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# THE DIPPER

**The Magazine of the Hope Valley Bird Watchers Club**

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Front Cover Photograph: Tawny Owl © Peter Bull

Tawny Owl (*Strix aluco*) is our most common woodland owl but, owing to their mostly nocturnal habit, an encounter with these magnificent birds is always a special moment.

# President's Message

It has been a difficult two years for all of us since our last Dipper magazine. COVID-19 has restricted our activities and I am afraid we are going to live with it for a few more years. However, we managed some of our regular walks, visits and indoor meetings in 2021.

My wife Barbara died in March 2020, she was our club's secretary at the start of the club 32 years ago. We had a great 52 years together, managing to visit over 60 countries around the world, seeing a few birds along the way.

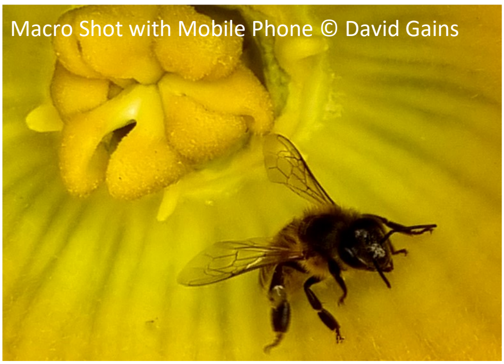
Since our last magazine, local bird populations continue to change, with larger bird species winning and smaller ones losing. Last year (2021) there was a flock of 29 Curlew, smaller numbers of Teal, Wigeon, Shoveler and Oystercatcher and a single Little Egret on the "flashes" in Hathersage. Birds of prey are increasing too, 11 Buzzards seen in the sky at once, regular Barn Owl sightings and Red Kite in the south of Derbyshire. Sadly, many smaller bird species are fast disappearing, mainly due to the lack of insects to feed on. Whitethroat, Linnet and Wood Warbler are now difficult to find, and Swallow, House Martin and Swift much reduced.

Finally, I would like to thank Alan Kydd, our chairman, for guiding us through a very difficult 2 years, and to wish all our members successful birding in the next two years.

# From The Editor

I'm honoured to edit the 10th issue of the magazine and, at the same time, wonder where the past 14 years have gone since I last edited it. With this in mind, I thank Alan Kydd for his outstanding editorship during this time.

Two things have struck me while editing this issue. First, the progress of digital cameras in the last couple of decades and how even a modest digital camera can capture superb photos — even our mobile phone cameras can produce good results (such as the photo here). Second, a few years ago, Mike Toms, from the BTO, gave a talk to the club about owls and how little we know about them, owing to their elusiveness and often nocturnal habits. Despite this, we have a plethora of articles and photos about owls in this issue, which is simply wonderful.


Macro Shot with Mobile Phone © David Gains

I'll close now by thanking everyone who has contributed to this issue and Alan for proofreading it — as always, any errors are mine. I hope you enjoy it!

# It is lockdown and a bird has designs on my body!

During the last 18 months or so, COVID-19 and social isolation have taken their toll on all of us. Moreover, though most of us are now double-vaccinated and with a booster jab, difficulties and uncertainties persist. Particularly during the difficult early months of lockdown, the weekly bird newsletter, and accompanying poem, put together by Alan Kydd, was a comfort and distraction.

Our “hour-long” walks “for exercise” along the river to and beyond Harper Lees were also therapeutic and enhanced by frequent sightings of Dippers, Mandarin ducks, the occasional deer and twice “dog fights” between Buzzards and Ravens. However, the bird that photographically brought the family together was the Goosander. At this point, you need to appreciate that there are two sorts of bird photography. First, there are the likes of Alan Kydd and Peter Bull and all the other regular contributors to the newsletter. Such people have expensive cameras, photographic expertise and infinite patience. These virtues combine to produce magnificent images where you can not only recognise the bird but also, if you have a mind to, count its feathers. The second, as exemplified by the Hodgson family, operates at the other extreme. Our instrument of choice is an elderly bottom-of-the-range mobile phone and an equally ineffective early digital camera with a very limited capacity to zoom in. Thus, whatever the original intent, our pictures always portray birds as part of the background. You will not see our photos at members’ night! Nevertheless, they have importance. They help to bring the family together. Our “classic” remains a distance shot of a Peregrine falcon on a church spire in Bath. You can just about make out the gargoyles but one of these is in fact a Peregrine falcon. To this day, the actual location of the bird within the picture remains the subject of fierce debate. Goosanders have similarly figured prominently in shared family snaps. During the first lockdown, fishing was prohibited, and this emboldened much of the riverside wildlife. We saw and photographed Goosanders on numerous occasions. Typically, the response to these shared photos went something like this:

Daughter 1: “Where is the Goosander?”.
Daughter 2: “Just behind the branch”.
Daughter 1: “That was the first place I looked…. Oh, yes, I can see it now!”.

Into this daily routine came some real excitement. Alan Kydd had seen a Lammergeier in the Hope Valley and had posted a picture in the newsletter. I was excited by the prospect of seeing this large, very rare vulture. However, I reasoned that my energies would be better spent improving my rudimentary ability to identify common species. I vowed not to “twitch” and, anyway, I had seen it once previously, high above Huesca in the Spanish Pyrenees, where it was pointed out to me by my friend Gabriel Montserrat. Nevertheless, I kept a lookout. In the past I had often been lucky with birds of prey. For example, when I was about twelve, I was sitting upstairs at the front of a bus to Kynance Cove in Cornwall when a Peregrine falcon flew less than 10 m in front of me. Then, when about sixteen, I visited a reservoir in Sussex with Tim Inskipp, who later became an expert on Indian birds. Although there had been no recent sightings, we went on the off chance to look for Ospreys on migration. Not only did we see an Osprey, we saw it catch a large fish and watched as it then proceeded to eat the fish in a dead tree.

Birds of prey have also featured in family life. Daughter 2 has a Dalmatian and, apart from eating, the dog's favourite activity is to play with a squeaky ball. We never thought much about the squeak but now suspect that to a bird of prey it must sound a bit like the death throes of a rabbit. We noted that, when the dog was playing with its ball, Buzzards would often come to investigate. Our favoured ball-throwing place is the small patch of grass just past Hathersage sewage works on the way to Harper Lees and once we counted four Buzzards and, perhaps fortuitously, one Kestrel during a single episode of ball-playing. This mirrors another close encounter with birds of prey that we experienced before the advent of children. We were in Austria at the bottom of a steep hill with an arête along its summit. Our aim was to walk along the ridge, but while enjoying the sunshine, there was a violent thunderstorm up on the mountain. So, we lay back in the mountain pasture and waited for the storm to abate. Within minutes, a Golden Eagle came to inspect us. In silhouette, it filled the whole field of view of my binoculars. Eventually, the storm moved off and we ascended. Unfortunately, unbeknown to us, the storm typically follows a circular course along a series of valleys. As a result, it reappeared when we were at the highest and most exposed point. The acoustics for the thunder were magnificent — if you like that sort of thing — and we got completely soaked as we crouched close to the ground to minimize the risk of being struck by lightning. But that is another story! The keen senses of the bird of prey in search of a meal, however, remains central to the narrative.

