

Sheffield Bird Study Group

BULLETIN



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Bulletin

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SPRING IS HERE!

The winter visitors go out, and the spring migrants return, in a bumper recent sightings.

A PATCH IN THE SUN

Birding on the Iberian Peninsula.

ENCOUNTERS WITH GOSHAWKS

Close encounters with Sheffield's mightiest raptor.

PLUS! Lunch hour birding, Wyming Brook, Secretary's Report, Varanger and Northern Finland.



Andy Deighton

Report on Wyming Brook and Fox Hagg Reserve Advisory Group Meeting (Feb 1st 2011)

Sheffield Wildlife Trust hosted this meeting at St Lukes church Lodge Moor. It was attended by a number of local residents who used Fox Hagg and Wyming Brook for leisure purposes.

SWT described the land management work that was ongoing. On Wyming Brook this consisted of attending to deteriorating public rights of way, strimming along the drive, car park maintenance, moorland fringe work and installation of three new culverts.

Fox Hagg management include strimming overhanging vegetation, bracken and birch tree control, improving access and viewpoints. Viridor had funded £5000 towards surfacing the bridleway and some concern was expressed about the materials that might be used for that. Another £22000 from Viridor was being used for heathland and woodland management for these sites and along the Rivelin Valley. SWT are negotiating to extend the reserve by 23 hectares by taking on a lease currently with the Duke of Norfolk

SWT has been successful in getting £238,000 from Waste

Recycling Environment Ltd to continue a Living Landscape project over the next 2 years. This will embrace the Limb, Porter, Rivelin and Loxley valleys

A bird woodland improvement grant is targeted at reversing woodland bird decline on 14 vulnerable species including Lesser Redpoll, Wood and Willow warblers, Redstart, Woodcock, Tree Pipit and Woodpeckers. This will involve felling and extraction of some fairly large conifers, coppicing of the moorland fringe, removal of Beech and Sycamore to allow heather and bilberry understory. Some of this felling work must be completed by March this year. They intend to do some survey work on the bird population although I was not clear who would do this work. One assumes there will be a baseline and repeat survey to demonstrate that the work has achieved improvement in those species.

SWT will also get paid for managing some of the woodland which provides some income. There will also be additional interpretation boards and way markers

An application for a Green Flag Award as a benchmark standard for parks and green spaces had just been submitted for Wyming Brook.

SWT described a number of activities and events they had organised in the last year. They included a photography walk with Paul Hobson who spoke to SBSG in 2010 and a fungal foray with Ziggy in Wyming Brook (this man is good and has a cult following). Future events include bimonthly conservation volunteer days at Wyming Brook and Fox Hagg. Most of the attendees felt they were past giving of their best for this sort of activity.

I was assured that SWT work closely with SBSG and are in regular contact with our esteemed Chair. There is a dawn chorus walk planned which presumably emulates the walk SBSG did down Wyming Brook in 2009. It was good to see the communication with local people and the willingness to listen to comment.

Neil Porter

Membership - final reminder!

A message from our Membership Secretary, Martin Hodgson – “Good news - membership had risen by 14 this year, and 77% of membership fees have already been paid. Could anyone who hasn't yet paid please use the form in the previous two Bulletins”.

If payment hasn't been received by the end of April, it will be presumed members will not be continuing their membership, and this will be your last Bulletin.

News in brief

New site guides

Lots of new material has been added to the website of late, including new site guides for Wyming Brook, Loxley Valley, Langsett and Midhope, Endcliffe and Porter Valley, Bolehill Flash and Millhouses and Ecclesall Woods. Visit www.sbsg.org.uk/sites/recslist.asp to see the new guides, and thanks to all members who have contributed to these.

New members

The SBSG welcomes new members Donna Tubridy, Chris Allen, John Dawson and Neil Dummigan. Good birding to you all, and we hope you enjoy your membership.

Twitter

The SBSG Twitter now has well over 250 followers, and if you want to join them to keep up to date with SBSG news and announcements, visit www.twitter.com/shefbirdstudy.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Indoor Meetings

Pete Brown - San Diego to the Sea of Cortez

Wed 11th May 2011, Sheffield University Arts Tower, Lecture Theatre 5, 7.15pm

Baja California has been called Mexico's Galapagos. The term doesn't begin to do justice to this superb wildlife destination. Pete takes us on a thousand mile trip along the Pacific coast of the Baja California peninsula and into the Sea of Cortez encountering an impressive variety of oceanic, shore and desert birds on the way, not to mention hundreds of whales and thousands of dolphins on the way.

Please note it will be worth double-checking the location for this meeting on the SBSG website, due to ongoing building work at the University Arts Tower.

Field Meetings

Spring Migrants

1st May 2011, Orgreave Lakes

This year our Spring Migrant walk will be at Orgreave Lakes, a site that's turning up a wealth of interesting bird records, but may still be unfamiliar to many. Meet at 07:00 by the Treeton cricket and football club, on Washfield Lane, Treeton, Rotherham, S60 5PU.

Evening birds

Wed 8th June 2011, location tba

In a change from the usual final indoor meeting of the year, we will be taking advantage of the light nights and (hopefully!) good weather to enjoy a spot of evening birding, somewhere on the moorland fringe. Exact times and locations will be announced on the website nearer to the event - see the website for details.

