



**ISSUE 6
2014**

THE DIPPER

THE MAGAZINE OF THE HOPE VALLEY BIRD WATCHERS CLUB



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Once again, I would like to thank all of our members and guest contributors who have written articles and submitted photographs for this issue. As usual we have a mixture of topics including holidays, nature-related experiences and report of sightings in the valley. A special thank you to David Gains who has once more proofread this edition. We also have David to thank for the informative snippets at the foot of pages 7,11, and 20 which he added during proofreading! AWK

Front Cover Photograph: Jay © Alan Kydd In 2013 there was a large influx of Jays from the continent and plenty could be found in the valley during that year. This was taken using a Canon EOS 7D SLR with EF 100-400mm f/4.5-5.6L IS USM with settings of ISO 1600, F/6.3 and 1/800th sec. The bird was at the top of Padley Gorge.



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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Welcome to the sixth biennial edition of the Hope Valley Birdwatchers Club magazine. Thank you all again who have written articles for this edition and in particular to Alan Kydd, the magazine editor.

This year, 2014, is the 24th anniversary of the Bird Club. Despite the advancing years of most members, we are still a very active club with over 30 birdwatching walks and reserve visits each year.

Alan Kydd is now our new Chairman and as well as co-ordinating a lot of our activities is the “hub” for digital communications throughout the club.

The summer of 2013, despite a very late and cold spring, turned out to be one of the best for many years. Many migrant warbler and swallow species arriving late had a very good breeding season. Our House Martins had three broods. This autumn there were huge

wild fruit berry and nut crops which should produce good numbers of visiting finches and thrushes.

Since the last issue of our magazine we have lost two of the club's former chairmen. Roy Briggs was our founder chairman who thought of the Dipper logo, as many club members often “dipped out” on seeing rare birds. Kit Stokes was our chairman for many years and always guided us through our A.G.M. He also gave the first ever talk and slide show, “The Falklands Islands”, to our club. We will miss them both.

Finally, I would like to thank all the committee members for helping to keep the club running smoothly over the past two years and to wish all club members successful birding in 2014.

BIRD QUIZ

The odd numbered clues are general bird questions and the even numbered are anagrams of birds on the British List—Good Luck! The answers are on the back cover.

1. Is the Kiwi the world's smallest flightless bird?
2. Wool threaders?
3. What bird appears on a chess board?
4. O talking cuddle?
5. Which football team has the nickname the ‘Canaries’?
6. Hat trims?
7. Which bird drops bones onto rocks to break them?
8. Pat margin?
9. How can you identify male and female Song Thrushes?
10. Go dangle eel?
11. What is the reason for birds migrating?
12. Leaping enforcer?
13. When did the Robin become Britain's unofficial National bird?
14. Hunger grill?
15. In the bible, what was the first bird sent out by Noah from the Ark?
16. How Ark Warps?
17. What species of bird can fly backwards?
18. Little toading?
19. What is the collective name for Wrens?
20. Sling rat?

BIRDS IN A CAGE

I have just finished reading a fascinating and inspirational book, called “Birds in a Cage”, by Derek Niemann. It is the true story of four British army officers who, through their shared love of birds, managed to overcome hunger, hardship, fear, depression and the stultifying boredom of being behind barbed wire for 5 long years as prisoners of war during World War Two.

All four were captured separately during the summer of 1940 and, like everyone, were at first optimistic that it would all be over within a year. For the first few months there were no thoughts of birdwatching – being shifted from one camp to another in horrendous conditions, they were too busy trying to survive mentally and physically. But by Spring 1941, John Buxton was inspired by a Chiffchaff singing outside the camp at Laufen to compose the first of many poems written in captivity, “*The Prisoner to the Songbird*”.

The last verse goes:



Chiffchaff © Jon Lowes

*Sing on sing on; then in my cage
I shall delight to hear*

*That you are glad and free out there
So near, so near!*

With no binoculars or reference books, he started to observe a pair of Redstarts which

were nesting somewhere outside the camp. But, as he noted wryly, “We are not encouraged to scale walls, climb trees or



Redstart © Jon Lowes

borrow ladders” in order to see the actual nests! With nothing much else to do in camp, Buxton started to record every detail of the birds’ activities in a notebook in mind-numbing detail:

10.10 Flew on barn roof

10.11 Flew back to wires

10.14 Ran along, stopped, flicked tail, again, again, up to willow tree etc!

Whenever he was moved on, even if it was a 200 mile march in midwinter, he always

carried his notebook with him, whatever else he was forced to leave behind.

At Laufen he made friends with Peter Conder, another naturalist, who helped him with the long 10-12 hour vigils that they kept on birds. Eventually they were taken to Warburg POW camp in Germany, where they met up with two more like-minded people – John Barrett and George Waterston. Together, they founded quite a large ornithological group to help with their studies on breeding birds.

The camp guards were often concerned that the men who sat for hours, watching, taking notes and even drawing maps might be planning an escape, and their maps were often confiscated. But Buxton, Conder and the others relished being arrested, as this usually led to solitary confinement for a few days. Although bird watching was interrupted, they could at least enjoy some valuable privacy, with “no parades, washing up, or arguments as to whether to leave the window open or shut at night.” The other type of incident that stopped the surveys was when there was an escape. Then everyone was confined to their huts while all their belongings and bedding were thrown outside during the ensuing search. One inmate was found hiding under his bed. When asked if there was a tunnel there, he replied “Yes – for two mice!”

