indoor meeting (Rare Breeding Birds in the

UK), Ron Blagden, whilst dealing with several matters financial, took a payment of £20 to sponsor a species but we have no record of who that kind person was or for what species. If it helps with recall, it was the one recent meeting when I wasn't there to gently encourage members to dig deeply into pockets

Please have a think back to the evening and if you did sponsor a species or pay for one that you'd previously chosen could you contact me on 0114 2967363 or at peterbrown@blueyonder.co.uk

Many thanks

Pete Brown

Records of declining species

In recent years, we have witnessed the spectacular return of species such as Peregrine, Common Buzzard and Red Kite to the Sheffield area and been party to the slow, northerly spread of Cetti's Warbler in Britain. In our excitement however, we have perhaps failed to notice that two of our formerly widespread British birds have become so scarce that they will now be monitored by the Rare Breeding Birds Panel!

Between 1970 and 2008, **Willow Tit** and **Lesser Spotted Woodpecker** populations declined by 91 and 76 per cent respectively, and they are now only patchily recorded across their former ranges. Within the SBSG recording area, data resulting from recent 'Atlas' fieldwork indicate that this worrying national picture is becoming all too apparent locally.

Its worth noting that the Panel will also be considering two other spe-

cies – Long-eared & Short-eared Owls – for the first time.

Please help us to monitor the local fortunes of these declining species by reporting **all** sightings – particularly those involving breeding – so that SBSG is able to contribute to the important work of the RBBP and other organisations involved in the conservation of our rare breeding birds.

For further information on the work of the RBBP, please visit: <http://www.rbbp.org.uk/>; it makes very interesting reading!

Paul Leonard

News in brief

Under 21s membership

In a bid to attract the next generation of local birders, the Group is now offering FREE membership to anyone under 21 years of age. This will take the form of an e-mail copy of the bulletin, an opportunity to attend indoor meetings and local field trips, as well as a PDF copy of the annual report (please note that under 16's MUST to be accompanied by an adult when attending indoor meetings and local field trips).

For details contact membership secretary Martin Hodgson.

Membership sec new email

Please note Membership Secretary Martin Hodgson has a new email address—martin@hodgson54.orangehome.co.uk

New members

The group welcomes new members Dave Simmonite, Ibraheem Mirza, Stephen Hall, David Langston, Mark Smith and Richard Bradley. We hope you enjoy your membership and good birding!

Cover photo

This month's cover photo is by David Wood.

Deadline for next Bulletin

The next Bulletin will be issued at the September indoor meeting. Please note that any items for inclusion in the Bulletin must be received by Pete Mella at peterjmella@googlemail.com (for preference), or 21 Lump Lane, Grenoside, Sheffield, S35 8PL, by **Saturday 25th August**.

Bulletin by email

More and more members have agreed to receive their Bulletins by email, and now **well over half** of you are on our email list, meaning we have been able to cut our print run considerably, and make big savings on postage. Many thanks to all members who have agreed to this, and if you would like to switch over to receiving your Bulletin in pdf format then please email me at peterjmella@googlemail.com. **Stamps have just rocketed in price—there's never been a better time to switch!**

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Indoor Meetings

Ian Newton—The Sparrowhawk

Wed 12th September 2012, Sheffield University Arts Tower, Lecture Theatre 5, 7.15pm

Chesterfield-born Prof Ian Newton is a renowned and award-winning ornithologist, known throughout the world for his work. His publications include material on finches, bird migration and population limitations, and at this lecture he will be talking to the group about the Sparrowhawk—a species he conducted a groundbreaking 27 year study on, considered to be one of the most exhaustive studies of any bird of prey. This promises to be a fascinating talk by a true expert in the field, on a very charismatic species.

Field Meetings

Dawn Chorus walk

12th May, Ecclesall Woods

Paul Medforth will be leading this trip to Ecclesall Woods. Meet at the entrance opposite Beauchief Gardens at 06:00, SK324817. Ecclesall is the largest part-ancient woodland in the city, and can yield a wide range of woodland species with of course the magic of early-morning song.

Evening birds

June, details tbc

An evening stroll somewhere on Sheffield's moorland fringe—date and location tbc, but keep your eyes on the website for more details.

OTHER DATES TO NOTE

12th May - Dawn Chorus Walk at Wyming Brook (Sheffield Wildlife Trust). 5.30-7.30am. Suggested donation £3, contact Sarah Sidgwick on 0114 2 6 3 4 3 3 5 o r [s.sidgwick@wildsheffield.co](mailto:s.sidgwick@wildsheffield.co.uk) to b o o k .

17th May - Dawn Chorus Walk at Heeley City Farm. Led by Philip Ridsdale, meet 6am outside reception classroom. Free entry - ring 0114 2580482 for more details.

30th May - SK58 Birders indoor meeting. Mike Richardson will be giving a talk on 'From Mexico to Mexborough'. 7.30pm. Upstairs function room, Loyal Trooper, Sheffield Road, South Anston. £1 members, £2 non-members.

Group contacts

Bulletin

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Committee changes

After long and dedicated service as both a committee member and recorder, Kevin Gould has stepped down from the post.

