

SBSG E-NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2018



Recent Highlights (Nov – Dec 2017)

November

On the 1st the semi-resident **Whooper Swan** remained at Parkgate Canal Basin and was reported throughout the period and into the New Year. 55 **Whooper Swans** headed SE through Middleton Moor on the 2nd, with 9 tempting fate by dropping on to the lagoon. A female **Common Scoter** at Thrybergh C.P, remained until the 3rd. 4 **Hawfinch** flew SE over Redmires with a single through there on the 3rd, the same day that, two were over Rawmarsh and a single was found in Woolley Woods – sadly the days when small groups (or singles for that matter) of **Hawfinch** could be regularly found at the latter location are long gone.

A juvenile **Glaucous Gull** was found at Middleton Moor on the 3rd and reported roosting on several dates until the 12th. **Little Egrets** were reported from Tyzack's Dam (4th and 5th) and Orgreave (4th) and a single **Twite** was found at the latter site that morning. 20 **Whooper Swans** headed SE over Greenmoor. Good numbers of **Golden Plover** were at Onesmoor and Redmires with 200 and 246 respectively. On the 5th a possible **Water Pipit** calling over Redmires could not be relocated. A south easterly movement of Pink-footed Geese occurred on the 5th with 230 over Baslow, 500 Mount Darnall, 230 New Stubbin and 618 Redmires.



Twite (Orgreave © M.Reeder)

Also on the 5th the same two groups of **Whooper Swans** (9 and 17) were seen over New Stubbin and East Dene, Rotherham before heading towards Silverwood and a single **Hawfinch** flew southeast over Mount Darnall.

On the 6th 2 **Whooper Swans** were briefly at Redmires Top Res before leaving north and a single circled Thrybergh C.P also heading north. More **Whooper Swans** on the 8th with a family party of 6 on Orgreave and 300 **Pink-footed Geese** flew east at Rawmarsh.



Whooper Swan (Orgreave © M.Smethurst)

A single **Hawfinch** flew west over Attercliffe on the 9th with a further 2 west at Renishaw Park. On the 10th a female **Scaup** was found at Orgreave remaining there until the 11th. At Thrybergh C.P a **Hawfinch** was perched in treetops briefly before heading west on the 11th.

On the 12th **Whooper Swans** were seen at Middleton Moor (3), Orgreave (1) and Thrybergh C.P (2). The 12th was also a **Pink-footed Goose** day with a total of over 2500 birds recorded heading east/southeast through the day.

A grounded **Red-throated Diver** was found at a Killamarsh industrial estate on the 14th and subsequently released at Renishaw Park the following day, where it remained up to 11am. At least 6 **Yellow-legged Gulls** were present in the roost at Middleton Moor on the 16th. Also, there at least 2000 **Starlings** roosted.

A returning **Bittern** was reported at Pit-house West, on the 19th, the only record of the period.

By the 21st the Redmires **Golden Plover** flock had increased to 400 birds.

Another urban **Hawfinch** was seen heading west over Manor Lane on the morning of the 23rd.

December

3 **PARROT CROSSBILLS** were positively identified amongst a group of 12 birds by Roy Twigg in Upper Derwentdale on the 3rd December. The first record in our area since 1982, they were much appreciated, particularly by some of the groups younger members i.e. those below 50! By the 9th, 12 birds had been confirmed and remained (mostly) in the same area into the first week of 2018.



Male Parrot Crossbill (Howden Res © R.Twigg)



Male Parrot Crossbill (Howden Res © P.Garrity)



Female Parrot Crossbill (Howden Res © P.Garrity)



Parrot Crossbill © P.Ridsdale



Parrot Crossbill © M.Reeder



Female Parrot Crossbill © T.Jones



Male Parrot Crossbill © D.Wood



Scaup (Orgreave © M.Smethurst)

A drake **Scaup** at Orgreave on the 16th (probably present since November) remained until the 31st. The same day 3 **Jack Snipe** were found at Woodhouse Washlands.

