



ISSUE 3
2008

THE DIPPER

THE MAGAZINE OF THE HOPE VALLEY BIRD WATCHERS CLUB



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Thanks are due to the members and guest contributors for their interesting articles and photographs. We always welcome articles, whether these are bird watching experiences, holidays, book reviews or whatever. My personal thanks to Alan Kydd for his tireless proof-reading. Finally, please complete the questionnaire that is enclosed with this magazine, it's your opportunity to say what you do and don't like about your bird club. *DJG*

Front Cover Photograph: Blue Tit © *David Gains*

Every now and then you find a bird in a wonderful pose but then, just as you release the shutter on your camera, it moves. Fortunately, on this occasion the instant at which this Blue Tit was going for maximum lift was captured and the result was much better than the original planned shot. This photograph was taken at RSPB Blacktoft using Canon EOS 350D SLR with EF 70-300mm f/4.5-5.6 DO IS USM with settings of ISO 400, F/6.3 and 1/2500th sec.



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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

As you can see from our third issue of our magazine, we continue to pursue many different birding activities. The list of birds seen by club members continues to grow as does the survey work and bird counts undertaken by club members.

We are of course very lucky to be situated in such a picturesque and varied part of England, and also close (2 hours drive away) from such birding hot spots as Bempton and Spurn Point on the east coast and Martin Mere and Leighton Moss on the west coast.

I hope that our annual programme still provides enough diverse birding events for most members and, as I have said before, you should be able to get as much as you want for your £8 membership fee.

Some members are by nature more active than others. David Gains, as well as editing "The Dipper" has recently taken on the responsibility of becoming the BTO

CLUB WEBSITE

Over the last two years the club's website has developed and most recently has got its own address: www.hvbwc.org.uk, which means people using search engines like Google are more likely to find us.

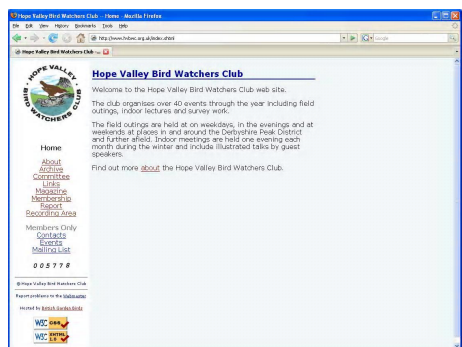
In addition to field trip reports and the current events calendar, past issues of "The Dipper" are now available for download from the website.

There is also a facility for submitting sightings of birds in the valley, but for more on this see "Hope Valley Bird Report" in this issue.

Regional Representative for south Yorkshire. Alan Kydd continues to organise the moorland survey work that he and some other members undertake. He has also started logging anything that flies!!

This summer we lost a dear and active member of our club in Keith Rotherham. He was the local Water Bailiff and started the fish farm near Leadmill. Over the years he has given at least three very interesting talks to our club. He would often phone me to say that he had a bird he could not identify, or the first swallow in spring to fly over the fish farm had arrived. Above all he was a man of the countryside and will be sadly missed.

Finally, I would like to thank all the members of the club committee for helping to keep the club running smoothly over the past two years, and to wish all members successful bird watching in 2008.



To access the "Members Only" part of the website, ask a committee member for the username and password.

FIELD TRIP HIGHLIGHTS

There are many good places to go to see birds but some are better than others. Over the past two years, the following have consistently offered club members the chance of 60 or more species in a day.

Of course, there is one noticeable omission, RSPB Titchwell, and that's because there hasn't been a club trip for a while. The first time I went to Titchwell, I saw 82 species (admittedly, this was over the course of a weekend). There is a trip planned this year!

Also, a few other reserves aren't too far behind, offering over 50 species; these include: Blacktoft, Old Moor, Potteric Carr, Gibraltar Point and Carr Vale.

In the following, the date of club field trips and the number of species seen are given in brackets.

National Trust Clumber Park

The National Trust's Clumber Park has a range of habitats, including lakes and rivers, deciduous, coniferous and mixed woodlands, farmland, scrub, heath and marsh, and is great for wildlife.



Spotted Flycatcher
© Alan Kydd

Springtime is the best time for both quantity and quality and the outings start early to catch the dawn chorus. Two years ago (29/4/2006, 72), members found one of the region's earliest Spotted Flycatchers and then benefited from an impromptu lesson in identifying distant Arctic and Common Terns. Stunning and prolonged views of a singing Woodlark, followed by brief sightings of a singing Redstart were the icing on the cake. A party of about six quarrelling Marsh Tits was an unusual sight the following year (28/4/2007, 69), but then so was seeing a handsome drake Mandarin sitting on the lakeside wall. A couple of Yellow Wagtails, several Yellowhammers and singing Woodlarks and Tree Pipits were other highlights.

Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust Whisby Pits

The flooded gravel pits and surrounding scrub and wetland habitats are becoming increasingly important for wildlife. The scrub holds many species of warbler as well as Britain's finest songster, the Nightingale. A hot, sunny day (3/6/2006, 64) guaranteed Nightingales and Turtle Doves, and both species were seen and heard within a short time of arriving. Grey Partridge was heard calling and close views of male and female Lesser Whitethroats provided club members with new ticks for the year. A year later, (26/5/2007, 60) club members were soon rewarded with the fantastic song of a Nightingale and, later in the day, even good views of one. Little Ringed Plovers were courtship displaying and a pair of Oystercatchers had two young. Of course, most of the warblers were seen too: Chiffchaff, Blackcap, Whitethroat, Lesser Whitethroat and Willow, Garden, Sedge and Reed warblers.



Nightingale

© Alan Kydd

Yorkshire Wildlife Trust Spurn Point

Spurn is a sand and shingle spit on the North Sea coast, extending into the Humber estuary, and is one of the prime spots for watching passage migrants and birds making landfall. Of course, much of this depends on the weather – a good, north-easterly is more likely to push the birds towards the coast – and so Spurn can be depressingly disappointing or remarkably rewarding. Our trip in 2006 continued the previous two years' poor run with members seeing only about 50 species. The following year, the run of poor experiences ended and members enjoyed an excellent day (23/9/2007, 61). After driving through a large crowd of twitchers to get into the car park club members discovered the attraction – a Bluethroat sitting in bushes by the cafe. High tide was around 2PM by which time there were thousands of waders close to the roadside. As well as thousands of Knots, there were Golden, Ringed and Grey Plovers, Dunlins, Turnstones, Oystercatchers, Redshanks, Sanderlings and Curlews, Bar and Black-tailed Godwits. Other highlights included an Arctic Skua, at least 3 Red-throated Divers and a fine pair of Wheatears. Incidentally,

an impromptu visit a couple of weeks later provided a similar list, although the Bluethroat was substituted by a Yellow-browed Warbler.

