

Sheffield Bird Study Group

BULLETIN



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Bulletin

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WINTER SURVIVORS

**How birds coped
with the big freeze**

PEAK NESTWATCH

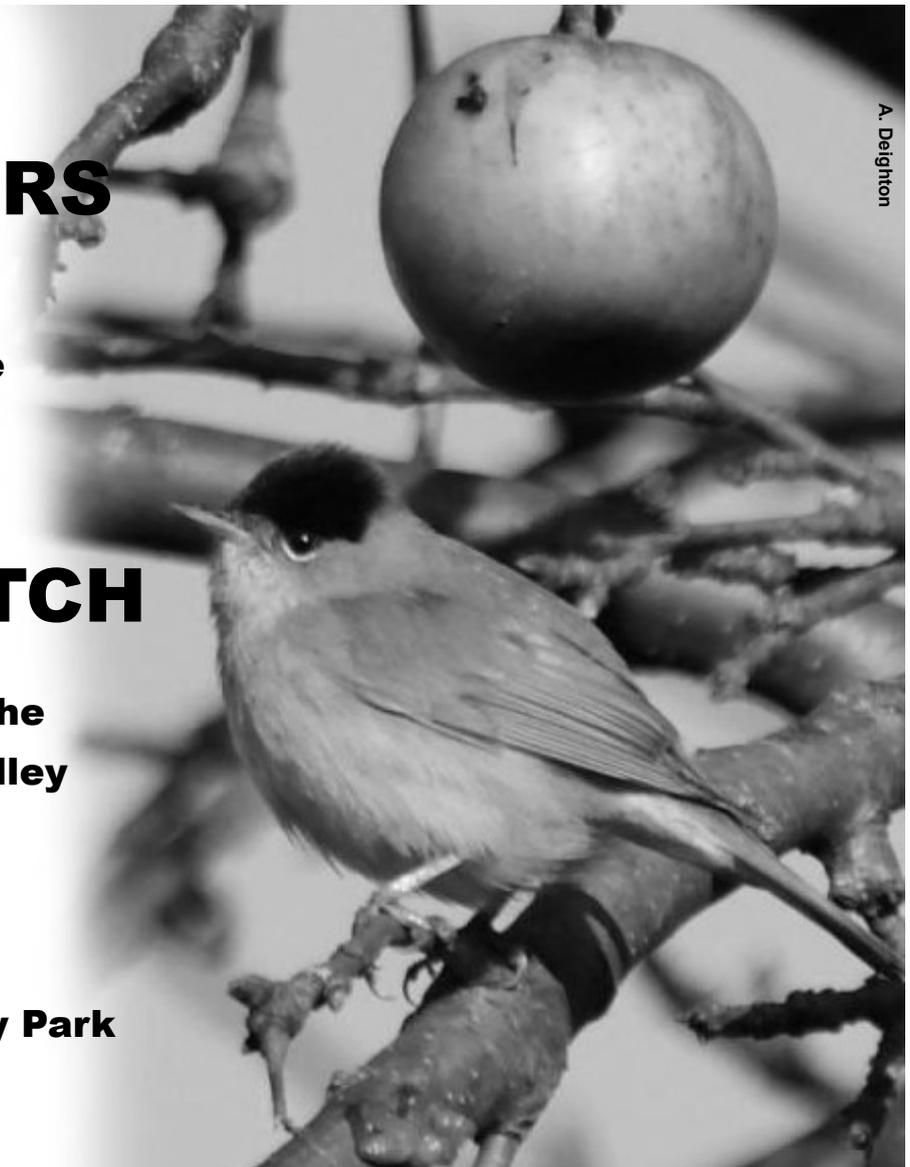
**Bleak news from the
Upper Derwent Valley**

ALSO

Gull ID

Thrybergh Country Park

Recent sightings



A. Deighton

Field trip report - Thrybergh CP Jan 2010

Thrybergh CP has a well-deserved reputation as one of our top sites, and our mid-winter field trip saw a group of 8 members arrive to familiarise themselves with the site.

Thrybergh is one of the last bodies of water to 'close in' locally, but the freeze of recent weeks has seen the reservoir almost completely covered in ice, with very few birds present. An easing in the cold over the week ahead of the trip meant that around half of the res was free from ice, but another factor that threatens to have a major impact on the res as a wildfowl was in evidence: posters in the visitor centre informed us of a consultation exercise on the closure of part of the footpath that runs around the res. Over the last decade and beyond, the closure of the footpath around approximately half of the res has ensured a refuge for wintering wildfowl between October and March, but this is under review, apparently partly the result of a desire on behalf of the council for the CP to attract more visitors and increase the takings of the cafe and car park, partly the result of pressure from those who wish to be able to walk the perimeter of the res year round.

Regular watching and recording from a band of dedicated observers has provided an excellent set of data with which to make the case for the importance of the res for wildfowl, and (with material provided from our database by Dave Williams) Richard Hill has put together an excellent response to the consultation on behalf of the Group that sets out the importance of the site for the species concerned.

Our trip proved how quickly birds would move back to the site once the ice had cleared, with 98 Tufted Duck and 8 Pochard in addition to well over a hundred each of Coot and Mallard and good numbers of Moorhen. Some of the 5 Great Crested Grebe present were coming into breeding plumage and starting to display and 2 male Goosander provided a fly-past. In the context of

the closure of the footpath around the back of the res, it was striking that as we walked around the path to the S of the res the birds that were feeding closer to that shore pushed off as we approached, maintaining a constant buffer of c.30 metres. It was clear that opening the footpath all the way round the res would lead to birds being herded away from the margins towards the centre of the res, reducing feeding areas and harming survival prospects.