A 2cy **Caspian Gull** was present at Poolsbrook C.P on the 17th. Seemingly now recorded in every month 2 **Little Egrets** were at RVCP on the 28th.

Thank you to everyone who submitted their records during the period. Whilst not all records will appear here they are added to our ever-growing database.

Also on the 3rd at least 300 **Golden Plover** were at Peat Pits, with a further 189 at Redmires.

A single **Red Kite** was over Stocksbridge on the 5th and at least 20 **Common Crossbills** were in the Upper Derwentdale area.

A **Red Kite** was over Rawmarsh on the 9th, with another (or the same wandering bird) over Orgreave on the 12th and it or another also over there late afternoon on the 26th.



Mark Reeder

Photo of the month



The image chosen by members for Sept-Oct 2017 is this shot of a Little Owl at Green Moor

taken by **Pete Garrity**.

Equipment: Canon 1DX, 500mm lens plus 1.4 x TC

Settings: 1/500th sec; F5.6; ISO 1250

Notes: "After numerous pre-dawn trips and many hours of waiting for and photographing my Green Moor family of Little Owls, I decided to visit the site in the afternoon on a day of mixed weather. During a rain shower I noticed an adult at fair distance behaving strangely with wings outstretched apparently bathing in the rain. I fired off a few shots with my set up of 500mm + 1.4TC before ducking down behind the wall to change over to my 2 x TC. I started filming and got the Owl doing a 360 degree twirl in the rain which was amazing. I just needed to be a bit closer, but I have to be very happy recording an event that very few people will ever see!".



Membership 2018

The Committee are pleased to announce that yet again membership fees will be held at £14 for single and £16 for joint or family membership. I'll be collecting at the indoor meeting on 10 January. Anyone who joined SBSG after 30 September 2017 is, of course, treated as having already paid through to the end of 2018. If you can't get to indoor meetings, please use one of the links under Renewing your Subscription on the membership page [here](#).

Subscriptions are due in January.

Young Person's Free Membership

The Committee has decided to extend free membership to anyone under the age of 25 whether or not they are in full time education. Existing members should by now have received from me a certificate stating the extended expiry date of their free membership. If they haven't, either through a slip on my part, or because they didn't confirm their date of birth when requested, please contact me on mjhodgson43@btinternet.com. Any existing paying member who now qualifies for free membership should also contact me, giving their date of birth.

SBSG & Social Media

In case you missed the short presentation on this at the October meeting, or would simply like a reminder, here is a brief account of what was said. We explained that SBSG wishes to use social media more widely as a means of speedy communication and of strengthening the group's cohesion. We asked you, if you are an existing Facebook user to go to the SBSG page [here](#) and click "Like" immediately under the picture of the Crag Martin. This will allow you to receive notifications of updates and news we post on the page and to interact in other ways.

If you're not already a user of FB, you might like to consider becoming one. It's not difficult to set up. Go to the Facebook Home Page [here](#) and follow links to create an Account.

We also asked, if you are an existing Twitter account holder, to go to the SBSG page [here](#) and click "Follow" under the picture of the Peregrines in order to get notifications about sightings and events. And if you Tweet sightings from your own account please add @shefbirdstudy so that we can easily identify them for possible re-tweet. Again, it's not difficult to set up a new Twitter account. Go to <https://twitter.com>, click on Log in then Sign up from the drop-down window.

Happy socialising!



Martin Hodgson
Membership Secretary

What to look out for in Jan & Feb



Click [here](#) to read an informative article by Ron Blagden which outlines some of the target birds for the next two months which might be found in the area.

Annual Report 2016



The report is very close to completion and we will be notifying members as soon as possible of a release date.

Field Trips 2018



Visit [here](#) for details of the local field trips for 2018. These may be subject to change so please keep an eye on the web site for updates.

Next Field Trip:

Derwentdale Raptor watch March – date TBC



This site, known locally by South Yorkshire and North Derbyshire birders as Windy Corner, is on the road up Derwentdale, around two hundred yards north of the dam wall of Howden reservoir. There is limited roadside parking back towards the dam wall. The prevailing westerly winds mean that soaring raptors favour the hillsides of Cow Hey, Nether Hey and Howden Clough on the east side of the reservoir, and the spot also has good views north towards Ox Hey and Slippery Stones, and over the conifer plantations south towards Hollin Clough.