Nightjars and Woodcocks

Jun/July 2011, Wharncliffe Heath

This year will see the return of the crepuscular walk on Wharncliffe Heath, to see and hear the secretive and elusive Nightjar. This trip will take place in either late June or early July - see the next Bulletin for more details.

OTHER DATES TO NOTE

16th April - Wonderful Warblers.
Guided walk at RSPB Old Moor, 10am-1pm. £5 or £3 for RSPB members.
Booking essential, email old.moor@rspb.org.uk or tel 01226 751593.

20th April - Optics Demo. RSPB Old Moor, 10-4pm.

1st May - RSPB Sheffield Group indoor meeting. The talk is entitled "The Race to Save The Albatross", and is by Euan Dunn. 7.30pm, Central United Reformed Church, Sheffield.

4th May - Optics Demo. RSPB Old Moor, 10-4pm.

14th May - Exploration of Blacka Moor reserve (Sorby NHS). Early morning walk of the SWT reserve, meet 7am at Stony Ridge car park, SK277806. For details contact Jim Monach on (0114) 266 7395.

14th May - Warbling at the Brook. Dawn chorus walk at Wyming Brook with Sheffield Wildlife Trust, 5am-7am. Suggested donation £3. To book tel Hannah Wittram on 0114 2634335.

18th May - Optics Demo. RSPB Old Moor, 10-4pm.

21st May - Blacka Moor Dawn Chorus. Guided walk with Sheffield Wildlife Trust, 5am-7am, Suggested donation £3. To book tel Hannah Wittram on 0114 2634335.

25th May - Sorby Bird Group indoor meeting. Annabelle Kennedy will be explaining in detail the Wildlife Trust's plans for Blacka Moor. 7.15pm, Sheffield City Museum.

1st June - Optics Demo. RSPB Old Moor, 10-4pm.

Deadline for next Bulletin

The next Bulletin will be issued at the June outdoor field Meeting. inclusion in the Bulletin must be received by Pete Mella (for preference), or 21 Lump Lane, Grenoside, Sheffield, S35 8PL, by **Saturday 29th May**.

Please note that any items for at peterjmella@googlemail.com

Bulletin by email

More and more members have agreed to receive their Bulletins by email, and now **well over half** of you are on our email list, meaning we have been able to cut our print run considerably, and make big savings on postage. Many thanks to all members who have agreed to this, and if you would like to switch over to receiving your Bulletin in pdf format then please email me at peterjmella@googlemail.com.

LECTURE REPORT

Graham Catley - Varanger and Northern Finland

The February lecture was presented by Graham Catley, who has visited Varanger and Northern Finland on three occasions, each in early June. At this time the area, some 250 miles north of the Arctic Circle, is emerging from winter snow and birch is coming into leaf.

Birds are thinly spread in the forest, with Redwing and Brambling the only species one is guaranteed to see in this habitat; an occasional Hawk Owl is the only raptor likely to be encountered. Much old wood has been cleared, removing natural nest sites for hole-nesting species, but large numbers of nest boxes have been put up, providing sites for Redstart and Pied Flycatcher. Feeding stations are valuable birding sites and one well-known station has provided Brambling, Mealy Redpoll, Siberian Jay and Pine Grosbeak. Siberian Tit and Three-toed Woodpecker can be found in the forest, the latter requiring old trees and large territories.

There is some excellent bog habitat, home to Little Bunting, Hen Harrier, Lapland Bunting, Red-spotted Bluethroat, Greenshank, Spotted Redshank, Wood Sandpiper, Crane, Broad-billed Sandpiper, Dotterel, Willow Warbler and Grey-headed Wagtail. Varanger is an accessible nesting area of the Long-tailed Skua but numbers may be falling as a result of reduced numbers of a major prey species, the lemming. It seems that milder winters lead to flooding of lemming burrows, with consequent drowning.

Further north, gulls, wildfowl and waders predominate. Large flocks of Common Scoter can be found. Drake Goosander congregate for the wing moult. Common, King and Steller's Eider can be seen. Herring, Iceland, Glaucous and Greater Black-backed Gull and Kittiwake are present, and waders include Turnstone, Bar-tailed Godwit, migrating Purple Sandpiper, Red Knot, Sanderling, Little

Stint and large numbers of Temminck's Stint. Graham has seen 70-80 Red-necked Phalarope on one pool. White-tailed Eagle is numerous; 30-40 can be seen on a 50 mile drive. On the coast there is Raven, Brunnich's Guillemot, Puffin, Razorbill, Shag, Black Guillemot and White-billed Diver.

The settlement of Hamningberg marks the end of the road – literally. Here one can find Shore Lark, and Dunlin and Golden Plover breed, whilst Arctic Redpoll find seeds preserved in snow over the winter. Willow Grouse, Ptarmigan, Long-tailed Duck, Black-throated Diver and Taiga Bean Goose are present, but Snow Bunting is scarce.

Graham was thanked for an excellent presentation, illustrated with superb photographs, and for standing in at short notice due to the illness of the planned speaker.

Rod Hinchliffe

HONORARY SECRETARY'S REPORT - 2010

The following provides a brief summary of the Group's activities during 2010, and an opportunity to thank a number of people, who gave up their valuable free time to help with the running of the Group. Apologies for any omissions.

Membership

Membership increased again and at the end of the year stood at around 160 – a lot has been made about the decline of bird clubs due to the internet, but indications are that in our case, the website (and other organised events) has started to bear dividends.

