



SHEFFIELD BIRD STUDY GROUP
BULLETIN

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www.sbsg.org



Photo: David Wood

Atlas launch



The Breeding Atlas was launched with a great turnout at The University of Sheffield on 22nd January, giving the public the first chance to get their hands on the group's new avifauna.

There was a great turnout to see an introduction to the project by editors Richard Hill and David Wood, and a presentation by the University's Prof Tim Birkhead, who wrote the book's foreword. A memorable evening saw some swift sales of the new book, as well as the new 2012 Annual Report, which was also out just in time for the occasion.

For a review of the book by Pete Brown, see page 4. (Pics Neil Porter and Simon Bailey).

Brian Wilkinson

The Group marks with sadness the passing of Brian Wilkinson, a long-standing member of SBSG and Group Leader of Sheffield RSPB.

The funeral will take place on Monday 24th March at the North Chapel at Grenoside Crematorium.

Scribes wanted!

Rod Hinchliffe, who has done an admirable job of writing up most of the indoor meetings for the Bulletin over the last few years, is retiring from the role.

That means we need volunteers to write up future lectures - please get in contact at the usual address if you think this is something you'd be able and willing to do this.

A big personal thanks from me to Rod, who has been a massive help with this, which has always been much appreciated (PM).

New members

We welcome the following new members to the group - good birding to you all and we hope you enjoy your membership.

Steve Warwick, Stephen Gordon, Jim Stephenson, Michael Bell, Jonathan Lowes, David Seal, Dawn Jackson, Haydn & Margaret Nichols, Ken Dobson, Paul Lawless, Joe Goldacre, Daniel Branch, Jonathan Simpson and Ella Scott.



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Indoor Meetings

Mark Thomas - Catching The Killers

Weds April 9th 2014, Sheffield University Arts Tower Lecture Theatre 5, 7.15pm

Mark is a Senior Investigations Officer with the RSPB and has been described as the 'James Bond of Birding' ! This lecture will explain the work of the RSPB's Investigations Team and their remarkable efforts in protecting our vulnerable species, particularly raptors, which we know continue to face a hard time locally. Mark began birding in the Sheffield area, including sites such Rother Valley CP, before helping to establish the SK58 birders. Nowadays, Mark can be found regularly on the East Coast, particularly Buckton near Flamborough, where systematic ringing has yielded numerous rarities such as Black-throated Thrush and Isabelline Shrike.

Mick Turton - Birds of the Western Palearctic

Weds May 14th 2014, Sheffield University Arts Tower Lecture Theatre 5, 7.15pm

Mick is a local birder living just outside the Sheffield area in Wombwell and will be well known to many members. He has been a member of Barnsley Bird Study Group since its formation in 1974 where he has filled many roles including Recorder, Secretary and Chairman and has been very involved with Broomhill Flash, Wombwell Ings as well as what we now know as Old Moor Wetlands. He is extensively travelled worldwide, and in this talk he will give a lecture about the birds of the Western Palearctic.

Field Meetings

10th May 2014 - Wyming Brook dawn chorus walk

Meet 07:00 at the car park SK268858. We hope to find singing Redstarts, Tree Pipits and if we're lucky Wood Warblers. Keep your eyes on the website for updates.