The hundreds of hours spent over 5 years watching and note-taking would seem to us exceedingly dull and frustrating in our busy lives. But it may well have been the one thing that kept them and many others sane. Maybe they learnt from the Crows picking at the midden heap and the Swallows nesting in the sentry box to make the most of whatever opportunities arose.

By 1945, all four men were returned home. So what did they do with the rest of their lives?

John Buxton
teacher of them all – eventually wrote up

all his notes on the Redstart into a well-received book. His collection of poems on both natural history and his battle experiences were published under the title “Such Liberty”.

John Barrett

“invented” the guided walk for visitors while managing a reserve in Wales, and wrote the first Collins guide to the Seashore. He and Peter Conder also managed Skokholm Island together for many years.

Peter Conder

joined the staff at the RSPB, becoming director in 1963. While he was there, he saw the number of members increase from 20,000 to 200,000.

George Waterston

achieved his ambition to have an observatory on Fair Isle, and started an innovative round-the-clock watch of the nesting Ospreys at Loch Garten, and invited the public to come and watch too.

I have always thought that in my old(er!) age, I will be happy to sit in my armchair all day, as long as my eye-sight is still good enough to watch the birds at a bird table through my window. Now I’m thinking I should have a little notebook by my side, to record the everyday life of my feathered friends. It might be of use some day:

10.32 Blue tit flew in to take nut

10.33 Blue tit flew away with nut.....

And I will remember “The Prisoner to the Songbird”.

JACKDAWS

Jackdaws must be one of our most familiar birds and one that is always present in the Hope Valley. They are adaptable, resourceful and intelligent, as are other members of the Crow family. They are with us all year round, nesting in holes in trees and rocks and in Rooks' nests after they have finished breeding. They will also build in chimney pots. A barrel full of sticks was once found stuffed in a chimney by a pair. Jackdaws pair for life and if you look at a flock high up you can see pairs of birds within the flock. They also have the habit of hiding food and other objects 'for a rainy day', as do Magpies and Jays.

Most winter mornings at first light you can



Jackdaw © John Wooddisse

see and hear flocks of Jackdaws flying up the valley towards Castleton. These flocks contain hundreds of birds and as far as I can

tell they come from Ecclesall Wood in south west Sheffield, where they perhaps roost.

Many years ago I used to cycle to work in Sheffield and would meet Jackdaws flying towards me close to the road above Fox House, particularly on a day with strong winds. However, in summer, during and after the breeding season, there is a huge roost in Overdale, behind Shatton.

Jackdaws feed on a wide variety of foods. They can be seen with Rooks looking for grubs and worms in farmers' fields. They visit picnic sites, car parks and bird tables in search of hand outs, but will also rob smaller birds' nests for eggs and nestlings. Jackdaws themselves are not immune to attack and I have seen a female Sparrowhawk make a surprise attack in a farmyard. I have also seen Peregrines try to catch Jackdaws near inland crags and sea cliffs.

Jackdaws make a variety of calls, the familiar 'jack' and 'daw daw' when greeting one another, chattering calls in flocks and loud 'cawing' at nest sites. They were once used as cage birds and could be trained to 'talk' to their owners. These ubiquitous birds are well worth a second glance.

COOMBS DALE IN JULY

Every year our bird club has enjoyed a springtime evening walk which includes part of Coombs Dale but spring had come and gone. It was early July - hot and sunny. Most birds had stopped singing and were recovering from the rigours of parenthood so it was not the best time of year or weather for a spot of birding. However, there are other wildlife delights to be savoured nearby at this

time of year, so we decided on a walk up Coombs Dale and our quest was to find a special butterfly which is on the wing in many limestone dales in July.

We parked up at the corner of the recreation ground at the foot of the dale and were surprised to see several other cars arriving in quick succession. At first we thought the

occupants were bird watchers but soon realised that although there were plenty of binoculars, cameras and tripods, there were no 'scopes. They were in fact Lepidopterists. We were approached politely by their leader who assumed that we were with them. We chatted and it transpired that many of their group had travelled from the Stockport area and they were members of the "Cheshire and Peak Branch" of "Butterfly Conservation", who were on a field trip in search of, amongst other butterflies, the same special butterfly which was also our quest. On returning home we looked up their website, which is most informative with a wealth of information on butterflies and a section for those that are found in The Peak District.

See: www.cheshire-butterflies.co.uk

Heading off before the group, we walked up the dale about a mile to one of my favourite spots, not just for butterflies but also for orchids. Common Spotted and Marsh Orchids were past their best but Fragrant Orchids were everywhere – bend down and take in the wonderful heady scent – mind blowing. We searched for and found a few Bee Orchids, always good to see, and one year we even found the rare Dark Red Helleborine – no such luck this time.

We then turned our attention to the butterflies. Common Blues, various browns and whites were in abundance and then a pristine Brimstone flitted by flashing its sulphur-yellow wings, a nice bonus. Then we spotted our quarry. A stunning Dark Green Fritillary, which is slightly smaller than a Red Admiral but larger than a Small Tortoiseshell. What a wonderful sight. The chequered bright brown upper-wings glinted in the sunlight and there was no doubt about the identification as there is no other species of fritillary in the

Peak District with which to cause confusion. The under-wings have large white dots on a silvery green background, hence the name. We marvelled at the miracle of metamorphosis. Who would have thought that an ugly, hairy caterpillar that spends its time



Dark Green Fritillary © Alan Kydd

munching violet leaves could turn into a creature of such beauty, dancing delicately between thistle flowers whilst searching for nectar and a mate. We had our fill and our quest was complete. Soon the Field Trip arrived and our special place didn't feel quite as tranquil any more, so we left them to fulfil their quest.