As lockdown was slowly relaxed, more and more outdoor and "socially distanced" activities were permitted. One activity to restart was Pilates. However, instead of being indoors at Bamford Institute, the class was now held on an outdoor tennis court at Brough. On this day the weather was good. I duly took my place in the remedial front row of the class and about fifteen of us were put through our Pilates paces. After my physical efforts and a quick chat, I set off home with my wife. To my surprise, a giant bird with an enormous wingspan flapped leisurely over Brough Mill in the direction of Castleton. It was about at my eye level with the sun shining directly upon it. The colouring was a mixture of dark and very light browns. I didn't see it very well or for very long: I was in a moving car. Nevertheless, I had been lucky enough to see the Lammergeier. We tried to follow it by turning left towards Hope at the traffic lights at the Travellers Rest but couldn't relocate it. Afterwards, I had doubts. Could I really have seen the Lammergeier? It was only when I saw a heron flying above Hathersage a few days later that I appreciated how large the bird I had seen really was. Moreover, another Pilates attendee saw what she took to be the vulture fly over Hope soon after our sighting.

Why did the Lammergeier visit Brough? Mindful of the large distance birds of prey travel in search of food, and my own experiences with Buzzards and the squeaky ball and the Austrian eagle, I believe it was attracted from afar by the sight of writhing bodies on the tennis court. It misinterpreted Pilates moves such as opposite arm and leg lift as an indication of persons in mortal distress. This is an easy mistake to make and, in my case, the Lammergeier was only half wrong!

# Halcyon Days

Kingfishers are spectacular and not easily seen except as a flash of blue and orange by a stream or river. Its taxonomic binomial of *Alcedo atthis* reflects its ancient name of halcyon, a mythical bird said by the ancients to breed in a nest floating on the sea at the winter solstice. Alcyone and her lover, Ceyx, had invoked the wrath of the gods by mocking Zeus, who sent a thunderbolt to destroy his ship. Morpheus appeared to Alcyone in a dream to tell of Ceyx's fate, and she threw herself into the dark sea to drown. The gods were merciful and turned them into Kingfishers or halcyon birds. She made her nest and her father, Aeolos, who controlled the winds, calmed them and the waves for two weeks.

Halcyon has come to signify a period of good fortune in the midst of adversity. Thus halcyon days are the quiet happy period connected to the calm weather of the winter solstice, said to be due to the presence of the fabled bird.

The mortality of young Kingfishers is high until they learn to fish for themselves, and only half survive their first week, many drowning by getting waterlogged. Not so halcyon after all. A country practice used to be to kill a Kingfisher and hang it up to predict the direction of the wind. Their feathers were kept as charms to ward off thunder, and it was thought that only the righteous get to see them or even to photograph them.


Kingfisher © Peter Bull


Kingfisher © Peter Bull


Kingfisher © Peter Bull

These photographs were taken early in the year at a reserve in Hertfordshire, where I was outgunned by two photographers with lenses like bazookas, complete with camouflage and rifle sights. But it was a rare treat to see such a beautiful bird.

**Did you know** that the kingfisher's aerodynamic bill, which allows it to dive at high speed with barely a splash, inspired a Japanese engineer, to improve the design of the Japanese bullet train.

# Mig Fest

**WHAT IS  IT?** MIG FEST stands for **Migration Festival**.  It is like a very mini Bird Fair.

**WHEN WAS IT?** It was held 10th to  12th of September 2021.

**WHERE WAS IT?** The epicentre is a field by the turnoff to Spurn Point near Kilnsea in the East Riding of Yorkshire. Here there is a marquee, picnic tables, information boards, toilets & a campsite. Talks are in the club house of the nearby Sandy Beaches Caravan Park.

**WHY GO?** We had toyed with going for a few years but were spurred on by not having Bird Fair again— this used to be an annual event in Rutland, but has now ceased (see page 10). We were encouraged by Joy Croot, who has frequented the event a few times (Joy used to be a member of HVBWC when she lived here).

**HOW MUCH?** A day ticket is £18 with £30 for the whole weekend.

**TIMETABLE:** The event started on the Friday at 19:00 with an introductory talk & a bat walk. Saturday started at 06:00 with walks & a sea watch session. Lunch time talks are 12:00 to 14:30. There was a barbeque in the evening, finishing at 20:45. Sunday is similar, finishing at 16:30. Most events are repeated so you needn't miss out if there is a clash of things you want to do.

**WALKS:** These are between 1½ and 2 hrs. Some starting near the field, at the Spurn Observatory or further afield, with transport provided. They are led by 1 or 2 knowledgeable birders with scopes.

We couldn't work out at first how we could walk to Sammy's point, birdwatching and get back in 2 hours. Mystery solved when we reached the point, there was a pickup truck with seats in the back ready to bring us back to the starting point.

**SEA WATCH SESSION:** This lasts most of the morning, manned by birders with very good eyesight! You pop in and out of the session, sitting outside in comfy chairs.

**TALKS:** These are on various topics – mainly bird related and last either ¾ hours or 1¼ hours. The ones we attended were excellent.

**OTHER ACTIVITIES:** As well as walks and talks on birds there is a ringing session. It's not just birds though. There are talks and walks on plants; outdoor art classes; photography classes; moth trapping, etc.

**MARQUEE:** Inside the marquee you will find a book stall, clothes stall, art exhibits, a few British holiday companies and most important of all – catering!

**FOOD & DRINK:** Breakfast is served Sat & Sunday, 6:30 – 11:30. Recommend very cheap and tasty bacon baps. Lunch is served 12:00-14:30.  Best of all, tea and coffee is served all day AND IS FREE!

**NEXT YEAR:** The dates for next year are 9th to 11th September 2022 and we shall certainly consider a return.

# Pied Flycatchers in Derbyshire

In Roy Frost's 1978 book "The Birds of Derbyshire" he writes that breeding in Derbyshire was first confirmed in 1945. You won't be surprised to learn that the nest was found in Padley Gorge. He continues that the population increased to over 10 pairs by the 1960's with the help of nest boxes set up specifically to help them, but it seems that the population declined from then during the 1970's. Indeed, in 1982 it seems that this bird was considered to be "a rare visitor, breeding in two restricted areas of Derbyshire". This is recorded in a rather larger and more comprehensive replacement book edited by Roy with Steve Shaw on behalf of the Derbyshire Ornithological Society which was published in 2013. Much had changed in the intervening 35 years. It suggests that in 2011 up to 16 pairs held territories in Padley Gorge but that there was perhaps a slightly larger population in the Derbyshire Wildlife Trust reserve at Hillbridge and Park Wood in the Goyt Valley near Taxal. This book also provides a table of the total of pairs recorded between 1995 and 2011. This shows a low point in 2001 with 40 pairs from 19 sites but that was clearly affected by access problems during the Foot and Mouth disease outbreak during that year, which limited coverage so much. Ignoring that year, the table shows a low of 55 pairs in 2006 (from 20 sites) and a high of 91 pairs in 2009 (from 33 sites). From this table it would seem that many sites must hold only one or two pairs.

We are fortunate in that HVBWC have local access to 2 significant sites at Longshaw and North Lees which both hold a good number of territories. The Sorby Breck Ringing Group

Male Pied Flycatcher © Alan Kydd

(SBRG) monitored 75 pairs in 2020 and 69 in 2021, most of which were within Longshaw and North Lees. SBRG records show that Priddock and Ladybower Woods together also have up to around 10 pairs with twos and threes at up to 5 other sites.