The arable fields around the res can be very productive for partridge, but we failed to see any, although around 90 Canada Geese were grazing, as were 22 Greylags, many of which came onto the res later. Some 140 Black-headed Gulls were present, with 8 Common Gulls allowing us to check for the characteristics of Eastern birds pointed out by Martin Garner in the January indoor meeting (none were found) and 4 Herring Gulls flying over.

In addition to the res, the surrounding trees, hedges and feeding station are renowned for Tree Sparrows, and at least 40 obliged with some very good views and chances to note the differences in call from House Sparrow. In addition, half a dozen Yellowhammer and 4 Reed Bunting added to a sense of the importance of the site for farmland birds in decline, but a small party of Lesser Redpoll gave no sign of the Common ('Mealy') Redpoll that had been present.

Other passerines included Goldfinch, Greenfinch, Chaffinch and House Sparrow, while 6 Stock Dove were noted among the several hundred Woodpigeon feeding in the fields. Much enjoyed was a female Kestrel that hunted at close quarters

D. Wood



from the trees bordering one of the fields, frequently dropping to the floor for prey. Finally, as we returned to the car park, a skein of 80 Pink-footed Geese moved low NW, part of a decent passage of this species in the preceding week.

The trip did not produce anything out of the ordinary, despite much scoping of the Tufted Duck (Thrybergh has an enviable track record for Scaup in recent winters), but a total of 35 species in the couple of hours we were present gave an indication of the importance of this site, especially for wintering wildfowl. Following the loss (or serious deterioration) of some of our most productive sites through human actions – think Barbrook Res and Ramsley Res (drained by Severn Trent), Redmires Res (heavily disturbed by dog walkers), Middleton Moor – increased disturbance at Thrybergh CP would be a major blow to this site's ability to act as a refuge for wildfowl, crucial in hard winters when many other waters become covered in ice.

If you value this site, we would encourage you to write to Rotherham Council to express your support for the footpath closure and its continuation in future winters.

David Wood

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Indoor Meetings

AGM

Wed 9th March 2011, Sheffield University Arts Tower,
Lecture Theatre 5

The AGM this year will include not only the Secretary's Report, the Accounts, Committee matters and so forth, but also an illustrated Review of the Year and, finally, Christmas drinks and socialising!

Keith Clarkson - Birds on the Edge

Wed 13th April 2011, Sheffield University Arts Tower,

Keith Clarkson is the RSPB's northeast reserves manager, and will be familiar to many members as a pioneer of visible migration in the SBSG area. He has led the RSPB's Gannet colony count at their Bampton Cliffs Reserve, and will tonight talk on the seabird species that make a precarious living on the edge of the cliffs, where there are mixed fortunes for its inhabitants.

Local Field Meetings

Derwentdale Raptors

Windy Corner, March 2011

Our usual Spring search for Goshawk, Peregrine, Buzzard and the like, in the company of Ron Blagden. Based on the awfulness of the weather in recent years, we have a choice of 12th or 19th March - keep your eyes on the SBSG website and Twitter feeds for updates nearer the time.

Deadline for next Bulletin

The next Bulletin will be issued at the April Meeting. Please note that any items for inclusion in the Bulletin must be received by Pete Mella at peterjmella@googlemail.com by **Saturday 26th March**. If anyone's sending hard-copies of articles please note my new address on the cover of this issue.

Bulletin by email

More members have now agreed to take their Bulletins by email in PDF format. This is now about one-third of membership and this will help funds in cutting down the cost of sending out Bulletins, as it saves both printing and postage costs.

It is appreciated that not all members have the email facility but many thanks to those who have and are willing to receive their copies in this way.

OTHER DATES TO NOTE

13th Feb - Valentine's Day Nature Walk (YWT). Denaby Ings, 10.30am-12.00noon. Meet outside field centre, £1 charge,

19th Feb - South Yorkshire Natural History Day. Treeton Community & Resources Centre, Pit Lane, Treeton.

21st Feb - Big Bird Day, Potteric Carr. Kid's crafts in celebrate National Nestbox Week. 10am-2pm, usual entrance fee + £5 per child. Booking 01302 570077.

23rd Feb - Half Term Bird Watching Challenge, Denaby Ings (YWT). Family bird race with prizes. 12pm-3pm, £1 entry.

25th Feb - DOS Indoor Meeting. The speaker will be Mike McKavett on "From Mytilini to Anatolia - my quest for the Balkan 10". Friends Meeting House, Chesterfield, 7.30pm.

2nd Mar - Optics Demo. RSPB Old Moor. 10am-4pm.

3rd Mar - RSPB Sheffield Group Indoor Meeting. The speaker will be Paul Mason on "Golden Orioles - The Story". Central United Reformed Church, Sheffield, 7.30pm.

12th Mar - DOS Indoor Meeting. Paul Bingham will talk on "Ethiopia: Its fascinating landscapes, birds, animals and ancient history". Methodist Church Rooms, Buxton, 7.30pm.

13th Mar - Beginners Course to Bird Surveying. Potteric Carr, 10am-2pm. Usual entrance fee + £3 pp. Suitable for age 16 and over.

16th Mar - Optics Demo. RSPB Old Moor. 10am-4pm.

25th Mar - DOS Indoor Meeting. AGM, plus Gordon Yates' film "Arctic and Hebridean Odyssey".

