

RING OUZEL *Turdus torquatus*
Increasingly uncommon migrant breeder.

1987 - A breeding and passage bird, all records included and relate to singles unless otherwise stated. The earliest was a male at Knotford Nook on 29th March. Ring Ouzels were also noted at: Rivock Edge 7th April; Cow and Calf Rocks, 12th April; Ilkley Craggs, 4th May; Burley Moor (three), 6th May; Thruscross Reservoir, 25th May; and Embsay Moor, 30th May. Others were reported from: Barden Moor (two), 23rd July; Keighley Gate, 23rd August whilst the last bird was at Fly Flatts Reservoir on 2nd September. Pairs were found to have bred at Kex Gill Moor, Langbar and Blubberhouses Moor.

1988 - A widespread but uncommon breeding bird upon the area's moorlands. First reported on 27th March when two males were on Haworth Moor and another was on Riddlesden Golf Course. The last was a single on Barden Fell on 1st October. Ring Ouzels bred at Fly Flatts Reservoir and Ilkley, Burley and Barden Moors and possibly at Whetstone Gate, Draughton Heights, Kex Gill Moor and Nab End near Sillsden. The highest count was on 17th September when six overflew Ilkley Moor. Nearly 30 records received including at least 36 adults.

1989 - Regularly reported from various parts of Rombalds Moor, especially Burley Moor and Whetstone Gate, and from Newsholme Dean, Barden Fell, Barden Moor, March Ghyll Reservoir, and Oxenhope and Haworth Moors. The first was a male at Woofa Bank on Burley Moor on 27th March with several sites seeing spring migrants in the following two days. The last birds were singles on Haworth Moor until 15th October and at Lower Barden Reservoir until 22nd of that month.

1990 - The first were three at Slippery Ford on 17th March while the last was a single at Upper Barden Reservoir on 31st October. Birds were noted at many moorland sites including Newsholme Dean, Harden Gill Beck, Stubden Beck Valley, Whetstone Gate, Stoneybank at Thruscross, Barden Fell, Barden Moor, Hawksworth Moor, Addingham Moorside, March Ghyll Reservoir, Heber's Ghyll, Draughton Heights and Timble Ings. The highest count was at least ten at Paul Clough, Oxenhope, on 30th September followed by six at Upper Barden Reservoirs on 7th October; otherwise only reported as singles or pairs with the occasional three. Breeding confirmed on Burley Moor and Ilkley Moor.

1991 - A male at Whetstone Quarry on 29th March was the first while the last was a female at Folly Top, Barden Moor, on 20th October, these being fairly typical dates. Other sites holding birds between these dates included Robin Hood Stone on Rombalds Moor, Graincliffe Reservoir, Harden Gill at Thruscross, Upper and Lower Barden Reservoirs, Ilkley Moor, Heber's Ghyll and Thornton Moor Reservoir. Maxima included a group of six on Burley Moor on 9th April and up to eight feeding on rowan berries at Newsholme Dean in early September. Breeding was proven on Morton Moor and Burley Moor. A most interesting record concerned a male watched bathing in an Eldwick garden pond on 4th, 7th and 8th October; it once drove off a pair of Blackbirds from the pond.

1992 - The year started with a single at Draughton Heights on 28th March. Records intermittently throughout April with Whetstone proving to be the most regular spot, holding up to six into early May. Breeding was proven at Burley Moor, Leeshaw Reservoir and Thornton Moor Reservoir and suspected at Whetstone. On return passage the maximum was 14+ feeding in rowans on Barden Moor on 27th September. Up to six birds were regularly seen around Paul Clough from 12th September, two males here on 17th October being the last of the year.

1993 – As expected recorded from upland areas only. A male at Thornton Moor Reservoir which left to the north-west on 24th March was the first of the year. A month later six were seen between the reservoirs at Barden. Although no confirmation of breeding was received this species probably bred at several localities with pairs being recorded at Whetstone Gate, Barden, Rombalds Moor and Burley Moor by the end of spring. On 23rd May a pair mobbed a Kestrel on Oxenhope Moor. The most obvious autumn passage was at Paul Clough between 12th and 24th September with a maximum of seven birds gathered on 20th. Passage was also noted at Thornton Moor reservoir between 19th and 24th September with a peak of at least four birds heard moving south after dusk on 23rd.

