



Huddersfield Birdwatchers' Club

Registered Charity No. 1098296

NEWSLETTER 2014

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PRESIDENT'S JOTTINGS

I hope that you have been enjoying some good birding this spring and summer. Certainly John Hamilton has, he being the only person to see and fortunately photograph a Purple Heron at Dewsbury Sewage Farm on 26th May – see the Gallery of the Club Forum for all of John's pictures. Purple Heron is of course a Yorkshire Naturalists' Union listed rarity, which, if accepted, will be a new species for the Huddersfield List. Lucky John? Undoubtedly, though his 'luck' may just have something to do with the effort he puts in in the field, so congratulations John, a well-deserved reward. Perhaps we should have a re-run of the competition that Brian Armitage ran some years ago for the 'next new species for Huddersfield'? What would your money be on?

Overall, it has been another strong year for the Club. John Walker delivered us an interesting and varied lecture programme, with contributions from our 'in-house' talent by way of Stephen Cook's talk on Panama and Mike Denton's now regular review of the Huddersfield birding year, pulling on the excellent pictures from our photographers. It would be great to see more presentations from members, so if you have photos from a trip, whether local or abroad, why not share them with us? It does not need to be a full evening, we have the digital projection kit and we can help with setting up the presentation.

We continued the successful record of recent years with the timely publication of Birds in Huddersfield 2012, another excellent report by the recording, writing and production team. I won't list them all, you know who they are, but must make special mention of David Butterfield for his gargantuan effort in managing our records and Mike Denton as 'Technical Editor in Chief', without whom we should be lost. Four patch outings were organised by new Committee member Stephen Cook, all reported herein. Alf King has kept our web site and forum quietly and smoothly ticking over behind the scenes, so that we can enjoy the sightings news and many photos posted by members.

On the other hand there are some concerns. Membership has shrunk to just 76 in 2013/14 and attendance at lectures, always variable, has also drifted down somewhat. The patch outings, though thoroughly enjoyed by those who came, have been thinly supported. Our plan to kick start again some 'in house' surveys suffered a massive set back with the death of Russell Smithson, who had agreed to take on their organisation. It is important that we learn from you what it is you think we are doing well, what not so well and how we might change things for the better – so please tell us your views.

In the same vein, we desperately need 'new blood' on the Committee to help spread the load and take the Club forward. Committee members are doing as much as they can and, of course, John Walker is bearing the load of two roles – Indoor Meetings Organiser and Treasurer. Please therefore do give some thought as to how you can help and have a talk with myself or other members of the Committee. In the manner of General Haig, "Your Club needs you" !

One area we are currently looking at is how to use Club funds. We now have a substantial cash fund, bolstered by the generous legacy left to us by Terry Piggott and our share of a collection made in memory of Russell Smithson. We are already arranging to buy a dedicated laptop computer and software to run the recording system and data for the Club, for which

David Butterfield has hitherto been using his personal PC. Amongst other options being considered is that of funding nest boxes for local reserves and other suitable sites in the Huddersfield area. Bearing in mind the charitable objectives of the Club, how do you think we should use the money? Again we need your ideas and input please.

It is clear that many of us are 'of a certain age' or more and often 'new' members we do attract are at or approaching retirement and wishing to spend more time pursuing an interest that work has hitherto limited. I put myself in that category and we very much welcome all such newcomers. However, if we are to expand membership we shall also need to find ways of appealing to a younger audience, which perhaps means taking a fresh look at how we might use the social media that figure so prominently in the lives of younger generations, but which seem like something from another planet to many of us – myself included. Alf King has previously floated ideas to us on this front and was overwhelmed by the deafeningly silent response. Undoubtedly we need help – are you a social media user who can help us ?

2013/14 of course saw the deaths of four of our colleagues, Terry Piggott, Russell Smithson, David Hardacre and Peter Bell. Full tributes have been made elsewhere and the Club was well represented at all of their funerals, but this is a moment to pay one last farewell to four massive contributors to our Club who will be missed.

