

## Re: philm63

by philm63, 29-Jan-14 08:07 PM GMT

Hello again to all, it seems ages since my last post back in August. A lot has happened since then and now but I feel things are back on track, especially considering the arrival of our first great-grandson 3 weeks ago. An utter joy as we can hand him back at the end of the day, all the good bits but still a good night's sleep as well. I was active in September but had computer issues meaning I could not post due to file size, then it was quieter in the last 3 months of 2013 as my attention was primarily on some family matters. Hoping to see a full year in 2014, weather permitting.

Rather than write much prose I have decided to do a month at a time showing my favourite or most interesting pics with a more detailed caption to explain what was going on

Since last post

In the days leading up to and directly after the surgery I was mainly observing around the garden area, but with the weather being excellent I could sit out for long periods. I had missed the period for some of my annuals such as Green Hairstreak, and also for my trips for some annual birds in the breeding season that I do not get locally. Whilst other individuals posts were showing good numbers at various places we do not seem to have had anything exceptional here that way, whites seemed very common at times with some days 30 or 40 sightings in the garden but the numbers may not have been that high. As some recognizable individuals turned up repeatedly throughout a day it was nice to have something around nearly all the time but I still think we did not have very high numbers; however much better than some previous years. In addition to the butterflies we had an excellent period for birds with Great Spotted Woodpecker, Bullfinch, Nuthatch and lots of juvenile commoner species back and forth between the gardens. Red Kite were seen on a good number of days from the back garden, it showed what I would normally miss being at work or in the house. In addition to my established buddleia I bought a dwarf one and put that on the paved area near the room window, it attracted more butterflies than the other, both seemed to bloom for a good period this year



A pair of Bullfinches were regulars at the garden feeders in my garden and next door, they continued to visit well into the autumn, then the sightings of Bullfinches dropped off till January. I managed to shoot quite a few shots of these and usually from around 8 feet or so. They would ignore the fact I was sitting nearby as long as I moved slowly and carefully



I just love Robins, could photograph them all the time. This was one of the garden residents that sometimes approached to within a foot or so as I sat out, there were a few juveniles about as later shots will show. A bird that looks totally different depending on the angle seen and the weather. Back views do no justice to the vivid colours seen head on, and summer birds more sleek than the almost circular puffed-up appearance of the winter visitors



Another firm favourite, the Blue Tit. We had both adults and juveniles around. Out front I have another feeding station of just fat-filled coconuts but it attracts some really nice birds, and from the porch window it is only about 8 - 10 feet so almost acts as a hide. The only down-side is the positioning of branches that they like to perch on, I am unwilling to remove them just to make the photos less cluttered. This one obligingly sat on top of the coconut. Some nice feather detail showing in this picture



Well not a rarity but I usually take shots of the local Rabbits when they pose well enough. I had gone out on the 17th to do my local patch and as you enter Walsh Lane a sloping field over a high wall on the left usually holds Rabbits, sometimes in double figures and handy at one spot for photographing, as this one shows. I was well pleased with how this picture came out, the overall colours seem complimentary



A cock Pheasant seems to think that hunkering down means I can no longer see him. A few seem to take this defensive posture instead of racing off across the fields. Taken also on the 17th and about 100 yards further on from the Rabbit, but the grass here has weathered better. There are a few of this distinctive colour pattern of Pheasant here and some are even more flamboyant, Ring-necks however do seem to be the commonest variety



Further on the walk I passed the cattle wallow on Heights Lane - a seep deeply messed up by cattle that had become a largish wet and muddy area. I had earlier posted a shot of a juvenile Lapwing here, but these have moved on and Pied Wagtails were much more common for a few weeks. Visits post autumn has seen very little here so I enjoyed it while it lasted. This is a juvenile bird



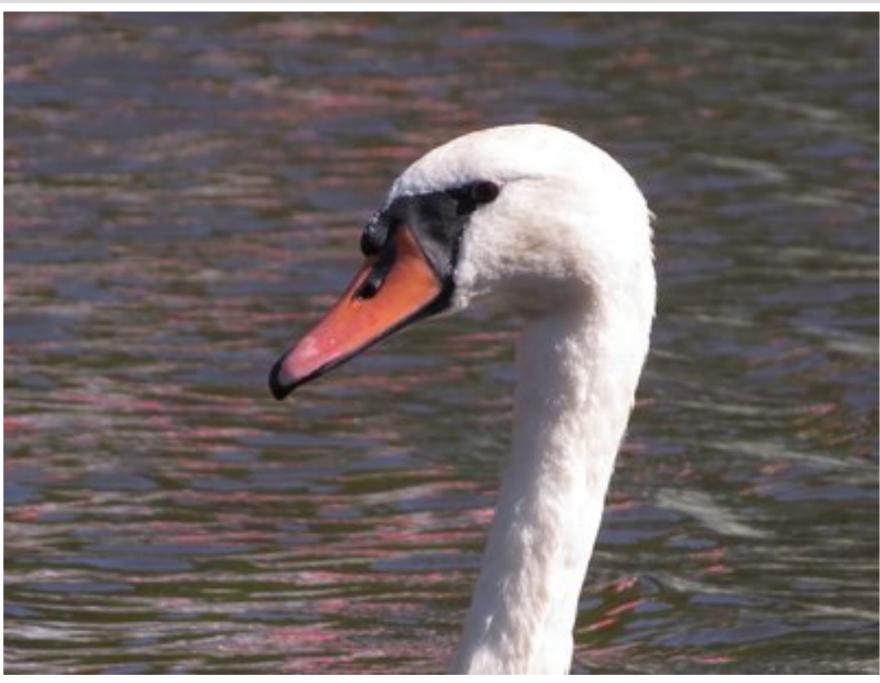
The following day the early afternoon sunshine brought a few butterflies into the garden on the buddleias including this Small White, numbers of these and their larger cousin were about equal I would say during the late summer and early autumn period. The occasional Green-veined white would also show up. I still feel whites are amongst the hardest butterflies to get decent shots off, much more skittish than nymphalids even when having a good feed



And talking of nymphalids, a few minutes later this Peacock showed up and continued to show on and off for the rest of the day, never seeming to move that far away from the gardens here. Peacocks are really a delight and common enough to brighten up any day. This one is showing the classic "owl" pose



Later the same day I popped down into the valley to the canal and on to the Bog. Micklethwaite Bridge usually has Black-headed Gulls and Jackdaws as well as the well-fed feral geese and Mallards. This Jackdaw was near the canal where the wildfowl had started moulting, hence all the feathers. A bird seen locally in some good numbers at times and that nest near my home in chimney stacks most years



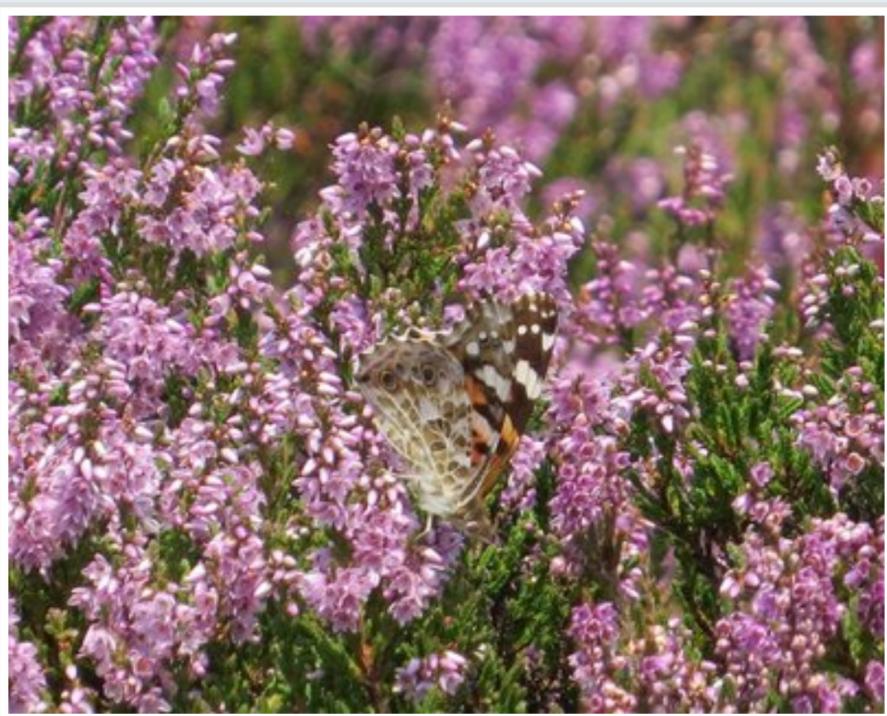
Here at Micklethwaite Bridge or nearby the wildfowl are joined at times by Mute Swans. Took the opportunity to try and get a head-only shot of a bird swimming on the canal. Later in the year the juveniles will also be around this area as well looking for easy pickings from the numerous people catering to the wildfowl's insatiable appetite for the humble loaf