It's not clear whether that 2011 total of 16 pairs in Padley Gorge includes other areas of the Longshaw Estate but in 2021, 11 broods were ringed there. However, a further 11 broods were ringed in other woodland on the estate. A total of 133 nestlings were ringed of which 132 fledged — 22 pairs with an average of 6.3 fledging per box. The numbers in Padley Gorge are almost certainly bigger in that there are still a number of sealed metal boxes which remain

Pied Flycatcher nest © Alan Kydd

attractive to the birds and are often used. These were erected when egg collecting posed a serious threat to the population there, which thankfully is no longer the case.

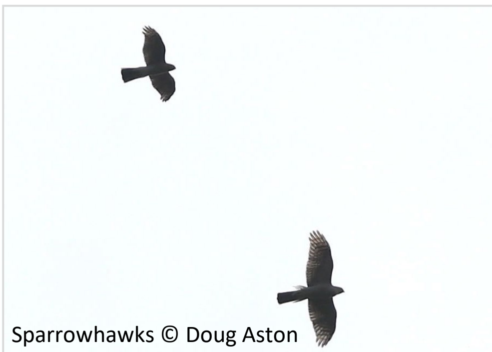
North Lees is not mentioned in the Birds of Derbyshire books, but a significant population now exists on the estate. This has grown with the increased number of nest boxes installed there by Peak Park over the last 20 years or so. These were monitored until 2017 by Flo Gordon and many of the boxes were installed by Bill Gordon. In 2021, there were 212 boxes of which 22 were occupied by Pied Flycatchers. From these 19 were successful and 114 nestlings were ringed of which 112 fledged - 19 pairs with an average of 5.9 per box.

It is only in recent years that females have been checked at North Lees during incubation, but there are many more records from Longshaw. In most cases, birds ringed as pulli have returned to the same area. There are also several movements recorded of pulli ringed at nearby sites such as Ladybower and Agden, as well as sites in Staffordshire and Cheshire. The furthest movement recorded at Longshaw was in 2014 of a bird ringed as a pullus in North Yorkshire in 2011, a distance of some 74 miles away. For North Lees, a pullus ringed in Bettys-y-Crwym (Shropshire) in 2018 was found in 2019, a distance of almost 90 miles. It does seem that the Pied Flycatcher is doing quite well in Derbyshire with a stable and possibly still increasing population.

Fledgling Pied Flycatcher © Flo Gordon

## Sparrowhawk Sexual Dimorphism

During the COVID-19 lockdowns, I spent a lot of time in the garden, doing a bit of gardening, but mostly lying on a sunbed staring at the sky and watching for any interesting birds. I saw plenty of Sparrowhawks, usually as singles, but on one occasion I had a pair. They were flying together so the size difference, which is called sexual dimorphism, is not caused by one bird being nearer than the other.



Sparrowhawks © Doug Aston

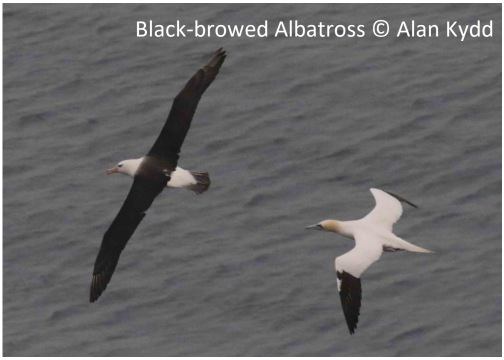
**Did you know** the size difference between sexes could be to ensure the female can better protect the young from the male and the two sexes are more likely to predate different sizes of prey.

The lens was a 400mm Canon; despite the distance, they make a nice size comparison when zoomed in. The female is the larger bird of course, and can be up to 25% bigger.

## Albert Ross

In the spring of 2021, a Black-browed Albatross returned once more to spend much of the breeding season in the company of the Gannets at the RSPB reserve at Bempton cliffs. Believed to be the only bird of its kind in the northern hemisphere it has been recorded around the Baltic Sea since 2014 and returned to Bempton almost exactly a year since it was recorded there in 2020. It should of course be resident in the southern hemisphere where its strongholds are the Falkland Islands and South Georgia among other islands in the southern ocean. When I went to see the bird in August, it spent the whole of my visit about ½ mile out at sea, just sitting there. As I left the reserve, after spending four hours there, I was spotted by John Spencer, another HVBWC member. He later reported that not long after I left, the bird flew in towards the cliffs and proceeded to put on a spectacular show! I was fortunate enough to go a second time to get better views of the bird and went with Jude Pealing in September.

As we arrived at 7AM we noted a group on the cliff top and were reliably informed by someone leaving that the bird was sitting on the top and great views could be had. By the time we reached the clifftop path, the group had dispersed, and we learned that "Albert" had flown out to sea. Some three hours later he flew back and spent well over half an hour flying around the cliff top with the Gannets. I know several club members who would recommend a trip to Bempton to see the spectacle should it return once more in 2022.


Black-browed Albatross © Alan Kydd

## Bird Fair Reborn

I was perplexed when the Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust decided to terminate holding the Bird Fair which had been running annually every August at Rutland Water with great success for over 30 years. I first attended the fair in 2005 with David Gains, spending half a day at the fair and half a day birdwatching. David wrote an article for our 2006 Dipper magazine which described what the fair was about (previous magazines are available on our web site). More recently Di and I have been spending up to two days at the fair, finding that one day just wasn't long enough! It was cancelled in 2020 because of the pandemic and a fine virtual event was run in its place. Their press release, after they cancelled the 2021 event without a virtual offering, gave 4 reasons for their decision. The first was the Financial Risk. For an event that had donated over £2.5 million to bird related charities since its inception, it seems to me that that risk would be rather tiny. The second was that there was a Business Risk. I'm afraid I still don't understand that.

*Continued on next page*

# Lapping Up A Lapwing

In September 2021, before I started working again, I ventured to Blacktoft Sands — I was later shocked to realise that 8 years had passed since my last visit!

I was hopeful of seeing some migrating waders, wildfowl and maybe Marsh Harriers. When I arrived, after driving at a snail's pace to Scunthorpe, owing to roadworks closing all the M180 slip roads, I was greeted by the warden with the exciting news of 2 rarities: Bluethroat and White-tailed Lapwing.

In the Marshland hide, peering between the heads of the unyielding photographers, packed shoulder to shoulder with their long telephoto lenses, I managed eventually to catch a glimpse of the distant Bluethroat, before moving on to Ousefleet, Xerox and Singleton hides for more restful birding.

Later, I ventured into the Townend hide, hoping to see the White-tailed Lapwing. The hide was surprisingly not jam-packed with birders and my heart sank a little as I braced myself for disappointment. In fact, it was still there, though barely visible as it was asleep on a distant bank, hidden by plants.

Finally, I called into the First hide, which I'd been told was bereft of birds — and they were right. While sitting there, finishing my drink, something put up all the waders on the neighbouring Townend lagoon. After a couple of minutes, the circling waders and wildfowl settled before me: Ruff, Snipe, Redshank, Green Sandpiper, Black-tailed Godwit, Teal and… White-tailed Lapwing!

White-tailed Lapwing © David Gains

For a while, I had a private audience with "Larry" the White-tailed Lapwing.; they are about the size of a Ruff, rather plain looking except for long, bright yellow legs, and breed in south-central Asia and winter in north-eastern Africa and eastern India.

The stampede of birders then arrived, and I departed, very happy  with my 46 species, including 2 superb surprises.