Website

This continued to run smoothly during the year, with up to date bird news and additional site guides – thanks are due to Simon Bailey, Dave Williams and Andy Deighton for its continued success.

Committee Matters

The remaining vacancy was filled by Rod Hinchliffe during the year – Rod's experience is already proving of value, so thanks to Rod for coming on board. The Group is also indebted to Martin Hodgson, who bravely agreed to become our new Membership Secretary.

Indoor Meetings

An excellent range of indoor meetings, with highlights including Martin Garners 'Frontiers of Birding', Stephen Murphy's

talk on Hen Harriers, Graham Appleton on Iceland, and Paul Hobson on bird photography. Sadly, both January & December's indoor meetings became victims of the great British weather.

Thanks are due to members who contributed to Members' Night, as well as Margaret Miller for organising the indoor meetings for the last time after so many years of service and to Roy Twigg for taking on the organisation of indoor meetings for 2011, the attendance of which has so far been encouraging.

Field Meetings

Local field trips included Derwentdale, Hallam Moors, visible migration and autumn gulls at Redmires. Thanks to the organisers & all those who attended.

Sadly, the year also saw the long-standing SBSG field trips come to a close – the Committee would like to thank Paul Medforth for running these for many years, as well as previous organisers including Mike Fenner, Rob Hardcastle and Pete Freeman.

Annual Report

The 2009 Report was again published on time in December, which maintains our recent good form. Thanks are due to all the contributors, Dave Williams, Dave Wood and Paul

Leonard for data production, proof reading and artwork respectively, as well as Richard Dale for co-editing. Work on

the 2010 edition will start in April 2011.

Bulletin

Pete Mella continued his hard work during the year, as well as a welcome revamping of the format – Pete asked me to thank everyone who provided features during the year and to David Woodriff and John Kirkman for their regular contributions. If you can sign up for an e-mailable copy – please do so as this saves the Group money on postage.

Breeding Atlas

The species accounts are now starting to come together and we hope to have everything in by the spring. We have also now agreed on a publisher – Crowes of Norwich, who have a long experience of producing bird books, so the aim is still to publish at the end of this year or early next year. Thanks are also due to Pete Brown for his continuing fund raising efforts.

Finally, a vote of thanks for Dave Wood for his assured Chairmanship, Ron Blagden for managing the Group's finances and last but not least, all of our members for supporting us during 2010.

Richard Hill

Lunch hour birding

Pete Mella discovers there's good bird-watching opportunities to be had, even when office-bound...

Being a birder who works full time can be a frustrating existence. You can drive yourself loopy spending your days dreaming of the birds you're missing while stuck in the office, occasionally checking the SBSG site or BirdGuides to curse those fortunate enough to be out and selfishly seeing cracking birds while you're incapable of doing so.

Luckily we live in a City that's up there with the best for urban birding, and there's a wealth of birds to see during your lunch hour if you know where to look. I'm fortunate to work at the University of Sheffield, meaning there's several "lunch time patches" within striking distance to explore.

Close to where I work are the Crooksmoor Parks, which turn up a surprisingly good range of birds, that, as well as all the expected species, can also include Goldcrest, Jay, Nuthatch, Treecreeper, Grey Wagtail and Redwing. Sparrowhawks often swoop overhead, and Grey Herons can sometimes be seen patrolling the edges of Crookes Valley lake. Sometimes real surprises can turn up. I've seen Mute Swan, Tawny Owl, Fieldfare, Mandarin, Teal and Lapwing at Crookes Valley Park, and a screeching Ring-necked Parakeet over Weston Park. And The Ponderosa may not look too glamorous, but is a good place to hunt for spring migrants, being one the first places I hear singing Chiffchaffs and Blackcaps.



Pete Mella

The Botanical Gardens are well within an hour's loop, if I get a riddle on, and is another good spot for the likes of Goldcrest and Jay. From here Ecclesall Road is a reliable spot for Waxwings in irruptive winters, with scores of birds descending on the multitude of rowan trees that line the back streets. If I've got time I sometimes give Sharrow General Cemetery a quick look, where Dipper and Grey Wagtail can be found on The Porter.

Heading into Sheffield Centre, St George's Church should always be checked for Peregrines, and the churchyard there also became a temporary home to Waxwings, with Redwing also likely in winter, and twittering Goldfinches usually present. Once in the City, a walk down to the River Don is often productive, with Goosander present in small numbers in winter, and Sand Martins in the summer. Grey Wagtails are usually about, and if you're very lucky you'll get a flash of a passing Kingfisher.

The roof of Mecca Bingo at Shalesmoor, and the tin roofs

opposite by the River, can also be an urban gull-watcher's, well... Mecca. I remember during a freezing winter weather a couple of years ago the roofs were covered with gulls - Black-headed, Lesser and Great Black-backed, Herring and Common. I'm sure if I'd have taken better optics out on my lunchtime jaunt I may have managed to find a rarer one in there somewhere...

From memory I've counted up the number of species I've seen on lunch hours, over the last four years or so, and it's just shy of 60, with a few glaring omissions that are sure to turn up soon enough. There's plenty of nooks and crannies of the City yet to explore, and certainly a few surprises to be had along the way.

Sometimes it's tempting to nibble your sandwiches at your desk on your lunch hour, but there's birding to be had everywhere and at all times of year, even in the heart of the City itself. With its green spaces and clean rivers, Sheffield is a brilliant place to work in, and to satiate those birding urges during the week!