6th Apr - Optics Demo. RSPB Old Moor. 10am-4pm.

7th Apr - RSPB Sheffield Group Indoor Meeting. Peter Robinson will talk on "Borneo: Island In The Clouds". Central United Reformed Church, Sheffield, 7.30pm.

Peak Nestwatch Report 2010

In 2000, the Peak Nestwatch was established as a consortium of like minded partners interested in halting the decline in the breeding success of birds of prey in the Upper Derwent Valley.

M. Smeethurst

From 1997, the South Peak Raptor Group field workers began to report an alarming reduction in the breeding success of birds of prey within the valley, particularly Peregrine and Goshawk. Previous Nestwatch reports concluded that this consistent and high failure rate could not be explained by natural causes alone. As a result, organisations made up of The National Trust, Severn Trent Water, Forestry Commission, The RSPB, Peak District National Park, South Yorkshire and Derbyshire Police Forces and the South Peak Raptor Group decided that a central coordination of the project was required. The intention was to keep all the partners informed and to raise awareness amongst the public and those within the valley.

For the past ten years the consistent and high failure rate could not be explained by purely natural causes and as with previous years the 2010 Nestwatch initiative was directed to try and stop any human persecution and attempt to halt the serious decline in the breeding success of the valley's breeding raptors. In 2010, it was decided that the partners would coordinate the project by requesting the South Peak Raptor Group to conduct a survey of birds of prey within the valley. Jack Street was appointed as fieldworker and central coordination of the project moved from Severn Trent to Geoff Mawson, a South Peak Raptor worker. The survey was funded by the National Trust, Severn Trent Water, the Forestry Commission and the Peak District National Park Authority.

The Raptor Group were asked to provide weekly email reports to the wider Nestwatch members during the early part of the season with this final report providing an outline of the resulting breeding success of birds of prey within the valley during 2010.

THE 2010 BREEDING SEASON

The following is a comprehensive summary for each species covered by the initiative:

Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*

In 2009 the Goshawks in the valley produced young from two nests and hopes were high in 2010 for a continued improvement for this species. As with 2009 Dave Jones from the Forestry Commission and Chris Fry from Severn Trent were actively involved supporting



Jack Street as part of their work programmes and linked with Jack Street to provide exclusion zones and cameras when nests were found within their areas.

Goshawks had a successful early start to their breeding with six, possibly seven, separate breeding sites located. Activity continued at three sites where birds went on to lay eggs and begin incubation. Two nests were in the lower part of the valley. Despite the early optimism four of the previously occupied sites failed to continue breeding and towards the end of the breeding cycle no Goshawks remained in those previously active sites. The single Goshawk site remaining in the upper part of the valley had built a new nest and had an incubating female for the full incubation period but the three eggs failed to hatch. Evidence of intrusion was noted and evidence collected at the nest site and handed to the police.

A second Goshawk site in the lower part of the valley was using the same nest that had been successful during 2009. The female was incubating five eggs. On the day chicks were expected to be ringed the site was found to have been recently used as an impromptu camp site. The debris, makeshift tent and beer cans indicated quite a substantial disturbance during the latter part of the

incubation period. Only one chick remained along with four addled eggs. This was the second time within the valley that an impromptu camp site below a Goshawk nest tree had interrupted and disturbed their breeding cycle.

The third Goshawk site was also in a new nest away from previous nest sites. Hopes were high for this site and those hopes were realised with three young Goshawks successfully ringed and DNA samples taken. Unfortunately, some weeks later, Raptor workers checking the site after the young had fledged found all three young dead some 500m away from their nest tree. They were placed alongside each other with their rings removed. Despite analysis the cause of death couldn't be accurately determined. It was noted during the examination that BTO rings for Goshawks are made out of substantial metal and are no easy item to remove without damaging the legs of the bird. The rings had been removed without any damage to the birds' legs. The upbeat feeling at the perceived success of this site soon changed as the police put a disclosure notice of any discussion of events until they had chance to continue their investigations. The landowner was contacted and informed of what had happened later in the season when this ban was lifted.

Peregrine *Falco peregrinus*

It is a long breeding season for many of our large raptors and as with the Goshawk the Peregrines within the Upper Derwent Valley were active at breeding sites from the beginning of the year. As a result raptor workers began recording their activities from January/February. 2010 had a promising start for Peregrines with pairs watched at Alport, West End and Abbey Brook. Raptor workers were optimistic of successful breeding commencing at all three sites with real progress observed at West End with a pair chasing, food passed and copulating. This activity resulted in an exclusion zone being established around the nest site with enhanced security set up in the area. It was after this security was in place that the fate of the Peregrines within the Valley changed, with a breakdown of the breeding pairs with one Peregrine from each site missing.

Regular observations noted important differences as they took place. After a period at West End when there was only a single female Peregrine a new adult male appeared, possibly from the Alport site. Alport was left with a single bird with no bird present for extended periods. Abbey Brook had two Peregrines observed again but the female this time was in immature plumage. The two birds at this latter site remained throughout the year but it was clear that the first

year bird was too young to breed. The change in breeding circumstances left a single pair at West End. The behaviour of the "new" pair resulted in a nest scrape with four eggs laid. The security which was already in place continued and hopes were high for young being produced. Both parent Peregrines were attentive and telescope observations reported an incubating female throughout daytime watches. Concerns began to materialise as the expected hatch date came and went. The male bird's behaviour and the female's responses also indicated that the eggs had past their hatching times. After a safety period the nest site was examined closely for the first time. Three eggs were removed and found to be partly incubated and then incubation had terminated. In addition spall marks in the rock face near to the nest itself were deemed suspicious.

