



ISSUE 2
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THE DIPPER

THE MAGAZINE OF THE HOPE VALLEY BIRD WATCHERS CLUB



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Front Cover Photograph: Common Snipe © *David Gains*

At times it is incredible that there are 60 000 breeding pairs of the secretive snipe as we glimpse the cryptic straw-coloured stripes of a crouching bird. This bird, at RSPB Conwy in October 2005, was flushed from the long grass in which it was hiding by a stoat and spent several minutes in the open before melting away again. Taken using Nikon Coolpix 4500 attached to Opticron HR66ED GA scope with 18-54x zoom eyepiece.



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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Welcome to the second edition of the Hope Valley Birdwatchers Club magazine. I hope you all agree that the 2004 edition was a great success and again thank you all for the contributions given to this latest edition, and a particular thank you again to David Gains for editing and producing this year's magazine.

As you can see from this year's programme we are still a very active Club with over forty meetings in 2006, despite the average age of the Club increasing. Could this be reflected in the ever growing number of pub lunches in 2006? We are however now in a position where we need some new younger members to keep the Club an active one. If any of you know someone who may be interested please let them know about the Club and its activities.

I was saying in the last magazine that bird watching is an increasingly popular hobby. Money generated by birdwatchers as well as grants from local authorities is helping

to create new bird reserves and also improve established ones. There are several local examples of this: Potteric Carr, Ogston, Carsington, Carr Vale, Old Moor and its adjacent Dearne Valley reserves. At all these reserves you can see an excellent range of wetland and other bird species. All are within one hour's drive from the Hope Valley.

In the spring of 2005 the Club undertook survey work for a local landowner from Brough. This work, coordinated by Alan Kydd, was carried out on four different grouse moors which are under development. Early results show that in creating this new moorland habitat, which was previously grass moorland, an excellent habitat has been provided for moorland waders to breed. We look forward to the survey results in subsequent years as the new heather moors develop into grouse moors.

Finally, I would like to wish all members successful bird watching in the future.

RINGED DIPPERS



Dipper
© David Morris

During 2005 a number of young Dippers raised in the Rivelin Valley were ringed. The intention is to try to determine how far they spread from their birth place.

They have a metal ring above a purple ring on their right leg, and 2 coloured rings fitted on their left. Please report any sightings to: s.sharp@sheffield.ac.uk.

Feel free to contact a committee member, who will contact someone who has e-mail, if you are not using it yourself.

FIELD TRIP HIGHLIGHTS

The following are some of the highlights of the field trips in 2004 and 2005. A list of all the birds seen is given at the end.

Dates of visits together with the number of species recorded are given in brackets.

Clumber Park. A wintertime walk (24/1/04, 54) provided the expected glimpses of Hawfinch—this secretive bird is present all year but stays within the tree canopies, but becomes more visible once the leaves have fallen—but much better views were gained on the last visit (6/12/05, 56). The dawn chorus was rejoiced with an early start (7AM) in April (25/4/04, 69 & 23/4/05, 71). Among the birds seen were Marsh Tit, Willow Tit and Woodlark, and arriving summer visitors, such as Cuckoo, Yellow Wagtail, Tree Pipit, Redstart and several warblers. Last year's evening "Nightjar" walk (12/7/05, 32) more than compensated for the previous year's wash-out. As the sun set, a few members glimpsed a Hobby before the Nightjars put on one of the best performances for years: wing clapping, calling, churring and fluttering flight just above our heads. As we were leaving, two

Woodcocks flew over a couple of times. Earlier that evening, we found an interesting sight: a juvenile Coot incubating a clutch of eggs with an adult nearby in the water—normally, the sight of a stranger will provoke fighting, so the juvenile must have been related. While juvenile Moorhens of the first brood will sometimes tend young of later broods, I've yet to find a mention of this in Coots.

Worlaby Carrs (14/2/04, 16), near Brigg, is an important area for breeding and wintering birds, and a large area is being changed into wet grassland, and wide grass margins and stubble are also being provided as part of a Countryside Stewardship agreement. A Rough-legged Buzzard over-wintered here in 2003, and there were other raptors too, such as Buzzard, Kestrel and Short-eared Owl. When we returned in February 2004 it was very quiet apart from dozens of singing Skylark and a few other species — the estate manager reported that there were few wintering birds owing to the unusually mild weather. The field trip was cancelled in 2005 owing to inclement weather.

Potteric Carr has recently secured funding to purchase additional fields and is currently converting them to wetland. In recent winters, the reserve has held up to about half a dozen Bitterns, and the outlook for breeding birds is promising. Club visits have so far "dipped" on Bittern, but typically 40-50 other species have been observed.

Our early morning walk up **Derwent Dale** to Howden Dam is usually memorable for the unexpected rather than the tantalising views of Goshawk. For example, a flock



Pied Flycatcher
© David Morris



Puffin
© David Gains

of 34 Whooper Swans (27/3/04, 29) on the water and (26/3/05, 30) flocks of twittering Siskins and Redpolls and a marauding flock of 200-300 Bramblings feeding on beech mast (some of the males being almost in breeding plumage).

Carr Vale (22/4/04, 60) provided many with several “firsts” for the year including Swift, House Martin, Whinchat, Little Ringed Plover, Yellow Wagtail and Whitethroat. The day finished with a pair of Buzzards being mobbed by a Sparrowhawk.

The **Padley Gorge** Pied Flycatchers have proven increasingly elusive on the evening walks (11/5/04, 21) for a couple of years. Happily, this is not because they have disappeared, because they are easily seen in the mornings. Consequently, last year the walk was in the morning and is likely to be so in the future.

In the summer, the pleasant walk over **Derwent Moor** is a regular venue and usually provides some unexpected joy. Several Cuckoos were calling and flying about in 2004 (18/5/04, 23), whereas last year (24/5/05, 28) several Ring Ouzels

were seen and heard, and a few Whinchat and Stonechat too.