A patch in the sun

Pete Brown introduces us to his other "local" patch...

Amongst the many memories from Graham Catley's excellent February talk on Varanger and beyond was his response to a question about whether he relied on local expert guidance in locating species. To an extent he did but most of the birds he came across were self-found and therein lay much of the pleasure of such trips.

And I guess that's the buzz that many of us get from birding, finding our own stuff, particularly if it's in an area that we watch with some degree of regularity. It has its drawbacks especially if your local patch offers a fairly limited range of habitats and consequently birds as does mine, the Millhouses Park/Ecclesall Woods area. It helps therefore if you have a back-up patch. I have but alas not a local one. It lies about eighteen hundred kilometres south of here.

Kev Borman and I go back a long way. I reckon we first met properly in Weymouth in 1969 on a failed quest to find a Ring-billed Gull. We were on a geography field trip from Sheffield University. One of the tutors was a birder and knew about the gull. We made an early morning attempt to locate the bird but with just one pair of binoculars between the three of us and with all day geographical excursions to be undertaken the attempt was doomed. Fast forward to 1979 and Kev and I crossed paths again, this time with a more lasting birding outcome. Kev suggested that I should join him as a member of something called the Sheffield Bird Study Group.

Forward again to 2004. Kev and I had been working in the same school for many years and both had taken the decision to give up the day job that summer. A good decision for both of us. I stayed in Sheffield and got involved in all manner of bird-related employment opportunities. Kev and partner Troy invested in a campervan and set a course for the Iberian Peninsula. After five months of exploration they

found the location and property that they'd been looking for and dropped anchor.

La Rondeña sits on a ridge in the Sierra Cabrera, a range of hills some fifty kilometres north east of Almeria in the south eastern corner of Spain. The coast lies about ten kilometres to the east. At 450 metres asl the house overlooks a shallow basin with the land rising steeply to the south to a ridge with summits at just over 600 metres. The valley floor supports a collection of small olive groves, vegetable patches, small gardens and the occasional pocket sized field of wheat. Away from the cultivations and scattered houses this is a rock strewn, hilly, semi arid landscape but with one exception, the *barranco*. Across the valley from the house and above the *fuenta*



“One our very first visit Kev’s garden list increased by one, a frustratingly short staying Rufous Bush Robin...”

where a stream springs from the rock face is a narrow ribbon of well irrigated olive and almond trees that stretches for a few hundred metres up the narrow cleft of the *barranco* and disappears from view beyond the ruins of a long abandoned settlement.

And this landscape, thanks to Kev and Troy's hospitality, is my patch in the sun, albeit one that only gets my attention in May each year. It's easy to work. With vegetation sparse away from the olive and almond trees and the weather usually conducive to early morning walks, birds are pretty easy to find. Based on the same two kilometre stroll done on several mornings on each visit over the last four years I reckon I've got a fair idea of the numbers of breeding birds on the patch. It

varies from year to year but approximate territory counts of some of the more interesting species go something like this:

Scops Owl 1, Turtle Dove 1, Thekla Lark 10, Hoopoe 1, Red-rumped Swallow 2, Black Wheatear 3 or 4, Black-eared Wheatear 2 or 3, Woodchat Shrike 2, Sardinian Warbler 10, Dartford Warbler 2, Blue Rock Thrush 1, Spotless Starling 5, Serin 3 or 4, Corn Bunting 5, Cirl Bunting 2 or 3, Rock Bunting 2.

There are plenty of other more familiar breeding birds in the valley and several interesting regular visitors that probably breed not too far away. These include Short-toed Eagle, Alpine Swift, Great Spotted Cuckoo, Bee-eater and Crag Martin.

All this is tasty enough but there's much else besides. We'd been there all of 24 hours on our very first visit when Kev's garden list increased by one, a frustratingly short staying Rufous Bush Robin, the only record there to date. And then early on our next visit in 2008, a nightjar of Kestrel like proportions lifted from our feet in the *barranco*. Red-necked Nightjar, again our only sighting to date but a trigger to make as frequent a visit as possible



to this ribbon of green in the semi desert and a moment of realisation; this is a place where north bound migrants pause and feed before moving quickly on.

Ten kilometres from the coast with a more or less south to north alignment, the *barranco* appears to be something of a funnel for newly arrived visitors. No two days are the same. The day after the nightjar find, the almond and olive trees held Spotted Flycatcher, Garden Warbler and Whitethroat. They'd all gone by the following morning. In May 2009 it got better. On one morning the trees held a Melodious Warbler. The next day it was like Padley Gorge with Redstarts, Wood Warbler and Pied Flycatchers feeding up before moving on. The following day was different again with Golden Oriole and Orphean Warbler the star birds. Early May 2010 saw a similar mix but with Pied Flycatchers in the ascendancy though these were brighter Iberian birds, even more contrastingly black and white than our Pieds. The *barranco* is a joy in early May. Numbers of birds are never high but that means very little gets missed and every thing is self-found. There are no other birds around and probably never will be. Indeed, the only human being I've ever encountered on my walks is the local goatherd. It's wonderful.

