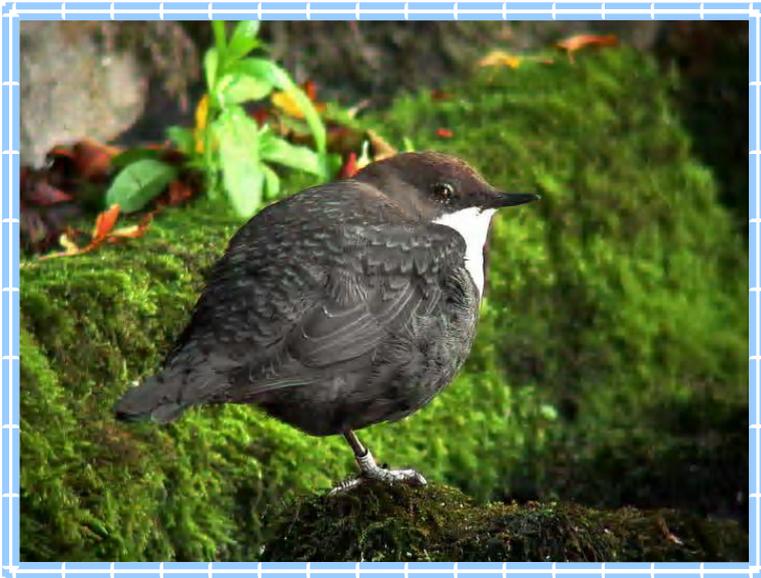




ISSUE 1  
2004

# THE DIPPER

THE MAGAZINE OF THE HOPE VALLEY BIRD WATCHERS CLUB



# INSIDE THIS ISSUE

---

<b>President's Message</b> <i>by John Wooddisse</i>	3
<b>Field Trip Highlights</b> <i>by David Gains</i>	4
<b>Club Website</b> <i>by David Gains</i>	7
<b>What is RVCP?</b> <i>by Alan Kydd</i>	7
<b>Water Birds of the River Derwent</b> <i>by John Wooddisse</i>	8
<b>Life Was So Simple</b> <i>by Sue Cockayne</i>	9
<b>Digiscoping</b> <i>by David Gains</i>	10
<b>Rookery Survey</b> <i>by John Wooddisse</i>	11
<b>Birds in the News - Part 1</b>	11
<b>A Beginner's Experience</b> <i>by Alan Kydd</i>	12
<b>Club Books &amp; Videos</b> <i>by Tom Ferguson &amp; John Wooddisse</i>	13
<b>Book Review</b> <i>by David Gains</i>	13
<b>Garden Bird Survey</b> <i>by David Gains</i>	14
<b>Mallorcan Magic</b> <i>by Alan Kydd</i>	16
<b>Bird Brain Quiz</b> <i>by David Gains</i>	19
<b>Birds In The News - Part 2</b>	19
<b>Club Members &amp; Committee</b>	20

---

Front Cover Photograph: Dipper © *David Morris*

The main rivers within the Hope Valley are home to many Dippers and so the club adopted the bird as its logo. Ironically, in twitching parlance to “dip” or “dip out” is to fail to see a bird that you wanted to see, which sometimes happens all too often, and so a dipper would be someone who misses the bird. So, “The Dipper” seems an appropriate name for the club magazine.



---

Text © Hope Valley Bird Watchers Club, 2004

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in or introduced into a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, without the prior permission of the copyright holders.

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

---

After a number of years, we have at last produced a new Hope Valley Bird Watchers Club Report. Roy Briggs produced the last report in 1996, and now David Gains and Alan Kydd have made this one possible. I hope that we will publish a similar one every two years.

As you all know, the club is still very active although the average age of members is increasing. We still have 12 midweek field trips and 12 further afield reserve visits throughout the year. The weekly Tuesday night walks and pub visits are still popular as are the 7 winter meetings at the Sir William Hotel.

This has always been a club where members get as much out of it as they want for their £5 annual subscription. There are 44 meetings this year, so I hope there is something for everyone.

Since the Club was formed from bird watching classes at Hope Valley College in 1990, it has continued to develop in terms of variety of bird watching experiences and friendships between all members. The smooth running of the Club has been possible with help of key members: Graham Games, Barbara Wooddisse, Kit Stokes and the rest of our committee, past and present. Club members must have seen over 300 bird species during the last 13 years, last year *Rough-legged Buzzard*, *Ferruginous Duck* and *Red-breasted Goose* were added to the list.

One of the more interesting aspects of

bird watching is that birds and bird populations are always changing, and this has been witnessed on many of our local walks. Since 1990, many large birds of prey have moved into the Peak District, including *Buzzard*, *Raven* and *Peregrine*, which we used to go to mid-Wales to see. During the next 10 years, there is a good chance that we will see *Red Kite*, *Osprey*, *Black Grouse* and *Little Egret* in Derbyshire. It is not all good news though, many small birds have vanished and many more species are declining sharply, including *Yellow Wagtail*, *Tree Sparrow* and *Redpoll*—very scarce in our area—and *Starling*, *House Sparrow* and some warblers.