A new destination for the Club was **Whisby Nature Park**, just south of Lincoln (5/6/04, 57). This reserve is renowned for its Nightingales and Turtle Doves. One of the first birds to be heard on our visit was a Nightingale singing, which though very close, proved impossible to see. Just before midday, a purring Turtle Dove was heard. At lunchtime, a low-flying Hobby flew in front of the hide overlooking Grebe Lake.

A few of the mid-week walks include a pub lunch. One such walk was the **Calver-Curbar** walk (17/6/04, 41). On the river were several Grey Wagtails and members had brief glimpses of Kingfisher and Dipper, but best of all was a female Goosander with 3 youngsters.

Bempton Cliffs (8/7/04, 15) in the summer offers the opportunity to see the only mainland Britain gannetry. In 2004, a number of “bridled” Guillemots, which have a white ring round the eye and stripe behind it, were present. We also had excellent views of the Puffins.

Towards the end of the summer (22/8/04, 60), **Gibraltar Point** was host to a rare North American vagrant and a couple of members managed to see it – a Long-billed Dowitcher, which resembles a Snipe but with a hint of godwit. A few Whimbrels flew over as we were having lunch in the dunes and watching terns.

The trip to **Titchwell Marsh** (11/9/04, 71) was perhaps the last time some of us would see a Black-winged Stilt in the UK, but the varied habitat – woodland,

wetland, marsh and coast – means all sorts of species were, and will continue to be, observed.

Strong winds at **Blacktoft** (23/9/04, 45) limited bird numbers. However, there were lots of wildfowl and waders. Good views of Bearded Tits—the largest UK breeding colony is on this reserve—and Water Rail, and a Marsh Harrier appeared later in the day. Just under a year later (23/8/05, 44), a few lucky members watched a Red-necked Phalarope on the flooded Ousefleet field; other waders included Spotted Redshank and Little Stints.

An autumnal trip on a blustery day to **Spurn Point** (2/10/04, 49) produced disappointingly few birds and no rarities. However, there were a few Brent Geese and rafts of Common Scoters and Scaups were visible on the choppy waters.

Bird watching at **Rother Valley Country Park** (11/11/05, 41) was frustrated by strong winds, but there were good views of a couple of Lesser Redpolls and fleeting glimpses of Green Woodpecker, Kingfisher and a trio of flying Redshanks.

The Club meeting at **Fairburn Ings**



Kingfisher
© Alan Kydd



Golden Plover
© Alan Kydd

(27/11/04, 56) was rewarded with the expected wildfowl, including Goldeneye, but there were very few geese. A breathtaking view of a Green Woodpecker outside one of the hides was surpassed only by that of a Kingfisher perched in a shrub for more than quarter of an hour. Hundreds of Fieldfares were roosting in hawthorns and dozens of Redwings were seen around the site. The following year (13/10/05, 50) a Kingfisher was yet again posing for photographs, and a couple of Black Swans were present with about 200 Mute Swans.

The weather for the **Old Moor** visit (9/12/04, 46) was excellent and the highlight of the day was the superb sight of over 5000 Golden Plovers, which kept moving around all the time. The springtime visit (23/3/05, 61) provided an early record of Sand Martin.

The Christmastime visit to **Martin Mere** in 2004 (19/12/04, 53) was actually the second visit that year, because the previous year's had been postponed owing to bad weather until January (18/1/04, 54—including Ferruginous Duck and Red-breasted Goose). Among the thousands of

wildfowl there were about a dozen Bewick's Swans and we managed to see two of them. Last Christmas, (18/12/05, 46) only 5 Bewick's were present and

none were seen. Increasingly, it is the raptors, such as Buzzard, Peregrine, Hen Harrier, Sparrowhawk, Merlin and Barn Owl that are providing the surprises!

The Birds of 2004-2005

Little Grebe, Great Crested Grebe, Gannet, Cormorant, Bittern, Little Egret, Grey Heron, Spoonbill, Mute Swan, Black Swan, Bewick's Swan, Whooper Swan, Pink-footed Goose, Greylag Goose, Snow Goose, Canada Goose, Barnacle Goose, Brent Goose, Red-breasted Goose, Egyptian Goose, Ruddy Shelduck, Shelduck, Mandarin, Wigeon, Gadwall, Teal, Mallard, Pintail, Shoveler, Red-crested Pochard, Pochard, Ferruginous Duck, Tufted Duck, Scaup, Eider, Common Scoter, Goldeneye, Red-breasted Merganser, Goosander, Ruddy Duck, Marsh Harrier, Hen Harrier, Goshawk, Sparrowhawk, Buzzard, Kestrel, Merlin, Hobby, Peregrine, Red Grouse, Grey Partridge, Red-legged Partridge, Pheasant, Water Rail, Moorhen, Coot, Oystercatcher, Black-winged Stilt, Avocet, Little Ringed Plover, Ringed Plover, Golden Plover, Grey Plover, Lapwing, Knot, Sanderling, Little Stint, Curlew Sandpiper, Dunlin, Ruff, Snipe, Long-billed Dowitcher, Woodcock, Black-tailed Godwit, Bar-tailed Godwit, Whimbrel, Curlew, Spotted Redshank, Redshank, Greenshank, Green Sandpiper, Common Sandpiper, Turnstone, Red-necked Phalarope, Arctic Skua, Black-headed Gull, Common Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Herring Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Little Gull, Kittiwake, Sandwich Tern, Common Tern, Arctic Tern, Guillemot, Razorbill, Puffin, Rock Dove, Stock Dove, Wood Pigeon, Collared Dove, Turtle Dove, Cuckoo, Barn Owl, Little Owl, Tawny Owl, Short-eared Owl, Nightjar, Swift, Kingfisher, Green Woodpecker, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Woodlark, Skylark, Sand Martin, Swallow, House Martin, Tree Pipit, Meadow Pipit, Yellow Wagtail, Grey Wagtail, Pied Wagtail, Waxwing, Dipper, Wren, Dunnock, Robin, Nightingale, Black Redstart, Redstart, Whinchat, Stonechat, Wheatear, Ring Ouzel, Blackbird, Fieldfare, Song Thrush, Redwing, Mistle Thrush, Grasshopper Warbler, Sedge Warbler, Reed Warbler, Whitethroat, Garden Warbler, Blackcap, Wood Warbler, Chiffchaff, Willow Warbler, Goldcrest, Spotted Flycatcher, Pied Flycatcher, Bearded Tit, Long-tailed Tit, Marsh Tit, Willow Tit, Coal Tit, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Nuthatch, Treecreeper, Jay, Magpie, Jackdaw, Rook, Carrion Crow, Raven, Starling, House Sparrow, Tree Sparrow, Chaffinch, Brambling, Greenfinch, Goldfinch, Siskin, Linnet, Lesser Redpoll, Bullfinch, Hawfinch, Yellowhammer, Reed Bunting [Total: 181 species]

