

OGSTON BIRD CLUB

DECEMBER 2023



NEWSLETTER



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MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL FOR 2024

Dear Members,

It's that time of year again - a time for giving! We hope that you have enjoyed your year at Ogston and plan to renew your membership with the Club for 2024. The subscription rates have increased slightly for this coming year as agreed at our last AGM , and a renewal form is included with this Newsletter.

A copy of the Renewal Form is also available to download from the Club website <http://www.ogstonbirdclub.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Membership-and-Renewal-Form.pdf>

If you wish to pay by Bank Transfer, please transfer your payment to the following account –

Sort Code 77-74-18 Account 25031260

(£15 Single Member, £20 Family, and of course voluntary donations are welcome)

Add your membership number for reference if you know it and drop me an email ogstonbirdclub@gmail.com to let me know you've sent it. Thank you in anticipation of your continued support. Happy birding!

NEWS ROUND-UP

A GOOD DEAL HAS BEEN HAPPENING AT OGSTON AS 2023 DRAWS TO A CLOSE

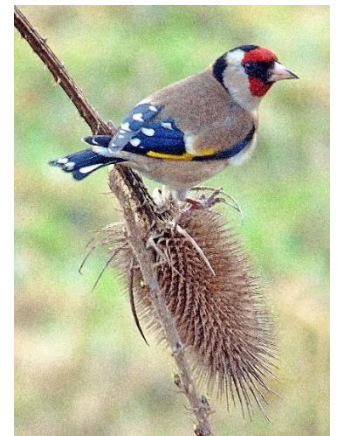
Work parties of our stalwart volunteers tackled outstanding tasks as the breeding season ended. The meadows having been cut and the cuttings removed by Severn Trent Water, we cleared growth of invasive vegetation around the reedbed and the area in front of the hides. Work on the islands was interrupted by the floods of 20th October and the resulting high water level in the reservoir, but there are tasks around the hides to keep us busy.

New walkways at Sue Worsey Hide. The steps, fence screen and approaches to the Sue Worsey hide, having deteriorated in recent times, have been replaced, for which thanks in particular to the volunteer members involved in the work i.e. Chris Taylor and Sam, Steve Payne, Des Haslam and Steve Walker. Not a small job. A delivery of timber on 3rd November was carried down the lane from the car park by volunteers in a sizeable endeavour, and the demolition and rebuilding completed throughout the following week. The hides now need two coats of preservative, which is work in progress. Here are some before, during and after shots of the work undertaken.



Teasel for the finches. In clearing and making safe the approach lanes to the hides we unavoidably sacrificed what remained of the teasel planted earlier for finches, and this has now been selectively replaced. This photograph of a Goldfinch on a teasel head is taken from our 2020 annual report.

The heavy rainfall of 20th October resulted in the Press Brook at **Jim Mart nature reserve** overflowing its banks, but our new footbridge withstood the torrent due to excellent engineering by Collin Shore.





Living Rivers Initiative

Members are aware of our **Spotted Crake** which took up occupation of the reed bed, rather perilously in the same area as a **mink** of which there have been several sightings of late. Fortunately, the crake toddled off to Africa whilst still in one piece, having delighted observers for some two weeks. I can't resist including another photograph of this rewarding bird.

We are now addressing the problem of the mink, with advice from

Derbyshire Wildlife Trust who have a county-wide project in place under the Living Rivers Initiative This project is aimed at restoring the population of **water voles**, of which the main predator is escaped (or released) American mink.

We of course are on the river Amber which is dammed to form the reservoir.

This photograph was taken at Dragonfly Pond by Mary Wilde back in March 2022 Keep a keen eye open for reappearance of "rattie".



