

SBSG E-NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2018



Recent Highlights (Jan – Feb 2018)

January

The year got off to a good start with at least 12 **Parrot Crossbills** still present in Upper Derwentdale. They remained there throughout the period and were last reported on the 26th. What was presumably the same skein of c.150 **Pink-footed Geese** was tracked heading west, being reported from Meadowhall, Intake, Ranmoor and Redmires from 12:30. Also on the 1st a party of nine **Waxwings** headed south at Edgemount.



Parrot Crossbill (Howden Res © M.Jarrett)

On the 4th a 1st winter **Caspian Gull** was found on wasteland off Stevenson Road, Attercliffe, where it appeared sporadically until the 9th February. The same bird was also seen at Orgreave on the 6th and 28th when it was also at the former Sheffield Airport site.



Caspian Gull (Stevenson Road © A.Deighton)

Once a late Spring rarity winter **Little Egrets** would have been unheard of, but a single was at RVCP and Orgreave on the 5th.

Pink-feet were again on the move on the 5th with notable skeins of; 300 NW over Aston, 400+ SW over Heeley City Farm and 450 SSE over New Stubbin. The first winter drake **Scaup** was still at Orgreave on the 5th, remaining until the 20th.



Scaup (Orgreave © M.Reeder)

A **Black-necked Grebe** was 'found' on Meadowgate Lake, RVCP on the 7th, where it remained until at least the 14th. A drake **Pintail** was also there on the 7th. A single **Hawfinch** was at Wentworth Woodhouse on the 8th, but not seen subsequently. A **Little Egret** was again at RVCP on the 12th, with two **Yellow-legged Gulls** there the following day. A single **Jack Snipe** was at Woodhouse Washlands on the 14th and a very unseasonal **Little Gull** roosted at Orgreave. The **Bittern** roosted at Pit-house West on the 20th and was seen again at the edge of the reed bed for ten minutes on 27th. Also on 20th a **Cetti's Warbler** called briefly there.



Yellow-legged Gull (Orgreave © R.Twigg)

Red Kites were reported over Upper Haugh (19th) and Gillfield Wood (20th). A brief **Lesser Spotted Woodpecker** was seen among a tit flock in a Wadsley Common Garden on 23rd.

At Crookes three **Waxwings** were found on the 23rd and remained mostly in the School Road area until the 8th February.



Waxwing (Crookes © N.Dargue)

A **White-fronted Goose** was found among the **Greylag Geese** at Thrybergh C.P on 28th, where it remained until the 10th February.



White-fronted Goose (Thrybergh CP © M.Smethurst)

February

The Orgreave **Scaup** relocated to nearby Ulley C.P on the 3rd, where it remained at least until the 25th.



Scaup (Ulley Res © M.Smethurst)

The **Bittern** was again at Pit-house West on the 4th, where it alighted in the top of the reed bed and spent 5 minutes in the open.



Bittern (Pit-house West © A.Deighton)

At Peat Pits 477 **Golden Plover** were present on 4th with at least 500 **Golden Plover** in fields between Ulley and Treeton on the 8th.

The wandering **Little Egret** was at Orgreave 6th to 7th. At Thrybergh C.P 12 **Whooper Swans** were present up to 08:30, when they left to the southwest, with a further two at Thrybergh on the 23rd and a party of 25 headed north over Orgreave on the 22nd

On the 24th at Treeton Dyke 3 **Red-crested Pochard** (2 drakes) were present.

A party of 37 **Whooper Swans** spent the morning at Orgreave on the 25th with others reported at Broomhead (13) and over Kiveton (3) that same day. At Upper Haugh 8 **Whoopers** were seen heading north on 28th.



Whooper Swan (Kiveton © A.Bateman)

The start of the freezing spell brought a single **Grey Plover** to Orgreave on the 28th, 1 of 9 wader species recorded there that day, also 325 **Pink-footed Geese** headed NW late afternoon.



Grey Plover (Orgreave © M.Reeder)

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.