And one final ingredient to the patch mix, visible migration. On May 3rd 2010 we'd had a good day's birding at the coast, enjoying all that the salt pans at Cabo de Gata and the wetlands at Rambla Morales had to offer. Back at La Rondeña the early evening turned cloudy with a north westerly breeze. Cool but not so cool as to stop pre dinner wine being consumed on the patio

overlooking the valley. Normally the bins and scope are trained downwards. Not this evening for the sky was filled with Swifts, hundreds upon hundreds hammering north west into the breeze and in the far distance, many raptors, maybe two miles away. But this is a corrugated landscape and their path took them behind distant ridges and out of our sight.

No matter, I was up early the next morning. The *barranco* held new arrivals in the shape of several Spotted Flycatchers, a Redstart and a Pied Flycatcher and as the morning progressed the Swift passage resumed, four or five hundred per hour going through until mid-afternoon. And with them, Honey Buzzards, at first, single birds, then twos and then a party of eight low over La Rondeña. And with it a birding tragedy. Kev and

Troy cultivate three terraces below their property, growing an impressive array of fruit and vegetables on a stony slope in the driest corner of Europe. They work hard, too hard, for as they toiled heads down to the soil they were oblivious to the raptor-fest above them and to the shouts from me on the other side of the valley.

And that was our last day there in 2010 but, out of a chance conversation with Bob Croxton on our return, came the suggestion that I should look at a Gibraltar birding web site to see what was happening there on that same day. Sure enough, thousands of Swifts and large numbers of raptors were moving north and north west there in the same period. We were 500 kilometres to the east but seeing the same event. How broad a front were these birds moving over? What kind of numbers were involved? Add that to the other questions that arise as I get more familiar with the patch. What moves through the valley in March and April? Does a different assemblage of migrants make use of the *barranco* at other times and if this one little pocket can turn in such a variety, what about the next valley, the next range of hills or similar habitats nearer to the coast?

I'll probably never know. I'm very content to work my patch in the sun



All photos used under Creative Commons License - Rufous Bush Robin by Sergey Yeliseev (www.flickr.com/photos/yeliseev/), Honey Buzzard by Billy Lindblom (www.flickr.com/photos/billyboystofotocolection/), Red-necked Nightjar by Pablo Salto-Weis Azevedo (www.flickr.com/photos/tefocoto/).

An encounter with Goshawks

David Woodriff recounts a memorable experience with one of the area's most charismatic raptors.

Just unbelievable! It was one of those time-stopping magical moments when I got close up views of a bird I've only previously seen at great distance.

For reasons of sensitivity I'll keep the location secret but needless to say it was a place I regularly watch in the SBSG area although, sadly, it wasn't on Wharnccliffe Chase!

It was the 22nd March this year, around 9am and a sunny Spring-like day. The moors had reopened to birdlife with the first groups of Meadow Pipits returning as well as Curlew, Lapwing and 2 displaying Snipe. Song Thrushes sang strongly throughout the area (at least 5 singing males) and a Great Spotted Woodpecker drummed at a nearby tree.

The nearby reservoir held 4 Goldeneye, 5 Goosander (all female), a pair of Teal and a trilling Little Grebe showing every sign of attempting to nest. On the dam wall a pair of Oystercatcher stood and watched motionless. A birder from Barnsley I spoke to later reckoned they nested in a local field last year so I'll have to keep a watch.

I was more than content with the array of birds seen so far when I pulled up at another favoured watch-point I regularly use to scan the area. After exiting my car, I instinctively looked up to see a bulky, medium sized raptor flying relatively low over my head.

Through my binoculars I could see a generally brown bird with heavily streaked belly, rings on



the tail and stripes on the underwing. The general chunkiness and size immediately differentiated from Sparrowhawk meaning – Goshawk! – an immature female. As it flew towards some nearby woods it showed some noticeable white colouring around the rump area towards the underside of the tail base.

I thought that was it - my 10-20 second decent view of a Goshawk. I'd been to Windy Corner only a few days earlier

“This view was just Champion's League quality!”

and saw a distant pair but this view was just Champion's League quality!

I'd pinpointed the area in the tree tops where it must have settled and scanned to try to re-connect. Instantly I could see another, smaller raptor flying directly above the general area. It was a male Goshawk which proceeded to show its loopy, circular display flight for a full 15 to 20 minutes afterwards. It felt like front row seats to watch the bird that we have as our club emblem.

I stood stationary not wishing to miss a second. I heard a car pull up nearby and three chatty women alighted and walked by. Apart from this it was just me and the displaying Goshawks – where were the crowds that this

spectacle deserved?

The female joined the male intermittently but generally seemed disinterested. Typical! In fact, she positively left him “on the dance floor” and proceeded to fly back above my position and begin hunting over the fields on the edge of the nearby moorland. This drew the concern of a Curlew which rose to mob the bird which again seemed not to notice.

What more can I say? As the female disappeared from view I felt a mix of elation and sadness. Elation for obvious reasons. Sadness because although it is so apparent that this area, and many more like it, could hold several pairs of Goshawk the chances of breeding success are limited at best for such a heavily persecuted bird.

I returned after work and achieved fleeting views of the female again. I have returned several times since though without any sightings. Hopefully they are safely tucked away and returning to their secretive ways.

I'm sure that we can all recall such special views of memorable birds. This is right up there with the very best that I have and I'll be lucky if I ever achieve such good views again.

Photoby Sergey Yeliseev (www.flickr.com/photos/yeliseev/) - used under the Creative Commons License.

RECENT SIGHTINGS

1st February- 31st March 2011

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

Black-necked Grebe - A pair were present at Silverwood Lagoon from 21st March, bringing hope they would stay to breed, but sadly they departed on 26th. Another was present at Orgreave Lakes on 23rd.