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

MOORLAND SURVEYS

Last winter, Geoffrey Eyre gave our group a very interesting talk about his habitat restoration work on the Peak District moors. Those who attended may recall that he strongly believes that the work he is doing to replace the *Molinia* grass with heather and more diverse flora is beneficial to the moorland birds.

This spring, I met him while doing my River Noe survey work (he owns much of the river bank), and he asked whether our Club might be interested in doing an independent bird survey for him on areas where he's been working.

After a chat with a few members, we agreed to do this and undertook to survey 4 areas. The first was at Moscar (SK2287) on the Bamford Moor side, then there were two on the east side of Derwent reservoir at Greystones Moss (SK1891) and Sheepfolds (SK1991) and finally we surveyed an area north of the Woodhead Road by the village of Carlecotes (SE1603).

All of these areas are temporarily fenced to keep sheep off as they've been seeded with new heather. There were certainly plenty of birds in these areas but a single survey is insufficient to prove a great deal, especially as we have no data from the time before Geoff started his work. We plan to follow up with surveys in future years to see how the bird population changes.

It will also be interesting to see how the plant life develops after the removal of the *Molinia*. Hares were recorded inside the fence in every area with at least four at both Moscar and Sheepfolds. Clearly,



Skylark
© David Morris

removal of acres of *Molinia* doesn't worry them. We did however notice a lot of holes—presumably used by small mammals—which have been exposed as a result of the removal of the deep grass. We wondered whether this would have an effect on the birds which use these for food, such as the Short-eared Owls. Time will tell.

So far, it does seem that the birds have already taken to these areas, and as more diverse plants fill around the new heather, it seems likely to get better.

A summary of the results is given in the table on the opposite page.

David Gains, Graham Games and John Wooddisse helped me with this work.

Today, the Skylark population is about one-third what it was 30 years ago. The decline is most likely caused by the move to winter sowing of cereals, which deters late-season nesting attempts and may reduce winter survival because there is less stubble.

SPECIES	MOSCAR	GREYSTONES	SHEEPFOLDS	CARLECOTES
Curlew	13	7	7	11
Golden plover	2	6	6	13
Skylark	2	7	10	18
Snipe	4			1
Redshank				1
Lapwing	14		3	13 + 2 young
Meadow pipit	42	10	41	27
Red grouse	1	1	2	1 + 6 young
Short-eared owl	1		1	

LISTING LUNACY

Until the last few years, I didn't make any lists. This was Di's province—a list of chores being her favourite, followed by shopping lists, holiday lists, camping lists, etc. Since taking up bird watching, I'm also hooked on lists.

Over the last few years, I've been listing the birds we see on what I call “local walks”. This includes all the bird club walks we do in spring and summer and others we do regularly in and around the Hope Valley. I would guess this covers an area of about 8 miles from Hathersage. Each year, I now record birds seen on about 80 such walks.

Perhaps we don't always realise the variety of birds we can see on our doorstep. I started in 2001 and recorded only 67 species. This increased to 75 in 2002 and 92 in 2003, probably as a result of my improved skill at recognition—thanks to HVBWC! The last two years have also seen counts of 92 and 93. The overall total recorded over the last five years has now reached 110 species.

Nine species have only been recorded once in these 5 years. The species concerned surprised me a little and are as follows: Little Owl—2001 in Coombs Dale; Common Scoter—2002 on Redmires reservoir; Black Grouse—2003 in Hathersage (one of the released birds); Grey Partridge—below Stanage Edge in 2003; Hen Harrier—Big Moor in 2003; Lesser Whitethroat in Monsal Dale in 2003; Shelduck on Middleton Moor in 2003 and Tree Sparrow—near Millthorpe in 2003. I imagine I have failed to record quite a few Lesser Whitethroats—I have yet to recognise their call!

The surprise is that what I think of as real rarities—such as Waxwings, Crossbills, Great Grey Shrikes, Wood Warblers and the like can be seen around the valley (with a bit of luck) more easily than these nine species.

Of the club evening walks, the walk that is likely to produce the most different species is the Calver walk (41 in 2004). Monsal Dale and Lathkill Dale also regularly produce more than 30 species.

ROUND THE CORNER FROM LEIGHTON MOSS

Morecambe Bay is one of the prime coastal birding spots in the UK and the Club has visited the RSPB reserve at Leighton Moss on several occasions. Our President reckons that it is only two hours drive from Hathersage but it takes us much longer, probably because we seldom resist a diversion to Hest Bank, with its spectacular wader roost and shoreline café. The main Leighton Moss reserve offers a wide variety, passerines and raptors as well as water-loving birds, but to do the area justice the visit should include the two salt-marsh hides and the walk round the coast to Jenny Brown's Point and Jack Scout. This makes a very long day and we prefer to stay overnight in the area. Our favourite stopping place is Grange-over-Sands, round the corner on the north side of the Kent estuary, ten minutes by train but much further by road. Grange is a small resort that developed following the arrival of the railway in 1887 and has remained largely unmodernised yet without slipping into decay. Until recently it was a good birding spot in its own right, with large numbers of Shelduck feeding below the sea wall by the station, Pintail just opposite our hotel room, and sounds of Oystercatcher and Curlew to punctuate our sleep. In the last decade the shore has been colonised by *Spartina anglica*, a new and highly invasive species that arose by mutation of a sterile hybrid between the native *Spartina maritima* and the introduced American species *Spartina alterniflora*⁽¹⁾. This has increased the build up of silt and sheep now graze where waders once fed. The birds are still there, but so far out in the estuary as to be almost invisible. Further along the coast things



Eider duck on nest next to the path
© Rodney & Joan Pollitt

are better and there are two reserves which are well worth a visit.

