

WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR IN JULY AND AUGUST

The summer months are often regarded as rather quiet, with little changing as birds concentrate on breeding, but there are still a number of birds to look out for.

This is the best month of the year to catch up with **COMMON SCOTER** in the area. Parties, often consisting solely or mainly of males, can turn up at any of the main lowland sites such as Rother Valley CP, Orgreave Lakes and Thrybergh CP, but also pretty regularly at Redmires Res and, occasionally, the Ladybower chain of reservoirs.

Although watching gull roosts is usually associated with winter, the build-up of Lesser black backed Gulls at Middleton Moor, Redmires and Orgreave in late summer is a feature of the area's birding. These roosts usually attract reasonable numbers of **YELLOW LEGGED GULL**, with counts sometimes into double figures, allowing observers to get to grips with the various plumages of this species. In recent years these roosts have occasionally produced **MEDITERRANEAN GULL**, in particular juveniles, a plumage unknown in the area until the increase in the UK breeding population.

With a breeding population just north of Leeds, and the re-introductions in the Midlands, it seem only a matter of time before **RED KITE** breeds in the area. Although birds are seen throughout the year, late June into July is one of the best times. The Peak District and moorland fringe are the best places to look, with birds occasionally taking up residence for a week or so. As with many raptors, Carrion Crows spot them before you do so pay particular attention to any "Buzzard" they are mobbing.

The other raptor where records spike in July and August is **MARSH HARRIER**. Sightings, in particular juveniles, have increased in recent years in line with the increase in the UK breeding population. In the lowlands, Carr Vale NR is particularly good, with its almost constant coverage producing several records a year, whilst in the uplands, the well watched sites of Middleton Moor, Big Moor, Redmires and Broomhead Moor usually get at least one each August.

Return wader passage starts at this time with **BLACK TAILED GODWIT** usually the first to be noted. Early July is a particularly good time for this bird at Middleton Moor, with the usual lowland sites of Orgreave, Rother Valley and Carr Vale NR having sightings a little later.

Early August is one of the best times to see **GREENSHANK** in the area. The plaintive, tri-syllabic call is so distinctive, with Blackburn Meadows NR a good site, along with the "usual suspects" of Middleton Moor, Orgreave, Thrybergh CP and Carr Vale NR. **WHIMBREL** also pass through the area in small numbers at this time, often given away by the distinctive whistling call. Interestingly, birds are often seen on grassland near upland wader sites such as Middleton Moor and Redmires, so any "curlew" in a field is worth a second look.

A bird which was once a “mega” in the area, first recorded as recently as 2001, is **LITTLE EGRET**. Although recorded throughout the year, the summer months do see an increase in records. Carr Vale NR and Orgreave are probably the best sites, with Thrybergh CP also getting records. Interestingly, in the Peak District, records have occurred more than once at Chatsworth Park.

For those wishing to test their ID skills, finding a **GARGANEY** amongst parties of Teal is a decent challenge. The slightly larger size, bill shape, distinctive but subtle head markings, as well as speculum colour, are what to look for. One or two, usually females/immatures, are found in the area each year, with Catcliffe Flash as well as Rother Valley CP and Carr Vale NR good sites.

Finally, August sees the start of the “vis mig” season. Parties of **SAND MARTINS** moving south are usually some of the first, and mid-August is the best time to see overhead **TREE PIPIT**, the bird given away by its high pitched “speez” call. The other bird to look out for in late August is **YELLOW WAGTAIL**. Difficult to see now in the area except on passage, listen out for the single, high pitched call as a wagtail bounces overhead at one of the migration watch points such as Redmires, Rod Moor, or Ramsley.