



# **Huddersfield Birdwatchers' Club**

**Registered Charity No. 1098296**

## **NEWSLETTER 2011**

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## President's Report 2011

This will be the final report that I have had the pleasure to write and allows me a last chance to reflect upon another successful year in the club.

Notwithstanding the privations of another freezing winter there was another good haul of species in 2010, which you can read about in the upcoming Annual Bird Report. Membership has continued to grow and many new members are taking a real part in many aspects of our activities which is to be really welcomed. As you may have become tired of hearing me tell you – it's your club; get out of it what you put in. Patch outings have continued, and expanded slightly, with some good attendances, in less than attractive weather at times. The forum continues to be an arena for healthy discussion of all things birding, mainly within the club area, with an increasing number of participants once more. Overall the picture is very encouraging.

This year we had a strong programme of meetings with attendances averaging out at 40 and, surprisingly given the inclement weather, no postponements. This represents a healthy interest in our programme and an endorsement of the hard work that John Walker puts in organising this. The Town Hall continues to be an excellent venue for a host of reasons including comfort and accessibility, and particular thanks should go to the staff there who are always willing and helpful. A personal highlight was Paul Rogers' presentation of "The Eyes Have It" which was a quick-fire treatise on bird eyesight and ocular physiology – absolutely fascinating. Equally pleasing have been the evenings where we have had presentations from club members, getting the chance to show that they can compare extremely well with the "pros".

It was a particular pleasure for me this year to be able to announce at the AGM the award of Honorary Life Membership to three stalwart club members. **Stuart Brocklehurst** has provided superb illustrations and especially covers for the club report and other publications for more than 20 years. This he has done willingly and completely voluntarily despite being a professional wildlife artist in his own right. **David Butterfield** has filled almost every post within the club, with one notable exception, throughout his long membership, and is now wearing his fingers to the bone in his capacity of Recorder/Data Manager. As we have embarked upon electronic storage of club data, especially sightings, this has involved an extraordinary amount of time inputting incoming data which he has done and continues to do without too much complaint. **Mike Wainman** has been the backbone of the club for more than ten years handling all of the Treasurer's duties and much, much more. He steered us through the transfer to charitable status, has balanced our often fragile financial affairs, has managed the practical aspects of our publishing efforts for a number of years, is now the IT manager watching over the web site etc, all of which he does in his relatively quiet and unflappable manner. I'm sure that all other club members will acknowledge that bestowing this honorary membership upon these three is more than justified. A final mention must go to **Brian Armitage** who has now left the committee and about whom there is a short article elsewhere.

It will be pleasing to see the publication of our 2010 Annual Report, especially if this is before I stand down, as it reflects a real combined effort from so many club members to get us back on track. As you will know the creation of the report is now a team effort involving many people, but also reflects upon the willingness of club members to submit their records. The 2010 records represented an exceptional effort from members and we thank you all for that. We are constantly reviewing how records might be submitted and if you have any input to make to that discussion then it would be most welcomed.

One particular point of discussion is whether we are able to contribute more to active habitat protection or even reserve management as a part of the club's role. For a host of reasons we have always shied away from having a club reserve but have looked for ways in which we might make more of a contribution. The Kirklees Friends of the Environment (KFE) operated reserve at Healey Mills/Kerry Foods has presented just such an opportunity. Whilst this runs under the general Yorkshire Wildlife Trust umbrella the KFE people, notably Russ Smithson and John Hamilton, act as the local reserve managers and general factotums. We were able to make a positive contribution to the operation of the reserve this year by making a cash contribution towards the purchase of a high-powered strimmer to allow for weed clearance

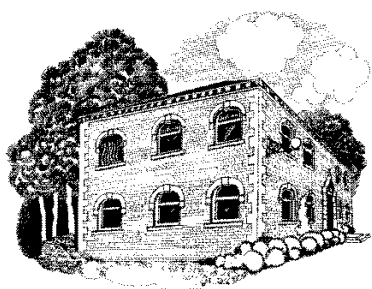
and opening up of paths. Anyone who is able to visit the reserve will be able to see the effects of this together with the other impressive results that are being achieved down there.

