

REPORT ON FIELD TRIP TO DERWENTDALE
14 MARCH 2015

Despite an unpromising forecast, visibility at Windy Corner was quite good as I arrived at 8.25 (to be informed by Roy Twigg that I had driven past a party of Whooper Swans further down the valley)! The weather was, however, cold with an easterly wind, not ideal for viewing raptors over the moors east of the viewpoint.

Things began slowly, but soon the dozen or so members present had good views of Kestrel, Sparrowhawk, Common Buzzard and Raven. Sadly, at least a couple of these birds showed the characteristic wing pattern of birds of prey in this area of the Dark Peak, with missing flight feathers in spring. We also had excellent views of Mountain Hares in winter pelage, one of which seemed determined to see off a Buzzard which landed nearby.

The species most people came to see was, of course, goshawk, and we finally had good views of an immature male and female, which flew virtually over our heads. For the first time in many years of running this trip, we saw no peregrines; who would have thought the day would come when it was easier to see this magnificent raptor in Sheffield city centre, rather than in Upper Derwentdale?

The highlight of the day for many people was, however, the sight of a flock of large birds spotted moving north-west over Howden Clough and Cow Hey. These were Whooper Swans, part of a large movement of this species through the area in mid-March. Photographs rattled off by Andy Deighton showed there were 51 birds, a superb record.

Thanks very much to the experienced birders who attended the meeting and helped those present both pick out, and identify, most of the birds, your help was much appreciated.