

## Winter 2024 no 127

### Why Not Start the Year with 5 Ways to Wellbeing and Help RVCG?

The January meeting of the Sheffield Green Spaces Forum started with a new year message promoting '5 ways to wellbeing'.

- Connect with other people
- Be active
- Learn new skills
- Give help to others
- Take notice of your surroundings.

Volunteering to help RVCG fulfils all these aims, so why not come and help us, and improve your own well-being at the same time.

In 2023 almost 250 households were members of RVCG and you donated an amazing total of £1432 in addition to your £3 membership fee. Most of you are from S10 and S6 postcodes which are close to the valley.

We have an active Task Team who carry out work in the valley, people who maintain the website and send out New Member packs, and a small Committee which runs the group. However, we have been without a Chairperson since the last AGM and we need more people to help with events and meetings as well as help with organising and supervising the work of the Task Team.

You may have skills or interests which would be useful – perhaps you have ideas of ways we could develop the group for the future. Our aim of 'Promoting and protecting the valley' is bringing us new challenges with storm damage, increased leisure use and reduced council budgets.

The Task Team are brilliant and your financial support is fantastic, but we do need more people to keep the group running. Can you help us by joining us in what we do – many hands make light work – as the saying goes.

Christine Roe

If you can help, please contact  
[rivelin.valley@gmail.com](mailto:rivelin.valley@gmail.com)

#### Contacts

|                      |                       |
|----------------------|-----------------------|
| Chairman             | VACANCY               |
| Treasurer            | Christine Roe         |
| Secretary            | Jacqueline Diaz-Nieto |
| Membership           | Graham Roe            |
| Task Team            | Graham Appleby        |
| Newsletter           | C & G Roe             |
| Group Recorder       | Joan Buckland         |
| Website              | Greg Shaw             |
| Speaker Organiser    | VACANCY               |
| Conservation Advisor | Roger Kite            |

If you wish to contact us please email  
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or visit the website  
[www.rivelinvalley.org.uk](http://www.rivelinvalley.org.uk)

### Membership Renewal

2024 Membership is now due. The simplest payment method is via our website at <http://rivelinvalley.org.uk/join.php>. (If any details have changed since last year, please tell me at [rvcg.members@btinternet.com](mailto:rvcg.members@btinternet.com) also.) If you prefer to pay by cash or cheque, a membership form is enclosed. Cost remains the same at £3 per household.

If you have any queries about your membership you can email me at [rvcg.members@btinternet.com](mailto:rvcg.members@btinternet.com).

Graham Roe, Membership Officer

### SAVE THE DATE!

#### RVCG AGM Thursday 11 April 2024

The 2024 RVCG AGM will be held at Stephen Hill Church at 7:30pm on Thursday 11 April. The Committee will report on the last year, look at some RVCG achievements, and consider plans and ideas for the future. The agenda and other papers will be circulated nearer the meeting.

**RVCG would like to thank  
Valleyside Garden Centre for  
their continued support.**

## Memories of Margaret Sanderson, who died in October 2023

After a public meeting in September 1991 at Stephen Hill Church to discuss the Council's failure to adequately fund the maintenance of the local Den Bank leisure woodland and the footpaths there, Margaret was one of the group keen to form a Working Party to see what could be done. The result was an embryonic Conservation Group determined to prepare plans to put forward local resident's ideas and to work with the various Council Departments to ensure they went into action.

Within 6 months that working party had become Rivelin Valley Conservation Group determined to look at development plans anywhere within the Rivelin catchment and to empower local communities to put forward their ideas for future maintenance. The first Annual General Meeting in February 1992 saw a ratified constitution and the formal setting up of an Executive Committee with Margaret as the Treasurer and subsequently Membership Secretary.

With a rapidly expanding membership and a busy programme of Walks, Talks and Nature Studies it became obvious that the best way to keep in touch was a regular and informative Newsletter. Margaret took this under her wing and continued as editor for over 25 years eventually handing over to Graham Appleby.

Keen to promote the links between Committee and the members Margaret, along with Mary Brazil, took the lead in the organising of Social Events and Visits such as the Annual Barbecue and coach trips. As Chairman for our first 19 years, I will always be grateful for the support and enthusiasm Margaret had for the aims of the group drawing a wide cross section of residents into planning the direction of all the valley's landowners regarding their maintenance responsibilities for our local wildlife and archaeological heritage.