We thank Kev for his service to the group for so many years, and welcome Mark Reeder, who has stepped in to fill the vacant slot on the committee.

Lecture report

Jon Hornbuckle

40 years of world birding

The April lecture, in front of a full house, was delivered by Jon Hornbuckle, a founder member of the group and one of the authors of the local breeding birds atlas produced by the group in 1985.

Jon began by outlining his early interests; Kingfisher behaviour studied in Millhouses and Endcliffe Parks, waterways bird surveys over a 20-year period, mainly on the River Noe, and a keen interest in raptors such as Hen Harrier, Merlin and Peregrine. In the 1970s Hen Harrier were much more numerous than they are today, with up to 11 being present on occasion at Broomhead and East Moors, often with 7-8 roosting. In contrast, Merlin was very scarce in the early days, probably a result of the widespread use of DDT; more birds were present in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Jon was also heavily involved in early efforts to protect Peregrines breeding at Alport Castles. He recalled a day in May 1985 when he found 27 Dotterel on a local moor, the highest number recorded in the area at one time.

Jon's next slides brought gasps from the audience, summarising as they did the numerous and often far-flung places in which he has watched birds. He has made 19 trips to the USA, has birded in most countries in Africa, made 14 trips to India, 18 to The Philippines and 11 to Papua-New Guinea. He has recently visited Burma.

He then went on to talk about bird groups he found most interesting. These included the pittas, of which there are about

30 species, mostly very difficult to see, and the ant-pittas of South America. These are also very retiring, with more being found about them in recent years as observers have begun to tempt them out of the undergrowth by using worms. Jon showed a slide of an apparently undescribed species found in Colombia. Among other favourites were Sword-billed and Tooth-billed Hummingbirds, the now probably extinct Kazumo Thrasher from a Mexican Island and the Great Grey Owl; Walden's Hornbill, found only on two largely-deforested islands in The Philippines; the Philippine Eagle; the New Guinea Eagle and birds of Paradise from Papua-New Guinea; the Kagu, only found on New Caledonia, and the truly remarkable Shovel-billed Kingfisher, that doesn't feed on fish but grubs for worms, photographed at what was possibly the first nest of the species ever found.

Next, Jon spoke about satisfying birding experiences. The first of these involved studies of birds in forest 'islands' set in the grasslands of Bolivia, where he spent six weeks in each of six years. A number of Sun Bitterns were caught here. Trapping along lakesides brought Rufous-sided Crake and, not initially recognised, a Rufous-faced Crake, some 2000km distant from its previous known haunts. A 1998 trip to Peru led to an attempt to conserve a good birding area threatened by logging, and involved bedding down on arrival, late at night, in an outhouse that was in fact a pig sty. Jon hoped to see Long-whiskered Owlet, found there in

1976, but failed to do so. A few have since been recorded in the area, which now has some protection. Jon was able to add a number of species to the list of those found in the area, including the very rare Bar-winged Wood Wren and Chestnut-breasted Wren, White-tipped Sicklebill and Ochre-fronted Ant Pitta.

In 1982 John visited Japan on a work-related trip and, despite heavy snow, inappropriate clothes and an absence of road signs in English, managed to find an area noted for Steller's Sea Eagle, and duly added the species to his list. Jon took a party of eight to Yemen in 1997, at a time of political stability there. His slides revealed a fascinating country, largely desert but with some dramatic mountainous areas, terraced in places for agriculture, and towns containing much fine architecture. Endemic species found there included Arabian Woodpecker, Arabian Waxbill, Arabian Serin and Arabian Linnet. A mandatory stop in Aden provided time to see several waders and gulls, including Sociable Plover, and Slender-billed, Sooty and White-eyed Gulls.

Jon was thanked for an authoritative and well-balanced lecture, notable for the quality of his slides.

Rod Hinchliffe

Lecture report

Review of 2011

At the March meeting the group's chairman, David Wood, gave a 'swift' review of the highlights of 2011, aided by photographs provided by group members.

Early in the year, Bittern remained at Pit House West for the ninth successive winter, whilst a Rough-legged Buzzard was in the Howden/Ewden area until April 17th. Between January and March there was an influx of Mealy Redpoll, especially in lowland areas. They were often found among flocks of Lesser Redpoll but were also present in twos and threes within the city. There were a number of good records from Orgreave during 2011, including Red-crested Pochard and Mediterranean Gull early in the year, Whooper Swan during March and the first of over 100 Yellow-legged Gull records noted in the area through the year. As the year progressed Red-legged Partridge were noted in the east of the recording area in fresh cereal fields.

Two Black-necked Grebe spent 10 days at Silverwood Lagoon in late March, and there were two at Orgreave on April 17th. Common Scoter were scarce, with a pair at Redmires one of only three records in the year, involving just six birds in total. Many birders sought the Great Grey Shrike at Leash Fen. It remained until April, producing some pleasant although rather incongruous song. Egyptian Goose was represented by single birds at Orgreave and Thrybergh Country Park. Yellow Wagtail were present daily in good numbers at Orgreave in early spring, with a Blue-headed Wagtail there and several White Wagtails, with one of the latter also on the uplands at Bolsterstone. Among the waders there were only two Dotterel records during the year, but a run of Turnstone sightings over seven days in early May at Orgreave, and

two Grey Plover there on May 1st coincided with an SBSG local field trip. There were three records of Avocet, at Orgreave and Thrybergh Country Park. There were a few records of Bar-tailed Godwit during the year, at Orgreave in spring, and in the autumn a flock of 19 over Moscar, and six over at Redmires. Ringed Plover and Dunlin moved through Orgreave in good numbers. Middleton Moor has declined in value over the years but five Dunlin there were, remarkably, accompanied by a Red-necked Phalarope, the first record since 1981 and only the third ever for the area.

