

October 2018 October is the month when our attention turns to migration and watching the passage of huge flocks of birds as they cross our region. Foremost amongst the species are Fieldfare and Redwing, which cross in huge swathes from their breeding grounds in central and northern Europe. These are later followed by the massed ranks of Starlings and then by Woodpigeons which transit over our island on the way to warmer climes in the south. Unfortunately, this autumn's 'watch' was badly affected by poor weather. Wind and rain hampered the intrepid birder, and when conditions were more benign, there was often fog on the hilltops.

Fieldfares began to appear in the first week and by the end of the month over 20,000 had been recorded at the two main migration watchpoints at Oxenhope and Caldene Fields in South Bradford. On the 17th, over 5000 flew over the former site and 1500 were recorded at the other site. There was also a second surge which took place on the 28th with 2169 at the first site and 1100 at the second. The 17th, a mild, cloudy but calm day, was also the occasion when Redwings first appeared in great numbers. Over 4,000 passed the observer in South Bradford and 2,305 were seen by those at the moorland site, all heading south-westwards in flocks of up to 150. On the following day, the sky was full of migrating Woodpigeons. Ten and a half thousand raced over Oxenhope, whilst about half that number were counted at Caldene. Our observers at these two sites logged an impressive monthly total of 69,000 Woodpigeons, and if all this entertainment was not enough, there was also a surge of 3,000 Starlings over the area on the 28th.

In amongst all this action there was a major movement of Pink-footed Geese which was seen and reported by many members. A monthly total of 7,910 birds crossed from west to east and some skeins even went in the opposite direction! On the 17th, which was indeed an exceptional day, 2,797 'pinks' was counted at the two observation sites.

Patient, detailed recording by members included those of Brambling which appeared to have arrived in good numbers. Out of the 30 records, six of them contained more than 50 birds and there was one which totalled 102. Other passerines claimed by migration watchers included Lapland Bunting, Snow Bunting and a couple of sightings of Rock Pipit. There was a strong movement of Siskins (19th); double-figure counts of Linnets and Lesser Redpolls; a few sightings of Crossbills and Bullfinches regularly turned up at Caldene which had an impressive 13 on the 17th.

Caspian Gulls and Yellow-legged Gulls were also present at Brown Royd in the Gilling area of Bradford and an adult of the latter species appeared at Barden. There were two family parties of Stonechats, one at Glovershaw and the other at Fly Flatts where the final sighting of Wheatear was made (7th). There was a late summer gathering of over 800 Swallows as they went to roost at Caldene Fields. A single Snow Bunting, chased by a Pied Wagtail on the dam Wall at Fewston, was another of the many good records submitted during a hectic month.

October 2017 Six Whooper Swans eerily emerged through the fog at Fly Flatts (8th) and nine others were seen on Chelker Reservoir (29th). Five Barnacle Geese surprised the observer at Caldene Fields as they followed a skein of 63 Pink-footed Geese (18th). At least 70 skeins of "pinks" were recorded, in what proved to be an exceptional month. 3,025 birds passed Oxenhope Watchpoint with the first mass movements on the 3rd and 4th. Later on, skeins increased again with day counts of 570 (27th) and 420 (30th). Small numbers of Shelduck, Gadwall, Goldeneye, Pintail and Shoveler were all reported. Most of these ducks were seen at Redcar Tarn, Warley Moor Reservoir or Cononley Ings where numbers of Wigeon built up to nearly 300 by the end of the month.

A couple of Hen Harriers visited Keighley Moor and two singles were seen two weeks apart in the Barden area. Single Merlins, up to six in total, were seen by observers as they chased flocks of Meadow Pipits through the Oxenhope watchpoint (5th). Single Ospreys passed over Barden and Peregrines, mainly juveniles, were well-reported. A birder in the centre of Bradford was attracted by an incident when about 20 crows were seen to mob an adult Peregrine as it carried prey over City Hall (20th).

A Black-tailed Godwit stayed for a couple of days at Cononley Ings and there were reports of large flocks of Golden Plovers at Timble and Sandwith Moor of between 300 and 500 birds. Enormous numbers of Lapwing built up at Cononley Ings with a maximum of 1,600 recorded (21st). A 2nd-

winter Caspian Gull, which was carrying a Davic ring, was discovered on Redcar Tarn (22nd). Further investigation showed that it had been ringed as a pullus in north-east Germany. A juvenile Gannet was watched from Oxenhope watchpoint as it flew along the Aire Valley (31st) and a Great-backed Gull spent a couple of days on Leeshaw Reservoir. As previously mentioned, the Herring Gull situation continues to amaze. A monthly total of 630, with a day maximum of 170 was amassed at Cullingworth Fields and other day totals of 86 and 50 were seen at Brown Royd (Bradford) and Redcar Tarn respectively. To complete the gull situation; two Yellow-legged Gulls were identified at Leeshaw and Cullingworth Fields.

