

MEET AND GREET THE MANKY BIRDERS

Welcome to the Manchester Birding Community

by Ian McKerchar

(edit: this article was originally written in 2009 and thus, some/most/all of the birders involved look a hell of a lot worse for wear now!)

Come and meet some of Greater Manchester's county birders right here within this page. Leave it like you've known them for years and say hello or cast insults/rocks at them when you see them out and about. There are many county birders currently missing from this page however. You probably think you're safe but you know all too well you're wrong. You'll be on here soon enough!

Please note. Manchester Birding accepts no responsibility for the accuracy of these photographs. In fact, the images might just as well not bear any resemblance what so ever to the person they purport to, its more a 'representation' of that person in my own (weird) mind or of their persona in some cases. Manchester Birding is not liable for any libellous comments nor any offence caused by any offensive images. If it comes to it, I didn't write this nor did I add or choose any of the images, the page was hijacked by some hacker and I've been unable to remove it so far. That or I'll deny all knowledge and finally get round to my defection to Cornwall to live in one of the caves by the cove at Porthgwarra. You may notice there are no female birders illustrated here either. Not because I'm sexist but simply because 'hell has no fury like a woman scorned'!



Rob Adderley- One of the very top county listers, digiscopers, rare and scarce finders and the birder most likely to be found birding in the depths of winter wearing a summer shirt and casual shoes. Rob is currently and quite rightly to be found on the county rarity committee and more often than not at his beloved Audenshaw Reservoirs battling for tripod space with joggers, fishermen, vagabonds, scrotes, dog walkers and the ubiquitous dog turds! An avid twitcher his amiable character is only further enhanced by the addition of his better half, Sonia but beware, they can make serious inroads into your biscuit barrel should you invite them in for a cup of tea.



Steve Atkins- Assistant County Recorder for the database (whatever that is!). Steve's high altitude birding of Watergrove Reservoir regularly provides him with memorable moments but none more so than his finding of the British record for the highest ever altitude Broad-billed Sandpiper. A thoroughly nice bloke with a competitive streak like you wouldn't believe and he would never admit to, despite living high in those hills above Rochdale he hides those six webbed fingers on each hand well.

Pete Berry- Reigning top county life lister and one of the most widely world-travelled birders in the county to boot. To be found birding considerably less in Greater Manchester in recent years due to a terrible affliction to birding/living in Scotland. When 'in county' his love of gulls serves him well at his treasured Heaton Park Reservoir evening gull roost but his love of seabirds less so, despite doing well with a Leaches Petrel there once. His fear of 'grockles' and of living inland looks set see him less and less in the county.



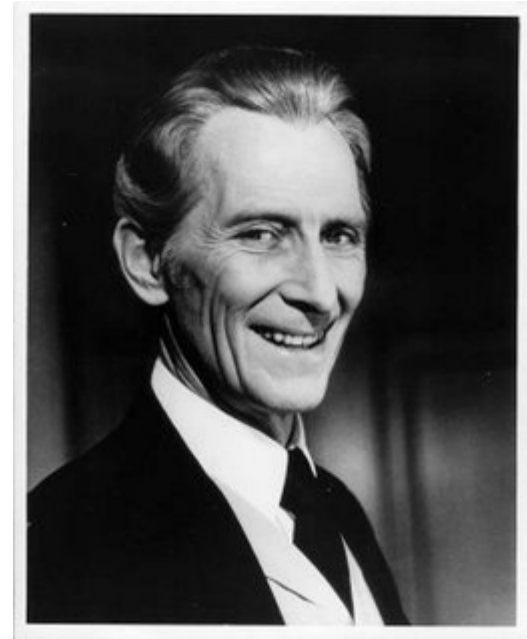
Dave Broome- Proprietor of by far and away, the largest garden bird list in the county. Mainly courtesy of living literally right on the shore of Scotmans Flash for most of his younger years and lazing in bed all day where hard working birders would give him a knock when something good turned up! Now spends his time working for a living, apparently being paid to scour fly-tipping sites and gypsy camps for Mealy Redpolls. With remarkable success it has to be said.