Blackcap, Brambling, Bullfinch and Woodcock were sighted in gardens, as were increasing numbers of Pheasant, whilst a White Stork turned up in the grounds of a Sheffield school. Among the oddities were a partial albino Lesser Redpoll and an albino female Mandarin. The Peregrines on St. George's church were seen daily, and a Sedge Warbler turned up on Effingham Street.

David then ran through some of the changes in bird populations in the Sheffield area since the last Atlas was published. Among the winners were Nightjar, up 43% and having a good year in 2011, Crossbill (+52%), Whitethroat, Common Tern (found in 11 tetrads during recent Atlas work) and Goosander, new to the area since the last Atlas and now becoming common. However Whinchat (-44%), Ring Ouzel (-7%), Meadow Pipit (-14%), Cuckoo (-50%), Dunlin (-58%) and Spotted Flycatcher (-40%) have all declined. Yellow Wagtail, despite a good breeding season in 2011, with some notable success on the uplands, has declined by 83% over the same

period.

Sanderling and Ringed Plover passed through the area in autumn. A Marsh harrier was briefly present, whilst an Osprey was in the Thrybergh/Wentworth area for a week. A Grey Phalarope, the first since 2007, was at Orgreave on November 3rd, as were two Twite. This was a good autumn for Twite, with 11 at Barbrook on October 16th, possibly an early success for the Eastern Moors Partnership. There were a few records of Mediterranean Gull at this time, with an adult at Redmires and a second-winter bird at Orgreave in late October. Also seen there were Caspian Gull and two White-fronted Geese, with four more at Renishaw. A Smew was present at Orgreave and Treeton Dyke for a spell towards the end of the year, and seven Bewick's Swan at Orgreave in December. Bringing the year full cycle, a Bittern had returned to Pit House West in December.

With thanks to Pete Brown, Andy Deighton, Pete Garrity, Andy Jones, Mike Smethurst, Marco Wood-Bonelli and others who submitted their photos to the website.

Rod Hinchliffe

The Eastern Moors

The Eastern Moors Estate comprises of Leash Fen, Big Moor, Ramsley Moor, Clod Hall Moor and Totle Moor and the Edges of Curbar, Froggatt and Birchen; ten square miles of quite stunning upland.

The RSPB and the National Trust have come together to lease this area from the Peak District National Park Authority for an initial 15 years with the option to extend to 25 years. In 2011 the Partnership (EMP) ran a number of public workshops and consulted with a wide range of key groups and individuals who had a keen interest in the way the estate would be managed. Their thoughts and ideas have influenced the first Management Plan that has just been produced for the five year period to 2017. From the outset Sheffield Bird Study Group has been involved in the consultation and a representative of the Group attends all ongoing Stakeholder Forums.

Derbyshire Ornithological Society is also fully involved and two of their members, Roy Frost and Mick Taylor, undertook a full survey of breeding birds within the earlier professional inventory of the site.

Two of EMP's management objectives relate to restoring and maintaining the upland habitats and the broadleaf woodland habitats. These improvements will clearly benefit the associated flora and fauna and can only enhance our

birding experience.

So for those of you who love Leash Fen you will be pleased to know that work has already started on restoring the mire habitat. With the intention of preventing the fen drying out and improving the habitat, ditches are being blocked, scrapes are being created and the water level raised and constantly monitored.

The blocking of ditches is also being carried out in parts of Big Moor to protect the peat deposits and to create pools and ponds. Also on Big Moor, to increase and manage the heather, the sheep have been moved off the land to leave the Red Deer and cattle to graze more effectively to achieve the conservation objectives. And the burning, cutting and spraying of the dominant moorland grass, *Molinia*, is taking place in certain areas for heather seeding purposes which can only be good for our breeding birds. As far as Barbrook Reservoir is concerned, a separate project and focus group is to look at the improvement and management of this area.

The Estate's woodland covers 3000 hectares, some of which is birch dominant so the planting of other native species such as rowan and oak is taking place to increase the diversity in the habitat. At Curbar Edge, some of you will no doubt have seen the work that has been

carried out to lower the tree line and clear the rock face; the felling of certain trees is opening up and improving the habitat and young oaks are already taking root.

More and more pressure will be placed on the Estate over the next 25 years. There is clearly a very fine balance between managing and improving the land for wildlife and meeting the needs of all the users. At least by attending the Stakeholder Forums, which are well run and amicable, SBSG do have a say regarding access, usage and disturbance. Others in attendance represent walkers, runners, climbers, mountain bikers, horse riders, archaeologists, naturalists and the local community. The initial signs look very good for wildlife and in particular for our breeding and wintering birds and there is a certain sense of comfort for SBSG that the RSPB in particular, is so heavily involved in the management of this whole area.