RSPB Leighton Moss

Leighton Moss is just south of the Lake District and has various habitats including shallow meres, reed beds and salt marsh. Eiders and Scoters were visible at sea with thousands of Oystercatchers being pushed ashore by the high tide (21/10/2006, 60+). There were a couple of sightings of a Kingfisher whilst watching the hundreds of Knots, Redshanks, Black-tailed Godwits and Lapwings, and 3 Greenshanks. Wildfowl included Gadwalls, Pochards, Tufted Ducks, Shelducks, Wigeons and a pair of Pintails, but the long-staying Lesser Scaup had moved on. Several Buzzards and a couple of Ravens were also seen. A couple of visitors, including one club member, both heard what they thought was a booming Bittern. Almost a year to the day (20/10/2007, 62), lovely weather was had and club members were treated with great views of a long-staying Great White Egret. There were also a couple of Kingfishers providing much delight.



Lesser Whitethroat

© David Gains

Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust Rutland Water

Anglian Water's reservoir has a nature reserve at one end that comprises wetlands, scrub, meadows and woodland, and is also the venue for the annual internationally renowned British Birdwatching Fair. Just two members went on this trip (2/12/2006, 66), which was rescheduled owing to inclement weather.

Wow! What a day it was for wildfowl. There were about 20 species of wildfowl and a dozen waders or gulls. The highlights among the wildfowl were a Slavonian Grebe, hundreds of Goldeneyes and Great Crested Grebes. Willow Tit, Little Egret, Water Rail, Buzzard, Redwing, Barnacle Goose and singing Song Thrushes were among the supporting cast.

The Birds of 2006-2007

Little Grebe, Great Crested Grebe, Gannet, Cormorant, Bittern, Little Egret, Great White Egret, Grey Heron, Mute Swan, Bewick's Swan, Whooper Swan, Pink-footed Goose, Greylag Goose, Greater Canada Goose, Barnacle Goose, Brent Goose, Red-breasted Goose, Egyptian Goose, Bar-headed Goose, Shelduck, Mandarin, Wigeon, Gadwall, Teal, Mallard, Pintail, Garganey, Shoveler, Pochard, Tufted Duck, Scaup, Eider, Common Scoter, Goldeneye, Smew, Red-breasted Merganser, Goosander, Ruddy Duck, Honey Buzzard, Marsh Harrier, Hen Harrier, Goshawk, Sparrowhawk, Buzzard, Osprey, Kestrel, Merlin, Peregrine, Red Grouse, Red-legged Partridge, Grey Partridge, Pheasant, Water Rail, Moorhen, Coot, Oystercatcher, Avocet, Little Ringed Plover, Ringed Plover, Golden Plover, Grey Plover, Lapwing, Knot, Sanderling, Little Stint, Curlew Sandpiper, Purple Sandpiper, Dunlin, Ruff, Snipe, Woodcock, Black-tailed Godwit, Bar-tailed Godwit, Curlew, Spotted Redshank, Redshank, Greenshank, Green Sandpiper, Turnstone, Arctic Skua, Mediterranean Gull, Black-headed Gull, Common Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Herring Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Kittiwake, Sandwich Tern, Common Tern, Arctic Tern, Little Tern, Guillemot, Razorbill, Puffin, Rock Dove, Stock Dove, Woodpigeon, Collared Dove, Turtle Dove, Cuckoo, Barn Owl, Tawny Owl, Nightjar, Swift, Kingfisher, Green Woodpecker, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Woodlark, Skylark, Sand Martin, Swallow, House Martin, Tree Pipit, Meadow Pipit, Rock Pipit, Yellow Wagtail, Grey Wagtail, Pied Wagtail, Dipper, Wren, Dunnock, Robin, Nightingale, Bluethroat, Redstart, Whinchat, Stonechat, Wheatear, Ring Ouzel, Blackbird, Fieldfare, Song Thrush, Redwing, Mistle Thrush, Grasshopper Warbler, Sedge Warbler, Reed Warbler, Lesser Whitethroat, Whitethroat, Garden Warbler, Blackcap, Yellow-browed Warbler, Wood Warbler, Chiffchaff, Willow Warbler, Goldcrest, Spotted Flycatcher, Pied Flycatcher, Bearded Tit, Long-tailed Tit, Marsh Tit, Willow Tit, Coal Tit, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Nuthatch, Treecreeper, Jay, Magpie, Jackdaw, Rook, Carrion Crow, Raven, Starling, House Sparrow, Tree Sparrow, Chaffinch, Greenfinch, Goldfinch, Siskin, Linnet, Lesser Redpoll, Bullfinch, Yellowhammer, Reed Bunting, Corn Bunting [Total: 176 species]

The red and amber lists are published jointly by several non-governmental (such as BTO and RSPB) and governmental organisations (such as English Nature) in The Population Status of Birds in the UK: Birds of Conservation Concern: 2002-2007. The red-listed species are those that are threatened globally, their population or range is declining rapidly, or they are not recovering from past declines. The amber-listed species include those that are threatened in Europe, their population or range has declined moderately, they are recovering from past declines, they are rare breeders in the UK, and those with internationally important or localised populations. The status of 247 species has been reviewed; forty species are red-listed, 121 are amber-listed and 86 are green-listed. Those species shown in black are not listed in the UK.

SCOTTISH SPECIALITIES

Having been bird watching for a few years now, it seemed time to catch up with those birds that can't be seen in the UK without a visit to the highlands of Scotland. We spent a week in May in splendid self-catering accommodation just outside the village of Nethy Bridge, itself just a few miles from the town of Aviemore in the Cairngorms.

The first species to be found was the Crested Tit. We believed that Loch an Eilein in the nearby Rothiemurchus Forest was guaranteed to provide this species. We spent over five hours walking round the loch and it revealed a grand total of ONE – but at least it was a high quality view, if a little too brief! On a brighter note, the area was heaving with Redstarts, Goldcrests and Tree Pipits. There were 3 Buzzards and a Goshawk to remind us to keep looking skyward.

The RSPB were running a daily “Caperwatch” event at the Loch Garten reserve to help folk see the elusive Capercaillie. A more likely incentive is that the survival of this species in Scotland might just depend on them being undisturbed by the likes of us tramping through the forest at dawn. This activity was actively discouraged by notices on many of the forest paths advertising the RSPB events and trying to dissuade folk from finding “their own” birds. The event started every day at 5:30 AM, so a very early rise was essential. We arrived at 5:10 to find we were 10th in the queue. We had an all too brief view of a massive male sitting in the top of a small fir tree from the forward hide at Loch Garten. On our way back to our cottage for a second breakfast we stopped on seeing a group

with ‘scopes on the roadside. This turned out to be the site of a Crossbill nest, where young had fledged a day earlier. We had good views of a female bird but the family was elusive. We'd hoped to find the Scottish Crossbill, but this nest contained Parrot Crossbills. We failed to catch up with any other crossbills during the rest of our stay, so we've still to see Britain's only endemic bird.