# Bird Fair Reborn — Continued

The third was related to Climate Change. The trust argued that the worldwide travel involved in exhibitors and visitors attending the event from over 80 countries, together with the promotion of travel to foreign destinations at the event did not fit well with the trust's strategy towards tackling the climate crisis. There may be some merit in this, but my view is that we cannot ignore the rest of the world and the benefits of sustainable travel to support biodiversity in less developed countries far outweighs any negative impact.

*Continued on page 27*

# Wicken Fen – A July Walk

I take the track to the fen from the village. The day is heavy and overcast. Lowering clouds, grey as battleships, oppress the sky. The air is stagnant. No bird sings. I take the first raised walkway which runs away between the reeds, following a dyke. I pause at a slight movement in the cloud-mirror water. A grass snake is swimming her sinuous way along the dark, still channel. I follow, watching her graceful undulations as she moves towards the sedgy bank. Raising her head she slips her slim body silently into the reeds and vanishes.

Thistle © Jane Varley

I turn onto a broad grassy track, long and straight, stretching away before me. On either side, the reeds offer protection to wildflowers and among the flowers busy insects hum and buzz. Brilliant dragonflies dart. Giant thistles seem to scratch the sky. A light wind whispers through the sedge; it tells of times past and men long gone who once toiled in these wetlands, gaining a sparse living from the fen's natural offerings: reeds for thatch, willows for baskets, fish and birds for the pot. An old windmill stands against the sky, its sails anchored to the ground. Now the fen is a 254 hectare nature reserve with tower hides set at strategic points. Some are three-storeys high and provide vantage points from which to see Marsh Harriers, Hobbies, wetland birds, and migrating birds; in Spring Cuckoos — many, many species of birds throughout the seasons.

Windmill © Jane Varley

Further on, the flowers of the fen begin to reveal themselves: vetches and yellow iris; ragged robin and orchids, both marsh and purple; meadow sweet and knapweed; white convolvulus, purple loosestrife and many floreted hogweed. The drove I walk turns at right angles and I come upon a dyke running beside an open field and here water lilies float among their saucer leaves. Across the water two swans sleep surrounded by moulted feathers, heads under wings. Ahead the land runs into the sky. A movement of brown, tossing heads across


Orchid © Jane Varley


Iris © Jane Varley

the water, catches my attention. A small herd of Konik ponies follow their leader from the cover of sedge and willow and congregate in the space beneath a lone tree, tails flicking, heads tossing. Through a gate, wide handlebars appear above a shaggy face. A highland cow stares at me, interested in this passer-by. She and several others are left here to graze the rough pasture, conservation workers.

The path is leading me around the perimeter of this wild and ancient fen. The sky darkens, the landscape darkens. The clouds hang lower and lower. The track turns again and I see in the distance the end of my walk in this secretive, silent place — a modern turbine, here to keep the fen as it always was — a wetland for sedge and flowers, insects and birds, reptiles and for man, no longer now to gain his living but to regain his stillness of mind and body. As I leave, walking over a little bridge, I hear a scuffle in the water and a craking call. Somewhere at my feet a Moorhen hides but try as I might, I can't see her. The fen keeps its secrets.

*In October 2021, the bird club's autumn weekend spent a day at Wicken Fen. The report of the visit included the following — It was very windy as expected but the rain showers were much lighter than we feared. The mere had a large number of Greylag Geese and several other wildfowl. We were entertained by the boatman who educated us about the history of the site. We had views of a Sparrowhawk being mobbed by a Crow during the boat trip and another in the afternoon near Priory Farm. Around the farm buildings were at least 40 Collared Doves and several Pied Wagtails.*

# The Owls of Outseats

A serendipitous encounter with Dr John Winfield led me to an encounter with Barn Owls; I had taken a camera with me (either further serendipity or the good fortune of preparedness) when I went for a walk up Cogger Lane in mid-January last year and John asked if I had come to seek the owl, of which I knew nothing at the time.

Horace Walpole in 1754 had coined the term serendipity from a fairy tale of the Three Princes of Serendip who, by happenstance, “were always making discoveries, by accidents and sagacity, of things they were not in quest of”. Serendip was of course later known as Ceylon and eventually Sri Lanka, surely one of the most beautiful islands on Earth.

I have made several more owl outings and on a few occasions have been rewarded with the magic of seeing a barn owl, even though it is thought in myth to be a harbinger of imminent death. The most recent sighting was again by chance in November this year when one was hunting in the near-dark at Gatehouse.

Owls have been depicted in ancient cave paintings and feared throughout many

Barn Owl © Peter Bull

Barn Owl © Peter Bull

civilisations through history. The Romans also regarded the hoot of an owl as foretelling a death. Shakespeare wrote in Macbeth:

> *‘It was the owl that shriek'd, the fatal bellman,*
> *Which gives the stern'st good night’*

presaging the murder of Duncan. It was, in Shakespeare’s times, the town bellman’s job to ring the bell when somebody was near to death, and that role was usurped by the owl. It explains the famous dictum of his contemporary John Donne:

> *‘Ask not for whom the bell tolls. It tolls for thee’.*

Other traditions saw owls as protective spirits and even as the souls of departed ancestors, easy to imagine when you see their silent and ghostly flight in the gathering darkness.

Long thought to be wise, the Little Owl is the symbol of Athena, the Greek goddess of wisdom, and we are all familiar with the concept of the wise old owl.


Tawny Owl © Peter Bull

In the area of Outseats, above Hathersage, there are several nest boxes in different locations and in the autumn of 2021 there were known to be at least 8 or 9 fledged Barn Owls in the area. To watch one hunting at dusk is indeed a privilege. Their silent flight is explained by the nature of the wing feathers with a soft fringe breaking up noisy turbulence, but they pay a price in that the wings are poorly rain resistant and easily waterlogged.

There are also several Tawny Owls in the same area, more often heard than seen as they are more strictly nocturnal than Barn Owls.

Barn Owls are also known as screech owls from their cry – the clue is in the name. (No tu whit tu whoo – those are tawnies, and who knew how to spell it?); as a child, I would not go to the attic in my grandfather's house where there was a yellowing skylight beyond which, according to him, a screech owl lived. It used to be said that if you walked round a tree with an owl in it, the owl would keep turning its head until it strangled itself.


Tawny Owl © David Gains

## Bird Quiz

All the clues are cryptic and the answers are bird names. Answers are on the back cover.

1. Sounds like it might be found in a laboratory.
2. Bit of mountain.
3. I'm counting XXIV.
4. No drug in Simon Cowell's autobiography.
5. River novice.
6. Not quite yellow, not quite illegitimate offspring.
7. Seen when heads down on a farthing.
8. I change to a Diana Rigg's daughter.
9. Used in ladies' hair.
10. A clown's prop.
11. Shake with fear.
12. Ringless kid's transport.
13. Negative adverb.
14. Russian vine.
15. Period of time.
16. Torticollis – can occur from moving your head too quickly.
17. Brenda's rockin' bird.
18. Mimic.
19. The Little Sparrow's endlessly had none.
20. Used by a Brummie to rub down.

## Bird Report

During 2020 and 2021 a total of 112 and 108 species were reported respectively within our recording area. As usual, we have kept a monthly record and the details can be found on our web site www.hvbwc.org.uk.