Little Egret - A brief visitor to Carr Vale on 5th February was the first ever winter record for the site.

Whooper Swan - Several groups recorded in our area during the period, with impressive counts of 78 over Silverwood Lagoon on 3rd March and 80 over Canklow on 6th. Other notable counts include 26 that spent the day at Orgreave Lakes on 5th; 44 at Ulley over Ulley CP on 6th; 52 over Sheffield City Airport on 19th, and 31 over Orgreave and Ulley on 20th. Groups also stopped off at Orgreave on 23rd (7 birds), 26th (2 birds) and 27th (17 birds), and five were at Thrybergh on 20th.

Shelduck - Several records, the highest numbers being nine at Thrybergh CP on 12th February, three at Redmires on 13th March, and two pairs at Thrybergh Tip on 20th.

Wigeon - Highest counts were 82 at Orgreave on 11th February, 120 at Rother Valley CP on 16th, and 60 at Blue Man's Bower on 21st.

Mallard - First ducklings were recorded at Tankersley on 27th March, and Rotherham Centre on 28th. A previous attempt at Rotherham was less successful, with eggs seen taken from the nest by a Mink on 11th March.

Pintail - A pair were at Orgreave Lakes on 11th Feb, with a female present at the same site on 29th and 30th March.



MA Smehurst

A pair of Black-necked Grebes were present at Silverwood Lagoon for several days in March, raising hopes that they would breed,. Unfortunately they left the site by the 26th.

Red-crested Pochard - A drake was present at Orgreave Lakes from 14th-25th February.

Goldeneye - Highest counts were 15 at Orgreave on 26th February, and 17 at Rother Valley on 27th March.

Red-breasted Merganser - A drake made a brief appearance at the SBSG raptor field trip at Windy Corner on 12th March, with further sightings at Ladybower on 20th and Derwent on 22nd.

Goosander - Highest counts included 15 at Hillsborough Park on 4th February, 20 at Broomhead Res on 12th, 12 at Ulley on 13th, 66 at Rother Valley on 24th, 74 at Orgreave on 3rd March, 19 at Staveley Works on 22nd, and 11 in Rotherham on 27th.

Red Kite - Single birds reported

at Stanage Edge on 14th Feb, Dore on 8th March, Big Moor on 12th, Gibbet Moor on 13th, Tinsley Golf Course on 17th, Whitwell Moor and Wincobank on 25th, and Hurl Field on 26th.

Rough-legged Buzzard - At least one juvenile was present in the Howden Area from 8th March until at least the 22nd, with a second bird observed on 20th.

Merlin - Singles at Orgreave Lakes on 11th Feb, Barbrook Pools on 26th, and Ughill Moors on 27th.

Water Rail - Single birds at Firsby Res on 1st February, and 12th and 13th March.

Oystercatcher - reports of one or two birds throughout the period, at sites including Orgreave Lakes, Pit-house West, Langsett Res, Silverwood Lagoon, Thrybergh CP, Rother Valley, Redmires, Middleton Moor, Ughill Moor, Firsby Res,

Staveley Works, and Blue Man's Bower. The highest count was three at Soughley Lane on 14th March, and a notable sighting was one at Orgreave on 20th Feb, "swimming like a duck" to evade a hunting Peregrine.

Little Ringed Plover - The first of the year was one at Orgreave Lakes on 13th March, followed by another at Silverwood Lagoon on 15th, with other reports from Staveley Works (first reported on 22nd) and Centenary Riverside (on 26th). The highest count was six at Orgreave on 28th.

Ringed Plover - Highest count was five at Orgreave Lakes on 21st February. Display was noted at Parkgate, where birds were seen on waste ground adjacent to B&Q.

Golden Plover - The Peat Pits flock peaked at 350 on 14th March. Other notable counts included 116 at Fulwood Head on 19th; 220 at Redmires on 19th, 20th and 21st; 150 at Orgreave on 22nd; and 250 at Waverley Opencast on 25th.

Lapwing - By far the largest count was 380 at Rother Valley on 16th February. Other high numbers included 71 at Redmires on 12th February; 60 at Peat Pits on 14th; 80 at Orgreave on 17th; 70 at Langsett Res on 2nd March; and 100 at Langsett Moor on 29th.

Dunlin - A bird seen by gull-watchers at Broomhead Res on 6th February was an unusual record. Other than singles at Thrybergh on 14th and 17th February, all other records were from Orgreave Lakes, where numbers peaked at three on 21st February and 13th March. One photographed on the site on 18th March was presumed to be of the race *alpina*.

Jack Snipe - One was present at Silverwood Lagoon on 15th February. It was the first reported at the site since 14th October, demonstrating a poor year for this species.

Snipe - 85 at Woodhouse Washlands on 20th February was the largest count of this period.



Andy Deighton

This Rough-legged Buzzard was one of two reported around the Howden area for much of March.

Displaying was first reported at Redmires on 13th March, with widespread reports of courtship by the month end.

Black-tailed Godwit - One was at Orgreave Lakes on 26th March.

Curlew - Some impressive counts included 40 at Langsett Moor on 25th February, 80 at Redmires on 4th March, 30 at Agden on 6th, 32 at Low Bradfield on 8th, and 56 at Middleton Moor on 17th and 19th.