We walked back down the dale feeling so lucky to have such a cracking spot for wildlife nearby, and to complete our morning a couple of Buzzards floated slowly overhead. A word of warning should you go there in July, beware the pesky horseflies!

DID YOU KNOW...?

The *Bird Atlas 2007-11* shows the range of the Mandarin Duck has expanded northwards

and eastwards since 1988-91 and the Peak District has become one of its strongholds.

THE KESTRELS OF CALVER QUARRY

It started with a HVBWC outing in June 2010 and has developed into something like an obsession. That “Coombs Dale Evening Walk” took in the hills above Stoney Middleton before swinging back down towards Calver. There were many great sights but the best was saved until nearly last: a Kestrel nest in a deserted quarry, with a trio of recently hatched chicks.

Jan and I returned the following year and witnessed the saga from start to finish, from courtship, through nesting, laying, hatching, feeding and, finally, fledging. Each visit involved parking by the Calver to Hassop road and climbing the rough track to the tops, where, in addition to Kestrels, there were beautiful views of Chatsworth, Curbar and the hills above Eyam, plus Buzzards, a Cuckoo, a Green Woodpecker and a multitude of more common birds.

There needed to be something in addition to the off-chance of seeing some Kestrels to justify an ascent of a couple of hundred feet over the best part of a mile with binoculars, telescope and tripod in tow!

It became a test of fitness, as well. A couple of stops on the way up were obligatory to begin with, in order to catch our breath, but after several twice-weekly visits, it became possible to manage on just one stop, or even, on a couple of occasions, with none. As so often with bird watching, the birds became in part a justification for something else: a communing with nature, and a decent cardiovascular workout for good measure!

Then, in 2012, there was nothing. A couple of adult Kestrels turned up once, had a look around and decided better of it. The nest remained uninhabited.

For long enough, it looked like being the same story in 2013 too. The tough winter and the delayed spring meant that April and most of May came and went without any sign of Kestrels: much less activity on the nest. They had been spotted there on the 12th of May in 2011.

The visit on 30th May 2013 was meant to be the last: a final check-up before giving up for the year. And there they were: two adults. It seems we must have missed them the time before, in poor light, as they were on the nest and quite possibly on eggs.

Eggs it was, confirmed by Alan Kydd on 3rd June, followed on 6th June by the first hatching, just four days later than had been the case in the same nest two years earlier. The Kestrels had been slow to get down to business in 2013, but they certainly seemed to be making up for lost time now.

9th June saw two Kestrel chicks and one egg, which remained unhatched throughout. But it also saw just one adult around, and then, a week later, two very vulnerable looking chicks and no adults on the nest, but one



The Kestrel nest © Alan Kydd

hunting in the distance.

It seems clear that food had become so scarce that the adults felt forced to desert the nest for long lengths of time in order to bring something in. This was potentially catastrophic for the youngsters – still basically balls of fluff – who could themselves have been predated or turfed out of the nest. What made it all the worse is that this was now high summer, and the unsheltered nest was getting the full glare of

the sun in what was shaping up to be an extended heat wave.

Some of our visits over the years had ended up as disappointments, as we drew a blank on the kestrel front, but none had ended as tragedy. But there seemed a very real chance that would be the case now.

Somehow, the adults, working overtime, managed to turn things round, and by 21st June the Kestrels were a happy family again, the adults taking it in turn to go off hunting and the chicks beginning to resemble birds at last. 7th of July and the chicks – probably a male and a female – had fledged but were keeping near to the nest.

20th of July and they had gone, all of them: neither adults nor juveniles to be seen. Feelings were mixed: on the one hand, this

was almost certainly a sign of a successful rearing, arguably against the odds; on the other, it felt a bit like a bereavement, as we might never see them again and must now move on.

We turned our backs on the deserted quarry, and the exquisite beauty of the views all round, for one last time. Or, at least, until the same time next year...

STOP! IT'S A COMMA

You probably know how the Comma butterfly gained its name but just in case any of you were wondering, there is a small white comma on the underside of each hind-wing – hence the name.

When the wings are closed, the Comma with its scalloped wings is well camouflaged and resembles a dead, ragged leaf, but when one sees the wings fully open, the rich brownish orange with darker patches is a pleasure to be savoured.

Maybe it is not the most colourful of names but the Comma has a beauty to rival the more aptly named Painted Lady, Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock and Red Admiral with which it is often seen on the wing at similar times of the year.



Comma © Graham Games

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

In the spring of 2013, Di and I went on a bird watching trip to Trinidad and Tobago. We flew to Tobago, the much smaller of the two islands, which lies about 50 miles to the north east of Trinidad. Trinidad itself lies only about twenty miles from the coast of Venezuela and is the most south-westerly of all the Caribbean islands. Although the islands have similar landscapes, they feel quite different. Tobago is rather more relaxed and more of a 'holiday' island. Trinidad is much busier and more of a working island with more industry and development.