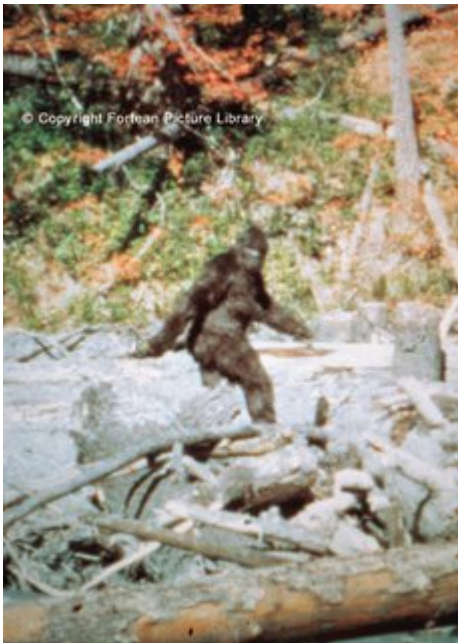


Paul Cliff- Birder, professional photographer, filmmaker, bands with silly names gig-goer and proper Manc geezer. Most likely to be identified by his usage of terminology such as 'sweet', 'cool', 'man' and 'sorted' or alternatively by his flash sports car. Has strived somewhat successfully to put Birtle firmly on the county birding map.

Adrian Dancy- County WeBS organiser Adrian is best known for his love of all things photographic. Want to know more about bokeh or contre-jour? Well then, Adrian's your man. Also to be found wearing out perfectly good shoe leather on the mean streets of Manchester City Centre in the search for Peregrines and Black Redstarts, his photos of which adorn many an article and gallery on this website.



Brian Fielding- Bona fide county twitcher. Once camped out at Pearson's Flash for an entire week, living off nothing but reed stems and newts just in an attempt to catch a glimpse of a Cetti's Warbler there. Capable of staking out a single bush for days without sleep, no problem.

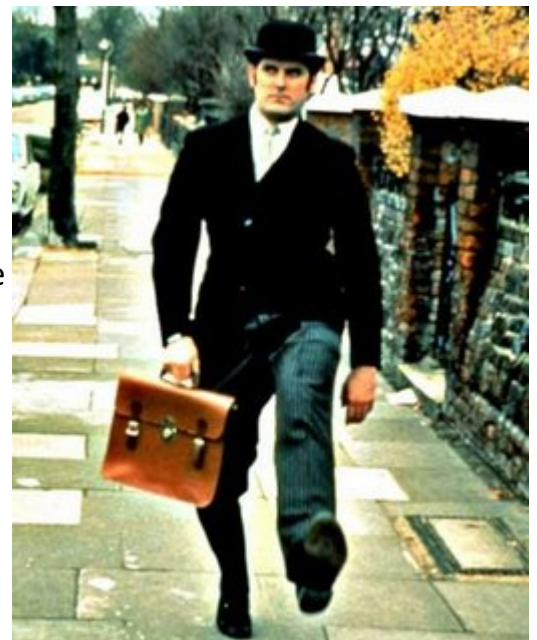


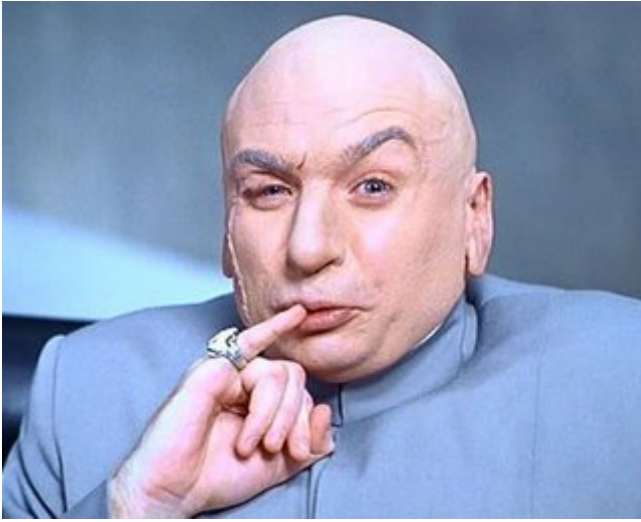
Paul Hammond- The county's biggest birder-literally! Paul is so tall he found the 2008 Audenshaw Reservoirs Alpine Swift by almost knocking it out of the sky with his head as it fed at a height of over 40 feet. His distinctive tracks of a size 30 boot print coupled with knuckle drag marks ensures you can tell if he's been to a site before you, although his springtime post-hibernation pre-dawn visits to Audenshaw Reservoirs are soooo early that you can rest assured; he's already beaten you to the birds. There's no need to run screaming the other way when you see him stomping towards you however, he's actually a very splendid fellow indeed.



