



SHEFFIELD BIRD STUDY GROUP
BULLETIN

Issue 224 September 2014

www.sbsg.org



News and announcements

Volunteer Bulletin editor wanted

I'm afraid after five years or so I'm print, and distributing hard-copies stepping down as Bulletin Editor, from to members. This could be done the end of the year. It's been a really rewarding post, but I'm currently studying for a Masters Degree, and with a dissertation looming I can't guarantee it's a job I'm able to do after this year.

Members may have noticed the timing of the Bulletin has become more erratic of late anyway! (This issue was also hampered by home broadband issues, so apologies for the delay, especially those receiving a hard copy).

The post includes collecting members' articles, writing the news and dates sections, putting the magazine together, sending the Bulletin off to

as an individual, or in a small team. The Bulletin needn't be designed in its current style, but I can supply my successor templates for Microsoft Publisher, Apple Pages or Adobe InDesign, depending what the new editor/designer is using.

If you think it's a post you want to take on, or have any suggestions about the process of producing the Bulletin, then please email bulletin@sheffield.ac.uk.

Pete Mella

Northern England Raptor Forum Conference

The Northern England Raptor Forum (NERF) Conference will take place on 16th November, and the Agricultural Business Centre in Bakewell. The programme includes:

- Richard Sale - Raptors and wildlife of the Arctic
- Andrew Dixon - Satellite Tagging Peregrine Falcons in Arctic Russia
- Alan Fielding - Updating the Hen Harrier Conservation Framework
- Jon Stewart - The National Trust - The High Peak Moors Vision and Plan
- Alan Charles - Combating Wildlife Crime in Derbyshire
- Trevor Grimshaw & Mike Price - A comparison of breeding success of key raptor species in the White and Dark Peaks
- Ron Downing - 30 years of Merlin in Angus
- David Walker - How much do we really know about Golden Eagles
- NERF Chairman Paul Irving - bringing us up to date with recent developments in the forum.

Registration takes place from 9am, with the conference opening from 9.50am. There will be plenty of chance for networking, with coffee, lunch and afternoon refreshments within the ticket price. Delegate fees are £22 (non-refundable after 16th Sept), and please email nerf.conference@gmail.com for more details and booking.

News in brief

Butterfly Conservation subscription offer

Butterfly Conservation have an offer to SBSG members - half price membership for one year. Either print out the form from the SBSG website homepage, and post it to the freepost address written on it, or go to www.butterfly-conservation/join and use the code BIRD50 which will be valid for new members paying by Direct Debit until the end of October.

Members will receive Butterfly magazine 3 times a year, membership to their local branch and gardening advice for butterflies and moths.

New members

We welcome new members Jack Massey, Tansy Hardy, Keefe Murphy, Jo Tomalin and Jake Kirkwood to the group. We hope you enjoy your subscriptions and good birding to you all.

Cover photo

This issue's cover photo features the St George's peregrines, and is by David Wood.

Deadline for next Bulletin

The next Bulletin will be distributed in November. Please send any articles or news to bulletin@sbsg.org, before the end of October at the very latest.

Dates for your diary

Dawn Balmer: BTO Atlas 2007 - 2011

8th October 2014, 7.15 pm, University Arts Tower LT 5

Dawn lives in the Brecks in Norfolk and has worked for the BTO since 1992, where she was Atlas Coordinator for the recently-released Bird Atlas 2007-11. She is a keen birder and ringer and enjoys local birding as well as the occasional twitch farther afield. She has been involved with OSME (the Ornithological Society of the Middle East) for many years and is a regular contributor to the journal Sandgrouse. This talk will see Dawn discussing the BTO's flagship Atlas, this has already become a major ornithological work.

Graham Catley: 40 Years of Lincolnshire Birding

12th November 2014, 7.15 pm, University Arts Tower LT 5

Ornithological consultant, photographer, author, wildlife blogger and serious patch watcher, Graham will be leading us through a talk tonight describing four decades of birding in his home county of Lincolnshire.

Redmires vis mig fieldtrip, October TBC

October will see our annual trip to Redmires Reservoir, with a last minute decision on date to maximise favourable conditions for visible migration. Join us for an early start, to watch what has been described as "Sheffield Serengeti" as (weather permitting) migrants, both common and possibly rarer, stream overhead. As always, keep your eyes peeled on the website for further details.