Previous early observations had noticed the "new" marks and thought them to be important but opinions from the distances observed ranged from identifying them as spall marks to possible lichen growth. Preliminary police forensics suggested that the spall marks were probably made by rifle bullets fired from a distance. A summary of observations and dates when observations had been made were finalised to conclude a summary of noted activity at the site. To conclude, despite a promising start to 2010's

breeding season, only one of three pairs of Peregrines produced eggs and these failed to hatch due to suspicious human disturbance.

Buzzard. *Buteo buteo*

A feature of 2010's bird observations in the Upper Derwent Valley was the increasing number of Buzzards present in the valley.

Up to eight were noted together throughout the breeding season but despite three early Buzzard nests no successful breeding was recorded.

Hen Harrier. *Circus cyaneus*

A single bird was seen in the valley but no breeding activity was noted by raptor workers.

Short-eared Owl. *Asio flammeus*

One pair produced young in the valley with a probable second pair also successful. Observations on the upland reaches above the tree line are hampered by the time taken by raptor workers to walk and survey the high moorland. It is a full day's walk to reach many of these sites to look for Short-eared Owl and Merlin.

Merlin. *Falco columbarius*

In 2010, three pairs of Merlin were active on the upper moorland with two sites having eight young ringed. The young produced by these Merlin gave raptor workers their main successful breeding records of birds of prey in the Derwent Valley during 2010.

In Conclusion

The Upper Derwent Valley has brilliant

habitats in which to see birds of prey. The survey monitored early breeding of Peregrines, Goshawk and Buzzard with up to 14 sites established. The resultant success produced just four Goshawk chicks from two sites, three of which were later found dead after fledging, lying side by side with their rings removed. In addition, no Ravens were observed to breed in 2010.

The suitable habitat found in the valley produces new raptors in the area year after year as young produced elsewhere out of

the valley are drawn in to breed. The small successes of Merlin and Short-eared Owl give a glimpse of what might be, but, my report confirms that human disturbance, in whatever guise, is mainly responsible for the poor success of large raptors in the Upper Derwent Valley. The best allies of the birds are the groups within the valley who requested this survey and make up the Nestwatch Scheme.

Dr Geoff Mawson

Acknowledgements

My thanks to the Nestwatch partners for their continuing support, in particular, The National Trust, Severn Trent Water, Forestry

Commission and The Peak Park. Thanks too, to Mick Taylor the coordinator of the South Peak Raptor group and the raptor workers for their survey work. My appreciation and thanks to Dave Jones and Chris Fry for their help in the breeding season and finally my gratitude to Jack Street for his hours of field work.



A. Deighton

Winter resilience in birds

John Kirkman finds some surprising survival techniques that helped the inhabitants of his garden survive the big freeze.

November and December had to impress even the thicker-skinned among us, those who remember 1963 quite clearly and even have inklings in our minds of 1947. Weston Park had its thickest ever snow blanket, 39cm, since it was set up in 1882. Whole weeks passed without troubling any recorder of positive temperatures. Altnaharra in Sutherland had a daily *maximum* temperature of -15.7°C .

And people grumbled, partly because so many travel more that we did in 1963. On the other hand, each winter several hundred people in Moscow die in snowdrifts, though vodka may have put them there in the first place. Snowdrops, they are called locally.

Death in snowdrifts reminds me of wrens. They were clearly under great threat in late 2009 and early 2010, with their large ratio of surface area to body-mass guaranteeing high heat radiation. Fortunately, I noticed no decline in singing wren in summer of last year, and perhaps this was because there rapidly appeared gaps between shrubs and around the lower trunks and rootstocks of trees. Wrens largely ignore food offered by humans, so access to invertebrates kept the birds going.

The snow in December 2010 seemed to fall quietly, vertically, in large rapidly-accumulating masses, then suffered no wastage as temperatures fell to Polish levels. Certainly in my area there seemed to be no gaps at all, no open soil or leaf litter, that wrens could peck in.

I was delighted, therefore, to see wren pairs going about family business on Boxing Day, at dawn, in temperatures of -8°C . One pair was in my garden, chasing around the invisible flower borders; another by the pavement a kilometer away. Wren song I did not hear during December (robins kept singing as



C. Hurst

soon as there was any relenting of meteorological foulness), but the cold had not killed the birds or even frozen the juices of matrimony.

“Wren song I did not hear during December, but the cold had not killed the birds or even frozen the juices of matrimony.”

Nevertheless, their survival contradicts my theory of their survival during early 2010. How did they survive? On December 28th, with the melt well under way, one wren spent an hour behaving like a tree creeper on the lower, mossy trunks of birches in my garden, and I suppose such behaviour provided just enough calories to get them through the long cold nights.

It was remarkable how long even the thinnest twigs kept their snow and were frozen hard. This must have severely limited the food supply for tits and the smaller finches, yet as soon as any open woodwork appeared, many birds were prepared to abandon food supplied for them and take to the twigs; insect eggs were likely targets.

In my garden, they included chaffinches and greenfinches, as well as blue and coal tits and goldfinches. One morning was

graced by a flock of siskin, which left only to be replaced by nine lesser redpoll, all preferring their natural quarry to scraps, nuts, seeds of various sorts.

Just before Christmas, several times dunnocks were actually singing in falling snow and biting cold as I topped up the food supply. Let's be anthropomorphic and claim that this singing showed great fortitude, determination and optimism! As soon as snow stopped falling, the garden was alive with three and four dunnocks squeaking, chasing, flitting their wings as though were were in mild spring sunshine.