**2020 Summary**

January was really mild until the last week. The Snow Bunting favouring the summit of Mam Tor at the end of 2019 lingered there into the New Year and stayed into February. A Merlin was spotted flashing across the main road above the Millstone Inn in January. A pair of Marsh Tits was recorded on the Thornhill Trail, also in January. Towards the end of the month and into February a series of Atlantic depressions brought storm Ciara, closely followed by Dennis, bringing strong winds and heavy rain. As a result, Barn Owls were regularly seen during the day in both months. For the first time since we began keeping records in 2007, Barn Owls were recorded in every month this year; none were noted during 2007, our first recording year. The mild weather brought Lapwings to the in-by fields above Hathersage before the end of January and good numbers of Curlew were on the flashes by the river at Hathersage in February. A Willow Tit was recorded on the feeders at Longshaw towards the end of February and a Great Grey Shrike spent no more than one day above Hathersage that month. February also found the first recorded Kingfisher in the valley. During March, a Yellowhammer was at Curbar Gap and a Greylag Goose was by Froggatt Bridge. Flocks of Greylag seem to be joining the large population of Canada Geese breeding on Ladybower and the higher reservoirs and are now being recorded more regularly in the valley. A pair of Oystercatchers was spotted in Edale valley towards the end of March and were recorded in April and May too. A Red Kite drifted over Hathersage on 3rd April and others were recorded in May and June. A pair of Teal were on the flashes at Hathersage in early April, as was a Redshank. The appearance of a Bearded Vulture in Edale valley on 30th June caused quite a stir, taking up residence on Howden Moors for most of July before moving further north and west to spend August and part of September in the Crowden Valley; from DNA samples it was identified as a first winter female bird that fledged from a nest in the Alps. Long-eared Owls bred successfully in Burbage valley and the young's begging calls were heard on our Nightjar evening in July. A Black Redstart


Lapwing © Alan Kydd


Bearded Vulture © Alan Kydd

spent a week or two at the north end of Burbage valley in September. A female Tufted Duck was on the pond at Longshaw in November. Also in November, more than 200 Lapwing were reported flying south through Curbar Gap. Woodcock were reported at Longshaw in both November and December.


Teal © Alan Kydd

**2021 Summary**

New Year's day saw a skein of around 250 Pink-footed Geese flying north-west over Hope rather earlier than normal. Again, both Curlew and Lapwing were recorded in the valley during February. The second half of February was unseasonably warm with earlier snow quickly melting. As a result the flashes by the river at Hathersage were quite extensive this year and lasted into April and a number of interesting wildfowl were recorded. In March, Greylag Geese, several Shovelers, some Teal and Tufted Ducks, a few Wigeon and Whooper Swans were reported there. Good numbers of both Lapwing and Curlew visited throughout February and March together with a pair of Oystercatchers, which stayed into June. A Lesser-spotted Woodpecker was seen in the valley in February. A Goshawk was reported over Hathersage towards the end of March. A Great-crested Grebe was on the cement works fishing ponds at the end of March, the first record in the valley since 2015. A Little Egret spent a while on the Hathersage flashes in early April. The Long-eared Owls were successful again in Burbage valley with young being heard during our Nightjar evening in July. Rather more unusual was a Nightjar in a Bradwell garden during August. Some of the young White-tailed Eagles recently released on the Isle of Wight were wandering around England this year— one took up residence for several weeks during the summer on Broomhead Moors. I assume that this was the bird spotted over Stanage Edge in August. Many skeins of Pink-footed Geese were reported flying over the valley during September and October, mostly heading south-east. Redwings were far more common than Fieldfare this year and by December had cleared most of the berry crop. Three Tufted Ducks were on the river at Froggatt in December and a Woodcock was reported in a Hathersage garden. December also saw several skeins of Pink-footed Geese, rather strangely flying both north-west and south-east. For the second year, no Green Woodpeckers were reported in the valley, a rather worrying change; since we started recording, they were reported in around 9 months each year — they are mostly detected by their calls, becoming quieter in the Autumn. In 2019, they were recorded in 4 months, the last being June.


Redshank © Alan Kydd

# Nape Patches on Little Owl

Ocelli, or nape patches as they are more commonly known, are a pair of markings on the back of the head of some raptors. In the UK, they are perhaps most easily seen on the napes of Sparrowhawk and Little Owl, but they can go unnoticed because most people when photographing birds are more interested in getting shots of the front or side of the bird.

Little Owl turning round © Doug Aston

The theory is that the ocelli evolved because they are beneficial to the raptor; they make the bird appear to have a pair of eyes on the back of the head as well as the real pair on the front, and this might make any mobbing passerines less likely to attack the raptor from behind, for fear that the raptor is watching them and therefore an attack would be too dangerous. That's the most common theory, but I've always been a tiny bit sceptical since, while I've seen plenty of nape patches, not many have looked much like eyes… until I photographed this Little Owl in August 2021.

Rear of Little Owl © Doug Aston

I'd been watching a Little Owl nest during July. The juveniles had remained near to the nest site for quite a time after fledging, but when I looked for them on 2nd August, an adult was still there but the juveniles were not, they'd dispersed. I had a look around to see how far they might have moved and found one sat on a limestone outcrop about ¾-mile away and about 200 metres from the road that I was on. I sat in my van and watched it through the binoculars for a few minutes, but it didn't move, so I took a few shots of what I thought was the bird looking in my direction. Then it turned its head (I hadn't got out of the van so perhaps it had heard the camera shutter) and it hopped to a nearby rock and looked straight towards me. I was pleased I'd taken the first shots because what I'd thought was the bird's face was actually the back of its head, and showed the ocelli as well as I've ever seen them.

The photographs were taken with a 500mm lens with a 2x converter, and have been cropped.

When I'd got a couple of shots of the front view I drove off and left the bird in peace and hopefully it will survive the winter and still be there next year. That particular dale has been "reliable" for Little Owl for at least the last 20 years, and I hope it continues.

During 2020/21 I knew of 2 Little Owl nest sites that were lost, one to a barn being converted/renovated, and the other by a tumbled-down wall being removed to add approximately 10 square metres to a silage field. Thank goodness that more people are beginning to wake up to the plight of the natural world. It's a slow process, but hopefully it's not too late, and while I might not live long enough to see much progress, I hope my grandchildren do.


Little Owl facing camera © Doug Aston

## Snipes

In October last year, the bird club had their annual trip to RSPB Old Moor reserve. As usual it didn't disappoint but the highlight for me was the sighting of two Snipes on the same bank — the Common Snipe and a Jack Snipe out in the open.

Although it's easy to identify the Jack Snipe with its constant bobbing up and down when feeding, I hadn't appreciated the difference in size, the Jack Snipe being about ⅔ the size of a Common Snipe. I think it was the first time I'd been able to compare the two birds and although they seem to be relatively similar, the Jack Snipe has a dark back with straw yellow stripes that are brighter and more obvious. Also, the head on the Jack Snipe has a central crown stripe, which is dark unlike the Common's pale stripe.

I managed to get a photo of the birds which, whilst not winning any awards, it does show how lucky we were to get such a good sighting of one of my favourite and relatively rare birds.


Snipe (left) and Jack Snipe (right) © Jude Pealing

# Birding and Soul Searching

Among the last handful of years' trials and tribulations, I've somehow got out of the habit of birding. I say purposefully "habit", because I used to go out often and without much forethought. Nowadays, I have seemingly to plan ahead, only to then have these well-laid plans dashed.