Looking forward, John Walker has put together another excellent lecture programme for 2014/15, full details of which are in the enclosed card. It starts on Tuesday 9th September, when John Mather will be presenting "A Bird on a bench" (an updated version).

I look forward to seeing you there. Meanwhile please do think on the issues I have raised.

Best wishes.

Mike Wainman.



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Huddersfield Birdwatchers' Club

Birds in Huddersfield

2013



Production of the 2013 report is well underway and on schedule for printing in the autumn. I am pleased to say that all of the writing team from last year have continued, plus Chris Abell re-joining after a year's break. Stuart Brocklehurst's fine colour picture of a Dipper graces the cover and he has again donated the original artwork for us to raffle when the report is out.

Thank you to all members for sending in their records promptly and again to David Butterfield for his sterling work in computerising and analysing them all.

Mike Wainman

PATCH OUTINGS

Blackmoorfoot Reservoir 13th May

The main aim of patch outings is to make Club members aware of how they can more appreciate a locality by knowing it intimately. It is all too easy to take a quick look over a reservoir and say there is nothing about. By knowing your local patch, however, the areas which birds are known to frequent can be instantly investigated. This was the case on the patch outing of 13th May when Stephen Cook and Mike Denton visited Blackmoorfoot Reservoir. There was nothing visible on the water, not even a Mallard, but knowing that a male Goldeneye had taken up residence and was likely to be along the edge of the willows near the NE corner, MLD looked, and yes, there it was.

A stroll into Orange Wood to watch the Nuthatch pair feeding their young inside a hole which they have used for the past four years also revealed the presence of a male Cuckoo. This was only the second record this year of this decreasing summer visitor. Due to a heavy shower of rain it was decided to park the car in the Will's O' Nat's car park before walking along Potato Lane. We instantly started seeing birds – Skylarks and Meadow Pipits were singing and five Wheatears and a stunning male Whinchat (the first this year) graced the fields. Further along the lane five pairs of Lapwings were sitting on eggs but no Golden Plovers were present. Indeed, this species has been noticeable by its absence over the winter period and, at this time of year, dark plumaged birds which are destined to breed much further north are normally passing through.

One of the major advantages of working a local patch is that, over the years, a better understanding in the fluctuations in bird populations can be accurately assessed. A good example of this can be seen by looking at the breeding figures for certain species. Linnet is a good example – only ten year ago up to ten pairs bred annually, but this has decreased since this time and only four pairs are breeding this year. It is only possible to make statements of this nature if you know the area intimately.

Mike Denton

Broadstones 21st May

A fine evening for the three of us who took part. Starting from the layby on Broadstone Road we followed the path to the reservoir dam, and then along the north side of the reservoir. At the western end we walked up the path some way, mainly to decide what distant bird we could see on a post; it was part of the post! Other more interesting finds included a very vocal whitethroat in the scrubby area near the nest box, several reed buntings, a yellowhammer, and the usual linnets and meadow pipits. Lapwings and curlew could be seen and heard in the surrounding fields, but, as usual recently, there was little of interest on the water apart from a solitary great crested grebe which had been around for some weeks.

For one of us it was a first visit, and he could see the potential of the site, but as many members will know, there is ever-increasing daily disturbance by dog-walkers, especially those who encourage their pets to play in the reservoir. I've written about this issue in my latest

article for the Hepworth Focus magazine, in particular referring to dogs frightening nesting curlews etc on the moorland section of the big circuit from Holme and around the Digley and Bilberry reservoirs, despite signs asking walkers to keep dogs on a lead at this time of year.

Hugh Quaterman

Langsett 24th May

You would have known it, lovely week, warm, sun, then on Friday heavy continuous rain. Not very hopeful that the Patch Outing would be very good, or that anyone would turn up. The portents were not good anyway as I had to change my original plan because the landowner had given notice that Access Land in the Little Don Valley would be closed.