Club contacts

Bulletin

Pete Mella
21 Lump Lane
Grenoside
Sheffield
S35 8PL
peterjmella@googlemail.com

Secretary

Richard Hill
22 Ansell Road
Sheffield
S11 7PE
rdhill2001@yahoo.com

Website

<http://www.sbsg.org>

Twitter

<http://www.twitter.com/shefbirdstudy>

Facebook

<http://www.facebook.com/sheffieldbirdstudygroup>

Breeding Atlas Review

Breeding Birds of the Sheffield Area

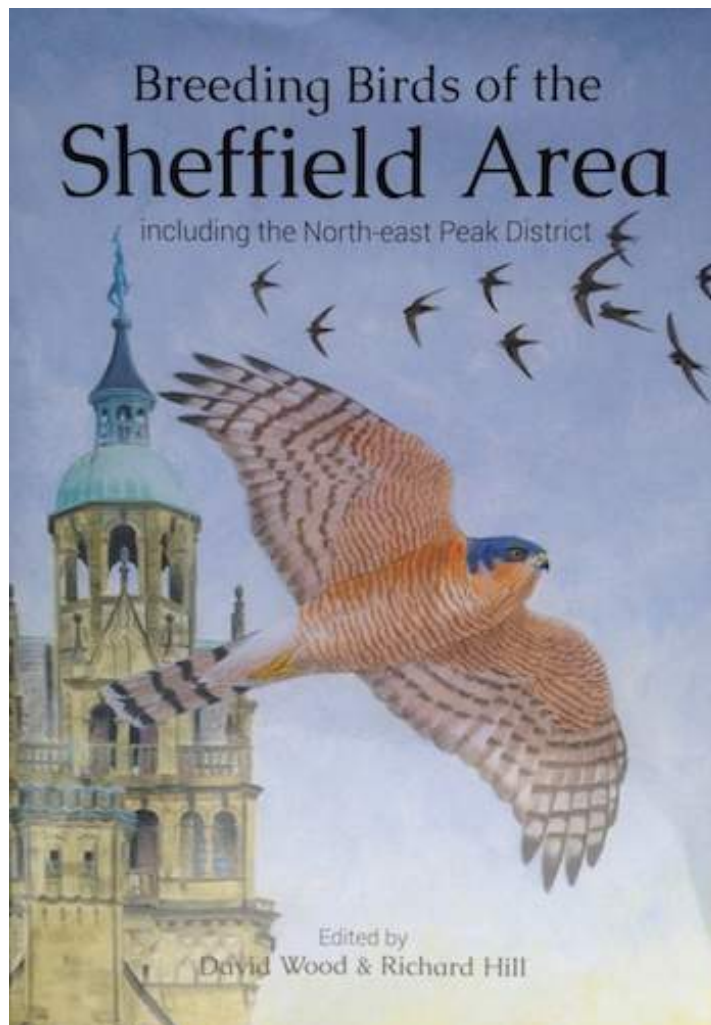
Edited by David Wood and Richard Hill

The Atlas; five years of intensive survey work followed by a further five years of mapping, analysis, research, writing, illustrating and editing. It's been worth the wait. This is a superb publication, the product of the thousands of hours of hard work put in by the survey team, the data collation and presentation suprema, the writers and the illustrators.

The bulk of the book is taken up with detailed accounts for all the 134 species recorded as confirmed or probable breeders in the Sheffield area in the period 2003-08. These are preceded and informed by chapters dealing with area's principal bird communities, current land use patterns and the impact of recent habitat changes, as well as an up-to-date analysis of current weather trends and the effects of climate change on Sheffield's birds. The book concludes with a summary of the changing nature of Sheffield's breeding birds and what the future holds.

Arguably it's the species accounts, each one superbly illustrated by one of the three very talented artists that we are fortunate to have in our midst that will command most attention. Try this: choose a

species and take a good look at the distribution map that charts the changing breeding fortunes of that bird since the 1975-80 Atlas. Rejoice in the colonisation and spread of certain species (OK, maybe not Canada Goose) and despair at the virtual disappearance of others. Before you even read the account, speculate on what lies behind those changes. Or look at the changing distribution of a bird within the area and speculate further.



Take Kingfisher, declining in the west of the area but increasing in the east or Red-legged Partridge, showing the opposite trend. Or look at one of our breeders in the national context. Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, a bird in steep decline nationally

with a current UK estimate of as few as 700 pairs but which has shown a very significant increase in the Sheffield area.

And perhaps best of all, look at your own patch. Find the relevant tetrad. Look at what the Atlas tells you about the breeding birds there in 2003-08 and about thirty or so years of change. And go out, check and record and keep checking and recording. The Atlas is a delightful book to look at and

read and surely an essential addition to the library of anyone with an interest in birds in the Sheffield area but it is more than that. As Professor Tim Birkhead writes in the foreword to Breeding Birds of the Sheffield Area: "The book itself is both an inspiration and a permanent record of changing bird populations. It is also a project that I hope will continue to be adopted by successive generations of bird enthusiasts." If you've not got a copy yet, you owe it to yourself: it's a fitting outcome for the Group's flagship project of the last decade that will serve as a key reference point for years to come.

