



## Happy New Year!

### CHAIRMAN'S NEW YEAR MESSAGE

*Nigel Daley*

Many thanks to all our volunteers at FoSL for all their efforts over the last twelve months, whether that be committee members, leaflet distributors, bird count members or just plain work party volunteers.

After the Summer break, we have had a fantastic response to our call for working party volunteers to come along on the first Sunday of each month. We meet at 9.55am outside Stocker's House (the big house on the canal by the lock, on the path between Stocker's Lake and Bury Lake), the more people the merrier!! There are too many people to thank, but you know who you are and we are so very grateful for all your hard work.

We have a number of exciting projects on the go at the moment (CCTV on the Heronry, developing cattle meadows on the northern edge of the lake, redeveloping the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War pillboxes as bat roosts).

I am keen that 2018 will be a really fruitful year for us at FoSL both in terms of projects coming to fruition and projects being planned for the future, as well as maintaining a healthy and active membership.

If you have a friend/family member who you think would enjoy becoming a FoSL member why not encourage them to join our ranks. It's probably the best £5 that they can spend in this part of south-west Hertfordshire.

Many thanks for everyone's continued efforts and I wish you a happy and peaceful New Year!

### WORK ON THE RESERVE

#### Work Party Sunday 1st October *Ian Watson*

A party of 14 did some useful work. We cleared the undergrowth in the plantation by the bungalow to restore deer protection and disentangled trees being smothered or pulled down by brambles and goose grass.

Some work on clearing the pond by the boardwalk was started.

Screws were inserted to support the nails in the kissing gate recently repaired by the Trust.

Thanks go to Dawn Goodair, Tony and Sheila Lee, Nigel Daley, Helen Harbrow, Eileen Petch, Tim Lawrence, Milesh Dodhia, Jack Westbrook, Ken Davies, David Neal, Dominic Wilson, Paul Knutson, Emma Brading and Ian Watson.



#### Work Party Sunday November 5th - *Ian Watson*

Wow! And what a party! 20 turned up, the largest work party since we did haymaking on the riverside meadows 15 years ago. It must be the 'Brading' Effect because since Emma took over, the two work parties have been really large. Well done Emma!

The difficulty of course is finding work for 20 people in more or less the same area (so that we can convene easily for coffee and excellent biscuits). However, we managed. We cleared the alder saplings which had taken over the second pond by the boardwalk; we used a pile of stones left by the Trust to fill in a puddle and patches on our paths (the Trust has been doing wonderful work in creating kingfisher nests - as featured on BBC Countryfile); We tidied up some timber left by the Trust - kept the good stuff and chucked the rubbish; cut back the hazel but kept the withy thus produced (useful when we get down to layering - which Rob Hopkins at the Trust has agreed to teach us at our next work party on December 3<sup>rd</sup>).

Good work by Emma Brading, Nigel Daley, Ken Davies, Julia and Phil Davies, Milesh Dodhia, Peter Ewer\*, Evelyn Fox, Dawn Goodair, Helen Harbrow, Marcus King, Tony and Sheila Lee, Eileen Petch, Andy Schofield, Bob Sherin\*, Paul and James Sumner\*, Jay Vala\* and Ian Watson. \* New workers who are most welcome!

#### Work Party Sunday 3rd December - *Ian Watson*

Another big party, 18 in all. The 'Brading Effect' is still working, although Emma herself is in India for a few weeks

We started a big job on the canal side of the reserve. The aim is to layer the hawthorn hedge we planted some years ago (some 400 metres!), but first we have to clear some of the brambles which have grown up on the canal side of the fence (which we paid for), so that we can get at the hawthorn and also to let sunlight to reach the hedge.