Bird watching is an increasingly popular hobby and several developments have helped during the past few years. Bird reserves have improved in quality and number in our area, for example: Carsington, Old Moor Wetlands and Ogston. Bird watching equipment, such as binoculars and scopes, has improved in quality and we have the advent of digiscoping. Information technology has also played its part, bird news to pagers and mobile phones, a host of information on the World Wide Web, and digital photographs of birds sent from PC to PC all help us share our bird watching experiences.

Finally, I wish members all the best in their future bird watching activities, and to remember that it can be just as rewarding to see something special in your garden as it is an unusual bird at a reserve.

# FIELD TRIP HIGHLIGHTS

The following are the highlights from some of the mid-week or weekend field trips in 2003.

Despite snow and a bitterly cold north-easterly wind about 55 species were seen at **Carsington Water** (8th January), including winter thrushes, redpoll, *Willow Tit*, *Tree Sparrow*, *Raven* and *Barnacle Goose*. The best “tick” was *Red-crested Pochard*, several of which were finally located in the marina.

There was nothing greatly exciting on the lake or in the woods at **Clumber Park** (25th January), but the fantastic views of several *Woodlark*, which were foraging in a ploughed field just beyond the ford, were memorable.

The trip to **Fairburn Ings** (22nd February) started cool and misty, but warmed up as the sun broke through and the wildfowl count increased. Among the 20 or so wildfowl species were *Goldeneye*, *Goosander*, *Smew*, *Barnacle Goose* and a solitary *Bar-headed Goose*.



Woodlark  
© David Morris

**Old Moor Wetlands** (19th March) has quite literally risen from the ashes and its diversity of avifauna gets better all the time. Good numbers of *Tree Sparrows* and *Yellowhammers* were there, chiefly because winter-feeding concentrates more on finches and buntings. There were also thousands of *Golden Plover* and *Lapwing*, a fleeting glimpse of *Kingfisher*, and early summer arrivals of *Chiffchaff* and *Sand Martin*.

On 29th March, several club members walked along **Derwent Dale** but the birds were disobliging apart from the spectacular appearance of a *Goshawk* during the welcome coffee break by Howden Dam. A detour to Shillito Wood gave good views of a roosting *Long-eared Owl* and flocks of *Fieldfare*.

A good day's birding in glorious sunshine at **Potteric Carr** (17th April) provided many with their first good sightings of summer visitors: *Chiffchaff*, *Willow Warbler*, *Blackcap*, *Whitethroat*, *Sand Martin* and *Swallow*. The reported *Lesser Scaup* proved elusive.

Who in their right mind would be at **Clumber Park** (26th April) at 7 o'clock in the morning? Anyone that wanted to see 77 species including: *Treecreeper*, *Buzzard*, *Whinchat*, *Woodlark*, *Crossbill*, *Mandarin*, *Garden Warbler* and *Stonechat*, and spectacular views of a *Green Woodpecker* near Lake Arm.

*Marsh Harrier*, *Avocet*, *Ringed Plover*, *Little Ringed Plover*, *Yellow Wagtail*, *Common Tern* and a drake *Garganey*



'Bridled' Guillemot  
© David Gains

were among the 60 species recorded at **Blacktoft Sands** (8th May).

The din and stench of thousands of birds is surprisingly tolerable when faced by the awesome spectacle of a seabird colony (**Bempton Cliffs**, 28th June). Among the seabirds were *Razorbill*, *Gannet*, *Guillemot*, *Kittiwake*, *Puffin*, *Fulmar* and *Shag*. A "bridled" *Guillemot*, a variant with a white eye-ringing and stripe, proved to be an attraction. The journey home was via Blacktoft Sands, where we had magnificent views of a *Grasshopper Warbler*, *Barn Owl*, *Spoonbill*, *Green Sandpiper*, *Spotted Redshank* and *Corn Bunting* (at Crowle). The day's total was 72 species.

Members at the evening meeting at **Clumber Park** (22nd July) were rewarded by dazzling *Kingfishers*, which were fishing and fighting opposite the boat dock, and a pair of *Egyptian Geese*. The tree plantation towards Thoresby again provided sightings of "churring" *Nightjar*, but two *Woodcock* stole the show.

A myriad of annoyingly irritating harvest flies made **Blacktoft Sands** (26th July) memorable for the wrong reasons. The birds included *Curlew Sandpiper*, *Kingfisher*, *Marsh Harrier*, *Buzzard* and *Barn Owl*.

*Green Sandpipers* and *Common Sandpipers* were among the waders at **Old Moor Wetlands** (20th August). We had stunning views of *Snipe* and *Black-tailed Godwit* at Wath Ings. The *Little Grebe* that escaped from the "jaws" of a juvenile *Grey Heron* is the enduring memory for most members.