Pete Brown

To purchase Breeding Birds of the Sheffield Area, please visit <http://www.sbsg.org/publications-and-sales/18-avifauna>

Lecture report

Pete Brown: Birding Down Under

The December lecture was given by SBSG stalwart Pete Brown, who spoke on the subject of two recent visits to Australia. The first port of call was Brisbane, a city of over two million people, containing some 30 reserves within its boundaries. Remarkably these seem to be grossly underused and under-visited. Around the city, Australian Crested Pigeon, Spotted Dove (an introduced species), Yellow-wattled Lapwing, Pacific Black Duck, Australasian Grebe, Kookaburra, and the surprisingly common Brush Turkey were among the species seen. The Pacific Baza, a small crested hawk was also present. This species sometimes uses a group hunting technique, crashing into trees to dislodge prey items that are then picked up from the ground. A small area of wetland in the Port of Brisbane, recently spared from development, held a remarkable amount of birdlife including Royal Spoonbill, Grey and Chestnut Teal, Mangrove Honeyeater and five species of wader. Woodland beyond the city boundaries contained Eastern Yellow Robin, Eastern Whipbird with its whipcrack call, Golden Whistler, Grey and Rufous Fantail and Crimson Rosella.

Moving to The Royal National Park in New South Wales, an hour's watching from one forest viewpoint produced an excellent variety of birds including Superb Fairy Wren, Spotted Pardalote, Eastern Spinebill, Lewin's Honeyeater, White-browed Scrub Wren, Rockwarbler, White-throated Tree Creeper and Dollar Bird, whilst



at one point close to the Victorian coast Tawny Frogmouth and over 25 Koalas were seen.

The red centre contained few birds, although Wedge-tailed Eagles and Black Kites were seen, feeding on the many Kangaroo carcasses that litter the roadside, and Magpie Lark graced the carpet in the Alice Springs airport lounge.

On to Western Australia, and sightings of Long-billed Black Cockatoo, White-fronted Robin, Musk Duck, breeding Osprey and plenty of Emu. On the coast, at Albany, White-bellied Sea Eagle, Nankeen Kestrel, Sooty Oystercatcher, Pacific Gull, Australian Pelican, Australian Shelduck, Pied Cormorant and Darter were among the many species recorded.

Back to Queensland, and a stay on Heron Island on the Great Barrier Reef produced sightings of Black-naped Tern breeding on the wreck of a naval craft. The tiny island is home to some 30,000 Wedge-tailed Shearwaters, whose ghostly moans are heard all night, and some

100,000 pairs of Black Noddies. Also present were Bridled Tern, Crested and Lesser Crested Tern, Buff-banded Rail, Lesser Sand Plover, Bar-tailed Godwit, Turnstone, Pacific Golden Plover, Grey-tailed Tattler, Silver Gull and Eastern Reef Heron, which has both black and white morphs. Heron Island is a delightful place where snorkelling the reef, enjoying the abundant birdlife and watching the nightly visits from egg-laying turtles makes for a top class wildlife experience.

Pete was thanked for yet another informative and entertaining presentation, and the high quality of his photographs.

Rod Hinchliffe

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Stanage Forum

Stanage Forum: SBSG Representative Wanted

Stanage Forum and the associated Steering Group was set up in 2000 by the Peak District National Park Authority (PDNPA) in order to produce a Management Plan for the North Lees Estate (which includes Stanage and Ringinglow Bog) that was acceptable to all interested parties. Initially, SBSG was represented by the admirable and much-missed Chris Falshaw who fought our corner strongly and contributed hugely to the successful outcome. However, his health deteriorated in 2006 and he asked me to take his place on the Steering Group. By this time, the Management Plan was being implemented, and amicable discussions

generally centred upon such issues as the usage of various buildings in the estate.

The PDNPA now inevitably finds itself short of funds, and they are looking at North Lees with a view to it breaking even financially by September 30th of this year (2014), see the Press Release on 25th September 2013 at <http://preview.tinyurl.com/movgs4f> or go to <http://www.peakdistrict.gov.uk> and search the News section.

I am wishing to stand down from the Steering Group but feel it is essential at this time of change and financial pressures that SBSG makes its own contribution to the Steering Group: parts of North Lees have been designated an SSSI and of course it is notable for Ring Ouzels and other bird

species. It is of the utmost importance that we support the Steering Group in its efforts to ensure that PDNPA fulfills its obligations with respect to conservation and other important issues and, indeed, the Steering Group is keen that SBSG should be well represented. Meetings are generally held several times per year, and are usually held in Hathersage or, occasionally, at Aldern House in Bakewell. They normally take place during office hours but with a choice of dates offered in order to suit as many members as possible. Anyone interested should email conservation@sbsg.org for more information. I would of course be happy to discuss the matter now and/or at any time in the future if that would be helpful.