Group contacts

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SBSG on the web

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sheffieldbirdstudygroup](http://www.facebook.com/sheffieldbirdstudygroup)

Other Groups' Dates To Note

26th Sep - DOS Indoor Meeting - Ashley Grove on 'Shetland To Scilly, Birds of the British Isles', Evergreen Club, Allestree, Derby, 7.30pm.

2nd Oct - RSPB Sheffield Group Indoor Meeting - Ashley Grove on 'Shetland To Scilly, Birds of the British Isles', Central United Reformed Church, Sheffield, 7.30p. [Note this isn't a copy and paste error, it is the same talk as above! - PM]

15th Oct - Sorby NHS Indoor Bird Meeting - The SBSG's Richard Hill will be giving a talk on visible migration trends and patterns in the Sheffield Area, University of Sheffield Hicks Building, F20, 7.15pm.

21st Oct - DOS Indoor Meeting - Joint meeting with Carsington Bird Club, Ian Newton talks on Trinidad and Tobago. 7.30pm, Henmore room, Carsington Water.

6th Nov - RSPB Sheffield Group Indoor Meeting - Chris Galvin on Around The World in 80 Birds, Central United Reformed Church, Sheffield, 7.30pm.

16th Nov - NERF (Northern England Raptor Forum) Conference - Agricultural Business Centre, Bakewell, from 9am, See page 2 for details.

Hen Harrier Day

August 10th marked the first national Hen Harrier day, organised by Mark Avery to protest at the illegal persecution of this beautiful species. There were four events held simultaneously, in Lancashire, Northumberland, Dorset and at Fairholmes.

The choice of the Upper Derwent Valley was a bold statement that spoke to the well-known problems there, as made very evident from Mark Thomas's powerful talk to the Group in the spring. The event at Fairholmes was the first one announced and was where Mark Avery was joined by Chris Packham and Barry Gardiner MP (shadow minister for the natural environment).

Despite the weather, which everyone knew was going to be atrocious as the remains of Hurricane Bertha dumped heavy rain across most of the country (especially, it seemed, the Peak District!), at least 300 people made an impressive crowd to join the protest at illegal raptor persecution on driven grouse moors. The other end of the Upper Derwent Valley saw the only successful breeding of Hen Harriers in our area in recent

decades, when two females raised chicks in 2006 (with a little help after the male mysteriously disappeared) and the Peak District moorland should be, of course, prime breeding habitat for this majestic species. Why can it be that they so rarely succeed, or why birds that do show an interest in breeding in the area apparently move on (or at least can no longer be found) from ideal habitat?

The National Trust is the landowner for many of the grouse moors in that area and produced a very encouraging vision document for the High Peak last year. However, when I wrote to ask what measures they were taking to ensure the success of a pair of Hen Harriers displaying 'on their watch' this spring I received no response. Chris Packham gave an excellent address to the crowd, setting out clearly and powerfully the need to do something about the situation.

Afterward, I was pleased to be able to give him a copy of our Breeding Atlas, which sets out the situation for breeding Hen Harriers over recent decades better than I could explain it to him. He was impressed with the

quality of it and I trust it gave him a sense that there are people here who came deeply for the plight of Hen Harriers, as well as other species. There were certainly a good few SBSG members in the crowd.

Chris compared the protest to the mass trespass at nearby Kinder Scout and held out hope that this could similarly mark a turning point in the way the law deals with the persecution of raptors. There are plans for another event next year, so keep your eyes out for that.

In the meantime I must congratulate Mark and Chris for leading this excellent initiative, which generated considerable (social) media interest and showed the potential power of new media in such causes.

If you would like to know more about the day and the campaign around it, which hopes to bring about an increase from the dismal three pairs in the whole of England, go to <http://markavery.info/category/hen-harrier-day>

David Wood





In September the National Trust released the brilliant news that five chicks had successfully fledged in the Upper Derwent Valley, for the first time in eight years. A nest containing eggs was discovered in early August by a National Trust shooting tenant Geoff Eyre, and a nest watch was set up to protect the chicks. The young birds have been ringed and satellite tagged.

It was also announced that nine chicks had fledged from two nests in the species' stronghold in Bowland, Lancashire.

Although this is encouraging news, sadder were reports later in September that three out of the five fledglings have been killed. However these are thought to be natural losses, with no indication suspicious circumstances. This mortality demonstrates that while successes like the Peak District harriers are worth celebrating, a healthier population of these birds is needed to sustain numbers.

