



**ISSUE 5  
2012**

# **THE DIPPER**

**THE MAGAZINE OF THE HOPE VALLEY BIRD WATCHERS CLUB**



# INSIDE THIS ISSUE

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<b>President's Message</b> <i>By John Wooddisse</i>	3	<b>No More Grouching</b> <i>By David Gains</i>	10
<b>Bird Food Matters</b> <i>By Chris Lorch</i>	3	<b>Field Trip Highlights</b> <i>By David Gains, Alan Kydd, and Graham Games</i>	12
<b>New Zealand Birding</b> <i>By John Wooddisse</i>	4	<b>Burma—the Golden Land</b> <i>By Jane Ralston</i>	17
<b>A Miserable Morning</b> <i>By Alan Kydd</i>	5	<b>Griffon Vultures</b> <i>By John Wooddisse</i>	20
<b>Little Bittern</b> <i>By Brenda Taylor</i>	6	<b>Hope Valley Bird Report</b> <i>By Alan Kydd</i>	21
<b>A Natural Pecking Order</b> <i>By John Wooddisse</i>	7	<b>Kiwi Encounter</b> <i>By Barbara Wooddisse</i>	23
<b>Bird Quiz</b> <i>By Alan Kydd</i>	8	<b>Club Members</b>	24
<b>A Whiter Shade of Pale</b> <i>By John Jackson</i>	8	<b>Committee Members</b>	24
<b>Tom Ferguson</b> <i>By John Wooddisse</i>	9	<b>Prospective Members</b>	24
<b>Monarch of the Fen</b> <i>By Graham Games</i>	9	<b>Quiz Answers</b>	24

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 reports from our field trips and of sightings in the valley. A special thank you once again to David Gains who has proof read this edition. AWK

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Front Cover Photograph: Great Spotted Woodpeckers © Alan Kydd  
Great Spotted Woodpeckers seem to be doing rather well in the valley. This was taken using a Canon EOS 7D SLR with EF 100-400mm f/4.5-5.6L IS USM with settings of ISO 2000, F/5.6 and 1/160th sec.  
The nest was in Padley woods in the spring of 2011.



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# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

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

This year, 2012, is the 22nd anniversary of the Club and despite the advancing years of most members we are still a very active club with about thirty bird watching walks or reserve visits each year.

The spring/summer of 2011 was a much better year for our summer visiting songbirds. Swallows and Martins arrived on

time and many Warbler species, particularly Willow Warblers were more numerous than the previous two years.

After the very cold winter of 2010/2011 some of the smaller resident birds were down in numbers; Wrens and Wagtails for example. I am sure their numbers will soon be back to normal if we have a mild winter.

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 bird watching in 2012.

# BIRD FOOD MATTERS

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It has been estimated that 60% of householders put out food for our avian visitors. From the traditional offering of kitchen scraps during the winter months, the bird food industry has developed over the last fifty years or so to provide a wide array of targeted foods for an increasing range of birds.

Probably the most important food in terms of volume and calorific value introduced to the UK has been the peanut. The story goes that in the 1930s, a bag of peanuts for human consumption split, emptying the contents onto a Liverpool dockside. The spillage brought birds swooping down to feed and from then on peanuts became the favourite food across British gardens. When I was a child, my mother used to buy peanuts still in their cases, from our local greengrocer. It was my job to thread them in a long line with a length of cotton, and hang them from a branch for the Tits. But I felt sorry for the tiny birds having to spend

lots of time and energy drilling holes in the shells to get at the nuts, so I used to help them by starting off the holes for them. I also remember melting dripping into a cup, with some bread and bacon rind, as a forerunner to the fat blocks you can buy today.

Before the growth of garden centres, supermarkets and specialist providers, bird foods were sold through pet shops and market stalls. Seed mixes were offered alongside peanuts which were exclusively cereal based, and originally intended for caged birds, such as parrots and budgies. Where sunflower seeds were included, they were the striped ones. As a young girl, I couldn't understand why so much was left to rot, but now realise that most small British birds bills are not designed to crack open a large wheat kernel, or hard millet seed. Nyger seed was only used as a "tonic" for caged birds, as it has such a high oil content. Incidentally, the main reason for

the continual increase in prices of most of the our bird foods now is because sunflowers, nyger and peanuts are all “oilseeds”, and are therefore linked to vegetable and mineral oil prices on the global commodity markets.

Since the early 1980s black sunflower seeds have been used, rather than the traditional striped ones, as the oil content is much higher and the thinner seed coat is easier for birds to crack. The 1990s saw the arrival of sunflower hearts (with the husk already removed). This means that birds with smaller beaks, such as Goldfinches and Redpolls, have access to this high energy food, and there is no messy deposit of husks under the feeder. I reckon that,

weight for weight, there isn't much difference in price either, as you pay about half the price for black sunflower seeds, but each kernel is about half the total weight of the whole seed. Even Robins and Blackbirds love the sunflower hearts, although they could never attempt to open the husks, and they are a good supplement to the worms and insects they find elsewhere. I have never had any success with mealworms, but I know these birds will sometimes even eat them out of your hand.

As we learn more about our birds' preferences and needs, I wonder what different types of food will become popular in the future?

## NEW ZEALAND BIRDING

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We visited the North Island of New Zealand in late November 2009 (springtime down there). We stayed with an old friend who lived on the edge of Auckland Bay. She was also a warden on Tiritiri Matangi Island, 25km from the centre of Auckland. The island has been restored to a forest haven for native New Zealand birds with all mammal predators eradicated. We had a whole day on the island and saw ten endemic species including a Takahe, like a large Purple Gallinule with 'attitude'.