Wendy Thomson



Field Trip Report

Upper Derwentdale

After a miserable run of weather in recent weeks and months, the morning of Saturday 12th March looked distinctly promising for the Group's annual raptor watch at Windy Corner, with some early spring sunshine. By the time a group had gathered at the traditional vantage point on the sharp corner above Howden Res dam it was clear that it was in fact too nice a morning for an ideal raptor watch: birds of prey typically enjoy a breeze on which to glide and soar, so the lack of any wind at all dampened expectations. Initial interest came from some mountain hares in full white livery, turning to excitement as a Common Buzzard lifted off its perch to harass them and repeatedly swooped at one in particular, landing just behind it. The hare decided to stand its ground and turned the tables, moving closer and closer to the Buzzard until it took off. All in all, half a dozen white mountain hares were seen, conspicuous against the heather and grasses and a spectacle much enjoyed. The next hour was rather quiet, though Kestrel and Sparrowhawk were both seen, another Buzzard took to the air and a Raven moved up the valley while a handful of Cormorants came and went from the dam towers. The first sighting of note came with a Peregrine that was picked up well to the south and passed directly overhead as it headed steadily north. A Merlin was briefly seen and a Goshawk that put on a fine display eventually landed in a conifer, where it remained in view for over half an hour, allowing fairly distant but unusually prolonged views.



Several species of passerine were also in evidence, with a Nuthatch gathering moss one of several species seen during the morning that simply wouldn't have been there 20 years ago. It's been a good winter for Crossbills, another species that's increased in recent times, and some of a dozen that perched up on the tops of conifers showed their red rumps gleaming in the sun. Further Goshawk display was much in evidence and was enjoyed by everyone present as both the 'butterfly' slow flapping flight and the swooping 'roller-coaster roll' were watched. By mid-morning a few more Buzzards were up and about, with some characteristic 'mewing', memorably described by Kev Gould as 'like a cat dropped from a light aircraft.' This has got to be the best description I've ever heard of the call, and was one of many humorous moments over the morning, which turned out to

be a great social event as well as a decent couple of hours for raptor watching. Thanks to Ron for leading a thoroughly enjoyable morning.

At the start of the breeding season, a variety of raptors are clearly present in Upper Derwentdale. The threats they face through illegal persecution are well known – and will no doubt be discussed by Mark Thomas at the April indoor meeting – and it will be important to keep a close eye on developments there over the coming weeks. The National Trust has expressed a real commitment to addressing the persecution of raptors in their High Peak Vision document: this breeding season will be the first time that is put to the test and we'll be watching with interest.

David Wood

Bird names, languages and myths quiz

After Martin Hodgsons' rather tricky bird name quiz a few months ago, **Karl Gehring** has taken up the challenge of producing one perhaps even more fiendish. Answers next issue.

1. Rotschenkel

An easy bird to to start with - what is the english name?

2. Turdus Philomelos and Rossingol Philomele

What are these two birds and what is the myth that links them to each other?

3. Quattrocchi

The language is easy to spot but what is the bird?

4. Barnacle Goose

Barnacle?? -- not so much a myth as a complete failure of the ornithologists' imagination in that era - but what's the story ?

5..... a duvet

What is the first word of this bird's name and in which language?

6. Puppenblau

There is one linguistic clue to this (quite rare) bird, but what is the minor european language (this one is a bit unfair, google doesn't help).

7. Zilpzalp

Onomatopoeic in its own language but a real tongue twister for English speakers.

8. Birdwatchers who gave names to birds

Can you name a birdwatcher (or anyone else) who had 15 or more birds named after him/her?

9. Bonaparte's Gull

What did Napoleon have to do with this bird?



10. Loffel

Two birds have German names beginning with Loffel. One is easy the other is harder, what are they?

11. Quebrahantahuesos

The Spanish name for this bird is a real mouthful so you get a clue: Quebrantar means bre** and hueso means bo**.

12. Alouette

Which bird is this and what is its fate in the hands of all those singing children?

13. Gallocanta

This is a place - but what bird will you find here (in huge numbers) and what does the name mean?

14. Tjiftjaf

If you didn't get Zilpzalp try it in Dutch.

15. Sex life

Which LBJ was held to be a model of modesty and domesticity by both Victorian ornithologists and clergymen but has recently been proved to be an impressive example of female promiscuity?

16. Wisdom

Which greek myth associates the owl with wisdom?

17. Seidenschwanz

The German name of this bird refers to a texture and a body part. The English name refers to a different texture and a different body part. What is it?

18. Halcyon

In modern usage halcyon days means an extended period of calm weather - especially at sea. Halcyon is also a genus of kingfisher (which contains 11 species but not our Common Kingfisher). What is the extraordinary myth which connects the two uses of this word?