Next on our list was Ptarmigan and we decided to take the funicular railway up Cairngorm to find this. We caught the first train at 10:00. No - we didn't have a lie in, we'd already been for another try-to-see Capercaillie but it was much too misty! Idle tourists like us who can't or won't walk up Cairngorm are restricted to the station area at the top to prevent disturbance to the environment. There were several of us with bins and ‘scopes searching from the large viewing platform. A trip of Dotterels was first to be spotted and then we started to hear Ptarmigan calling. Within a short time we had excellent views of one quite close to the station which eventually obliged by flying in front of us. We had lunch at the bottom station where we saw Ring Ouzel with Wheatears and Meadow Pipits.

Crested tit, Scottish Crossbill, Capercaillie and Ptarmigan were our targets, and 3 out of 4 wasn't bad, especially with the bonus of the Parrot Crossbill as compensation. Other highlights included several Ospreys, Slavonian grebes in breeding plumage on Loch Ruthven, Black-throated Divers on Lochindorb, Long-tailed Ducks at Berghead Bay and a Black Grouse lek on Tulloch Moor. It was well worth the trip.

GARDEN BIRD HEALTH INITIATIVE

During the summer of 2006 we noticed that we had finches in the garden that looked unwell. They tended to be very lethargic, fluffed up and scruffy. Later in the summer, we were also finding dead birds in the garden. All of these were either Chaffinches or Greenfinches and we later discovered that there was widespread disease among UK finches which also affected House Sparrows. Towards the end of the year I discovered that the BTO required more volunteers for a study – the ‘Garden Bird Health Initiative’ or GBHi. This project was started in the summer of 2005 and it is hoped that it might shed some light on the causes of disease in our garden birds and possibly help to provide advice on how we might be able to reduce its occurrence. It was originally started to examine the risk factors associated with outbreaks of Salmonellosis and E.coli at garden feeding stations, but is proving helpful in understanding the more recent outbreaks of Trichomoniasis. We began to take part in this survey at the start of 2007. On a weekly basis volunteers record the types and number of bird feeder they use, together with the type and weight of food supplied. Additional information about cleaning of feeders is also recorded. For example, which feeder types were cleaned, and how they were cleaned – with water only, or detergent or disinfectant. Additional information about the species of diseased birds seen is noted, together with details of any dead birds discovered. We are also asked to send carcasses for post-mortem analysis so that there might be a chance to discover the cause of death. Records are sent quarterly to the BTO. In 2007, we have seen fewer instances of dead and diseased birds. It seems we had little or no disease until late summer, when



Greenfinch
© David Gains

once more finches appeared to be having problems. During September and October we sent 2 Greenfinches for post-mortems and saw several diseased birds. These were mainly Greenfinches but there were also a few Chaffinches.

There are around 850 participants in the study and I understand that the project is now scheduled to finish at the end of March 2008. From the post-mortems completed during 2006, the most frequent cause of death in diseased birds was Salmonellosis – 141 cases from 104 sites. Trichomoniasis was diagnosed in a further 63 cases with a possible additional 53 to be confirmed. Greenfinch was the species most commonly reported on the mortality incident forms and also topped the list of diseased birds reported – with Chaffinch next and many fewer records of House Sparrow, Siskin and Collared Dove. The latest update for this winter (2007) shows that Greenfinches are suffering much more than other birds from Trichomoniasis. At present it seems that where occurrence of disease is found, it is still suggested that birds should continue to be fed – with the proviso that feeders should be regularly cleaned.

MULL

We decided to have a holiday on Mull because of all the good information given to us about sea eagle sightings and other highland wildlife.

We duly booked a cottage for a week in May, and worked out routes — it's a long way to Mull — over 350 miles plus ferry crossings, but only 6 or 7 hours driving time to Oban.

However, we were not disappointed. The weather kept fair and, although the sea eagles' nest site had no chicks, we had very good views of the parents. The nest is monitored with cameras and we believe the chicks had fallen out of the nest just prior to our visit. We also saw Golden Eagles and Buzzards at different locations. The bird count for the week was 108 species.

There is plenty of wildlife to see on Mull. Otters abound, Grey and Common seals are plentiful and there are lots of Red Deer. We saw a deer coming down to the shoreline near our cottage; it jumped over a wire fence from a standing start of over 5 feet.

We also enjoyed a day on Iona, the weather was perfect. Silver sands, divers, otters and seals in one bay and in almost every clump of iris a Corncrake calling. We visited two castles, Duart was particularly memorable.

Mull in May (there were few midges or horseflies), is to be recommended as the perfect place for a holiday with good wildlife, scenery and friendly locals.

DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY

As you may have seen from last year's members' slide show, digital photography continues to improve and to provide opportunities for magical wildlife shots hitherto unavailable.

Digital single lens reflex (DSLR) with long image stabilised lenses can capture really good shots of birds and insects that previously were only possible by a professional photographer. Also, there are now compact digital cameras with 12x zoom lenses that are ideal for most nature shots.

There is also the advantage with digital cameras that you can take as many shots as you want until you are

satisfied with your results and then delete the rest. This is of particular advantage when photographing birds, insects and flowers which won't "sit still" to order.

There are now a number of ways of looking at your digital images as well as prints, and you can view your results on a PC, your television if it has a slot for a memory card, a digital projector or even transmitted on the internet to a friend.

The price of digital camera equipment, memory cards and digital projectors continues to fall, so get shopping!!

NOT IN THE BOOK

Our dilettante interest in bird watching can be dated back to August 1989, when we purchased a copy of John Gooders' *Field Guide to the Birds of Great Britain and Ireland*. It is getting very tatty and both covers have fallen off but we treasure it for the checklist at the back which bears record to our wanderings over the years. Hand-written additions show that we saw Little Egret and a Black-winged Stilt when HVBWC visited Titchwell in September 1999. Little Egret is now classified as a resident breeder and it is hard to imagine that it was not included in the 1986 list.

We recently had another handwritten addition, a Great White Egret seen on the Eric Morecambe salt-marsh pools at Leighton Moss on 15th September 2007. Previously we had only glimpsed this bird from a slow local train in South Bohemia. Now here was one in full view, surrounded by over 20 Little Egrets but the hide was so crammed with photographers that it was hard to get in. This specimen had arrived on 27th August and was making itself well at home. Another was present at the RSPB Marshside reserve just north of Southport. Mainly found in

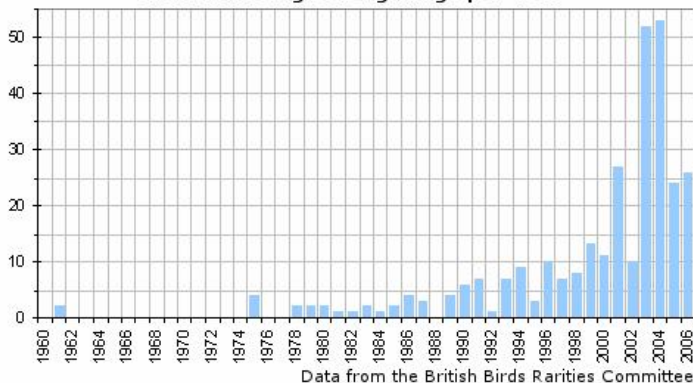


Great White Egret
© David Gains

south-eastern Europe, the northward spread of these striking birds is reflected in the increasing number of UK sightings recorded in the recent years and is presumably one of the up-sides of global warming.