1994 – During the first week in April birds began arriving and Ilkley Moor (four), Whetstone (a pair) and Ha- worth Moor (one male) all produced birds on 2nd. On 6th and 10th pairs were at Bond Clough and Haworth Moor respectively. On 16th April one bird survived an attack by a Sparrowhawk at Whetstone Gate. Breeding records came from this last mentioned site, Burley Moor and Gillbeck Head. The most obvious autumn passage was noted at Paul Clough on dates between 10th and 30th September with a maximum count of seven on 10th. The last record, from Barden Moor, was exceptional; a singing male on 5th November.

1995 – The records received were as expected, from rocky moorland sites in the north and west. A notable exception was an early passage bird found at East Bierley Golf Course on 22nd March. Between the last week of March and the middle of June singles or breeding pairs were noted at sites such as Round Hill, Barden Moor, Leeshaw, Bond Clough, Thornton Moor Reservoir and Nan Scar. Six at Burley Moor on the 11th April was the highest count. Breeding records included a pair at Whetstone Gate and adults carrying food at Reva on 14th May. At Burley Moor a nest containing four eggs on 25th April was predated. When presumably the same pair tried to breed again, the nest had again been predated by 25th May. A male was seen at Barden on 1st October and return passage was noted on three occasions at Paul Clough: a single on 9th September, four three days later and the last of the year on 10th October.

1996 – There was a minor influx of Ring Ouzels nationally and it was not unexpected that one of these birds should find its way into the Group's recording area and on 2nd January a single bird was found at Holme House Farm, Barden. The first record of a bird back from its wintering grounds was at Cullingworth Fields on 30th March; this was followed by a bird at Burley Moor on 31st. During April, a pair was at Whetstone Gate, a regular site for the species; and in the Whetstone Quarry area three males were found on 6th, Ilkley and Add- ingham Moors each had single males on 9th, and a further single male was just south-west of Withins Inn on 13th. A pair was at White Wells, Ilkley Moor on 5th May, and Barden had a good count of five birds on 9th. On May 30th, a single male was found at Upper Barden Reservoir during a gull count.

The only confirmed breeding record came from Burley Moor, where a pair was seen with young at a nest on 9th June. Once breeding was over, birds began to start to move, and an interesting sighting was of a bird flying south over Oxenhope at 8.55 pm on 21st July. Perhaps the first passage bird record came from Paul Clough, where two first-winter males were seen on 31st August; during September at the same site, six passage birds were seen on 6th, five on 15th and three on 29th, however, an excellent passage was observed on 14th, with two birds increasing to seven, and later a Sparrowhawk flushed 11 birds! Interestingly, the last record of the year was again 'late' – a single at Whetstone Quarry on 2nd November.

1997 – A ravine at Burley Moor held the first returning bird on 19th March, with the possibility of two other birds in the area at that time. For the remainder of March until early April there was a steady movement of birds into the area like Ilkley Moor and Barden Fell; however, a more notable influx

occurred from 10th to 16th April. During this period birds were recorded at eight different locations, including a 'site-first' for Caldene Fields, where a male bird was discovered associating with Blackbirds on 12th. Burley Moor again provided a breeding record, with a pair seen carrying food to young on 18th May; sadly, however, a nest containing four eggs found on 16th June at Ilkey Moor had been predated by 28th. There were two relatively good counts during the year, both from Barden Moor – more than five birds on 15th May and six birds on 14th September. Return passage was under way in September at Paul Clough with two birds on 11th and at least three on 22nd. During October, a single bird was present at Yeadon Tarn on 11th, and two birds were still at Paul Clough on 17th, while the last sighting of 1997 came from Ilkley Moor on 18th.

1998 – Apart from one record of a passage bird located in a field near Lindley Wood Reservoir on 23rd April, all records come from upland sites in the the north of the Group's recording area. Bradup held the first re- turning bird – a single male, on 22nd March. The next make bird arrived in April, on 6th at Burley Moor, by 20th, the count at this site had increased to three birds. Breeding records came from six different sites: Rombalds Moor (one nest containg four eggs on 29th April, all hatched by 14th May), Roms Clough, Bond Clough, Addingham Moorside, Burley Moor (where a pair had a second brood of four eggs on 10th June) and Bob Hill drain. Return passage in August was confined to Paul Clough, with two juvenile male birds seen on 15th, and the year's final sighting there was on 29th August.