Waking early Saturday morning, dark, no birds singing, I soon realised there was a mist. Driving along A616 it got thicker and thicker the nearer I got to Langsett, crawling along below 30mph on the open road because of poor visibility.

At the Langsett Car Park I was soon joined by Steve Cook and John Palliser and without moving from our cars we picked up a dozen or so species, including Nuthatch and Siskin. In the woods themselves we were rewarded by all the usual species, including 3 Treecreepers. It was good to hear singing Blackcap, Willow Warbler, Song and Mistle Thrush and hooting Tawny Owl. We saw evidence of breeding Robin and Coal Tit carrying food, and a female Great Spotted Woodpecker with head peeping out of a nest hole before flying off. The calls which drew our attention to the hole were almost certainly from young in the nest. On the reservoir Mallard and Canada Goose each had 5 young.

We had heard Cuckoo in the distance and as it became louder we scanned the far bank of the reservoir and found the bird perched on a bare tree. John found a single Common Sandpiper well camouflaged on the far bank.

We kept picking up a trill above us in the woods. We speculated that it may be Wood Warbler but it was only partial song, or was it possibly Tree Pipit singing as it descended to a tree. I have seen both species there, the Tree Pipit in more open areas at the edge of the wood further on and Wood Warbler once when the club did a survey there some years ago. My thoughts to Melvyn & Shirley Collinson who surveyed that bit. But we had to give up looking, no sighting and no conclusive song.

We turned round at the bridge and returned on the upper path parallel to our route out. Again the trill. Our searching was eventually rewarded by watching a male Wood Warbler flitting around a tree, always returning to the same spot. It was not very green but our sighting was confirmed as we watched it sing with a little shimmer to go with the incomplete song we had heard previously. A lifer for Steve made our day.

Returning to the car we drove to Cliff Wood and braving the rain which was now falling we found 2 male Pied Flycatchers and 1 female.

So despite the poor weather, the inauspicious start and the change to the original plan the day

was, for me, a complete success. The Langsett area always seems to turn up something good if you look and today was no exception. Thanks Steve and John for joining me.

Chris Abell

Digley 1st June

We met at 8.00am in Digley quarry car park for a circuit of Digley and Bilberry reservoirs, out to Blackpool Bridge, over the moor to Issues Road and round the south side of Digley. We turned out to be just Roger Mitchell and myself, but we were rewarded with a fine sunny morning with light winds, a welcome contrast to the cold and wet of this outing in some previous years. A total of 33 species were recorded, with many singing, displaying or carrying food. Curlew and in particular Lapwing were present in good numbers on the northern leg, but measures to 'improve' fields along Issues Road have destroyed previous good habitat. Two 'mystery birds' puzzled us – one a probable distant and our only Wheatear and the other a smallish wader that shot across into thick rush and defied all our efforts to relocate it. Otherwise it was an enjoyable morning of spring birding in good company. Thank you to Roger for his support.

Mike Wainman

EXPLAINING THE CHANGING ROLE OF THE RECORDER AS I SEE IT

When I talked myself into taking on the role of Recorder for the Huddersfield Birdwatchers' Club I did so on the understanding that certain conditions and changes would be implemented

Firstly, most important I felt, was that an independent much more experienced panel of expert ornithologists would be set up to adjudicate on those records that are deemed to require descriptions prior to publication. This in the past was something that came under the aegis of Club Recorder but was something that I neither wanted nor felt qualified to do. Secondly, that the method of maintaining records would change, that a move would be made away from what I considered to be the cumbersome, out-dated, time-consuming, hand-written card index system that was being employed to a more manageable electronic system based on a searchable database. Inasmuch as this change would be implemented I foresaw my role less as Recorder, more as Records Compiler, Compiler, what you will ... that change in job title sounds awful and was never implemented but it was, nonetheless, how I saw, and still see, myself.