Geoff Hargreaves- Hailing from Platt Waz (if you have to ask...), Geoff is perhaps the county birder least likely to be understood both verbally and 'in litt' due to his broad Wiganese dialect and mouth permanently filled with pie. He has some decent county rare and scarce bird finds to his name though and continues to work those top Wigan sites and pie shops with equal vigour.

Paul Heaton- The county's top birding RSPCA inspector. Paul has had more county rarities in the back of his van than you've had hot dinners. An indefatigable bird book collector, he is currently writing his own book on the life and times of Hilda Ogden. The current reigning county year listing champ, he is still likely to be found at the scene of a county rarity before you've even had time to study it's tertials or otherwise birding at a site which cannot be named for fear or execution.





Craig Higson- Ex-Pennington Flash ranger, ex-part time twitcher and ex-ringer. Currently precariously fighting against becoming an ex-birder by enduring sporadic forays into the mystical and enchanted Viridor Wood. A natural deterrent to birds, Craig subsequently doesn't see very much but is at least used to the phrase "you should have been here earlier mate"!

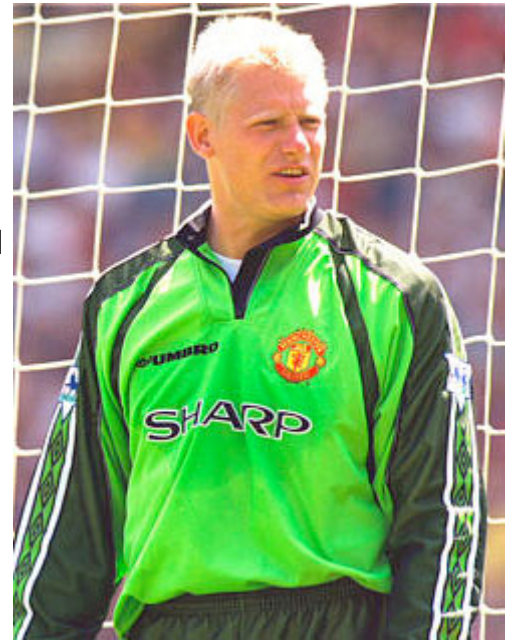


Pete Hines- In the elite of top UK twitchers, he easily possesses the biggest British list of any other birder in the county. Often to be found laid up in bed with man-flu when those Irish west coast or Northern Isles megas turn up (apparently!). His experience is now being rightly tapped via his appointment to the county rarity committee and his work as a Mersey Valley Warden of many years ensures he keeps his ear to the ground chasing up those 'funny little birds' reported by Joe Public. One day, one of them will turn out to be an overwintering Magnolia Warbler, just you wait and see.

Barry Hulme- Pennington Flash silent assassin. Unlocks the door to Horrock's Hide in the morning so early you've not even gone to bed yet, subsequently finds birds you've no chance of! Sharp as a Samurai sword and quiet as a mouse, take your eyes off him and he'll have picked out a biggy before you've even got your bins up. Frankly, anyone who gets up *that* early *every* day deserves those rewards and at that time of the morning, he's welcome to them!



Andy Isherwood- Relocated from rarity rich East Yorkshire to sample the fine delights of inland north-west England birding (think House Sparrow VisMig, Gadwall counts and sewage bed perusal) and never looked back. One of the best rare/scarce radars in the county, his unquestionable birding ability has found him as another of those currently on the county rarity committee, though his penchant for birding in a formal suit is far more open to question.



Simon Johnson- Greater Manchester's top VisMigger. The balcony at his flat in Whitefield has become something akin to 'the narrows' at Spurn. Simon is regularly to be found Scope at hand peering through neighbour's windows at migrating pipits and wagtails. Well, that's what he says he's doing anyway! A diligent birder, his patch of Heaton Park Reservoir regularly fails to live up to expectations but his list of 'ones that got away' remains a constant reminder that a biggy will stick sooner or later.



John Lyon- Pennington Flash 'fixture and fitting'. Generally to be found dawn 'til dusk sat in the corner of Horrock's Hide or rather as it now termed, 'Lyon's den'. Can also occasionally be found wandering hide to hide complete with Everest expedition sized rucksack but often only communicates via a series of grunts, clicks and whistles. Regardless, he continues to find some seriously good county birds!