The vision of the EMP is for the Eastern Moors to become a place recognised as a guiding model for the future management of our uplands, benefiting both people and wildlife. The five year management plan looks impressive and if the first steps taken by the Partnership are anything to go by, then things do look very promising for birders.

Chris Measures



Peregrines at the University of Sheffield

In summer 2008, following increasingly regular sightings of Peregrines around Sheffield city centre, and on St George's church tower, I persuaded the University's Pro-Vice Chancellor with responsibility for Estates that we should place a nest platform on St George's in the hope of attracting a breeding pair. Working with staff in the University's Department of Estates we liaised extensively with those responsible for the Derby cathedral Peregrine platform, a national expert on urban Peregrines, and the RSPB. We also had to persuade Sheffield City Council's planning Department that a platform could be placed on what is a listed building.

In December 2009 a nest platform was erected on a raised platform within the walls at the top of the tower of St George's church to overcome concerns on the planning front. Inspection of the site with RSPB officers revealed that the church tower was being regularly used by Peregrines, but by the end of the summer in 2010 there was no sign that this platform had been used for any breeding activity. Sightings of an immature bird on the tower in early summer 2010 had raised hopes, but close analysis of bare part coloration showed this to be a bird of the previous year that had hatched elsewhere.

In light of the failure of this nest platform to attract the birds' attention as a breeding site, I continued to press for a nestbox to be placed on an external ledge at the top of the church tower, and in summer 2011 such a platform was constructed in line with the recommendations of the experts mentioned above and erected as a temporary structure on the north side of the tower.

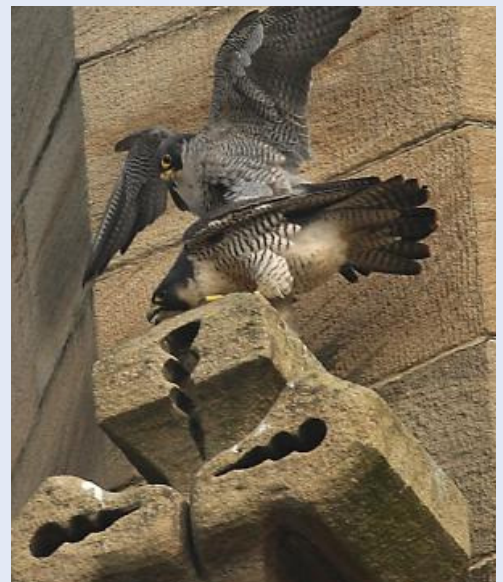
Through late 2011 and into 2012

one or two Peregrines were regularly seen on St George's, and in February 2012 I watched the pair attacking a Kestrel over Brook Hill roundabout with hundreds of pedestrians below completely oblivious to the spectacle taking place just above their heads. The pair then circled St George's and it looked to be clear territorial behaviour, with a good deal of calling between the birds.

In mid-March copulation was observed on several occasions and by the end of the month the female's activity indicated that she could be laying eggs, with both birds subsequently taking it in turns to sit out of sight on the nest platform, on which one bird seemed to be constantly present. If all goes well, the end of April or early May should see hatching and then considerable activity as the parents bring food to the nest. Unfortunately, there is no webcam in place, although the City Council's planning department have indicated that they may look favourably on an application to locate one in future to monitor the nest.

The pair on Derby cathedral attract considerable attention, and other urban pairs are established in Nottingham and Manchester. It has taken a few years to get things in place to make a breeding attempt in Sheffield a reality, but fingers crossed that this is the first of many years in which we can look forward to enjoying the spectacle of Sheffield's very own breeding urban Peregrines.

Words & pictures: David Wood



South Peak Raptor Report 2011

The South Peak Raptor Study Group (SPRSG) was formed in 1998 to monitor breeding success of scarce raptors in the South Peak. Broadly speaking, their study area extends northwards into the Upper Derwent Valley, and southwards into the whole of the White Peak, including the Staffordshire Moors, south Derbyshire, and central Derbyshire as far as the Nottinghamshire borders.

In 2011, for the first time, they have combined their Annual Report with that of the Peak District Raptor Monitoring Group (PDRM) whose study area covers the Dark Peak (excluding the Upper Derwent Valley), the Goyt Valley and the Macclesfield Forest, together with two Hobby study areas outside the Peak in Cheshire and South Yorkshire.

The following is a summary of their Annual Report for 2011. The tables show data for the SPRSG study area, to enable comparison with previous years, but PDRM data is included in the species accounts where appropriate.

Mick Taylor introduced the Report by noting that 2011 again saw the common theme, in both study areas, of persecution of the larger raptors (Goshawk, Peregrine, Hen Harrier), particularly on and around driven grouse moors. Both groups work within the Northern England Raptor Forum to address these problems which are prevalent throughout the UK uplands. Mick Taylor forcibly made the point that the problems will continue unless the law makers and enforcers adopt a much higher profile.

The table (below) summarises the data for breeding success over the past five years; in general, the number of fledged young can be assumed to be the minimum.