Pete Mella



Pictures: Opposite page, Richard Hill, this page, Andy Deighton.

Birds on patch

Birdwatching activities have been virtually non-existent for me of late following a house move to Chapeltown and never ending, on going, re-decorating. However, after Pete asked for a contribution to the SBSG report covering my visits to nearby Smithy Wood over the last few years I was more than happy to find time to dust off my notebooks and contribute.

The site is just off junction 35a of the M1 and on the descent towards Chapeltown, so is very easy to just call in on. The particular area that I have spent most time on isn't actually the wood itself - sadly threatened by a proposed new motorway service station - but an area of flattened wasteland which is destined for development in the near future. It is a typical area of industrial wasteland with areas of open grassland, shingle and rush covered flashes bordered by the woods itself, some business units and shrub land.

When I first saw the site I thought of the many potential species that I may encounter and I'm happy to report that they did materialise into confirmed sightings. The first of these species was Little Ringed Plover which I've seen here every year. In one year I actually found a pair's nest which was successful and I'm confident another pair also successfully bred the same year. I've seen up to 7 adults on the site at the beginning of the season and enjoyed watching their slow wing beat display flights. Sadly, breeding success is affected by dog walkers

and off road motorbikers though.

A pair of Ringed Plover also took up residence one year but didn't breed and were joined by a single Dunlin passing through. Lapwing have bred here too. Other typical wasteland species are around and the site holds a healthy number of Skylarks, Meadow Pipits, Pied Wagtail, Goldfinch and Reed Bunting.

The site edges hold up to 5 pairs of Common Whitethroat, breeding Bullfinch and Linnet plus most years a pair of Lesser Whitethroat. Up to two pairs of Kestrel hunt over the site and I've seen displaying Sparrowhawk, up to 5 Buzzards and Little Owl reside on nearby farmland. An Osprey was reported passing over earlier this year which I sadly missed.

The surrounding woods and bushland abound with singing Willow Warblers, Chiffchaff and Blackcap during the summer and the nearby Blackburn Brook holds breeding Grey Wagtail and Kingfisher sightings are not uncommon. 3 figure numbers of Swallow, Swift and House Martin have been seen, the latter of which collect mud from here to build their nests on the nearby estates.

Passage movement is always exciting and the site attracts good number of Wheatear, plus I've seen Redstart and Curlew too. One of the most striking birds was a male Whinchat which spent a day here in May'13, its white supercilium really standing out as it perched on plants before dropping to the ground to feed.

Back to my target birds... I've flushed numerous Common Snipe whilst trudging around the site in the Winter periods. As most birders know, they tend to fly a good distance once flushed and I've watched them circle the site a few times before landing or leave the site all together to another chosen site.

In March this year I saw 25+ Common Snipe on site which gave me the incentive to look harder for a bogey bird of mine. I've visited other local sites specifically to see Jack Snipe without success. I'd spoken to other birders on their experiences of finding them and equipped with this knowledge I checked the boggy pools on site more thoroughly. And then it happened, one flew up from right under my feet and quickly alighted a short distance away.

And then another, and another and so on - I reckon there was up to 10 birds in total which was a fantastic experience and immensely satisfying. Despite carefully checking the ground in front of me I never managed to see one prior to flushing them, its amazing how they hide themselves. So, there I was, stood wet through in mud and as happy as a Hippo... in mud. I've always preferred patch watching and this is an ideal site for this. As I mentioned, this particular site will disappear quite soon once its developed but there must be countless other un-watched industrial wildernesses around the area that hold the same type of potential and species.

David Woodriff



Got a patch you want to share with the group? Drop us a line at bulletin@sbsg.org

St George's Peregrines

There was another successful breeding season for The University of Sheffield's breeding Peregrines this year, with all four chicks fledging at St George's Church.

The chicks fledged on the 5th June, a beautiful summer's day, and a date fortuitously chosen by David Wood for this year's public Peregrine Talk. This saw hundreds of interested people not only seeing great talks by David, and the University's Jim Lonsdale and Phil Riley, but getting great views as the young birds made their first tentative explorations of the church's tower.

As always the birds have created a huge deal of interest among not only local birdwatchers, but University staff and members of the public, who have been watching the action from the churchyard, and also across the world on the University's excellent webcam. Slight concerns about the nest's proximity to building work on the University's new 'Diamond' building proved unfounded with the adults seemingly unbothered by the noise and disturbance.