It will soon be time to start work on your 2023 annual report. We have two, and maybe three, new birds for the **All-Time List**. On the 22nd of May Tim Sexey sighted a **GOLDEN ORIOLE** *Oriolus oriolus* which disappeared into Carr Wood. The **SPOTTED CRAKE** *Porzana porzana* obligingly took up temporary residence immediately by the side of our main hide for two weeks at the end of August. The third is a possible **PACIFIC GOLDEN PLOVER** *Pluvialis fulva* found by Dave Wragg on the 12th September and caught on several impromptu distant photographs by John Turner. Being a national rarity, this is being submitted via the county recorder to British Birds Rarities Committee (BBRC) whose deliberations we await.



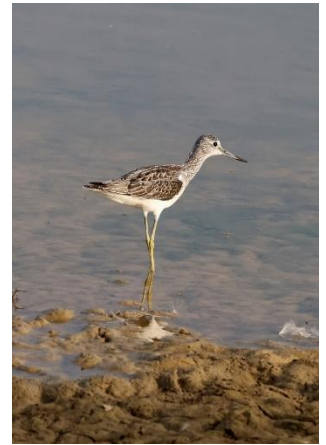
What is it? These photographs were taken by Steve Walker (at a distance of at least 200 metres) which had us puzzled at first. What were we looking at?

An expert on mutations involving bird pigments is

Hein van Grouw, whose paper on the subject can be found on the internet for those keenly interested in the broader science. Hein's comments on our grey snipe were:

Right, this snipe, a beautiful bird with a rare colour mutation. Obviously, all colour mutations are rare, but this particular aberration is not recorded much in any species. The two pigments in a normal coloured Common Snipe are eumelanin (black and grey) and pheomelanin (the whole range of brown colours), and in this individual all the visible phaeomelanin (brown) is gone, leaving only the black and grey eumelanin to determine the plumage's colour. So in this bird, due to a genetic change (mutation), the pigment pheomelanin doesn't get produced (synthesised) when the feathers grow, and therefore the feathers get provided with eumelanin only resulting in a "grey" Snipe.

Interesting sightings of recent weeks at the reservoir have included waders taking advantage of the scrape, pride of place going to this fine Greenshank photographed by Mary Wilde on 9th September.



Trips have continued, with rewarding days at several locations. On 28th October we were in Dearne Valley where we visited RSPB sites at Edderthorpe Flash, Old Moor and Wombwell Ings. The latter, whilst an unspectacular site, produced **Green Sandpipers, Little Stint** and **Dunlin**.

We scored 49 species for the day. Photographs here show the merry band at Wombwell Ings, and **Spoonbills** at Edderthorpe captured by Martin Kaye by digiscope.



Time for renewal of subscriptions approaches, and we do hope you will all be with us next year. The club is entirely dependent upon its members in order to continue with our important recording, and management of both our sites for the birds and wildlife.

And so, onward into 2024. Plenty of work to do, and hopefully it will be another successful year for Ogston Bird Club. We have in mind a change of venue next year for our AGM and speaker meeting in May. Further news to follow.

Bill Padley 1/12/2023



The view of the flooded scrape from the main members hide capturing the peace and tranquility of Ogston on a late afternoon in early November (**Steve Walker - Editor**)

SUNDAY DINNER!

Members in the hides are often astounded by the size of the fish which the Cormorants can catch and dispatch.



These photographs were taken by William Radford on Sunday 12th November. Incredibly, the bird swallowed the fish whole, and its digestive enzymes did the rest.

That said, it is seemingly not unknown for a Cormorant to choke to death during this perilous exercise. Presumably a meal like this lasts the bird a day or two.

Bill Padley November 2023

A TASTE OF THINGS TO COME



Spotted and photographed from the Sue Worsey hide on 18th November by Mary Wilde, this male **Brambling**, the first one so far this season seen from the hides.

It was a fleeting visit but hopefully a sign of many more to come, particularly when the feeders go back up on 1st December at the rear of the main members hide.

We can then also look forward to other regular visitors over the next few Winter months, particularly Siskin, Redpoll, Willow Tit and Nuthatch for example, which are always a delight to watch from the hide.

SW Editor Nov 2023

MINK CONTROL

There have been an increasing number of sightings of American mink, sometimes in our area of access. Mink are members of the Mustelidae family of carnivorous mammals which include the not dissimilar polecats, stoats and weasels, and indeed martens and wolverines !