It will be recalled that, in 2006, two pairs of **Hen Harrier** bred successfully for the first time in the SPRSG recording area but the event was marred by the unexplained disappearance of both adult males. Since then, birds have been present in

suitable breeding areas in the spring and, in 2011, a nest containing seven eggs was located in the Buxton area. A dawn-to-dusk watch was set up but the nesting attempt failed when, overnight, the female disappeared, and the eggs were found smashed. Feathers were found, but had not been chewed, and DNA analysis found no trace of dog or fox. Destruction by humans seemed to be the most likely explanation but subsequent police enquiries proved to be inconclusive. There were several autumn records of the species but no winter roosts built up.

As in all recent years, there was a noticeable split in breeding success for **Goshawks**, with very low success rates in the north but much higher success to the south. Thus, in the Upper Derwent Valley, seven territories were located, four were occupied, but only one was successful, fledging two young; DNA samples of these were taken should future identification be necessary. In contrast to this, 14 out of 17 known

	Number of Sites					Number Successful					Number of Fledged Young				
	'07	'08	'09	'10	'11	'07	'08	'09	'10	'11	'07	'08	'09	'10	'11
Hen Harrier	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	0	-	-	-	-	0
Goshawk	23	24	13	21	24	14	11	7	12	8+	26+	27+	13+	25	18+
Buzzard	75+	80+	100+	?	?	30+	40+	27+	?	?	40+	50+	41+	?	?
Merlin	7	9	9	9	9	3	7+	6	5	2	8	24+	24	21	4
Hobby	44	35	34	41	51	28	25	28	28	33+	55	61	64	64	70+
Peregrine*	28	32	29	32	32	11+	19+	17+	18	20+	23+	41+	35+	40+	55+
Barn Owl	10+	18	18	20	10	10	12	18	20	9+	37	27	55+	49+	28+
LE Owl	3	8	2	3+	4+	2	1+	1	2+	3+	5	2+	1	4+	6+
SE Owl	1	9	8	4	5	1	2+	3	1+	?	4	5+	6	1+	?
Raven	33	42+	37+	49	37+	20	15+	12	11+	11+	64+	48+	44+	47+	41+

* includes North Staffordshire sites.

territories elsewhere were definitely occupied, at least seven were successful, and at least 16 young fledged successfully. However, persecution was strongly suspected at three of the failed sites, and was thought to be possible at a fourth. PDRM reported a number of sightings of the species, including a pair displaying, but there were no confirmed breeding attempts.

As usual, there was again a marked contrast in success rates of **Peregrines** between the north and the south. In Upper Derwentdale there were only occasional sightings, and no breeding attempts, at any of the five monitored sites. Elsewhere in the SPRSG area, breeding attempts were made at all 27 monitored sites, fledging at least 55 young, with two pairs known to have failed, with persecution suspected in both cases, and the outcome of five sites unknown due to time constraints. There continues to be no feasible explanation for the disappearance of pairs in Derwentdale, other than human interference. PDRM reported two breeding attempts, both successful, and fledging seven young.

Merlins had a dismal breeding season in the SPRSG area in 2011, a pattern that was repeated elsewhere in the east of the UK from the Pennines up to Deeside, and it was thought that birds had failed to reach breeding condition after the very dry Spring and hence possibly a lack of prey species. The PDRM area fared better with eight confirmed breeding attempts, seven successful (one lost to predation), and 22 (probably 27) confirmed fledged young; this is about average for the PDRM area.

Hobbies continued to gain ground in both study areas. Most records were from the SPRSG's long-term study, where occupancy was high but productivity slightly lower than usual (2.125 young per successful nest, compared to an average of 2.4 taken over 20 years). PDRM reported ten young ringed from four nests within their area, and at least seven from four nests from just outside their area.

Buzzards are now so widespread that it is no longer possible for SPRSG to monitor all known nests. However, it is known that unexplained failures continue to occur in the Upper Derwent Valley, and

PDRM also report a "surprising lack of breeding birds" in suitable habitat adjacent to heather moorland, even though the species continues to expand elsewhere in their study area. In particular, there were three breeding attempts in these moorland fringe areas, two successful, the third failing due to disturbance (believed to be intentional as a bivouac was constructed under the nest). Overall, 38 young were ringed from 19 nests in the PDRM recording area.

The **Barn Owl** did noticeably less well in 2011, probably due to two severe winters. The Chatsworth and Bakewell areas were the most productive with six pairs fledging 16 young. A total of 23 young and three adults were ringed. PDRM reported no records of breeding in 2011.

Long-Eared Owls had a slightly better year in the SPRSG area with four known breeding attempts, plus another site where a male was alarm-calling in June. Three sites were successful, the fourth failing at the young stage when the male disappeared. PDRM visited many traditional breeding sites, but located only one active nest (near Winscar) which failed due to nearby tree-felling. However, a second nest found empty later in the season, showed signs that young had fledged successfully.

SPRSG located five pairs of **Short-eared Owl** but time constraints meant that the outcomes were unknown. PDRM reported good numbers displaying in the Longdendale Valley but, very unusually, all activity suddenly ceased until much later in the season when two sites were located. One pair fledged four young, but the other failed with all the young birds of varying ages being found dead in and around the nest. Normally, larger chicks will cannibalise smaller ones when threatened by starvation, and persecution was thought to be the most

probable cause of failure.