Peregrines can still occasionally be spotted around the City Centre throughout the winter, so keep your eyes open! And let's hope we have another successful season in 2015.

The University filmed the Peregrine talk, and it can be found on their 'iTunesU' site. To view, download iTunes, and then visit <https://itunes.apple.com/gb/itunes-u/peregrine-falcons-at-university/id890403565>

For a full account of the Peregrines' breeding season, see the blog at sheffieldperegrines.wordpress.com

Pete Mella

(All pictures, David Wood)



Recent sightings

1st May - 31st August 2014

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

STAR BIRD

Glossy Ibis - 3rd May, Orgreave Lakes



May always arrives with great anticipation, but more often than not it ends with a great deal of frustration. The 3rd was one of those typically frustrating days, warm sunshine light south-west wind and very little movement. After a lap of the two lakes I decided that a circuit of the site, taking in the hawthorn hedgerows and young trees would prove more fruitful. A couple of Lesser Whitethroats singing in the southwest corner were a good addition - and at the time of writing still the only ones this year - and a Cuckoo (the first since 2012) almost deserved a little dance. Other than the aforementioned it was generally very quiet though.

Trawling through my Twitter notifications I scowled enviously at a report of a Glossy Ibis at Carr Vale and carried on round the perimeter stopping to scan over the seemingly birdless lakes. A quick look at Twitter again revealed that the Ibis had flown north from Carr Vale. Hmm. I stood on the causeway between the two lakes scanning the skyline all around me. I could see distant Swifts and Skylarks and mused to myself that even I could pick up a distant Ibis - though in all likelihood it would be miles away by now. As I turned from looking over the near woods at Treeton I was immediately faced with the site of a Glossy Ibis slowly dropping out of the sky towards the largest lake.

For a second or two I was stunned, then grabbed the camera and rattled off a few shots before it disappeared briefly. As I picked it up again it headed towards me and to my amazement dropped at the waters edge just in front of where I was stood. Okay Glossy Ibis aren't the best lookers in the world, but this was the first Sheffield area record (though strictly speaking Messrs Beevers and Gould can claim that honour as it headed north from Carr Vale) and one that had avoided our area for too long. Despite the good weather there wasn't and hadn't been a single dog walker onsite all morning and as the Ibis fed at the edge there was no danger that it would be flushed. Despite this after just five minutes - which consisted of me making a series of panicked phonecalls and firing off many shaky photographs - it took flight and headed north. Just over an hour later it was re-located at Adwick Washlands, the Twitter message I sent to the Barnsley birders had clearly paid off. Having spent just a few short minutes in our area it then went on to spend the rest of May and a good amount of June in the Dearne Valley area.

Mark Reeder

Black-necked Grebe – Two were at Thrybergh CP on 22nd-24th May, with a single also there on 31st. Another was at the same site on 8th August.

Little Egret – This species continues to be more regularly reported in the area, with all reports from Orgreave Lakes and Thrybergh CP. A trio seen at both sites on 10th August was a good count.

Glossy Ibis – A perhaps overdue first for the Sheffield area was seen at Orgreave Lakes on 3rd May (see opposite). This was followed by reports from RVCP on 22nd June, and Rawmarsh on 26th July.

Greylag Goose – 540, including juvs, were at RVCP on 28th June.

Canada Goose – 1,180, again including, were also at RVCP on 28th June. Sadly both feral geese species seem to have had a good breeding season.

Garganey – Single drakes at Orgreave Lakes on 17th and 24th May.

Common Scoter – Six at Orgreave Lakes on 19th July, and two at Redmires on 9th August.

Honey Buzzard – One was seen and photographed high over St George's Church at Sheffield University on 7th June.

Red Kite – Mainly records of single birds from a good num-

ber of widely distributed sites, with two birds reported together at Rawmarsh on 20th June, and Peter Dale on 26th.

Marsh Harrier – Records of cream-crowns at Howden Clough on 19th June, Broomhead Res and Spout House Hill on 31st July, and Low Moor on 27th August.

Osprey – One was at Thrybergh CP on 30th and 31st May, with reports from Rawmarsh on 1st June and 28th August.

Quail – One was heard calling at Big Moor on 1st June, followed by one calling-singing at Leash Fen on 29th and 30th.