We then drove north to the Bay of Islands, a scenically beautiful area with Australian Gannets diving into the deep blue sea. One of the most notable things about New Zealand birds is that the dawn and evening chorus is mostly British birds, Blackbird, House Sparrow, Skylark, Starling, Song Thrush, Chaffinch, Greenfinch and Yellowhammer. The only exception is the Tui, a common Blackbird-sized native bird.

It appears that most of the native songbirds were forest dwellers, some of which were also flightless. The European settlers to New Zealand cleared away most of the native forest to create rich pasture land for sheep and cattle. As a result of this and introduced ground predators, they missed the sound of songbirds and so introduced some common European birds to the islands.



Takahe © John Wooddisse

After staying with our friend we headed south calling at Miranda on the Firth of Thames, 50km from Auckland. The main attraction here was the most accessible wader sites in the country, and the only bird observatory. A bird hide on the shoreline provided excellent views of a good variety of Waders as they moved to within feet of the hide with the incoming high tide. Here

we saw Bar-tailed Godwit, Pied Oystercatcher, New Zealand Dotterel, a Sharp-tailed Sandpiper and many other Waders and sea birds. The most interesting birds we saw were Wrybills which are the size and colour of Ringed Plovers but with a longish black bill that is curved to the right at its tip.

## A MISERABLE MORNING?

It's a miserable April morning. There's rain in the air and the forecast promises heavy rain by noon. After yesterday's rain, it's too wet to do much in the garden. Maybe I could drive up to see if the Snipe are about up by Scaperlow? I'll have a coffee first – maybe the rain will arrive early and I'll have an excuse to stay in. Suitably refreshed there's still rain in the air as I get my (wet) boots on by the side of the road. There's a distant Chaffinch singing deep in the wood below Millstone Edge. A Wren calls from the dead bracken over towards Higger Tor and a forlorn sounding Willow Warbler tries to lighten the mood from somewhere near the Millstone – but it's otherwise very quiet, and there's not a single bird to be seen. As I walk along Scaperlow's drive, a Meadow Pipit lets me know I'm unwelcome and is the first bird I see. Three Jackdaws bicker as they drift over high above. A Pheasant raucously shouts from somewhere not so far away but still no sign of those Snipe. What's that on the wall at the far side of the grassy field? The Mistle Thrush rattles to make it easier for me. A Red Grouse on the slopes of Carl Wark tells me to 'go back' and I am tempted! Just then a Linnet arrives singing strongly and lands in some nearby gorse to give me a better view.

Well, the rain hasn't yet arrived with any force, so maybe I'll persevere. There's another Willow Warbler calling behind Scaperlow and a Song Thrush starts singing. It can just be seen in the wood above the Millstone. The plaintive cries of a distant Curlew keep me going and a Lapwing starts its display flight near Mitchell Field. Just then I begin to hear the first Snipe calling. The monotonous **chip-per chip-per** isn't so far away but it can't be seen.

Maybe things are looking up at last. Meadow Pipits begin to appear from both sides of the track. Several are doing their



Snipe © Alan Kydd

parachute displays despite the weather. A Pied Wagtail sits bedraggled on the roof of Scrapperlow and seems undismayed by the noise and activity on the other side of the house - much of the roof seems to be under repair – the two workmen huddled and hooded. A Blackbird flies low across the fields with its beak full of fodder for a hungry brood somewhere not too far away. More Lapwings make their presence felt as I start across the track towards Mitchell Field and I can hear Wren, Robin, Chaffinch and another Willow Warbler singing as the sky continues to darken. I'm still reasonably dry. Great, there's another Snipe calling – and isn't that another over there? I know I won't see them on the ground but then a Curlew comes to see what I'm up to as I start making my way back to the car. What is that bird that's dropped down by the wall over there? It

seems to have very white tail feathers. As I get closer, it flies up onto the wall and the male Wheatear's white rear confirms his identity. A Carrion Crow flies purposefully north as yet another Snipe starts calling.

What's that flying high over there – at last a Snipe – no there are two of them and another over there and is that really a fourth behind me – yes it's drumming. And so are two of them in front! Three birds drumming and four all in view at the same time – and for several minutes! The rest of my short walk is less eventful with only a couple of courting Curlews in a nearby field being disturbed by a flock of hungry Starlings. As I reach the car, the lively notes of a singing Skylark and a scolding Reed Bunting complete a memorable hour. Not such a miserable morning after all!

## LITTLE BITTERN

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A very small Bittern, possibly the smallest of the heron family, which breeds in southern Europe, across north Africa and into southern Asia. It lives largely in reed beds, like our Great Bittern, and feeds on fish, amphibians and insects. This photo was taken at the Albufera reserve in Mallorca. Even there it is VERY elusive.

It is a very rare visitor to the U.K. but has been known to breed here —even as close to us as Potteric Carr! Three young were raised back in 1984.



# A NATURAL PECKING ORDER

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Who's the boss bird in your neck of the woods? Around our garden the Carrion Crow seems to rule the roost. Crows are one of the first birds to be heard and seen in the morning and the last at night. Throughout the day they keep an eye open as to what's going on in their patch. They even keep an eye on thieving Magpies which take songbird nestlings. Crows will intercept the Magpie and steal it's booty but they are very wary and will not come to bird tables, preferring to watch and wait. Rooks, Jackdaws and Magpies on the other hand will visit the bird table.



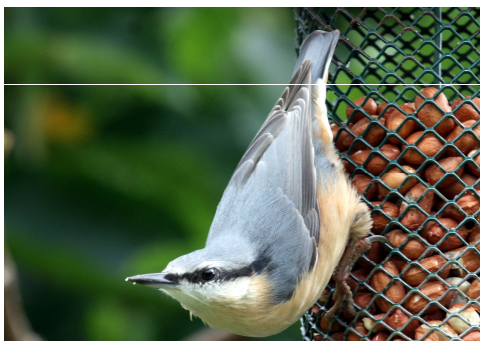
Carrion Crow © Alan Kydd

Of course birds of prey, who earn their living by killing other birds and animals, are at the top of the tree when it comes to who kills who. Sparrowhawks mostly take birds and occasionally small mammals. Kestrels take mostly small mammals and occasionally small birds. Buzzards take a wide variety of prey from earthworms to rabbits and medium-sized birds and that's why Buzzards have recently become the most widespread bird of prey in Britain.