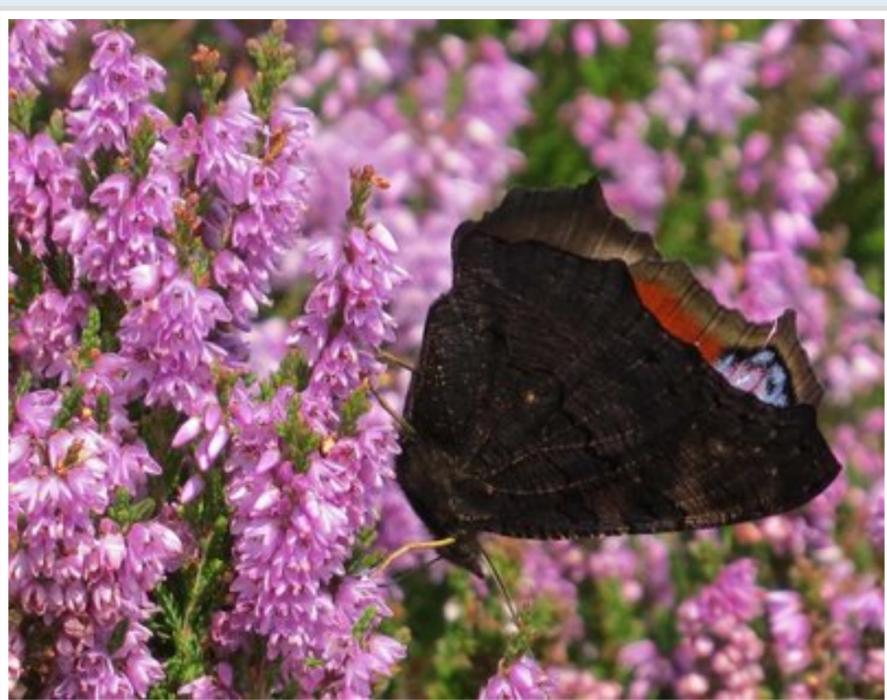
Popping down into the Bog area I came across these Small Whites mating. I was really struck by the size difference between these two individuals; one appears only half the size of the other. The Bog area was pretty quiet and I found no remaining skippers there at all



23rd August. The garden is now being visited by a nice-sized flock of mixed-age Goldfinches. Here is a juvenile on the feeders, not yet showing the glorious colours of the adults but still recognizable as a Goldfinch, especially around the wings and tail areas. Greenfinches, Bullfinches and Chaffinches are also showing well but Siskins have moved on for the moment, re-appearing just before Christmas



25th August. I went up to Whetstone Gate on the moors, parked up and walked back down to the small quarry. Here the sides were resplendent in flowering heather. I was amazed – miles from anywhere and here were a few Painted Lady. I had seen none previously this year and saw none after, I wondered later how many years they may appear up here but not lower down the valley. These were my first since 2009 so I enjoyed them whilst I could, the steep sides of the quarry limited photo opportunities and I was still taking care at that stage not to aggravate the recent surgery so no silly climbing to get better shots



If the Painted Lady were not enough the site also had a few Peacocks, Small Tortoiseshells and Small Coppers. A Peacock undersides here as it fed on the heather. Though not brilliant a picture I really enjoy looking back at, nice pose and some lovely colours



And if the above were not enough for the day I found my first Small Heath ever here with about 3 individuals seen. Regrettably all the shots are obscured in some way by the rough grasses they frequented on the quarry floor. Now I have a location will be returning next year to see if I can improve on the images, this is the same area where I usually come for Green Hairstreak a bit higher on the moors. It was a day to savour with also good sightings and shots of Red Grouse and Wheatear



A second shot of a Peacock taken at the site later on, but with a upperwing view. Never enough pictures of Peacocks in my opinion



26th August. Great Spotted Woodpeckers continue to frequent the garden, with two seen together one day. Most are usually seen out front from the kitchen window, although they will visit the back garden. I occasionally manage to get a few shots without scaring it off as here, a pleasing shot of what is a most unusual and almost exotic visitor to the garden, I now have quite a collection of photos taken in the garden area of this bird, but most are like this one with the odd branch obscuring part the shot, but as mentioned earlier the birds love these as perches, and it has led to shots of Jay, Jackdaw and Magpies at the coconuts



Later that day I walked along the River Aire from Dowley Gap to Cottingley Bridge, very few butterfly species seen but some good number of whites around. The occasional Speckled Wood brightened up the walk, like this one on a riverside bush



Further on I found two Small Coppers around a field fringe; and got some odd looks, as I tried to find a good angle to take a shot, from locals walking their dogs or playing on the grassy areas. Not many seen this year due to limited time out and about so enjoyed these



As the playing fields gave way to a narrower path and vegetation I turned up a few more Speckled Woods. This one looks quite fresh despite the damage to the hind-wing. A butterfly I usually see in good numbers most years except this one. By the time I was fully mobile they all seemed to have gone apart from the odd one



31st August. Walked over the fields and then down to Eldwick Reservoir on what became a day to remember. This Small Tortoiseshell was in the fields enjoying the sun. Low down on the grasses it was elusive to photograph and this was the best of the few taken, not as many this year as last when this field held 20+ one sunny afternoon. It appears to be holding its own locally with a widespread distribution in a variety of habitats



The first of the day's highlights was this Buzzard by Eldwick Reservoir. It was on the wall around the field opposite and this was taken from about 100m away, I love the shot, most are just shapes as they soar overhead so was glad of the chance to take this in a more presentable pose. It stayed around for twenty minutes and I got one or two more good images before it moved into a tree area



Not 15 minutes later a call from some bushes alerted me to this female Redstart which then conveniently posed on the wall nearby. It is not a Redstart area although they breed not too far away, so this must have been a passage bird moving south. The first (and possibly last) for my local patch. Two cracking birds with good shots taken in 15 minutes, I probably floated home in a daze



But not before another Rabbit shot. This one looks a more mature individual than that posted earlier in the month, but in the same field. The overall appearance seems to shout it is an older animal unless I am just imagining it



We nearly started this retro with a Robin so I decided to finish with one. Taken on the lawn in the back garden as I sat with a cup of coffee reflecting on my Buzzard and Redstart, I say lawn there is not much grass showing here. An adult bird looking for its evening meal

Hope that was of interest and so in the next post we move into September and go further afield. By far the busiest month to recap on, so I may have to split it we will see how it goes when I have got the photos reduced to posting size.

### Re: philm63

by Nick Broome, 29-Jan-14 08:56 PM GMT

Nice to see you back, Phil. I hope everything is good with you and, that your leg is finally allowing you to get out and about. Congratulations on becoming a Great-grandfather. 😊

Lovely photos, especially the Buzzard. 😊

All the best, Nick.

### Re: philm63

by philm63, 30-Jan-14 02:54 PM GMT

Nick

Thanks, it is good to be back again. Now looking forward to the next few Christmases it has been a good few years since we had the magic of infants around at Xmas-time. Love seeing the sheer joy and awe on their faces at this time; and with it being a boy new territory for us as we have to date only been "blessed" with girls

Phil

### Re: philm63

by Wurzel, 30-Jan-14 11:20 PM GMT

Good to see you're back Phil! A great selection of shots, highlights for me being the buzzard, the Painted Lady and the juvenile Pied Wagtail – I really like the composition of that shot 😊 I'd love to see a Red Grouse 🐓, in fact any grouse as they make a glaring gap in my birding life list 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: philm63

by philm63, 31-Jan-14 09:14 AM GMT

Thanks Wurzel.

I notice Larkhill pop up in your posts, I remember spending a few good weeks there over the years when i was in the Royal Artillery. Have not been down that way though since the late 80s.

i have seen Red Grouse within a few miles of the house, and the spot I go to is only about 3 – 4 miles as the crow flies. But seriously though, If you ever fancy seeing what Yorkshire has to offer around here I would be very glad to act as a guide.

Anyway just for you!!!