One of the down-sides is the northward spread of unpleasant insects. Last year we found a Biting Forest Fly in the house, a long way from its traditional stronghold feeding on the New Forest ponies. Other insect species, particularly mosquitoes, can carry serious diseases and present a real threat.

Great White Egret: Sightings per Year



PEAK DISTRICT RAPTORS

Last year (2007) saw a spring and summer of unprecedented wet weather which had a detrimental effect on some species such as Merlin and Hobby, but the earlier nesting species like Goshawk, Peregrine and Buzzard were affected to a lesser extent.

Goshawks had a good season away from the Derwent Valley, where six sites were occupied but no successful breeding took place. Birds failing to breed and small young vanishing from nests leaves the future of this population in some doubt and, coupled with the absence of Peregrine from these traditional sites in the valley and a Raven nest being destroyed, seems to point the finger at human intervention. Away from the Derwent Valley more than twenty young Goshawks fledged.

Buzzards continue to thrive in most areas, though the paucity of records on northern grouse moors is a cause for concern.

The White Peak's Peregrine population seems to be fairly stable and, although some pairs lost eggs/young to the atrocious weather, overall an average breeding season. The pair nesting on Derby Cathedral generated much local interest, and some of their prey items were amazing, e.g. Quail and Arctic Tern.

Hobbies occupied a record number of sites (44) but breeding success was low with 1.99 young fledged per successful nest, well below the average of 2.5. One pair nested in a limestone dale, an unusual site.

Merlins had their worst year since 1997 with only seven sites occupied, three successful, and only eight young fledged. If the run of very wet spring and summers

continues the future for this, the smallest British falcon, begins to look bleak in this area.

No Hen Harriers bred in 2007, although birds continue to prospect in the area and would no doubt breed if they were left alone.

Red Kite sightings have been regular in small numbers throughout this year and surely (hopefully) a pair will breed before too long.

Sparrowhawks and Kestrels are still our commonest raptors and continue to be reported throughout the area.

Barn Owls had an excellent year with at least ten pairs breeding successfully, raising at least 37 young. This success is no doubt helped by sympathetic farmers and land owners allowing the group to put up nest boxes for this lovely species.

Long-eared Owls had an average year, but I feel sure this nocturnal and secretive owl is often overlooked.

Short-eared Owls had a poor season due to the appalling weather and lack of prey. Only one pair was successful, raising four young. In an average year we monitor up to seven pairs.

Tawny and Little Owls still seem to be doing well.

Despite the problems in the north of the area, the Peak District remains a good area to see birds of prey throughout the year, long may it continue.

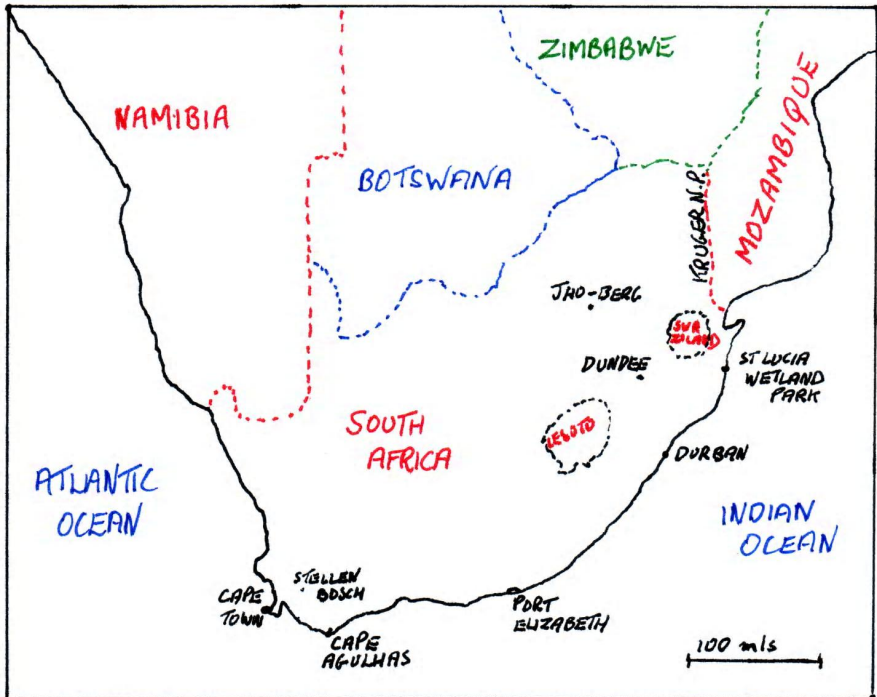
OUR BIRDS IN SOUTH AFRICA

In February 2007 we travelled with Explore to South Africa. Our tour consisted of ten days in the north east of South Africa, including Zululand, Swaziland and the Kruger National Park, and then ten days in the south west of South Africa, Cape Town, the garden route, and winelands around Stellenbosch (see map).

We flew into Johannesburg and then south east to the high plains at Isandlwana and Rorke's Drift, scenes of battles in the Zulu Wars. At Rorke's Drift, 5000 ft high, on the flat Zulu tableland, we saw our first overwintering European Swallows; could they have come from the UK? We saw nine other species of swallow in South

Africa most of which were resident. We then drove to the Indian Ocean coast and the Greater St. Lucia Wetland Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, with several different habitats in one small area. There were lots of African wildlife here, including antelopes, rhinoceros and also hippopotamuses and leopards, which sometimes come into residential gardens at night. Close by was the Hluhluwe - Imfolozi game reserve where we saw elephants, giraffes and 14 rhinoceros in one day.

Next we drove north to the small independent mountain kingdom of Swaziland. We stayed at a small reserve where we could walk about freely in the bush. An early morning walk revealed





White-fronted Bee-eater

© John Wooddisse

Spotted Flycatcher and singing Willow Warbler - could this little 10 gram bird have flown 5000 miles to get here? Driving through Swaziland we saw signs “wear a condom and reap the benefits”, which may be one way of containing the AIDS epidemic.

North again to the Kruger National Park on the border of Mozambique, here were lots of wildlife and very colourful birds, including European and Lilac-breasted Rollers and European and Carmine Bee-eaters. The wetlands and rivers were home to many familiar European waders such as Common and Wood Sandpipers, Ruffs, Greenshank and Little Stints.

