



Tony Gough's Diary

Here is a further extract from the diaries of Tony Gough, this time we concentrate on the BOG Bird Race Day held on the 11th September 1994. From midnight to 7pm the race was on to see as many birds as possible. Small groups chased around the area noting as many species as possible in the hope of beating other challengers.

Tony's Team: AGG, PG, MS and JS (+ baby Rosie).

Sunday 11th September 1994

Visited the following sites (most interesting birds at each site listed):-

St Ives Woodland and Coppice Pond, Harden 6.14 a.m. to 7.07 a.m.

Song Thrush – 3+ singles, Jay, Coal Tit, Goldcrest

Sugden End Tip, near Crossroads, Keighley 7.15 a.m. to 7.20 a.m.

Herring Gull – 1 first-winter. Lesser Black-backed Gull – plenty including several adults of race 'graellsii'

Paul Clough, Oxenhope 7.30 a.m. to 8.26 a.m.

Chiffchaff – 1, possibly 2 together Bullfinch – party of 4+

Fly Flatts Reservoir, Warley Moor 8.30 a.m. to 8.41 a.m.

Zilch – a waste of time!

Stockbridge Reserve, Keighley 9 a.m. to 9.30 a.m.

Kingfisher – 1 Mute Swan – 2 adults Greenfinch – 4+ Collared Dove – 1

Dunnock – 1 (the only one seen today!)

House Sparrow – 1 male (but not by AGG, though a few more seen elsewhere).

Marley Sewage Works, Aire Valley 9.37 a.m. to 10.46 a.m.

Grey Heron – 2 Kestrel – 2 Reed Bunting – 3 Teal – c.12

Whetstone Quarry and Morton Moor, Ilkley Road, Riddlesden. 10.55 a.m. to 11.22 a.m.

Red Grouse – 1 female (again the only one seen today). Otherwise, wet and dead!

Weecher Reservoir, Bingley Moor 11.30 a.m. to 11.35 a.m.

Tufted Duck – 2 Nothing else at all.

Woodhall Lake, Calverley 12.04 p.m. to 12.10 p.m.

Bewick's Swan – 1 adult. The bird which seems to have been stuck here since it was found last winter. It now appears to have an injured wing which it carries slightly arched above the line of the back but the wings were undamaged when the bird was first found and in the ensuing weeks. Has it picked up this injury in trying to escape from this lake and its encircling trees? The lake is small and offers little in the way of take off space. Come to think of it, the bird perhaps first appeared in the 1992/3 winter. Coot – 1

Warren House Lane, Leeds Bradford Airport edge, Yeadon 12.25 p.m. to 12.30 p.m.

Nothing!

Enroute from Airport in fields between Guiseley and Chevin c.12.40 p.m.

Common Gull – flock of c.40 adults in a roadside field.

Knotford Nook, near Otley, Wharfedale 12.50 p.m. to 1.10 p.m.

Great Crested Grebe – total of five adults in breeding plumage, one of which was accompanied by three juveniles that seemed still dependent.

Otley Gravel Pits, Wharfedale 1.20 p.m. to 2.50 p.m.

Sparrowhawk – 1 (the only one of the day but seen three times soaring high over Ashfield House area.

Grey Partridge – covey of c.10 Ashfield lake.

Common Sandpiper – 1 Ashfield Lake.

Stock Dove – 1 flying west (then east) at boating lake. Again, the only one of the day, though MS saw one at Knotford Nook.

Snipe – 1 (but only seen by AGG and MS and so it did not count – JS and Rosie did not attempt the trek anyway) boating lake.

Tufted Duck – 2 female types Ashfield lake.

Great Crested Grebe – 1 juvenile new lake by Ashfield Lake and 1 adult first lake.

Lindley Wood Reservoir, Washburn Valley 3.10 p.m. to 3.50 p.m.

Cormorant – 1 but well down the reservoir and difficult to keep up with it let alone get enough on it to age the bird. It was swimming low in the water between long dives and spent little time on the surface. Bird of the day for us, really, dismal though our day was.

Common Sandpiper – 2 (though AGG only saw one at any one time). Goosander – redhead.

Great Crested Grebe – 3 adults, though could not be certain of age of two of them.

Beaver Dyke Reservoir (west reservoir), Haverah Park, near Harrogate 3.58 p.m. to 4.58 p.m.

Greenshank – 3 Shelduck – 1 juvenile. Little Owl – 2 singles flushed.

Little Grebe – 4 (2 adults in breeding plumage and 2 in winter plumage).

Mistle Thrush – party of 4 or 5 on rowan berries, the only ones of the day. Kestrel – 1 male.

Kex Gill Quarry Ponds, Washburn Valley 5.15 p.m. to 5.20 p.m. Nothing!

Denton Lake and adjoining fields from back road between Askwith and Denton, Wharfedale 5.37 p.m. to 5.39 p.m. Again nothing.

River Wharfe and Woodland at back of Ilkley Cemetery 5.43 p.m. to 6.25 p.m.

Grey Wagtail – 1+ Great Tit – 3+ (the first and only ones of the day!) Goldcrest – 1+

Nuthatch – 1 Blackcap – 2+ (male and female, possibly two of each). Garden Warbler – 1

Arrived back at the Prune Park Inn, Prune Park Lane, Allerton, Bradford (our starting point) at 6.54 p.m. – deadline 7 p.m.

The team's full list consisted of 64 species.

We had a disastrous day and hardly ever put a foot right. 64 is 22 less than last year's 86 and then we missed House Sparrow and Collared Dove at that. The weather had a lot to do with it – far too much rain – but it was not the whole story as the winning team matched our last year's total of 86 and they had to endure the same weather, of course. We missed a number of normally 'easy' birds and several I thought we had pinned down from just the day before, including birds that had been present for some time. We also had no luck whatsoever and you need some to win (e.g. one team had Peregrine over Otley town – you could stand there for the rest of your life and not see another!) Mainly, however, there were just no birds at the sites we visited, unless we simply missed some that were keeping a very, very low profile – more skulking than ever at this time of the year due to the rain.



Greenshank appears on Tony's list. This one was seen in Southern Spain this spring.
photo: Brian Vickers