### Re: philm63

by Wurzel, 01-Feb-14 10:01 PM GMT

That's belter of a shot 📷📷 I'd love to get Red Grouse onto my life list so if I can ever persuade my wife to come on a holiday to the Yorkshire moors then I'd gladly take you up on your offer, likewise if you should find yourself down this neck of the woods 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: philm63

by philm63, 03-Feb-14 12:55 PM GMT

Wurzel – the offer is appreciated

And so into September, the weather still excellent and I was becoming more active it proved to be a good month. Some visits to more distant spots and good times locally and in the garden

The first few days of the month were spent in Oxford, I took the wife down for a few days as we had always wanted to go and we enjoyed the visit. I had expected in some places to see bountiful butterflies and other things but it was not the case. Wildlife-wise I was disappointed but we did enjoy the city. That was followed by visits to Knotford Nook, Fairburn Ings and Blacktoft Sands as the month progressed; in addition to my local trips. Anyway onto the pictures:



2nd September. We visited the Oxford Botanical Gardens where I saw a few whites and nymphalids, but the area was good for dragonflies with a few

seen. These mating Ruddy Darters posed nicely at the edge of a pool in the grounds so got a few shots. In addition the same pool held about 6 or more dragonflies of a few species and more were seen towards the river



Also taken in Oxford was this obliging Jackdaw as we walked down towards the river. Shows a lot more pale grey on the head than the one posted for August, I have seen some on the East Coast that were very pale almost eastern race in colouration



5th September. Back home and the autumn passage starts to show as I saw a few juvenile warblers visiting the garden. This Willow Warbler was very obliging as it posed in the back garden. I have had around 4 species of warbler visit the garden now which is very pleasing; no doubt I miss many because I am not home or not looking





The same day I spent a few hours down at Knotford Nook in the Wharfe valley, a very enjoyable trip. This Migrant Hawker was my first of this species and was very confiding as it perched on riverside vegetation, the site held good numbers and variety of dragonflies but very few damselflies remained. The crop shows well how the wings attach to the thorax, and the colours and markings around this area help determine the type of Hawker on show



Another dragonfly photographed that day was this Ruddy Darter of which species a few were seen during my visit. Very similar to Common Darter, the leg colour and as can be seen here “nipped-in abdomen” are indicators for Ruddy. I find them much more confiding than their larger hawker cousins



The trees along the river-line are usually good for Speckled Wood and this is one of the few seen that day so I was not disappointed, there were not many butterflies showing and a few I expected were not seen at all



Another Ruddy Darter in what I think is a very pleasing shot, I may have had macro on for this one as the background has faded out so does not distract from the beautiful dragonfly



This Common Darter was shot at the same place as the previous picture; a little, almost hidden, pool that had 30+ dragonflies buzzing about. I sat around for 25 minutes and still missed a few I would have liked to have got on a picture. I was lying on my belly to take this; the dragonfly is only about 8" off the ground. Although not very obvious from this angle the abdomen is much more even throughout its length



Farther up the river was another Speckled Wood with a darker, richer background. These when fresh are beautiful butterflies and usually quite content to let you snap away



Another Common Darter that allowed me to concentrate on the thorax area, this one landed on the tarmac close to the car as I prepared to set off home. Like some butterflies they can appear very hairy when viewed in close up



There was still plenty of light when I had got home so went out back for a while and sat waiting to see what turned up. This Blue Tit sat still long enough and close enough for a very pleasing study shot to be taken, not very often they come out like this



To be followed a few minutes later by this shot of both a Blue and Great tit sharing a feeder. It is the same Blue Tit I think. The colours and detail came out as I would have wanted



A juvenile male Blackbird starting to moult into his black plumage landed close by and was added to the pot for the day. Was eventually a good year for Blackbirds considering the early broods were poor due to the weather, and we had a good few juveniles pottering about late summer into early autumn



7th September. Another juvenile changing into adult plumage was this Robin, also seen in the garden.



The next day I was back around the local patch and of course took the opportunity to shoot the posing Rabbits on Walsh Lane



Opposite the rabbit field is the Little Owl field as I call it, and I was not let down. This one was on a different, more distant wall than is usual but still in adequate shooting distance. Usually they are staring at you all the time so this shot made a nice change. I have only had a maximum of 2 at this spot in 2013, but other sites nearby have become more reliable or more used, not sure which



On Heights Lane is a field that frequently holds horses and occasionally a gymkhana. That day it had a single Black-headed Gull close to a single Common Gull. I shot both and the similar poses allow easy comparison of the differences between the two when on the ground. Here I see mostly Black-headed but when I used to live on the Leeds side of Bradford Common were more usual locally



Near to home I managed to find a Nuthatch in a copse looking for food, the lighting was not good due to a heavy tree canopy but it did appear a few times in a more lit zone and I took the chances when they came. A frequent visitor to my garden but often difficult to photograph as it usually flies in, snatches something and flies elsewhere to consume it

Next post will be the trip to Fairburn Ings where I had the chance to take my first pictures ever of two butterflies I only ever see very occasionally.

### Re: philm63

by Wurzel, 03-Feb-14 10:57 PM GMT

More great shots Phil, especially the Mew Gull 🇬🇧 😊, I prefer that name as they are by no means Common 😞 so I don't like calling them such. Looking forward to the next post...I'm stuck guessing what species you photographed for the first time 😊  
Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: philm63

by philm63, 04-Feb-14 02:50 PM GMT

These were suprisingly the first for me photo wise silly as that sounds.

September Part 2

This post mainly covers a trip to Fairburn Ings RSPB Reserve near Castleford and the days around that period. I normally visit the reserve twice a year; once in the winter months for the wildfowl and again usually late July or August for butterflies, dragonflies and the start of migration. There will still be Sedge and Reed Warbler there with some terns and waders passing through. I intend to start adding a May visit in future as well. Regrettably it was mid-September when I went in 2013 and some things I would have liked had already moved on, but it was still a good day



The western end of the reserve has a lovely path (Lin Dyke) shadowing a stream and leading to a hide and other walks and that area has a number of pools or flashes. These all held good numbers of wildfowl with a few grebes and gulls. Most of the male ducks were still in eclipse plumage. Gadwall, like the one above, seems to do well here and can be expected on any visit



And at the right time of year Teal can be present in good numbers as well, there were quite a few around the edges when I visited like the one above. Usually easy enough to pick out at any time due to the smaller size of this species



A Black-tailed Godwit that showed up at Spoonbill Flash whilst I was in the hide, I have a series of shots of this as it approached along the water edge then came to about 50m away. It was not a great day for waders but a few species were about but only in small numbers



Within 10 minutes a small flock of Dunlin dropped in with a Ringed Plover for company, this is the same area of mud as showing on the last picture and it was the closest they approached. The other shots showing all 6 and including the plover were all taken at longer range



After about 30 minutes in the hide I set off back up Lin Dyke to the car. The sun was now starting to have an effect and things were warmer and brighter, hence the trip back started turning up occasional butterflies. This path is very good for Speckled Woods and it wasn't long before I turned up the first one, and still in reasonable condition



That was followed soon after by my first Green-veined White of the day. No large numbers seen of anything today but an interesting spread of species as later events would show



I then drove down to the Reserve centre which has a car park, hide, shop, dipping ponds and nice walks. At one of the feeding stations I eventually got an acceptable shot of a Willow Tit that kept popping in to snatch sunflower seeds. I have an aim to eventually get a decent shot of this species here, I see it most visits but it is very active and only briefly perches



Another bird that is reliable here is Tree Sparrow, and a few spots will have these birds on show especially the feeder areas



From the feeders I passed along the path at the back which is near a drainage channel and also passes the dipping ponds. Along here I usually see Speckled Wood in season and today was no exception, at least a half dozen in a few hundred yards



As I reached the fence near the dipping pond that usually holds basking darters, I was amazed to see this male Brimstone in good condition. I have seen this species here before but usually in spring and I have never had a photo opportunity so took a few shots. They do occur in the Bradford area but I have yet to see one. As it is not something I see very frequently I spent a bit of time here just enjoying the sheer splendour of it



From the fence it crossed the path onto vegetation at the drainage ditch side to feed. The sun was now behind the Brimstone and made it even more lovely turning its wings to look almost waxy in texture. It is times like this that compensate for all the days trudging round in bad weather hoping to see something interesting



Well, I was dead pleased with myself as I walked along and then up the hill from the centre towards the river walk. I normally head east at the top but I passed a bit further to the gate to see what was beyond and found another path I was unaware of heading back west above the River Calder. I did not intend to go that way but could see a few nice patches of trefoil so decided to cover 50m or so and I was not disappointed. There was a male Common Blue, another species I have seen very infrequently and never had a chance to photograph. This male was not in good condition, with bits of wing missing, faded colouration and one antennae missing, but I was not complaining. I doubt if I got a perfect shot in the 10 minutes I watched it but I really did enjoy it. I am surprised that I have yet to find a spot closer to home where this butterfly can be seen. I know they occur at the Shipley Station Butterfly Reserve about 5 - 6 miles away from me, but I have yet to find them on a more local site