As in previous years, Woodpigeons were carefully counted as they spread from north-east to south-west across the moorland watchpoint. The main passage occurred within a 24 day period when 70,981 birds flew over our observers. 55% of those birds were recorded on the 27th between 7am and 2pm when 415 flocks, some with more than a 1,000 birds raced by.

A Ring Ouzel was seen with Redwings at Menston (25th) and four birds spent up to three days at Fly Flatts (26th to 29th) where four Redstarts made a brief stop during this time (29th). Whilst all the events surrounding Woodpigeons, and winter thrushes was taking place, there was still time to record flocks of passing Starlings with four-figure counts of 1,097 (21st) and 1,975 (31st). Surprise sightings included a Lesser-spotted Woodpecker in a Gilstead copse, a Marsh Tit in woodland near Scargill Reservoir and a Yellow-browed Warbler in the centre of Otley.

Harbingers of winter appeared on cue with the arrival of thrushes from Northern Europe. Fieldfare, first seen on the 8th, continued to flow through the Oxenhope watchpoint with 6,500 counted by the end of the month. The main passage was during the final week, with a day total of 1,841 (27th) rising to 2,939 three days later. Redwings arrive slightly earlier, the first bird noted on the 3rd, was followed by 900 others a five days later. The main thrust came between 21st and 23rd when 25,000 birds crossed the area, 14,000 in consecutive days at Caldene Fields and 11,000 at Oxenhope. Twite were seen by migration watchers at Oxenhope on the 18th when a flock of 11 flew towards the south-east and a smaller one of seven went by on the next day. An influx of Brambling was signalled with 29 here (23rd) and two days later another 15 were identified.

Perhaps the most startling reports during the month concerned the appearance of Hawfinch. A single over the heads of observers on migration watch at Oxenhope (8th) was the precursor to an eruption of the species with sightings in South Bradford at Caldene Fields (26th & 30th), Denholme Clough (29th) and four birds in ilkley cemetery (30th). On the final day, two birds were seen in similar habitat at Otley cemetery.

October 2016 The mild, benign weather continued to give perfect conditions for migration watching. Observers at Oxenhope recorded a nearby Turtle Dove (1st) and a week later scoped a Wryneck as it flew east. A Slavonian Grebe stayed long enough on Thornton Moor Reservoir to be positively identified (20th) and a Wood Lark passed overhead whilst repeating its rhythmic phrases.

A Black Redstart at Fly Flats, first reported on the 13th remained for at least two days. A second bird, this one a female was seen on the same day at the Oxenhope viewing point before it flew off into the mist. Lapland Buntings were also picked up here (1st and 29th) as they uttered their distinctive calls as they passed close by. A flock of Brambling at Ogden Reservoir which reached a high of 17 on the 19th were then followed by another one of similar size at Street Lane, Riddlesden (21st). A family of five Stonechats were watched at Glovershaw (10th) and two others were reported from here and at Scargill and John o'Gaunt's Reservoirs towards the end of the month. Small numbers of Crossbills were seen in Stainburn Forest (8th) and a couple of good flocks of Siskin were reported from Otley and Queensbury.

The first signs of winter thrushes occurred on the 5th when about 30 Redwings found a heavily laden rowan tree at Storiths. At the Oxenhope watchpoint, 3260 Redwings passed over during a morning's observation (8th) and four days later a mass surge of 125 flocks produced an aggregate 5,800. At Caldene Fields, another impressive aggregate of nearly 5,500 was recorded on the 17th. The first sizeable flock of Fieldfares also passed through here (18th) when 1444 were noted over this South Bradford watchpoint. This figure was surpassed on the final day of the month at the Oxenhope Watchpoint with 6226, which included two massive accumulations of 1800 and 1500.

A female Ring Ouzel was watched before it disappeared into thick brambles on Soil Hill (16th). The following day at Oxenhope, three Ring Ouzels were picked out flying amongst Redwing and a single passed close to the observers a week later. The first sign of a possible Waxwing invasion occurred here, when one, possibly two birds were heard (22nd).

Pink-footed Geese, on their autumn movement, were first reported from the middle of the month. A skein of 300 passed eastwards along the Aire Valley on the 19th and the following day, two smaller but still substantial groups, took the same route. Another skein containing 150 pinks flew over Thruscross (30th) and over 200 were counted over the distant ridges by the Oxenhope birders on the 20th. During the month, a couple of Egyptian Goose were well-reported from the Scargill Reservoir area. Four, possibly five Whooper Swans emerged from the mist and flew over Baildon Moor on the 29th. Other small numbers had been seen previously from the Oxenhope watchpoint, with a sizeable 25 over the distant ridges on the 20th.