Mark Reeder

Photo of the month



The image chosen by members for Nov-Dec 2017 is this shot of Kestrels at Brownhills Lane by **Bob Russon**

Equipment: Panasonic Lumix FZ200

Settings: 1/320th sec; F4.0; ISO 200

Notes: "The picture was taken on Brownhills Lane. I was driving towards the bottom reservoir counting the greylags in the fields. I saw a kestrel approach and land on the dish then realised there was already a bird there. I was about 50 yards away from the cottage so slowly drew nearer. At about 30 yards I decided to take a shot in case they flew. As I was face on to the birds I had to open driver's window and lean out to get a picture. I only managed 1 shot before they flew. It was very windy and they appeared to be sheltering in the lee of the building. I would have loved to get nearer for a sharper image. I realised it was a bit unusual to get male and female perched side by side."



Jon Hornbuckle



It is with great sadness that we report the death of one of the group's original founders Jon Hornbuckle, who passed away suddenly on 19th February.

Jon was well known and respected both locally and worldwide, having climbed to the top of the world bird listing tree having seen over 9,600 species on his many self-organised birding trips, covering all corners of the globe.

Our thoughts are with Jon's family, and wife Syndy.



More information on Jon's remarkably full and eventful life can be found [here](#).

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 Saturday March 17th



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.

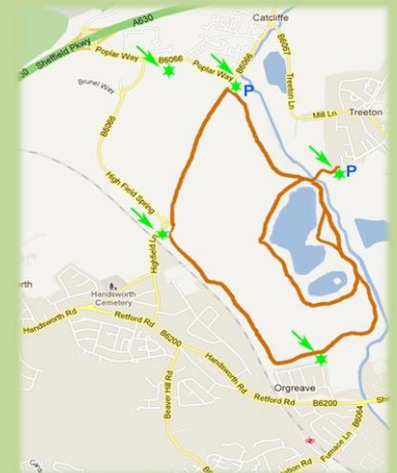


April Field Trip:

Orgreave – Waders & Wagtails Date TBC (see SBSG Website)



Join us for a visit to one of the most productive sites in the Sheffield area in April where passage birds normally include Wheatears and Wagtails and expect to see a variety of Waders and Wildfowl.



Membership 2018

We recently emailed over 30 existing members whose Gift Aid data needed updating. There was a terrific response rate of over 90%. Well done, and thank you for helping SBSG to maximise its Gift Aid claim from HMRC.

I'll be collecting annual subscriptions again at the indoor meeting on 14 March - £14 single and £16 family membership. If you can't get to the meeting, please use one of the links under "Renewing your Subscription" on the Membership page [here](#). Subscriptions are now overdue.



Martin Hodgson
Membership Secretary

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 14th Mar at 7.15pm
AGM

Including 2017 Review of the Year



The Group's AGM on 14th March is a chance to take stock of where we've come from over the last year - and beyond - and where we might go. As Chair of the Group, I'd like to take this opportunity to recognise and acknowledge the support and contribution of our members. If you're receiving this newsletter, you've continued to support the Group for another year, or perhaps have just joined us; either way I encourage you to come to the AGM to have your say in how the Group is run and what directions we might take. And after the official business of the AGM, we'll enjoy some short presentations from a number of our members. I hope to see you there!



David Wood, SBSG Chair

Also to include:

- Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 8 March 2017
- Report of the Honorary Treasurer
- [Report of the Honorary Secretary](#)
- Report of the Recording Team

Short trip talks by:

- Pete Brown – Ethiopia
- Martin Hodgson - Australia

Indoor Meeting

Wednesday 11th Apr at 7.15pm

Peter Garrity
Tobago



Peter has been involved with the SBSG since the 70's and is currently an active committee member, website editor and e-newsletter editor. A birder since childhood, he has also been interested in photography for many years. In recent times he has "focused" on photography more and is regularly published in various forms of media including the Birdwatch magazine.

He visited Tobago in May 2017 on a family holiday but took advantage of the opportunity to record some of the island's magnificent bird life. This is his first full length talk at the SBSG so be prepared for an evening full of quality images, equipment banter and no doubt a few humorous anecdotes! As a taster why not visit his blog [here](#).