But which system to use? Initially, I devised a system where records were kept in species datasets based on Excel spreadsheets that were little more than 'computerised' card indices. Inadequacies in this 'system' soon came to the fore and I progressed to using a programme that I had been using for several years to record wildflower distribution: MapMate. Broadly, this system puts dots on maps at tetrad level but had a myriad of built-in queries that could be adapted to recording birds and that the Club could use. Again, after using it for a period of time, inadequacies came to light and I began to consider the pros and cons of using another recording system that I had access to on my computer and which I had been using for a good number of years to keep my own birding records. This programme was Jack Levine's *Wildlife*

Recorder. This is a huge programme that requires a steep learning curve to get to grips with. I freely admit there are some aspects of the programme that I still haven't come to terms with after years of using it. It is, however, eminently customisable and allows the user to keep details of observers, locations, and species in a whole range of disciplines other than birds (if required). It will keep an unlimited number of lists automatically generated from inputted data in minutes. If this is beginning to sound like an advertisement for the programme, it is! It is, in my opinion, quite simply the best recording programme on the market. I knew that it would fulfil our requirements but, because it was not easy, and I was thinking of a time beyond me, I shied away from using it. And then I learned of others that were using it for Club recording: FBOG even used it to generate their annual reports. If they could use it, so could we. Since 1st January 2012 all our Club records have been kept on this programme and, though I say so myself, it seems to be working OK!

By the time you read this, we will, as a Club, I hope, have taken the next step. Over the past twelve months I have been badgering, brow-beating, trying to persuade our Club Committee to spend some of the Club funds and authorise the purchase of a laptop and its' own WR programme on which to keep Club records. This would be the property of the Club and would be registered to the Club Recorder. Up to now, this data has been kept on my own PC using my own programme which is fine, and has not been a problem but again, I'm thinking beyond me. What happens when my successor takes over? What happens if I fall under a 'bus? How does the Club retrieve its' data if all the data is on my own PC and no-one else can access it? So a decision was taken and by now the Club will be the proud possessor of laptop, dedicated WR programme and an external hard drive for back up.

All that is needed now is for some poor soul to come forward and volunteer to learn how to use it – just in case I DO fall under that 'bus.

I ain't joking!

David Butterfield

SETH LISTER MOSLEY (1847-1929)

The 2012 Annual Report contained a fascinating article by Mike Pinder aimed at drawing Club members attention to "An account of the Birds of Huddersfield District" a 20 part work completed in 1915. The authors were S.L. Mosley and F.O Mosley who was Seth's son Frederick Ormerod Mosley (b.1887) and in 1911 he was a lecturer in Biology at the Technical school.

Mike referred to a copy of the part work being sold for £731 in 1995 and an incomplete one for £260 in 2010. A dealer who has a copy, told me a complete set sold for £3600 in 2010 and another for £3200 in 2010. Both at Bloomsbury Auctions.

This March a considerable number of Lister's publications were auctioned by Bonhams. The part work went for £2259. Perhaps a sign of recession?

“A History of British Birds” (1892) sold for £9375 and a collection of 470 original drawings and lithographs, mainly of British birds c. 1890-1920 made £8750.

His rarest book “A Record of Nature for the Huddersfield District” published in 1926 realised £10625.

Club members with the foresight to have purchased “The Birds of the Huddersfield Area” by Paul and Betty Bray, published by the Club may well be rewarded in a hundred years!

N.B. For more details and references see Mike Pinder’s article.

Stephen Cook

COMPUTING AND THE CLUB

Like them or loathe them computers are now a firmly embedded part of life and this is equally so with our club. We rely upon our web site, and particularly the forum, for keeping many members informed of events. We use email wherever possible to keep you abreast of club activities. Our record keeping is completely dependent upon computerised records now, and our archives are safely stored away for posterity on our website “in the cloud”. What more can or should we do? I ask because without any prodding or jogging by members I will just blithely carry on doing what I do, rightly or wrongly, for another year or so. Any suggestions for change, offers of input, straightforward criticism would all be welcomed – without feedback it is difficult to know what is working and what is not. For example, I have tentatively tried to involve us in social media, Twitter etc over the last year or so but this has resulted in no real response at all. Unless I hear to the contrary I will be unlikely to try to take the club any further down these tracks for now.

