

SBSG E-NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER 2017



Recent Highlights (Sept - Oct 2017)

September

A **Turtle Dove**, reported at Upper Haugh on the 1st may likely be the only record of the year. On the 2nd a **Red Kite** was at Bradfield Dale, remaining in the area for a couple of days and at least two cream-crown **Marsh Harriers** were at Ewden Beck. Several further reports of both species in this area were received during September. The imm **Whooper Swan** was at Parkgate on the 1st and remained mostly there throughout September.

A **Gannet** on the 3rd was the 1st of two reports during the period and a **Great White Egret** flew S through Orgreave. An **Osprey** was present for several hours at Thrybergh C.P on the 3rd with presumably the same bird making several other visits during early September. The **Cetti's Warbler** was still at Treeton Dyke on the 6th and was last reported on the 17th.

At Orgreave four **Ruff** dropped in briefly on the 9th. On the 13th an adult **Arctic Tern** was at Orgreave, and presumably the same bird later at RVCP, with a juvenile at Orgreave the following morning. On the 15th an incredible five **Gannet** were reported flying W over Brockwell, Chesterfield.



Cetti's Warbler (Treeton Dyke © M.Smethurst)

Pink-footed Geese were on the move on the 16th with skeins of 239,180 and 111 over Carr Vale, Manor Fields and Walkley respectively. Also, that day the first **Jack Snipe** of the autumn was at Silverwood, a **Mediterranean Gull** at Carr Vale and a **Bar-tailed Godwit** reported over Rawmarsh, with the same observer reporting an adult **Little Gull** the following day and a **Marsh Harrier** on the 19th and 23rd - quite a purple patch!



Osprey (Thrybergh CP on 10th © C.Tyler)

At Redmires two adult and a 1st year **Yellow-legged Gull** roosted on the 21st. A **Yellow-browed Warbler** at Hillsborough on 24th was as good as it got for the finder that afternoon! On 27th a red-head **Red-breasted Merganser** was reported briefly and a late **Greenshank** flew S at Thrybergh C.P. A **Little Stint** was found at Redmires on 28th remaining there until the 3rd October. A single **Ruff** was at Orgreave on 29th.



Yellow-legged Gull (Morehall Res on 7th © H.Nichols)

October

A **Brent Goose** flew S at Silverwood on the 3rd, presumably the recent bird seen in the Barnsley area. **Pink-footed Geese** went W at Silverwood (200), Thrybergh (250) and Wentworth Park (110) on the 6th.

At the Haugh Road Obs' ten **Whooper Swans** flew W on the 7th and a **Jack Snipe** was at Thrybergh C.P. A **Greenshank** went through Silverwood and Thrybergh on the 8th, quite a late record. **Redwings** arrived in force on the 8th with over 500 birds through Redmires and 135 over Rawmarsh. Also on the 8th two **Twite** spent the day at Ewden Cabin.



Whooper Swan (Holmebrook Valley Park on 8th © L.Stoppard)

At Middleton Moor on the 13th over 750 **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** roosted. A single **Rock Pipit** was at Thrybergh C.P on 16th and a single was at Orgreave on the 18th with two there the following day. Carr Vale had two fly-through **Great White Egrets** on the 17th. A **Rough-legged Buzzard** was reported at Ewden Heights briefly on the 18th

A single **Ruff** was at Orgreave at first light on the 19th. An occasionally vocal **Yellow-browed Warbler** was at Carr Vale on 22nd to 24th. 33 **Crossbill** and five **Brambling** went S through Redmires on the 25th.

A group of 13 **Whooper Swans** were tracked from Derwent edge to Rawmarsh, where they continued SW, on the 29th. Also on the 29th a **Merlin** was seen at Ulley then 10 minutes later passed north through Orgreave.



Whooper Swan (Rawmarsh © M.Langston)

Fat Finch Fallout

The national **Hawfinch** explosion hit Sheffield on the 25th when 10 (7 then 3) went S and SW through Redmires. The following day two were reported over Silverwood. Attendees at the Redmires Vismig event on 28th enjoyed a further 3-4 birds. A single dropped in at Stubbin Colliery on 29th and one went west at Ramsley on 30th. On the final day of the month two passed through Redmires, one was over Midhope and the inevitable single flew southwest at Rawmarsh. Hopefully this invasion will continue through November.