American mink is an introduced species to Britain, having been imported in the 1920s for fur farming. With the demise of the fur trade a feral population took hold which is now occurring over most of Britain. Mink in the UK are implicated as a threat to the conservation of native species. It is now accepted that, in a similar way to the grey squirrel, *wild mink are too well established for eradication to be possible* (ADAS 1983) The endeavour is therefore to control numbers so far as possible in a safe and targeted manner.

It is recognized that the spread of feral mink has played a major part in the decline of water voles, to a point where they could become extinct in parts of the UK.

Additionally, mink are a serious threat to ground-nesting birds of which our breeders include at least one **schedule one** species under the **Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)**. It is therefore appropriate that we co-operate in steps to control the mink in our area.

We have spoken to Derbyshire Wildlife Trust who have in place the Wildlife Trusts' position statement: **Mink Control for Water Vole Conservation Policy**. This document is interesting and bears careful reading, as do the **Mink Trapping and Despatch Guidance Notes** providing strict guidelines for humane and safe practice.

We are therefore taking steps to participate in the effort so far as is practicable in the immediate area of our influence. If you should see the mink, which several members have recently, please make a note in the site diary. A photograph is always useful.



This photograph for illustrative purposes was not taken at Ogston.

Bill Padley 19/11/23

£5 million government grant to restore peatlands in the Fens

A Rare Bird Alert article by Norfolk Wildlife Trust



Bittern (© Glyn Sellors)

As part of the Fens East Peat Partnership (FEPP), we are excited to announce we have been awarded a substantial “Restoration Grant” by Government as part of their progressive Nature for Climate Peatland Grant Scheme.

The Government is investing over £50 million in peat restoration, building on its pledge to restore approximately 35,000 hectares of peatland in England by the end of this Parliament, and leave the environment in a better state for future generations.

87% of England’s peatlands, including lowland peatlands are degraded, damaged and dried out, emitting tonnes of carbon dioxide each year. The funding from government will help restore these environments, in turn helping protect wildlife and restore their critical ability to manage water quality and reduce the risk of flooding.

The Fens East Peat Partnership has been awarded over £5m to deliver restoration of peatlands in the Fens. The Government’s Nature for Climate Peatland Grant Scheme “Restoration Grant” will enable the partnership to deliver restoration activity on at least 16 sites across Cambridgeshire, Lincolnshire, Norfolk and Suffolk. This work will build on the successful FEPP Discovery project activity to develop site restoration plans, how to overcome barriers and sharing knowledge gained about lowland peat restoration in the Fens.

Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust are leading the project on behalf of The National Trust, Natural England, us at NWT, RSPB and the Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire & Northamptonshire. We have been working together across the Fens for many years through the Fens for the Future partnership.

Tammy Smalley, Head of Conservation for Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust is from The Wash Fens, and so says, 'It is brilliant that the importance of lowland peatlands in addressing the biodiversity and climate change crises has been recognised, including the role of submerged peats. This Restoration Grant will enable us to recover natural systems while working with our neighbours and other sectors to ensure the area delivers towards sustainable food security and better integrated water management. The FEPP Team and Partners have done a cracking job so far, which I thank them for, as The Fens is a very special place to me on a personal level. Let's crack on, and together, get on the road to bringing nature back and achieving net zero – acting local, addressing global issues.'

Matt Jones, our Wilder Landscapes Manager, said: 'This funding from Natural England will allow us to continue work with a number of private landowners in west Norfolk, progressing some exciting and extensive wetland restoration and creation projects that will start to address historic wetland losses at a landscape scale. As well as offering climate change benefits, potential protection against flooding and improving water quality, a landscape filled with healthy peat-based wetlands will teem with life. It will support many species which are scarce in Norfolk including dragonflies and damselflies, wading birds, bitterns, cranes and otters.'