On a sadder note we are always sorry to lose loyal members. It was particularly felt this year with the untimely deaths of Joan Wilkinson and of Melvyn Collinson and their absence is keenly felt. Melvyn and Shirley were regular attendees at meetings, patch outings and any other club activities going for many years. Even in his personal tribulations though Melvyn was able to think favourably towards the club and ensured that we received a bequest on his death in the memory of the happy times that he had with us.

It has been a pleasure and an honour to be able to serve as club President over these years and to have the opportunity to work with such a dedicated bunch of people. I wish my successor well in the expectation that he, or she, will have just as much fun as I have.

Good birding!

Alf King



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## **Patch Outing to Blackmoorfoot Reservoir**

Six members, including the leader, assembled by the inflow of Blackmoorfoot Reservoir at 18.30hrs on 10<sup>th</sup> May. After a preamble about the advantages of local patch watching, the group ventured into Orange Wood in the hope of hearing the three male Whitethroats which had taken up territories on Edge Moor. It was not to be, and we had to make do with seeing/hearing Willow Warbler, Chiffchaff, Blackcap, Robin, Blackbird, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Goldfinch and Pheasant. The party visited the predated nest of a pair of Treecreeper and saw the Nuthatches which were nesting in the same hole they used last year. Viewing from the SW corner of the reservoir (a good vantage point) revealed three Great Crested Grebe (a fourth was known to be sitting on a nest in the NW corner but was not visible from this point), two Tufted Duck, several Mallard (some females with ducklings), a Grey Heron, a Moorhen and a couple of Common Sandpiper. Occasionally a Swallow was seen over the water but, as with some other summer visitors, they were still not present in any numbers.

The party then moved their cars to the Will's O' Nat's car park so as to access Potato Lane. The only birds seen on the lane were Skylarks and Meadow Pipits, along with five Golden Plovers. One of the Golden Plover was a resplendent male which showed much black on the under parts and was obviously destined to breed much further north than the local moors. The Little Owls, which had been present on the wall that morning, decided they would play at being invisible.

Although the weather remained dry throughout, it threatened to rain at times but all members said they had enjoyed the experience. Even so, despite departing for home from a pub car park, nobody offered to buy the leader a pint. Ah well, there's always next year!

Mike Denton



## **Patch Outing to Digley Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2011**

Five of us set out on a windy and showery morning to do the 'Digley round' from the quarry car park along the north side of Digley and Bilberry reservoirs to Blackpool Bridge, over the moor to Issues Road, Holme village and back over Digley dam. Conditions were far from ideal, but we had a productive trip with 39 species. The most notable were of two Crossbills near the shooting lodge and then a group of seven near Blackpool Bridge, some way from any conifers. I had not seen the species in this area before and we speculated that it was perhaps a post-breeding dispersal. Followers of the forum will be aware of sightings across the club area in July in what appears to be a "Crossbill summer" according to the BTO.

Other highlights, in addition to the usual suspects, included one Snipe chipping, one Common Sandpiper, one Oystercatcher, four singing Blackcap, four singing Chiffchaff, several singing Willow Warbler, two Linnet, a single Wheatear and a pair on territory, a Stock Dove, one Dipper and a singing Reed Bunting. We had one Sand Martin and only two House Martins, which a few years ago were numerous breeders at Digley Cottages. There were several Curlew and small numbers of Lapwing, both difficult to count being mobile in the wind. We remarked on the absence of Skylark until one sang as we approached the dam, though an earful of wind made it difficult to hear. It was nice to see Jackdaws breeding in the little school at Holme and Blue Tit nests in the quarry car park and in the woods south of Digley reservoir. Thank you to Peter Burton, Stephen Cook, Steve Graham and David Marchant for their support and expert eyes and ears on a less than hospitable morning. I had wondered whilst driving down to Digley whether I would be doing the round solo!

Mike Wainman

## **Patch Outing to Langsett on 4th June**

Six of us gathered at Langsett car park on a sunny but chilly morning at 8am on June 4th. After hot weather the day before the wife of one of us had suggested wearing shorts, but we were serious birders and had to look the part. After 10 minutes in the wood, away from the sun we were glad we were suitably clothed and began to wish we had brought extra clothing. At least we were luckier than the trip to Cheesegate Nab where mist, cloud, winds and drizzle had kept the birds down and spoilt our views.