At night of course the Tawny Owl is the top bird, feeding on anything from rabbits to small birds. Long-Eared Owls specialize in

feeding on roosting songbirds, and Barn Owls on small animals.

In gardens and around bird tables there is a natural pecking order amongst song birds. Of course size matters but there are a few who always seem to punch above their weight. Mistle Thrushes will boss Blackbirds, particularly when guarding a bush of holly berries in winter and Blackbirds boss Song Thrushes. At bird tables and hanging garden feeders no one will stand up to a Greater Spotted Woodpecker and a Nuthatch with its chisel-shaped bill takes no prisoners.



Nuthatch © Alan Kydd

Robins always seem to boss Dunnocks but very occasionally the worm turns and a Dunnock will fight back. Goldfinches and particularly Siskins, despite their diminutive size, successfully challenge larger birds on hanging bird feeders.

These observations of bird behaviour come from many years of bird watching and highlight what can be gained by just watching birds as well as counting and identifying them.

# BIRD QUIZ

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This year's quiz is all about local names or old names for British Birds. Some are summer/winter visitors but most are resident all year round. See how many you can get before resorting to Google! Answers are on the back cover.

1. In Scotland, what is a Green Linnet?
2. The Daker Hen is the old name for which bird?
3. In Dorset, what is a Reddock?
4. In East Anglia, which bird might be called a Mavis?
5. Which bird used to be known as a Sea Dotterel?
6. In Aberdeen, what might be called a Blue Cap?
7. A Mire-drum is an old name for which bird?
8. In Shropshire, what might a Black-headed Tomtit be?
9. In Gloucestershire which common bird might be called a Collie?
10. Which bird was once known as a Water Ouzel?
11. In Devon, what might a Crackie be?
12. In Yorkshire which bird might be called a Little Blackcap?
13. A Heather-bleater is an old name for what?
14. In Dorset, what is a Pope?
15. King Harry Redcap was used in Shropshire for which bird?
16. In Aberdeen again—what is a Hedge Spurgie?
17. A Grey Spadger in Antrim is what?
18. In Surrey, what might be called a Ditch Watcher?
19. A common bird in Somerset might be called a Sheep Stare. Which?
20. An easier one to finish—a Blue Bonnet in Scotland is what?

## A WHITER SHADE OF PALE

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Over recent years Mandarin ducks have become established in the area. They can be frequently seen on the Derwent and Wye rivers, as well as many lakes and reservoirs. Two pairs have taken up residence on Damflask reservoir, at Bradfield, in the north of the Peak District. The two pairs can easily be identified apart as one of the females is completely white. This duck has all the features of a normal female except for its white plumage and pink beak. Is this a common occurrence?... I wonder?



Mandarin © John Jackson



# TOM FERGUSON

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We were all saddened by the death in October 2011 of Tom Ferguson, one of our bird club's founder members. Tom had many interests besides bird watching, but took a very keen interest in birds and was a very good companion on many birding field trips with the club over the last twenty-three years. As his interest in bird watching progressed he visited far away places such as Iceland and Norway looking for birds.

We will always remember Tom as a polite, interesting and generous person who took to bird watching with a real passion.

*Tom survived his wife Angela by a little over a year. You would be hard pressed to find a more pleasant and helpful couple. It was Tom and Angela who introduced Di and I to the bird club so we owe them both a big thank you for starting us off on our birding adventures. They are both very much missed. AWK*

## MONARCH OF THE FEN

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The Fen, is not 'far away' like Norfolk but 'near', right on our doorstep just 5 miles or so south east of Hathersage.

We are lucky to have such a mini wilderness nearby, though it wasn't always like this. Rumour has it that it was once the site of a village, now lost, and there is even a rhyme to this effect.

“When Chesterfield was gorse and broom,  
Leash Fen was a market town;  
Now Chesterfield's a market town,  
Leash Fen is but gorse and broom.”

To many of you “Monarch” will bring to mind wild Red Deer but this is not my monarch, although superb views of these animals can be had with a little patience nearer to Hathersage, on Big Moor. On occasions I have seen up to 150 of them but they are most impressive in the autumn rut when the stags are bellowing and fighting for supremacy. I have it on good authority that the stags can even be heard on a calm

morning in Hathersage!

The Fen could be dismissed by many as a desolate, miry bog, hardly worthy of a second glance. Recounting a recent experience of mine may change your mind; yes, it is about birds and one species in particular.

The delights of spring may be found in many areas of the Peak District and the Fen is no exception. Curlew, Lapwing and Snipe all give pleasure to the birdwatcher but it is in winter that, to me, one of our most stunning birds may be seen. Often there is not a bird to be found but patience may be rewarded, for example, with views of the elusive Great Grey Shrike, but even that is not my “top bird”.

One late afternoon in January just as the sun was setting I scanned the Fen for the umpteenth time and there it was, a good half mile away, a ghostly shape, flying low over the tussocks and heather. Yes, you

have guessed right – a Short-eared Owl.



Short-eared Owl © Jon Lowes

I drove round to the far side of the Fen to get a closer view, set up my scope and watched, mesmerised as the owl hunted backwards and forwards a few feet high as it quartered the ground. It flew with brief hovers and sudden plunges, interspersed with rapid flight to a fresh hunting patch but always in good view.