Roger Kite

My first recollection of Margaret was when I was inducted onto the committee as 'Recorder' around 2000 and I was required to write a 'Recorder' article for each quarterly newsletter. I realised that creating the newsletter and sending it away to be printed was a bit expensive and inefficient and just by chance I was able to obtain an old printer from work which we began to use for newsletter production. This allowed us to make last minute corrections and produce any number of copies when we liked and so I became involved in editing the newsletter. Suggesting improvements to Margaret's articles was always a bit like walking on eggshells but we

eventually struck up a good relationship over the years to the benefit of our readers. Margaret would always start the newsletter with her own articles in the format we all recognise and then I would add any other articles including pictures and it all ran like clockwork. Sadly, Margaret's eyesight began to fail, and she struggled on with the help of her son Jeremy but eventually was forced to retire.



*A Winter Walk - Rivelin*

Margaret enjoyed sketching and photography and kept an album of local wildflowers. She was very proud of some of furniture in her house that her father had made as a skilled carpenter, and she also kept his runner beans growing by collecting the seed each autumn to plant the following year.

We published Margaret's life story in newsletter 100 Autumn 2016. Margaret was a very enthusiastic and loyal committee member actively supporting our events and visits and is sadly missed.

Graham Appleby



*Margaret Sanderson at the Duke of York awards ceremony (2004) with Roger Kite, Graham Appleby and Keith Kendall*

## Open Meeting November 2023

**Peter Machan** took us for a walk around the Loxley valley based on his book 'Loxley: Wanderings in a Curious Valley'. He had time to explore the valley during the Covid lockdown. The area is packed with history and has changed little over the centuries. He started by talking about High Bradfield and St Nicholas Church, with its Norman pillars, Viking Cross and the Talbot dogs on the ceiling bosses and the stonework outside. The area was the hunting grounds of the Talbot family. The graveyard has the Trickett family grave from the deaths in the Dale Dyke Dam disaster in 1864 and is overlooked by the Watch house, used to check for body snatchers.

He also talked about farms in the area, some of the oldest in Sheffield with Tudor Cruck Barns, built with huge A frame oak timbers. Later 19<sup>th</sup> Century farms added a forge to their properties, making metal blades, which were then sent to the water powered grinding mills in the valley. Some mills produced paper and crinoline wires. Gannister mines provided clay for firebricks used in the steel industry. Now industry has gone, and the valley and its reservoirs are a habitat for wildlife and used for recreation.

The valley top is at Derwent Edge, where stone paths have been laid to cross the boggy tops. Peter talked about the grouse moors, deserted buildings and Boot's folly, the tower at Sugworth Hall and the Mortimer Road. He showed photos of the Dale Dyke Dam memorial and the memorial at Rowell bridge, created by Andrew Vickers' Stoneface company.

His talk was packed with information and supported by many pictures.: As someone said: 'a lovely walk without leaving our seats.'

Christine Roe

## Open Meeting January 2024

**John Robinson** talked us through a year of the 'Birds of Wadsley and Loxley Common'. The Wadsley and Loxley Commoners (WALC) group was set up 30 years ago, encouraged by the founding of RVCG in Rivelin! The area is 271 acres of woodland, meadow and rare lowland heath and is managed to preserve habitats for birds and other wildlife. Records have recorded numerous species of flowers, fungi etc and 91 species of birds. Their 'muck ins' (work parties) have also discovered a possible stone circle and a WW1 trench as well as the Bilberry Pug Moth.



Photo by [A Perry](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Different birds are seen with the changing seasons, starting in January with Robin, Blackbird, Dunnock, Wren, Tits and Magpie. Special birds seen on the common are Nuthatch, Treecreeper and Great Spotted Woodpecker. Spring brings Linnet, Chiffchaff, Warblers and Blackcap. These migrant birds arrive from Africa and can now be traced by ringing/tagging on their long journeys.

After a peak of activity in May, birdsong declines in June as nests are hidden from predators, such as magpies, crows, pigeons, and jays. Birds of Prey such as Kestrel and Sparrowhawk and Buzzards are now seen regularly.

In Autumn, resident birds hide and moult. Migrants such as Swift and Swallow depart and winter visitors appear. Redwing, Fieldfare and Waxwing arrive for winter berries. Tawny Owl and Barn Owl can be seen. In November and December mixed flocks of finches get together to survive.