Walney Island lies at the mouth of Morecambe Bay, just west of Barrow in Furness, and is worth a full day. The Cumbria Wildlife Trust runs a reserve at the southern tip, open from 10:00 to 17:00 in summer, 10:00 to 16:00 in winter, is closed Mondays. There is a small admission charge (£2 per head at our last visit). The final stretch of the approach road is very rough and “amenities” are limited to the toilets. However, the routes through the reserve are well marked and there are several hides. The sheltered eastern shore has salt marshes as well as mud and shingle and supports a fair number of waders. The more exposed western shore is good for open-sea birds. Some of the freshwater lagoons have recently been extended and are beginning to attract a variety of species. The sandy interior is notable for the impressive numbers of nesting gulls, mainly Lesser Black-backed (estimated to be a third of the total UK nesting population) and

1. www.morecambebay.org.uk/PDF/reference/saltmarsh_factsheet.pdf



Beginning to stake out nesting sites, third week in April

© Rodney & Joan Pollitt

Herring but with some Greater Black-backed Gull also. The way-marked circuits lead through the nesting sites in places. Views are excellent but a hard hat is recommended in season—those gulls can draw blood! Walney is also the most southerly nesting site in the UK for Eider with an estimated 700 pairs.

We have yet to visit North Walney, where there is an English Nature reserve. Further up the coast is Hodbarrow, an RSPB reserve but one that could scarcely be more different from Leighton Moss. The site is a former iron ore quarry, abandoned in 1947 and now flooded to form a huge freshwater lagoon. It is easily reached from the centre of Millom and is open at all times. A rough vehicle track semi-circles the lagoon, crossing the narrow spit which separates it from the open sea. There is no on-site warden or visitor centre: the only concession to bird-watchers is a very large hide at about the

half-way point. For some reason we seem only to visit in the worst of weathers and the 50 yard dash from the car to the comparative shelter of the hide is always exhilarating! Midweek we are usually the only occupants. Once inside the hide you are overlooking a shingle bank sloping down into the lagoon. A variety of ducks and waders can usually be seen and Great Crested Grebes are in abundance. Sandwich and Little Tern bathe in clear view and both species nest on an island viewed further along the track. In less extreme weather it should be possible to see a good variety of passerines in the surrounding scrub and the flora is said to be interesting. The track eventually comes out in the small village of Haverigg where there are public toilets and a small café at the beach car park.

Continued overleaf

FANCY THAT...

The American Birding Association 2004 List reveals that Tom Gullick, Spain, leads the World list of birds seen with an

impressive 8421 species. Running in second place with 8073 is none other than Jon Hornbuckle.

South Walney—Recent Sightings 21st April 2005

Offshore: Common Scoter, Guillemot, Razorbill, Kittiwake, Fulmar, Gannet, Manx Shearwater, Arctic Skua, Red-throated Diver, Sandwich, Arctic and Little Tern

Raptors: Peregrine, Sparrowhawk, Kestrel, Merlin

Gulls: Greater and Lesser Black-backed, Glaucous, Little, Herring

Waders: Oystercatcher, Curlew, Whimbrel, Knot, Dunlin, Turnstone, Sanderling, Ringed Plover, Grey Plover, Greenshank, Redshank, Bar-tailed and Black-tailed Godwit, Common Sandpiper

Wildfowl: Canada Goose, Greylag Goose, Teal, Mallard, Shelduck, Tufted Duck, Ruddy Duck, Scaup, Gadwall, Red-breasted Merganser, Eider, Little Grebe, Coot, Moorhen, Mute Swan

Passerines: Stonechat, Goldfinch, Linnet, Twite, Greenfinch, Chaffinch, Meadow Pipit, Skylark, Pied Wagtail, Wren, Dunnock, Chiffchaff, Goldcrest, Willow Warbler, Reed Bunting, Wheatear, Swallow, Sand Martin, Blackcap

BOOK REVIEW

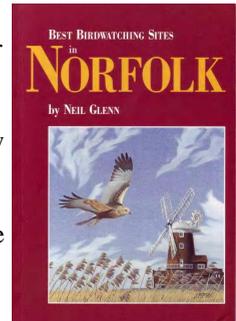
Best Birdwatching Sites in Norfolk by
Neil Glenn Buckingham Press
ISBN 0-9533840-4-7 £15

I've got several site guides including a couple from the "Where to watch..." series and very useful they are too, but if I am perfectly honest they all lack one thing or another. Before a long weekend in Norfolk, I decided to buy "Best Birdwatching Sites in Norfolk", having read several good reviews of it.

The start of each account identifies the species you are most likely to see at the site together with the times of year and the chance of seeing them (as a percentage figure in brackets after the species' name). This is followed by a commentary of a typical walk round the site, with tips on the best places to look.

Neat maps show the main features, like paths, marshes, lagoons, woods, hides, etc.

and another smaller map shows the major roads near the site. There are also access details including how to get there, where to park, when it's open and whether there are admission charges. Whether there are local facilities, such as toilets and cafes, is mentioned too.



As well as general monthly accounts at the front of the book, which provide details of what the different species are doing and what to look for, there are guidelines on disabled access, public transport and contacts in the back.

This book sets a new standard for all future site guides— it is jam-packed with all the information you need for your birding trip.

PEAK DISTRICT RAPTORS

The Peak District is one of the best areas in the country to watch birds of prey.