I could see every feather, the pale trailing edge to the wing, darker wing tips and carpal joints, a glimpse of its eyes. What a cracking bird. I felt privileged as I watched for a full ten minutes before it did a final stoop. Perhaps it was successful and grabbed an unfortunate vole. Another owl appeared some distance away to add icing to my cake and there were reports of five, yes five, on the Fen.

It was time for home. I drove further down the lane and there, perched on a post not 20 metres from the road was, yes, another owl. I stopped the car and slowly reversed back for a better view. The owl turned its head and his dark centred, lemon-yellow eyes looked piercingly straight at me as if to chide me for being on his patch. My best ever views. What an experience, tingling toes and frozen fingers were all forgotten and those late afternoon images will stay with me for ever.

He is my “**Monarch of the Fen**”.

## **No More Grouching**

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Following on from my earlier exploits to find Black Grouse in Wales, I have embarked on two further expeditions. The first of these ended like the earlier ones – no Black Grouse but some considerable pain. Briefly, on our descent from the moors, the footpath subsided behind Chris, who was immediately in front of me, and I ended up lying in a gorse bush! So, would the second attempt be any less painful or, indeed, even rewarding?

We arrived at Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust’s Glaslyn reserve (Grid Ref. SN829942) in glorious sunshine. After just

a few minutes we were delighted by the spectacle of a Red Kite quartering the surrounding moors. By the time we left, about half an hour or so later, the sun had hidden itself behind some clouds and we were being pelted by hail!

From Glaslyn, our 4x4 bounced along a pot-hole ridden track towards our intended destination – the starting point (SN819916) for our trek up Plynlimon. After pulling on boots, gaiters and fleeces we set off along the valley floor alongside Afon Hengwm (pronounced Avon Hengoom). Everything was going well until the concoction of the

bumpy ride and the chilli con carne of the day before stimulated an undesirable response from my alimentary canal! I hope it is sufficient to say that relief was eventually obtained behind a derelict wall.



Afon Hengwm © David Gains

A while later, we paused for lunch alongside a farmhouse ruin, though my appetite was a little under the weather... Talking of the weather, it was at this moment that the overcast skies and sunny intervals were abruptly replaced by heavy sleet and more hail. You may be wondering the time of year – it was mid-May.

Donning waterproofs, woolly hats and mitts, we packed our rucksacks and set about crossing the river. This was surprisingly difficult, the bridge had been washed away and the river was a raging torrent, with slippery rocks spaced inconveniently more than a stride apart. Nevertheless, we managed eventually a way across at the foot of Craig Y Eglwys. By now, however, there was more than an inch of sleet and hail on the ground and with no sign of it letting up. We decided reluctantly that discretion was the better part of valour and not to tackle Plynlimon and, instead, work our way back to the car across Bryn Cras.

Having struggled up Craig Y Eglwys, over hail-covered grass and moss-covered rocks, the view from the top was quite breath taking. Despite the covering of hail, which barely shows on the photo, Plynlimon now seemed to be well-covered in snow.



Plynlimon © David Gains

During our returning tramp across the moor, we encountered dozens of Wheatears and Meadow Pipits, but little else. We made a minor detour to find the source of the River Severn which, we were surprised to see, was more than just a gurgling puddle of muddy water.

As we resumed our walk, we heard suddenly a series of “guck guck” calls in the distance – a Black Grouse! We waited for a time but despite our hopes of seeing it take flight or otherwise revealing itself in a fanfare, it did not.

Finally, we got back to the car, tired but contented and, better still, I had now at least heard a Black Grouse, even if I had not seen one!

# FIELD TRIP HIGHLIGHTS

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The highlights from our field trips in 2010 and 2011 are summarised here. More detailed reports are available on our web site and include previous years. The numbers of birds recorded on the day are shown in brackets after the dates.

## Chatsworth Park

*10<sup>th</sup> March 2010 (31) and 25<sup>th</sup> November 2011 (34)*

In 2010 there were few birds to be seen or heard on the climb up to Beeley hilltop. The only birds of note were a few Stock Doves. One or two Brambling and Siskin could be heard calling in the woods.



Brambling © Alan Kydd

On the lake by Swiss Cottage there was a pair of Mandarin, with a few Tufted Ducks and a flock of Canada Geese. A female Goosander landed on the lake as we left. On the lawns by the house, there were no less than 7 Song Thrushes! On the river were 3 Goosanders and a pair of Grey Wagtails. On our 2011 walk, there were masses of Coot on and around the river. On the lake by Swiss cottage were a dozen Teal, a Goldeneye and a drake Shoveler. There was a Little Grebe on the river and a couple of Goosander.

## Linacre Reservoirs

*23 March 2011 (33)*

The first club visit to this nearby location turned out to be on a warm and sunny spring morning. We walked around all three reservoirs before retiring for a good pub lunch in Barlow. Highlights included splendid views of a Cormorant perched high in a tree directly overhead, with both Little and Great Crested Grebes in pristine breeding plumage on the water. We saw or heard most of the expected woodland birds including an extremely loud Great Spotted Woodpecker. There was a splendid Grey Wagtail on the reservoir outfall.

## Carr Vale

*23 April 2010 (61) and 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2011 (54)*

Once again one of our most rewarding field trips didn't disappoint in either year! Both visits gave us perfect weather and were brilliant for Warblers, including reeling Grasshopper Warblers. 2010 was good for butterflies too. In 2010, highlights included Reed Bunting, Yellowhammer, Bullfinch, Yellow Wagtail, Little Owl, and at least 3 Willow Tits.



Yellow Wagtail © David Gains

There were also more Waders in 2010

including a pair of Oystercatchers, at least 4 Little Ringed Plovers, three Common Sandpipers and a Redshank. The single Pink-footed Goose which was there in both 2009 and 2010 wasn't seen in 2011. A Tawny Owl surprised us on the Stockley Trail in 2010.