**Titchwell Marsh** (13th September) had the usual variety of birds, but we did not see or hear a single *Bearded Tit*. Among the waders were *Grey Plover*, *Ruff*, *Little Egret*, *Sanderling*, *Greenshank*, *Knot*, *Turnstone*, *Wood Sandpiper* and, of course, Sammy the *Black-winged Stilt*. *Common Eider* and *Common Scoter* were close to shore.

A glorious sunny day and a south-westerly breeze stopped us freezing to the marrow at **Spurn Point** (11th October). A *Stonechat* greeted visitors to



Snipe  
© David Gains



Wood Sandpiper  
© David Gains

Six intrepid club members met at the Sheepwash hide at **Carsington Water** (11 December). Despite heavy rain until midday, *Long-tailed Duck*, a very probable *Ring-billed Gull* and a *Peregrine Falcon* were among the 60 species seen. Sadly, none of the bird feeders contained seed, owing to increasing numbers of rats, so we saw no *Tree Sparrows* all day. There were large numbers of wildfowl including *Wigeon*, *Teal*, *Shoveler*, *Ruddy Duck* and *Pochard*.

the Kilnsea car park, and a stroll to the pools gave good views of three *Greater Scaup* and a *Pintail* duck. As we left the hide a *Merlin* rose from the scrape where a couple of *Redshank* had been lurking. The Sea Buckthorn on the spit is normally heaving with warblers and thrushes, but not this year. A pair of *Brambling* was in the Heligoland trap near the Vessel Tracking Service centre.

Redevelopment of the buildings and fence building activity at **Old Moor Wetlands** (14th October) caused too much disturbance to see many birds, but we still managed about 50 species. The highlights included a *Merlin* chasing a flock of *Starlings*, and a Weasel wrestling with a Water Vole, though the latter managed to escape. There was a *Pectoral Sandpiper* at Broomhill Flash

A dank and murky day and very low water levels at **Blacktoft Sands** (11th November) forecast a poor day's birding. However, perseverance was rewarded with sightings of *Kingfisher*, *Barn Owl*, a ringtail female *Hen Harrier* and a single *Waxwing*.

After repeated postponements over several weekends because of bad weather, the **Martin Mere** field trip took place on 18th January 2004. Hundreds of *Whooper Swans*, *Pintail* and *Pochard* were by the Swan Link, but the highlight was a single *Ferruginous Duck*. At the Millers Bridge hide, we had distant views of a *Red-breasted Goose* among *Barnacle Geese* and *Pink-footed Geese*, though the reported *White-fronted Geese* remained elusive. We saw only a couple of *Bewick's Swans*, though there were reports of up to about one hundred.



Waxwing  
© David Morris

# CLUB WEBSITE

---

If you have access to the World Wide Web then you can visit the club's website for news on recent field trips, or look at last year's field trip report. The current year's programme of meetings and field trips is also available on-line, and there are some useful links to the websites of other organisations and reserves, such as the RSPB and Derbyshire Ornithological Society.

A mailing list is available that allows members to send an e-mail to every member on the list. To join this free service, simply provide your e-mail address by completing the on-line form.

The website is available to club members only and so you will need a username and password to use it. Ask one of the committee for details.



The website address is [www.garden-birds.co.uk/hvbc](http://www.garden-birds.co.uk/hvbc)

# WHAT IS RVCP?

---

We asked ourselves this when we saw these initials in a Sheffield Bird Study Group Annual Report (2000) and it took a while before we realised it referred to Rother Valley Country Park. I spent the last 5 years of my working life within 1/4 mile of RVCP and never once visited it - wasn't it full of noisy kids? I was surprised to read what had been recorded in 2000 - a *Broad-billed Sandpiper*.

Our first visit was in December 2002. There are two lakes with a pool between, one of the lakes is reserved for wildlife and is part of an extensive "natural area" away from the main water sports lake and visitor centre. We recorded 35 species on a slow 2-hour walk around the wildlife lake. There is also a bird feeding and car parking area, overlooking the wildlife lake, on the side of the road into the centre.

We've visited at different times of the year, but prefer the winter (and not just because entry is free then!). We normally record between 40 and 50 species, including *Kingfisher*, *Willow Tit*, *Shoveler*, *Wigeon*, *Goosander*, *Tufted Duck*, *Pochard*, *Ruddy Duck* and *Gadwall*. There is usually a surprise too, such as *Firecrest*, *Barnacle Goose*, *White-fronted Goose*, *Common Tern*, *Black Swan* and *Pink-footed Goose*.

Oh yes, they also do a mean bacon butty at the café by the main lake!

# WATER BIRDS OF THE RIVER DERWENT

Members of our bird club have helped to carry out this Waterways Bird Survey for the British Trust for Ornithology for a number of years. The survey is undertaken on the river Derwent between Bamford Mill and Leadmill Bridge, Hathersage. This involves at least six walks along the river between the end of March and early July to assess the number of breeding pairs of water birds. This is a national survey and helps to monitor the breeding success of our river nesting water birds.