BLACK GROUSE UPDATE

Back in 2003, a partnership between Severn Trent Water and the National Trust, supported by the Peak District National Park Authority, set about reintroducing the Black Grouse into the Upper Derwent valley.

Since then there have been controlled releases of fully-fledged birds each year, release strategies changing depending on the outcome of earlier ones.



Lilac-breasted Roller

© John Wooddisse

For the second part of the holiday we flew south to Cape Town where a walk along the sea front revealed Sandwich Terns and the occasional Arctic Skua. Five miles along the coast was a large and expanding colony of Jackass Penguins that have now become a major tourist attraction.

Other highlights were a visit to the top of Table Mountain behind Cape Town, a walk in the hills near Stellenbosch, Blue Cranes near Cape Agulhas, the southernmost tip of the African continent, and of course the magnificent scenery along the coast near Cape Town.

Admittedly, the results so far are mixed but these schemes are often fraught with problems. So far, mortality has been quite high, the main cause being predation by raptors but there have also been other causes, such as foxes and unleashed dogs.

The good news is that in 2006, 20 males were “lekking” at five sites and three captive-bred females raised broods on the wild moors.

BTO SURVEY WORK

As some of you will know, I have succeeded Chris Falshaw as the BTO Regional Representative for Yorkshire Southwest and Southeast — Chris retired earlier in 2007. My main duties are organising BTO survey work, such as Breeding Bird Survey and Bird Atlas, and recruiting new members. So, please feel free to contact me if you want to know more about becoming a member of the BTO or if you can help with any of the following surveys – you do not have to be a BTO member to do survey work.

Breeding Bird Survey

The BBS is a simple but very important survey that requires three visits to a randomly selected 1 km x 1 km square. The first visit is to find a 2 km route across the square and record the habitat within the survey area. On the two subsequent visits, one between early April and mid-May and another between mid-May and late June, you record all the birds you see or hear. The fieldwork usually takes 5 to 6 hours. You need a reasonable knowledge of the songs and calls of common and widespread UK bird species, but the BTO supplies you with full instructions, forms and a CD or tape containing the calls and songs of many typical bird species.

The following BBS squares are available in and around the HVBWC recording area, which straddles two BTO regions, Yorkshire (Southwest) and Derbyshire (North).

Bird Atlas 2007-2011

Although long-term surveys, like BBS, provide us with information on trends in populations, they are only sample surveys and do not cover all of Britain and Ireland.

Yorkshire (Southwest)	
SK1594	Howden Moor
SK1395	Howden Moor
SK1099	Woodhead

Derbyshire (North)	
SK1184	Barber Booth
SK1381	Castleton
SK1388	Edale
SK1570	Taddington
SK1678	Little Hucklow
SK1787	Ashopton
SK1874	Wardlow
SK1088	Kinder Scout
SK2073	Great Longstone
SK2577	Nether Padley
SK2975	Unthank
SK2978	Owler Bar

In contrast, atlases give us the chance to visit all 10 km squares in Britain and Ireland and find out what is there and approximately how common they are.

There have been two previous breeding atlases (1968-72 and 1988-91) and just one winter atlas (1981-84), and they have provided vital information for bird conservation. For example, one of the important findings from the last breeding atlas was the widespread range contraction of many of our farmland birds. This led to detailed research into the causes of these declines and conservation effort to prevent further deterioration.

However, these atlases are at least 20 years old and it would be fascinating to look at the changes there have been in that time. Bird Atlas 2007-11 is a huge and exciting project that will map the abundance and distribution of birds in

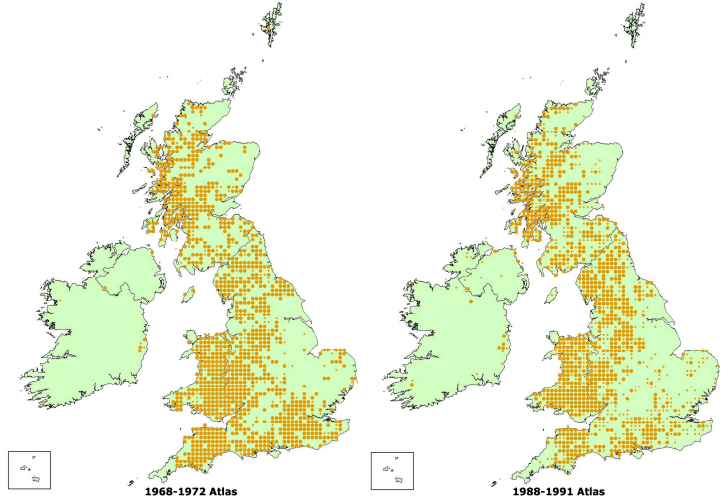
Wood Warbler Distribution

Britain and Ireland during both the breeding season and winter. Will the conservation efforts for farmland birds have made a difference? What will we discover about woodland bird species, such as Wood Warblers? More importantly, the results from this atlas will be the basis for the conservation of birds

in Britain and Ireland for the coming decades. What's more, we can all take part and make a real contribution to its success.

There are two components to the fieldwork: *Timed Tetrad Visits* (TTVs) and *Roving Records*. TTVs involve two visits in the breeding season and two in the winter to a tetrad (2 km x 2 km square). Each visit is for a minimum of one hour and the idea is to record species you see and hear along with numbers, so we can calculate the relative abundance of species in the 10 km squares. We are aiming to cover a minimum of eight tetrads in every 10 km square (there are 25 tetrads in a 10 km square). You can choose to survey a tetrad in the winter, the breeding season or ideally both.

The first winter visit has to be made in November or December, the second then takes place in January or February. Of equal importance are general bird watching visits to 10 km squares (*Roving Records*) where the aim is to note the species you see and hear in a 10 km



square. These can then be reported by entering online at www.birdatlas.net or filling out a *Roving Records* form (available from your Regional Representative, BTO HQ or as a download from the website). These records may be complete lists of birds you have seen on a field trip, or regular walks or just one-off records of elusive birds, like Lesser Spotted Woodpecker.

Fieldwork for the *Timed Tetrad Visits* is being organised through a network of local Atlas Regional Organisers. To find out more, visit the website www.birdatlas.net, or contact the appropriate Regional Representative.

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SUMMER VISITORS

For some years it has been suggested that climate change is causing our summer migrants to arrive earlier and we wondered if we could see this here in the valley.

John Wooddisse has been keeping records of the arrival dates of our summer migrants since 1975 and certainly believes this to be the case.

The earliest arrivals are the Chiffchaff, Ring Ouzel and Wheatear. These tend to arrive during the last two weeks in March. Using the earliest arrival dates for each 5 year period from 1975 to date (see table opposite), it is clear that all 3 of these are now arriving sooner than they were. John's records show that the earliest arrival date for all of these birds has occurred within the last 10 years.