### Clumber Park

*1 May 2010 (74) and 30<sup>th</sup> April 2011 (65)*

The club's dawn chorus visits here were both blessed with fine weather. The regular warblers were there in both years and 2011 added Grasshopper Warbler. 2010 highlights included Turtle Dove, Woodlark, Yellow Wagtail and Tree Pipit. Cuckoos were seen in both years as were Mandarin Ducks. In 2010, we had great views of a drake Mandarin perched in a tree as we had lunch beneath! In 2011 we flushed a Greenshank, a rare find here. We also had



Greenshank © Alan Kydd

excellent views of a Green Woodpecker. The only disappointment was our failure to find any Woodlarks in 2011. Hopefully this does NOT mean the terrible winter weather has caused these birds to disappear permanently from this site.

Our summer evening visit on 19th July 2011 was excellent after bad weather prevented our trip in 2010. It began to get dark quite early and we heard our first

Nightjar churring soon after 9:30PM. There followed a half hour during which we were treated to some superb display flights by one bird which conveniently flew across open sky many times but also showed his true colours by occasionally dropping down to give us good views of the plumage against the dark of the background trees.

### Whisby Pits

*15 May 2010 (51) and 14 May 2011 (63)*

In 2010 the day started very quietly with only a few very short snatches of Nightingale song in the usual spots. The weather was warm and dry and the Warblers were in full song with many Willow Warblers and Chiffchaffs. We had loads of opportunities to compare the songs of Garden Warbler and Blackcap but only found a single Lesser Whitethroat. There seemed to be fewer Common Whitethroats than usual but the others made up for that. Later we were rewarded with a very obliging Nightingale which sang beautifully on the edge of one of the main paths and gave excellent views too. Other highlights included distant views of a Black-necked Grebe in full summer plumage and a Hobby. The old Sand Martin colony was still deserted in 2010 although an artificial



Garganey © David Gains

bank built near the visitor centre was very active in 2011. The 2011 highlights included at least 3 Lesser Whitethroats, 2 Grey Partridges, a Black-necked Grebe once again, and a Garganey. Nightingales were more tricky this year with only a couple heard – very late in the day!

### Padley Gorge

6<sup>th</sup> June 2011 (30)

For once we saw pretty much all of the target birds on an excellent morning visit. A Cuckoo could be heard from the woods near the car park. On the way across the heath to the wood, we had good views of a male Stonechat, displaying Tree Pipit and several dozen Meadow Pipits. There were lots of Pied Flycatchers and Redstarts busily feeding young. Both Blue Tits and Great Tits were feeding fledglings, and a Treecreeper had young that we failed to find. A pair of Jays were giving a grey squirrel a very hard time, or was it the other way around!



Eurasian Jay © Alan Kydd

There was a pair of Wood Warblers busily feeding young in their nest with a Spotted Flycatcher visiting a probable nest nearby. To cap that, there was also a Great Spotted Woodpecker nest close by, with an obliging youngster showing well at the hole. (see

cover photo!) On the heath above the wood as we left, we found a pair of Whinchats with a 3rd higher up near the main road. We enjoyed a truly memorable few hours.

### North Cave

7 July 2010 (63) and 5<sup>th</sup> July 2011 (54)

This location continues to be rewarding and as gravel extraction is gradually completed over the next year or so, plans are in place to enlarge and develop the site even more. There are now some excellent maps on the hide walls which show how the reserve will be expanded once the sand and gravel extraction taking place to the west and south is finished. One new hide is now completed and the reserve will more than double in area with several new pools and large expanses of wetlands being created. In 2010 waders included Lapwing, Oystercatcher, Avocet, Snipe, Ringed Plover, Little Ringed Plover, Green Sandpiper and Common Sandpiper. Once again the rarer farmland birds were found including Yellow Wagtail and Corn Bunting in both years. Other highlights included watching 3 Stoats, presumably youngsters, playing alongside the reserve margin, a Red-legged Partridge surveying the area next to the working gravel pit and a couple of Black Swans.



Red-legged Partridge © David Gains



Wildfowl were well represented with many fledglings and juveniles confirming breeding among Mallard, Shoveler, Gadwall and Great Crested Grebe. In 2011 there were even more, with Mallard, Great Crested Grebe, Shoveler, Tufted Duck, Coot, Moorhen and Shelduck with young. Waders were largely absent in 2011 apart from a lone Green Sandpiper and the usual Lapwing flock.

### **Tansley Dale**

*13<sup>th</sup> July 2011*

The club's first visit to Tansley Dale was on a fine but breezy morning. Birds were not very evident as the breeding season was almost over but we did see several young Redstarts and a Raven appeared briefly over the skyline. Many Swallows hawked for insects over the pastures near Litton and there were numerous House Sparrows. There were plenty of wild flowers and butterflies. Meadow Browns were very common and in one area there were five



Dark Green Fritillary © Graham Games

Small Heaths. A stunning Small Copper settled long enough for us to marvel at its markings and a Brown Argus stopped to be photographed. Common Blues, Small Tortoiseshell, Green-Veined and other Whites were also seen. The banks of the dale were brightened with Wild Thyme,

Rockrose and several other species including Wild Onion. The creamy flowers of Dropwort were showing well in several places. On a wooded bank we found a dozen or more fine examples of Nettle-Leaved Bellflower standing almost a metre high, but the highlight was the Orchids. A single Pyramidal Orchid and hundreds of Fragrant Orchids graced the bank.