So I was doubly pleased to briefly find a second male in better condition not that far away. The area also held a single Meadow Brown and Green-veined Whites, plus some passing nymphalids. I have already started plotting the visit in 2014 to see the blues at the best time and add females to my tally, and I now only have one more species seen but not yet photographed - Purple Hairstreak



Returning back past the dipping pond the Brimstone was still there feeding so snatched a few more shots



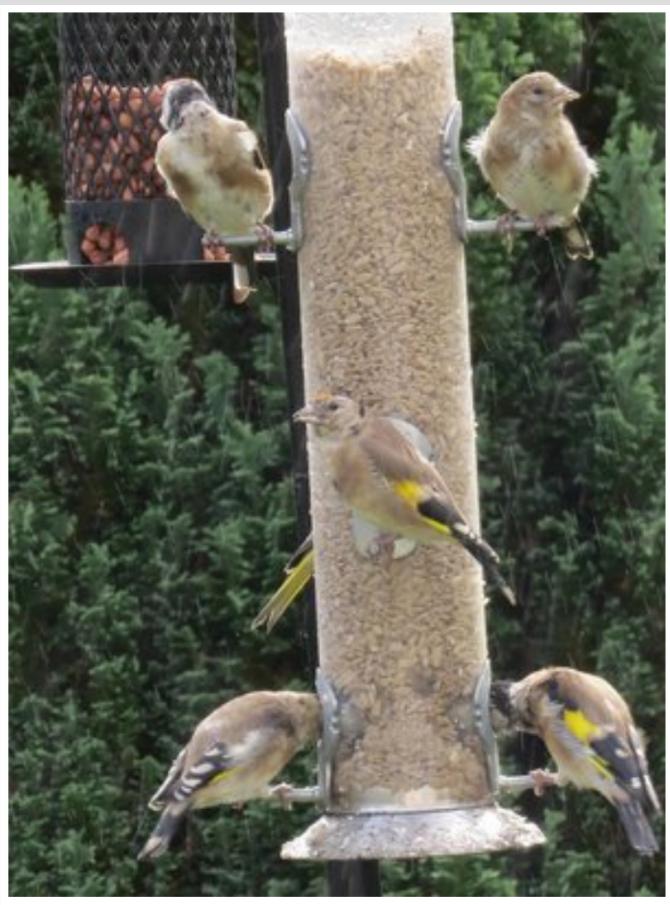
A juvenile Bullfinch clearing up around the feeders and quite happy to approach within a few feet



The next day, 15th September, I was sat out and my local friendly juvenile Robin jumped for joy as he saw me, a lot redder on the breast than the last picture posted of him



That day I believe saw the first real rain and that would become a feature as we progressed towards year end. However still time for a few butterflies to put in an appearance as did this Red admiral



Within 20 minutes I was ready to call it a day as the rain increased, it did not deter the Goldfinches fattening up on the feeders. A number of the shots taken just then show the tracks of the rain drops to various degrees and make for interesting shots

A downturn in weather conditions would spoil the rest of the year but I did manage to get across to Blacktoft Sands PSPB Reserve before the end of the month and will cover that in the next post

## Re: philm63

by philm63, 07-Feb-14 10:18 AM GMT

September Part 3

Sitting here on a cold, grey and damp February day the glorious summer of 2013 seems a distant memory, but just going back over the pictures and re-living the memories makes me so glad I got into wildlife in the first place. We are approaching the end of September in my re-cap and the weather would be changing into the awful end of the year that we had. In addition some personal matters would soon crop up that would occupy me for the rest of the year, however before all that I had one more major outing, this time to Blacktoft Sands. Usually considered up here as a Yorkshire spot it actually lies in north Lincolnshire I believe. So set out early and drove along the M62 to Goole, then along the south bank of the Ouse towards Swinefleet and eventually Blacktoft. It sits where the Trent flows into the Ouse and becomes the Humber. A lovely reserve managed by the RSPB and boasting breeding Bearded Tit, Marsh Harrier and Avocet; plus at the right time of year lots of waders. It also has a good local population of dragonflies and butterflies. I was visiting later in the year than I normally would so missed some of the species I normally go for but had a good day none the less



Ruddy Shelduck, these were a life species for me and were showing in the morning and afternoon so bagged them soon after my arrival. There are six hides overlooking different pools or habitats at Blacktoft and it is strange one can be devoid of anything but the next 50m on is crawling with things to see, this particular hide was quiet but these two beauties made the stop worthwhile



My next stop was Townend Hide and this had waders galore, here are part of a decent mixed flock of Dunlin and Ringed Plovers. This hide also saw Marsh harrier whilst I was there but won't shame myself with my poor shots of flying harriers



Travelling between hides I would spot an occasional butterfly like this Speckled Wood, but not in the numbers I usually see earlier in the year



Xerox hide is also a good wader spot. In the picture are two Black-tailed Godwit, two Lapwing, four Redshank, four Teal and a very pale Ruff



Although most shots were taken at 40+m distance, the occasional bird would land closer to the hide such as this Lapwing did, allowing a better picture. I really do like this shot, the kind I would like them all to be as good as



And a Redshank that approached a bit closer but off to one side



Some nice groups could be got such as this with Black-tailed Godwit, Ruff and Lapwing



Or this with Lapwing, Black-tailed Godwit, Snipe and Green Sandpiper



The farthest hide is a walk of about one and a half kilometres with farmland on one side and screening bushes on the other, a bank with thistles and other vegetation held occasional butterflies such as this Small White



Or a Small Tortoiseshell



Arriving home I was later presented with a nice shot of a Dunnock that came quite close in the garden



The following day, 22nd September, in the garden I was to be honoured with a Comma and Red Admiral that seem to hang around for quite a while on the buddleias. I do get the very occasional Comma in the garden but this was by far the longest-staying one and allowed me to get some reasonable shots



The two enjoying the same bloom



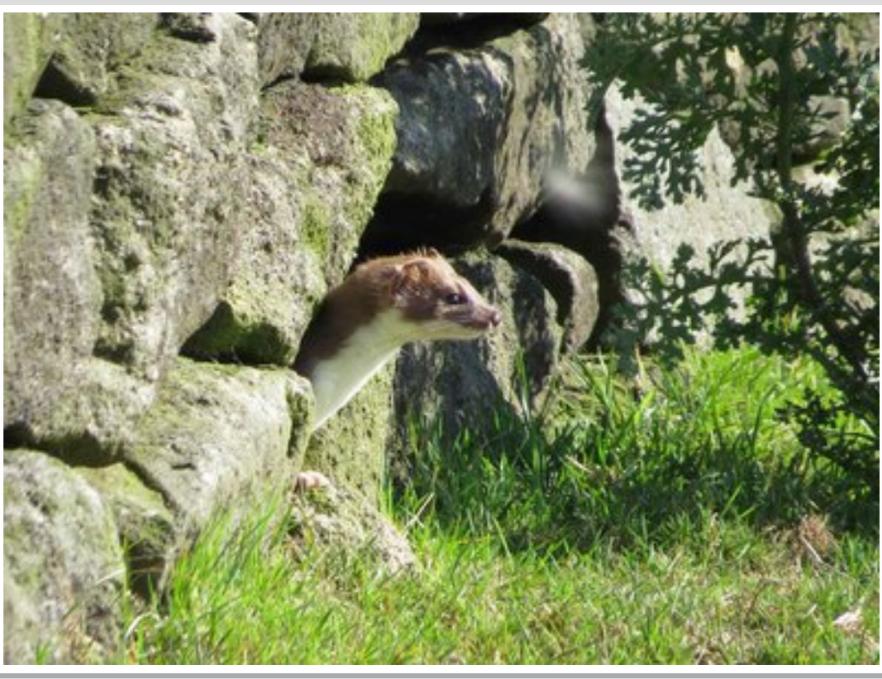
An interesting angle on the Comma, with the butterflies on the dwarf bush I could get some better angles than on the larger, almost tree-ish one I have



The Comma even obliged by landing on the wall of the house presenting even more views



The Red Admiral was quite faded but still nice to see



Some moments are very precious and this was one. Later that same day I went round the local circuit with Chris, my wife; and I spotted this little beauty in the Little Owl field on Walsh Lane. I snapped a shot as soon as I got the camera out and managed to get just the one shot before it was off and running, luckily it was in focus and nicely posed, considering it was 40+m away. I am leaning towards this being a Stoat and not a Weasel as a second bad shot as it ran seems to show a black tip to the tail. Pure luck that we passed just at that moment and I was looking that way to see if any Little Owls were on the far wall