The longstanding passage of corvids over Bradway, at dawn from Ecclesall Woods out to the pastures and woods of Holmesfield, and at dusk back again, continued throughout. Though they suffer less heat-loss per unit of volume than wrens, they shared the same food problem: pastures completely hidden, frozen, inaccessible. Over they came at dawn on December 3rd, for example, when Topcliffe had recorded -19°C , and even the city centre was -7°C . They returned at 3pm, and if their numbers had fallen since November, it was to no great extent, and the birds were calling and indulging in flying displays and mock battles.

Crows, of course, are intelligent and adaptable birds, but for such large numbers to survive showed these characteristics to the full. Round haystacks, barns and stockyards? Did jackdaws perch on cattle as do oxpeckers on buffaloes and giraffes? Any food-sources seemed to be limited extent and contents, but the flocks somehow managed.

Our local pigeons have certainly known how to survive, descending in large numbers on the snow I cleared and saturated with food. There were up to 25 woodpigeons, six collared doves and an increase in the regular stock dove pair or trio to six. They hovered up everything in a ceaseless pecking like the movements of an old-fashioned sewing machine. They have been coming for years and clearly know the local food geography.

Nevertheless, their arrival was often an hour after dawn, and even then they would lounge a while in the birch trees. Natural caution to ensure safety? Already fed? Several were juveniles, probably born in October or November. As with the dunnocks, though with far less lightness and grace, there was plenty of courtship from some of the males, though I saw no great female desire for romance.

A remnant of all three species lingered for hours, dozing, or preening; a full interlocking of tiny feather barbules and barbicels must be of paramount importance when nights fall so well below zero.

Remarkably, sunny spells, even at freezing point, were enough to tempt flies and gnats into crossing the garden or to practice their rising and falling group dances; and to cause pairs of great spotted woodpeckers to chase and call their metallic note.

On January 7th, we had another rapid accumulation of two inches or so. As so often, I spread the food just before the snow pounced, but the local crow pair was watching from a nearby tree – the food rapidly disappeared, but as soon as the snow topped falling, the crows dropped down and beaked aside the snow exactly where it had been spread. The only birds to do the same were not the (intelligent) magpies, but the stock doves, also using their beaks. All the other species waited until the snow melted.

Lecture report - Martin Garner's 'Frontiers in Gull Identification'

The January lecture was given by Martin Garner, author of 'Frontiers in Birding' and a member of the British Birds rarities committee. Given these credentials it was not surprising his talk proved highly popular: in birding terms it drew in so many vagrants that the entire population, including the local residents, was forced to migrate – to a larger lecture theatre.

Martin took the audience on a voyage of discovery covering a period of more than 20 years during which he and a few other like-minded gull devotees, primarily by the use of detailed field identification, have expanded knowledge of the heterogeneity of gull populations in the UK and elsewhere, and of gull movements across the globe.

Martin's early interest in the Herring Gull led to the recognition of the presence of both the Scandinavian race (*argentatus*), and the Yellow-legged Gull (*michahellis*), among birds of British origin here in the UK. Initially these findings produced a sceptical response but Martin persisted and his work came to the attention of Rob Hume, who proved supportive. Ultimately these discoveries became accepted. He has since studied the Common Gull in detail, leading to the recognition that the Eastern Common Gull can be found here, as can the Caspian Gull (*cachinnans*) and the American Herring Gull (*smithsonianus*). Along with colleagues he has also been responsible for recognising that the rare Thayer's Gull can, occasionally at least, be found in UK waters. The Sheffield area has proved to be good for rare gull species, which can turn up anywhere, such as Poolsbrook Country Park and the

roof of Mecca Bingo!

Much of Martin's talk was taken up with detailed descriptions of gull plumage, notably in the patterns of black and white on the outer primaries, and the number of primaries bearing black coloration. He spent a lot of time describing the evolution of change in feather pattern on the scapulars and wing coverts as an aid to both identification and age in juvenile and immature gulls. These points were made with the aid of superbly detailed photographs, high quality art work and specimens of gull wings from his own collection.

Martin stressed the importance of 'thinking outside the box' and being prepared to challenge accepted beliefs. This involves being prepared to make mistakes and looking most closely at those birds one cannot readily identify. There is enormous variation in gull plumage such that, as Martin acknowledged, even experts struggle to identify some 10% of birds seen in the field.

Martin's enthusiasm and expertise came across throughout his talk and he was thanked for a hugely enjoyable and stimulating presentation.

Rod Hinchliffe

New members

The group welcomes **Tom Albone, Jill Perlstrom, Paul Rowen, Peter and Ann Wilson, Bill Mulheran, Philippa Gullett** and **Mark Reeder** to the group, and welcomes back **Roger Butterfield** and **Steve Samworth**. Good birding to you all!

RECENT SIGHTINGS

27th November 2010 - 30th January 2011

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

Cormorant - 29th Jan saw some high counts in the east of the area, including 23 at over Ulley CP, 25 at Thrybergh, and 28 at Rother Valley CP.

Bittern - One was regularly sighted at Pit House West from 26th December onwards, favouring the area around the Chinese Bridge and "Bittern Pool".

Grey Heron - Eight at Orgreave Lakes was a high count on 28th Jan.

Mute Swan - 75 were at Parkgate Canal Basin on 2nd Jan.