Bird of the Month



Whooper Swan

Although this species could be seen in the area in any month from October to April, the peak month for sightings of Whooper Swan is undoubtedly March. Numbers wintering in the UK have increased considerably in recent years, and this national trend has been matched by larger numbers moving through our area in spring.

Parties can be seen moving north-west over virtually any part of the area, and birds are more likely to be "down" than those seen in the autumn. The sight of some of these magnificent white birds moving overhead on their way to Iceland, or the sound of a noisy party that is taking a short break on a local water is one of the birding highlights of late winter/early spring in the area.

Any reasonably sized water could see birds resting provided they are undisturbed, with records from reservoirs in the west quite frequent, especially if there is bad weather, as well as lowland sites such as Orgreave Lakes. Middleton Moor was one of the best sites until recently. However, following the sad poisoning incident in spring 2016, the owners of Cavendish Mill actively disturb any birds which land, which means you have to be there pretty well when the birds arrive to see them.

On more than one occasion the Windy Corner raptor watch has been livened up by a party of "Whoopers" moving over the Upper Derwent Valley, so fingers crossed for the morning of March 17th.

Header image © Mark Reeder



Ron Blagden

What to look out for in Mar & Apr



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.

Eastern Moors Partnership

We have had a request from John Mead of the Eastern Moors Partnership asking if any SBSG members would be interested in doing an upland bird square survey for them this year on Burbage Moor.

"We survey 8 sample squares across the Eastern Moors and Burbage annually using a Brown and Shepherd methodology. This involves 3 visits from the end of March until the end of June, with each visit taking approximately 2-3 hours".

"The terrain is quite uneven, wet, and bouldery (I know I'm not selling it very well here!) so we're looking for someone who would be comfortable in this setting. Also someone with good bird ID, and ideally some experience of similar monitoring".

Anyone interested should email John [here](#).

Eastern Moors Partnership



Sorby Proceedings



Arthur Whitaker (1882 - 1949)
Sorby Natural History Society

In 1929, the then-named Sorby Scientific Society published its first journal, entitled Proceedings Volume 1. The journal contains interesting papers on a wide variety of subjects. Of particular note is Arthur Whitaker's paper "Notes on the Birds of the Sheffield District", this being one of the first times that local bird observations had been published. Although widely referred too subsequently the following paper by Charles Wells detailing the record of a White-tailed Eagle in Derwent Dale makes for interesting reading.

Link to the proceedings which were scanned by Bob Croxton can be found [here](#).

Appeal for legal challenge on behalf of Hen Harriers

An appeal from Mark Avery to raise funds for a judicial review with full details [here](#).



"Instead of tackling the key issue of criminality, Michael Gove's Department for the Environment (DEFRA) has proposed something called 'brood management' which involves removing chicks from nests near grouse moors. That might help grouse moor owners but it won't help Hen Harriers".

Stanage / North Lees Estate Update

At a meeting on 31/1/18, four volunteer surveyors (Neil Porter, Saffra Wright, Alan Kydd and Graham Thorpe) met with representatives from the Peak District National Park. We discussed the planned woodland surveys for 2018, building on similar work carried out in 2017. These will hopefully contribute to future woodland management work. Ring Ouzel survey arrangements have not been finalised as yet. It was hoped that Kim Leyland who has done extensive work on Ring Ouzel breeding on the Eastern Moors (published reports have been available via our website) will be able to help on the Stanage /North Lees estate. As usual, the climbing community will play a key role in nest detection and erection of suitable signage when pairs are in vulnerable sites. The ranger post vacated by Bill Gordon, is up for replacement, and this individual will also be heavily involved (Bill is returning to deliver relevant training).

Arising from the formal 2017 SBSG survey of Stanage carried out by Richard Hill, there was a desire to monitor Curlew and Lapwing productivity on the estate. We need extra volunteers to help with this.

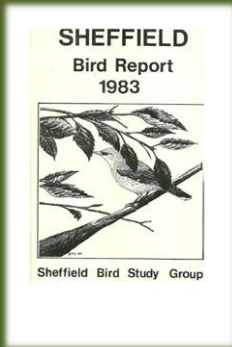
Anyone interested, please contact Neil Porter on 0777 2254 731 or by email nrporter48@hotmail.co.uk. I will forward your name to Frances Horsforth at the Peak Park. Note that volunteers will sign a formal agreement with the Authority this year which means expenses may be paid and risk assessments made on survey areas.