Whilst Dawn Goodair and Jack Westbrook did some layering (continuing the job they started last year), Tony and Sheila Lee cleared up the rubbish discarded by the Great British Public on the towpath and the reserve, and the rest of us started clearing the brambles. This left us with 4 huge building sacks of brambles and rubbish which present a disposal problem which is Ian Watson's problem

Many thanks to all who attended; Len Carter, Nigel Daley, Ken Davies, Phillip and Julia Davies, Peter Ewer, Dawn Goodair, Paul Knutson, Ray Kristofiak, Tony and Sheila Lee, Eileen Petch, Andy Schofield, Bob Sherin, Paul and James Sumner, Ian Watson and Jack Westbrook.

## EVENTS ON THE RESERVE

### Water Voles Have you seen one?

Water voles were once common mammals in



British waterways but their numbers have declined by over 90% due to habitat loss and predation by the non-native American mink. Ours were exterminated by mink in the 1990's

The Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust (HMWT) is working to conserve and enhance water vole populations in Hertfordshire. They are surveying sites around the county regularly, improving habitats and reintroducing water voles as well as controlling mink populations. Many sites around the county are surveyed including Stocker's Lake, the River Colne and Springwell Lake.

Water voles are about 20cm in length with a tail of 11cm. They have a reddish-brown coat in summer which can be a little darker in the winter. They have a rounded face and nose and small, rounded ears which do not protrude above the fur. Water voles can be mistaken for the brown rat although the rat is usually larger.

Information on water voles including appearance, how to identify them, signs and how you can help can be found at

[www.hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/species/water-vole](http://www.hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/species/water-vole)

If you think you have seen a water vole or mink locally at Stocker's Lake, the River Colne or Springwell Lake area, please contact Barbara James on 01923 282815

[barbara.james5@btopenworld.com](mailto:barbara.james5@btopenworld.com)

### Survey of Butterflies at Stocker's Lake 2017

#### The recording scheme

Once again, a dedicated band of enthusiasts under the leadership of Barbara James recorded the number of butterflies seen in 12 transects around the lake each week between April and September. The recorders enter their results directly onto the UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme database, one of the world's largest butterfly and moth recording schemes with records countrywide.



#### Total butterflies counted by year

Butterfly counts at Stocker's Lake are available for 9 years in 2 periods, 1997-1999 and 2012-2017, so we are increasingly able to compare numbers counted and ascertain trends.

2017 was a good year around the lake with 817 butterflies counted, 72% up on 2016, and the second highest total recorded. The distribution of sightings over the recording period confirms that this was heavily influenced by the unusual weather patterns.

#### The National Picture

The report on Butterfly Conservation's Big Butterfly Count held each summer states that January-June 2017 had above average temperatures which encouraged early emergence but July and August were dominated by unsettled weather and above average rainfall. Numbers of Red Admirals counted increased by 75% on 2016 and 300% on 2015, while Comma, Common Blue, Small Copper and Gatekeeper increased by 90%, 109% 62% and 24% respectively on 2016. By contrast, Green-veined White, Large White and Small White all fell by around 38% but this was largely because of their early emergence, largely before the count took place. Small Tortoiseshell and Peacock showed no signs of recovery from their very low counts in 2016

*A chart showing the top 10 butterfly species counted at Stocker's Lake in 2017 and how their ranking has changed since 2012, can be seen with other charts on the FoSL Web Page.*

### The Withey Beds

FoSL joined Friends of Withey Beds some years ago and thought Members might be interested in what they as another local nature group, are doing and to see how it complements our work. Further details are available on the Friends web site at [www.thewitheybeds.org.uk](http://www.thewitheybeds.org.uk) and the Membership Secretary can be contacted directly at [friendsofwitheybeds@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofwitheybeds@gmail.com).

The Withey Beds is a designated Local Nature Reserve and is owned and managed by Three Rivers District Council. The site is located off Moor Lane (A4145) between Rickmansworth and Watford. 'Withey Bed' is an old English term used to describe the growing of different species of willow for coppicing. This was an important part of the local economy, supplying poles and witheys for basket making and other uses.