Avocet – Two at Middleton Moor on 2nd May.

Grey Plover – One in summer

plumage was at Redmires on 4th May. Another bird was at Orgreave Lakes on 16th-17th.

Knot – A partial summer plumaged bird spent the day at Orgreave Lakes on 26th August.

Sanderling – Reports of singles at Middleton Moor on 7th, 10th and 16th May, with Orgreave seeing birds on 21st, 22nd, 23rd and 27th, the latter date peaking at four. Finally three were at Langsett Res on 7th August.

Little Stint – Up to two birds present at Orgreave Lakes between 17th and 27th May.

Curlew Sandpiper – One at Silverwood Lagoon on 26th August.

Black-tailed Godwit – Six at Middleton Moor on 29th June, 11 at the same site on 8th July,

one at Thrybergh CP on 19th, and six at Redmires on 21st.

Whimbrel – A good number of records of this species for the area, from several sites in May, July and August. The largest counts were eight at Redmires on 7th May, five at Orgreave Lakes on 10th, five at Middleton Moor on 11th, and four at Thrybergh CP on 28th August.

Turnstone – Three at Orgreave Lakes on 6th August.

Mediterranean Gull – Three probable birds were at Thrybergh CP on 3rd May, and a juvenile was at Redmires on 21st July. A 1st summer bird spent a while at Orgreave Lakes between 27th July and 17th August, and was joined by a juvenile on 16th August.



Highlights of May:

Top left: Wheatear at Cundy Cross (P. Mella)

Top right: Two-barred Crossbill at Broomhead Res (P. Jackson)

Bottom: Black Tern at Orgreave Lakes (R. Twigg)

Little Gull—A second year bird was at Thrybergh CP on 29th August.

Black-headed Gull – The Orgreave roost peaked during this period at 1,500 on 7th August.

Lesser Black-backed Gull – Numbers picked up in some of the local roosts towards the end of the summer, with 744 at Sheffield City Airport on 6th August, and 1,200 at Orgreave Lakes on 18th.

Yellow-legged Gull – A good number of records for this now regular species, with site peaks of eight at Redmires on 20th July, three at Shirecliffe Tip on 29th July, 11 at Orgreave Lakes on 6th August, 10 at Sheffield City Airport on 6th August, three at Middleton Moor on 7th August, and three at Langsett Res on several dates.

Caspian Gull – Another species with a good run of records. All single birds, these were a 1st winter bird at Redmires on 20th July, a 2cy bird at Redmires on 21st, and 1st summer at Orgreave Lakes, and adult at Langsett Res, on several dates in August.

Sandwich Tern – Two at Orgreave Lakes on 16th May, with one at the same site on 25th. One flew N with Black-headed Gulls at Rawmarsh on 30th June.

Arctic Tern – A number of records at Orgreave in May, June and August, including four on 1st May. Elsewhere one was with four Common Terns at Elsecar Res on 2nd May.

Black Tern – A summer plum-

aged bird was at Orgreave Lakes on 19th May, and Thrybergh CP on 20th. A juv was at Orgreave Lakes on 10th August.

Turtle Dove – Some welcome sightings of this near-extinct bird in our area, with singing birds at Thrybergh CP on 22nd June, and sightings at Silver Wood and Thrybergh CP on 22nd July thought to be same bird.

Two-barred Crossbill – One the star birds of 2013 was still lingering into May, with singing noted from birds in early days of the month. Sadly the last record was of two in a flock of Common Crossbills on 7th May, almost 10 months after the first sighting in the area.

Pete Mella



June highlights:

Top left: Tree Pipit at Cowell Flat (C. Kelly)

Top right: Arctic Tern at Orgreave Lakes (A. Deighton)

Bottom: Willow Tit at Green Moor (P. Garrity)



Highlights of July:

Top: Raven at Middleton Moor (D. Wood)

Bottom left: Black-tailed Godwit at Thrybergh CP (M.A. Smethurst)

Bottom Right: Probable Caspian Gull at Redmires Res (A. Deighton)



Highlights of August:

Left: Black-necked Grebe at Thrybergh CP (M.A. Smethurst)

Top right: Knot at Orgreave Lakes (M. Reeder)

Bottom Right: Spotted Flycatcher at Broomhead Res (A. Hill)