We spent the first few days in Kariwak village, close to the airport, where our room was a small cabin in the gardens. There were Bananaquits nesting outside our front door, and we were woken each morning by the raucous calls of Chachalacas on our roof. We spent a few days on Tobago, based in



Bananaquit © Alan Kydd

Kariwak, birding coastal and inland wetland areas, and also spent some time in the hills, where much of the rainforest remains. We then flew to Trinidad where we spent a week at the Asa Wright Nature Centre, a location which we felt would be one of the highlights of our trip. We weren't disappointed. The Centre is a scientific research station as well as a nature reserve and is located high in the Northern Range of Trinidad in the Ariba

valley. It is now owned by a non-profit-making trust. A former Cacao estate, the area was once the home of Newcombe and Asa Wright. In the 1950s and 60s it became internationally renowned for its access to wildlife, and particularly birds. After Newcombe's death in 1967 the estate was acquired by the trust. Asa continued to live there until her death in 1971. It is now a superb place to watch birds in the rainforest. The veranda overlooks the valley and there are numerous bird feeders which are always



Rufous-vented Chachalaca © Alan Kydd

active, and there's a fine view over the rainforest. There was regularly one or more Agoutis feeding under the bird-feeders. It would be easy to spend the whole week on the veranda watching the various hummingbirds, honeycreepers, flycatchers and tanagers. The walks within the forest-grounds are also fascinating. There are leks with displaying Golden-headed and White-bearded Manakins and you are constantly regaled by the call of the Bearded Bell-bird. The Asa Wright Centre is also famous for the Oilbird cave. A large colony of this large nocturnal bird lies in this cave within the estate. The bird is so called because the locals used to use the young birds to make oil! The young grow to weigh as much as 600 grams and contain tremendous amounts of fat which can be boiled down to make oil.

From Asa Wright, we also visited Aripo

Savannah, Caroni Swamp and walked several of the tracks higher up in the rainforest. The



Asa Wright Centre © Alan Kydd

highlight of the visit to Caroni Swamp was the sight of the hordes of Scarlet Ibis coming in for the night-time roost. As the sun sets, the trees look like gigantic hawthorn bushes full of large red berries!

The comforts at the Centre included excellent meals with morning coffee and afternoon tea with rum punch! Our last few nights on Trinidad were spent on the north coast in a village called Grande Riviere. While we were



Purple Honeycreeper © Alan Kydd

FANCY THAT...

The Oilbird (*Steatornis caripensis*) is the world's only nocturnal fruit-eating bird. They

there, the beach was used nightly by dozens of leather-back turtles to lay their eggs. The site is closed from dusk until dawn, and the villagers have set up a business showing folk the turtles at work. They use red-light torches to protect the turtles and ensure that they are not overly disturbed. This seems to work well; keeping the habitat secure and bringing much needed cash to the village. This area is one of the very few places where the Trinidad Piping Guan survives. Locally known as the Pawi, this huge bird can be seen feeding on fruit at the top of trees, if you hike up a nearby hill at dawn!

Our last few days were spent back on Tobago, in the north of the island at a holiday resort called Speyside. The bay there faces the island of Little Tobago where there are



Pawi © Alan Kydd

colonies of nesting seabirds such as Red-billed Tropicbirds, Brown Noddies with both Red-footed and Brown Boobies. The hotel at Speyside was a fine place to relax before the long flight home after a memorable trip.

LOISACH VALLEY, BAVARIA

In June 2013, Carin and I embarked the 8AM train in Munich, which marked the start of our long-planned walk from Kochel am See to Benediktbeuern in the Loisach valley, Bavaria.



The Smith of Kochel © David Gains

The Loisach valley is one of the most important areas for grassland birds in Bavaria – it is about an hour and half by train from Munich and on the northern edge of the Alps. The habitat is mainly grassland, fen meadows and bog. The whole area is protected for its breeding birds and other fauna as well as flora.

We arrived in Kochel am See at about 10:30 – an hour later than planned, because our first train had been delayed in arriving in Tutzing and so we missed our connection for the regional train, which normally always waits for the train from Munich, but not on this occasion. Nonetheless, we were here, and so we set out on our 13km (8 mile) walk northwards to Benediktbeuern.

The houses in Kochel am See are constructed and decorated traditionally and have the family name painted somewhere on the walls. On top of one of the houses we saw and heard our first bird of the day, a singing male Common Redstart. There is a monument in the town centre of the Smith of Kochel - a legendary figure who is supposed to have led heroically and fatally a rebellion against the imperial troops during the War of Spanish Succession (1701-14).

Kochelsee is a glacial lake (about twice the area of Carsington reservoir), the primary tributary is the Loisach, which rises in Austria and then continues

through the lake northwards before joining another river, the Isar, which runs through Munich and eventually joins the Danube. There was very little in the way of birdlife here – a couple of Great Crested Grebes and Coots, though it may be better in winter – so we continued our walk northwards to the Loisach outflow.

We spent a while at the Schledorfer Straße bridge - a flycatcher was perching on a branch overhanging the river, but as soon as I focussed the binoculars it flew across the river and disappeared. I thought I saw a flash of red as it took flight, so maybe a Red-breasted Flycatcher, but I'll never know.

We hadn't walked very far along the footpath by the river when we were hearing Chaffinches, Chiffchaffs and Willow Warblers. Then there was something different - at first, I thought

Lesser Whitethroat, then Sedge Warbler, but then I wasn't sure. Eventually, I managed to see the bird - a little brown job! When we reviewed later our day's sightings, I realised it was a Marsh Warbler, which are renowned for imitating other birds, and also one of the species I had hoped to see (along with Savi's and Icterine Warbler).