A different look at a common bird, a Woodpigeon; also on the same day, and still some blue sky



28th September. Another Rabbit poses for a shot on Walsh Lane. I have only ever seen one Hare locally, but as the fields are only viewable from the roads there are lots of areas I never see over the walls etc



On the same walk I found a small covey of Grey Partridges in long grass, I had almost passed before movement caught my eye. They stayed whilst I dragged the camera out and this one showed enough to make a shot worthwhile. Now becoming more frequent locally, however the local birds are about equal number of Greys and Red-legs and can be seen together at times



29th September. The month draws to a close and the occasional butterfly still visiting the buddleia, which are still holding bloom; especially the dwarf one. A very nice Peacock to brighten up any ones day



Later in the afternoon I decided to try Dowley Gap. On the island below the viaduct the low water levels meant I could track along the shingle which is usually under water, so I got this Grey Wagtail in a spot I usually cannot see. A second bird was with it and they moved along in front of me as I walked along the shingle bar



Staying on wagtails; at the sewage works the building roof opposite had a dozen or so Pied Wagtails (adults and juveniles) basking in the sun and snatching flies. Reasonable distance, good light, little movement and a wall to lean against gave me a series of a dozen shots or more I was really pleased with, it was hard to pick a favourite. I have some more shots of Pied Wagtails taken later on at the very same spot, but without the clear blue skies and they are not as striking

That ends September and also practically the good weather. All the remaining months are much briefer as I was pre-occupied with other issues

### Re: philm63

by Paul Wetton, 07-Feb-14 04:28 PM GMT

Absolutely brilliant shot of the Stoat Phil especially considering the distance. Black tail tip definitely a Stoat.

Enjoying all your photos.

Paul

### Re: philm63

by philm63, 07-Feb-14 07:03 PM GMT

Paul

Thank you for the kind comments. I have seen Stoat / Weasel in the area a few times but normally it is a fleeting glimpse usually near a wall into which it vanishes seemingly never to re-appear. It really was pure luck with this one

Phil

### Re: philm63

by Nick Broome, 08-Feb-14 01:28 PM GMT

A great set of photos in your last couple of posts, Phil. I especially like the Stoat and the head shot of the Woodpigeon. Great. 😊

All the best, Nick.

### Re: philm63

by philm63, 10-Feb-14 10:55 AM GMT

Cheers Nick

October 2013

I still managed to get out occasionally during the last three months of 2013, and take some shots around the garden, but it would be January before things started to turn around. During the middle of October I also was looking after a young lady from France visiting the company I work for. I took her to a few places locally from a cultural, language interest perspective and one of those was Harewood House. On the edge of Leeds it is a visitable stately home with good grounds and a bird sanctuary. It is also the site of the re-introduction of Red Kites in West Yorkshire and at times a score or more can be visible at once. From here they have spread up and down the Wharfe valley. I had not been for a few years and it did have a tropical house with some spectacular butterflies, regrettably that was no longer there. There is a Tropical Butterfly World at Roundhay Park in Leeds and I am told it is quite good. May pop along before the end of winter and have a look



5th October. On Walsh Lane I see the occasional Meadow Pipits but most are seen a bit farther out into the rougher ground. These were at the edge of the Little Owl field and this particular one stopped on the wall in what was a quite strong breeze and posed for long enough to get a few pictures



In the area of Eldwick Reservoir I saw this Common Darter on the path, a spot not too long ago where I saw the Buzzard and Redstart



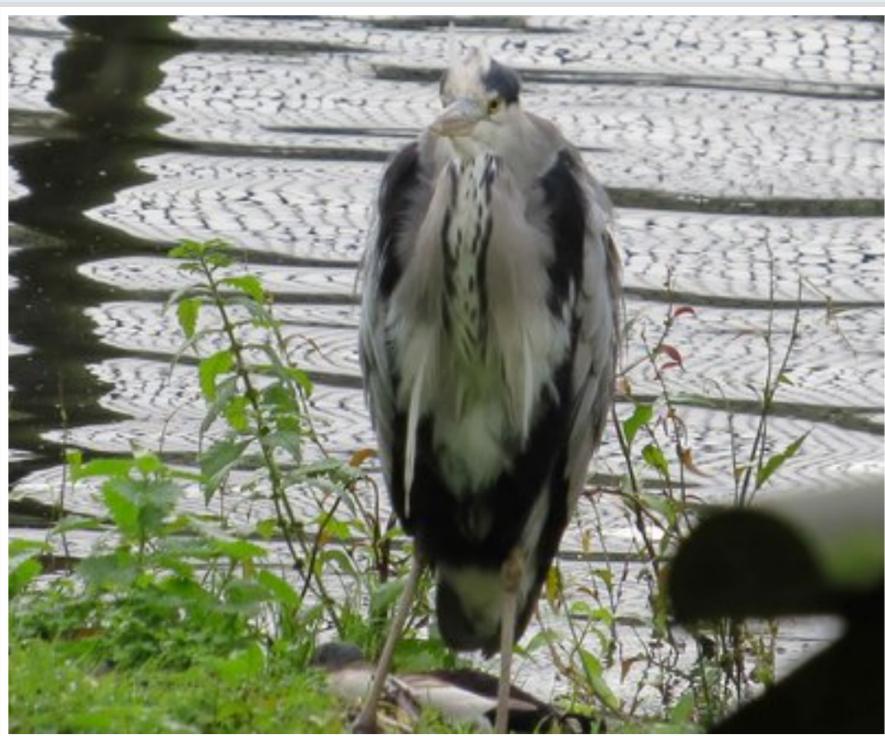
Soon after I was approached by this Hedgehog, I stood still and let it pass taking a few shots as it went by. It appeared to be a juvenile based on size, I see more during the day than I would have expected locally. Our gardens play host to 3 - 4 some evenings. What I do not see locally here are Foxes, just 1 in 5 years. Where I used to live they would walk through the garden regular, I have had to wait to park my car as I let a Fox move off my drive



23rd October. The bird sanctuary at Harewood has a penguin pool and also lies next to the lake. They breed rare species and these are in cages or compounds, I got some good shots of species I have yet to identify (forgot to take notes at the time). The lake and food supplied to the compound birds attracted a good number of gulls and I took the chance to try a portrait close-up shot of an adult Black-headed Gull in winter-plumage plus lots of other views



Black-headed Gulls feeding with two Egyptian Geese in a lake-side compound. Just beyond view were lots of ducks and grebes on the lake



To the left this Grey heron sat at the water's edge not really doing much at all



I rarely see Egyptian Goose and I have never taken any photos so a closer bird allowed some more intimate portrait shots



The highlight of the visit was undoubtedly around a dozen Red Kites I saw going back and forth. Some were very low but not in view long enough to take any shots. So this bird which perched about 150m away on the other side of the lake was too good an opportunity to miss. A stunning addition to the British fauna which it rapidly becoming available to most people



A second bird farther along the lake but at a narrower point, so only 80– 100 m; however it was not facing the right direction. I still took the chance to add to my collection of Red Kite images not involving birds flying over at high altitude



26th October. When is doing good doing bad? I occasionally show images attributed to time spent in Prince of Wales Park in Bingley. It is practically on my doorstep and part of my local circuit. Once part of the college grounds here, some of the trees are obviously not local or even British. It is on a wooded hill and the centre is open with gorse and bilberry, probably too hilly for housing There is also an area I call the dell where the bramble played host earlier this year to Comma and Holly Blue which I posted. The grass and bushes held skippers and for three years a Southern Hawker was around. The park is one of the best sites locally for Speckled Wood, also holds Purple hairstreak and supposedly Green Hairstreak. Over the years in places it has become a bit wild so a group called the friends of POW Park was formed and for months they have been busily working away tidying the whole place up. The dell is now a cleared amphitheatre with the walls re-built and the bushes removed, really looks nice but all the mini habitats have gone. I will see what this year brings to the site as to whether good intentions have done it harm. On a visit where I noticed for the first time what was happening in this part of the park; I took this shot of a Robin at the edge, even this bit of vegetation has now gone and the area is cleared up to the boundary walls

### Re: philm63

by Maximus, 10-Feb-14 08:33 PM GMT

A really nice selection of images in your last postings Phil. Great shots of the Red Kites, I didn't realise that they had been re-introduced into West Yorkshire. We went to Henley-on Thames last week and saw plenty flying right over the town, they are also beginning to spread out from the Chilterns re-introduction. We have seen them over the Meon valley in Hampshire and also on the outskirts of London, they seem to be doing very well.