John spoke of the decrease in birds over the last 50 years but also of some success. The jewel in the crown is the Yellowhammer on the heathland. To see some of the birds mentioned he recommended hiding in your car in the top car park near the feeders which are kept stocked by WALC volunteers.

This was a lovely talk with plenty of photos and audio examples of different bird songs throughout.

Christine Roe

# Storm Babet Friday 20<sup>th</sup> Oct 2023

## Storm damage in Upper Rivelin Valley

Photos by Graham Appleby unless otherwise stated



Second Coppice Steps washed away



Frank Goit Blockage



Wolf Goit Blockage



Swallow Goit Blockage and Weir Damage



Serious footpath damage at Hind Wheel (West)



Serious footpath damage at Hind Wheel to Upper Cut

# RVCG Task Day Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> Oct 2023



Silt removal at Frank goit (Sue Shaw)



Silt removal at Wolf goit (Sue Shaw)



Frank goit wall restoration (Hannah Isherwood)



Flow restored to Frank goit



Flow restored to Wolf goit

## Task Days

### October 2023

Storm Babet hit Sheffield on Friday 20<sup>th</sup> Oct 2023 leaving an unprecedented trail of damage along the Rivelin Valley. The intense rain over 24 hours created a torrent of water that scoured the valley, moving tons of sand, stone, and debris and changing the course of the river in several locations. The force of the water also damaged structures, washed away footpaths, and blocked several head goits, thus starving some of the old mill dams of their water supply. A week later, the water had subsided enough for the RVCG to organise a task day on Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> October. An appeal on Twitter helped swell the ranks and around 30 volunteers duly arrived for duty. The focus was to dig out and clear the head goits of two of the dams: Frank Wheel and Wolf Wheel. The event was very successful and the water supply to both dams was restored. Other volunteers cleaned benches, cut back small trees and overhanging branches, and litter-picked. The recovered gravel was also used to restore some of the footpaths.

### November 2023

For the November task day, we decided to work our way down the valley from Rails Road repairing the footpaths. Having had a delivery of 10 tons of footpath material, the 20+ volunteers barrowed it down to the nature trail where others filled in the trenches and steps. This was very strenuous and full marks to all the volunteers for their efforts. The RVCG had purchased a compactor especially for the occasion but unfortunately, we couldn't get it started. I discovered later there was a built in mechanism to prevent the petrol engine from being started until there was sufficient oil in the sump! At 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Coppice the footpaths were restored without the use of the compactor. 3<sup>rd</sup> Coppice has had its stepping stones and bridge swept away and a temporary diversion is in place.

We have also had offers of help from Friends of Loxley Valley, Don Catchment Rivers Trust, and the River Stewardship Company. There has also been a suggestion of crowd funding for any of the required work. The Rivelin landowners, Sheffield City Council, have kindly agreed to meet with the RVCG to discuss the recovery of the nature trail. The areas of concern will be identified, and hopefully we will learn the Council plans for restoration and agree where the RVCG task team can be most effective. Thank you to our new Council Ranger for Rivelin, Ryan Atkin for his enthusiastic support and advice to the RVCG task team.



*Restoration of the steps at 2<sup>nd</sup> Coppice (Sue Shaw)*



*Father (rake) and son (compactor) at 1<sup>st</sup> Coppice (Graham Appleby)*

Graham Appleby

## Yorkshire Water Rivelin fisheries monitoring, 2020–2022

Yorkshire Water has kindly provided us with their fisheries survey records for the years 2020, 2021 and 2022 from four sites along the River Rivelin. The surveys were done using electrofishing\*, which stuns the fish so that they can be caught, counted and measured. The method favours the larger fish such as brown trout, so the numbers of smaller fish such as stone loach, lamprey (*Lampetra* sp.) and minnows, were likely to be under-estimated of their populations.

The results are shown in the graphs opposite and show good news for the Rivelin fish populations. The numbers of brown trout and bullhead caught suggested a healthy adult stock of fish and were as expected because the Rivelin provides ideal habitat. There was also a good mix of other species including stone loach, which is generally quite susceptible to poor

water quality and requires clean and well oxygenated water and riverbeds to spawn; they are also eaten by the larger trout.