The birds on Langsett Banks were very active, particularly in the patches where the sun broke through and we were rewarded with good sightings of common birds. Breeding of Chaffinch, Blackbird, Robin, Song Thrush, Great Tit was confirmed by watching adults carrying food or seeing young birds. It was particularly pleasing to see the return of Spotted Flycatcher, the 2 birds suggesting a pair and possible breeding.

The water levels on the reservoir were lower than expected for this time of year but we soon found 2 Oystercatchers and Common Sandpiper, but how many? Two birds were evident on the far bank and flew left, then we saw 2 to our right on the near bank a few minutes later. These then crossed to the far bank. Was it one pair or 2? Despite watching for over 10 minutes we could never be absolutely certain. Whilst scanning we picked up a small Plover on the far bank. Ringed or Little Ringed? Now we were regretting that we didn't have a telescope. Only slightly smaller than the adjacent Common Sandpiper, it fed along the shore line but never flew in all the time we were watching. We concluded from size it was Ringed Plover but could not be certain.



We then moved into the Little Don Valley, to me always a beautiful, peaceful place, picking up Goldcrest, a pair of Redstarts and hearing Curlew and Cuckoo on the moors. Resting in the valley outside the club area overlooking Mickleden Beck and moorland, we were not as fortunate as previous years but witnessed a movement of at least 15 Mistle Thrushes. A raptor tantalised us with brief views, most likely it was a female Sparrowhawk but ... ? Could it have been Goshawk? We will never know.

It was such a fine day we decided to explore further up the valley, crossing moorland to make a circular walk of about 6 miles. In a small wood on Swinden Lane we found another pair of Redstarts, Spotted Flycatcher and were treated to a display flight from Siskin.

As ever on this walk Willow Warblers were singing in profusion. I did not count them on this occasion, but the last time I did so in May I recorded over 40. My impressions were that on this visit the numbers were even greater, at times we were never sure whether there were 2, 3 or 4 birds singing simultaneously. Plenty of young were also seen. Surprisingly other similar Warbler species are never as common; only 2 Chiffchaff, 4 Blackcap but no Garden Warbler. What are the subtle characteristics of the habitat?

We eventually returned to Langsett some 6 hours after we set off having enjoyed an interesting but slightly frustrating day recording 43 species.

Chris Abell  
1st July 2011

## **Recorder's Report**

I do not intend to give here details of individual species – new to the area or otherwise – that have been recorded in the HBWC recording area other than to say that records for 176 species, 3 races and 3 escapes were sent in over the course of the year by no less than 85 observers in addition to a further 9 societies or birding organisations other than our Club. It is this latter fact that I would like to comment upon.

2010 saw a marked increase both in the number of records submitted and in the number of observers submitting those records. This is a trend that I hope will continue and I take this opportunity to thank those who have contributed their records, and urge those who might be “thinking of doing so” to actually step up and do it! Since the recording process has “gone digital” it is a simple matter to send records in on a regular basis via e-mail (my preferred method). But, to risk repeating myself, whichever method is the method of choice of the observer is fine by me: what is important is that the records come!

2010 has also seen a welcome increase in the number of observers sending in records “of the common stuff”. In the past we have tended to get details of every record of wader or raptor that comes through our area but very little data regarding dunnoek or robin, blue tit or wren. We assume that these species show no change. But without the data to back this assumption, how do we know that is so? So, please, let this trend continue.

This will, inevitably, mean more work for me – but as our President has frequently intimated, I’ve got nowt else to do!

David Butterfield

## **Stop Press - Mink About!**

Following Chis Abell’s reported sighting of a mink (probable) swimming in the River Holme near the centre of Holmfirth; Jeff Keenlyside (Kirklees’ Environment Officer) confirms that mink are quite widely distributed in both Holmfirth & Huddersfield areas.

He writes: “what is of more interest, that any sightings on Howley Beck (Batley/Birstall) and the upper Colne Valley and upper Holme Valley then trapping would be required. This is because the last remaining water vole populations are there.”

C.A./R.M.

## **Protecting and digitising the Club archive**

In last summer's newsletter we mentioned that we were investigating ways of protecting the club's 'archive' (for which read a cardboard box full) of annual reports and other one-off publications, to ensure that they could not be irrecoverably lost or damaged and also to bring the archive into the modern era by digitising it all and making it available on-line as part of our charitable remit. We asked for members' views given the likely cost and, whilst not many responded, those who did were enthusiastically behind the idea.