There are currently seven species regularly breeding in the area—Buzzard, Kestrel, Sparrowhawk, Goshawk, Peregrine, Hobby and Merlin.

Most are faring well with the exception of Merlin, whose breeding success over the last few years has been low compared with the late 80s and early 90s. The reasons for this are not fully known and may be complex, but overgrazing of heather moorland by sheep does appear to be one contributing factor.

Buzzards continue to increase and infill and must be at, or very near to, maximum density, and they are an increasingly common sight throughout the area, except in the northern grouse shooting areas, where persecution is still a problem.

Sparrowhawk numbers seem to have peaked and a slight decrease has been noted over the last few years, but numbers now appear to be fairly stable. They are increasingly noted in urban areas.

Goshawk numbers are at reasonable levels, but some pairs of this spectacular, secretive raptor may be overlooked. Persecution still continues, it seems, in some moorland areas in the north.

Pleasingly, there are one or two pairs of Hobby getting a foothold in the lower parts of the Peak District. This attractive, agile falcon is a wonderful addition to the local avifauna, and birds can be seen over moorland between May and September catching moths and dragonflies.

Kestrel numbers have dropped a little recently, but this is still one of our commonest and most visible raptors, and can be seen throughout the Peak District in all sorts of habitat as it hovers in search of small rodents and insects.

Peregrines are doing well. Most of our nesting pairs are in working quarries and therefore safety is practically guaranteed, and quarry managers often refer to them as “our birds”—long may it continue.

When you add in the migrant and wintering raptors, such as Marsh Harrier and Hen Harrier, and then the more exotic visitors which turn up sometimes, e.g. Honey Buzzard, Rough-legged Buzzard plus (if you are very lucky) the odd Red-footed Falcon or even White-tailed Eagle, it is no surprise that the Peak District can be considered one of the best and most scenic parts of the country to look for birds of prey.



Buzzard
© David Morris

TANZANIA: SAFARI AND ZANZIBAR

I travelled with Explore to Tanzania in October 2005, flying from Heathrow via Nairobi to Kilimanjaro—terrific view of the summit of Mount Kili from the plane, above the clouds and covered in snow.

We spent one night in Arusha where we met the rest of the group, 13 of us plus Jake, the Explore leader. We set off at 8:30 the next morning for a week's safari. We travelled in 3 elderly, but reliable, land rovers, with excellent local drivers. The first overnight stop was in Tarangire Safari Park where we slept in safari tents. The view across the park was terrific and we sat on the terrace sipping cold beer while watching Elephant, Buffalo, Giraffe, Zebra and Marabou Stork down on the river. Warthogs were grazing outside our tent, and a Vervet Monkey, cradling a dead

baby, was sitting in the tree opposite. We were assured that we were 100% safe inside the tents, but if we heard lions or elephants moving through the camp during the night we had strict instructions not to investigate!

Next day, after an early morning game drive (including good views of Saddle-billed Stork, White-bellied Bustard and hundreds of weaver bird nests) we returned to the lodge for breakfast. Afterwards, we set off for the Lobo Wildlife Lodge in northern Serengeti—a drive of over 250 miles on very rough roads. At one toilet stop I bought a “Birds of East Africa” book at the local shop, which turned out to be invaluable. Other members of the group, who hadn't been particularly interested in birds, became fascinated, and Jake and the drivers were kept busy identifying them for us. My favourite was the Lilac-breasted Roller, which sat and posed for us for ages quite near the road.

Once inside Serengeti National Park the tops of the land rovers were raised for easier game viewing. Almost immediately we saw Ostrich, Secretary Bird, Spotted Hyena, Topi, Hartebeest, Zebra, Buffalo, Wildebeest, Thomson's gazelle, Grant's gazelle, Giraffe and Baboon.

We saw our first Lions, soon after they had eaten, lying quite near the road. They were still sitting by the carcass and a foul smell wafted across—we weren't sure if it was the carcass or if the Lions had bad wind! A bit further on we saw Lions mating—apparently they do it every 20 minutes for 5 days!



Saddle-billed Stork

© Jane Ralston



Lilac-breasted Roller
© Jane Ralston

The following morning we were thrilled to see hundreds of thousands of Wildebeest migrating southwards. We hadn't expected to see the migration, but the rains had come a bit early and we had travelled further north than originally planned. We drove south to spend two nights at the Seronera Wildlife Lodge, still in the Serengeti, stopping at a hippo pool en-route. This was the only place we were allowed to get out of the land rovers and there were 40-50 Hippopotamuses wallowing in their own excrement and squirting it over each other. There were also a few Nile Crocodiles. Our room at Seronera was on the ground floor and at 2:00 AM two hippos walked past munching grass. They were there again the next night, at exactly the same time—an amazing sight!

On the way to the Ngorongoro Crater we visited the Olduvai Gorge, which is famous for Mary Leakey's discovery, in 1959, of the 1.8 million year old ape-like skull known as *Australopithecus boisei*, often referred to as the Nutcracker Man.

We also visited a traditional Maasai village where we were welcomed into the



Lion
© Jane Ralston

village, invited into their homes and taken into the school to meet the children. The Maasai man whose home I visited told us proudly that he had bought his wife for 15 cows, and was building up his herd of cattle in order to buy another wife.

Our last two nights on safari were spent at Ngorongoro Wildlife Lodge on the rim of the Crater, 2286 meters above sea level. Our final game drive in the crater was spectacular. In addition to animals we had already seen, we saw Black Rhinoceros, 250-300 Lesser Flamingos, and watched a Cheetah stalking Thomson's gazelle for 20 minutes before going for the kill. It was all over in seconds but was very exciting to watch.

Half the group finished off with 4 days on Zanzibar Island. Idyllic days were spent relaxing on palm fringed beaches, snorkelling in azure sea, and sipping cocktails at sunset—just what we needed after a hectic week on safari.

Owing to riots following presidential elections we were unable to visit Stone Town, but did manage a fascinating tour of a Spice Plantation.