Of the 37 known sites (it is believed there could be up to 60 pairs in total) occupied by **Ravens** in the SPRSG area, 19 were in quarries, 12 in tree nests, and six on natural rock faces; at least 11 pairs were successful. PDRM reported four successful nesting attempts, fledging at least seven young.

Two non-breeding species were also mentioned in the SPRSG report. There were again sightings of **Red Kites** throughout both study areas, mostly of single birds, but also of a pair soaring together in Matlock/Rowsley but unfortunately there was no evidence of breeding. There continued to be records of **Marsh Harrier** from both study areas, mainly in April/May and July through to September. Although there is little likelihood of breeding, it is interesting that the uplands are used on migration.

Some Acknowledgments: The membership of SPRSG in 2011 was: Mick Taylor (Co-ordinator), John Atkin, Roy Frost, Trevor Grimshaw, Mick Lacey, Geoff Mawson, Anthony Messenger, Stephen Moores, Steve Samworth, Ken Smith, Jack Street and Paul Tooley. The membership of PDRM was Steve Davies (Co-ordinator), Carl Ashford, Nick Corley, Andy Platts, Mike Price, Paul Stafford and Mark Watson. Mick Taylor expressed his thanks to the landowners who allowed access to their property, including some enlightened gamekeepers and shooting estates. He also noted that he is standing down as Co-ordinator of SPRSG, and passing the reins to Trevor Grimshaw. He expressed his thanks to all the members of the group for their hard work and support over the years.

Wendy Thomson



Dave Simmonite

RECENT SIGHTINGS

1st March - 28th April 2012

These records are largely unchecked. Records in bold require supporting details.

Bittern - Two roosted at Pit-house West on 16th March, with a sighting of a single bird on 17th.

White Stork - One was at Ravenfield on 21st March, and Millhouses on 29th, probably pertaining to an escaped bird that's been doing the rounds locally.

Whooper Swan - Sightings include nine at Pebley Pond on 20th March, 25 NW at Rotherham on 22nd, 25 NW at Underbank on the same date, and 10 at Blackburn Meadows on 24th. The latest record was one at Thrybergh CP on 7th April.

Pink-footed Goose - The latest record was 1+ heard over Bole Hill Rec in thick mist on 22nd March.

White-fronted Goose - A Eurasian White-front was feeding with Greylags in Upper Midhope on 17th April.

Brent Goose - 3 at Orgreave Lakes at dawn on 27th April.

Garganey - A pair were at Elsecar Res from 20th March, up to at least 13th April.

Scaup - Drake recorded on several dates in March, from 15th-25th, reported at one point to be displaying to a Tufted Duck.

Red Kite - Twos were reported over Sheffield University on 26th March, Midhope on 15th April and Ridgeway on 17th. Elsewhere singles were reported at Agden Side (16th March), Derwent Res (18th), Ramsley Moor (19th), Broomhead Res (29th), Rivein (29th), Orgreave Lakes (31st), Big Moor (7th April), Owlbar and Leash Fen (17th), and Padley Gorge (28th).

Marsh Harrier - Adult male drifted N at Rawmarsh on 27th April.

Rough-legged Buzzard - The juv at Ewden Height was reported up to 19th March. Two birds were seen together at Langsett Moor and Mickleden Beck on 31st, and a

possible was at Blacka Moor on 20th April.

Osprey - Single birds on passage included birds one at Midhope Res on 5th and 8th April, Burbage on 8th, Silverwood Lagoon on 11th, Orgreave Lakes on 12th, Broomhead Res on 13th, Morehall Res on 15th, and Thorn Hill on 16th.

Water Rail - Reports from Poolsbrook Marsh (max count 4 on 28th and 29th March), Pit-house West (3 on 16th), Bolehill Flash (one on 10th April), and Blackburn Brook (one on 25th).

Common Crane - 3 SW over Stubble Hollow on 12th April.

Avocet - 2 at Orgreave Lakes on 24th April.

Golden Plover - Maximum counts of 190 at Orgreave Lakes on 1st April, 400 at Edge Mount on 3rd and 21st April, 350 at Peat Peats on 12th April and 200 at Agden Side on 22nd.

Grey Plover - Two were at Middleton Moor on 10th April.

Knot - One was at Orgreave Lakes from 19th March until 1st April.

Sanderling - One at Orgreave Lakes on 25th April.

Dunlin - Peak counts were four at Middleton Moor on 23rd April, and 17 at Orgreave Lakes on 27th.

Ruff - One at Orgreave Lakes on 5th April.

Black-tailed Godwit - One at Thrybergh CP on 18th March. One was at Orgreave Lakes from 11th-21st, with a flock of 26 present on 19th and 20th. One showing characteristics of *islandica* was present at Orgreave Lakes on 26th-27th, and was a different bird to the previous long-stayer.

Whimbrel - One reported at Orgreave Lakes on 13th, 19th, 21st, 25 and 27th April, with two there on 24th.