Hawfinch (Redmires on the 28th © D.Wood)



Hawfinch (Redmires on the 25th © A.Deighton)

Many thanks again to all those that have submitted records to the Group over the last few months.



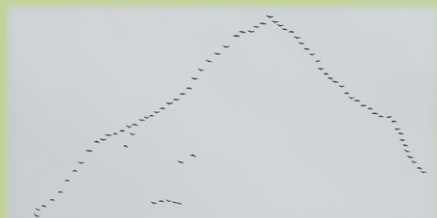
Mark Reeder



Hobby (Firsby Res on 7th Sept © C.Tyler)



Red Kite (Ughill Moors on 17th Sept © A.Deighton)



Pink-footed Goose (Norfolk Bridge on 30th Oct © A.Deighton)

Photo of the month



The image chosen by members for May-Aug 2017 is this shot of an Arctic Tern at Orgreave

Lakes taken by **Mark Reeder**.

Equipment: Nikon D90, 150-500 lens at 500mm focal length

Settings: 1/640th sec; F8; ISO 800

Notes: "I always look forward to the Tern passage at Orgreave. Four species were recorded this spring Arctic being the most numerous with a total of 58 birds between 30th April and 17th May (when this photo was taken).

Often when terns linger they favour the shallow edges of the large lake and can be enjoyed, with patience, at relatively close range. On the 17th the water was very still and gave an almost perfect reflection of a couple of Arctic Terns as they fed along the eastern shore. With a bit of luck and a high ISO I was able to get this shot as one bird picked at the surface as it passed just a few metres away".



Field Trip Reports 2017



Report on the Redmires Vis-Mig Field Trip (Sat 28th October)

The chosen final weekend of October once again promised less than ideal conditions for optimum visible migration. A westerly breeze and overcast skies on Saturday 28th looked a better bet than clearer skies but northerly winds on the Sunday so we updated the website to alert interested parties to the confirmed date. A group of 14 hardy souls met at daybreak by the middle reservoir at Redmires, but even by then I'd enjoyed a memorable morning as a Barn Owl hunted over fields by Soughley Lane, buffeted by the winds as I drove past en route to Redmires, only my third in 25 years! Unfortunately it had disappeared, presumably to roost, by the time some returned to try to catch up with it. After enjoying the shelter of the plantation for a few minutes as we gathered ourselves, we headed out to a better viewpoint on the dam wall, where the breeze was noticeable. Luckily, the temperature was (by Redmires standards!) higher than the norm for the time of year and proved tolerable, even encouraging a Mistle Thrush into song, although one of those present regretted forgetting both gloves and hat...

From the outset a steady movement of thrushes started to pass through heading W and keeping low into the wind, meaning we were often looking across – or even down – at them. Typically, Redwings, Starlings and Fieldfares moved in species-specific small flocks, but there was some mixing, keeping us interested as we searched for scarcer species among the birds on the move. This should have been peak season for passage of winter finches, but only small numbers of Goldfinch, Chaffinch and Greenfinch were in evidence, with 15 Siskin, 25 Lesser Redpoll and a couple of probable Brambling proving unobliging as they failed to call on their way past us. An hour into the watch an unusual call drew attention, as is often the way with vis-migging, and a Hawfinch emerged from over the lower res plantation and headed W pretty well directly overhead

before circling round and heading back E, allowing decent views for all present, even if the light was disappointing for photography, as evident below!



Hawfinch © D.Wood

Given the impressive national movement of this species, mostly further south, there was a chance that one would pass through, but this was an excellent sighting nonetheless. A few minutes later two Crossbills headed low W across the middle res and after another hour a further two Hawfinches followed a similar flight line to the Crossbills and passed close to us as they headed off W.

During quieter moments on the vis-mig front, the lower water levels on the middle res and the resulting shoreline offered another perspective, although the poor light made viewing conditions challenging. Nonetheless, some 160 Lapwing were huddled among the rocks, and among them around 20 Golden Plover blended into the background while a handful of Black-headed Gulls lingered post-roost.

Other species noted on the migration watch included two Grey Wagtail S, several hundred Woodpigeons mostly W, a Great Spotted Woodpecker W and then back E and a party of seven Long-tailed Tits that flew between the plantations against the strengthening breeze. A Sparrowhawk dashed through virtually at our feet along the reservoir embankment and one of the resident Kestrels hunted over Hammond's Field, where a female Teal dropped onto the small lake and Black-headed Gulls picked at the aquatic vegetation.