A single eel was caught, in 2021, in the river near Havelock Dam. The individual was quite small (140 mm) meaning that it was quite young and had only recently migrated upstream. Unfortunately, Signal Crayfish are present in the lower reaches, but it appears from the data that they have not made their way far upstream.



Brown trout

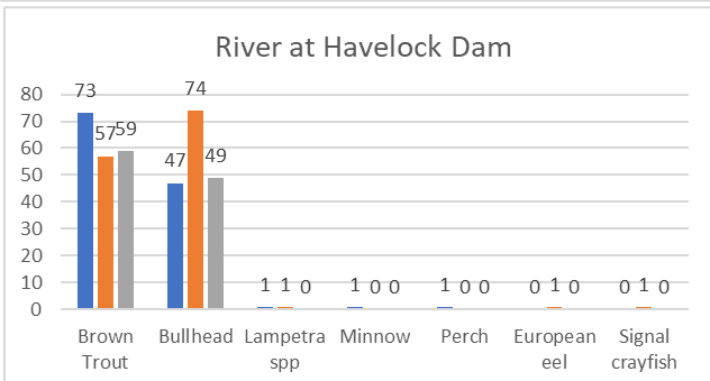
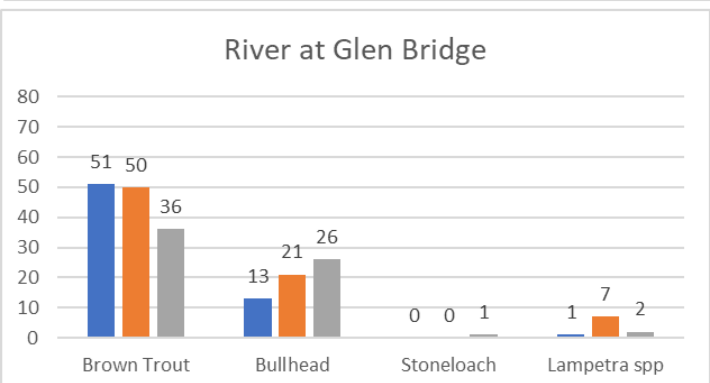
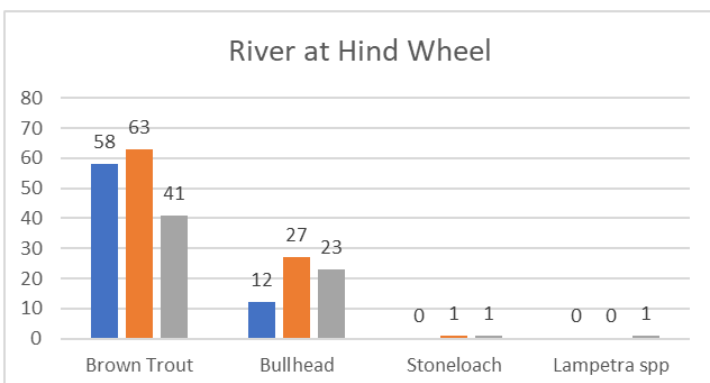
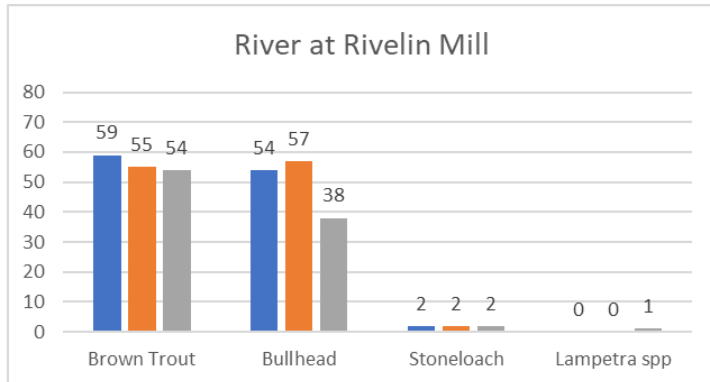
The River Rivelin is home to populations of three conservationally-important fish species. **Brown Trout**, of which there is a strong population in the Rivelin, is classified as a Priority Species in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (i.e. UK species most threatened and requiring action), while **Brook Lamprey** and **Bullhead** are included on lists of species important within the EU.



Bullhead

It is thought that the Rivelin population of Brook Lamprey is now the only known population in the South Yorkshire, having disappeared from the other rivers. This population may have survived since pre-industrial times, becoming isolated from the rest of the river due to the construction of weirs and dams.