At Soil Hill on the 16th, a Jack Snipe was flushed from near the summit before dropping into nearby reeds, a Water Rail was seen feeding by reeds at Stockbridge (23rd) and a fisherman flushed a flock of 23 Snipe at John o' Gaunt's (31st). Three Shovelers (9th) and a couple of Gadwall (8th) at Park Dam and three Goldeneye on Leeshaw Reservoir (31st) were amongst the more interesting duck reports.

The month had started with 4,000 Meadow Pipits streaming southwards over Oxenhope Watchpoint and finished with 7,000 Wood Pigeons both here and at Caldene Fields. These events, and all those mentioned above, clearly showed what an exciting month it was.

October 2015 October was a pleasant, mild month with light winds and foggy mornings which unfortunately affected visible migration watching at our main sites.

A Great Grey Shrike was picked up over Oxenhope watchpoint on 18th. It flew in a deeply undulating roller-like flight before swooping down into a partly leaved tree where it gave an excellent view. A Yellow-browed Warbler, the third such record, was seen amongst a feeding party in riverside habitat in the Riddlesden area (4th).

A female Hen Harrier, seen over Keighley Moor (20th) was fitted with a radio transmitter. We have learnt that the bird, known as 'Highlander' was tagged in 2014 shortly after hatching. She twice attempted to breed in Bowland this year and each time, the males she paired with went 'missing'. She has wandered around several local moors away from the breeding season since first being tagged.

Despite relatively poor conditions for most of the viewing period the Redwing passage was recorded from 5th, with the main surge crossing the area between 13th and 17th when 17,000 passed the watch-point at Oxenhope and 10,000 flew over Caldene Fields. The Fieldfare arrival, as is usual, came a few days later with the main passage between 29th and 31st when 11,600 birds were recorded. Pink-footed geese movement from west to east was reported from 7th until 25th with day totals ranging between 164 (7th) to 950 (25th), the highest daily total.

A Common Scoter spent a couple of days at the beginning of the month on Keighley Moor Reservoir and late Wheatear was in this location on 20th. On that day two Stonechats were in this area and a single male was seen at Sconce earlier in the month (8th).

A modest 14 Mandarin ducks were on the Strid (12th) and a couple of Gadwall and five Wigeon were reported at Park Dam. Two Water Rails were present at Stockbridge by the 18th and migration watchers reported Grey Plovers on 8th and 11th.

A Short-eared Owl was hunting over Fly Flatts (2nd) and a Green Woodpecker was also watched whilst another of these attractive birds was seen on Hazlewood Moor. A few Brambling were noted on passage and one bird visited a garden in Riddlesden (17th).

Of further interest was a Black-headed Gull which was seen at Redcar Tarn on 21st October. It was first ringed in the nest near Oslo, Norway on 12th June 2014. It was reported from other locations

in the Oslo area on 12th July 2014, 16th May 2015 and 13th June 2015 before relocating to the Keighley area!

October 2014 October was, like the preceding months, mild and mostly dry. During this busy period there were some interesting sightings as birds moved through and away from the area. Three Ring Ouzels were present around the Oxenhope watchpoint (16th), another of the same species had flown nearby a couple of days earlier. A Short-eared Owl travelled quickly over the recorders at this migration watch point (17th) as did a Hen Harrier on the 11th. A couple of juvenile birds were watched at Barden Scale on the same day and another young bird was seen there two weeks later. A Hawfinch flew north over Caldene Fields (9th) and single Snow Buntings were noted on two occasions at Oxenhope.

A juvenile Red-breasted Merganser dropped into Redcar Tarn (16th) and a Green Sandpiper spent a few minutes at Toad Hall Beck before departing (25th). Two flocks of Dunlin were recorded at Oxenhope, one of 20 (17th) and another of 25 (30th) and Water Rail had returned to Stockbridge where at least two birds were thought to be present.

Pink-footed Geese were seen on five days with three skeins judged to be over 80, two went down the Aire Valley (23rd & 26th) and the largest, one of 92, was reported over Caldene Fields (2nd). There were also four records of Whooper Swans at Oxenhope with the best two, a creditable 16 and an excellent 31 seen on the 16th and 29th respectively.

The annual winter thrush spectacular began on the 13th with 720 Redwings counted over Oxenhope. This was then followed by a massive 6,000+ on the following day and two days later by a continuous stream, estimated to be at least 8,500. As is usually the case, Fieldfares appeared a little later and two days of counting on the final two days of the month produced an aggregate of 3,600 birds. At this time Woodpigeons and Starlings were making their move and 60,000 of the former (29th) and an aggregate of over 8000 the latter during the last three days kept the scorers busy.