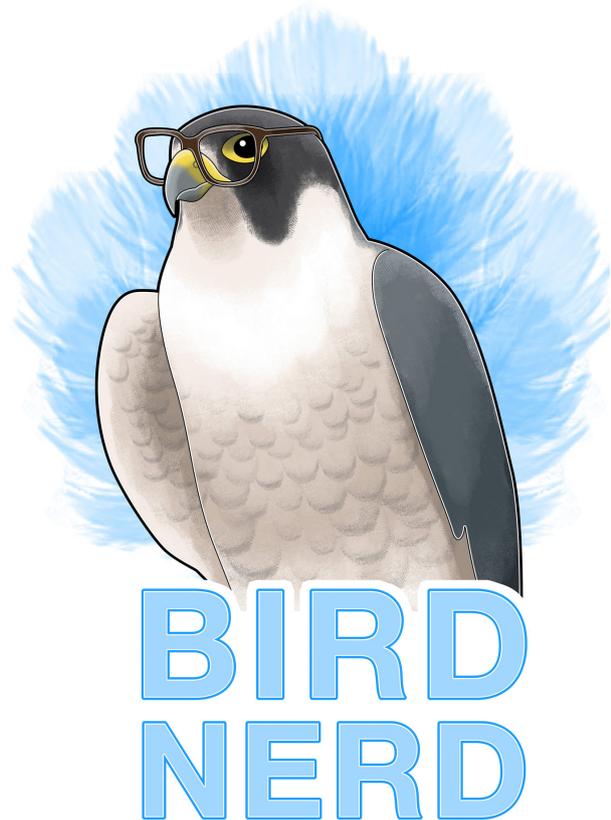


Artwork



Paul Leonard will be familiar to readers as a regular contributor of fantastic artwork over the years, including stunning work for the SBSG's Annual Reports and Breeding Atlases. Paul has updated the group's Goshawk logo with a gorgeous new design, which you may have already noticed adorning the cover of this issue.

Inspired by the Peregrine talk at Sheffield University in July, graphic artist Mel Gibbons shared this great image with us via Facebook.



It would be great to make an artwork section a regular feature in the Bulletin - if you've created anything bird-related recently then please send it in!

This issue's observers with apologies for any omissions.

CD Abell, C Almond, MG Archer, B Bailey, S Bailey, SJ Barnes, A Bateman, AR Bell, AS Bilton, F Bird, RP Blagden, K Bower, P Bowker, RJ Bradley, D Branch, SJ Branch, R Bream, MC Brew, PL Brown, V Browne, R Butterfield, DJ Buttle, EO Chafer, I Chapman, J Clarke, B Cole, J Crank, J Crooks, N Cross, M Cunningham, R Dale, A Deighton, S Duckworth, W Dudhill, H Egan, D Gains, P Garrity, S Gauton, DN Gill, DJ Glaves, KR Gould, G Grant, T Grose, S Guymer, C Hallam, R Harris, I Hedge, A Hill, AA Hill, RD Hill, DJ Hitchen, A&V Hobson, M Hodgson, J Hornbuckle, K Horton, P Jackson, G James, M Jarvis, Anne Johnson, A Jones, C Kelly, JE Kenward, S King, J Kingsland, N Kipling, J Kirkman, K Knowles, D Langston, MR Langston, P Lawson, P Leonard, P Lockwood, F Maddock, GP Mawson, JN MCGourlay, S McIntyre, C Measures, P Mella, B Merryweather, M Miller, TH Minskip, J Mosley, D Mowbray, L Nelson, H&M Nichols, PH Pearsall, R Platts, NR Porter, I Purslow, M Purslow, MN Reeder, M Ridler, B Roberts, K Roberts, SJ Roddis, S Samworth, M Sanders, R Scally, J Sherwin, M Sherwin, A Siddall, D Simmonite, MA Smethurst, GJ Speight, B Spencer, M Stacey, CG Stack, MJ Sweeney, M&L Taylor, SG Tebbutt, MS Thomas, A Thompson, W Thomson, M Timms, R Twigg, C Tyler, SE Vickers, EC Vincent, AD Watson, M Wells, G Williams, RDR Williams, JB Wilson, P&A Wilson, M Winter, D Wood, D Woodhead, D Woodriff, P Wragg, Barnsley Bird Study Group, Sorby-Breck Ringing Group, Thrybergh CP Bird Log, BTO Bird Track.