BRITISH BIRDWATCHING FAIR

“I thought you weren’t going to buy anything”, as I wandered around the bookstall clutching two books. Alan was right, of course, because from the outset I’d told him that credit cards had to be left at home when visiting the annual British Birdwatching Fair at Rutland Water.

Each year the fair’s profits go towards an international conservation project. In 2005, we joined the 18,500 people to visit the fair over its 3 day period and support the latest project, Gurney’s Pitta in Asia. This was also our first visit to a bird fair.

For anyone who has not been before, there are several gigantic marquees for hundreds of companies and organisations representing every aspect of bird watching, from art and photography, bird food and feeders, books and magazines, clothing and accessories, and travel and tourism. What else? Oh yes - the latest optics from the likes of you know who...

Throughout the day there are talks, quizzes, demonstrations and presentations by various organisations, like the RSPB, and celebrities, such as Dominic Couzens.



Osprey
© David Morris

Some are repeated over the weekend, while others are not. We attended a talk by Dawn Balmer, BTO, on the BirdTrack on-line survey and its early results.

Away from the hubbub in the marquees, an observation point had been set up, complete with spotting scopes, to observe translocated Ospreys. We had great and lengthy views of a couple of these magnificent fish eagles.

The translocation programme aims to restore the Osprey as a breeding species in England and to extend its breeding range in the United Kingdom. This year 11 chicks were moved south from Scotland, 9 of them being females. The male is the bird that usually returns to the same place each year and in 2004 there were 6 non-breeding adult males at Rutland, but none attracted any passing females. Hopefully in the future, some of the translocated females will pass this way, stay and breed.

After lunch, we ventured on to the Eggleton reserve and within a couple of hours we had a list of 48 species, including Yellow Wagtail, Green Sandpiper, Kingfisher and Turtle Dove. We also had fantastic views of a roosting Tawny Owl within the woodland area. As the day drew to a close, the route back to the car park took us by the ringing demonstration and provided very memorable views of a Treecreeper.

For some people, the fair is an annual pilgrimage, whether it is to plan next year’s holidays, see the latest equipment or meet up with old acquaintances, but for others it is a less regular occasion. Whichever camp you find yourself, it is indeed an event to experience at least once.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

I have always been fascinated by the Latin names of birds, Wren—*Troglodytes troglodytes*, Corncrake—*Crex crex*, House Sparrow—*Passer domesticus*, Avocet—*Recurvirostra avosetta*, etc.

It seems that all the Latin names of birds have a story to tell. A Swedish biologist Carolus Linnæus (1707—1778) developed a system of biological nomenclature for birds and animals which is still in use today.

Latin names for birds are usually in two parts. The first part of the name describes the family name and is often the dominant species in that family, for example, “Corvus” in *Corvus corax* (Raven). The second part is more descriptive about a species, for example, “domesticus” in *Passer domesticus* (House Sparrow). This system of a local name alongside a Latin one brings together a common system that can be used throughout the world in any language in all bird books. An example of this is *Falco peregrinus* (Peregrine Falcon), a truly cosmopolitan bird, and *Falco mexicanus* (Prairie Falcon), a bird found in the south western U.S.A. and Mexico.

When bird watching in Europe the common name for a particular bird species can change with the language from country to country. The Chiffchaff is called “Tjiftjaf” in Holland, “Zilpzalp” in

Germany, “Pouillot véloce” in France and “Gransångare” in Sweden but the Latin name *Phylloscopus collybita* will be seen alongside the local name in bird books from all four countries.

Common and even worldwide bird names are sometimes changed to provide a unified approach. Our Swallows are now called Barn Swallows (they nearly always nest in barns) throughout the world and there is pressure on Britain to change the name to Barn Swallow.

Linnaeus was very clever in naming birds and a good example of this is the Chaffinch (*Fringilla coelebs*). The Latin word *coelebs* means bachelor which ties in with the fact that the first winter flocks of Chaffinches to arrive from the continent are sometimes all males, females arriving later.



Avocet
© David Morris

GUILTY GAMEKEEPER

John Cripps, 60, the gamekeeper who was convicted of destroying the nest and eggs of a Goshawk in Derwent Valley in 2002, escaped prison when he was given a three-

month suspended jail sentence at Buxton Magistrates Court, in February 2004. The maximum sentence for such crime is six months or a £5000 fine.

A SLIGHT TWITCH

It's October 17th and BirdGuides (www.birdguides.com) tells me there's a Lesser Yellowlegs reported at North Killingholme (N. Lincs.) this morning. I hunt through Collins Bird Guide to find that it's a North American wader which occasionally graces us with its presence! It's a fine looking bird so I could maybe go and take a peep. Now then, where on earth is North Killingholme? After studying a few maps—paper and internet—it seems to be on the south side of the Humber estuary, just a mile or so west of Immingham—not so very far then. North Killingholme is quite a way from the coast, but I eventually realise the bird is actually at Killingholme Haven, which seems to be a large pool at the coast, and is reported to be visible from “the hide”. It sounds quite promising. It's lunchtime by now, and the weather's not brilliant so maybe I could try in the morning—what's the forecast for tomorrow? BBCi says clear blue sky and sunshine so that's that—no excuses! There's only one drawback, Di needs the car tomorrow lunchtime, so I need to get there and back before then. An early start is called for.

I'm on my way from Hathersage soon after 6:00 and after breezing through Sheffield I'm queuing to get onto the M1 at the end of the Parkway by 6:35. It always surprises me how busy the motorways are at such times. Even the M18 is heaving but at least following all the overtaking trucks keeps me below the speed limit. M18, M180, A160 without any problems and I find a sign to Killingholme Haven on the A160. I find the pool and there are hundreds of birds around—but is there anywhere to park? Killingholme Haven seems to be a deep sea shipping container

terminal and the road leads me to a gate into the docks! There should be a hide by the pool but I can't see where it might be, so turn at the dock gates and return to see if there is access anywhere else around the pool. Ten minutes later I'm back at the dock gates! There's just room for my car off the road at the end of a footpath that appears to head off towards Immingham along the sea wall. After a short exploration, I find the hide. I'm not overjoyed to find there's a bolt on the OUTSIDE and I know that with my girth I'll not manage to get through the hide windows should some joker lock me in! It's only just after 7:30 and very cloudy—so much for the BBCi forecast—and it's hardly light yet.