There have been some small progressions made this year, not really great enough for anyone to really notice however as these have largely been in the operation of the forum and the presentation of images. One important issue that we are interested in is the appearance of the site and its accessibility for those using tablet computers. (I was going to say for those on tablets but that’s probably all of the membership!) As you might be aware web sites etc appear quite differently on a tablet than on a conventional PC screen and we may need to address the issue of the software that supports our site if its appearance or operation is unsatisfactory on a tablet. If anyone using such a device could let me know how they find our site and forum on them, then it would be a great help in deciding what to do for the future.

As the President has reported elsewhere we are making a small investment in a new laptop and software for record keeping purposes, which should be of immediate benefit as well as in the future.

Alf King

A NEW PROJECT – MARGARET WOOD AND THE COUNTRYSIDE RESTORATION TRUST



I don't exactly know how it came about that I came to be involved with this in the first place but now I'm quite glad that I am!

I think Steve Cook saw an article in *The Telegraph* and it sort of progressed from there. Following the appearance of the article he made contact specifically to find out what they (CRT) were doing in Margaret Wood. Their conservation officer, Vince Lee, replied that he was delighted that we had made contact

and that the Countryside Restoration Trust (CRT) would welcome any assistance that the Club could give them in surveying the bird life during the course of the year as the volunteer workers on site had only limited knowledge and he was an infrequent visitor.

Here I should say that CRT was established some 22 years ago with the aim of promoting wildlife-friendly farming and to campaign for a living, working countryside. Does that sound familiar? It now has over 1500 acres of working farms, small-holdings and woodland. Most of these are in southern England. Margaret Wood, CRT's northern outpost, is situated in Upper Denby, on a short, gated track a little way down Gunthwaite Lane, signposted 'CTR, Caravan Club'. Now, I've lived and worked in the Denby Dale area for the best part of 50 years but I had no idea where this wood was. I was to find out that Margaret Wood started life as Swift Wood and is still named such on some maps (but check out Google Maps, it's called Margaret Wood on there) Following donation of the wood to the Trust by the owner, it was renamed Margaret Wood in memory of his deceased wife.

Following his lead, emails were exchanged between Steve, myself and CRT's Vince Lee and we found ourselves invited to meet Margaret Wood's volunteer and CRT staff (who would come up from their base in Cambridge) at the upcoming Margaret Wood Bluebell Festival on 10th May 2014. And so myself, Steve and his wife, Viv, found ourselves being shown around the wood by our volunteer guide on the day, Andy West. Other volunteers that we met included John Dunn, Phil Opie and CRT representative Hayley Newton, up from Cambridgeshire with paperwork on the CRT project and maps of the area which we might require for any survey work that we could undertake. We would also need keys for the locks on the gates that would give us access to the site at any time and these were to be supplied by John Dunn.

Margaret Wood is an area of semi-ancient woodland owned. It is surrounded by short turf grassland, owned by the trust, with grazing rights leased to a local farmer and used solely for grazing sheep. Here a natural spring surfaces and supplies water to several ponds both inside and outside the wood. Andy informed us that even in the harshest weather this water source never froze! This is the source of Clough Dike, which flows through the wood and is joined by a second stream, which also has its' source nearby, and leave the wood at a point on its' south-

eastern woodland edge. Years ago, before the woodland came under trust administration, the wood, as I have said, was in private ownership and was kept ruthlessly tidy - dead trees were removed as was all fallen timber. As a result, over time, the woodland fauna had become impoverished. In AD.2000 (?) CRT began a programme of tree-planting (oak, birch, hornbeam, ash), hedgerow restoration, nest box installation, and creation of wood-piles (to emulate fallen timber) and slowly its' wildlife value has and is improving.

