

Ornithological profile Neil R Porter

I think I started to show an interest in birds at the age of 12 when reading a large seabirds tome by James Fisher and Julian Huxley in the library of Humphrey Perkins School in Barrow upon Soar. A seed was sown about the seabird colonies on St Kilda that would take many years to come to fruition. The inspirations in the library led me to request books for my prize givings in those early years when I apparently studied very hard. The books were the wonderful Birds of the Wayside and Woodland (1961) and the even more impressive Birds of the British Isles series by T A Coward. I received these from Lady Isobel Barnet of TV Call My Bluff fame, who regrettably was many years later convicted of shoplifting.

So I liked the books but had no ornithological experience. That started to take shape when I moved to Sheffield in 1974 and I met up with another committee member Rod Hinchliffe. We spent many hours in Blackbrook Wood near Lodge Moor, following on from Harold Smith's surveys. In the 1980's I moved to the Lodge Moor area and discovered the awesome knowledge of Keith Clarkson, Kevin Gould and Richard Hill on many visits to Redmires Reservoir. For many years Rod and I have carried out survey work for the BTO the DOS and SBSG in diverse parts of the Sheffield recording area, but mostly on the West side. Memorably we were threatened with guns by a farmer in the Hathersage area on one occasion. We have been surveying the breeding birds of the Strines area on a specific transect for many years, including winter mammal and butterfly surveys.

The St Kilda attraction formed in 1960 eventually came good in 1994 when I had a truly frightening boat trip there. Never to be forgotten, including sleeping outside with no tent on a steep field with, I think, Petrels nesting in the wall behind, and I did see St

Kilda Wren. Also my first experience of vertigo walking those 1300 ft cliffs

My birding now extends to Lesbos, Ronda , Ecuador and the Galapagos, India and in 2011 Kenya

More recently I have moved to the Rivelin Valley and I can get to the river in about 5 minutes. I record all my visits through Birdtrack and have approximately 140 visits to date . In 2010 I was lucky enough to be offered the Waterways Breeding Bird Survey for the Rivelin, which is a real pleasure to do. My highlight has been finding breeding Lesser Spotted Woodpecker. For some reason Kingfishers evade me though.

N R Porter April 2012