The data for the hirundines, the next arrivals, also shows earlier arrival. The Sand Martin is normally first, followed by Swallow and House Martin in early April. John's data clearly shows that the most recent years have the earliest dates for Sand Martin and Swallow, but the data on House Martins is very different. As they nest on John's house it might be expected that their arrival dates would be pretty accurate. It's odd to see the earliest arrival date he has recorded was back in the 70's. Derbyshire Ornithological Society (DOS) publishes a detailed annual report and in 2004 it clearly shows that almost all of the summer migrants are arriving in Derbyshire around 2 weeks earlier than they were 50 years ago. One of the exceptions is the House Martin, and the DOS report shows little change in arrival dates from the 1950's until the year 2000. However, in the years 2000 to 2004, the average arrival date for House Martins

moved forward to 24th March – some 3 weeks earlier than John's records suggest. Other exceptions include the later arrivals – being Swift, Whitethroat and Spotted Flycatcher. The DOS data seems to suggest that Spotted Flycatcher are arriving at much the same time throughout the last 50 years, whilst the Whitethroat and Swift are maybe only a week earlier at most. John's data seems to concur with this.

The DOS Bird Report also shows that not only are summer visitors arriving earlier, but they also seem to be staying longer. It is much more difficult to record the dates the last birds leave for their wintering grounds but even so, it is clear that almost all of them are leaving a week or more later than they were in the 50's.

Below is a summary of John's data showing the earliest arrival dates that he recorded for each of the 5 year periods from 1975. It will give you some idea about when you might expect to see these birds in the valley this spring!



Common Whitethroat
© David Gains

Species	75-79	80-84	85-89	90-94	95-99	00-04	05-07
Chiffchaff	1 Apr	31 Mar	31 Mar	30 Mar	30 Mar	24 Mar	24 Mar
Wheatear	3 Apr	31 Mar	31 Mar	30 Mar	30 Mar	24 Mar	24 Mar
Ring Ouzel	30 Mar	2 Apr	3 Apr	2 Apr	30 Mar	25 Mar	23 Mar
Swallow	15 Apr	11 Apr	2 Apr	10 Apr	9 Apr	7 Apr	4 Apr
Sand Martin	8 Apr	1 May	1 Apr			25 Mar	25 Mar
House Martin	9 Apr	23 Apr	16 Apr	7 Apr	17 Apr	16 Apr	21 Apr
Blackcap	25 Apr	27 Apr	8 Apr	15 Apr	8 Apr	3 Apr	5 Apr
Willow Warbler	2 Apr	8 Apr	2 Apr	6 Apr	6 Apr	1 Apr	14 Apr
Redstart	27 Apr	16 Apr	13 Apr	14 Apr	21 Apr	19 Apr	25 Apr
Cuckoo	28 Apr	19 Apr	16 Apr	25 Apr	22 Apr	23 Apr	14 Apr
Yellow Wagtail	18 Apr	9 Apr	14 Apr	22 Apr		24 Apr	23 Apr
Tree Pipit	10 Apr	20 Apr	24 Apr	29 Mar		22 Apr	26 Apr
Lesser Whitethroat	1 May	1 May	27 Apr	28 Apr	23 Apr	28 Apr	29 Apr
Garden Warbler		26 Apr	26 Apr	30 Apr	19 Apr	27 Apr	
Swift	7 May	1 May	4 May	27 Apr	5 May	27 Apr	29 Apr
Whitethroat	15 May	8 May	1 May	23 Apr	13 May	27 Apr	
Spotted Flycatcher	11 May	12 May	19 May	18 May	12 May		

BIRD QUIZ

1. What colour are a Blue Tit's cheeks?
2. What bird is used as the logo of the BTO?
3. What is an aide memoir for the Pied Flycatcher's song?
4. Why do Willow Tits have bull-necks?
5. Which of our summer warblers returns from Africa around the Eastern Mediterranean rather than cross it?
6. What is the only UK bird to eat deadly nightshade seeds?
7. In the 1988-91 atlas, what was the most ubiquitous breeding bird?
8. What bird is used as the logo of the RSPB?
9. The feathers of a bird may sometimes be heavier than its skeleton. True or false?
10. An isle off Anglesey is named after which bird?
11. How many pheasants are released each year in Britain for shooting? And how many of these are actually shot?
12. What 2 birds have inappropriate Kentish names - excluding Kentish plover?
13. What is it about a male swallow that gets him the mate he wants?
14. In the 1968-71 atlas, what was the most ubiquitous breeding bird?
15. Which species has the longest migration?
16. What was it that caused our Sparrowhawks to be almost wiped out in the 1980's?
17. How much does a Raven weigh?
18. Which bird will often make up to 75% of a Merlin's diet?
19. What colour are the legs of a Blue Tit?
20. How often do birds moult?

IN NEED OF A GROUSE

Around Migneint, Europe's largest upland bog, there are Black Grouse, a species I've yet to see, so while on holiday my guest house host, Chris, and I planned an expedition. Oh and what an expedition...

We set off from Manod at 5:30AM one March morning, except his 4x4 wouldn't start. So we decided to take my car. Now, with hindsight, this decision was erring on foolhardy given that there had been a couple of inches of snowfall across Snowdonia during the night. Driving wasn't too bad until we turned off on to the Cwm Penmachno road, a track with passing places. This was fun – a term I use loosely. Nevertheless, we arrived, at last, at Hafodyredwydd (Grid Ref. SH7746), which is located at the top of a steep hill with a precipitous drop into a ravine on one side. Perhaps not surprisingly, the wheels had no traction. Chris tried pushing against the bonnet but to no avail. So we decided to clear the road with a shovel I carry in the boot, except when I got out of the car, it started sliding down the hill and we had to run after it! Then we decided to strand the car on the verge. Thankfully, we gained traction and I could reverse up the hill far enough to then swing the car round and off the road. Next, we donned walking boots and set off ...

We'd done the same walk to Llyn Conwy the previous year, except no sooner had we begun than it started to rain, we lost the track and, well, that's another story. Anyway, this time we walked straight to the stile in the wall beneath Pen y Bedw (about 1.5 miles), which was still hard work because, err, it's a bog. Despite the cold, in the lee of the hills it was calm and quite mild; a couple of Mallards, Canada

Geese, Meadow Pipits and a solitary Raven had noticed this. As we approached 500m ASL, we were buffeted by the northerly winds. This worsened nearer the summit and, in the end, we spent maybe 10 minutes looking for Black Grouse, after which we were numbed to the marrow. The views across to snow-covered Snowdon were breathtaking – just like the wind. We didn't see any grouse - they'd more sense than to be out in this!

Back at the car we were confronted with a new dilemma. The snow had blown away and a substrate of frozen hail, which resembled nut brittle, was exposed. We declined the challenge of clearing several hundred metres of road to get off the hill and opted instead for trudging the 10 miles back to base camp. Along the way, our attempts to telephone people back at the house failed - their mobile phones were switched off and, we later discovered, there was a fault with the land line too! Luckily, several miles into the walk we hitched a lift off another intrepid traveller.