The table shows some selected results over the last twelve years, and some noteworthy results are:

- The large number of *Mallard* pairs consistently breeding on this stretch of river.
- The steady number of both *Grey Wagtail* and *Dipper* pairs breeding. These are both good indicator species for river quality and invertebrate numbers.
- We seem to have lost *Little Grebe* as a breeding bird but have gained *Canada Goose*.



Grey Wagtail  
© David Morris

	1992	1996	1997	1998	2000	2001	2002	2003
Little Grebe	2	2	0	2	0	0	0	0
Canada Goose	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Mallard	23	30	22	21	27	30	22	39
Tufted Duck	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	2
Goosander	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1
Red-breasted Merganser	4	3	2	3	2	3	2	3
Moorhen	13	10	5	8	12	6	8	10
Coot	1	10	2	3	3	1	1	0
Dipper	3	6	4	3	3	1	4	4
Pied Wagtail	2	4	1	1	2	1	2	3
Grey Wagtail	4	5	1	3	4	2	5	6
Lapwing	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Curlew	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Teal	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

# LIFE WAS SO SIMPLE

---



Life was so simple when I was a child  
Then, birds were just vees in the sky  
Now my head spins with facts  
Books say I should know  
Must their miracle be defined?  
By wood or water, moor or marsh  
Dibbling or diving, amassed or alone  
Soaring or swooping, hovering on high  
Do I have to question why?

Must migrations mysteries to be understood?  
The form of a wing, the shape of a head  
Some pastel painted, some black as lead  
Was there a song or perhaps a call?  
Maybe there was no sound at all  
And what power was it taught them to fly?  
Do I now have to question why?  
Life was so simple when I was a child

# DIGISCOPING

Bird photography has traditionally used 35mm SLR cameras with a telephoto lens and often many hours of patience in a hide waiting for that “magic” moment. This has given us breathtaking, close up pictures of birds, but still mainly in the realm of professional photographers.

Photo-adapters are available that allow a 35 mm SLR camera to use a spotting scope as a fixed length telephoto lens, typically about 1000 mm. Sadly, the small aperture size means fast film and slow shutter speeds are often needed and so results are mixed.

The digital camera is more compact than an SLR camera and usually has better low-light performance than film. Further, the technology has moved, and still is moving, at such a pace that the resolution needed to capture fine detail is now available and at progressively more competitive prices.

Birders, often already equipped with spotting scopes and tripods, are able to take very good photographs of distant birds without additional bulky equipment or hides - just a small digital camera in the coat pocket - and so digiscoping was born.

Digiscoping is simply using a telescope as a telephoto lens with a digital camera and you can keep it as simple or as sophisticated as you like. At its simplest, you point your digital camera down the eyepiece of your spotting scope. The best results come from digital cameras having a small external lens diameter

and a scope with a large eyepiece. However, depending on the make and model of camera you may need to adjust the optical zoom to reduce the vignette and focussing so that you focus on the image and not the innards of the scope.

The effective magnification is typically 20-150 times so the slightest movement will have disastrous effects on your photograph, but technology comes to your aid. Digital cameras store the photographs you take on memory cards rather than film and most have built-in LCD displays, this means you can take many photographs, view them on the display and erase those that are poor from the memory card – without ever having to go to print. Alternatively, there are accessories available to assist in taking photographs more effectively, such as adapters that fix the camera to the eyepiece and shutter release cables.

A few club members are digiscoping, so if you are interested they will be more than happy to offer advice.



Basic Digiscoping  
© David Gains

# ROOKERY SURVEY

The 5-yearly Rookery Survey was last carried out by the Club in 2000 for the Sheffield Bird Study Group in two local 10 km square: SK28 (Hathersage) and SK18 (Castleton). The Club carried out this survey in 1990 and 1995 too.

The results, shown below, are encouraging as *Rooks* are a good indicator species for the state of our local farmland and goes against the trend of the decline of many of our common bird species. We now look forward to the results in 2005.



Rook  
© David Morris

	Number of Rookeries			Number of Nests		
	1990	1995	2000	1990	1995	2000
SK28 Hathersage	12	11	9	237	193	161
SK18 Castleton	7	7	9	205	276	325
Total				442	469	486

## BIRDS IN THE NEWS - PART 1

### Black Grouse Return

Severn Trent and the National Trust supported by the Peak District National Park Authority re-introduced 30 *Black Grouse* to the Upper Derwent Valley in October 2003.

Prior to the birds' release, moorland and broadleaved woodland had to be restored to provide a suitable habitat. Over the next two years a further 60 birds will be released, which will make this the first time that a re-introduction scheme of this size has been carried out in the UK and, if successful, will be the blueprint for other schemes worldwide.

The first 30 birds were fully-fledged and bred in captivity in north Wales. They were fitted with radio tags and released at three different locations in the valley, an area that had not seen the species for 20 years or so.

Several club members saw one of the birds in Hathersage after their release.