The main target is Goshawk, but there is a good chance of seeing other raptors, as well as Raven, the woodlands should have siskin and maybe crossbill, recent years have been good for whooper swan on more than one occasion, and it is probably one of the best places in the area to see mountain hare.

Meet at 8.30am on Saturday (date TBC) and bring warm clothing and a flask. The meeting normally breaks up by 11.00.



Indoor Meetings – 2018



Visit [here](#) to see the complete list of indoor meetings for 2018. Location is Sheffield University Hicks Building, Lecture Theatre 5 and the meetings will commence at 7.15pm.

Forthcoming Meetings:

Wednesday 10th Jan at 7.15pm

Ron Marshall

Spain



Ron has had an interest in wildlife and the countryside from a very young age, but has been seriously birding for the last 35 years. He spent all of his working life running the family butchering business so long holidays were very rare. On retirement at 60 yrs. of age he invested in a camera and big lens, so now his main interest is wildlife photography. Retirement enabled him to travel to countries he could only dream of.

Ron visited Spain on a photographic holiday, "focussing" on three different areas. He started in Andalucia looking for Lynx and any birds he could find, then to Asturias for birds and Wild Cat. Finally he visited Castile and Leon for Great Bustard and birds of prey including Golden Eagle and Bonellis Eagle.



Wednesday 14th Feb at 7.15pm

Mark James Pearson

Can Bird Observatories Thrive in the Modern Era?



Cape May morning flight watch

Inspired by his ongoing work at a UK Bird Observatory (Filey), this thought-provoking talk sees Mark discussing the challenges, innovations and unique stories exclusively gathered from a diverse cast of international bird observatories during his recent research.

An invitation to speak and take part in workshops at the International Bird Observatories Conference in Cape May, USA in October 2017, combined with recent commissions from British Birds magazine (and others) to spotlight the issues and roles of observatories, has led to Mark developing this unique illustrated talk, with exclusive insights into the present state of play, and future prospects, of the bird observatory family.

This talk works best as a discussion, so feel free to chip in as we go along!



Cape May Hawkwatch platform



Filey Bird Obs as seen by an approaching migrant

Bird of the Month



Bittern

January is probably the best month of the year to see this secretive heron in the Sheffield area. An extremely rare visitor up to the turn of the century, records increased in line with national trends, although there has been something of a decline in the last few years.

Seeing the species often involves long waits in very cold conditions at dusk, and casual sightings also increase during harsh weather, as the favoured reed bed habitat becomes frozen and birds need to venture further out in order to feed.

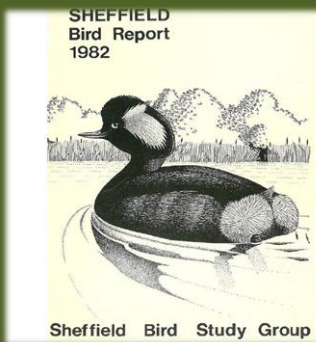
The most favoured site is the appropriately named Bittern Pool at Pit-house West, close to Rother Valley Country Park, with at least one bird being present for at least the last fifteen winters. The bird or birds either fly in to the relatively small reed beds there to roost, or re-locate within the reed bed, just before dark giving usually fleeting views. Carr Vale N R is the next most regular site, although the birds are often seen just yards outside the SBSG recording area to the south. However there are records from other lowland sites such as Blackburn Meadows NR, Catcliffe Flash and Poolsbrook Marsh, where you have a chance of finding your own bird. The reed bed at the latter site in particular must be a strong candidate to hold this elusive bird.