Nonetheless, in the words of Simon Barnes, "I don't go birdwatching. I am birdwatching.", because opportunities abound as we go about our lives, such as the delightful moments of watching the local Kestrel perching on the contractors' cabin's mast outside my office window (on the old Sheffield airport site). This isn't good enough, however, because getting out among nature is good for the soul—reducing anxiety and stress and increasing our wellbeing, oftentimes letting us reframe our own problems but, more importantly, enabling us to understand nature better, and learn about the world around us.

In earlier issues, I've recounted some of my thrills and spills — well, mostly spills. Sadly, my own expeditions have dwindled in past years — and I've not even been able to visit Germany for a couple of years owing to the pandemic. While considering my next steps, I began reminiscing about some of the unexpected thrills I've had while in Germany — sometimes I'd gone birdwatching, other times I was simply birdwatching.

Wendelstein Church © David Gains

Alpine Chough © David Gains

One of my favourite landforms is hills and mountains — just as well, living where we do — and Bavaria, although mostly surprisingly flat, has the Alps! Once, a few years ago in June, Carin and her sister took me to the eastern Alps and up to the summit of the limestone *Wendelstein* — using the rack railway, of course! There was still snow on the peaks and the view was breath-taking, something I shall not forget; it also has the highest church in Germany. Equally, unforgettable, however, was the bold and inquisitive behaviour of one of the locals while I was eating an apple — the local being an Alpine Chough, which is very similar to our own, but has a yellow bill. Among the harsh beauty and tranquillity of the peaks, these corvids have adapted to tourists and feeding on scraps discarded by them and, I suspect, the flocks are larger than they would otherwise be.

Another place of tranquillity, a short walk from Carin's home, is *Nordfriedhof* cemetery, which is the final resting place of over 34000, including Gertraud "Traudl" Junge, the secretary who remained with Hitler to the very end. Unlike so many of our churchyards and cemeteries, this one is well

Short-toed Treecreeper © David Gains

-tended, but like ours is also a place abundant in wildlife. Among the 25 or so bird species recorded during the year, one species is particularly cherished, as this was the first place I heard the difference in the calls between two visibly, infuriatingly similar species — Treecreeper and Short-toed Treecreeper.

Riverine habitats have also yielded their own surprises. Several times, we have walked along the banks of the *Isar* River from *Pullach* (home of the Federal Intelligence Service) to *Thalkirchen* (home of Munich Zoo) — which is probably about 7km (4 miles) as the crow flies. Once, while sitting on a bank to rest, a Pied Wagtail alighted in front of us and started foraging among the rocks. After a short time, the joy of watching the bird flitting along the water's edge became suddenly ecstasy as it dawned on me that I wasn't watching a Pied Wagtail like ours but a White Wagtail!

White Wagtail © David Gains

*Englischer Garten* is a large public park that runs several kilometres through central Munich; it was created by Sir Benjamin Thompson in 1789. When I'm in Munich, this is our regular stomping ground and has maybe 3 to 5 main habitats. Along the streams, Dipper and Mandarin frequent, but it is one bird in particular that we've heard more than we've seen, but have seen once, and has become a constant lure — Black Woodpecker. For a bird so large, it is amazingly difficult to see.

Grey-headed Woodpecker © David Gains

However, it's the excitement associated with another woodpecker that proved almost too much for the image stabilisation on my pocket camera. We had gone for a walk along the *Amper* River, near *Dachau*, which needs poignantly no introduction, and there were lots of wildfowl on the water and plenty of woodland birds among the trees too. Suddenly, there was the "yaffle" of a Green Woodpecker and then our obligatory attempt to locate it and see it. A movement caught in the corner of the eye drew our attention to a tree and there it was, except it wasn't a Green Woodpecker but a Grey-headed Woodpecker!

After this reminiscing, I've rediscovered the pleasure and relaxation that birds and, more generally, just being out walking provides and I should resolve to do better in future—maybe more spontaneity is needed.

# Keeping Swifts in Kinoulton

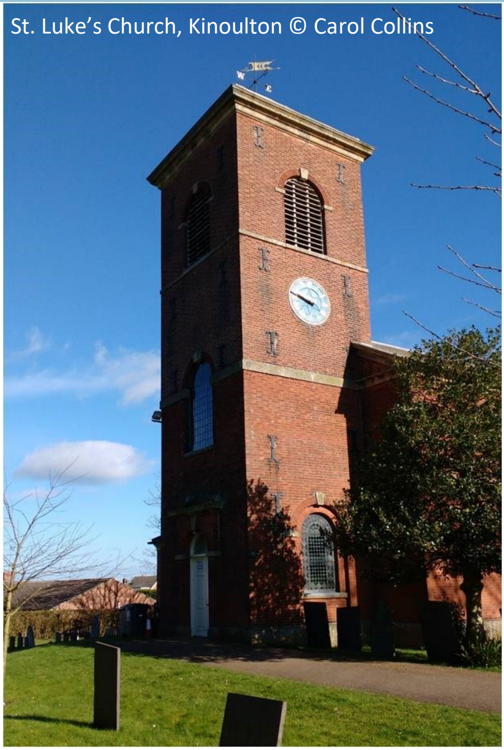
Whilst Kinoulton is not in the Hope Valley, nor even in Derbyshire, it's not very far away and certainly well within the range of a feeding Swift. The village lies right at the southern tip of Nottinghamshire, about ten miles to the south-east of Nottingham, and happens to be where I lived for over thirty years before moving to Hathersage. I lived opposite the church, St. Luke's, which is Georgian in style and built in brick, so it looks very different from most of the churches in the Peak District. However, like most churches, it has a bell tower with louvered windows. The louvres are of course designed to direct the sound of the bells down to the residents of the village, but they serve equally well as entrances for Swifts into suitably positioned nest boxes.

There had been Swifts in Kinoulton each summer since we arrived in the mid-eighties, but there were fewer each year. I wasn't sure where they nested, and I didn't know what to do about their decline. Then, in discussion with a fellow bird-watcher (Alan) in the village, we found out about a group in Cambridgeshire who had been putting Swift nest boxes behind louvres in churches. We made contact and Dick Newell invited us to watch the installation of boxes in St. Mary's church in Ely. Brilliant! We had an amazing day there in February 2011 and learnt so much that we were both exhausted by the time we got home. Alan proved to be the ideal partner in the project, with both wood-working skills and sufficient knowledge of electronics to install cameras (and later microphones) in some of the boxes, as well as setting up a sound system to broadcast Swift calls to attract the birds. He constructed a unit of ten boxes which we fitted immediately behind the louvres at the top of the north-facing window in St. Luke's tower. They were ready nicely before the anticipated return of the Swifts in early May. We waited.

Suddenly, on 8th May, there were half a dozen Swifts circling a cottage in the village which had been entirely reroofed during the winter. It was heart-breaking to watch as they flew repeatedly up to the eaves, obviously searching for holes which were no longer there. We turned on the attraction calls at St. Luke's (about half a mile from the cottage) and within a day or two the Swifts were circling the tower. There followed several highly tense days of watching as the Swifts endlessly investigated every nook and cranny of the tower's brickwork but seemed unable to find the entrances (so obvious to us!) of the boxes, but after about ten days one pair found the way in. We didn't have a camera in that box so we couldn't see inside, but we could hear by putting an ear to the back of the box and of course we could see the birds flying in and out from the churchyard. To our absolute delight and amazement that pair raised two chicks – a success we hadn't dared to hope for in our first year.