Whooper Swan - The highest count was 40 over Barborough village on 26th Dec. Two flew NW over Bolehill Flash on 11th Dec, five E over Thrybergh on 23rd, and two N at Orgreave Lakes on 28th Jan.

Pink-footed Goose - Many skeins recorded, particularly from 22nd Dec onwards, and numbers swelling throughout January. The highest counts included 500 E over Thrybergh on 13th Jan, 900 NW over Orgreave Lakes on 28th Jan, 1,000 NW over Midhope Moor on the same date, and 1,550 over Redmires in just 20 minutes on 30th. Grounded birds included a single

bird at Orgreave on New Year's Eve, and two at Thrybergh on 23rd Jan.

Shelduck - Two were at Rother Valley Country Park on the 2nd and 9th Jan.

Wigeon - The flock at Orgreave Lakes peaked at 91 on 9th Jan.

Gadwall - 130 were feeding on grass at Orgreave Lakes on 3th Jan, and 115 were crammed into a small area of unfrozen ice at Treeton Dyke on 14th.

Eurasian Teal - Peak counts included 109 at Thrybergh CP on 2nd Jan, 50 on the Rother near Orgreave Lakes on 4th, and 120 on the Don at Thrybergh banks on 9th.

Pintail - Single females were at Orgreave Lakes on 8th Jan, and Aldwarke on 30th.

Goldeneye - Nine were at Orgreave Lakes on 25th Jan.

Goosander - Peak counts included 86 at Orgreave on 24th Jan, and 44 at Rother Valley CP on 29th.

Red Kite - One, with no visible wing tags, was at Emlin Moor on 28th Nov.

Rough-legged Buzzard - A juvenile was seen hunting Uppery Hey and Howden Edge on 8th Jan, viewed from Windy Corner.

Merlin - A male was at Silver Wood on 14th Jan.

Water Rail - Singles reported from Firsby Res, Pit-house West and Harthill Res on several dates in January.

Golden Plover - 14 were at Freebirch on 1st Jan, five flew SE over Ulley CP on 2nd Jan, and nine were at Orgreave Lakes on 8th. 52 were at Peat Pits on 13th, with a flock present for the remainder of January, peaking at 76 on the 15th.

Lapwing - The flock at Orgreave Lakes peaked at 77 on 19th Jan. 28 were at East Moor on 28th.

Dunlin - Six flew NW over Howden Edge on 18th Jan.

Jack Snipe - Four were at Bolehill Flash on 4th Dec. Singles were reported from Firsby Res on 6th Dec, Woodhouse Washlands on 1st Jan, Waverley Opencast on 9th and 13th, and Barbrook Pools on 17th.

Snipe - 40 were at Woodhouse Washlands on 1st Jan.

Woodcock - Recorded from a wide range of localities, no doubt in many cases brought out into more built-up areas by harsh weather. One in a garden in Broomhill on 7th Dec was the only record there in 41 years, and perhaps the same one flew in front of a cycling observer on Glossop Road on 10th. Others were seen at Endcliffe, Woodseats, Damall, High Green, Wardsend Cemetery, Intake and Heeley City Farm, among more traditional locations. The highest counts were three at Firsby Res on 23rd Dec, two at Thrybergh CP on 23rd, and two at Aldwarke SF on 31st.

Curlew - Six flew W over Ecclesall on 1st Dec during a heavy snow shower. Singles were at Woodhouse Washlands on 5th Dec and Firsby Res on 6th, and three were in the Mayfield Valley on 26th.

Redshank - Numbers at Rother Valley CP peaked at 3 on 17th Dec,



M. Garner

This 2nd winter gull, showing characteristics of Caspian, proved once again that the glamorous gull-watching location of Mecca Bingo can pay dividends!



This Marsh Tit was at Monsal Dale on 8th January.

with ones and twos seen on several dates in Jan, and one flew down the River Don at Attercliffe on 26th.

Green Sandpiper - Singles reported on several dates at Ulley CP and Blue Man's Bower. There were also records at Ewden Valley on 25th Dec, Silverwood Lagoon on 15th Jan, and Stocksbridge on 23rd Jan.

Mediterranean Gull - An adult was recorded in the roost at Broomhead Reservoir on 5th Dec, and 29th and 30th Jan.

Black-headed Gull - Highest counts included 1,000 at Shirecliffe Tip on 14th Jan, 2,000 at Orgreave Lakes on 15th, and 1,500 at Broomhead Res on 28th.

Common Gull - Roosting birds at Broomhead Res peaked at 86 on 11th Dec.

Herring Gull - Maxima were 345 at Broomhead Res on 3rd Jan, 182 at Orgreave Lakes on 8th Jan, and 97 over Ulley CP on 5th Jan.

Yellow-legged Gull - Single birds were at Orgreave Lakes on 15th Jan, and Shirecliffe Tip on 25th.

Caspian Gull - A probable 2nd winter was opposite Mecca Bingo at Uppertorpe on 26th Dec. A 1st winter was at Shirecliffe Tip on 19th Jan, and an adult was at Broomhead Res on 28th.

Iceland Gull - A 2nd winter flew over Morehall Res towards Broomhead on the 4th Dec.

Glaucous Gull - One flew over Morehall Res towards Broomhead

on 4th Dec (a lucky observer managing two white-winged gulls in one evening).