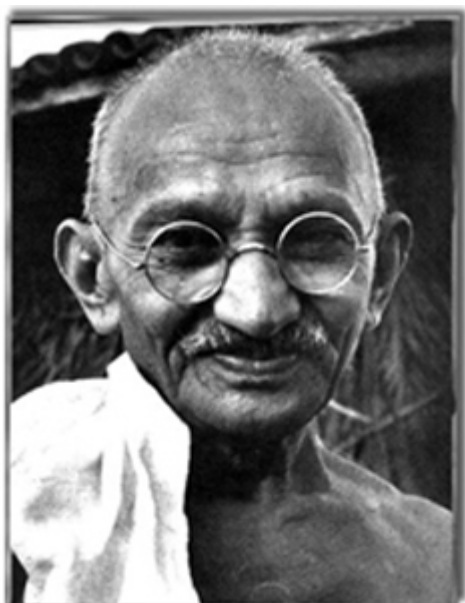
Dean MacDonald- Boltonian birder and the county's most prevalent cat lover. Dean spends copious amounts of time in and around the centre of Bolton as guardian of the town centre Peregrines there, fighting crime, righting wrongs and wearing his underpants on the outside of his trousers.



Andy Makin- Mast Road moocher and another county VisMigger. He once used his own funds in an endeavour to set up his own Smithills feeding station only to find it being devoured by a sheep the very next day! His remarkable suburban Hindley garden list proves what can be achieved anywhere in the county by lying on your back with a pair of sunglasses on for half of the day.

Ian McKerchar- Assistant County Bird Recorder for rarities (whatever they are?) and the sole voice behind the Manchester Birding empire. Just a guy who had an idea, nay a dream, for uniting a county, building a birding community and perhaps producing some better birding along the way via this crummy website and less crummy forum. Watch it all fall to crap when I finally live the dream and relocate to Cornwall.





Jimmy Meadows- County birding stalwart, true gent and all-round good egg. Covers the very western boundary of the county, including some sites no one's ever heard of. Possesses an admirable pair of sea legs as crows-nest watchman aboard the Mersey mouth and Irish Sea Liver Cruises and doubles up as occasional Wigan RSPB outing guru.

John Rayner- Long-time county birder, reinvigorated and reformed in recent years. Old enough to remember when sites in the county weren't just covered with a mass of trees, decent wader habitat existed and Adswold Tip was a top birding location. Also old enough to forget just exactly what he's got on his county life list!

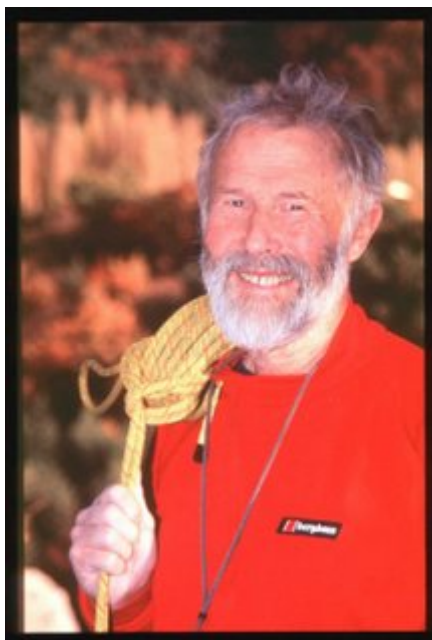


Phil Rhodes- 1930's throwback Phil remains adamant that Greater Manchester doesn't exist and fails to recognise any of it's boundaries. Despite this he continues to find some excellent birds in the west of the county (old Lancashire and Greater Bolton as he likes to refer to it) and is resolute that he would never set foot anywhere near a true Manchester site such as Audenshaw Reservoirs. Other than the time he was rattling the gates to get a peek at the 2008 Alpine Swift there!



Mark Rigby- Castleshaw Reservoirs have never had it so good thanks to the staunch attention of Mr. Rigby whose regular flogging of the site has now recorded several Sand Martins. Besides being an enthusiastic birder and twitcher, Mark is also one of the UK's top train spotters and has a list of 'birds seen from a steam locomotive' that is second to none.

Rob Smallwood- Birdforum supremo and pride of Timperley. Rob, besides being a birder and more than occasional twitcher is also guitarist in top boy band XL5. With talents that know no bounds, he taught Ex-Dire Straits front man Knopfler all he knew and also how to utilise primary moult timing in the identification of Yellow-legged Gulls. Has since pioneered the use of simple guitar riffs to attract autumnal migrant passerines from deep within coastal Sea Buckthorn.