We stopped for lunch and heard Reed Bunting calling and then... What on earth is that? A bird was whistling "pleased to meet you"... a Common Rosefinch! I wandered off to see if I could find the bird, but found only a Marsh Harrier quartering the fields against a backdrop of Kochel's St. Michael's church and mountains.

I called Carin but by the time she arrived to see the Marsh Harrier, it had gone. Why had she been so slow coming? Yes, you've guessed it; she was watching the male Rosefinch that had alighted on a branch a few metres from where we had been sitting!



The Kochelsee © David Gains

Further along our path we came across a juvenile Grey Wagtail, and Tufted Ducks and a female Goldeneye on the river. The river is about 30 metres wide and fast flowing. Both sides of the river have sparse hedgerows and the occasional stand of trees, but huge areas of wheat fields and meadows. We heard at least another male Rosefinch singing and then stumbled across some other birds I didn't recognise. By now, Carin was impressed by my ability to proclaim "little brown job". She offered Ortolan instead and, when we checked the field guide, she was absolutely right.

As we continued our walk we came across Swallows, Swifts, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Starlings, Greenfinches, Goldfinches, Kestrels, Blackcaps, Blackbirds, Mistle Thrush, Fieldfare, Carrion Crows, Jay, Buzzard, Blue Tits, Great Tits, Marsh Tit, Mallard, Yellowhammers plus the other common warblers we had seen earlier.



St. Michael's Church © David Gains

At our most northerly point we made a sharp turn eastwards towards Benediktbeuern along a bridleway that cuts through the fields and has quite dense hedgerows. We paused for a drink of coffee.

Suddenly, we heard a shrieking call from within the hedgerow about 3-4 metres away, it sounded like young birds being fed. A moment later, we saw a bird fly away from the far side of the hedge, but didn't see what it was. A few minutes later, it returned and this time, after feeding the young, it paused on our side of the hedge before departing once again. What a bird! We waited excitedly in the hope of getting a better look. Finally, it returned... It was a

magnificent male Red-backed Shrike!

While we were waiting to see the Red-backed Shrike, we also heard a couple of the classic meadow birds that are rather too scarce in the UK: Corncrake and Quail, calling “wet my lips”. As is to be expected with these species, we didn't see them, but continued to hear them as we walked along the bridleway.

We heard another bird calling, which we were unable to identify. We subsequently listened to various recordings (a good reference web site is: www.xeno-canto.org) and the closest to it is Night Heron, but this will also have to join the list of "we'll never know" birds.



Red-backed Shrike © David Gains

As we headed towards Benediktbeuern, more mountains offered spectacular backdrops to the area, in particular one to the east, called Benediktenwand (1801 metres high). This town is best known for its abbey, which was originally home to a Benedictine Order. Today, there are two universities here for theological, philosophical and social studies, as well as a centre for environment and culture. The abbey itself was founded in 739 AD but has been destroyed by fire several times. Today's building dates back to 1490. In 1805, an Optical Institute was established here and one of the workers was Joseph von Fraunhofer, who developed flawless optical glass and the spectroscope, and discovered dark absorption lines in the Sun's spectrum.

Although we didn't manage to see some of the birds that breed in the area, such as Bluethroat, Icterine Warbler and Black Kite, those that we did see were great birds. In addition, the scenery is spectacular, and would have been even better had there been less low-level cloud over the mountains. We have already decided that the vegetation was too mature and the breeding season too well advanced to get good views of some of the birds, so a future visit should be in late May.



Benediktbeuern Kloster © David Gains

ISLAY AND JURA

I suppose I'm just lucky that I *have* to go to Jura at the end of May each year! At first it was a one-off visit in 1992 to compete in the annual Bens of Jura Fell Race – a route covering 16 miles and 7500ft of the most rugged and testing terrain in Britain.

The route goes over 7 magnificent summits including the 3 main Pap's of Jura: that distinctive far away silhouette in the west as seen from most of the Inner Hebrides. I was younger and fitter then and managed a time of 4hrs-28mins on that first occasion. I have not missed many years since, such is the magic of these islands; with failures as well as successes – lost in mist, broken bones and/or too knackered to carry on. Inevitably, my race times are slipping to almost 7hrs and, now being one of the oldest competitors, so is my appetite for this masochistic sport....but I can't imagine not being there. So it was this attraction that first took me and my ever patient wife, Elaine, to Jura – we now use this trip not only for the reasons mentioned, but also as a halfway jumping off point to the more remote islands north and west from there.

The journey requires firstly a ferry to Islay; famous for its whiskies: not for me, I don't like the stuff! Here the birdlife is outstanding; Islay is particularly renowned for wintering geese – up to 70% of Greenland's breeding Barnacle Geese and 25% of its White-fronted Geese winter here. We've never been in autumn or winter so we don't see these but our springtime visits usually result in excess of 80 species by the time we leave.

Islay does not have the high hills of Jura but has unspoilt areas of moorland, peat bogs, woodlands, scrub, freshwater lochs and arable land. Coastal areas include extensive shingle



beaches, machair, dunes, marshes and high cliffs (Mull of Oa). Last year we only had about 3 hours on Islay but in 2012 we stayed on for about a week, basing ourselves at Port Charlotte and travelling to the following recommended locations.