Alan Kell states, "We are thrilled that the National Trust's Wicken Fen National Nature Reserve is one of the places that will benefit from this significant peatland restoration grant. The work this grant will enable will not only help safeguard and enhance the beauty of the fenland scenery for generations to come, but we will also use this as an opportunity to increase public awareness, of the significant role peat has to play in tackling the climate crisis. As well as social and cultural benefits, which include enhancing the biodiversity of the natural spaces where people can spend time to connect with nature for their health and well-being. Peatland restoration projects such as this one will also enable us to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, increase our carbon capture and ensure we're more resilient to the changing climate."

Lorna Parker of the Great Fen, WTBCN, 'We are excited to be a partner in this project, developing paludiculture as a tool for conserving peat in a working landscape and protecting wildlife for the future.'

'The Fens East Peat Partnership is a fantastic example of close partnership working to build the scale of lowland peat restoration work in the Fens'. Catherine Weightman, Natural England

David Rogers, Senior Site Manager at RSPB Lakenheath Fen said: "The grant will hugely benefit biodiversity at our nature reserve. The funding allows us to create new fen and grassland on the dry arable fields whilst preserving carbon and establishing peat forming vegetation. In addition, raising the water levels helps previously created habitats stay wetter for longer making the whole site more climate resilient. The restored habitats will help to support a wide variety of species. These will include birds such as Lapwing and Redshank, Cranes, Yellow Wagtail, Skylark, Sedge Warblers and Reed Buntings – it could even encourage rare birds such as the Spotted Crake to spend time here. Other species such as Water Voles, Otter and a range of aquatic plants and invertebrates will thrive and flourish in new wetland areas. This is an exciting time for all of us, and we are thrilled to be part of this peatland restoration project."

25 October 2023

Refreshing News: Norfolk Wildlife Trust purchases pub close to nature reserve

A Rare Bird Alert article by Norfolk Wildlife Trust



We have announced that we are the new owners of the Pleasure Boat Inn at Hickling Staithe. The purchase of the pub and its associated land this week sees us adding to our existing land and property holdings close to our popular nature reserve Hickling Broad and Marshes, which include the Whispering Reeds boatyard and the Hickling Broad Sailing Club.

Our new acquisition includes the pub and adjacent buildings, a large car park and public toilets, together with associated mooring.

This move sees us developing our vision for the area's wildlife and people, working alongside the local community.

Eliot Lyne, our CEO, explains: "We are delighted to get a step closer to our vision of creating a Wilder Hickling Broad for our local communities and visitors to the area.

"In addition to taking care of this unique and vital landscape for wildlife, we aim to create facilities that will provide new opportunities for everyone to experience Hickling's fantastic wildlife in an area where nature, the community and the local economy are all thriving.

"Investing in a popular local pub will allow us to create new ways to introduce people to the nature, landscape and wildlife of Hickling. We want to create a business that will serve the local community, as well as attract new visitors to the area, and are looking forward to working closely with the local community to turn our vision into a reality."

We're looking for a business partner, committed to our vision and values, to run the pub on our behalf.

In addition to reinstating the community pub, we hope to develop additional visitor facilities at our new site, from which visitors will be able to find out more about Hickling Broad and its wildlife as well as book and enjoy boat trips.

Our existing Visitor Centre located at our Hickling Broad and Marshes nature reserve will remain unchanged.

We will now be embarking on significant building work and aim to share further news of the pub reopening and additional facilities available in 2024.

8 November 2023

FACEBOOK GROUP PAGE

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/697216894038085/about>



This is a “private” Group, membership of which is only open to Ogston Bird Club members, so may I urge you to renew your Club membership for 2024 as soon as possible to ensure your continued uninterrupted and valued participation.



Of the Club’s total membership of 650+ the Facebook Group currently has in the order of 215+ members – there are a number of regular contributors to the Group and as such it is a good source of information on a daily basis in terms of what birds or other wildlife have been sighted and as often as not and are still to be seen in the Ogston recording area.