The lamprey is a primitive, jawless invertebrate that has two life stages: the juvenile stage (ammocoetes) can last for a few years – during this stage they burrow in patches of deep silt and feed on detritus, and can be identified by their brown colour and lack of eyes and poorly developed mouth. To reach the adult phase, the ammocoetes go through a phase of metamorphosis where they develop eyes, a mouth and turn silver. For Brook Lampreys their life cycle is similar to the mayfly – the adult phase is only very short as they will try to spawn shortly after metamorphosis and then die. Their spawning season is April–June so the River Rangers might like to look out for them at that time.





*Brook lamprey*

\* **Electrofishing method:** A 50 m section of river is selected as the survey site and nets are placed at the upstream and downstream limits to stop fish moving in and out of the site during the survey. The nets are placed in the same location every year to ensure the same site is surveyed. The 50 m section is then electrofished three times, with the fish from each run being held separately. The fish are then counted and returned to the river after the final run. The purpose of the three runs is because it is rare to catch all the fish first time around.

*Sue Shaw, with thanks to Dr Tim Stone Senior Environmental Scientist at Yorkshire Water, who also provided the photographs*

## 160th Anniversary of The Great Sheffield Flood

On the night of 11 March 1864, the embankment of the Dale Dyke Dam collapsed and released 114 million cubic feet of water into the Loxley Valley. The Chief Constable's records show that 240 people were drowned, 100 buildings and 15 bridges were destroyed and around 4,000 houses were flooded. The Sheffield Flood of 1864 remains the greatest civilian disaster of Victorian Britain, yet is relatively unknown outside the city.

Look out for exhibitions, walks and talks being held in March to mark the 160th anniversary of the Flood. These include:

A walking audio trail:  
[www.gencem.org/stories/the-great-sheffield-flood/](http://www.gencem.org/stories/the-great-sheffield-flood/)

'The Great Sheffield Flood of 1864': illustrated talk by Malcolm Nunn. Monday 4th March.

'The Great Sheffield Flood Exhibition' at Sheffield General Cemetery, 16-17th March:  
[gencem.org/event/the-great-sheffield-flood-exhibition/](http://gencem.org/event/the-great-sheffield-flood-exhibition/)

Venues taking part include Sheffield General, Loxley and Wardsend Cemeteries, Wadsley and Bradfield Churches.

For details of other events see the Friends of Loxley Cemetery website:

[e-voice.org.uk/friendsofloxleycemetery/calendar/](http://e-voice.org.uk/friendsofloxleycemetery/calendar/)

## Hawes Tool Donation

The RVCG would like to thank John Hawes for his kind donation of his gardening tools. Not that he wanted to get out of gardening particularly, but he is leaving his life-long home in Crosspool for pastures new. John's mum, Mrs Hawes was a dedicated member of RVCG from the very beginning, up until her passing when her son John took over the membership.



This is only half the tools donated as he discovered a load more in his garden hut later. So, thank you John for your kind generosity and your impeccable support of the RVCG. We wish you well for the future.

Graham Appleby

## Recent Planning Decisions

*Application for a toilet (including disabled toilet) and refreshment block on Land Opposite Holme Head Wheel Dam, Rivelin Valley Road (existing dog exercise field)* has been refused as it is contrary to various parts of the National Planning Policy Framework.

*Application for redevelopment of the site including demolition of existing structures and removal of manège and erection of new stable facilities and partial land excavation to form new riding arena at Bingley Lane Pastures, Bingley Lane* has been approved, as the proposals replace existing stables and manège/riding area and they are sheltered from view in the valley.



## THE RECORDER WINTER 2023/24

Since I last wrote we have experienced Storm Babet, which hit our area on the 20<sup>th</sup> October. It was windy and very, very wet. If you have not been down the valley since you will be shocked by the damage caused. Weirs and paths have been damaged and huge stepping stones swept away. The amount and force of the water was such that new islands of boulders have formed in various places which have changed the flow of the river and will cause damage to the bank. There is an awful lot of work for the task team and the council, which will take a long time to repair. If you go down, please be very careful as some parts are unsafe.

I am extremely worried about our Dippers. They are used to fast flowing water, but this storm was exceptional with the amount of water and the speed of the current. The insects and crustaceans the Dippers feed on may have been dislodged, and they may not be able to find enough food to sustain them through the winter. Please let me know if you see a Dipper (not the human kind!). Amazingly four people were seen in the plunge pool the day after the storm – an accident waiting to happen!