Mike

### Re: philm63

by philm63, 12-Feb-14 09:11 AM GMT

Mike

Harewood sits to the north of Leeds on the hills overlooking the Wharfe valley and out into the Vale of York. Red Kites were first released here in 1999 and they have since spread out into the southern Dales and the Yorkshire lowlands. There are about 300 birds now in Yorkshire. Over the past few years they have also moved west and appear locally along the moor edges, I one had one fly over my back garden at very low altitude being hounded by Rooks; it was like watching a coffee table fly over with the wings outspread. From the location spread of your sightings they do appear to be doing very well further south

November 2013

By November with the weather and other things I was only going out a few times in the whole month, and then around the patch or along the canal. These became head-clearing sessions where I could get some fresh air and think out paths to pursue in other matters. Some areas produced goodies but the prime sighting area was actually the garden, nothing new but regular visitors kept my spirits up, and my bank balance down as they munched their way through what seemed an endless refilling session on the feeders



3rd November. A walk along the canal eventually produced two Kingfishers and this one posed nicely in a tree on the opposite side. I took over 20 shots in all with varying degrees of success. I have seen more Kingfishers in the past 12 months I think than the preceding four years. As the rivers rose and

became more coloured the birds moved onto local pools and the canal as here the water was still clear enough for them to be able to see the fish



Back along the canal near Micklethwaite Bridge the Black-headed Gulls again provided a number of photo opportunities. This bird swimming came out well with the water looking better than its normal dirty colour. This area sees lots of people feeding the ducks and geese and the canal bed must get clotted up with bread, probably why the carp in here seem so big



9th November. I know the birds have been liberal with using the feeders but this Goldfinch took it a stage further. After stuffing its face it nodded off for an after-dinner nap. Quite happily spent 20 minutes sleeping at that spot before it woke up, scooped a bit more and flew off. It was oh so lucky the local Sparrowhawk was spreading fear and confusion elsewhere



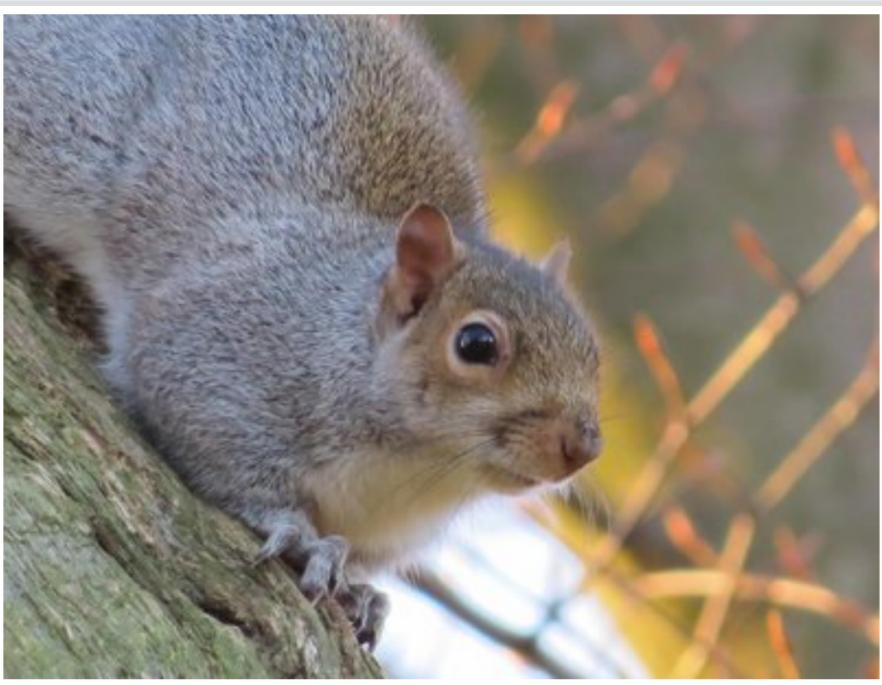
10th November. Managed to do the local circuit and actually found a small covey of Grey Partridges not skulking in the long vegetation. They appeared to be taking a lot of interest in a scar on a hillside – grubbing for food or possibly minerals. An opportunity I made good use of, I have had good views in the past but not with my current camera set-up so this was the best yet



A bit further along and a Little Owl on a wall near the old barn. Not seen here often. I was talking to an oldish couple along the walk and they said they had seen two Barn Owls in the area a few weeks before. I remain hopeful but sceptical, although Barn owls have spread to within a few miles of here. I since learned that someone has applied for permission to put a box for Barn owls in the fields along the bridleway (part of my extended usual route) so I hope it succeeds as I would love these on a more regular basis



23rd November. Walsh Lane, one of the fields starts to slope off just about where this Common Gull was standing so it appears sky-lined although it is actually in the middle of the field; I knelt and took the shot through a gate making the effect more pronounced. I do like Common Gulls but most are either silhouettes or well out of decent photo range



Same day in POW Park. Have so far posted Rabbit, Hedgehog and Stoat so thought I would add another mammal. This Grey Squirrel stayed still long enough for a nice shot



30th November. Seen along the Canal near Crossflats, a local spot for House Sparrows. I used to see these daily and all over as a child, now I have to go to certain places just to find them, and they are quite rare in the garden. This is of course a male and part of a small group in some hawthorns. Overlooked when common, now rarer you appreciate they are a lot more handsome than previously thought



On the way back I spotted these two Jackdaws enjoying what appeared to be a very tender moment on a building roof next to the canal. Proving once again there is always something of interest to look for even on the days when your hopes of finding x, y and z have proved fruitless

### Re: philm63

by essexbuzzard, 12-Feb-14 10:04 PM GMT

Loving the bird pictures, Phil, especially the English Partridge, haven't seen one for years. We get reasonable numbers of French Partridges (red legs) which certainly are the dominant partridge here.

Keep 'em coming!

### Re: philm63

by Wurzel, 12-Feb-14 11:28 PM GMT

More great shots and a lovely report Phil 😊 That Goldfinch shot had me confused when I first saw it – all the distinguishing features are absent save for the black and white marking on the wing and the Little Owl looks as belligerent as always 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: philm63

by philm63, 14-Feb-14 08:40 AM GMT

Essex, Wurzel

Thanks for the comments. I have only started seeing Partridge locally for the past few years, and now the fields around here hold some at times but I generally see no more than 6 of each whilst out. Getting them is a hit and miss affair with so many fields behind walls that cannot be seen into, and when I do see them they are often in mixed flocks of Grey and Red-legged. Going by local group reports there are several Grey Partridge flocks in the general area with numbers over 20 seen at times. The fields here are rough pasture so are neither heavily farmed for crops nor over-grazed, so there is good cover at various times in the year which should help them

We had this week our first snow of the winter; it only lasted on the ground overnight and into the morning. But seeing the devastation wrought on

Wednesday I am hoping you are all ok and not seriously affected by it all

December 2013

In the latter part of the year I re-joined the Bradford Ornithological Group and started attending the monthly meetings. The group was 25 years old in 2012 and I have not been a member since the early 1990's, but I do have history with them. I was one of the founding members back in 1987 when a group of like-minded people met in Shipley to talk about creating a proper group, and I was recorder for its first two years. It has grown into a decent group over the years. Early December saw the group do a tour of a number of spots looking for winter wildfowl so I went along. It was an interesting day and I ended up agreeing to write up the day for the next magazine, also supplied photos of most of the birds we saw, so looking forward to seeing those in print. Otherwise it was still a quiet month for me as life plans laid over the preceding weeks waited to take fruit and the weather was generally awful



7th December. The local group outing and our first port of call was Yeadon Tarn, a nice spot very close to the runway at Leeds/Bradford Airport. It held a nice selection of ducks today and was probably the best spot we visited out of the three. Double-figured Goosanders of both sexes were out in the middle of the Tarn, along with a few Cormorants and plenty of gulls. Most will stay in the area till they move back into the upper river valleys next spring. I frequently see these birds in the Bingley area as well