Elated by our unexpected success we (or rather Alan — I helpfully passed him appropriate tools, screws etc.) made a second unit of ten boxes and installed it behind the louvres of the east-facing window in the tower. We moved our single camera into the box occupied in 2011 and waited again. Swifts don't take easily to new nesting sites but they are remarkably faithful to sites they've used before and, sure enough, in early May 2012 we were rewarded when the returning pair occupied their previous nest and proceeded to lay two eggs. This time we could watch them. Our set-up was not particularly hi-tech. We had asked around for spare televisions and were given three. One we used in the area behind the louvres to make sure that the camera was focused on the nest. The second we used one level below in the Ringing Chamber which was a fraction more comfortable and involved climbing fewer ladders. Here we invited the Church Wardens to come up and see for themselves our first breeding pair of Swifts. Not only were they delighted, but they immediately wanted the rest of Kinoulton to be able to watch too, and so they encouraged us to set up our third television in the nave of the church. After much wiggling of wires through small spaces, taking care not to damage the structure of the church or to leave wires visible, we set up a television and wrote out instructions so that anyone visiting St. Luke's could turn it on and see, live, what was going on in the occupied nest box. Like most churches, St. Luke's is used for a number of community activities quite apart from services: the Post Office; a weekly coffee morning; toddler groups and so on. We weren't sure how much interest there would be, but in fact most folk were interested at least to some degree, and many were totally fascinated. Our "audience" consisted of all ages, including classes from the local Primary School, and varied from those who had never even heard of Swifts to those who knew quite a bit about them. Somehow, the fact that what they could see on the screen was both live (albeit less than brilliant quality), and local ("Is this really happening now, up in the tower?"; "This is our very own Spring Watch.") made a big impression.

St. Luke's Church, Kinoulton © Carol Collins



During that second season, whilst our original pair raised their second brood of two on camera, another pair of Swifts was investigating one of the new nest boxes on the east side of the tower. At the end of the season when all Swifts had left we were able to examine all the boxes and found that the pair on the east had begun to make a nest, though they obviously hadn't bred (no evidence of eggs or chicks, or the accumulation of droppings). They appeared to be a bonded pair, probably still too young to breed, but they had "staked their claim" to this particular nest box for the future. Sure enough, in 2013 they returned and raised two chicks whilst the original pair raised their third brood of two.

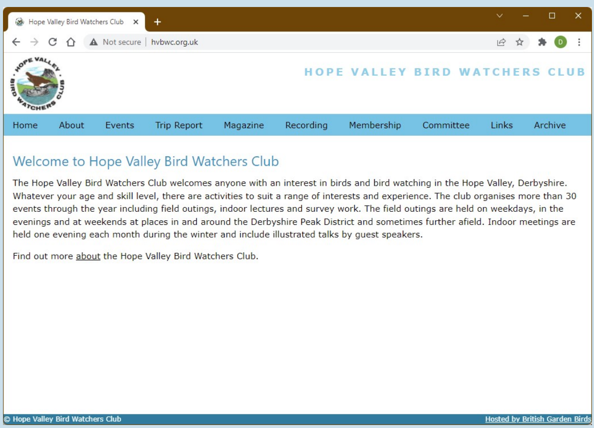
2014 was particularly good. The spring weather was much better than in previous years and the Swifts seemed to flourish. We had our first ever clutch of three eggs, as well as two other clutches each of two, and had cameras installed to watch all these broods develop into fully fledged chicks. There were also more Swifts in evidence around the tower and when we checked the boxes at the end of the season it was obvious that Swifts had been bringing nesting material into several of them. Suddenly we could imagine many of our boxes being occupied and so Alan made two more units during that winter. By spring 2015 we had a unit of ten boxes behind each of the four faces of the tower — still leaving plenty of open louvres for the sound of the bells to emerge!

Over the next few years the number of Swifts using the boxes very gradually increased. There were good years and less good years of course, mostly relating to the spring and early summer weather. We had some tragedies when Honey Bees investigated the boxes and disturbed sitting Swifts, leading to eggs and even one tiny chick being ejected from the nest. We had problems with persistent Starlings which were in situ to enter nest boxes long before the Swifts returned from Africa, but they were mostly deterred by reducing the size of the entrance holes. By 2018, my last season in Kinoulton, our estimate for the year was of 18 breeding pairs producing 37 fledged chicks – numbers we wouldn't have dreamt about when we installed our first boxes.

In 2019 I moved to Hathersage and was delighted to find a very active Swift group, and then to move into a house with two Swift nesting sites under the eaves! Meanwhile, one or two more enthusiasts have joined the team in Kinoulton and brought their own expertise to the project. The advent of COVID-19 in 2020 restricted human access to the tower, so it has not been possible to assess breeding success accurately, but judging from the Swifts screaming parties in and around the churchyard, all is well. Whilst, sadly, the television has no longer been set up in the nave during the pandemic, the team is now beginning to think about setting up a website and perhaps making some of the video footage available on YouTube. With luck it won't be too long before the story of this particular project can be shared with everyone who is fascinated by these remarkable birds.

The Hope Valley Bird Watchers Club web site has past issues of The Dipper magazine, events programmes, field trip reports and much more. Further, it can now be used more easily on mobile devices.

Visit: **www.hvbwc.org.uk**



# Nature Notes

I have a love/hate relationship with the willow arch in our garden. The previous owners planted two rows of 15 willow sticks in the ground, which had taken root and grown to about 8 feet high, and then formed the beginnings of the arch by tying opposite pairs together. It was then left to me to maintain it after we took over the house.

Little did I know, over the next 15 years, how much work it would be to keep it in shape. It's a cardinal sin to get the shears to it, as you'd just be left with bare stalks — the only way is to weave the shoots in and out of each other, and anyone who knows just how fast-growing willow is, can see my problem. It has to be done at least 3 times a year and, despite my best intentions to keep it to its original size, it's not easy— I have to lay on top of the arch with my feet on an 8ft step-ladder to reach the top (with fingers crossed that it's strong enough to take my weight!) Consequently, I prefer not to do the job on a windy day, and it's not much fun when the branches are wet either, as my fingers get cold, wet and numb very quickly. Over the years it has become misshapen, but I've given up trying to battle with its shape, and think of it as a "willow sculpture" rather than an arch! To give you an idea of my dedication, the first "weave" in the Spring takes me roughly 40 hours, after which the growth rate slows down slightly so subsequent trims take 8-10 hours.

However, the good thing about any gardening job is that you have time to think. The reason it was planted in the first place was to hide the support cables for an electricity pole, which are "planted" in the middle of the lawn. Many people don't even notice the cables now. Plus it gives shade in the garden to relax in on hot days. For several years I used the arch to support sweet peas, which was quite successful, but it made weaving very difficult. Every year, wild foxgloves grow from the base, adding colour to the garden and giving insects a good food source. Once we had Chaffinches nesting in its canopy — a joy to see. Tits enjoy the many aphids and caterpillars which feed on the willow leaves. The most impressive caterpillar I found was of the Puss moth — it has two long curly tails, a bright green body with a saddle-shaped band along its back and puffs its head up into a big red face with 2 black "eyes" when threatened. Sadly, like several of our most colourful caterpillars, it is a boring grey moth in adulthood! The visiting birds drop seeds from other plants onto the ground beneath, which grow up through the mesh of twigs. I've allowed a cotoneaster and a holly to flourish here, the latter making my job rather prickly! Both of these flower in summer, delighting hundreds of wasps and bees – an extra hazard for me! Last but not least, the aptly named shield bugs, which, depending on the species, feed on leaves, sap and aphids and other insects.