By 10:30 conditions were deteriorating and most people had retired for a cup of something warm. By that time, we'd seen some 2,000 birds in total, of 25 species. After a quiet autumn for the species to date, it was good to see the numerous parties of Fieldfares (below) moving through, somehow full of character and giving the odd 'chack', with a total of 450 during the morning.

Around 400 Redwing were also logged, along with 240 Starlings, but the highlight for all present was undoubtedly the Hawfinches. Stood on the edge of a reservoir to the W of Sheffield, it was exciting to feel part of a national,

Phenomenon and indeed an international movement as birds moved into the country for the winter.



Thanks to all who supported the trip, which was not the most memorable in terms of passage numbers, but won't be forgotten by those present for those Hawfinches, perhaps the best birds we've ever had on a vis-mig trip.

David Wood

Local Field Trips 2017



Visit [here](#) for details of the local field trips for 2017. These may be subject to change so please keep an eye on the web site for updates.

Next Field Trip: Poolsbrook Marsh - Winter Wildfowl

Saturday 9th December 2017

Meeting at Poolsbrook CP / Poolsbrook Marsh - meet 1pm in the car park OPPOSITE the visitors centre / cafe:

Nestled in the outskirts of Chesterfield, the Poolsbrook area has a remarkable diversity of species which regularly feature in the SBSG and DOS annual reports. The primary focus will be the small lake at Poolsbrook Country Park - this traditionally provides an area for gulls to congregate and 'wash off' after using the adjacent refuse tips, before they head off to roost at Ogston Reservoir, just outside the area. Amongst the regular species such as Black-headed, Common, Herring, Lesser and Great Black-backed Gulls, there is always a chance of picking out more unusual species such as Yellow-legged, Caspian, Glaucous and Iceland Gulls. If time permits, a circuit of nearby Poolsbrook Marsh should also be productive, with Water Rail, Willow Tit and wintering Chiffchaff often recorded from the reed bed / willow scrub, plus the possibility of Cetti's Warbler, which has wintered occasionally in recent years.

Indoor Meetings – 2017



Visit [here](#) to see the complete list of indoor meetings for 2017. Location is Sheffield University Hicks Building, Lecture Theatre 5 and the meetings will commence at 7.15pm.

Forthcoming Meetings:

Wednesday 8th Nov at 7.15pm

Nicola Hemmings

How Studying Sperm & Eggs Can Save Endangered Species



In many critically endangered birds, more than half of all eggs laid never hatch. This represents a huge reduction in the breeding success of many struggling species. In order to address the underlying reproductive problems and ultimately help save these birds from extinction, it is crucial that we understand why these eggs fail. In this talk, Dr Nicola Hemmings will describe methods she has developed to diagnose fertility problems in birds and explain how these techniques can be used to improve the effectiveness of conservation programs for endangered species.

Nicola Hemmings is a Research Fellow in the Department of Animal & Plant Sciences at The University of Sheffield. Her research interests lie broadly in the fields of animal behaviour and reproductive biology, and she is currently funded by Royal Society Dorothy Hodgkin Research Fellowship to investigate the causes of reproductive failure in birds.

Wednesday 13th Dec at 7.15pm

Justin Carr

Digiscoping Birds



Justin started birding at the tender age of 12, a teacher at School sparked this passion with his love of everything Avian. His interest in Photography soon followed. Digiscoping for him started around 20 years ago even before it really had a name. His first Digiscoping camera was actually a video camera with the Druridge Curlew (still Slender billed in his opinion) being one of the first birds videoscoped. This soon evolved into still's. Fast forward to present day, he now works freelance for Swarovski optic, and hosts workshops for them as well as attending Birdfair demonstrating Digiscoping



What to look out for in Nov & Dec



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.

Bird of the Month



Great Grey Shrike

Although in some autumns the first sightings are in late October, November is probably the best month of the year to look for **Great Grey Shrike**. The first sight of one of these superb birds perched on top of an isolated birch or conifer makes any birding trip special.