October 2013 The first half of the month was mild and settled before a change to a more typical autumn of wind and rain. Redwings were first reported at the beginning of the month when a small flock of six were seen at Caldene Fields and on the same day a similar number of Song Thrushes moved through. However, propelled by a north westerly airflow, between 9th and 15th, 17327 Redwings were observed at this watchpoint with the major invasion taking place on the 10th. On that day, at the watchpoint, almost 6,000 were recorded and observers at Paul Clough and at nearby Oxenhope Watchpoint also saw large numbers. As is traditionally the case, Fieldfares were a few days behind, and our observers were at Oxenhope on the 19th when almost 16,000 passed through.

On the 12th, 15 Whooper Swans passed Caldene Fields and during the month numerous skeins of Pink-footed Geese flew west. The major movement occurred between the 20th to 24th. On the first date a skein of over 200 flew over Oxenhope Watchpoint, another 75 over Denholme Clough, and four days later 370 geese were recorded over Stockridge.

Passerines of interest passing through the area included a Ring Ouzel in Paul Clough (6th), a late Spotted Flycatcher was seen at Hawkswoth Golf Course where it spent the 28th and 29th. Three Wheatears at Glovershaw and one at Bradup (5th). A Hawfinch flew north over Denholme Clough (6th) on the same day that fourteen Crossbills were seen. Most surprising of all was a Yellow-browed Warbler it was seen by Steve Bain, a Bedfordshire birder (10th). The Warbler, reported for the second consecutive year, was at Denton Park where a recording was made and posted on our Blog.

Whetstone Gate there were four juvenile Stonechats feeding (5th) and a pair was seen on Pennythorn Hill, Baildon (26th). A Rose-ringed Parakeet flew through Caldene Fields (16th) and another was frequenting a Saltaire garden in the final few days.

An intrepid birder discovered a Woodcock and a Jack Snipe on Soil Hill (12th). A Water Rail had returned to Stockbridge (5th) and large flock of 650 Curlews had congregated at Denton Hall

(30th). A male Hen Harrier and a Peregrine passed over Wharfedale (19th) and two Ravens were seen in the south of the area.

On the penultimate day, an observer at Timble Ings, reported a few Snow Buntings passing by and over 50 Crossbills were showing well in the conifers. Bramblings, Mealy and Lesser Redpolls were in the vicinity together with about 20 Goldcrests, one of which had been ringed in the same area in August 2012.

October 2012 The October weather was generally mild and settled. The major movement of Pink-footed Geese took place during the month, when observers at the Oxenhope watchpoint witnessed a series of spectacular movements. Anticipation had been rising since the 2nd when large flocks from the west, flying towards the east, were reported by members. However, on the 14th, the Oxenhope observers were alerted by a member out at Skipton of a large skein coming E down Airedale. Almost immediately, a large skein flew E over the watershed, just as another massive skein lumbered low over the moor to their SW. Almost immediately another, followed by another and then another skein came on the same track and level. A tremendous sight. As they got over the eastern Pennine upslope, an obvious lift came into play and they took off, lifting like "jumbo's" into the upper sky and away high, to the east. Twelve skeins passed that day with more on the 19th, and over 2000 birds sailed overhead on the 20th and another five skeins passed on the following day.

Redwings began to appear from the about the 10th with over 1000 recorded on the (11th & 23rd) and by the 22nd they were passing an overnight observer "in top gear, whistling like express trains". A Shag flew SW with a Cormorant over Caldene Fields (19th) and a Spoonbill flew north from Hare Head hills over Barden Moor (17th), only the second recorded in this area. Four Whooper Swans graced the reservoir at Chelker (30th).

Two lots of Twite passed the Oxenhope watch-point (21st) and a surprise flock of ten were found by an intrepid birder, in foul conditions, on Soil Hill (30th). At Glovershaw a pair of Stonechat had held onto until late in the month (27th).

At Stockbridge Reserve two Kingfishers (25th) and a Water Rail showed well (21st) as did a single Ring Ouzel at the Oxenhope watch-point (19th). Five Grey Partridge were in evidence at Heights Lane, Bingley (14th) and 11 were seen at their stronghold on Baildon Moor (8th). There were three sightings of Yellow-legged Gulls in the fields adjoining Haworth Road, Cullingworth (8th, 15th & 25th) and on the 14th a 1st-winter Mediterranean Gull was seen in the early evening.

300 Golden Plover had assembled on Sandwith Moor (9th) and a very clear Grey Plover was heard, but unseen, in the fog at the Oxenhope watch-point (8th). There were over 1500 Lapwing at Cononley Ings (8th) where five Pintail, eight Shoveler and 200 Teal had congregated. A Marsh Harrier flew over Kex Gill (12th), a Merlin was seen at Bradup (3rd) and a Peregrine was seen to take a Mistle Thrush at Scargill Pasture (9th).

Plenty of Tree Sparrows could be seen in Timble village and around Beaverdyke. There was an influx of 20 Jays passing through Wharfedale on the morning of the 4th increasing the numbers of a well-established species.