At the house, some 5 hours after leaving it, Chris now realised he'd left his keys in his shoes, which were in the boot of my car! The search was now on for the spare set. Once found, the spare keys revealed there was nothing wrong with the 4x4, it was the battery in the other key fob that was flat!

We drove back to my car, wondering what we would find. Unbelievably, the weak sunshine had cleared all the snow and ice; it was like entering a "twilight zone".

And what should be sitting on the dry stone wall... Come on! You don't think I'd have been that lucky...

MOORLAND BIRD SURVEYS

We have now completed 3 years of moorland surveys for Geoff Eyre, who, you may recall, believes his heather restoration work is beneficial to moorland birds. Since the article in the last issue of *The Dipper*, we have completed two more survey areas – Nether and Upper Hey. The results are detailed below.

It would seem that the new habitat is certainly suiting Skylarks and Meadow Pipits. Curlew numbers also seem to be very healthy, though conclusions regarding waders more generally are less clear. The extremely dry early spring weather in 2007 may have had a negative impact – generally, these waders prefer



Short-eared Owl
© John Wooddisse

moist ground with clumps of cover but not so much as to obscure distant views.

SPECIES	MOSCAR			SHEEPFOLDS			CARLECOTES		
	2005	2006	2007	2005	2006	2007	2005	2006	2007
Curlew	13	18	11	7	21	9	11	17	33
Golden plover	2	0	0	6	4	7	13	9	7
Skylark	2	5	4	10	10	25	18	23	36
Snipe	4	3	0	0	0	0	1	2	2
Lapwing	14	14	12	3	4	2	15	21	14
Meadow pipit	42	40	30	41	12	36	27	16	56
Red grouse	1	2	0	2	0	7	7	1	12
Short-eared owl	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0

SPECIES	GREYSTONES			NETHER HEY			UPPER HEY		
	2005	2006	2007	2005	2006	2007	2005	2006	2007
Curlew	7	4	0	-	9	11	-	7	12
Golden plover	0	0	2	-	2	0	-	0	3
Skylark	7	4	10	-	5	12	-	16	9
Snipe	0	0	0	-	3	2	-	5	2
Lapwing	0	0	1	-	3	0	-	8	3
Meadow pipit	10	3	10	-	36	46	-	29	32
Red grouse	1	0	1	-	0	18	-	3	4
Short-eared owl	0	1	1	-	0	1	-	1	4

MY LOCAL PATCH

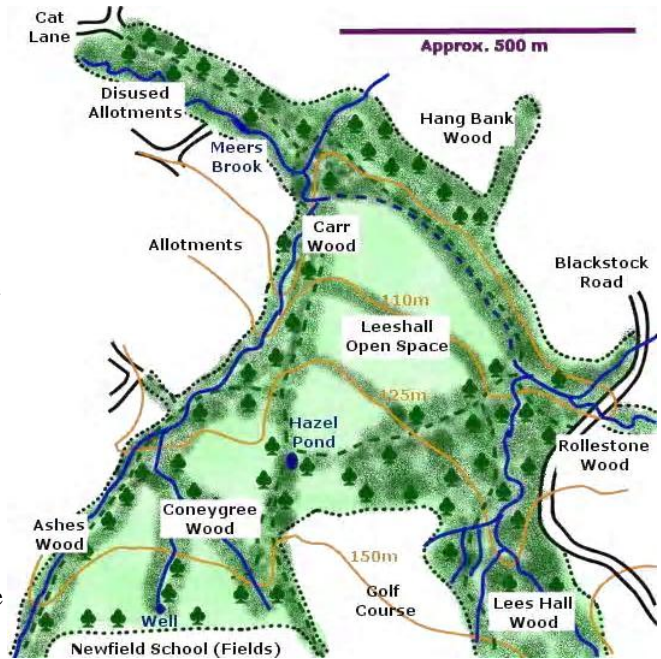
At some indoor meetings I've cited my local patch and yet I expect most people will know little about it. I hope to address this now by sharing some of my infatuation of this patch, which is part of the Gleadless Valley Local Nature Reserve (Grid Ref. SK3683), about 2 miles south-east of Sheffield city centre.

There are several ancient woodlands, called Carr, Ashes, Coneygree, Buck Wood, Rollestone, Hang Bank and Lees Hall Woods. From dendrochronology of recently felled oak trees, the woods may be dated at over 600 years old. In past times, several of these woods were coppiced for charcoal production.

Nowadays, among the industrial archaeology, there is a scattering of relic "Q-pits" that were used to produce white-charcoal for lead smelting. Following many decades of neglect, traditional woodland management methods are being introduced anew.

Chiefly, to open the canopy by removing non-native species, so the relict oak coppices and understorey may thrive. There are also stands of oak and birch to be found on the dry, steep slopes, alder and willow in the wetter parts, or carrs. Beech, sycamore and sweet chestnut, and even a solitary lime tree, are prospering elsewhere. Between the woods, there are fields, meadows and hedgerows, some ancient and some more recent. Here we find shrubs including hazel, hawthorn,

holly, elder and many others. Dissecting the whole area are several streams, some sourced from springs, others from culverts. The most important, certainly historically, is Meers Brook, which once divided the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms of Mercia and Northumbria but today separates the archbishoprics of York and Canterbury. The area was not only important to kings and bishops but also for farming and dwellings and there are several old farm building sites, including Lees Hall, which was demolished in 1957. Today, there is really only the restored Hazel Pond and remnant orchards to be found above ground. Finally, there's the former landfill site, next to the current Blackstock Road recycling centre, and the whole area is surrounded by disused and in-use allotments, school grounds, golf course and housing estates.



Twenty-odd years ago I used to sometimes go home from school through these woods but rarely took notice of the wildlife. In fact, it wasn't until about 10 years ago that I embarked on my first walk through the woods in nearly a decade and I was amazed how the landscape had changed. Of course, I know all about succession, but "seeing" it happen is really something to behold. I regularly see a couple of dozen species and occasionally breakthrough the "30" barrier. Admittedly, a trip to Clumber Park or parts of Derbyshire will trump this, but local patch work is somehow more rewarding, even for fewer species. Above all, you cannot beat the thrill of finding something new on your patch...

One of my first discoveries was a Willow Tit, following a visit to Potteric Carr where their "tchay tchay" calls seemed inescapable. Imagine my delight when I heard and recognised the same call on my patch. Subsequently, I've seen and heard them on several occasions, and even shared a bramble branch with one while picking blackberries!

This year's terrible floods eventually passed, leaving much devastation in their wake. Unusually, most of the streams had remained wet – having shale beds, most dry up during the summer, though the stream continues to flow beneath. While I was stalking a Sparrowhawk, I became suddenly aware of a bird in the brook, bobbing on a discarded pram wheel. Spellbound, I gawped for what seemed like an age before fumbling for my camera to capture my latest visitor for posterity – a juvenile Dipper, which had presumably been dispersing from its natal grounds when it found the Meers Brook in flood and explored upstream.