Sadly, November's heavy snow and Storm Arwen wreaked havoc on the arch's top, tearing it apart. So I'll have my work cut out in the Spring to get it back into shape. Each year I swear I've had enough weaving, and that I'm going to pull the sculpture down and let a clematis conceal the cables instead. But then I stand back to admire all my work and think of all the wildlife it supports — and decide to let it survive another year.

# Hope and Reality

In Dipper 2016, an article '*New Boy Lives in Hope*', explained that having, recently moved to Hathersage from Hampshire, I lived in hope of achieving a few avian objectives. I concluded with: '*Kestrels nesting in our garden, Barn Owls nesting in a tree in the adjacent field, Swifts and martins, nesting on the house, Swallows nesting in our wood store, to see Hen Harriers sky dance, to see a Goshawk; to see... - modest really, and we will try to make them happen*'. The question is: did hope become reality?

For completely unanticipated reasons, reality has far exceeded hope. Early on, during the repointing of our house in lime mortar, we asked Dave Fletcher, the builder to cut 12 holes to access nesting sites for swifts in the cavity between the outer stone and the inner breeze block. A pair of bonded non-breeders, seen in July 2019, returned in May 2020 and raised a brood. In 2021 they returned, and two other pairs occupied other cavity nest sites. July 2021 was exceptionally hot; two underweight fledglings were brought to me from overheated, inaccessible nest sites under tiles in the village; ours, deep in the cavity, were fine. Raising a Swift to release weight is notoriously difficult, so I held each in front of two of our active nests. They readily climbed out of my hand into the tunnel and were successfully fostered — amazing!

Like Swifts, House Martins, had not previously nested on our house. I put up 8 'cups' and in 2019 we had our first breeding pair, in 2020 two breeding pairs, one raising two broods. Last May we had five pairs nesting. Then three weeks of cold weather reduced insect numbers. Sadly, only one pair bred.

With previous experience of Barn Owls, I liked an isolated tree 60m from our house as a potential nest box site. Barn Owls appeared in the first year, but Jackdaws disturbed them. Then from 2018 to last summer we had broods of 4, 3, 3 and 4. All fledged, and they have spread. One of 'our' ringed female chicks subsequently raised a brood at Longshaw. Last summer Alan Kydd ringed 11 chicks within 1.5km of our box.

Kestrel Chicks © John Ellicock

Although there are no Kestrels in our garden yet, elsewhere in Hathersage we have had great success — I put up a box for Tim Birch and he has had broods of 6, 5 and another 6 subsequently. All fledged thanks to the strength of the vole population in the valley.

Completely unanticipated was:

- The interest in Hathersage for Swifts. Following a short series of articles in the Hathersage News, and encouragement from Alan Kydd, we formed the Hathersage swift group. This allowed us to respond to the request from DWT's Nick Brown to participate in the inaugural UK Swift Awareness Week in 2018. The walk we organised attracted over 100 folk which subsequently led to talks and the formation of Swift groups in 8 other Peak District villages.

- Meeting Lester Hartmann. He and Lynden moved to Hathersage about a year before us. Lester is a designer in wood. I asked him to make some boxes for me. His interest soared when he saw broods of Kestrels and Barn owls in boxes he had made. This led to the start of two conservation projects Kesbo (Kestrels and Barn Owls) and Swifts. Working with Alan Kydd, Lester now monitors over 40 Kestrel and 40 Barn Owl boxes in the area.

I became concerned that my requests for boxes was detracting from Lester's main business. We discussed it and in 2018 agreed to buy a CNC (computer numerically controlled) machine. This new venture displaced his previous business within a year, and the rest, as they say, is history. Lester and Lynden now have a business (Peak Boxes) of national significance; but that is their extraordinary story to tell.


Barn Owl Chicks © John Ellicock

## Bird Fair Reborn — Continued

Finally, they felt that the event might be having a negative impact on the Nature Reserve because of soil compaction at the site area. That sounds entirely spurious to me and seems hardly credible from an event held for only 3 days each year. Sadly, in the release their was no mention of the prime instigator of the event — Tim Appleton— who had done such a fantastic job for so many years. While we were away in January, I heard the news that Tim had decided to organise a replacement event. This will be held in 2022 at the Rutland Showground at Oakham on 15th, 16th and 17th July. You can learn more about the event at https://globalbirdfair.org/ . I hope Tim gets the support for this event he deserves and we will certainly be there once again. I have a feeling that the Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust will not have their usual stand at the show!


Bird Fair © Alan Kydd

# Club Members (2020/21)

Kay Allinson
Sue Argent
Doug Aston
Laurence Atkinson
Stephen Brennan
Peter Bull
Liz Burns
Audrey Buxton
Anita Cavell
Jane Cheshire
Mike Cheshire
Marion Clemons
Richard Clemons
Marion Codd
Carol Collins
Janice Connell
Sue Cork
John Craike
Sally Craike
Christine Crawford
Joy Croot
John Ellicock
Elaine Ellingham
Jaimella Espley
Steve Espley
Carol Franks
Chris Franks
David Gains
Peter Gait
Graham Games
Carole Goodwin
Christine Gregory
Jasmine Harfoot
Larry Harfoot
Lester Hartmann
Carole Hemsley
John Hodgson
John Jackson
Alan Kydd
Di Kydd
Rosemary Lake
Sarah Lee
David Lockwood
Chris Lorch
Rob Lorch
Jennifer Marshall
Janet Morris
Phil Morris
John Nicholson
Ian Orford
Sandra Orford
Doug Pealing
Jude Pealing
Mike Pedler
Scharlie Platt
Steve Platt
Pam Rowarth
Simon Rowlands
Carol Skelton
Cedric Skelton
Jean Spencer
John Spencer
Vonny Stokes
Hilary Tann
Pat Tann
Jane Taylor
Will Taylor
Barry Thompson
Steve Tompkin
Jane Varley
Brian Whalley
Lyla Whalley
Alison Wheeler
Ellie Wood
John Wood
John Wooddisse

# Committee Members

| | |
|---|---|
| President: | John Wooddisse |
| Chairman: | Alan Kydd |
| Secretary: | Jude Pealing |
| Treasurer: | Chris Lorch |
| Ordinary Members: | Carol Collins |
| | David Gains |
| | John Spencer |

# Members Not Forgotten

Since our last edition in 2020, two long-standing club members sadly passed away.

Barbara Wooddisse, who supported our president, John, ever since he formed the club more years ago than he probably cares to remember, died in Ashgate Hospice in March 2020. She was our secretary for many years. She and John travelled to many interesting locations worldwide and she wrote several articles for our magazine about some of those experiences.

Sue Cockayne was, I believe, one of the club's original members. Sue also contributed several articles to the magazine and was a keen participant in our Tuesday evening walks until mobility issues prevented her from joining these some years ago.

**Bird Quiz** answers: 1. Pipit, 2. Partridge, 3. Blackbird, 4.Owl, 5. Ousel, 6. Bustard, 7. Wren, 8. Starling, 9. Roller, 10. Stilt, 11. Quail, 12. Scoter, 13. Knot, 14. Wallcreeper, 15. Stint, 16. Wryneck, 17. Robin, 18. Parrot, 19. Egret, 20. Sandpiper