Ardnave Point: at the car park there is a small loch where Tufted Duck, Shelduck, Mute Swan and Redshank are common. A walk over the dunes to the headland has Wheatear, almost ground nesting Sand Martin and groups of feeding Chough.

Gruinart, RSPB: the centre here is worth a visit, a small hide overlooks the flats and here are breeding Lapwing, Redshank, Snipe, Mallard, Teal and Shoveler, sometimes Garganey.

Corncrake also breed here but are far easier to hear than to see.

Sanaigmore: a small northern point – we recorded Twite, Great Northern Diver and a large 60+ flock of Black-tailed Godwit on passage.

Loch Gorm: Whooper Swan can be seen when the rest have flown north to their breeding grounds.

Saligo Bay: if lucky, Golden Eagle and Peregrine frequent here.

Frenchman's Rocks: most westerly point; usually quite wild but with chances of Great Northern Diver, Great Black-backed Gull and proper Rock Doves.

Bruichladdich: a coastal shingle beach which had a group of 4 Whimbrel: quite a surprise to see /realise that these birds are in fact smaller than Oystercatchers.

Bridgend: this area has coastal flats with Dunlin, Redshank, Shelduck and sometimes Sanderling at the shoreline. Inland is the River Sorn with Dipper, Grey Wagtail and the usual common woodland birds readily identifiable.

The Oa: the south cliffs, this is the place for Golden Eagle, Peregrine, Raven and Chough, here we spent an hour watching a GE hacking into a 'something' carcass.

Jura: different again; a small open ferry battles the current across the Sound of Islay to Jura – it takes about 10 minutes then 8 miles of single track road to the little village of Craighouse. Jura landscape is harsh, unforgiving and rough, but (for me) has stunning scenery and wildlife. Craighouse is in an exquisite setting, being sheltered in the beautiful Three Isles Bay with the spectacular Paps and the rest of Jura behind. The west coast is completely uninhabited with no roads and extremely difficult access, except for the Grey Seals.



The Paps of Jura across the Islay Sound © David Lockwood

Again, like Islay, here the bird-life is excellent.... this year we recorded 48 species during our 3 days on the island including Golden and Sea Eagle, Hen Harrier and Short-eared Owl. On two occasions we have seen Common Rosefinch (a very uncommon visitor to Britain). Today the 5000 Red Deer outnumber Jura residents by 20:1 and Otters are often seen along the



Great Northern Diver © David Lockwood



Black Guillemot © David Lockwood

beautiful shoreline just north of the village. Eider Duck, Grey Heron, Shelduck and Mute Swan, often with a trailing line of cygnets, complement the Oystercatchers, Ringed Plover, Common Sandpiper and Rock Pipit along the shingle beaches.

Further north it becomes even more remote as the single road makes its winding way, in sight of the east coast, but through moorland and farmland towards the small hamlet of Inverlussa. Curlew, Twite, Stonechat and especially Whinchat frequent this area, and one would be very unlucky if close views of Cuckoo were not seen. Here again there are good chances of Hen Harrier and often Short-eared Owl will fly quite close to the roadside.

During the ferry crossings there are chances of Minke Whale, Porpoise and Basking Shark: the sea birds usual at this time of year include Eider, Guillemot, Razorbill, Gannet, Black, Guillemot, Great Northern Diver, Manx Shearwater, Common and Arctic Tern, and the common British Gulls.

Thoroughly worth a visit – but like all our wild and wonderful places in Britain, be prepared for inclement weather... you'll just have to keep going back!

TWO HUNDRED TIMES ROUND THE WORLD...

Manx Shearwaters are long-lived and migrate to South America for the winter; so one such 55 year old bird had probably flown more than 8 million kilometres during its life.

SHETLAND ISLANDS

After many years of being on my holiday wish list, I finally got to visit the Shetland Islands for 10 days in June this year. After a lot of planning and discussions of where to stay, we decided to fly up to Lerwick via Birmingham and Edinburgh, hire a car for our trip and have two bases. We had been pre-warned that once on the islands, accommodation would be fairly scarce and we needed to stock up on food before venturing too far from Lerwick.

After shopping we headed for our first ferry to Shetland's second largest island, Yell, where we stayed for 3 nights. Although the island was mainly heather moorland interspersed with green areas of crofting, we found some superb sandy beaches, especially at Hamnavoe and Sandwick, with Grey and Common Seals in the coves. With over a hundred islands in the Shetland archipelago you are spoilt for choice of where to go as all the islands support superb wildlife - even the sheep are unusual - but we had decided to make the islands of Unst and Fetlar a priority which were a short ferry ride from our cottage on Yell.

We headed to Fetlar and the Loch of Funzie in the hope of seeing Red-Necked Phalarope.



Unusual sheep markings! © Jude Pealing

We sat very patiently for a few hours in the hide with no sight of these elusive birds, only to walk back to the car for Alan to spot a Phalarope feeding along the loch edge. The

600ft cliffs on the most northerly island of Unst at Hermaness and Muckle Flugga were teeming with birds and alpine flowers and we had a marvellous day exploring the island despite not having yet seen an Otter!

Our second base was on Mainland in Scalloway where we could not only bird-



Bonxie nest at Hermaness © Alan Kydd

watch but combine it with exploring the history and archaeology of the area.

At Sumburgh, the prehistoric and Norse settlement of Jarlshof was fascinating and was only discovered at the end of the 19th century when storms blew away the low cliffs.