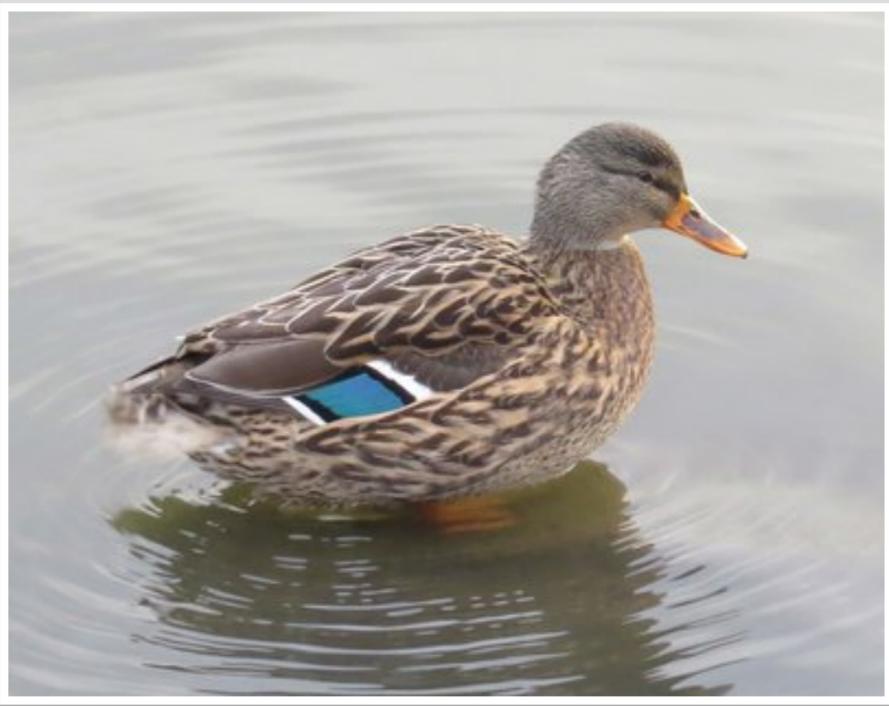
One end of the tarn is classed as a wilderness area and out of bounds to boats and anglers, this Great Crested Grebe was down that end unlike most of the ducks which seemed to go wherever they liked, saw a few of these through the day



There was also only one Goldeneye there but it was this splendid male which approached quite close, not seen in large numbers locally but is seen most years



Towards the concrete "town" end this Pied Wagtail strutted about amongst the more usual Mallards and gulls. Pies are lovely birds, when I lived in Germany I was seeing the paler Whites that breed on the continent, nice but male Pies are classy



Not a rarity just a nice shot of a common bird. I sometimes deliberately practice on Mallards testing out various settings, angles for shots etc. I shot this female as we rounded the end of the tarn and just liked the way it came out, pity it moved its tail at the wrong moment though



Another female duck and one that took us by surprise, this sleeping bird is a female Wigeon. Later saw a good flock of mixed sexes at another site but not as close as this



Now heading back to the car park we racked up male Tufted Duck



Followed by male Pochard amongst the mixed group of wildfowl



18th December. A male Chaffinch in the garden, we have a couple of these birds virtually every day and for most of the year, whereas the Goldfinches, Greenfinches, Bullfinches and Siskins are much more seasonal



22nd December. I had gone out front and spotted this Grey Wagtail land on the college building across the car turning area (I live in a cul-de-sac). Back in to get the camera and it stayed long enough for a shot. There is a pond in the college grounds on the other side of the building; and the college is actually all apartments now. So this was not too unusual a sighting really, but still not a regular thing. Funnily enough considering the size of the pond the occasional Grey Heron has also popped in which is much more attention grabbing as it flies over at low altitude



Boxing Day. The wife and I invariably go for a walk on Boxing Day so we went down to Saltaire and then back along the canal and river. Actually back in Bingley and on the canal sat this pair of a male Mandarin and a male Wood Duck. Wood Duck is an American species that is kept in collections and not yet added to the British List. They are both related and the females have a similar look about them. The male Wood Duck is a stunning bird

Phil

### Re: philm63

by Wurzel, 14-Feb-14 12:13 PM GMT

Great report Phil with more great bird shots – the Goosander is lush and beats my distant shots hands down 🍷 😊  
Your last shot features a male Wood Duck face on and the bird preening is a male Mandarin (you can just see the orange 'sails' along the back/wing – nice comparison shot. 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: philm63

by philm63, 14-Feb-14 12:52 PM GMT

Wurzel

Thanks for that I have re-worded the text so it is clearer

### Re: philm63

by philm63, 17-Feb-14 11:39 AM GMT

January 2014

This is the last of my catch-up reports and we go into the New Year. Back to business I thought, but not so as on the 6th my first great-grandson arrived. So I became a very busy taxi driver ferrying people to hospital for visits, then taking grand-daughter and son home. Then lots more trips here there and everywhere as everyone vied to buy the cutest outfits and all the other additional bits deemed necessary. No doubt most people have been through this stage at some point. Then weekends became baby-sitting sessions as all the women in the family wanted to spend time with the new arrival and my time to go out slowly disappeared during the short days.

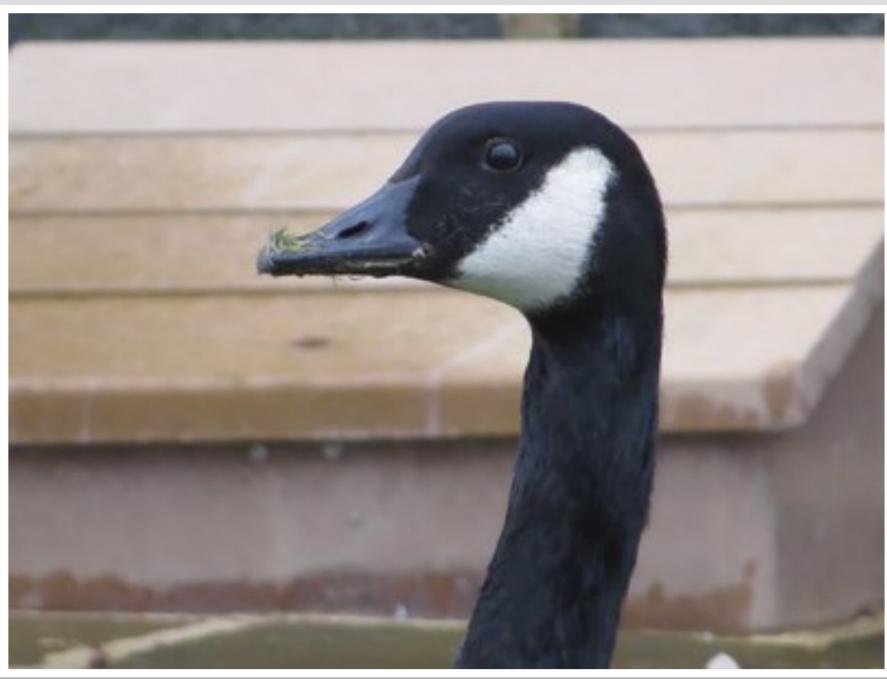
With all the activity few opportunities arose to do much walking especially as all it seemed to do was rain. I am still continuing to try and show more common species in a different light such as in the head-on shots of the Chaffinch and House Sparrow, or close-up shots such as the Canada Goose



7th January. The Great Spotted Woodpecker visits seem to have tailed off but the Nuthatches are providing an alternative spot of colour. This one popped onto the front feeders as I stood in the kitchen and stayed till I had got the camera. Nuthatch has become much more frequent in the garden over the past two years, with two birds showing at times. I have at least two, possibly three, pairs in a half-mile radius of the house



12th January. Went to Dowley Gap to see if I could find over-wintering Chiffchaffs, they are around that area at the moment, but I had no luck. However I was well compensated with some excellent views of this Kingfisher. The nearby River Aire was in full flow and very cloudy so the Kingfisher was along a small channel that runs down the side of the island and under the canal aqueduct. The trees made it quite gloomy so I was actually pleased with the results and I managed to creep up quite close



18th January. A trip up the canal towpath provided some nice winter birds, lots of finches and passing thrushes. A small group of Canada Geese provided a nice study shot



Followed soon after with a small group of Redwings in canal-side trees, I have been unable to get any decent shots of Fieldfare so far this winter, most have been fly-over or against the light views. Redwing have been a bit more reliable but not by much, both species seem to have been very wary here this winter



And a very confiding Chaffinch



19th January. I was on ferrying people duties at Bierley in south Bradford. Due to the baby I nearly always have the camera with me now. Here House Sparrows are pretty regular and this male was just outside the door so didn't pass up the chance

Have now caught up on my diary and like everyone else just waiting for the first butterflies - I hazard a guess it will be a Small Tortoiseshell for me, as that is usually the case

### Re: philm63

by Wurzel, 18-Feb-14 11:33 PM GMT

A great way to finish your round up - lush Kingfisher, tricky Redwings 😊 and a psychopathic Sparrow 😱😄  
Looking forward to reports for 2014 already Phil 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: philm63

by Neil Freeman, 19-Feb-14 08:08 PM GMT

Hi Phil,

I have enjoyed reading your round-up and some great photos to go with them 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

### Re: philm63

by philm63, 20-Feb-14 07:17 PM GMT

Wurzel, Neil

Thanks for the comments and glad you enjoyed the ride, I really enjoyed reading back over my trip reports looking for sightings and shots worth relating

It is looking like there will be no post for February as I have only been seeing more of the same. I have managed to get a few decent shots but mostly again of the same species, or in other cases just record shots such as a large flock of Fieldfare I found on Sunday; so will not post any of them

Phil

### Re: philm63

by philm63, 22-Apr-14 10:42 PM GMT

At last some butterflies! last Tuesday (15th) saw my first Small Tortoiseshells, with a few around, followed a few days later by the first Peacock. With the bank holiday managed to get out a bit and added three male Orange Tips; none of which showed any inclination to stop.