The last of the Wheatears were seen at Oxenhope watch-point and Glovershaw (5th) and the next day at Timble Ings. Two Swallows flew over Swinsty car-park (6th) and two well-spaced Sandwich Terns dashed by Oxenhope on the same day.

October 2011 The weather during October was relatively settled and mild. The birding highlights included the expected arrival of 'winter thrushes', and this year the patient observers were not disappointed as a 'wave after wave of biblical proportions' swept through the region on the 13th. During this epic day, at the Oxenhope view-point, over 17,000 birds in the ratio of 70 Fieldfare to 30 Redwing were recorded and to add to this, in South Bradford, 8,000 more passed over. Mingling with them were other migrants including Swallows and a superb Goshawk. The following day, a phenomenal 29,000 Redwing were countered at Caldene Fields and sizable flocks of feeding birds were beginning to appear at many locations. A mass, westward movement of Starling took place on the 24th.

A skein of Pink-footed Geese and one of Brent Geese passed over Caldene Fields on the same day as the massive movement of Redwing (14th) and on the following day, more Pinks went along the Aire Valley. Three Whoopers passed NW over the Oxenhope view-point (20th) and the following day, five were seen on nearby Ogden Water.

Siskin, Redpoll, Crossbill and Bramblings were all reported and there were 19 Twite at the Fly Flatts feeding station, including just one colour ringed bird (3rd). A Willow Tit was on the feeders at the private Wetland site and Wheatears straggled through until the third week of the month, with the latest being recorded at Glovershaw (24th).

A Short-eared Owl was seen hunting over Baildon Moor (13th & 14th), and a female Marsh Harrier passed over Denholme Clough (13th).

At Ruff spent a few days at Cononley Ings (15th to 17th) where 150 Teal, 73 Wigeon and a Pintail were feeding. By the 17th, the Lapwing flock had grown to 1400 at this location. In Strid Wood, the Mandarin total had climbed to 38 (28th) and at Denton Hall the number of Curlew stood at 260 (26th).

At Cullingworth Fields an adult Yellow-legged Gull, as well as a 2nd-winter bird were present (22nd) and in the roost amongst 1300 Black-headed Gulls, at the members' only reservoir, an adult Mediterranean Gull (21st). A Black Swan appeared in Low Moor and confusion reined over the identification of a Dipper, seen regularly at Charlestown, Baildon which appeared to have a hint of a 'black belly'!

October 2010 A fairly dry, mild October produced lots of interest for the local birder with a strong passage of Pink-footed Geese, Thrushes, some wintering passerines and at the end of the month, lots of Waxwings.

Pink-footed Geese began their flights across the region from the 6th with three closely spaced skeins, the biggest about 140 and they continued to attract attention until the end of the month. The major movement of Fieldfare started before sunrise on the 20th with several high flocks flooding out of the valleys, along the ridges, the majority of which were tightly streamed by the topography as they followed the same track, time after time. At the Oxenhope watch-point, over 6500 passed through and a similar number was recorded in the Skipton area. Over the next few days, the spectacle was repeated with numerous flocks flooding over the moorland and along the valleys and at Timble about a 1000 were finding a place to roost (31st). Redwings had arrived much earlier with over 3700 over Stainburn (9th) in flocks of up to 400.

Late passage birds included a Wheatear and a Stonechat at Glovershaw (4th), a Ring Ouzel moving through with Swallows at Oxenhope watch-point (4th) and another a few days later. It was on this date that the reporter heard the musical call of a Wood Lark (10th) and exactly a week later, a Yellowhammer went by and previously, four Twite flew over Caldene Fields (5th). Of further interest, a Reed Warbler was still present at Stockbridge (3rd), whilst a Common Crane flew over Silsden (2nd).

The Waxwing invasion began on the 24th with 50 birds seen in the Wharfe Valley. There were further reports during the next week from a wide variety of locations in Crossflatts, Baildon, Ilkley and Keighley with a high of 82 in trees in Ben Rhydding (31st).

More winter harbingers were in the form of three Whooper Swans at Lower Laithe (21st), a gathering of 480 Curlew at Ben Rhydding, flocks of Crossbills, Siskin, Redpoll and regular reports of Brambling, Snow and Lapland Bunting. Of the latter three species, a very strong party of 15 Brambling passed very close to observers at Oxenhope (17th), Snow Buntings were noted in flight from the watch-points and on the ground at Soil Hill (23rd) and the occasional Lapland continued the amazing recent passage of this species.

With Merlins seen following the passerine movement (2nd), Red Kites over west Bradford and two reports of Hen Harriers this was an eventful and action-packed month.

October 2009 The weather during October was generally mild and settled, just the right conditions for a good migration and so it proved with reports of large numbers of moving birds from the main watch-points. The major action was compressed into the final week of the month with significant movements of birds across the area.