Curlew - Larger counts included 50 roosting at Middleton Moor on 15th March, 23 at Curbar Gap on 16th, 20 in Mayfield Valley on 17th, and 49 at Middleton Moor on 21st.

Greenshank - One at Orgreave Lakes on 23rd and 25th April.

Turnstone - One at Orgreave Lakes on 27th April.



Garganey (P. Thomas)

Arctic Skua - One on large lake of Orgreave Lakes on 26th April, before flying SSE.

Little Gull - Adults at Thrybergh CP on 17th April, and Thrybergh and Orgreave Lakes on 19th.

Iceland Gull - Records from Shirecliffe Tip on 15th March, Broomhead Res on 16th, and Orgreave Lakes on 21st.

Kittiwake - An adult was at Orgreave Lakes on 18th and 31st March.

Sandwich Tern - One was at Orgreave Lakes on 9th April.

Arctic Tern - Three were at RVCP on 18th April, one at Poolsbrook CP on same date, five at Thrybergh CP on 19th, and there were singles at Orgreave Lakes and Rawmarsh, both on 26th.

Cuckoo - One at Raynor Clough on 12th April was the first of the year, followed by singles at Shilito Wood on 13th, Wharcliffe Chase on 15th, Gibbet Moor on 22nd, Pit-house West on 23rd, Blacka Moor on 25th, and Padley Gorge on 27th.

Swift - The first of the year was one at Greasbrough on 24th April, with subsequent April reports including records from Orgreave Lakes (including 20 on 26th), Thrybergh CP, Rawmarsh, Woodhouse Tip and Staveley.

Sand Martin - Three north at Orgreave Lakes on 16th March was the earliest record. Peak counts include 40 at RVCP on 10th April, 46 at Orgreave Lakes on 11th, and 70 at Thrybergh CP on 22nd.

Swallow - First of the year was one at Orgreave Lakes on 17th March. Highest counts include 150 at Wentworth Lakes, 60 at Linacre Res, and 50 at Poolsbrook CP, all on 18th April.

House Martin - The earliest report was one at Orgreave Lakes on 2nd April. Numbers, up to time of writing, relatively low, with the highest counts 30 at Rother Valley CP on 18th, and 20 at Thrybergh CP on 26th.

Tree Pipit - Singles at Remires Couduit and Wharcliffe Chase on 12th April were the first of the year.



Great Grey Shrike (M. Garner)

Single males reported at a number of locations, with higher concentrations of four at Greave's Piece and five at Wharcliffe Chase.

Water Pipit - One at Orgreave Lakes on 18th March.

Rock Pipit - One *littoralis* bird at Thrybergh on 18th, and two of the same race at Orgreave on the same day.

Yellow Wagtail - Four at Orgreave Lakes on 13th April the first of the year. Further reports from Thrybergh CP, Silverwood Lagoon, and Staveley SF.

Pied Wagtail - White (*alba*) Wagtails reported on a number of dates from Orgreave Lakes, with the first on 31st March, and the highest count six on 15th and 26th April. Elsewhere, one was at Thrybergh CP on 14th and 15th April, and 3 on 20th.

Waxwing - 15 were at Uppertorpe on 20th March, and up to 20 were at Lodge Moor from 26th-31st. 14 were at Ecclesall on 1st April, and 18 flew W to roost at Redmires on 5th. 22 were at Lodge Moor on 14th, and eight at Ecclesall on the 18th, with a late surge of records from 26th onwards, of up to 25 birds in the Ecclesall, Brincliffe and Nether Edge area.

Redstart - One at Alport Dale on

11th April was the first of the year, followed by singles at Chatsworth Park and Miller's Dale, and two at Chee Dale, on the 14th. Eight at Longshaw on 20th April and four at Wharcliffe Chase on 21st were the highest concentrations.

Whinchat - One was at Orgreave Lakes on 27th April.

Stonechat - Larger counts included two pairs at Burbage Valley on 21st, and three at Barbrook Plantation on 7th, with pairs reported from various locations. One at Barbrook Plantation on 1st April showed characteristics of *rubicola*.

Wheatear - Three at Orgreave Lakes at 17th March were the first of the year, followed by six at the same site on 18th, six at Ewden Height on 19th, and six at Taylor's Hill on the 20th. Wider reports as we entered April included high counts of 23 at Orgreave on 14th, and 18 at Wharcliffe Chase on 21st.

Ring Ouzel - First reports were a single at Stanage Edge, and three at Cutthroat Bridge, on 23rd March. Birds returned to their usual territories into April, with more unusual records being four at Agden on 15th, and 14 at Hordron Farm on 22nd.

Fieldfare - Higher counts in March included 140 at Wharcliffe Chase on 14th, 250 at Freebirch on 18th, 200 at Wharcliffe Chase on 24th, 100 at High Bradfield on 27th, 100 at Leash Fen on 29th, 200 at Middleton

Moor on 31st. In April, the peak counts were 100 at Hillsborough Park on 4th, and 100 at Wharncliffe Chase on 6th, with later records including 60 at Barlborough on 22nd, 14 at Redmires on 22nd, and 17 at Midhope on 24th.