19. Russian General

A certain Russian General was such an expert naturalist that he had a horse, a gerbil, seven birds and an entire genus of plants named after him. What was his name?

20. David

Why should a large heron keep clear of birders named David?

21. Chevalier culblanc

How is this bird linked to the wheatear?



22. Ziegenmelker

The literal translation of this bird's name is goat-milker. What on earth is going on?

RECENT SIGHTINGS

1st January - 28th February 2014

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

Bittern - One again at Pit-house West on several dates in January and February.

Mute Swan - Peak monthly counts at Parkgate Canal Basin of 113 on 17th January, and 105 on 9th February.

Whooper Swan - Five at Linacre Res on 3rd January, and four at Orgreave Lakes on 28th. Some larger counts were recorded in February with 23 at Orgreave Lakes on 10th, 22 N at Rawmarsh on 16th, 30 N over Harley on 17th, and 19 at Thrybergh CP on 28th.

Pink-footed Goose - A number of sightings of skiers across the area mid-January, with a cluster of sightings on 10th, 600 NW over Botanical Gardens being the highest count. 100 were N-W at Greave's Piece on 3rd February.

Canada Goose - Some large counts at Rother Valley CP, peaking at 237 on 19th January.

Wigeon - Highest counts at Rother Valley CP (peaking at 183 on 19th January) and Staveley SF (peaking at 112 on 2nd February).

Teal - 111 flushed at Middleton Moor on 2nd February was a notable count for the area.

Mallard - Higher counts included 115 at Greasebrough Dam on 1st January, 100 at Morely Pond on 1st January, 103 at Morehall Res on 27th January, and 217 at Rother Valley CP on 16th February.

Pochard - Over 100 were at Orgreave Lakes on 9th January.

Tufted Duck - Counts of over 200 at Thrybergh Tip on 2nd January,

Thrybergh Banks on 5th, and Thrybergh CP on 21st.

Red Kite - Three over Rotherham Centre on 8th January was notable. Single birds were also at Higger Tor on 2nd February, Morehall Tip on 15th, and Stocksbridge on 23rd.

Coot - Peak counts were 163 at Thrybergh CP on 10th January, and 335 at Rother Valley CP on 19th.

Golden Plover - As is typical, the largest flocks were reported around the Peat Pits/Onesmoor area, with the largest count 328 on 26th January.

Lapwing - Peak counts of 136 at Thrybergh CP on 7th January, 100 at Onesmoor on 13th, 120 at Redmires Res on 19th, 118 at Rother Valley CP on 19th, and 110 at Silver Wood on 22nd.



These Whooper Swans were part of a group that dropped into Thrybergh CP in February (Photo: MA Smethurst).

Sanderling - One at Orgreave Lakes on 1st February.

Mediterranean Gull - A single bird, in adult plumage, at Broomhead Res on 25th and 26th January, and another (thought to be a different bird) on 8th February. One was also at Renishaw Park on 26th January.

Black-headed Gull - The Broomhead Res roost peaked at 3,000 on 26th January, with over 2,000 still present well into February.

Herring Gull - The highest count from the Broomhead Res roost was 652 on 7th February.

Yellow-legged Gull - Two at Orgreave Lakes on 2nd January, and singles at Shirecliffe Tip on 4th, and Orgreave Lakes again on 24th.

Caspian Gull - 2nd winter at Broomhead Res on 26th February, and a 1st winter at Orgreave Lakes on 28th.

Iceland Gull - A Kumlien's Gull was first sighted at the end of December at the Broomhead Res roost, and was present again for most of January and February, when it was also occasionally

reported at Langsett Res, and spending its days at Shirecliffe Tip. From 7th February it was also joined by a 1st winter Iceland Gull, seen at both Broomhead Res and Shirecliffe Tip. Elsewhere there were sightings of Iceland Gull at Attercliffe on 21st February, and Orgreave Lakes on 25th and 27th.

Great Black-backed Gull - The Broomhead roost peaked at 167 on 10th January.

Kittiwake - A 1st winter at Broomhead Res on 4th January, and an adult on 9th February. Elsewhere two adults flew low SSE at Longstone Edge on 1st February.

Waxwing - Smatterings of reports continued, with 10 at Totley on 5th January, 1-2 birds at Sharrow on various dates until 13th, and one at Brincliffe Edge on 9th. Two at Crosspool lingering from 15th-20th, and three were at Carterknowle on 26th. In February, 10 were feeding at Ringinglow from 18th-22nd.