The 15th is almost the same day as last year's first butterfly, but the Orange Tips are earlier. Over the past few weeks I have trawled the local area looking for my first sighting but last week saw the first consecutive days that averaged around 13 - 14 C, maybe that played a part. We have had some short periods of sunshine but seemingly tempered by a nagging wind, even over the weekend the wind spoilt what could have been some decent outings; and now we are back to the rain

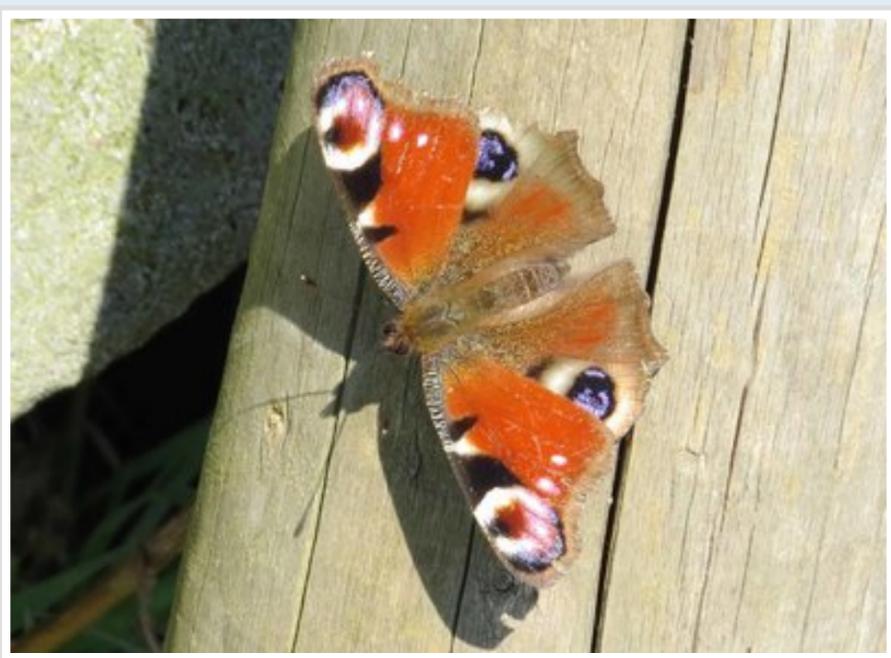
The time was not wasted as I had some excellent bird sightings locally, and reading the various posts enjoyed other people's finds.

I have visited a local spot called Bradup a few times recently which was a delight. A tarmac road runs out to Whetstone Gate about two miles out onto Rombalds (Ilkley) Moor. Here there is a car park next to the radio relay station (which is why the road exists). Bradup is lower down the road where farmland starts changing to rough pasture, and then to heather moorland. On a sunny spring day it is a lovely place to be - and typical of the edges of the local moorland. The fields echo to displaying Lapwings, bubbling Curlew and the occasional drumming Snipe. Meadow Pipits and Skylarks singing with the occasional Reed Bunting and Pied Wagtail. In the area the background sounds include calling Pheasants and the "go back go back" calls of Red Grouse. I will be back here soon as the moor edges here are home to Green Hairstreaks.

Small Tortoiseshells have been the predominant butterfly with 32 seen on one walk, but still very flighty and hardly settling; hence the limited



Peacocks have been a bit more confiding and have showed various stages of wear and damage as the recent shots below show



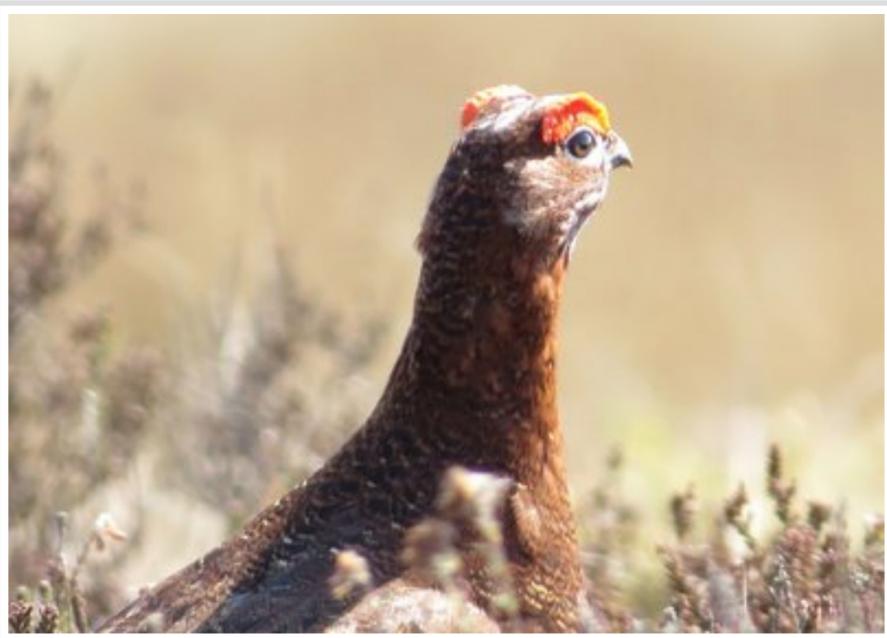
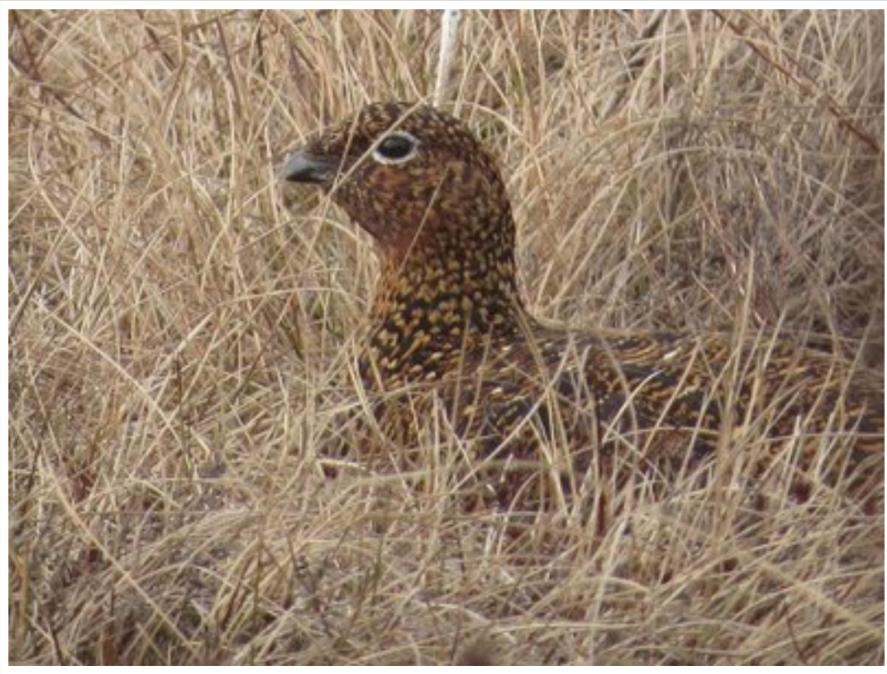


I have managed to get some very pleasing bird shots recently but have resisted the urge to post them as we are in the butterfly season now, but wanted

to share the one below. The last visit to Bradup on Saturday resulted in 15 minutes watching this Redshank at decent ranges, it is much brighter than the usual birds seen in autumn and winter at the coast or on wetland reserves. A few breed locally around the moor edges, oddly enough I had another one even closer to home the day before; actually on my local patch



And finally the shots below are included just for Wurzel – hope you enjoy them!



Phil