Redwing passage had been underway from the start of the month, it all peaked when over 3500 passed Caldene Fields (13th) and another 3770 at the Oxenhope view-point. Bird Guides reported that 30000 Redwings had passed Sandy Pinnacle This was a big arrival from Norway moving directly inland. Fieldfare numbers increased spectacularly with over 3500 recorded at Stainburn Moor (28th), and within a two hour period, 6000 passed the Oxenhope watch-point on the same day. These were frantic times with observers reporting massive movements. In a 20 minute period at Caldene Fields, 954 Redwing were counted and up at Oxenhope 14000 birds passed in five hours (29th).

On the final day of the month a wave of Starlings passed through with 4265 recorded at the Oxenhope and over 3000 at Caldene Fields in the south. On 27th a massive flock of 7000 were feeding on Stainburn Moor. At the same time 5700 Wood Pigeons were recorded at Stainburn (27th), and two days later, there were 2000 passing Caldene Fields, 2600 at Stainburn (29th), and a peak of 7500 at Oxenhope.

Pink-footed Geese moved in high numbers from east to west on the 29th, with 879 over Caldene Fields and 1945 over the Oxenhope watch-point.

A significant movement of Greenfinch was recorded earlier in the month with a high of over 210 at Caldene Fields (4th). It was here that 44 House Martins went by, as did a few Swallows, but the latest of these was a bird through the Wharfe Valley on 27th.

Snipe were seen in good numbers at the Oxenhope watch-point with a site record 61 passing through (10th) and 20 were flushed at John o' Gaunt's Reservoir (9th). A Jack Snipe was noted at Cladene Fields (30th) and although Water Rail are always present at Stockbridge, one seen 'pottering' around Morrison's Car Park at Girlington (15th), has to be the surprise of the month. 300 Golden Plovers were feeding in what is now a traditional area near Caldene Fields (11th) and 1200 more had gathered on Stainburn Moor (29th). At Nearby Scargill Reservoir a Green Sandpiper was in the outflow.

Seven Whooper Swans were on Lower Laithe Reservoir (24th), another was seen at Skipton (29th) and three were observed during migration watch over Oxenhope (27th). Two female Goldeneye were reported at Stockbridge (24th), 14 Mandarins were at Strid Wood (23rd), five Shelduck passed Caldene Fields (23rd) and five Pintail were seen at the Oxenhope watch-point (10th).

Stonechats were reported from a few locations with eight moving through Glovershaw (8th) and another five on 31st. A Wheatear was near Shipley Glen (16th), three Yellowhammers and a flock of 46 Redpoll passed observers at Stainburn (27th) and a Marsh Tit was in the wood by Beaver Dyke Reservoir (18th). Redpoll, Siskin and Crossbills were noted at Timble and a Lapland Bunting flew over on 13th whilst there were reports of a few Brambling from watch-points in the south.

October 2008 A two-barred Crossbill visited an Oakworth garden on 29th, it stayed long enough to be identified and photographed before it was taken by the local Sparrowhawk. This is believed to be the first time one of these northern Russian species has been seen in Yorkshire. Otherwise, it was a typical October with an influx of visitors in the form of winter thrushes, small numbers of Whooper Swans and the passage of Pink-footed Geese and Wood Pigeons.

The mass invasion of Redwings and Fieldfares reached its high point on the 18th when over 15 000 of the former were counted flying west and south-westwards, at the moorland watch-point, Paul Clough, Cladene Fields and Ogden. Fieldfares, in smaller numbers, were seen more frequently as the month went by with 1100 over Caldene Fields (29th).

Whooper Swans were first seen in the south of the area when a flock of eight birds crossed Paul Clough (8th) and the moorland watch-point. Later in the month, two dropped into Doe Park whilst another couple were on Chelker Reservoir (both 19th) and at the month end, four adults and two

immatures were seen on Cononley Ings (29th). Pink-footed Geese moved generally eastwards throughout the month with skeins was seen on the 1st, 17th, 18th, 23rd and 28th. The autumn movement of Wood Pigeons was also witnessed around the area with an impressive total of over 15 000 passing Caldene Fields on the 28th and 29th.

Two Ring Ouzels spent a couple of days in Paul Clough (2nd & 3rd), a Rock Pipit was feeding at the moorland watch-point (7th) and two Tree Sparrows spent time at the feeders on the Stockbridge Reserve (11th). Redpolls and Siskins were reported in small flocks from a number of sites mainly from the south of the area and family groups of Stonechats continued their passage over the moorland fringes with regular reported sightings. A Snow Bunting flew over the moorland watch-point (3rd), two Brambling were seen in Denholme Clough (12th) and a female Lesser Spotted Woodpecker was feeding at Crook Farm, Baildon (28th).