Well, the project is underway as I write and will hopefully be completed before the new lecture season. The work is being undertaken by a local firm Riley Dunn & Wilson, based off Leeds Road, which specializes in this field and whose clients include libraries, universities, museums and regimental associations etc. They are scanning and digitising the whole archive and will be providing us with computer files which will form an effective back up of the club's works and which we intend to make available through the new web site. The current physical archive, each book of which would need to be broken apart for scanning, will then be professionally rebound in cloth-backed volumes to protect it – the photo shows pages being stitched before binding. They will also be handling the hardback printing of *'The Birds of the Huddersfield Area'*.

The cost will be close to £1,000. There is a considerable amount of skilled work involved and we believe this to be good value and a worthwhile investment for the club. We shall show the results at a suitable club meeting.

Mike Wainman





## **Brian Armitage Presentation**

As everyone will know Brian Armitage stepped down as a member of the committee last year having put in many years of service as President, and Secretary as well as a massive stint as club Recorder. On behalf of the club and committee a presentation of a superb Stuart Brocklehurst print suitably inscribed was made to Brian earlier this year by the Club President Alf King.





## **Club Identity**

A month or two ago I was down at Potteric Carr when a chap came into the hide wearing a baseball cap with a logo from Ogston Water Bird Club on the front and I thought that perhaps it might be an idea if we could do the same with HBWC.

I've had a look at prices from a local supplier which seem interesting but before placing an order with them it would be nice to get some indication on numbers that members would be interested in purchasing, I doubt that we would want to order twenty of something and only sell two.

Below is a list of items available and an indication of costs:-

Caps	£7.50	Minimum order 30
Winter Hats – Beanie no turn up	£7.50	Minimum order 20
T Shirts – Fruit of the Loom	£8.50	Minimum order 20
Polo Shirts – RX150 Heavy Polo	£13.00	Minimum order 20
Fleeces – Regatta standard	£22.00	Minimum order 10

As far as colour I had thought of dark green with the club logo in gold.

The company can also supply pretty much any garment including the more technical 3 in 1 type coats for anyone who feels like splashing out, so for example if any member wants a nice shirt or wool jumper plus jacket it can be accommodated.

The items would be embroidered with the flying Curlew logo with HBC (or HBWC) beneath. I just thought that this might be a nice way of creating a club identity and be a talking point when visiting other birding areas.

Perhaps we could discuss this more at the AGM or maybe at a suitable meeting date beforehand.

David Hardacre

## **Annual reports – Birds in Huddersfield 2010**

Since the last newsletter we have published two annual reports (2008 and 2009) and, as I write this article, *Birds in Huddersfield 2010* is being written by our team of authors, indeed some have already finished their section. Stuart Brocklehurst has produced another stunning piece of colour artwork for the cover and our regular photographers Daves Pennington and Tattersley seem intent on making my life difficult in choosing shots for the report through the sheer number of excellent photos they have submitted. Still plenty of work to do, but we aim to have the 2010 report out in the autumn. It was an eventful birding year, so make sure you qualify for your copy by paying this year's subs!

In publishing our 2010 report within 12 months of the year-end we shall achieve the objective we set ourselves some three years ago of catching up with the backlog of reports and hopefully from now on producing *Birds In Huddersfield* in a timely fashion to maximise its impact. Not only this, but I believe we have continued to improve the quality and presentation of reports with each issue – judging by your feedback, something with which you would agree.

This has involved a tremendous amount of work and I should like to pay tribute to:

- Brian Armitage, followed by Russ Boland, who bore the brunt of writing the reports single-handedly for many years.

- David Butterfield, who has completely revamped the way we handle records by computerising them, inputting the many thousands of entries and providing our authors with pre-prepared analyses with which to work.
- Our team of authors, who have enabled us to speed up the production of the reports - Chris Abell, Brian Armitage, Russ Boland, Mike Denton, Alf King, Hugh Quarterman, Dave Pennington, Mike Pinder and Dave Pogson.
- Our artists Stuart Brocklehurst and Russ Boland and photographers Dave Pennington, Dave Tattersley and Nick Mallinson for helping bring reports to life so vividly.
- You – everyone who contributes records and especially for your response to our appeal to send in 2010 records promptly, without which we cannot even begin the rest of the work. More of the same please for 2011 – indeed David Butterfield would like you to send them in monthly so as to spread his workload.