### Great Grey Shrike

A few *Great Grey Shrike* were seen around Big Moor, Leash Fen and Barbrook during the winter months of 2002 and 2003, together with the occasional *Hen Harrier*.

# A BEGINNER'S EXPERIENCE

---

Tom and Angela Ferguson have a lot to answer for! Towards the end of 2000 Di had just retired and I was about to take early retirement when they asked, "Why don't you join the Bird Club?" Our brisk walking pace has now reduced to less than 1 mile an hour, Di is rarely seen without a pair of heavy binoculars and most of my rucksack is permanently occupied by a telescope and tripod.

We had always been vaguely interested in birds. We fed them in the garden, and enjoyed watching them. Now, three years since we got involved, we've learned quite a lot and seem to spend more and more time "birding". Back then, we'd never seen *Goldcrest* or flycatcher, *Brambling* or *Chiffchaff*. Now we find these regularly on our walks around Derbyshire - it helps so much to know where and when to look!

When we went on our first field trip in February 2001, to Ogston, we remember being impressed when Pam Edwards spotted a *Pochard* in the distance. It looked to us like a duck (they were all just ducks to us then). The others were soon chipping in with *Tufted Duck*, *Goosander*, *Little Grebe*, etc. We also saw our first owls ever - two *Little Owls* in what we now know is a regular roosting spot. We learned a lot that day, not least how ignorant we were! However, it has taken a further 3 years to become more comfortable about identifying ducks and most, but still not all, of the birds we see around Derbyshire.

Towards the end of March 2001, we went on our first walk with the club. It was a cold and foggy Saturday morning, and we had to walk on roads because of the Foot & Mouth outbreak. There were only the two of us with John Wooddisse. From Hathersage we walked up towards Stanage and then back under Millstone Edge and down the main road. We can remember learning that the little brown birds on the moors were *Meadow Pipits* - and learned their flight characteristics. We were surprised, and still are, how John was able to spot *Snipe* and *Lapwing* almost before we'd noticed the field they were in. We had not seen either species before and they were nesting within a mile or so of our house.

A big thank you is due to everyone who has helped us since we joined - we'd probably still be struggling to tell the difference between *Mistle Thrush* and *Song Thrush* if it weren't for all the tips we've been given. The best tip was to LISTEN. It takes a long time but being able to identify bird calls has certainly been the biggest help in being able to find the birds we never used to see. Of course, the more you learn, the more you find there is to learn!

We're just back from a trip to Thailand, where we spent about half of our time "birding". Having almost got to know how to identify the half dozen warblers in the UK, it's a bit of a blow to find that there are no fewer than 44 to choose from there - we managed to identify 6 of them on this trip!

# CLUB BOOKS & VIDEOS

---

These books and videos are owned by the club and are usually available at the indoor Tuesday evening meetings from John Wooddisse and Tom Ferguson.

## Books

1. Where to Watch Birds in the West Midlands
2. Where to Watch Birds in Cumbria, Lancashire and Cheshire
3. Where to Watch Birds in East Anglia
4. Where to Watch Birds in Wales
5. Where to Watch Birds in Yorkshire and North Humberside
6. The Complete Book of British Birds

## Videos

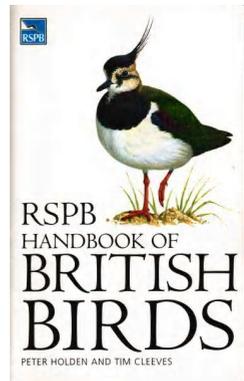
1. Barn Owl; Bird of Darkness
2. Flying for Gold: The Feathered Athletes
3. Barcod; The Red Kite Success
4. Seabirds

5. Ynys Hir
6. Look Again at Garden Birds and Gulls
7. Wildfowl
8. Eagles - the Majestic Hunters
9. Skydancer - Hen Harrier Profile
10. Kingfisher and Short-eared Owl
11. The Video Guide to British Birds - Volume 1
12. The Video Guide to British Birds - Volume 2
13. The Video Guide to British Birds - Volume 3
14. The Video Guide to British Birds - Volume 4
15. The Video Guide to British Birds - Volume 5
16. Bird Images Video Guide: The Warblers of Britain and Europe
17. Bird Images Video Guide: Bird watching in Scotland

# BOOK REVIEW

---

There are so many excellent books about birds that it is a very difficult decision to choose just one. Well, the RSPB Handbook of British Birds is a strong contender to be that one, especially for birders who want to know more about the lives of the 280 commonest birds in Britain and Ireland rather than identify every rare vagrant that may land on our shores (for which Collins Bird Guide is ideal). This book can be used as a field guide as most plumages are superbly illustrated, but it is the easy-to-read information that it is packed with that makes it stand out from the crowd. Each bird has a biography that includes identification and moult, habits, voice, habitat, food, breeding, movements and migration, population, conservation and distribution maps.