Finally with Ring Ouzel arrivals imminent can we remind everyone to respect these birds whilst establishing their territories, and to do so particularly if you are a bird photographer.



Neil Porter

A Look Back to 1983



Another excellent look back article by Richard Hill. [This](#) edition looks back into the archives to 1983. Richard covers world events including the US Embassy bombing in Beirut and the shooting down of a Korean airliner over Soviet airspace. In the UK the General Election was topical along with the Brink's-Mat robbery at Heathrow and the start of "Breakfast TV". National birding highlights included White-throated Sparrow, Needle-tailed Swift, Dark-eyed Junco, Blackpoll Warbler and Cliff Swallow. Local highlights included Golden Oriole, Parrot Crossbill, Two-barred Crossbill, Little Auk and Baird's Sandpiper. Developments within the structure of the SBSG included the departure of Dave Gosney, Keith Clarkson and Betty Moore from the committee.

Mystery Bird ???



Our March 2018 mystery photograph of a gull is shown below. Have a close look before you make a decision!



Mystery Bird January 2018



At first glance, we have a brownish, compact and small looking falcon, with obvious barring on the tail, and heavily streaked underparts. Given that the photo is taken on 3rd July at 1700ft on the Upper Derwent moors, thoughts turn to the dashing Merlin, still to be found breeding in fairly healthy numbers on the heather moorlands of the NW peak. But is it that simple?

Assuming we have ruled out Kestrel (dark brown ground colour, wrong tail pattern with no subterminal band, and thick dark streaking on underparts) and Peregrine (perceived bulk and again tail pattern), the only two choices we have are Merlin and Hobby. We can rule out an adult Hobby, as the bird appears brownish on the upperwing and tail, and with no sign of any red 'trousers' that should be obvious at this age. Neither can it be a juvenile Hobby, as this species breeds late with juvs not fledging until well into August.

So that takes us back in the Merlin direction. The tail pattern and overall colour of the bird indeed look good for a female Merlin (or conceivably an early fledged juvenile), though a couple things visible don't look quite right, namely the thick underpart streaking, and the head pattern, what we can see of it, looks largely pale with an obvious thick dark moustachial stripe.

Though not widely known, Hobby has a fairly distinctive first summer plumage, in which much of the brown juvenile plumage is retained and with new, blue-grey feathers, and the red 'trousers', moulting in over the course of the summer. A clear view of the head (see other photo) **confirm the id of this bird as a first summer/2cy Hobby**, with the distinctive head pattern and underpart streaking obvious.



The 'trousers' appear pale buff, but with some brighter blotchy orange patches that are not easy to see, and some greyer adult like feathers can just be seen on the upperparts. Note the barring on the tail is confined to the inner webs, so only obvious when the tail is spread as in the photo, it would normally be less noticeable.



Hunting technique is another good identification aid, this bird was actively hunting Oak Eggar moths, showing incredible grace and agility. Merlin and Kestrel will also take moths in flight, but can't match the dashing elegance of a Hobby. Although Hobby do not usually breed in the Dark Peak, they can often be seen on the moors in June-July, taking advantage of the day flying moths, and most of these are likely to be non-breeding first summer birds.

An old 1992 British Birds paper discussing first-summer Hobby plumage can be found [here](#).



Andy Deighton – Images © A. Deighton

Photo of the Month



Below are the shortlisted images taken between the months of Jan - Feb 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. Kingfisher



2. Caspian Gull



3. Barn Owl



4. Dipper



5. Whooper Swans



6. Kingfisher 2



7. Parrot Crossbill



8. Cormorant



9. Greylag Goose and friend



Parrot Crossbill – Full Photographic Report



Howden Res – 18/12/2017

My report of an encounter with 12 Parrot Crossbills at Howden Reservoir in December can be found [here](#). The abridged Powerpoint presentation was shown at the SBSG January indoor meeting and can be found [here](#).

© Peter Garrity

e-Newsletter

We hope you enjoyed the March 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](#)