We even managed to see the elusive Otter swimming across a small inlet, where it then



Seals at Bay of Scousburgh © Alan Kydd

played about in the rocks and at one point got out of the water and ran across the headland very close to where we were sitting.

Another one of the highlights was a midnight boat trip to the uninhabited island of Mousa, a World Heritage Site that not only has an Iron Age broch (defence tower) but is the home to around 5,000 Storm Petrels, the world's smallest seabird. The birds return to the broch around dusk to avoid predation and the sound and sight of them flying in is something I will remember for a long time.

Although Shetland has been the subject of many wildlife programmes and books, I hadn't fully appreciated the beauty and richness of the area and the remoteness of the inhabited islands until now and I will



Puffin at Sumburgh Head © Jude Pealing

certainly be visiting this incredible area again.

THE GALAPAGOS ISLANDS

We visited the Galapagos Islands last June for a week's stay; a once in a lifetime visit. These Pacific islands are on the equator and 1000 kilometres west of the coast of Ecuador, South America. The archipelago is formed by 13 major islands, plus many islets and rocks, some of which are still pushing up from the sea. All the islands are, or once were volcanic, with one erupting as recently as 1995. The sea around the islands is rich in marine life due to many ocean currents converging in the area. This gives rise to the extraordinary range of animals and birds that have evolved to exist on this isolated group of islands.

They were discovered in 1535 and were used by whalers and pirates, for whom they provided refuge, water and food. A giant tortoise would last for a year on a ship before being eaten. The Galapagos islands became famous after the visit of Charles Darwin in 1835. Much of Darwin's theory of evolution was based on his observations of different species of giant tortoises and small finches with different bill shapes, found only on certain islands.

As well as many bird species, we saw marine and land iguanas, giant tortoises, sea lions,

penguins, sharks and turtles. Marine Iguanas have to dive into the sea to feed on algae and seaweed. Being cold-blooded reptiles they have to come out of the sea after a short time to warm up in the sun. Giant tortoises vary in shape from one island to another. On islands where there is tall cactus scrub, the tortoises have very long necks to reach their food. On most of the islands the birds are very tame, where sea and land birds can be approached to within a few feet. I had a Galapagos Mockingbird looking for insects in my bootlace holes.

It was the seabirds of the Galapagos that were the most spectacular and colourful. Two species of Frigatebirds, that chase other sea birds to rob them of their hard won catches, are particularly colourful. The male Frigatebird inflates his bright red throat sack when displaying to a female on the nest.

There are four species of Boobies (similar to our Gannets), that dive deep into the sea for fish and nest on the islands. Blue-footed Boobies have bright cobalt-blue feet and have a synchronised walking display showing off their feet.

Pelicans, flamingos and egrets were also large



Frigatebird © John Wooddisse



Blue-footed Boobies © John Wooddisse

and colourful, as well as Swallow-tailed Gulls, the only night flying gull in the world. Pressure on local wildlife from tourism is apparent on some islands although visitor numbers are restricted. The local authorities will have to be careful in the future not to over-exploit the very delicate and unique ecosystem that is the Galapagos Islands.



Swallow-tailed Gull © John Wooddisse

CROSSBILL INVASION

The winter of 2012 was a Waxwing year, with huge numbers coming south and quite a few sightings in the valley. The following winter was the turn of the Crossbill. The 'common' variety turned up with a much larger number of their more exotic relatives towards the end of 2013. Several families of Two-barred Crossbills took up residence in the woods at Broomhead Reservoir and were still around in mid-January 2014. They could be found at or near a clearing in the woods with a bird feeder at SK 254 960, a few hundred yards from the raised wooden

walkway on the road at the side of the reservoir. A flock of 14 of their even rarer cousins, the Parrot Crossbill, preferred Nottinghamshire and could still be found on Buddy Common mid-January too. They took a liking to some particularly attractive puddles as their watering hole. They could be found not too far from the 'Major Oak' on the edge of the forest at or around SK 613 693. So far neither of these rarer species have been found in the valley, but there is time yet...

LEFT OR RIGHT?

The number of Common Crossbills with their lower bill crossing to the left is about the

same as those to the right, but in Two-Barred Crossbills it is more often to the right.

HOPE VALLEY BIRD REPORT

During 2012/2013 a total of 111/110 species were reported within our recording area. Once again we have been keeping a monthly record and the details can be found on our web site www.hvbwc.org.uk.

2012 Summary

A male Black Grouse was spotted by the roadside on Hathersage moor in January. A Hawfinch was seen near Nether Hurst farm in Hathersage, also in January, and skeins of Pink-footed Geese were over. Brambling were reported every month until April. Mandarins were found every month this year

Lesser-spotted Woodpecker was at the main car park, also in April. After a very dry and bright March, a long stretch of very wet weather started during April and went on for the rest of the summer. This caused lots of