*RSPB Handbook of British Birds, Peter Holden and Tim Cleeves. 2002. Christopher Helm. 304pp. Softback. ISBN 0-7136-5713-8. £9.99*

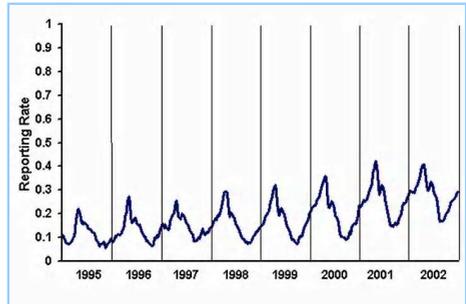
# GARDEN BIRD SURVEY

Gardens are an increasingly important habitat for birds, particularly as changes in farming practices and woodland management over the past few decades have badly affected their respective avifauna, and in many cases continue to do so. Despite this, and the fact that the species that visit gardens are among our most common species, we know little about them, but this is changing.

About 10 years ago, the British Trust for Ornithology started a survey of garden birds, sponsored by CJ Wildbird Foods and called the BTO/CJ Garden BirdWatch. Today, more than 15 000 people in the UK now complete the survey, and it is the largest survey of its kind in Europe. The participants record daily the numbers of birds that use their gardens.

This type of survey belongs to a branch of science known popularly as Citizen Science, which some people regard as lacking scientific rigour and treat the results sceptically. However, the sample size is so great as to iron out any

anomalies, and the survey is now providing a much-needed insight into birds' habits and populations, both separately and together with other BTO surveys, such as the Breeding Bird Survey and Constant Effort Site scheme.



Reporting Rate for Goldfinch  
*With kind permission of the BTO*

Conservationists use the information to discover why once common species of garden bird are in decline, how birds use our gardens throughout the year and how these correspond with changes in other habitats. Further, the information contributes to the UK Government's Quality of Life headline bird indicator and Biodiversity Action Plan, and to the Birds of Conservation Concern (i.e. the red and amber lists).

The charming *Goldfinch* is perhaps the subject of one of the most enthralling results. The seasonal pattern in the reporting rate (i.e. the percentage of gardens having a species visiting them) is remarkably consistent. They make the most use of our gardens at the same time in late spring every year - between returning from their wintering grounds



Goldfinch  
© David Morris



Great Spotted Woodpecker  
© David Gains

and the start of breeding, and at a time when natural food resources are at their lowest. More interestingly, this finch is increasingly using garden bird feeders, this may be because natural resources are in steady decline or more gardens are offering niger seed and sunflower hearts, which are both high energy foods that Goldfinches seem to prefer.

The number of *House Sparrows* visiting the author's garden has increased, which is contrary to the strong, long-term decline nationally that is often reported in the press. However, the BTO has discovered that population changes are different regionally, in some regions they are in decline, while in others they are doing well. The Garden BirdWatch data are going to be a key part of their on-going investigation into the cause of these population changes.

Taking part in the survey improves your observation skills too and you start to notice new species, such as *Great Spotted Woodpecker*, *Willow Tit* and *Grey Wagtail*. You also become more aware of their peculiar habits, such as a

*Magpie* that always dunks its food in the water bath before eating it and apparent handedness in Jays. In fact, Garden BirdWatch is life changing and you will never look at your garden birds in the same light as before.

If you can identify the common birds that visit your garden and can spare a few minutes over a cup of coffee or while doing something else, then by taking part in Garden BirdWatch, you will be helping to monitor the changing fortunes of garden bird species. In addition, you will receive a free 128-page book on garden birds, a quarterly, colour magazine, that includes a range of informative and entertaining articles on garden birds, their behaviour and identification, and discounts off quality bird food and equipment from CJ Wildbird Foods. The annual subscription, which contributes to the funding of the survey, is £12.

---

Contact the BTO for further details.  
Telephone: 01842 750050  
E-mail: [gbw@bto.org](mailto:gbw@bto.org)

---



Willow Tit  
© Alan Kydd

# MALLORCAN MAGIC

In April 2003, we decided to spend a couple of week's bird watching in Mallorca and duly booked into one of the small hotels in Port de Pollenca. This is in the North East of the island and is in Pollenca Bay. This area is quite close to many of the most famous birding spots on the island. It came highly recommended by Tom and Angela Ferguson and we weren't disappointed. We arrived at Palma airport late in the afternoon and were somewhat dismayed to find the weather a bit like a wet day in the Hope Valley in late November - cold, damp and misty with a fine drizzle.

Our first day dawned warm and sunny and we had our first visit to Albufereta, at the southern end of Pollenca Bay where a small river flows into the sea. It comprises some wetland habitats with marsh surrounded by open fields. We always found there were very few human visitors. On our first visit, we found the only *Bee-Eater* of our stay. Around the river, when the tide was right, waders could be found. Apart from *Kentish Plover*, we also found *Little*

*Ringed Plover* and *Common Sandpiper*. On one visit, we saw a *Long-eared Owl* being severely buzzed by one of the many *Yellow-legged Gulls* around, and on our fourth visit we saw the *Great Egrets* which we'd heard were about.