Redwing - Few large groups, with the highest counts including 73 at Stubble Hollow on 15th March, 24 at Thrybergh CP on 15th, 28 at Sharrow General Cemetery on 28th, and 17 at Thrybergh CP on 29th. Later records included singles at Wharncliffe Chase on 6th April, Sharrow General Cemetery on 8th, and two at Redmires on 14th.

Grasshopper Warbler - The first of the year was one reeling at Pit-house West on 7th April, with subsequent birds reported at Silverwood Lagoon, Redmires, Poolsbrook Marsh, Blackburn Meadows and Beighton Marsh.

Sedge Warbler - Singing males at Poolsbrook Marsh on 18th April, and Beighton Marsh on 26th.

Reed Warbler - Three singing at Poolsbrook Marsh, and one at Duckmanton, on 21st April were the first records of the year. There were subsequent records from Thrybergh Tip, Poolsbrook Marsh, Orgreave Lakes and Silverwood Lagoon.

Lesser Whitethroat - Singles at Aldwarke on 22nd April, and Thrybergh CP on 24th.

Whitethroat - Singing males at Pebley and New Stubbin on 16th April were the first of the year, followed by a number of sites by the month's end. Highest counts were twos at New Stubbin and Silverwood Lagoon, both on 21st.

Garden Warbler - One at New Stubbin on 21st April was first of the year, followed by singles at Morehall Res and Wharncliffe Wood on 28th.



Brambling (C. Hurst)

Wood Warbler - One at Wyming Brook on 21st April.

Willow Warbler - Two singing at Old Whittington SF were the first of the year, and the only March record. Numbers swelled from mid-April, with higher counts of 20 at Firsby Res on 15th, 17 at Wharncliffe Heath on 15th, 23 at Wharncliffe Chase on 21st, 25 at Greave's Piece on 21st, and 24 at Redmires on 22nd.

Pied Flycatcher - A male at Padley Gorge on 13th April was the first of the year, with subsequent reports from Chatsworth Park, Hathersage, Haywood Farm, Rough Wood, Wyming Brook, Priddock Wood and Stanage. Highest count was 7 at Rough Wood on 20th.

Great Grey Shrike - Reports from the Ramsley, Barbrook and Big Moor area on 19th and 26th March, and 1st, 6th, 8th, 12th, 13th and 20th April.

Brambling - A smattering of sightings throughout April, with the

highest count being two in a Lodge Moor Garden on 26th. Elsewhere singles were at Fulwood on several dates up to 22nd, Thrybergh CP on 13th, Cowell Flat on 22nd, and Oughtibridge on 28th.

Twite - 12 low over Agden Side Road on 24th April.

Common (Mealy) Redpoll - One with Lesser Redpolls at Orgreave Lakes on 15th April.

Crossbill - Confirmed juvs at Broomhead Wood and Langsett Res.

Escaped Species - A Sacred Ibis was found feeding on the 'plains' at Orgreave Lakes on 9th April. Thought to be the same bird seen earlier in the day at Alkborough and Blacktoft Sands.

Pete Mella

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

C Almond, MG Archer, A Bailey, B Bailey, S Bailey, S Barnes, SJ Barnes, A Baverstock, AR Bell, AS Bilton, RP Blagden, C Bonnington, K Bower, R Bradley, SJ Branch, MC Brew, C Brewster, PL Brown, V Browne, RV Burton, R Butterfield, DJ Buttle, DM Bye, EO Chafer, I Chapman, J Clarke, L Coates, B Cole, H Coull, J Crank, J Crooks, N Cross, S Davies, A Deighton, W Dudhill, H Egan, KL Evans, G Featherstone, MG Fenner, P Flackett, D&J Franklin, D Gains, P Garrity, G Grant, S Green, T Grose, S Guymer, D Hallam, R Harris, M Hibbert, A Hicks, A Hill, RD Hill, DJ Hitchen, M Hodgson, J Hornbuckle, J Housden, C Hurst, G James, M Jarvis, Anne Johnson, CG Johnson, A Jones, C Kelly, S King, J Kingsland, K Knowles, M Lacey, T&D Langford, D Langston, P Lawson, CL Leonard, P Leonard, S Leonard, P License, J Lindley, P Lockwood, C Measures, P Mella, B Merryweather, T Middleton, M Miller, T Millson, TH Minskip, J Mosley, D Mowbray, D Neill, MG Oxlade, J Partridge, PH Pearsall, N Perera, J Perlstrom, R Platts, NR Porter, MN Reeder, P Ridsdale, B Roberts, D Roberts, D Roddis, SJ Roddis, GA Rodgers, L Sanders, J Sherwin, M Sherwin, S Sherwin, A Siddall, D Simmonite, MA Smethurst, AHV Smith, M Snook, B Spencer, CG Stack, JAH Stobart, MJ Sweeney, M&L Taylor, SG Tebbutt, P Thomas, W Thomson, M Timms, C Tyler, SE Vickers, EC Vincent, DL Vine, D Warburton, P Wareham, JC Wasse, R Watkinson, G Williams, RDR Williams, I Wilson, J Wilson, P&A Wilson, D Wood, D Woodruff, H Young, Thrybergh CP Bird Log, Sorby Breck RG.