

STANAGE FORUM STEERING GROUP

Note of a site meeting at Hollin bank themed on wildlife survey and conservation on 19 May 2015

Present

Members: John Dalton, Stella Maguire, Adam Long, Dianne Atkinson, Henry Folkard, Jane Marsden, Bill Gordon

PDNPA: Rebekah Newman, Frances Horsford, Flo Gordon

Apologies: Jacque Bevan, Jean Hodgkinson, Julian Dunk, Jean Monks, John Horscroft, Neil Porter

Receipt of a note of Habitats and Species Action Plans, a meeting with Sheffield Bird Study Group on 22 April and the SSSI designation circulated by Rebekah were noted. The Action Plan draft remains open for comment. Julian's proposals were endorsed.

Ring Ouzels

Bill gave an update on ring ouzels nesting this year. The Wall End nest had been predated out, probably by a stoat. Green Crack and Cowper Stone were believed to be alright, as were four nest sites adjacent to North Lees, one on Long Causeway and three in the Burbage Valley (where one pair, identified by distinct plumage, had returned to the same spot where they were successful last year).

Whilst a fair number of ring ouzels had passed through on migration few seemed to have stayed. Overall there was an estimated shortfall of 30% over last year, a figure coincidentally mirrored further north in North Yorkshire. It was not yet known where the 'missing' birds had re-located.

There had been a particular problem with wildlife photographers this year. Some signage has had to be erected, and several photographers have been spoken to, including one using a song recording as a lure in Burbage. Restrictions by traditional climbers were well observed (with the exception of the evening of 21 May), but further action might be needed to mitigate exploration of new problems by boulderers.

Further bird surveys at North Lees and at Burbage were planned.

It was suggested ring ouzels should be shown as a distinct group within the SSSI designation, rather than being included a species within the moorland assemblage.

There was a need to document every known nest site within the Burbage / North Lees area and the years in which those sites had been used. There was a further need to describe the methodologies used now and previously so it could be determined where comparisons were of like with like.

With monitoring there was no substitute for field work and for getting to know where the same bird was using different areas for singing and for nesting. This has implications for the role of the Estate warden now and into the future. The merits (or otherwise) of using Ring Ouzel as a flagship species for the property were also discussed given its uncertain future and the requirement for a significant year on year investment in order to carry out the monitoring and management works.

Woodland Birds: Ringing and Monitoring

Flo reported that last year seemed to be a good year for nest boxes, with more than half the 150 nest boxes occupied. The main target species is Pied Flycatcher, but the boxes were also occupied by Redstart, Nuthatch, Great Tits and Blue Tits. A total of 263 chicks were ringed from 41 boxes, of which there were 119 Pied Flycatcher chicks ringed from 20 boxes. The need for support for the ringing/monitoring was discussed and Rebekah agreed to talk to Pete Bush (Area ranger) who has links with several Bird Study Groups and to the Hope Valley Bird Study Group.

Merlin

The apparent absence of merlin last year and this was noted- not only for Stanage but for the whole of the eastern moors there is an apparent decline.

Passage Birds

It was questioned whether the Redmires station adequately captured data on passage migrants on North Lees or whether we should be aspiring to carry out survey work specifically for Stanage-North Lees particularly in relation to species such as Dotterel.

Hay Meadows

There was some discussion about the importance of the hay meadows, and how critical the correct management of them was if they were not to gradually deteriorate. Small bales were not in themselves necessary: what mattered was that cut herbage was properly tossed to release seed.

Invertebrates

Survey and/or events with regard to butterflies and moths were recognised as actions that volunteers could get involved in. Flo is to contact a moth expert who is interested in setting up a moth trap above the Warren.

Additional discussion points

- A need to review recording of both vascular and non vascular plants was noted with a lichen survey considered a priority in order to ensure there is no conflict with bouldering activity. Steve Price (Sorby NHS) recognises some of the protected boulders under the edge as being particularly valuable.
- There was also a discussion on the ecology of Toothill Moor.
- Red deer had been seen in the North Lees area.
- Grey squirrels were becoming ever more of a problem.
- One or more donation boxes are needed at Hollin Bank (car park + toilet area) to encourage donations for bird seed.

The Vision

The vision for North Lees was of overarching conservation objectives embracing an understanding of how best to accommodate recreation and people pressures whilst being delivered by on site management and agreed farming practice. The three elements, farming, recreation and conservation should be seen as integral and complementary features of a common vision, and not pursued individually as ends in themselves.