That's one of the good things about a trip here, it's very easy to find out what's around and where to find it as there are so many British bird watchers visiting. If you are standing on the side of a road using a telescope, you can guarantee that within 5 minutes someone will stop their car and ask, "What have you got?" Either that or "Was haben sie?" but the Brits far outnumbered the Germans. By the end of our stay, we realised that quite a few hotel guests were there for the birds.

On our second day, we planned to go to the Albufera reserve, which is one of the most famous birding spots and is a protected nature reserve. It consists of a very large wetland area with miles of reed beds. Unlike Albufereta, we always found this to be very busy. We managed three visits here but our first was the most memorable. We caught the 9:15 bus from Port Pollenca and chatted with another couple of bird watchers who were waiting for the same bus. They were a very big help to us as they'd been to Mallorca several times. They told us where to get off the bus - and on the walk into the reserve, identified the calls of two of the most common warblers - *Cetti's Warbler* and *Fan-tailed Warbler*. These were everywhere and it wasn't long before we matched up the bird with



Little Ringed Plover  
© David Gains

the call. This helped us tremendously as we could then concentrate on trying to identify the others! The main entrance to the reserve is about 1 mile down a track and there was a lot to see before we got there. There were a few *Woodchat Shrikes*, a new bird for us, which has distinct plumage. There was an *Osprey* fishing over one of the pools and a *Night Heron* skulking on the

edge of one of the canals. A couple of *Collared Pratincoles* were flying overhead, which we needed help to identify having never seen one before. We had an excellent day, finding some *Glossy Ibis*, a couple of *Egyptian Geese*, a few *Purple Swamp Hens*, several *Purple Herons* and many *Black-winged Stilts*, some of which were nesting within yards of the hides.

North of Port de Pollença and a short walk from the town centre is the start of the Bocquer valley. This lies between two impressive rocky ridges and leads to the North Coast of the island. This maybe the most famous name in Mallorcan bird watching but we were rather disappointed. On our first visit, we were up very early, expecting to see a lot

before more folk arrived. Unfortunately, the birds seemed to rise as late as the tourists did so there was little to see. Apart from good views of *Cirl Bunting* and a few glimpses of a high flying *Booted Eagle*, we saw few birds. We had better luck on later visits to the orchards at the foot of the valley - without skipping breakfast. On one memorable morning, we had excellent views of a *Black-eared Wheatear*, as well as *Black Vultures* circling the crags over the valley. Quite late in our holiday we finally managed to find the *Wrynecks* there, which everyone else seemed to have seen. Sadly, this area of orchards at the foot of the Bocquer looks as if it will soon disappear under a major dual carriageway, which is under construction to bypass the town.



During our second week, a very keen birder named Pete Christie arrived with his family in our hotel. By Monday night, he'd located where a pair of *Scops Owls* tended to roost between 9:30 and 10:00 just a few hundred yards from the hotel. We joined him and a few others to see them, and by Thursday night, this nightly excursion was at least 25 strong. On one memorable evening, one of the pair flew onto telephone wires close to one of the streetlights and we had very good views as it called to its mate.

During that week, we hired a car and met Pete on more than one occasion in other parts of the island, when we stopped to ask "What have you got?" after spotting him with his telescope at the roadside.

We spent a day walking around the Cuber reservoir up in the mountains in the north of the island. We went there primarily to find *Tawny Pipit* and once the crowds of walkers had moved on, around lunchtime, a few of these large pipits appeared to keep us company. We were surprised to find several thousand *Yellow-legged Gulls* on and around the reservoir.

The Formentor peninsular is the most north-easterly point on the island and there is a spectacular drive to the lighthouse at the end of a narrow road fighting its way through the crags. We hoped to find *Crag Martins*, and failed, but were rewarded by some great views of *Blue Rock Thrush*. From the lighthouse, which sits on top of a high cliff, we saw a pod of dolphins in the sea finding shoals of fish. They attracted some sea birds including lots of both *Cory's* and *Balearic Shearwaters*.

We finally saw *Crag Martins* in another less spectacular area further south called the Arta peninsular. On our walk around there, we had lots of these martins skimming just over our heads for quite a time. We'll never get better views of the "white windows" in their tails. As we parked the car, we noticed a juvenile *Crossbill* calling loudly at the top of a nearby tree. We also found *Firecrest*, *Turtle Dove* and the resident *Thekla Lark*.

Our visit to the far south of the island to an area called Ses Salines was very frustrating. These salt lagoons were teeming with large numbers of waders. Sadly, our wader recognition skills were, and still are, very poor so we were struggling to identify them all, but we did identify the *Greater Flamingos*!

We finished our holiday with another day in Albufera before we left for home. Another beautiful day started with a *Squacco Heron* on the walk in to the reserve. We also had great views of *Great Reed Warbler*, *Moustached Warbler*, *Gull Billed Tern* and the highlight of our holiday - close views of a *Little Bittern*. This was also where we had our first sight of *Eleanora's Falcons*, which were arriving in large numbers from their wintering area in Madagascar and several were hunting over the reserve.