Great Black-backed Gull - Peak counts were 105 at Orgreave on 8th Jan, and 53 at Broomhead Res on 11th Dec. 26 flew

Silverwood Pit Top on 12th Dec; 225 roosting at Redmires on 12th Dec; 100 at St George's Churchyard on 13th Dec; 200 at Highfield on 13th Dec; 100 at Mount Pleasant on 14th Dec; 200 on The Moor on 15th Dec; 300 at Uppertorpe on 16th Dec; 100 at Neepsend on 26th Dec; 150 at Walkley on 28th Dec; 120 at Nether Edge on 30th Dec and 1st Jan; 150 at Crosspool on 31st Dec; 200 at Gleadless Town End on 12th Jan; 100 at Norfolk Park on 12th Jan; 150 at Manor Top on 13th Jan; 150 at Intake on 14th Jan; 100 on the Parkway on 17th Jan; 100 on Hanover Way on 21st Jan; 100 at Brightside on 27th Jan; and 120 at Meadowhead on 28th Jan.

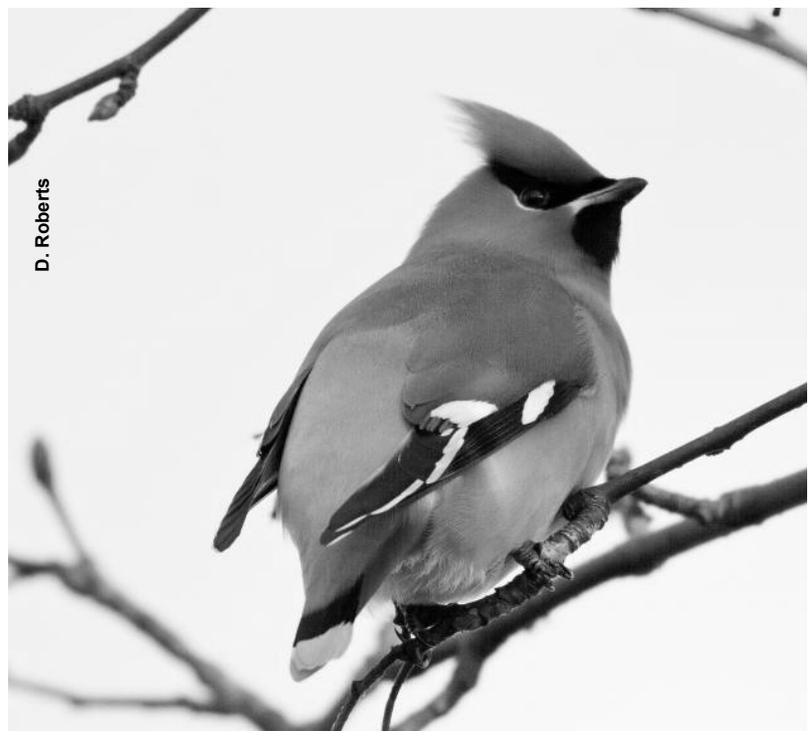
Stonechat - One was at Silverwood Lagoon on 12th Jan.

Fieldfare - Higher counts included 200 at Canklow on 2nd Dec, 400 at Silverwood Pit Top on 9th Dec, 410 at Load Brook on 31st Dec, 250 at Midhope Res on 1st Jan, and 400 at Peat Pits on 25th Jan.

Redwing - Some of the larger counts included 240 at Silverwood Pit Top on 9th Dec, 200 at Inkersall on 11th Dec, 260 at Thrybergh on 12th Dec, 200 at Thorpe Hesley on 18th Dec, 336 at Woodhouse Washlands on 23rd Dec, and 200 at Barlborough on 25th Dec.

over Ulley CP on 5th Jan.

Waxwing - A fantastic winter for this species continued, with almost daily reports, including many into three figures. Some of the larger counts included 120 over Ecclesall Road on 27th Nov; 110 roosting at Redmires on 17th Nov; 200 at Uppertorpe on 30th Nov; 150 at Heeley City Farm on 1st Dec; 100 at Carter Hall Lane on 4th Dec; 110 at Gisborne Road on 4th Dec; 100 at Westfield on 4th Dec; 200 on Edward St in the City Centre on 10th Dec; 110 at



The Waxwing winter continued, with birds seen all over the area, including this one at Catcliffe.

Cetti's Warbler - One was seen briefly, and heard calling for 30 minutes, at Carr Vale on 28th Nov.

Blackcap - Ones and twos reported from various sites throughout the winter, including Millhouses, Sharrow, Tideswell, Woodseats, Handsworth, Ecclesall, Intake, Nether Edge, Crookesmoor, Middlewood, Bamford, Botanical Gardens, Malin Bridge, Broomfield, Walkley Bank and Wadsley Common.

Chiffchaff - Singles reported from Firsby Res on 15th Nov, Wardsend Cemetery on 30th Nov and 4th Dec, Aldwarke on 5th Dec, Eastwood on 5th Dec, and Thrybergh CP on 10th Dec.

Goldcrest - Highest counts were 10 at Greno Wood on 27th Nov, seven at West Wood, Brimington on 28th Dec, and six at Ravenfield Park on 18th Jan.

Firecrest - One was seen at Silver Wood on 4th Dec.

Bearded Tit - One was still present at Pit-house West until 28th Nov.

Corvid sp. - 2.097 flew over Millhouses Park to roost in Ecclesall Woods on 5th Jan.

Brambling - Highest count was 12 at Lodge Moor on 25th Jan.

Greenfinch - 250 were at Bingham Park on 2nd Jan, and 150 at Owlerton Greyhound Stadium on 27th.

Siskin - The highest counts were 60 at Firsby Res on 2nd Jan, 50 at Ulley CP on 4th, 65 at Millhouses Park on 5th, 80 at Harthill Res on 27th, and 63 at Beighton on 29th.