*Waxwing from RSPB Website*

On a brighter note the twitchers have been out in force on Manchester Road, Crosspool, where the Waxwings have arrived. On the 7<sup>th</sup> November 10+ were seen in the Rowan trees. On the 1<sup>st</sup> December, which was a sunny, frosty day, I saw 30+ in the same trees basking in the rays of the setting sun. Since then there have been reports of over 300 birds. They really like those trees and return to them every winter. I am hoping they visit my Cotoneaster bushes which are laden with berries. The Holly tree

has also got a good supply. The folklore goes that if there are lots of berries it will be a hard winter. Plants cannot forecast the future weather as it is the conditions during the growing season that determines the berry crop. Let me know if you spot the Waxwings and the other winter visitors – Fieldfares, Redwings, and Scandinavian Blackbirds. Mavis Roadhouse has had ten Blackbirds in her Crosspool garden some of which will be winter visitors. Our local birds will have a hard time defending the berry bushes. At least they do not have to contend with 30cm of snow and -30 C, which they have had in Northern Sweden, where the waxwings come from. We woke up to 3-4cm of snow on the 3<sup>rd</sup> December and that is enough for me these days. It was the right kind of snow to make a snowman, and several appeared in the area.

I hope you left some leaves in the borders so that the tiny creatures hibernating in the soil would be protected from the cold. They may not escape the Blackbirds who seem to enjoy scattering the leaves in their search for titbits. This year the autumn leaves were spectacular especially on the Beech trees which shone in the sun like amber jewels. There were carpets of red, orange and yellow leaves under the Cherry trees in Crosspool - lovely memories of warmer days not so long ago. Now the leaves have fallen, it is a good time to spot birds' nests, which is an interesting game to play with your children/grandchildren when walking in the countryside.

The other day I put some seeded bread out for the birds. This is more nutritious than white bread. It must have got hard in the frosty conditions. Our usual Crow came into the garden and picked a piece up. It went over to the small bowl of water put there for the birds and dropped the bread into it and proceeded to eat. My neighbour, Chris Allen, watched a brave Magpie on her lawn tweaking the tail of a fox which was eating the food it was also interested in. The Magpie persisted and the fox moved away. Has anyone else seen any interesting behaviour by these intelligent birds or any other creature?

Although we have stopped monitoring the moths there are several species that fly in the colder months. One I particularly like is the aptly named December Moth *Poecilocampa populi*, which has cream markings on a blackish body which, on close up, looks like a fur coat. These moths will be safe from the hibernating bats, but the Crosspool owl might fancy a tasty morsel.

If you find a ladybird, butterfly, or other insect in the house, they are looking for a place to spend the winter months. Please do not put

them outside but find a nice, frost-free place for them to survive the winter, hopefully.

I love to see trees in winter. Their outline on a hilltop against a clear sky or the setting sun is a sight I never tire of. I hope we get some nice, crisp, sunny weather this winter and not too much rain. We have had enough of that. Many areas in the UK have been flooded, some more than once, which is disastrous for the people concerned. Farmers crops have been ruined and their livelihoods compromised. It is hard to believe that 2023 was officially the world's hottest year on record, and according to the Met Office, 2024 will be at least as hot.

Thank you for your sightings: -

Sue Shaw S10 - 10 Bullfinches in her new garden.

Jack Nuttgens S6 - On his recent walks and jogs down in the valley Jack has seen a good variety of birds including Goldcrest, Blue Tits, Coal Tits, Great Tits, Long-tailed Tits, Grey Heron, Mallard, Grey Wagtail, Moorhen, Chaffinch, Nuthatch, Treecreeper and finally a Dipper in the river near Holme Head Wheel on 9.1.24 (hurray).

Joan Buckland S10 - 13.11.23 - male Sparrowhawk sat on top of hedge for a few minutes; 17.11.23 - flying very high - a skein of 100+ honking (Pink-footed) Geese going south ; 27.11.23 - Song Thrush first spotted in garden and is still here; regular visitors - Sparrows, Dunnock, Robin, mixed small flock of Tits, male and female Chaffinch, Blackbirds, Magpies, Pigeons, Crow, Wren, Goldcrest and Starling.

Joan Buckland

16.01.24