During our stay, we recorded 118 species, 35 of which were new for us. We found Graham Hearl's book, "A Birdwatching Guide to Mallorca" (1999 edition), invaluable though it is getting a little out of date already.

# BIRD BRAIN QUIZ

---

1. Which gull is named after a fish?
2. What is Britain's national bird?
3. Does the Bar-tailed or Black-tailed Godwit have a straight bill?
4. What do the Carrion Crow and Hooded Crow have in common?
5. How much pressure can a Hawfinch exert with its bill?
6. Why is the Ring Ouzel unpopular with some gamekeepers?
7. In which species nest do Lapwings sometimes lay their eggs?
8. In what year did breeding Avocets reappear in Britain?
9. How many species wrens breed outside the New World?
10. What does the Dipper do with its eyes when it bobs up and down?
11. Which is the most numerous wintering goose in Britain?
12. What is a Bonxie?
13. What time of day does the Brambling migrate?
14. Which wader is the most numerous in NW Europe?
15. Which wagtail has the longest tail?
16. What is the eye colour of a juvenile Carrion Crow?
17. There is just one sandpiper that has all-black plumage. Which?
18. What is the Water Rail's pig-like squealing and grunting called?
19. How fast does the Great Spotted Woodpecker drum?
20. How did the Stonechat get its name?
21. Where do Bewick's Swans breed?
22. Which raptor has the widest distribution worldwide?
23. Where do Shelducks nest?
24. What is Britain's smallest seabird?
25. Where is the most southerly point that Goldfinches breed?
26. Which is the fastest flying sawbill?
27. What is peculiar about the Red-legged Partridge's incubation?
28. What is the smallest soaring bird?
29. What is a Goshawk's favoured food?
30. What is the Black-winged Stilt at Titchwell called?

*The answers are on the back page.*

## BIRDS IN THE NEWS - PART 2

---

### **Goshawk Crime**

Magistrates sentenced Leonard O'Connor, 37, in January 2003 to four month's imprisonment for stealing *Goshawk* chicks from a nest at Hagg Side in May 2000.

John Cripps, a gamekeeper at a private shooting estate, was given a three-month suspended jail sentence (the maximum being 6 months) after being convicted of disturbing a *Goshawk* nest and of

smashing eggs, but was acquitted of killing protected species, including *Peregrine* and *Goshawk*, and illegally collecting wild bird eggs.

The *Goshawks* of Upper Derwent are among the most persecuted birds of prey in the UK. In an attempt to counter further thefts, Peak Nestwatch Scheme used round-the-clock CCTV and a special DNA-coded liquid called Smart Water.

## CLUB MEMBERS

---

Peter Ashmore	Graham Games	Cedric Skelton
Roy Briggs	Pam Games	Carol Skelton
Audrey Buxton	John Jackson	Ken Slack
Gary Carter	Pat Jackson	Jean Slack
Sally Carter	David Rees-Jones	Kit Stokes
Alice Cullen	Alan Kydd	Vonny Stokes
Richard Clemons	Di Kydd	Terry Taylor
Marion Clemons	Jennifer Marshall	Brenda Taylor
Sue Cockayne	Celia Oldridge	Peter Thompson
Sylvia Derbin	Rodney Pollitt	Bryan Turner
Ashley Edwards	Joan Pollitt	Sue Turner
Pam Edwards	Ann Ralston	Barrie Wilkinson
Tom Ferguson	Jane Ralston	Barbara Wooddisse
Angela Ferguson	Keith Rotherham	John Wooddisse
David Gains	Margaret Rotherham	

## COMMITTEE MEMBERS

---

President:	John Wooddisse	Ordinary members:	Tom Ferguson
Chairman:	Kit Stokes		David Gains
Secretary:	Barbara Wooddisse		Alan Kydd
Treasurer:	Graham Games		Rodney Pollitt

---

**Answers to the Bird Brain Quiz**

1. Herring Gull 2. Robin 3. Black-tailed Godwit 4. Same species 5. 200 psi 6. Their odour distracts the gamekeeper's dogs 7. Ruff 8. 1947 9. One 10. Blinks 11. Pink-footed Goose 12. Great Skua (Scottish name) 13. Night 14. Dunlin 15. Grey Wagtail 16. Blue 17. Spotted Redshank 18. Sharming 19. Twenty times per second 20. Alarm call sounds like two stone crashing together 21. Russia 22. Osprey 23. Rabbit burrows 24. Storm Petrel 25. New Zealand 26. Red-breasted Merganser at 100 mph 27. Both birds incubate, but separate clutches in separate nests 28. Swift 29. Kit Stokes' pigeons, but we'll accept small birds 30. Sammy

**Scores:** 0 - 6=Oh dear! 7 - 15=Good. 16 - 23=Very good. 24 - 30=Bird Brain!