

Book reviews

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Wood, D. & Hill, R. (eds) **Breeding Birds of the Sheffield Area, including the North-east Peak District: A New Atlas 2003–08**. 359 pages, with many maps and illustrations. Sheffield: Sheffield Bird Study Group, 2013. Hardback, £26.00, including p.&p., from Martin Hodgson, 142 Hangingwater Road, Sheffield S11 7ET, with cheque to the Group, ISBN 978-0-907-575-38-2. Website: <http://www.sbsg.org>.

This scholarly work is good value, a successor to Hornbuckle and Herringshaw's *Birds of the Sheffield Area* (1985; for a review, see *Ibis* 128: 432), which included atlas results from 1975 to 1980. It is based on a survey of 2003–2008 and is largely restricted to breeding birds, although a full species list is printed in Appendix C. The area includes 12 'hectads'; at last the writers of an atlas have used the obvious term for a 10 × 10 km square! Its 300 tetrads place it in the same class as Bedfordshire, Avon, Banbury and the North Cotswolds, all from 300 to 500, and all productive of a series of atlases. This suggests that an area of this size, with a reasonably high population, is ideal for the continuity and efficiency of such works, being small enough to be locally manageable, but large enough to provide variety. About half the area is still in Derbyshire. A curious consequence of this overlap is that a future Derbyshire avifaunist will have three closely following surveys for the northern part of the Peak District within 18 years: Frost and Shaw's recently published work for 1993–1998 (reviewed in this issue), followed by this one and then by the 2007–2011 national *Bird Atlas*.

The eastern half of the area is heavily industrialized, although there are country parks and estates, and the pall of smoke that I remember in my boyhood as stationary over the blast furnaces and foundries has vanished. The western half, largely Derbyshire, has a dozen reservoirs, and the Red Grouse *Lagopus lagopus* of Kinder Scout. Rotherham and Chatsworth House are at opposite corners of a hugely varied landscape.

The analyses of species are thorough and painstaking, placing the results firmly in a national context. They are accompanied by ingenious maps designed to show both distribution and change. For a more general view of the latter, one can look at Appendix A, where, as in so many current atlases, one can chart the advance of Buzzard *Buteo buteo*, Raven *Corvus corax* and Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*. Nuthatch *Sitta europaea* has trebled over the period, and, most surprisingly, so has Lesser Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos minor*. It is good to see that Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria*, Curlew *Numenius arquata* and Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola*

have remained about stable, and Pied Flycatchers *Ficedula hypoleuca*, almost absent in the 1970s, have quadrupled, against the national trend. However, there is the expected catalogue of declines: the populations of Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*, Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra* and Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata* have all fallen by 40–60%, and Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur* and Corn Bunting *Emberiza calandra* have all but vanished. The famous Goshawks *Accipiter gentilis* have been under intense pressure from keepering.

There are attractive grisaille drawings and colour photographs of the main habitats.

David Ballance