The pool is full of birds. I can see Lapwings, Redshanks, Dunlins and godwits. Are they Black-tailed or Bar-tailed? They sit with most of their legs under water and their bills under their wings (tails, as always, well hidden) so it's anybody's guess! There's lots of wildfowl—mainly Shovelers but there's Teal and Mallard around too. I'm scanning them all with my scope in the gloom trying to find our American visitor. The hide faces south-east—and of course there's a cold SE wind. After completing one scan, another chap arrives so now there are two of us at it. I ask him about the godwits (he's a regular here) and discover the pool is freshwater and they'll likely be Black-tailed Godwits.

Another couple of folk join us but after several unsuccessful scans, they're all off to work and at 8:30 they leave me to myself—and there's no sign of the yank as yet. I decide to take a walk along the sea

wall—maybe there's another patch that I can't see. There's no shelter on the sea wall and it's quite cold. The sun has now appeared, but there's nowhere else where waders would congregate so I'm soon back in the relative shelter of the hide. I scan the birds for the umpteenth time and find a small flock of Knots has arrived. There are over 2,000 Black-tailed Godwits out there with 250+ Lapwings, over 200 Dunlins and at least 200 Redshanks. I also manage to find 3 Curlews, but yellow-legged American waders are conspicuously absent. The sun is quite bright now but, as I said, the hide faces south-east so most of the birds are now black silhouettes and even harder to identify!

It's 9:35 when, with a flurry of wings, a wader drops onto the mud bank not 20 yards in front of me. It's a bit smaller than a Redshank with beautiful long yellow legs, white underbelly and appears to me to be even more elegant than a Wood Sandpiper—unmistakable. I spend the next ½-hour watching it busily feeding before I decide to leave for home. I'm back for lunch at 1:00 and even find time to spend an hour wandering around Worlaby Carrs on my way back. I can think of many worse ways to spend a Monday morning!

After lunch my PC tells me there's a Slavonian Grebe at Ogston— I wonder what the weather is for tomorrow.

MOTHER'S FLYING MACHINE

One sunny morning in the early autumn a couple of years ago, I had walked to the end of the sea wall at the western side of Criccieth on the Llŷn, North Wales.

Suddenly, a deafening roar shattered the tranquillity and after a few disorientated seconds I found the fighter plane that had zoomed over the peninsula and was now crossing Cardigan Bay towards Cadair Idris and then beyond.



Swallow
© David Morris

With serenity restored, I was marvelling at the engineering involved in this ground-contour-hugging machine and.... Whoosh! Something flew past my ear.

Wow! There were hundreds, perhaps thousands of Swallows and House Martins flying along the coastline on their southward journey to Africa, 5000 miles away. Flying low over the beach, cliff tops and hinterland, hawking for insects, they would climb effortlessly above the sea wall blocking their way. Often flying directly towards me, a dazzling effect like driving through falling snow, and then at the last moment they would veer to one side as they flew by. I could look downwards, upwards and sideways at them. They were everywhere.

Half an hour later, I had left my vantage point behind me, but even today I have the memories of Mother Nature's wonderful ground-contour-hugging birds.

BREEZE IN THE BEECHES

Poor old Ratty and his friends are having a very poor time. He and his kind are being driven off by nasty North American bandits. There are perhaps as many as 100 000 of them on the loose in the wild woods who have escaped or been set free from farms by well-meaning humans.

Along the river banks, which are Ratty's home, many of his friends are also suffering at the hands of these murderous North Americans.

The Dabchicks, who also seem to spend most of their time under water, have been driven away, and recently the assassins have now turned their attention to our friends the gentle Waterhens. Who will be next on the list? Will it be the Water

Ouzels, who are always bobbing up and down to see who's there, or will it be the Ducks, who bring their ducklings down to the river as soon as they are hatched?

However, help is at hand, the human who looks after the river has been putting down boxes along the river to catch the cut-throats. It is said that inside these boxes are mirrors that are irresistible to the killers who like to admire their beautiful coats. Once inside there is no escape.

There is a rumour that Mr Otter and his friends are on their way back, they will soon box the ears of the murderers and all will be calm again under the beeches.

Mole

BIRD BRAIN QUIZ

1. How many British species are on the Amber List indicating "medium conservation concern"?
2. What colour are the legs of an adult Avocet?
3. What is a female swan called?
4. What sex is a falcon?
5. What colour is a female Green Woodpecker's moustache?
6. What is a Water Ouzel?
7. What is the average lifespan of a Robin?
8. What is a Green Linnet?
9. The Blue Tit is also known as the Bottle Tit? True or False.
10. What is a female Black Grouse called?
11. Which is bull-necked, Marsh Tit or Willow Tit?
12. What is the aide memoir for the Yellowhammer's song?
13. How can you tell the difference between male and female Kingfishers?
14. Who killed Cock Robin?
15. Gilbert White wrote of Willow Wren and Golden-crowned Wren. What were they?
16. What is a Winter Wren?
17. What is Britain's rarest breeding raptor?
18. Which is Britain's smallest seabird?
19. House Sparrow is on the amber list of conservation concern. True or False?
20. Which British species does not have a return migration?
21. "Go back go back back back back" is a phrase to help remember which species' call?
22. Name the 3 species of sawbill.
23. What is Ratty?
24. Who is Mole better known as?
25. Which has the larger breeding population in the UK, Robin or Dunnock?

The answers are on the back page.

AN AMERICAN STAR IN BRITAIN

For some birders Grimsby may not sit comfortably alongside Norfolk and Scilly as top birding spots, but it was to become a top attraction in late winter 2003 and early spring of 2004.