Fieldfare - Larger flocks included 500 at Freebirch on 11th January, 400 at Ewden Height on 19th, 400 at Barlow Moor on 30th, and 300 at Broomhead Moor on 2nd February.

Redwing - The largest recorded groups were 150 at Hutcliffe Wood Cemetery on 5th January, 170 at Barlborough on 19th, and 130 at Burnt Hill Farm on 18th February.

Lesser Whitethroat - A bird present in a suburban Sheffield garden from 14th January, and visiting garden feeders, was trapped and ringed on 2nd February. DNA analysis of feathers shed by the bird prove it belongs to the subspecies *blythi*, commonly known as 'Siberian Lesser Whitethroat'.

Starling - The murmuration at Middleton Moor, estimated to be up to 80,000 strong, continued to wow observers and even make the local press. Elsewhere feeding flocks included 500 at Canyards on 11th January, 600 at Meek Fields on 1st February, 600 at Wharnccliffe Chase on 8th, 650 at Redmires Res on 26th. 5,000 were SE at Langsett Res on 28th.



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This Mediterranean Gull at Broomhead Res was one of a series of rarer gulls to the area, which included Iceland/Kumlien's, Caspian, Yellow-legged and Kittiwake. (Pic: Andy Deighton)

Chaffinch - A feeding flock of over 100 was present at Wheata Wood during January and February.

Brambling - 250 at Longshaw on 26th January was by far the most notable count.

Linnet - A large feeding flock frequented Wheata Wood and Grenoside, peaking at 250 on 5th January and 13th January. 100 were at Owlthorpe on 22nd February.

Two-barred Crossbill - Remarkably still present into their sixth and seventh months, up to seven birds

(including five males) were regularly reported at Broomhead Res during the entire period (and still present at the time of writing in early March).

Pete Mella



This Lesser Whitethroat, which frequented feeders in a Sheffield garden for much of the period, was proven to be of the 'Siberian' race *blythi*.

This issue's observers, with apologies for any omissions:

MG Archer, S Ashton, J Atkin, A Bailey, B Bailey, S Bailey, SJ Barnes, AR Bell, AS Bilton, F Bird, RP Blagden, K Bower, RJ Bradley, SJ Branch, PL Brown, V Browne, RV Burton, R Butterfield, EO Chafer, I Chapman, J Clarke, B Cole, J Crank, N Cross, S Davies, A Deighton, S Draper, W Dudhill, NP Dummigan, CM Dunhill, H Egan, N Fawson, MG Fenner, P Flackett, P Garrity, S Gauton, KA Gehring, D Gill, G Grant, S Guymer, A Healey, M Hibbert, A Hill, RD Hill, DJ Hitchen, M Hodgson, J Hornbuckle, J Housden, P Jackson, G James, Anne Johnson, A Jones, L Jones, C Kelly, JE Kenward, S King, J Kingsland, K Knowles, M Lacey, D Langston, P Lawson, CL Leonard, P Leonard, P Lockwood, J Luis, F Maddock, J McMahon, C Measures, P Mella, B Merryweather, M Miller, T Millson, TH Minskip, D Mowbray, MG Oxlade, PH Pearsall, R Platts, NR Porter, M Price, M Purslow, M Reeder, P Ridsdale, L Riley, B Roberts, D Roberts, SJ Roddis, D Seal, J Sherwin, M Sherwin, S Sherwin, A Siddall, MA Smethurst, M Smith, B Spencer, D Stables, CG Stack, MJ Sweeney, SG Tebbutt, MS Thomas, P Thomas, J Thompson, M Timms, R Twigg, C Tyler, SE Vickers, EC Vincent, D Warburton, R Watkinson, AD Watson, M Wells, G Williams, RDR Williams, P&A Wilson, D Wood, D Woodhead, D Woodriff, P Wragg, Barnsley Bird Study Group, Sorby-breck Ringing Group, Thrybergh CP Bird Log

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION 2014 RENEWAL FORM

Individual membership £14 Family membership £16

To renew, please see Martin Hodgson at any meeting, or complete this form and send your cheque payable to Sheffield Bird Study Group to Martin Hodgson at 142 Hangingwater Road, Sheffield, S11 7ET. Membership cards are now sent out in soft version as email attachments unless you contact Martin to ask for hard copy.

No sae is required.

Alternatively, you may pay by inter-bank transfer. ***If so, do not complete this form.*** Simply email Martin and ask for payment instructions.

For new members an application form is available at meetings, on the website or by email to martin@hodgson54.orangehome.co.uk

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