Redshank - Several singles in the east of the area, with larger counts including four at RVCP on 16th February, and five at Orgreave Lakes on 19th March.

Green Sandpiper - Singles at Centenary Riverside on 11th February and 27th-28th March, and Blue Man's Bower on 16th March.

Mediterranean Gull - An adult winter was still present at Broomhead Res until 12th February, and one was at Orgreave Lakes on 5th March.

Black-headed Gull - The Broomhead Res roost peaked at 3,500 on 10th February. Other higher

counts included 780 at Orgreave on 3rd February, and 275 at Silverwood Lagoon on 25th.

Common Gull - Numbers at the Broomhead Res roost peaked at 250 on 10th February.

Lesser Black-backed Gull - 15 were at Broomhead Res on 1st February, and 12 at Orgreave Lakes on 28th.

Herring Gull - The highest counts were 360 at Orgreave Lakes on 3rd February, and 350 at Broomhead Res on 12th. 123 passage birds were over Thrybergh CP on 14th.

Yellow-legged Gull - A suspected hybrid was at Shirecliffe Tip on 16th February, and an adult was at Orgreave Lakes on 20th.

Great Black-backed Gull - Largest counts were at Orgreave Lakes, peaking at 250 on 4th March. Other notable counts include 45 at Broomhead Res on 20th February, and 46 at Thrybergh on 14th.

Kittiwake - One was at Orgreave Lakes on 11th February.

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker - Singles reported from Somersall



Andy Deighton

This Great Grey Shrike spent several weeks in the Leash Fen/Ramsley Moor area, where it was heard singing by many observers.

Park, Hall Wood, Hutcliffe Wood, Wharcliffe Chase, Millhouses, and woodland by the Northern General Hospital.

Skylark – Peak counts were 22 at Inkersall on 6th February; 20 at Orgreave Lakes on 11th, 16 at Gleadless Valley on 22nd; 20 at Silverwood Pit Top on 25th; 40 at Orgreave Lakes on 19th March; and 30 at Wharcliffe Chase on 23rd.

Sand Martin – First of the year were seven at Thrybergh CP on 13th March, followed by two at the same site on 14th. The highest counts in March were 70 at Thrybergh CP on 27th, 20 at Treeton Dyke on 26th, and 21 at Orgreave Lakes on 28th.

Swallow – First of the year were two at Langsett Res on 23rd March, with the next being singles at Thrybergh CP on 26th and 28th. Other March sightings were at Orgreave Lakes (28th, 30th, 31st), Aston Ponds (28th) and Treeton Dyke (31st).

House Martin – Four flew north at Orgreave Lakes on 25th March. Singles were recorded at Treeton Dyke on 26th, and Orgreave Lakes on 29th.

Meadow Pipit - Birds returned to the usual breeding grounds, with good counts of 56 at Wharcliffe Chase on 18th March, 75 at Firsby Res on 21st, 199 at Langsett Moor on 22nd, 150 at Wharcliffe Chase on 23rd, 90 at Totley Bents on 26th, 60 at Agden Side on 27th, and 100 at Midhope Moor on 29th.

Rock Pipit - A single was at Orgreave Lakes on from 29th March until at least 31st.

Rock/Water Pipit - A calling bird passed W over Firsby Res on 8th March.

Waxwing - Still reported almost daily throughout the period, although generally in smaller flocks than previous months, and numbers tailing off significantly towards the end of March. The largest counts in February were a group at Barlborough present throughout the month (and much of March) that peaked at 100 on 22nd February; 60 at Meadowhead on 4th February; 50 at Kimberworth on 6th; 50 at Millhouses on 8th; 70 at Attercliffe on 9th; 100 at Wincobank on 12th and 13th; 100 at Longley on 14th; 90 at Grenoside on 16th; 120 at

Handsworth on 19th; 125 at Bramley on 20th; 200 at Heeley City Farm on 20th; 50 at Chapelton on 25th; and 50 at Dinnington on 28th. There were few flocks >50 birds during March, the exceptions being 80 at Barlborough on 4th; 61 at Silver Wood on 26th; and 54 at Woodlathes Pond on 26th.

Stonechat - Singles were seen at Wardsend Cemetery and Shirecliffe Tip on 20th February, and one was at Totley Moss on 24th. In March birds were recorded at several upland sites, with a maximum of 7 at Burbage Valley on 21st,

Wheatear - First of the year was one at Peat Pits on 12th March, followed by one at Wharcliffe Chase on 13th. Birds were recorded throughout the remainder of the month, with maximum counts of seven at Silverwood Pit Top on 26th, and seven at Agden Side on 27th.

Ring Ouzel - The first record was a male at Stanage Edge on 22nd March. Further records in March were one at Stanage on 24th, two at Bamford Moor on 26th, and six at Burbage Valley on 29th.

Fieldfare - Highest counts were 90 at Silverwood on 3rd February; 200 at Peat Pits on 16th; 200 at Ulley CP on 20th; 150 at Treeton on 21st; 300 at Langsett and Midhope on 25th; 250 at Edge Mount on 14th March; 100 at Middleton Moor on 19th; 100 at Midhopestones on 19th; 150 at Wharcliffe Chase on 23rd; and 100 at Barlborough Park on 25th.

Redwing - Highest counts were 122 at Stubble Hollow on 10th February; 70 at Greno Wood on 13th 100 at Wharcliffe Chase on 23rd March; and 95 at Stanington on 26th.