Given that we shall have an up to date report, we hope to gain some publicity and local coverage for it. There is also something on which we should like help from members – sales. At one time we used to recoup much of the cost of printing by sales to non-members, but recently these have been minimal. Since Toll House Bookshop in Holmfirth closed and Ottakers in town was taken over we have struggled to find supportive local retail outlets. Chains such as Smiths and Waterstones have not proved feasible. We should therefore appreciate any ideas you may have.

Mike Wainman

### **Old annual reports**

Are you missing some years in your *Birds in Huddersfield* collection? Well we have a selection covering many, but not all years, mainly from the early 1990s onwards, that is cluttering up the houses of half of the Committee. If you would like to complete your series please let me know what years you require. These will be for sale at just £1 each for a limited period up to the AGM in November after which we shall be ‘de-cluttering’ and disposing of them – so last chance!

If anyone knows of a possible good home for the remaining miscellany of reports please let us know, but go they must, one way or another.

The current ‘archiving’ project (see separate article) will of course provide access to digital copies of every publication back to the founding of the club in 1966.

Mike Wainman



## Huddersfield Birdwatchers' Club

Chris Abell, Secretary, 57 Butterley Lane, New Mill, Holmfirth HD9 7EZ  
Tel 01484 681499; email [cdabell@gmail.com](mailto:cdabell@gmail.com)

### Notice of AGM

The 45<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting is to be held in The Old Court Room, Huddersfield Town Hall at 7.30pm on Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> November 2011. A full agenda will be issued at the meeting but the following posts are due for election;

President

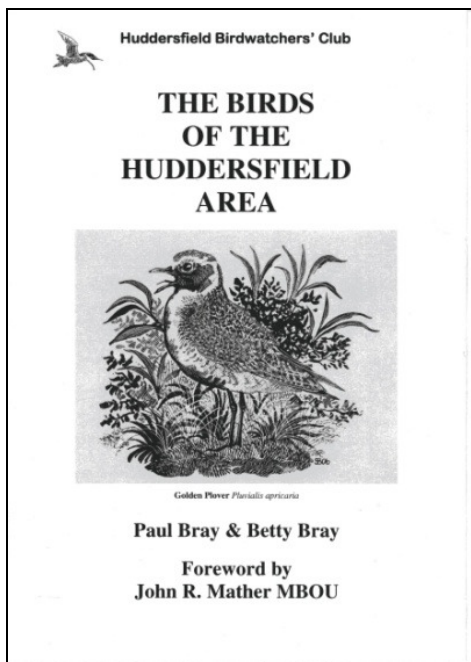
Treasurer

Indoor meetings Organiser

2 Committee Members

Nominations for these posts should be sent to the Secretary, in writing or by email, at least 14 days before the meeting (i.e. to be received no later than 1st November).

### The Birds of the Huddersfield Area – in hardback



In last summer's newsletter we mentioned the possibility of producing a hardback version of Paul and Betty Bray's superb book, originally published in paperback, if there was sufficient interest from members. This has taken somewhat longer to arrange than anticipated, for which I apologize, however we now have a firm quote from a local firm for a one-off limited edition. The book has had an enthusiastic reception from all who have read it and I cannot commend it too highly to those who have not. This will be the only opportunity to own a hardback copy of this notable work. The price will be **£20**.

We need to progress this as quickly as possible and need a definite commitment from all those who are interested. Therefore, to enable us to proceed with the print order will everyone who would like a copy, including those who previously expressed an interest, please confirm that commitment to Treasurer Mike Wainman no later than **15<sup>th</sup> September 2011**. Note that this price is for collection at a club meeting or from Mike and we shall arrange to collect the money when we have the stock. If there is not enough demand we will let you know.

Mike Wainman

## **2011/2012 subscriptions now due !**

Subscriptions for the new season are now due – please note the new rates below.

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

In 2010/11 the Club received over £300 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 Mike for one (Tel. 01484 469232 or email [m.wainman@ntlworld.com](mailto:m.wainman@ntlworld.com)). 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.



<b><u>SUBSCRIPTION RETURN SLIP 2011/2012</u></b>
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Address:
Telephone no.
Email address:
Subscription (tick): <b>Single £16</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Couple £28</b> <input type="checkbox"/>
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