Ron Blagden



Images © D. Wood

A Look Back to 1982



Another excellent look back article by Richard Hill. [This](#) edition looks back into the archives to 1982. Richard covers world events including the Falklands War, the World Cup in Spain and the UK unemployment crisis. National birding highlights included a number (nine) of British firsts with Savannah Sparrow, White-crowned Black Wheatear, Lesser-crested Tern and Varied Thrush featuring in the list. Locally, Marmora's Warbler added to that list and other highlights included Ring-necked Duck, Ferruginous Duck, Grey Phalarope and "Parrot Crossbill". Developments within the structure of the SBSG are covered along with the production of the outstanding 1982 annual report.

Mystery Bird ???



Our January 2018 photograph is shown below, and you may think it is easy but have a good look before you make a decision!



Mystery Bird for November 2017

The bird was obviously an Owl which gives us a good starting point.



Taken on a summer evening on the Peak district moorland fringe, this bird was quartering rough fields before sunset. It is obviously a medium sized bird, and as it is actively hunting on the wing, we can narrow it down to one of the two eared owls, as Tawny Owl doesn't actively quarter but hunts from a prominent perch and then drops on prey. Any 'eared' owl in the Peak district hunting before dark is statistically more likely to be a Short Eared Owl, as Long Eared is more strictly a nocturnal hunter, but with exceptions in the summer months when they can be seen hunting in daylight when breeding and they have hungry mouths to feed, especially if bad weather has prevented hunting in the previous nights.

We can't be sure of the eye colour or the extent of streaking on the underparts, which would help with the id with LEO having orange eyes compared to yellow in SEO, and with LEO having more extensive streaking on the lower belly compared to SEO which has a paler belly with less streaking. However we do have a couple of good clues to id the bird, namely the trailing edge to the upperwing, and the pattern of barring on the primaries, best seen on the underside. The trailing edge to the upperwing shows only an indistinct pale trailing edge, and the underside of the outer primaries are pale with 3-4 darker bars visible.

Both these features lead us to an id as a Long-eared Owl, as a comparative view of a SEO would show an obvious white trailing edge to the upperwing, and the wingtip of the under primaries showing a largely black tip, with less barring visible. The photo was taken on the South Yorkshire moorland fringe in early June before sunset, and was feeding chicks nearby explaining the unusual daylight sighting.

The full presentation from the December 2017 indoor meeting can be found [here](#).

Andy Deighton / David Wood

Foreign Bird Trip Register



If you are thinking of birding in far off lands then visit the recently updated trip register [here](#) to access members contact details and get their tips and recommendations!

Please could you send details of any recent trips to Neil Porter at :

nrporter48@hotmail.co.uk

Alternatively hand the information to Neil or another committee member at an indoor meeting.

SBSG 2018 Calendar



This A3 full colour calendar features the top 12 images from 2017 chosen by members from the Photo of the Month item in the SBSG e-newsletter. The calendar includes a "dates for your diary" section in each month which shows all of the 2018 indoor meetings and field trips. It also features a "what to look out for" section identifying topical species that could be seen in each month.

An absolute bargain for members at the cost price of £5.00 and would make an ideal Christmas gift. An A3 card envelope is provided. The remaining calendars will be available at the January indoor meeting or alternatively contact a committee member to obtain a copy.

Photo of the Month



Below are the shortlisted images taken between the months of Nov - Dec which were submitted by SBSG members.

Please select your favourite photo via the e-Newsletter link. The image with the highest number of votes received before the February indoor meeting will feature in the next issue along with a note from the photographer describing how the image was achieved. To give all photographers a chance showcase their images the winner will not be considered for the following issue.

Please Vote [here](#) or click on the link at the foot of the final page (one vote per member) but note that the form may not work on old versions of Internet Explorer (IE 8 or older). Alternatively use Chrome, Firefox or Safari and paste the link/address or email your vote [here](#). Many thanks.

1. Whooper Swan



2. Little Owl



3. Kingfisher



4. Kestrel



5. Ravens



6. Kingfisher 2



7. Magpie



8. Egyptian Goose



9. Parrot Crossbill



e-Newsletter

We hope you enjoyed the January issue of the e-newsletter. We are always happy to include topical articles from members so if you have something for us to consider for future issues then please contact me.



E-newsletter Editor – [Peter Garrity](#)