Water Rails returned to Stockbridge on the 2nd and the expected arrival of ducks was witnessed by reports of small numbers of Wigeon at Lindley Wood (1st), Knotford Nook, Otley Wetland (9th) where Goldeneye were present (29th). Mandarin numbers were increasing at Bolton Abbey, a Merlin flew through Stockbridge Reserve (19th) and the last remnants of summer were reported in the form of a few Swallows and House Martins lingering on to the end of the month.

October 2007 October was a very dry, sunny and relatively mild month. Conditions were excellent for autumn watching and the birds didn't disappoint. The major highlight was a Great Grey Shrike which stayed around the boating lake area at Otley Wetland from the 9th to 13th. Of course, rarities bring birders out in numbers and true to form other interesting birds were seen in this area during this time, included a Barn Owl (10th), Red-crested Pochard, Whooper Swan and a Grey Plover.

Ospreys were seen early in month at Draughton Heights (1st) and Chelker Reservoir (3rd) and a ring-tailed Hen Harrier was observed from our watch-point in Wharfedale (17th). Eight Red Kites in the sky at the same time (5th), seen at this location, amply demonstrates the successful re-introduction of these birds to the area. During the middle of the month a first-winter Red Kite with two green tags from the Dumfries area was identified. Merlins were reported by three observers and a Peregrine had moved into Wharfedale at the end of the month.

On the 14th, over 1500 Pink-footed Geese were recorded passing over the area, mostly from west to east in large skeins of up to 300 birds. Seven Whooper Swans were noted at the moorland watch-point (19th) in addition to other sightings at Otley Wetland and Leeshaw (20th). At our moorland watch-point, a Goosander roost of 73 was recorded (6th) and a Barnacle Goose visited Leeshaw (21st).

Visible migration watchers recorded some spectacular flocks, particularly in the south of the region. Up to 3000 Meadow Pipits were counted, with a high of 771 (6th) at the moorland watch-point, 5500 Wood Pigeons, the highest count at Caldene Fields 1579 (30th) and a total of over 8400 relocating Starlings from a variety of sites.

Winter thrushes moved into the area in large numbers during the month, over 10 000 Fieldfares being reported, with the greatest number 3000, at the moorland watch-point (19th). Redwings were similarly evident, a total of over 3500 passing through, with the high point at around the same time. The final Wheatear was recorded at the moorland watch-point (15th) and a few Ring Ouzels were seen here early in the month, with a final sighting of a single bird at Oldfield Lane (21st). Stonechats continued to be reported from moorland areas and Twite were prominent at the feeding site at Fly Flatts.

Crossbills, mainly at Timble Ings, where over 30 were regularly seen, and occasionally Redpolls and Siskins, the latter being more widely distributed, kept birders alert during the good weather. Other passerines relocating included high numbers of Chaffinches and Greenfinches passing our watch-points, and 50 Skylarks were seen grounded on Norr Hill, Wilsden (2nd).

Two Water Rails had returned to Stockbridge by the 14th and up to 60 Mandarin Ducks were counted in Strid Wood and over 400 Golden Plovers were seen near Tong Street, Bradford (21st). Other highlights included a Green Sandpiper making a brief visit to Stockbridge (21st), a Rock Pipit

and Grey Plover at the moorland watch-point (5th) and the welcome site of a ring-tailed Hen Harrier over the moorland of Wharfedale (17th).

October 2006 October was another mild month with some unusually warm days and average rainfall. Autumn migration continued apace, but there were few rarities, attention was taken by a single Black Redstart at the moorland watch-point (1st), a Willow Tit was at nearby Denholme Clough for most of the month and a Dartford Warbler was recorded at Lippersley Pike, Timble (13th to 15th). A Grey Plover was at Denholme Clough (2nd) and another was seen over Timble Ings (18th). A late Swallow passed the moorland watch-point on the 29th and two House Martins were seen over Denolme Clough (24th). The passage of Wheatears was noted at many places including the moorland watch-point (1st), Caldene Fields (1st), Sandwith Moor (2nd) and Glovershaw (9th). Birds of prey reported within the area included Hen Harrier, Goshawk, Merlin, Pergerine and Red Kite.

Members reported a good influx of Brambling, Redpoll and Siskin and winter Thrushes were seen in increasingly large numbers with 2800 Redwing and 770 Fieldfare passing observers at Paul Clough (27th). It's early days for Golden Plover, but signs were good, with reports of small flocks at Chelker (25th) and Denolme Clough (23rd). 800 Pink-footed Geese flew over Caldene Fields (9th) and at this site three Shoveler appeared on the 18th.

Two Whooper Swans were using the reservoir at Fly Flatts (24th) and a male Scoter was seen on Thruscross Reservoir (8th).

October 2005 October was a very mild month with temperatures mostly above average with 70 degrees being recorded on 27th. Precipitation was relatively low until the wind changed to a westerly direction in the latter half of the month and the rainfall increased accordingly. It was a month with a reasonable selection of species, evidence of winter visitors, and considerable numbers of more common species on migration.