Lesser-spotted Woodpecker © Jon Lowes



Brambling © Jon Lowes

and are still growing in numbers in the valley. In February, there was a single Greylag Goose with the Canada Geese above Ladybower dam which stayed until April. A milder winter this year meant that Grey Wagtails were spotted throughout the winter months. Lapwing, Curlew and Snipe were back on the breeding areas by February. The first Kingfisher was reported near Yorkshire Bridge in March but there were few other sightings this year. Little Owls were reported in the Edale valley in March and were regularly reported for most of the year. The first returning Osprey was spotted drifting northwards up the Burbage valley in April and the first Red Kite of the year was also over Burbage in that month. At Longshaw, a

problems for breeding birds of all kinds but some odd records of wetland birds turned up - a Greenshank was on flooded fields at Froggatt in May and a Little Egret was reported at Froggatt too. Also in May, we had reports of a family party of Crossbills feeding in pine trees at Longshaw. Early breeding birds such as Crossbills and Long-tailed Tits had a much better year than those starting in April and May. The first of two reports of Merlin came from Burbage Edge in May. Wood Warblers were reported in Longshaw, Padley Woods and also below Millstone Edge this year. There was only one report of Grasshopper Warbler, also in May after a few years when they seemed to be thriving with sightings in several locations. A party of four White Storks toured the north of the country during June and dropped in to a field in Bamford for a while. The only reported Woodcock of the year was roding over the car park at Longshaw on a June evening. A female Common Scoter was spotted up the south arm of Ladybower in July. The only recorded Hobby was over Longshaw in August. Pink-footed Geese

started returning during September and were recorded in October and November too. A Snow Bunting was recorded around Stanage Edge in November.

There was a big irruption of Waxwings this year and small numbers were spotted in the valley in both November and December. In December a Hawfinch was in the woods at the top of Sickleholme Golf Course.



were released around Greens House above Hathersage. They were supported with supplementary feeding and seen in March and April. It is unclear what happened to them after that.

Grey Wagtails were back on the river in February and the moorland birds, such as Snipe, Curlew and Lapwing, were all on the breeding grounds by early March. They had a tough start as a really heavy snow fall in late March, compounded by strong winds, caused some very deep snow drifts up there which lasted for several weeks. A Wigeon was at Leadmill Bridge in March and a Red Kite



The winter started mild and warm once again so a Kingfisher was still on the river at Calver in December.

2013 Summary

Waxwings continued to be reported during January. Also in January, a Short-eared Owl was seen around Mam Tor and several skeins of Pink-footed Geese passed over. A Ring-necked Parakeet was a surprise visitor in Edale, which stayed into February. Mandarins were on the river throughout the winter months this year and continued throughout the year, with many reports of successful broods between Calver and Bamford in the summer. Goosander were also reported throughout this winter and continued to be seen throughout the year. A family, including a few well-developed youngsters, was reported during July and remained around Froggatt until fully grown. In February, a couple of rescued Barn Owls

flew down the Burbage Valley and over Longshaw that month. A group of 35 Whooper Swans were seen heading north on 21st March. Stock Doves started visiting a Hathersage garden in March and continued to be reported around the village every month from then until September. Another Short-eared Owl was seen – this time around Hathersage in April. Cuckoos seemed to be more active this year with reports of birds from at least 5 locations around the valley. A Grasshopper Warbler was reeling near Millstone Edge in May but that was the only report for this year. An extremely cold spell with a biting easterly wind in April and May caused severe problems for our summer migrants this year. Many were late arriving and struggled to find sufficient food to survive, let alone start a family. Happily, the weather improved dramatically and we had

excellent weather in June and July with temperatures up in the 30s and prospects for the insect-eating birds looked more promising. Whilst most seemed to do quite well this year, it seems that Wood Warblers continue to struggle with only 2 reports this year. A Golden Oriole was at the top of Padley Woods for one evening in June. Little Owls were seen regularly in the Edale valley again this year and Little Grebes were seen most months on the river. A pair nested near Froggatt New Bridge in July but the three young failed to survive the storm conditions which caused the river to rise dramatically later that month. Kingfisher sightings were few but one was at Froggatt in June and it seems a pair nested near Grindleford this year. A Red-backed Shrike was around Froggatt Edge in June. The first sighting of a Peregrine in the valley was of one successfully hunting around Carr Head above Hathersage in July and another was at



Red Kite © David Gains

The last record of a Swallow this year was in October, later than usual no doubt because of the late start to the breeding season. In November, a lonely drake Wigeon was on the Water Board pond by the river Noe in Castleton, watched by a Kingfisher from the wires overhead. A drake Teal was on the Derwent at Froggatt, also in November. A party of five Tufted Ducks were on the river above Calver Weir in December. Another Peregrine was spotted over Bradwell, also in December. As the winter closed in there were more Redwing and Fieldfare in the valley and there was a larger than usual influx of Crossbills into the country, though few were spotted in our area.



Hobby © Jon Lowes

Froggatt edge in September. A Sand Martin was seen around Stanage Edge in July – a rare sighting in the valley these days. A Hobby was hawking over Hathersage in late July and another was reported around Stanage Edge in August. A family of Marsh Tits was seen at the top end of Padley Gorge, also in July. A Red Kite was over Mam Tor in August. A number of Crossbills were around Birley Lane, Hathersage, in October.

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President:	John Wooddisse	Ordinary members:	David Gains
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Secretary:	Jude Pealing		David Lockwood
Treasurer:	Jane Ralston		

Answers to the Bird Quiz
1. No – it is the Inaccessible Island Rail 2. Short-eared Owl 3. Rook 4. Long-tailed Duck 5. Norwich City. 6. Marsh Tit. 7. Lammergeier or Bearded Vulture 8. Ptarmigan 9. Only the male sings 10. Golden Eagle. 11. To find food 12. Peregrine Falcon. 13. 15th Dec. 1960 14. Herring Gull 15. Raven 16. Sparrowhawk 17. Hummingbirds. 18. Long-tailed Tit 19. A herd 20. Starling