1999 – The earliest returning (and only March) bird was a single Ring Ouzel on Burley Moor on 28th. A small influx occurred in early April, with up to two birds seen on Burley Moor up to 9th, also five birds were ob- served at Windgate Nick on 3rd and Harden Moor held three birds on 9th. After a fifteen-day gap, the next records were of individuals at Whetstone Gate (24th) and on Barden Moor (25th). Breeding was reported from Burley Moor, Barden Moor and Kex Gill quarry; at the first site mentioned, the Ring Ouzels were pre- dated upon twice! Of the three pairs on Barden Moor at least one pair was successful. In the recent past, breeding has been recorded on Ilkley and Rombalds Moors, and although there were sightings during the summer months no breeding attempts have been confirmed there this year. Autumn migration began for the species on 29th August at Thornton Moor Reservoir, with a single bird seen in a nearby field. Paul Clough then had a string of sightings from 12th September right through to late October, the highest counts being of six birds on 14th September, five birds the next day and four on 26th September. Ikley Moor held five birds on 20th and six birds on 30th September. The year's highest count occurred at Luddenden Dean, with eight birds present there on 2nd October. The year's last sighting of this species was of a single bird at Paul Clough on 29th October.

2000 – The earliest sighting was a single bird on Burley Moor on 24th March, an average arrival date. There were subsequently seven April records and four in May, with little in June and July. There was then a one- month gap before return passage became evident from 1st September, with notable numbers of seven birds at the Swastika Stone (Ilkley Moor) on 30th Sepytember and four at Kex Gill on 22nd October. The year's final report was from Thornton Moor Reservoir on 11th and 12th November, of a distinctively-marked bird, possibly assignable to the eastern race *T.t.amicorum*. The record is still under review.

Details of confirmed breeding came from only one location, a traditional site, and there is no doubt that the the lack of records reflects the decline nationally.

2001 – The access restrictions this year greatly limited the opportunities to search for this declining species and there was an all-time low in the records submitted.

In the preceeding nine years, records averaged 50 per year, with a maximum of 72 in 1997. This year's total of 14 records was 15 down even on the previous poor year. It will be interesting to see

if this is just an artificial drop engendered by the access problems or whether there is a continuing downturn for the species.

The first returning bird was at Barden on 1st April, and two days later a bird was seen at Whetstone Gate. No more sightings were then reported until 8th September, on the edge of Ilkley Moor, and, following a small autumn passage mainly through Kex Gill, the last bird of the year was recorded there on 1st November, a relatively late date for our area. For the reasons stated, there were no breeding records.

2002 – Whilst a better showing than in 2001, when access restrictions inhibited observations, the 30 records in the current year point to a continued downturn for the species in the area. This is particularly so, when most of the sightings refer to birds on autumn passage at Paul Clough between late August and October, during which period the same birds are known to stay around for several days at a time. In general, only ones and twos were involved, with five birds seen at Addingham Moorside in April being exceptional. The first arrival and last departure dates of 23rd March and 19th October were unexceptional.

Breeding was thought to have taken place near Keighley Gate, but could not be proved.

2003 - A poor year with no proof that breeding occurred in the recording area. The first to arrive were singles seen at Burley Wood Head and at Pennistone Hill on the typical date of 23rd March. A male was seen along Trough Lane on 26th March. Three birds were seen at Kex Gill in early April and two birds were seen throughout the summer on Burley Moor around Coldstone Beck. One record each came from Haworth Moor and Paul Clough in mid-summer with single autumn passage birds being located at Paul Clough in August and September, Sconce Lane on 2nd October, Kex Gill on 16th August and 17th October (the latter of which was caught and ringed) and Soil Hill on 26th October.

2004 - The general downward trend continues, with only 15 records, and no indication of breeding. The earliest were three at Thornton Moor Reservoir on 2nd April, followed by one at Kex Gill on 12th. Further arrivals during the month and early May were then noted at Barden Scale, Leeshaw Reservoir, Barden Moor, Thornton Moor Reservoir, and Luddenden Dean, which had five birds on 23rd April, the year's highest total. Apart from a bird at Paul Clough, the only autumn records came from Thornton Moor, where the year's final bird was seen on 21st October.