Meadow Pipits continued to pour through the watch-points with nearly 1900 on the 2nd but this tailed off significantly towards the middle of the month. A movement of passerines resulted in 63 Siskin being noted at Paul Clough along with 268 Chaffinch and 150 Redpoll on the 2nd as 82 Swallows also passed through TMR, with the last one recorded on the 11th. On this day a Grey Plover and Red-throated Diver were seen passing over Denholme Clough as small flocks of Mistle Thrush began to establish a presence at various locations. Single records of Chiffchaff and Blackcap were received with the former still around on the 30th.

Water Rail was calling at Stockbridge Reserve where up to three birds had taken up residence, and a Ring Ouzel passed through TMR on the 22nd. Stonechats were seen in small family groups with Glovershaw and Sandwith Moor being the best places. On the 13th 150 Pink-footed Geese flew over TMR at regular intervals and the first Snow Bunting of the season was noted at this watch-point, followed four there days later by four Lapland Bunting. Observers on Soil Hill, Queensbury recorded a Jack Snipe (16th) that seemed to be there until the end of the month. Soil Hill supplied us with records of reverse migration when both Greenland and Northern Wheatear were noted and there was also a report of Twite and a Raven at this spot.

Redwing were first recorded on the 7th from TMR and this heralded a major influx that started with a flood a week later with 610 (14th), 866 (15th), 1173 at Caldene Fields (18th), with observers at TMR recording 1400 on the 26th. Fieldfare numbers began to pick up from about the 18th and on the 26th, 2700 flooded past the TMR watch-point.

Timble Ings appeared to be a reliable spot to see Redwing going into roost. Timble was also a good place to see Brambling and Crossbill with over 250 and 15 (22nd) respectively. Ring Ouzel were still to be seen on the 30th with two birds on the moorland around Kex Gill.

Winter ducks were gathering within the area with Wigeon, Tufted, Pochard and Goldeneye reported from around the region and Golden Plover numbers were increasing with their favoured spot being Sandwith Moor, it produced 150 (29th), but Bowling Back Lane in the centre of Bradford had over 200 (28th)

October 2004 The month was largely wet and windy with localised flooding, however, rainfall was well short of the total experienced in 2000.

The first day of October started with viz-mig in full swing. Huge numbers of birds were on the move, with over 800 Meadow Pipits seen moving south at TMR. Throughout the next few days, numbers were close to 1000, with waves of the birds, flying low and skimming the roof tops. At Kex Gill, flocks of passerines were arriving and moving through all morning and here a high of 119 Meadow Pipits were moving westwards. Leeshaw had a couple of Twite and in the Wharfe Valley four Red Kites with two juveniles were spotted together with a male Hen Harrier and a high of twelve Buzzards.

On the 2nd a large flock of over 500 Starling and 300 plus Lapwing occupied the flooded fields around Silsden. Over at Fewston Reservoir, 43 Tufted Ducks had assembled and quartering the Prune Park fields was a Short-eared Owl. A member watching in Paul Clough reported a Ring Ouzel, which remained for at least two days. On the 8th, over 2000 Thrush species were counted flying high towards the north-west at TMR. Influxes of Blackbird, Jackdaw, Sparrowhawk and Kestrel were noted from this vantage point. On the 9th Fieldfare and Redwing passage numbers had risen to over 4300 and at Denholme Clough good numbers of birds were counted included an influx of Song Thrush.

On the 10th, Stockbridge had a Water Rail and a Buzzard was seen in a ploughed field by Hollins Hall, Baildon and Long-tailed Tits seemed to be everywhere. A Common Tern was seen, fishing, at Baildon Bridge on the 15th. By the 16th, 70 Teal were recorded on Silsden Floods and late Swallows were still being reported from around the region. Two Jack Snipe were seen on Soil Hill on the 17th and a couple of Snow Buntings were reported from Cold Edge Dams.

A male Hen Harrier was observed being mobbed by corvids on Rombalds Moor on the 19th. Throughout this period, moving Thrush numbers remained high, 3580 passed TMR heading SSE on the 22nd. At this spot, the next day, a surprise bird was a Slavonian Grebe, an adult moulting to winter plumage. The flooded meadows of Silsden produced four Whooper Swans (2 adult 2 immature), on the 24th, before they were disturbed by shooters and flew down the Aire Valley. The highlight of the 26th was a female Lesser-Spotted Woodpecker at OGP and a flock of over 400 Redwing. As the month drew to a close, over 700 Lapwing had taken up residence at Silsden Floods, and Wood Pigeons were congregating in ever increasing flocks with 1400 at OGP. On the final day, members were pleased to record that three Water Rail were showing well at Stockbridge.