When seen well, the bird is unmistakable. The first thing you notice is a pale bird with a very upright stance and long tail, usually at a fair distance! Closer examination reveals the light grey back and crown, white belly and throat, black wings with large white primary patches, and of course the familiar black "bandit" eye mask and slightly hooked beak. This bird definitely has a "don't mess with me" attitude.

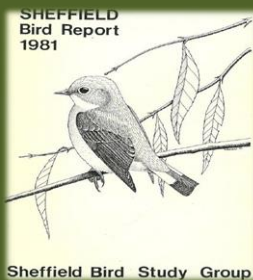
When it flies, the short, blunt wings and rounded tail are noticeable as it flies with low, deep undulations from one perch to another. Be careful to keep an eye on it; the ability of these birds to disappear unseen from an apparently isolated bush, only to re-appear hundreds of yards away, if at all, is legendary.

At this time of year, small birds are its main prey, and it will attempt to take birds not much smaller than itself. Birds seen in the spring are often seen taking bees and beetles, and even small lizards.

The moorland fringe is undoubtedly the best place to look for this bird in the autumn (lowland records are almost invariably birds returning east in the spring). The Eastern Moors, from Blackmoor through Totley Moss, Big Moor, Ramsley Moor and Leash Fen are a good bet, together with the area around from Agden Beck/ Thornseat Delf around to Ewden Beck and Midhope. Finally, it is always worth keeping a lookout for this bird if on a raptor watch around Derwent and Howden. This was a regular spot in years gone by, and there has been the odd record in more recent years.

Ron Blagden

A Look Back to 1981



Another excellent look back article by Richard Hill. [This](#) edition looks back into the archives to 1981 where He covers interesting world and UK events and national birding highlights of the year including Sandhill Crane, Trumpeter Finch, Rock Sparrow and Pacific Swift just to name a few spring highlights. Local highlights included Sheffield's first Mediterranean Gull and Temminck's Stint and other notable sightings such as Red-necked Phalarope, Wryneck and Red Kite! The various developments within the increasingly popular SBSG are also covered along with an incredible year of leading edge visible migration study led by the equally incredible Keith Clarkson.

Mystery Bird ???



This is a new item for the newsletter where we will be showing images of mystery birds for you to identify. This may be an unusual image or simply a species which can be easily confused. Our first photograph is shown below, and you may think it is easy but have a good look before you make a decision!



In the next issue we will explain why the species can be confusing, particularly in flight.

Off the Beaten Track



The Porter Brook and Mayfield Valley

In this latest article, Chris Greenwood visits the Porter Brook and Mayfield Valley area.

See [here](#) for the report.



Chris Greenwood

Mike Fenner



It's with great sadness that we report the recent death of Mike Fenner, a stalwart of SBSG for over forty years.

It's difficult to overstate his contribution to the group in that time through his various roles as a hard working committee member, an enthusiastic contributor to a host of local and national bird surveys, the organiser of the 1995-1996 Sheffield parks birds survey and author of that report, a writer for the annual "Birds in the Sheffield area" for many years as well as for the 2013 "Breeding Birds of the Sheffield Area", the group's field trip organiser for several years and not least, the SBSG chairman between 1993 and 1998.

And in all that Mike remained a quiet, self-effacing, helpful and determined individual with an engaging sense of humour and a great enthusiasm for birding. He will be greatly missed by many and our thoughts and sympathies go out to his friends and family.

Pete Brown

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 begin collecting at the indoor meeting on 13 December. 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!

SBSG Constitution

The Committee has recently reviewed and amended the Constitution. Anyone wishing to see the revised version should click [here](#).

Multiple copies of newsletters

In a joint membership, if you are the person whose email address is SBSG's main point of contact, you may like to ensure that your partner and/or children get their own copies of newsletters like this. Just send me their email address(es) and I will add them to the distribution list. If you pay as a single member but would like your children to have their own copies, just follow the application route outlined above under [Young Person's Free Membership](#).



Martin Hodgson
Membership Secretary

Photo of the Month



Below are the shortlisted images taken between the months of Sept - Oct 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 end of October 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. Dipper



2. Raven



3. Kingfisher



4. Goosander



5. Little Owl



6. Egyptian Goose



7. Yellow-legged Gull



8. Grey Heron



9. Whooper Swan



10. Little Owl 2



11. Dipper 2



e-Newsletter

We hope you enjoyed the November 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](#)



VOTE FOR PHOTO OF THE MONTH