Juvenile Dipper
© David Gains

Of course, there's more than birds present. I've caught glimpses of stoats, shrews, rats and, of course, you cannot miss the Grey Squirrels. My favourite mammal is the fox and I've had a few joyous encounters, including crossing paths with a vixen and two cubs, though the saddest time was calling out the RSPCA to an injured dog fox so that it could be humanely destroyed.

There are many wildflowers too, including wood anemones and bluebells, and many grasses and fungi — that I can only confess complete ignorance about — among which are some national rarities, like *Russula rosiecolor*. These, and the streams and pond, also attract a great many insects and amphibians, including newts.

So, that's my local patch! I've now seen 66 species of birds, and I've yet to catch up with the Woodcock and Kingfisher that have been seen by others...

More information on these woodlands may be found on this web site:
www.heritagewoodsonline.co.uk

HOPE VALLEY BIRD REPORT

It is now over ten years since the club produced an annual report detailing the birds recorded in the valley in that year.

The club's bird reports published in the early 1990's included areas outside of the Hope Valley such as sightings on the moors above Howden and Derwent dams as well as the lagoons on Middleton Moor.

At a committee meeting this winter it was agreed that we should try to collect information on birds recorded in the valley once again, but to limit the area as follows.

The reporting area should cover the Hope Valley from Mam Tor in the north-west to Calver bridge in the south-east. This would include the Edale valley and the Derwent valley as far north as Ashopton viaduct – including that part of Ladybower reservoir south of the A57. It includes all the land south of the Gritstone Edges from Bamford to Curbar. In the south and west, the boundary is a line joining the villages of Bradwell, Bretton, Eyam and Stoney Middleton. It's easier to look at the map!



I have offered to collate information for publication in future editions of The Dipper and have tried to summarise below the status of birds recorded in this area over the last 2 years.

The first list is of common resident breeding birds which can be easily seen every month of the year in the valley. There are 31 species: Mallard, Sparrowhawk, Kestrel, Pheasant, Moorhen, Woodpigeon, Collared Dove, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Wren, Dipper, Dunnock, Robin, Song Thrush, Mistle Thrush, Blackbird, Goldcrest, Great Tit, Coal Tit, Blue tit, Long-tailed Tit, Nuthatch, Treecreeper, Magpie, Jackdaw, Rook, Carrion Crow, Starling, House Sparrow, Chaffinch, Goldfinch and Greenfinch.

The second is a list of migrants that have been seen in or over the valley in either winter (W) or summer (S) in the last 2 years. There are 25 of these: Pink-footed Goose (W), Teal (W), Common Sandpiper (S), Cuckoo (S), Swift (S), Sand Martin (S), Swallow (S), House Martin (S), Tree Pipit (S), Redstart (S), Wheatear (S), Whinchat (S), Redwing (W), Fieldfare (W), Ring Ouzel (S), Garden Warbler (S), Blackcap (S), Lesser Whitethroat (S), Whitethroat (S), Willow Warbler (S), Wood Warbler (S), Chiffchaff (S), Spotted Flycatcher (S), Pied Flycatcher (S) and Brambling (W).

Finally, a list of other birds recorded in the valley over the last 2 years – another 44 to give us a nice round figure: Little Grebe, Great Crested Grebe, Cormorant, Grey Heron, Canada Goose, Mandarin, Tufted Duck, Goosander, Red-breasted Merganser, Osprey, Hen Harrier, Buzzard,

Goshawk, Peregrine, Red Grouse, Coot, Lapwing, Curlew, Woodcock, Snipe, Black-headed Gull, Herring Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Stock Dove, Tawny Owl, Kingfisher, Rose-ringed Parakeet, Green Woodpecker, Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, Skylark, Meadow Pipit, Pied Wagtail, Grey Wagtail, Stonechat, Willow Tit, Jay, Raven, Tree Sparrow, Linnet, Lesser Redpoll, Siskin, Bullfinch, Reed Bunting and Yellowhammer.

As the decision to develop this list was not taken until the end of the 2 year period, it will not of course be complete! In order to make it more comprehensive, we need you to tell us about your sightings of the less common species for inclusion in the 2010 edition of The Dipper. You can e-mail alan.kydd@bopenworld.com, phone HV650864, or submit your sightings on the club website, www.hvbc.org.uk

More details have been recorded on the website about the birds recorded in the last two years, together with others which we've probably missed. Examples of these include the following: Goldeneye last recorded on Ladybower and at Froggatt in 2003, Merlin last recorded by a club member around Leam in 2000, Red-legged Partridge at Dennis Knoll in 2000, Long-eared Owl used to nest beneath Stanage Edge, Waxwing last recorded between Hope and Castleton in 2005 and Crossbill in Longshaw in 2005. A Rose-ringed Parakeet was reported by Richard Clemons on Syckleholme golf course. He wasn't 100% sure of the identification and as far as we know it wasn't seen again in the valley.

CLUB MEMBERS

Audrey Buxton	Pat Jackson	Brenda Senior
Gary Carter	Alan Kydd	Cedric Skelton
Sally Carter	Di Kydd	Carol Skelton
Richard Clemons	Chris Lorch	Ken Slack
Marion Clemons	Rob Lorch	Jean Slack
Sue Cockayne	John Needham	Kit Stokes
Sylvia Dervin	Pauline Needham	Vonny Stokes
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Pam Edwards	Celia Oldridge	Brenda Taylor
Tom Ferguson	John Pegler	Elizabeth Wetherall
Angela Ferguson	Rodney Pollitt	Barrie Wilkinson
David Gains	Joan Pollitt	John Wooddisse
Graham Games	Ann Ralston	Barbara Wooddisse
Pam Games	Jane Ralston	
John Jackson	Chris Senior	

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

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

Ring Ouzel Update

Three pairs of Ring Ouzels nested on Stanage Edge in 2007 but only two pairs were successful, fledging 10 chicks from 3 broods.

Late News

Chris Falshaw died peacefully in hospital on 31 January 2008. He is survived by his wife, Vivien, and son and daughter.

Answers to the Bird Brain Quiz

1. White 2. Gannet 3. "Tree, tree, once more I come to thee" 4. They have enlarged neck muscles which help them excavate holes. 5. Lesser whiterthroat 6. Pheasant 7. Wren 8. Avocet 9. True 10. Puffin 11. 20 million and 12 million respectively 12. Dartford Warbler and Sandwich Tern 13. Length of his tail streamers 14. Skylark 15. Arctic Tern 16. Pesticides 17. 2-3 lbs (1-1.5 kg) 18. Meadow pipit 19. Blue-grey 20. Once or twice a year but occasionally three times depending on the species.
Scores: 0-2=Oh dear! 3-7=Good 8-12=Very Good 13-17=Excellent 18-20=Bird Brain!