### **Potteric Carr**

*2 August 2010 (56) and 22 February 2011*

*(46)*

In our summer visit Kingfishers were feeding young on Piper Marsh. Waders were represented by Lapwing, Snipe, Black-tailed Godwit, Green Sandpiper (4) and Common Sandpiper. A pair of Lesser Black-backed gulls bred successfully on Huxter Well Marsh. We were still able to find Blackcap, Willow Warbler, Whitethroat and Reed Warbler. No fewer than 5 Little Egrets were present. Our February visit disappointed in that we failed to find any Bitterns. However, there were hundreds of Lapwings on Huxter Well Marsh and about 70 Golden Plover. Other highlights included a couple of Treecreepers, a small flock of Redpolls, several Bullfinches and a Goldcrest.



Bullfinch © Alan Kydd

## Blacktoft Sands

7 September 2010 (50) and 31<sup>st</sup> August 2011 (51)

2010 was one of the best club visits to Blacktoft for some years. There were Green and Wood Sandpipers, Common and Spotted Redshanks, lots of Ruff and Lapwings, Snipe, at least 2 Little Stints and 2 Greenshanks, a Curlew, a Black-tailed Godwit and a Little Ringed Plover, dozens of Dunlin together with at least 15 Curlew Sandpipers; a total of fourteen wader species! Remarkably this species total was repeated in 2011 but with 7 Ringed Plovers replacing the lone Curlew on our 2010 list. Highlights in 2010 included Yellow Wagtails, a very close Barn Owl 'flyby', and excellent close views of Marsh Harrier and Sparrowhawk. Yellow Wagtails were also present in 2011 (at least 8) and no fewer than 7 Water Rails were seen. A Hobby was hunting over the river too.



Lapwing © Alan Kydd

## Far Ings

19th September 2011 (53)

The trip to Far Ings seemed disappointing, probably because most of the more interesting birds were seen from such a distance. The waders comprised Ringed Plover, Lapwing, Ruff, Snipe, Redshank, Curlew, Dunlin and Black-tailed Godwit

but they were all so far away!

Other highlights included Goldcrest, Treecreeper and a distant Yellow Wagtail. On our way home we called for a short while to see what could be found on the river at Read's Island near South Ferriby. We were rewarded by good views of a hunting Peregrine and a couple of Marsh Harriers drifting over the island on which we were surprised to see a small herd of fallow deer!



Peregrine © Jon Lowes

## Old Moor Wetlands

6<sup>th</sup> October 2010 (51)

Despite heavy rain early in the day the weather was perfect when we arrived at the reserve. The garden feeders were very quiet but a couple of juvenile Bullfinches and a Willow Tit were seen. The water level from both Wath Ings and the Wader Scrape seemed very low but there was plenty to be found. There were 100's of Lapwings and Golden Plovers, regularly disturbed by a Sparrowhawk and settling in a variety of different spots. Other waders included 3 or 4 Greenshanks, at least 6 Green Sandpipers, about 13 Dunlin, 2 Little Stints, 3 well hidden Snipe and at least 6 Ruff giving a total of 8 wader species. Other highlights included a couple of Lesser Redpolls feeding with a small flock of Goldfinches.

# BURMA—THE GOLDEN LAND

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I recently visited Myanmar (formerly Burma) where foreign visitors have been discouraged for the past 15 years, but during the last year it has opened up and tourists are actively welcomed to this beautiful country. We flew to Yangon (formerly Rangoon) via Bangkok, on New Year's Eve, landing at Bangkok airport just as Britain was seeing in the New Year. We celebrated with Singapore Gin Sling (yes, I know, wrong country!) in the airport at 7.00AM their time - much to the amusement of the airport staff!

Driving from the airport to the hotel the first thing we noticed was that the Burmese drive on the right ... in right hand drive vehicles. We spent one night in Yangon, where we met the rest of the group of 15, mostly Americans and Australians. During a brief tour of the city we visited the magnificent Shwedagon Paya (pagoda). It consists of a main stupa (zedi) covered in gold leaf and 1000s of jewels. The top is tipped with a single 76-carat diamond. The Pagoda is in a huge complex of smaller zedi, statues, temples, shrines, images and small pavilions.



We flew north to Mandalay, staying 3 nights in a hotel overlooking the

Ayeyarwady (or Irrawaddy) River where local people were living on the river bank. Everywhere we went the locals were extremely friendly, wanting to practice their English and to know about Manchester United and whether we know David Beckham! They asked us to take photos of their children, very few asking for money despite extreme poverty. We took a boat to a village on the banks of the river to visit Mingun Paya, which would have been the world's biggest stupa had it been finished! It is described in guidebooks as "The world's largest pile of bricks".

We returned to Mandalay to see yet more pagodas and Buddha images. Mhamuni Paya houses a Buddha image believed to be over 2000 years old. Over the centuries so much gold leaf has been applied by worshippers (male) that the figure is now entirely covered in a knobbly 6 inch layer of pure gold. This is the second most important pilgrimage site for Burmese Buddhists, the first being the Shwedagon Paya in Yangon.

The "World's largest book" is found in the grounds of Kuthodaw Paya at the foot of Mandalay Hill, and consists of 729 text-inscribed marble slabs, each housed in its own small stupa, together presenting the entire Tripitaka (Buddhist canon). We were taken in trucks up Mandalay Hill to Sutaungpyai Paya, where young monks who want to practice their English gather to chat to tourists (photo overleaf).

At sunset we went to Amarapura, a previous Royal capital, to walk across U Bein's Bridge, the world's longest teak footbridge, which curves 1300 yards across Taungthaman Lake. The lake supposedly



gets its name from an ogre who came here looking for Buddha. During the dry season (winter) the bridge is high above the water and much of it crosses seasonal vegetable gardens, but during the wet season (summer) the lake rises several feet and laps just below the floor planks. A few of the 1060 poles on which it stands have been replaced by concrete supports. The fabulous sunsets are best viewed from a small boat on the lake.