Blackcap - February records from Millhouses, Botanical Gardens, Broomhall, Little Roe Wood, Walkley Bank, Lynwood Reserve, Woodseats and Grenoside, with singing first heard at Green Moor on 19th, and Woodseats on 25th, and birds more widespread though March.

Chiffchaff - One was at Blackburn



This Mealy Redpoll visited a Handsworth bird feeder on 13th March, one of many reports from a scattering of sites during the winter.

Meadows on 5th February, and another at Firsby Res on 7th March. Singing was first recorded at Thrybergh CP on 12th and 13th March, with birds recorded widely from this date. Maximum counts were three at RVCP on 16th, four at Ulley CP on 18th, four at Thrybergh CP on 20th, three at Canklow Woods on 22nd, four at Carr House Meadows on 23rd, nine at Ulley CP on 24th, five at Manor Fields on 24th, three at Stubble Hollow on 25th, five at Silver Wood on 25th, ten at Blackburn Meadows on 25th, five at Firsby Res on 26th, three at Stoney Middleton on 26th, six at Treeton Dyke on 26th, five at RVCP on 27th, nine at Gleadless Valley on 27th, five at Ravenfield Ponds on

27th, nine at Shirebrook Valley on 28th, and seven at Broomhead Wood on 30th.

Willow Warbler - First of the year were singles at Treeton, Catcliffe and Thrybergh CP, all on 28th March, with another at Treeton Dyke on 31st.

Great Grey Shrike - One was at Agden Side on 12th February. A bird was present at Ramsley Res/Leash Fen from 26th Feb until at least the 26th March, sometimes heard singing.

Starling - Largest counts included 400 at Mayfield Valley on 2nd March, 400 at Peat Pits on 6th, 500 at Langsett Moor on 7th, and 250 at Edge Mount on 14th.

Brambling - Small numbers at various sites, with the largest counts being 18 at Lodge Moor on 9th February, 15 at Fox Hagg on 22nd, 28 WNW at Redmires Res on 20th March, and 12 at Dore on 30th.

Siskin - The highest counts were 60 at Attercliffe on 2nd February, 42 at Ickles on 3rd, and 50 at Canklow on 20th.

Linnet - The highest counts were 50 at Ewden Valley on 8th February, 70 at Thrybergh CP on 11th, 50 at Wardsend Cemetery on 13th, 100 at Stannington on 16th, 80 at Stannington on 12th March, and 63 at Ulley CP on 26th.

Common (Mealy) Redpoll - A good winter for this species continued, with 1-2 birds reported from Sharrow on 3rd-6th February; one at Ulley CP on 5th; 1-3 at Canklow Woods between 14th and 22nd; one by Penistone Road on 23rd; two at Salmon Pastures on 28th February and 4th March; two at Edale on 12th March; one at Shirecliffe Tip on 12th-13th; one at Handsworth on 13th; one in Mayfield Valley on 15th; two at Wharnccliffe Wood on 20th; one at Canklow Woods on 21st; and one at Scholes on 27th.

Lesser Redpoll - The biggest flocks were 50 at Inkersall on 6th February; 112 at Firsby Res on 11th; 130 at Canklow on 11th; and 100 at Pit-house West on 14th March.

Crossbill - Only single figure counts recorded, including six at Langsett on the 1st March, two at Redmires on 2nd and 14th, six at Ewden Height on 19th, and six at Little Don Valley on 21st.

Pete Mella

Records were received from the following observers, with apologies for any omissions:

C Allen, N Anscumb, MG Archer, S Ashton, J Atkin, D Atkinson, A Bailey, B Bailey, SJ Barnes, A Baverstock, MA Beevers, AR Bell, T Beresford, RP Blagden, C Bonnington, K Bower, P Bowker, SJ Branch, C Brewster, PL Brown, R Butterfield, DJ Buttle, DM Bye, EO Chafer, I Chapman, J Clarke, L Coates, B Cole, J Crooks, N Cross, A Deighton, F Dilley, J Ducker, C Dunhill, G Dyson, M Dyson, H Egan, G Featherstone, MG Fenner, J Fermer, A Flintoff, D Franklin, D Gains, D Gardiner, P Garrity, D Gosney, B Graham, S Grant, S Green, T Grose, J Hallam, D Heathcote, I Hedge, A Hicks, A Hill, RD Hill, D Hitchen, A&V Hobson, M Hodgson, J Hornbuckle, J Housden, C Hurst, M Jarvis, Alan Johnson, Anne Johnson, C Kelly, S King, J Kingsland, K Knowles, M Kramer, M Lacey, P Lawson, P Leonard, P Lockwood, A Long, D Mainwaring, JL Marriott, P Mella, M Miller, TH Minskip, D Mowbray, D Neill, MG Oxlade, J Partridge, PH Pear-sall, NR Porter, C Prime, MN Reeder, P Ridsdale, D Roberts, D Roddis, SJ Roddis, S Samworth, M Sanders, J Sherwin, A Siddall, D Slmmonite, MA Smethurst, C Smith, B Spencer, G Stride, M Sweeney, J Taylor, M&L Taylor, N Taylor, SG Tebbutt, P Thomas, A Thompson, M Timms, C Tyler, SE Vickers, EC Vincent, DL Vine, RV Walker, D Warburton, A Watson, G Watson, RDR Williams, I Wilson, P&A Wilson, D Wood, D Woodriff, P Wragg