Steve Suttill- Dedicated BTO representative and another hill dweller fond of altitude sickness birding. His passion for county birding is currently being ploughed into deep and meaningful, if not to mention at times stressful, atlas work. This could potentially lead to him birding either more or less in the field and also to his hair falling out, which could eventually make him look like his head's on upside down!



Rob Thorpe- One of the most persistent patch watchers in the county with a keen eye and ambition to match. Plunders Horrock's Flash for all its worth on a very regular basis and the term 'glutton for punishment' comes to mind! Would dearly love to permanently relocate to his second home of Spurn but apparently they don't do pies there.

John Tymon- One of the original county 'moochers'. John went through something of a period of wilderness some years ago, spending his time birding in a far inferior county before the realisation that Pennington Flash is indeed the Rutland Water of the north. His county birding revival has since also seen the development of his photographic skills and of a shortening of the spine due to the four tons of gear he carries around. By the way, "t'awreet" basically means hello, should he cast it in your direction.

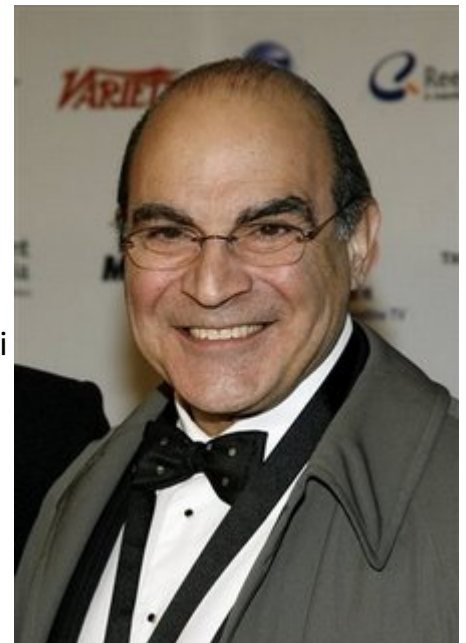


Alan Warford- Top man and of course half the reason for the existence of Warfy junior (see below). Ranks easily in the top 10 of county life listers though he's still a few behind more manic junior. Once alleged to "give a Greater Manchester big year list a go when I retire". It hasn't come to fruition yet, but as and when (and if?) he does, you can rest assured he'll give it his full attention.



Simon Warford- Elton chieftain, site year list record holder, son of Alan (above) and more than occasional UK twitcher. Makes enjoying the delights of Elton Reservoir his goal in life although he has developed a distinct habit of being out of county when site biggies have occurred, not that he's bothered of course! Will always be remembered for disappearing across a bleak and lonely moor alone at dusk in front of assembled friends only to vanish into the clouds. We're not saying he was abducted by aliens but...

Tim Wilcox- Birder and celebrated 'art luvvee'. Renowned at one time for only birding the entire county by push-bike but then subsequently for coming off worse when playing chicken with a taxi at full pelt one day. Now only birds the county by car!



Paul Wilson- Another of the 'Elton elite'. Paul has fared well finding some excellent county rare and scarce there and has gone the extra yard in photographing most of them as well. He has an affection for partaking in the infamous Elton mud bath ritual (good for the complexion apparently if not the nostrils) and for attracting Firecrests to his garden using his top secret alluring techniques which remain as closely guarded a secret as the coating for Kentucky Fried Chicken.



David Winnard- Champion of perhaps the bleakest birding site in the county in Ashworth Moor Reservoir. Maintains his accolade as Greater Manchester's very own David Bellamy thanks to his manchesterwildlife website. Has a fondness for things fungal and for lugging about a Tymon thrashing six tons of camera equipment. As *the Rochdale* scene aficionado, if it's going on in them hills, then he'll know about it, just don't stray from the paths...

Ian Woosey- Ex-short lived twitcher and now passionate advocate of birding the borough of Wigan. Ian currently plies his trade amongst the trees of Haigh Country Park to good effect. A top Northern Soul 'keeper of the faith', he can often be found combining birding at Abram Flashes with slick dance moves on a bed of talcum powder along the canal towpath accompanied by the sweet smell of a Galloways pie.



Ian McKerchar, September 2009

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