One of many Redwings sighted Nov 2023

If you are on Facebook please consider joining. You do not have to post photos to actively contribute to the Group, liking and commenting on posts is as much a contribution as the posts themselves. You can just use this Group for information on what is out and about at Ogston, but as a member please post your sightings and comments back on the Group page with or without a photo for others to see and enjoy. But do please bear in mind the importance of not drawing attention to “sensitive” breeding or nesting birds in your postings on this or any social media site for that matter.

Female Goosander – sighted 5 Nov 2023



Steve Walker - Group Admin 30/11/2023



THE CLUB'S WEBSITE

<http://www.ogstonbirdclub.co.uk/>

IMPORTANT: Several members have recently expressed concern over a security warning they receive when trying to access the Club's website using their web browser or a link in an email, for example:

"The connection to www.ogstonbirdclub.co.uk is not secure. You are seeing this warning because this site does not support HTTPS."

Connections to sites that use HTTPS are more secure than those that don't. When you turn on HTTPS-First Mode, Google Chrome and some other web browsers attempt to load all sites over HTTPS and display this kind of precautionary security warning before you visit a site that doesn't support it. It doesn't mean that OBC's site is unsafe to view.

We are in the process of arranging for our web site hosting company to add SSL to our website thereby upgrading the security to HTTPS, so hopefully by the time you read this it will have been done and the security warning when accessing the website should no longer appear.

However, be sure to set your privacy and security levels on your web browser accordingly, for example

On your computer, open Chrome.
At the top right, click More, Organise and then Settings.
At the left, click Privacy and security.
Click Security.
Turn on Always use secure connections.

Steve Walker 30/11/2023



*The Committee would like to wish all Club members
a very Happy Christmas and a fulfilling and
successful New Year!*



OGSTON BIRD CLUB - Membership / Renewal Application 2024

APPLICANT (S) INFORMATION (PLEASE PRINT)			
Applicant Full Name			
Email		Telephone	
For a Family Membership (2 Members at the same address) Enter the second member's details below			
2nd Applicant Full Name			
2nd Applicant Email		Telephone	
Please note to keep costs down, Newsletters are sent by email. A paper copy is always available in the hide to read after issue. Copies can be posted if absolutely necessary but will cost £5 to cover some of the cost.			
Membership Type – Please Tick as appropriate			
RENEWING MEMBER?	<input type="checkbox"/>	OR NEW MEMBER?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Full Postal Address including Post Code –		SINGLE MEMBERSHIP - £15	
		FAMILY MEMBERSHIP - £20	
		Postage for Newsletters - £5 (only for members without email)	
		VOLUNTARY DONATION	
		TOTAL	
I UNDERSTAND THAT THE INFORMATION SUPPLIED WILL BE HELD ON THE OGSTON BIRD CLUB DATABASE <u>FOR CLUB USE ONLY</u> AND WILL NOT BE SHARED WITH ANY OTHER CLUB, ORGANISATION OR BUSINESS.			
Signature of applicant (s):			Date:

Membership renewals are due on JAN 1st annually, access codes changed shortly after.

****** Gift Aid ******

Gift Aid raises more funds for Ogston Bird Club **without costing you a penny more**. If you're a UK taxpayer we can reclaim the tax on your membership subscriptions and donations.

For each £1 you give, we can claim 25p from HM Revenue and Customs. All we need is for you to tick this box

I would like Ogston Bird Club to reclaim the tax on this and any other eligible donations or membership subscriptions that I may make in the future or have made in the past 4 years. I understand that I need to pay enough Income Tax or Capital Gains Tax in each tax year to cover the Gift Aid claimed on all my donations otherwise it is my responsibility to pay any difference. **GIFT AID DECLARATION --- PLEASE SIGN AND DATE:**

Signature:-

Date:-

Please return above form with cheque/PO made payable to Ogston Bird Club (existing members can renew by Bank Transfer – see page 1 of the Newsletter for details)

Ogston Bird Club c/o Mr Steve Slack, Membership Secretary,
26 Bramble Way, Kilburn, Belper, Derbyshire, DE56 0LH, e-mail - ogstonbirdclub@gmail.com