In February, a couple of us went beyond Worlaby Carrs, the intended destination, to an industrial estate in Grimsby. Outside a factory gate, we joined a line of birders who were focussed intently on bushes a few yards away. Suddenly, a thrush-sized bird popped out of the undergrowth into full view—an American Robin.

The 1st winter female American Robin stayed for several weeks and probably became one of the most watched and photographed birds in Britain. Sadly, on 8th March this well-fed stray was killed by a female Sparrowhawk.

American Robin or Migratory Thrush (*Turdus migratorius*) is a widespread thrush of North America and is commonly seen there pulling up earthworms from



American Robin
© David Gains

lawns, much like our own Blackbird. They breed throughout North America, including Alaska and Canada, but thousands migrate to southern parts for the winter.

In autumn 2003, their migration route was displaced eastwards and this led to at least three American Robins reaching the British Isles, the Grimsby bird being one of them.

KINGSBURY WATER PARK

Next time you are driving South on the M42, soon after passing under the A5 near Tamworth, beware low flying birds. You will be driving through the middle of Kingsbury Water Park.

The park covers an area of over 600 acres and has 15 lakes. The lakes are the remains of old gravel workings and a few of them are reserves for wildlife. The area of the park alongside the River Tame and the Birmingham & Fazeley canal is best for bird watching.

There are 4 bird hides that are very well maintained. The park's main claim to (birding) fame is the Common Terns that breed there every year.

Entrance is described as free but there is a car parking charge.

To visit, take the A5 exit and head for Kingsbury village—2 or 3 miles from the A5 from where it is sign-posted—or check it out on www.westmidlandbirdclub.com/kingsbury.

SPRING

*What if nature forgot to fuel the sun,
breathe on the meadow
and undo the bud.*

*What if nature forgot to lengthen the day,
waken the snowdrop
and will birds to sing.*

*What if nature forgot to carpet the wood,
uncurl the frond
and fill up the beck.*

*What if nature forgot to stir the dormouse,
swell the seed
and busy the bee.*

*What if we forget to open our eyes,
unclap our ears
and remember to live!*

BEAUTIFUL BIRDS

During a holiday in Guatemala last year we had great hopes of seeing the national bird, the Resplendent Quetzal (a kind of trogon).

They like their national bird the Quetzal so much that their money is also called quetzal (pronounced Ketzahly).

Guatemala is a very diverse country with volcanoes, Caribbean and Pacific coastline, Mayan historical sites and lots of wildlife.

We spent several hours walking in the cloud forest looking for the national treasure but to no avail, we did however

see a stuffed one in the park visitor centre.

Disappointed not to see this colourful feathered bird, we did have lots of opportunities to see other beautiful “birds”. These were in every village and market. All the local girls and women wear really lovely costumes with different colours depending on which village they came from.

There were also plenty of feathered birds, toucans, hummingbirds, etc., and animals to see in the fantastic country called Guatemala.

BYE-BYE SAMMY

Sammy, the famous black-winged stilt at RSPB Titchwell Marsh was last seen on 21 May 2005.

During his 11 years at Titchwell, he never encountered another stilt and earned the title of the nation's loneliest bird.

In the spring, several other black-winged stilts were in England and so it may be Sammy has finally caught up with his own species and moved to pastures new.

Sammy will remain one of Britain's most-seen wild birds, with at least half a million people seeing him at Titchwell. Many will

miss this enchanting wading bird, but they will have fond memories of him.



Sammy the Black-winged Stilt
© David Gains

RARITIES



Great Grey Shrike
© David Morris

A Great Grey Shrike was reported at Ramsley Reservoir, Leash Fen and Blacka Moor from November 2004. A few Club members managed to see this bird.

A Dartford Warbler was at Blacka Moor in June 2005 and a few Club members managed to see this "first" for Sheffield, which stayed in the area for just over a week.

BLACK GROUSE

In 1995/96, just 6500 lekking males were found, most of these being in Scotland, compared with 13 000-19 500 in the BTO Breeding Bird Atlas 1988-1991.

In the second year of the re-introduction project, 20 birds, ten of each sex, were released at two different sites in the Upper Derwent Valley. In the first year of the project 30 fully-fledged young Black Grouse were released in October 2003.

The project is a partnership involving Severn Trent Water and the National Trust supported by the Peak District National Park Authority.

There are other Black Grouse recovery projects in the UK, all aiming for a sustainable recovery of this species.

So, in the near future, the sight and sound of Black Grouse may once again be commonplace. Fingers crossed!

CLUB MEMBERS

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Secretary:	Barbara Wooddisse		Alan Kydd
Treasurer:	Graham Games		Rodney Pollitt

Thanks are due to the members and guest contributors for their interesting articles and photographs. We always welcome articles, whether these are bird watching experiences, holidays, book reviews or whatever, and it doesn't really matter how long or short they are—they can always be made to fit! Finally, I thank Alan Kydd for the thankless task of proof-reading—any mistakes you find are entirely my own. *Editor*



www.garden-birds.co.uk/hvbc

Answers to the Bird Brain Quiz
 1. 121. 2. Blue-grey. 3. A pen. 4. Female. The male is a tercel. 5. Black. A male's has red centre. 6. Dipper. 7. 1.1 years. 8. Greenfinch. 9. False. Bottle Tit is a Long-tailed Tit. 10. Grey mandible. 11. Willow Tit. 12. A little bit of bread and no cheese. 13. Female has red on lower international name for it. 17. Montagu's Harrier. 18. Storm Petrel. 19. False—it's on the red list. 20. Crossbill—they're nomadic. 21. Red Grouse. 22. Smew, Red-breasted Merganser and Goosander. 23. Water Vole. 24. John Wooddisse. 25. Robin

Scores: 0-5=Oh dear! 6-10=Good. 11-15=Very Good. 16-20=Excellent. 21-25=Bird Brain!