2005 - Whilst the total of 24 records submitted is an improvement on 2004, there are several points to bear in mind. All but eight of the reports relate to autumn migration (in a year when there was a large influx of birds into the country), there were only four moorland records, and there was no evidence of breeding. Thus, the species' decline in the area regrettably continues.

The first arrivals were individuals seen on different parts of Burley Moor on 11th April, followed by other sightings there later in the month, and at Thornton Moor Reservoir, Soil Hill and Luddenden Dean. There were no further reports until 12th July, when a bird was found on Barden Moor, and another two months elapsed before return migration brought a welcome increase in sightings.

A probable total of 18 birds was recorded from Thornton Moor, Paul Clough, Kex Gill Quarry, Roils Head, Cold Edge, Soil Hill (which had four birds on 21st October), the totally unexpected location of Burley/ Menston Sewage Works, and Barden Fell, from where the last report originated on 9th November, a notably late date. This was in keeping with the national influx mentioned earlier, and most of the autumn records came during the two week period from 21st October.

2006 - For a bird which is in decline in the area, the 2006 records actually stand up quite well when compared with those in the Group's initial Report in 1987. This year produced 17 records and a total of around 24 birds, whereas 20 years ago there were 12 records and 15 birds. The main and significant difference, however, lies in there now being no breeding records, when in 1987 three breeding pairs were located.

All this year's reports were of migrating birds, and were almost exclusively confined to the months of April and September. In spring, singles were seen between 3rd and 18th April at Coney Warren, Soil Hill, Hey Slack Allotment, Burley Moor and Thornton Moor Reservoir, where a pair were present on the 27th and 29th. This same period produced the year's highest count, and the best for some time: seven birds on Barden Fell on the 15th.

Return passage commenced in mid-August, with a bird at Thornton Moor on the 18th, and singles moved through Paul Clough in September on the 4th, 9th, and 30th, with two there on the 25th. There was a further Thornton Moor record on 14th October, and the southern sector's autumn monopoly was completed by the final bird at Warley Moor Reservoir on the 22nd.

2007 - Whilst 29 records of probably 55 birds might indicate an upturn of this species' fortunes in the area, this, unhappily, is not the case. All the reports appear to be associated with migration, and a large number of them were in April, when there was a large national influx.

The first bird was seen at Thornton Moor Reservoir on 6th April, and other singles were noted there and at Whetstone Gate, Nan Scar, Burley Woodhead and West End (in the Worth Valley). Between two and six birds were reported at Thornton Moor and Soil Hill, which had a good run of records between 13th and 24th, but the year's best count (and the highest for several years) came from Nab End, on Rombald's Moor, where 11 were seen.

Nearly all the autumn records came from Paul Clough, which had between one and three birds in September. Thornton Moor had several singles, and two in late September, and there was a single on Barden Moor about the same time. The final sighting was an individual at Warley Moor Reservoir on 14th October. Clearly, Ring Ouzel no longer breeds in the area, and there were not even any summering birds.

2008 - For the second successive year, Nab End on Rombald's Moor had the best count of migrants, with seven there on 18th April. Apart from these and pairs at Ponden Clough in May and Paul Clough in October, the rest were singles, at Soil Hill, Thornton Moor, Windgate Nick, Oxenhope and Barden Moor. The last was a juvenile, but there was no indication of local breeding.

2009 - All the records were again of migrants, and almost all in spring. After one at Top Within in March, singles were seen in April at Thornton Moor, Soil Hill, Oxenhope and Otley, and three were at Nab End (Rombald's Moor). In autumn, one was at Windgate Nick in August, and Thornton Moor had two in October and a single in November.

2010 - Spring migrants were seen at Trough Lane on 24th March and 3rd April, and at Thornton Moor on the 9th and 23rd, with another single at Oxenhope the following day. Departing birds comprised Thornton Moor individuals on 4th and 12th October (with two on the 10th), and a notably late bird on 9th November. Two birds were also seen at Paul Clough on 30th September and on Soil Hill on 11th October, and one was on Barden Moor on that date.