Linnet - 100 were at Pebley on 3rd Jan, and 60 at Ulley on 14th.



This Mealy Redpoll was one of ten at Ulley CP in late January, a group which helped make a memorable month for this species.

Common (Mealy) Redpoll - A good period for this species. Two were at Tinsley Golf Course on 27th Nov, two at Blackburn Meadows on 11th Dec, one at Ulley CP on 27th Dec and 7th Jan, three at Orgreave Lakes on 3rd Jan, two at Thrybergh CP on 9th Jan, three at Waverley Opencast on 9th Jan, and two at Canklow Woods on 19th. An impressive 10 were at Ulley CP on the 24th Jan, with at one present until at least the 30th, and two 1st winter males were caught and ringed at Blackburn Meadows on 29th.

Lesser Redpoll - Maximum counts included 120 at Tinsley Golf Course on 27th Nov, 70 at Thrybergh CP on

2nd Jan, 60 at Orgreave Lakes on 6th Jan, 90 at Firsby Res on 13th Jan, 112 at Canklow Woods on 19th Jan, and 100 at Ulley CP on 26th Jan.

Crossbill - One was at Thornseat Delf on 2nd Jan, two at Ouzelden Clough on 22nd, and 30 at Holling Dale on 22nd.

Yellowhammer - Highest counts included 60 at Freebirch on 2nd Jan, 60 at Pebley Pond on 27th Jan, and 50 at Ulley CP on 30th.

Corn Bunting - Reports from Pebley included six on the 3rd Jan, 15 on 22nd, and 8 on 23rd.

Pete Mella

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

N Anscomb, MG Archer, E Ash, S Ashton, B Bailey, S Bailey, R Barnard, SJ Barnes, A Baverstock, MA Beevers, AR Bell, RP Blagden, K Bower, SJ Branch, MC Brew, PL Brown, R Butterfield, D Butters, DJ Buttle, DM Bye, J Clarke, L Coates, B Cole, J Crooks, N Cross, D Dawson, A Deighton, J Ducker, G Dyson, M Dyson, H Egan, J Fermer, D Gains, M Garner, P Garrity, KA Gehring, S Green, T Grose, S Guymer, J Hallam, D Heathcote, M Hibbert, A Hicks, A Hill, RD Hill, M Hodgson, J Hornbuckle, C Hurst, G James, M Jarvis, Alan Johnson, Anne Johnson, A Jones, JE Kenward, S King, K Knowles, M Kramer, M Lacey, D Lakin, JM Laskey, P Lawson, P Leonard, P Lockwood, JL Marriott, P Mella, J Middleton, M Miller, TH Minskip, D Mowbray, D Neill, MG Oxlade, PH Pearsall, R Poplewell, NR Porter, NM Reeder, P Ridsdale, D Roddis, G Rodgers, S Samworth, E Shaw, G Shaw, J Sherwin, M Sherwin, A Siddall, D Simmonite, MA Smethurst, J Smith, M Snook, B Spencer, CG Stack, CB Stride, M Sweeney, N Taylor, SG Tebbutt, MS Thomas, P Thomas, A Thompson, M Timms, R Twigg, C Tyler, E Vaccari, SE Vickers, EC Vincent, D Warburton, A Watson, G Watson, RDR Williams, S Williams, I Wilson, P&A Wilson, D Wood, D Woodriff, M Woodward, P Wragg, Rotherham and District Ornithological Society, Sorby-Breck Ringing Group, Thrybergh CP Bird Log, BTO Bird Track

GIFT AID AND MEMBERSHIP

In recent years there have been changes to Gift Aid legislation, making it easier for charitable organisations to reclaim income tax on the contributions, including subscriptions, made by members.

The group is constantly looking for sources of income to offset the increasing costs of running the group, such as printing the excellent Annual Report, (the better it gets, in terms of photos etc, the more it costs) and also room hire for our Indoor Meetings.

Gift Aid is a means by which every basic rate tax-paying member can contribute to the group's income, courtesy of the Inland Revenue (what an incentive!). If you are about to pay your 2011 subscription and have not already filled in a Gift Aid form, please complete the tear off slip below, and return it to any committee member at an indoor meeting or send with subs to Martin Hodgson by post. Alternatively, please send it to me at:

Anselm,
White Edge Drive,
Baslow
Derbyshire
DE45 1SJ

At the end of the tax year I can then recover 22/78 of your subscription (£3.95). If you are a higher rate taxpayer, you can include the payment on your tax return, and get higher rate tax relief yourself.

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*Ron Blagden
Treasurer*

GIFT AID FORM

NAME

Are you a basic rate taxpayer? YES/NO

Do you agree to Sheffield Bird Study Group treating your membership payment for 2011 and future membership payments, as a Gift Aid contribution? YES/NO

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS

Subscriptions for 2011 become due in January.

As you will have seen from the list in this Bulletin we have a good programme of speakers planned for next year, and many local and more distant field trips are also in the pipeline. A copy of the Annual Report for the year prior to membership is also included. The subscriptions remain the same at £14 for individual members, £16 for family membership, and £7 for juniors (up to age 16), which I am sure you will see as good value for money. A subscription form is below. To renew, please see Martin Hodgson at any meeting, or send your cheque payable to Sheffield Bird Study Group, together with a stamped addressed envelope for return of your membership card, to Martin Hodgson, 142 Hangingwater Road, Sheffield, S11 7ET. For new members an application form is available at meetings, or by e-mail to martinjhodgson@btinternet.com

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