

### **A Walk on the Wharfe**

A walk along the River Wharfe between Barden Bridge and the Cavendish Pavilion is always rewarding no matter what time of year. The usual sightings would include: mallard, mandarin duck, dipper, kingfisher, robin, nuthatch, blue, coal and great tits along with blackbirds and chaffinches et al. However, a walk in the spring, when the returning summer visitors have arrived and the surrounding woodland comes alive with sound, it offers another chance to brush up on the songs of two site specialities. The redstart, usually singing from the canopy of an ash, or oak, but not always easy to spot and the pied flycatcher, working a territory at mid tree height, probably somewhere close to a nest box and much easier to observe.



Grey wagtails are relatively obvious as they flit between the patches of river pebbles, catching flies at water level. Sand martins will have also arrived and they congregate around their usual breeding area, a sandy south facing bank just downstream from Barden Bridge. Several pairs of common sandpipers hold territory along the stretch and this spring, a spotted flycatcher was seen darting out towards midstream then returning to the same observation post. A female goosander, relaxing on a semi-submerged stone, didn't seem at all concerned by my proximity, glancing occasionally in case I decided to paddle in. No chance in such cold water and, in any case, I was close enough to get my picture.





This year, a wood warbler returned, although it was difficult to see well through dense foliage as it flitted between branches well below path level. Nice to hear its' song and contact call again after missing out the previous year. Records appear to be encouraging so far with at least four different places in the BOG area where singing birds have been recorded. Let's hope they breed successfully.

Oystercatchers, blackcaps, garden warblers, curlews, green and great-spotted woodpeckers are around too although maybe just identified by call unless you have time to seek them out. Listen out for the alarm call or a blackbird or thrush which may signal the unwanted presence of a tawny owl. Unwanted by the birds but not by the birder!





What a great place to visit but probably best midweek when visitors are fewer in number, or early, before they arrive, or even on a dull and damp day when you might chance upon otters!

Mike Bloomfield