2011 - After several mediocre years, just five reports make 2011 the worst on record. Apart from a bird at Warley Moor on 28th March, all the sightings were in April. Individuals were found at

Thruscross on the 7th, and four days later at Warley Moor, followed by one on Burley Moor (a traditional site) on the 19th, and another on Soil Hill on the 23rd.

2012 - It is pleasing to report that after last year's worst on record, 2012 was in many aspects the best since 2007. There were 18 records involving around 25 birds, and, most importantly, the distinct probability of breeding. Nine reports came from around Airedale, and the rest from the moors above Wharfedale, where the highlights were five birds on Ilkley Moor on 17th October. The probable breeding concerned a bird carrying food at Slippery Ford in June, a known previous breeding site.

2013 - After the improvements shown in 2012, this was a disappointing year. There were just seven records which featured eight birds on passage, a situation comparable with the depressingly low point of two years ago. The earliest report was of a bird at the likely spot of Warley Moor on 14th April (BS). Two of the three other spring records came from Barden Moor, where a male bird was heard on two occasions, six days apart, in May (IC), raising the distinct possibility of breeding. Later, between 18th September and 5th November, two birds were seen on Addingham Moorside (WNS), singles at Paul Clough (BV), from the Oxenhope watchpoint (DB) and finally a bird was with a mixed flock on Ilkley Moor (PF).

2014 - A pair seen in Wharfedale on 21st May gave an indication that they were engaged in establishing a possible breeding site (RN). This area was traditionally used by the species until 1995, but no further reports of any outcome were submitted. Earlier, three birds visited Soil Hill on 9th April and a male was there on 9th May (HBC, BS). On 24th April, at Addingham Moorside, a feeding flock contained six Ring Ouzels (four males and two females) and a Cuckoo (JP). Other sightings were limited to returning birds: three on Soil Hill on 4th September (HBC) and singles at Paul Clough on 20th and 27th September (BV). On 21st September an adult and a juvenile were feeding on rowan berries at Slippery Ford (IH), and migration watchers at Oxenhope supplied records of single birds on 11th and 14th October; a threesome was present there on 16th October (DB, HC, RP). The final bird was a male seen at Thornton Moor Reservoir on the following day (KM). This was a very pleasing year and equalled the 25 reported in 2012.

2015 - It was another interesting year, with birds seen at seven locations, mainly on spring and autumn passage. There were two confirmed reports of breeding, the first since 2012. The first arrivals were two birds on Burley Moor on 9th April (JT); this figure rose to ten a week later (WNS). During the period 16th to 25th April, up to six birds were watched on Soil Hill (BS, NP), a single was at Timble Ings (JB) and later, on 9th May, an individual was at Whetsone Gate (MD). Breeding took place on Barden Moor, where three young fledged in June, whilst at Kex Gill a male was seen carrying food to a nest (WNS, PRo). The final record was a solitary juvenile on Beamsley Beacon on 19th July (WNS).

2016 - Slightly more widespread than the previous year with reports from eleven locations though most of these were of passage birds moving through in the spring and autumn with only eight sightings during May, June and July. These records came from moorland in Upper Wharfedale and included two successful breeding attempts.

Spring passage sightings included the first back on 26th March at Paul Clough, several birds moving on Barden Moor and at least ten passing Slippery Ford up to 28th April, though only one bird was seen there in autumn, on 9th October. The last migrant was at Oxenhope Watchpoint on the 22nd.

2017 - Last year's numbers weren't repeated, and it is probable no more than 16 birds were involved. Passage at Withins Head, Slippery Ford and Warley Moor Reservoir

accounted for eight of them, including four at the last site in October. The remainder concerned birds lingering on Wharfedale moorlands, and breeding was suspected at one of them.

WHINCHAT *Saxicola rubetra* Migrant breeder/passage visitor.

Most reports appear to concern migrants, particularly in the general area of Warley Moor Reservoir and Oxenhope, where up to 28 birds were recorded between late April and early September. The only suggestion of local breeding was juveniles near Warley Moor Reservoir in July.

2018 - Over the years, numbers have fluctuated markedly, as most of our birds are clearly on passage. This was a better one, with a total of around 46 birds, most on the Wharfedale moors, with six in and around Airedale. The Wharfedale total included seven near Hazlewood on 20th April, and a record 15 on Rombald's Moor (Nab End), a traditional stopover, on the 24th (GL). Successful breeding occurred in Wharfedale.