From Mandalay we cruised for 8 hours along the Ayeyarwady River to Bagan for a 3 night stay. During the 11th to 13th Centuries over 4000 religious structures were built here, an area of approximately 26 square miles. Over 2000 temples and pagodas survive, and Bagan is considered to be the most important archaeological site

in SE Asia. Many buildings were destroyed or badly damaged during a severe earthquake in 1975, but some have been restored. We visited a number of pagodas including climbing up the outside of Dhammayazika pagoda for magnificent views of the surrounding area (photo below). We also visited Ananda Paya, built between 1090 and 1105. It contains



four 31 foot standing Buddhas made of teak and covered in gold. Ananda is one of the finest, largest and best preserved temples in Bagan.

We also visited Mt Popa, the spiritual HQ to Myanmar's '37 nat' (spirit beings) and so an important venue for nat worship. Mt Popa is an extinct volcano with a temple at the top accessed by 777 steps. As you climb them it is hard to avoid the monkeys hoping for food, and the locals selling cold drinks and asking for tips for keeping the steps clean. Most of the steps weren't very clean but where they were, we were happy to give a tip!

From Bagan we flew to Heho and transferred by bus to Khaung Daing village at the northern end of Inle Lake. We stayed in a hotel where the rooms were individual chalets around the edge of the water. It was beautiful, with mountains in the

background across the lake ... a glorious place to relax.



For 2 days we were transported around the lake by boat, visiting villages built on stilts, local craft workshops, and busy local markets. We spent half a day walking through the countryside, stopping in villages to visit schools, and talking to local farmers and families. We saw the famous leg-rowing fishermen who paddle their boats with 1 leg wrapped round the paddle - amazing balance but it didn't look very good for the hips!



We flew back to Yangon and set off by bus for Mount Kyaiktyo to visit Golden Rock, the third most important pilgrimage site for Burmese Buddhists. The bus only took us so far, then we left our main luggage and took an overnight bag. We were packed like sardines into an overcrowded truck,

and hurtled up the mountain, round hairpin bends, for 40 minutes, then we had to alight and walk the last 45 minutes to our mountain top hotel. Four of our group opted to be carried up by sedan chair, and the rest of us paid boys to carry our backpacks ... it was steep! After dumping bags in the hotel we walked up to Golden Rock at the summit of Mt Kyaiktyo. It is a small pagoda built on top of a granite boulder covered with gold leaves pasted on by devotees.



According to legend, the Golden Rock itself is precariously perched on a strand of the Buddha's hair. There were hundreds of pilgrims chanting, lighting candles and meditating all through the night. Only men are allowed to affix gold leaf squares on the rock's surface.

Next morning we made our way down the same way we had come and spent a night in Yangon before driving to Ngwe Saung Beach on the Bay of Bengal. The 13 mile palm fringed beach was an idyllic place to end our holiday and we spent the days walking along the beach, watching the local fisherman bring in their catch, swimming and exploring the nearby village, and sipping cocktails while watching the sun set over the sea (photo overleaf).





However, I did come across a lizard in the grounds of the hotel at the Lake (see photo) but I've no idea what it is.



On the way back to Yangon we stopped at a small elephant camp where we were able to have a ride through the forest and along the river. Apart from these elephants we didn't see much wildlife throughout the trip, and very few birds - lots of Egrets, Drongos, Sparrows and Ducks, but little else.

Myanmar is a great country to visit, preferably before it is over run with tourists.

## GRIFFON VULTURES

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We have been visiting our son's house in southern Portugal for the past nine years. Amongst many things of interest it has provided a real eye opener to many new southern European birds.

On one or two occasions while we have been there in late October we have seen a large flock of Griffon Vultures flying southwest over the Sierra de Alcaria do Cume in the late afternoon. On occasions when we have not been there, these birds have been reported overnight roosting in the area at the same time of year, before setting off the next day. Where are they coming from or going to and why always within a week or so at the same time of year?

Griffon Vultures are resident breeding birds throughout the more mountainous parts of Spain and spread out over a wide area of Spain and Portugal in search of carrion. We have seen them breeding in the Picos de Europa and in Extramadura at the

Monfrague National Park. Apparently some overwinter in North Africa crossing the Strait of Gibraltar, but where are the ones going that regularly pass through the northern Algarve? One can only assume that they are moving away from the colder north and central Spain to overwinter in warmer south-west Portugal where there a good supply of carrion.



Griffon Vultures © John Wooddisse



# HOPE VALLEY BIRD REPORT

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During 2010/2011 a total of 113/111 birds were reported within our recording area. We have been keeping a monthly record and the details can be found on our web site at [www.hvbc.org.uk](http://www.hvbc.org.uk).

## 2010 summary

Common (mealy) Redpolls were on the feeders at Longshaw in January and February with larger flocks of Lesser Redpoll and Siskin. Lesser Redpoll were recorded regularly once more this year.



Lesser Redpoll © Alan Kydd

Teal were at Calver Marsh in February and again in November. The heavy snow and extreme cold returned again this winter. Grey Wagtails seemed to be missing from the river until April. Grey Partridge were recorded in several months from April around Hathersage and Calver, but there were no sightings of Red-legged Partridge at all. The first Hobby was spotted in April and more reports came for 3 other months this summer. Peregrines were also found in April and they too seem to be doing quite well, being seen in another 4 months. A few Dotterel dropped in once again – on Abney Moor in May. Stock Dove sightings are quite rare but birds were reported in

April and November this year. Sadly, Lesser Whitethroats were only reported in one month. One was singing in Hathersage for most of May. A Grasshopper Warbler was heard reeling on our Castleton walk, also in May. As last year, Red-breasted Mergansers were few and far between with only a couple of reports in April and June, unlike Goosander which were reported every month and almost certainly raised young in the valley this year. A few small flocks of Crossbill were flying through during April, May and June. Single Red Kites were over in both May and June. Woodcock were seen in May and June around Longshaw and Stanage.



