

# CASTLESHAW RESERVOIRS

by Mark Rigby

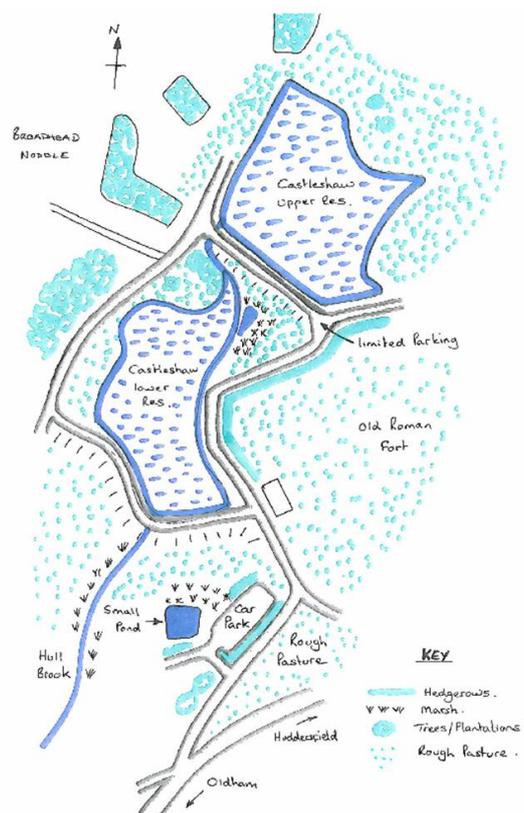


Above: Castleshaw Reservoirs, viewed from the Pennine Way.

## Directions

Castleshaw reservoirs are located high in the Pennines approximately 5 miles north-east of Oldham (SD995099). Leave Oldham on A62 Huddersfield Road. After approximately 4 ½ miles and passing through Delph, take the left turning onto Waterworks Road. Follow the road for another ¼ mile and park in the public car park adjacent to the Castleshaw centre.

## Map of Castleshaw



### Castleshaw Upper Reservoir

At 852 feet above sea level, Castleshaw Upper Reservoir is one of the highest reservoirs in the county. It is separated from the Lower Reservoir by a man made dam which forms the south-west shore. The remainder of the shoreline is made up of rocks and stones.

Due to the elevation and depth of the reservoir, the water is much cooler than the lower reservoir, and as such, does not hold much in the way of food for the birds. The Upper Reservoir is very often “bird free” and is usually restricted to bathing gulls and Canada Geese. However, during the winter months, Goosander, Goldeneye and Great Crested Grebes are almost guaranteed, with other wildfowl putting in the occasional visit. A small rocky “spit” can hold the odd roosting wader or Cormorant. There are several public footpaths enabling a complete circuit of the reservoir.

The habitat surrounding the Upper Reservoir is of rough pasture and damp moorland which is used for grazing. The Pennine Way runs along the top of the hillside to the north of the Upper Reservoir. There are three small plantations, but these are fenced off with no access.



Above: A view along Castleshaw Top Bank towards the largest of the three plantations (Photo Mark Rigby)



Above: Looking north. The two smaller plantations can be seen. The Pennine Way runs along the top of the hillside to the right.

### Castleshaw Lower Reservoir



Above: Castleshaw Lower Reservoir. (Photo Mark Rigby)

The Lower Reservoir is 755 feet above sea level and is the more productive of the two reservoirs. During the winter months when water levels are normal, the shoreline is made up of mainly rocks and rough grassland with small clumps of sedge. During the summer when water levels drop, a muddy shoreline is exposed. A small pool on the in the north-east corner is worth scanning from the Top Bank.

Again, it is possible to complete a circuit of the Lower Reservoir using public footpaths, but the best vantage points are from the dam wall to the south, along the Eastern side of the reservoir by looking over the wall (tall people only) or from the wooden gate at the north-eastern corner.

Being a moorland site, there is not much in the way of trees or hedgerows. This accounts for the relatively low numbers of passerines recorded. There is a mature wooded area behind the farm on the west side of the reservoir and a hawthorn hedge along the track to the eastern side.



Above: Looking west across the Lower Reservoir towards Wood Farm. The area to the right is the best for waders. (Photo Mark Rigby)



Above: Looking North towards Castleshaw Top Bank.

### **Other Areas**

There is a small pool opposite the public car park and an area of marsh which is worth a scan. Both Snipe and Jack Snipe have been recorded in this area. There are several mature Hawthorns and Rowans surrounding the car park which can hold good numbers of common passerines during the autumn and winter months.

The dam along the south-western edge of the Lower Reservoir affords a good vantage point towards Hull Mill Dam and a footpath runs along Hull Brook from which Dippers can regularly be seen.

The whole area surrounding the reservoirs is used for grazing and Stonechats, Wheatears and the occasional Whinchat on passage can be seen on the dry stone walls and fences that form the field boundaries.

Don't expect to visit Castleshaw and see a multitude of bird species. Like everywhere, it has its good and bad days, but there tends to be more bad than good. However, it does turn up the occasional rarity or less common species seen in Greater Manchester.

### **Birding highlights**

Whooper Swan, Brent Goose, Scaup, Eider, Common Scoter (including a single flock of 80-90 birds. A County record.), Red-breasted Merganser, Garganey, Black-throated Diver, Red-necked Grebe, Osprey, Ruff, Greenshank, Mediterranean Gull, Iceland Gull, Whinchat, Ring Ouzel, Yellow Wagtail and Yellow-browed Warbler.

**Mark Rigby, August 2009**

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