Some, significant areas of the wood are predominantly beech. Beech is not considered to be part of the semi-ancient woodland community and, consequently, beech, whilst not being actually removed, is not being replaced. The desired effect is that these parts of the wood will revert back to oak-birch, and it is these that are being planted whenever tree-planting is carried out. [Not sure that I entirely agree with this as the beech woodland community is of great interest and adds to the diversity of species that can be present]



At this time of year the most obvious attraction in the wood is the endless carpets of bluebell. So far, encroachment of Spanish Bluebell has been averted but, it would seem, only through vigilance, as plants are removed as soon as and whenever they are discovered – on the day of our visit a plant had been uprooted near the entrance to the farm gates (AW). Other obvious woodland plants that were prominent at that time were Greater Stitchwort, Yellow Archangel, Opposite-leaved Golden Saxifrage...

Our main focus, obviously, was the woodland's birds. Visiting around midday, during periods of rain, at a time when the woodland trees are coming into full leaf, was not conducive to a 'big list' but this was a visit intended mainly to get a feel of the wood, to assess its' potential - and this, thanks to AW's commentary, was what we achieved

Singing birds included: Willow Warbler (frequent), Chiffchaff (2), Blackcap (at least 2), Common Whitethroat (on the woodland edge) and a record of a (probable) Garden Warbler. Also seen / heard were Blackbird, Song Thrush, Wren, Robin, Chaffinch, Nuthatch, Carrion Crow (overflying) and Woodpigeon. A surprising absence was a complete lack of tits but this we attributed to the time of day and the fact that most would be involved with nesting. Still, I did not notice any signs of occupancy in any of the nest boxes, and many showed signs of damage caused by Grey Squirrel. Indeed, an owl box also showed signs of being used by squirrel.

At his time of year it should have been occupied by Owls but it did not look like it was although Andy did say that there were Owls in the wood. On the woodland edge we found evidence of raptor kill - obviously Sparrowhawk. AW indicated the location of a Badger sett of which he told us there were two in the wood: it did not look occupied but we were told that it was.

All in all, an impressive piece of woodland and an impressive bunch of people. I am very pleased to have been allowed access to it - I might even make it my new "home patch", it took me 10 minutes to get there!

David Butterfield

50th ANNIVERSARY OF THE CLUB

In 2016 it will be 50 years since the founding of the Club in its present form in 1966, since then we have a proud record, publishing an annual report every year. How do you think we should mark this anniversary? Please let us know, bearing in mind that we shall need to plan well ahead.

CLUB ACCOUNTS

Unfortunately, we did not have the accounts ready for the AGM in November, but they were presented to members at the last meeting of the season in May. We also promised that a copy would be sent to all members, together with John Walker's notes on the accounts and these are enclosed. Thank you again to Reg Senior for undertaking the audit of the accounts.

Also enclosed is a copy of the provisional accounts for 2013/14, the final version of which will be presented at the next AGM in December.



Huddersfield Birdwatchers' Club

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NOTICE OF A.G.M.

The 48th Annual General Meeting is to be held in Meeting Room 1, Huddersfield Town Hall at 7.30pm on Tuesday 9th December 2014. A full agenda will be issued at the meeting.

The following posts are due for election to serve for 2 years;

- Secretary
- Conservation Liaison
- Recorder
- Publicity
- 2 Committee Members (1 to serve 2 years, the other 1 year)

Nominations for these posts should be sent to the Secretary, in writing or by email, 14 days before the meeting (i.e. to be received no later than 25th November)

2014/2015 SUBSCRIPTIONS NOW DUE!

Please send your subs now directly to John Walker using the slip below. This method of collection has worked well over recent years - it avoids queues and delays at the indoor meetings.

The Club receives substantial amounts in **Gift Aid**. Most members have already signed a Gift Aid form and it will still be valid. However, if you are a taxpayer and have not provided a signed form, please help by asking John for one (Tel. 01484 310875 or email j.walker@forrestburlinson.co.uk). It costs you nothing and the Club can reclaim a tax rebate from the government.

Address and email update: please also fill in your postal address, telephone number and email address so that we can check that club records are fully up to date.

Thank you your support.



Huddersfield Birdwatchers' Club
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