Woodcock © Alan Kydd

A Whimbrel flew over Abney Clough in July. A Black Redstart was at Longshaw, also in July. We no longer seem to see Sand Martins much in the valley but some were reported from the slopes of Win Hill in August. A few Willow Tits were between Calver village and Coombsdale in August. Kingfishers were only seen in two months this summer and seem to have suffered severely from 2 consecutive hard winters. A Marsh Tit was around Calver Weir in

August. The only Osprey reported this year flew over in September. A Great Grey Shrike was at Longshaw in October - on 20th. A single Twite was at Curbar also in October. A Black Grouse was seen flying over the Burbage valley towards Stanage one morning in October. At least 2 Short-eared Owls were between Curbar Edge and the village also in October. A Merlin was reported in the valley for the first time in several years in November. The hard winter caused huge numbers of Waxwings to arrive in the U.K. and several were seen in the valley during November and December.



Waxwing © Alan Kydd

The first Goldeneye for several years was reported above Calver Weir for a few days in December. A Common Gull was over Froggatt, also in December.

### 2011 Summary

January started wet and warm, quite a change from the long Arctic spell experienced last month. Mandarins were reported in January and continued to be seen every month once more this year. Goosanders were around in January and some stayed to breed in the valley again. A few Waxwings were seen in January and February and a flock were still in the valley as late as May this year. Once again Teal were found at Calver Marshes - in January and April. A Red Kite was over in February

flying south from Stanage Edge. A Common (mealy) Redpoll was in the Edale valley in March but there were no further sightings this year. Red-breasted Mergansers were only seen in March and April. A Tree Sparrow was in a Hathersage garden in March and maybe the same bird was also spotted in the Edale valley during the same week.



Tree Sparrow © Alan Kydd

Woodcock were found in March and continued to be discovered every month until mid-summer. A returning Osprey was seen flying north in April, and the first of many Redstarts arrived. There have been a lot more Redstarts around this year than in recent years. A pair of Greylag Geese dropped in to Ladybower Reservoir during April. Lesser Whitethroats continue to be very rare and once again there was a single bird singing in May at Hathersage. Crossbills were around Dennis Knoll in May and July and at Froggatt Edge in June. A Dotterel was on Abney Moor again in May but only for one day this year. A Merlin was seen for the second year running - on our Castleton walk in May. Grasshopper Warblers were heard reeling in several locations this summer and Hobbies were reported monthly from May to July. A Long-eared Owl was at Stoney Middleton in May, a rare sighting these

days. A family of Willow Tits were reported in Froggatt in May and a few Marsh Tits were around Calver Marshes in July. A White-tailed Eagle was reputedly seen flying over Bradwell northwards in July! There were again regular sightings of Peregrine during the summer months. Stock Doves were reported in 3 months this summer. There were no reports of any Grey Partridges at all this year and only a single sighting of Red-legged Partridge - on Burbage Moor in July. The recent hard winters seem to have had a very negative impact on Kingfishers. There was only one record this year - in August. An unusual find in August was a Sedge Warbler on the slopes between Calver village and Coombsdale. A few Great Grey Shrikes were reported in Derbyshire in November

and one was in the Burbage valley for a while. A Common Gull was found with a flock of Lesser Black-backed Gulls around Calver Gap in November.



Sedge Warbler © David Gains

## KIWI ENCOUNTER

In the late Autumn of 2009 John and I spent 10 days in New Zealand's North Island. There is much to see but we restricted ourselves to the Bay of Islands, which is very beautiful and where the Treaty of Waitangi was signed between the British and Maories in 1840. On Tiritiri Matangi they are returning the island to native species of plants and birds and removing any introduced predators. We finally decided to visit Rotorua. The city has hot thermal pools and is the heartland of Maori culture. One of the other attractions is a conservation project called "Kiwi Encounter".

Staff incubate kiwi eggs taken from the wild and hand rear chicks. These eggs have been predated but it has been found that with help, the chicks can be released back into the wild once they have reached their maximum weight.

These birds are nocturnal and we saw very

little chance of seeing them in the wild.

On our visit to this project we were lucky enough to see one of the chicks being weighed and measured at 5 days old. They have amazingly large feet and beaks - they are fully feathered when they emerge from the egg, an exact kiwi in miniature. This project has been formed in order to preserve the kiwi whose very existence has been under threat.



Kiwi © John Wooddisse

## CLUB MEMBERS

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Audrey Buxton  
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Sally Carter  
Richard Clemons  
Marion Clemons  
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Janice Connell  
Ashley Edwards  
Pam Edwards  
David Gains  
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Susan Sutton  
Brenda Taylor  
Barrie Wilkinson  
John Wooddisse  
Barbara Wooddisse

## COMMITTEE MEMBERS

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President: John Wooddisse  
Chairman: Kit Stokes  
Secretary: Barbara Wooddisse  
Treasurer: Jane Ralston

Ordinary members: Graham Games  
David Gains  
Alan Kydd  
Chris Lorch

## PROSPECTIVE MEMBERS

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If you are not a club member and would be interested in joining us, please contact John Wooddisse on 01433 650606. You can also contact us via our web site – [www.hvbc.org.uk](http://www.hvbc.org.uk). Annual membership runs from January each year and is currently £8 per person.

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**Answers to the Bird Quiz**  
1. Greenfinch. 2. Cornrake. 3. Robin. 4. Song Thrush. 5. Turnstone. 6. Chaffinch. 7. Bittern. 8. Great Tit. 9. Blackbird. 10. Dipper. 11. Wren. 12. Coal Tit. 13. Snipe. 14. Bullfinch. 15. Goldfinch. 16. Dunnock. 17. House Sparrow. 18. Starling. 19. Pied Wagtail. 20. Blue tit.