The site is approximately 7.2 hectares (17 acres) and is part of the River Colne flood plain. The area is open grassland used for cattle grazing with shallow ponds and scrapes created to attract birds, insects and animals in the remainder. The Withey Beds is listed on the National Invertebrate Site Register for supporting nationally uncommon insects, the **oak jewel beetle, soldier fly, solitary bee** and **Roesel's bush cricket**.

Like FoSL, Withey Beds is an organisation which exists to promote awareness of their site in the community and to work with the local people on conservation plans for their site. Bird boxes, including one for owls have been installed; a small area of land has been used to grow willow which is regularly coppiced and a willow hide has been constructed. A board walk has been created enabling visitors to enjoy a circular walk and a WW2 pill box was converted to a bat roost though that has since unfortunately been vandalised; a

fate we at FoSL learnt from when carrying out our own similar conversion.

## **FORTHCOMING EVENTS**

### **Working Parties for 2018**

We welcome any members who would like to get more involved in practical conservation work. The work parties last about 2½ hours. Please bring wellies/boots and strong gloves also rakes and garden cutters if you can.

### **Working Parties 2018**

**Sunday January 7th 2018**  
**Sunday February 4th 2018**  
**Sunday March 4th 2018**  
**Sunday April 8th 2018**  
**Sunday September 2nd 2018**  
**Sunday October 7th 2018**  
**Sunday November 4th 2018**  
**Sunday December 2nd 2018**  
**All start at 09.55am**

**Meet:** usually by Stocker's House (next to Stocker's Lock) but it is a good idea to check with Emma (01923 779008) before the date in just case we have changed the meeting place.

### **2018 AGM**

**The AGM will take place at 7.30pm on  
Thursday April 5th 2018**

**Baptist Church, Field Way,  
Rickmansworth WD3 7EL**

**Speaker: John Little, (see page 4 for details)**

**Subject: Making a Wildlife Garden**

### **Wildfowl Walks**

**Sunday January 14th 2018**  
**And**  
**Sunday February 11th 2018**  
**Guided walks to look at wintering wildfowl  
on the Lake.**

**Meet:** 10am on the Causeway between Stocker's Lake and Bury Lake

### **Heron & Egret Watch**

**Sunday March 25th 2018**

**1pm - 4pm**

**Our annual look at herons, egrets and  
their young**

**Meet:** on the Causeway between  
Stocker's Lake and Bury Lake



### **SUBSCRIPTIONS - Dick Beeden**



It's that time of year again. Please get your subscriptions off to Dick Beeden as soon as possible. Our aim this year is to run down our reserves with work to improve Stocker's, so every penny is needed.

Please send your £5 (and any donations) to Dick Beeden 1 Finch Lane Bushey WD23 3AH.

There is a renewal form with all the details with this newsletter.

Please note that the law on data protection is changing in May. We have therefore tried to incorporate as much of the change as possible into this year's renewal form to avoid you having to send us information again during the year. I know it is a pain but please, please, please fill in all sections of the renewal form. It is important. From May I have to have your explicit permission to contact you and the only information I am allowed to use is what you put on this year's renewal form. Just paying your subscription now and relying on the information I already have about you is not enough.

The good news is the change in the law applies to everybody and so you should see a drop generally in spam, unsolicited mail and cold calls. At least that is the idea.

## STOP PRESS

The wildlife cameras were installed 11/12 January on the heron and egret nests. Hope to have live pictures up and running by the end of the month. Should be available on our second wildfowl walk. More information as it happens on our web site.

## COMMITTEE

<b>Nigel Daley</b> ( <i>Chairman</i> )	01923 282844
<b>Ian Watson</b> ( <i>Vice chair, work parties</i> )	01923 282136
<b>Dick Beeden</b> ( <i>Treasurer &amp; membership</i> )	0208 4219958
<b>Sue Sanderson</b> ( <i>Secretary</i> )	01923 445541
<b>Simon Jones</b> ( <i>Web Site</i> )	01923 285763
<b>Trish Jeneid</b> ( <i>Newsletter editor, posters</i> )	01923 770221
<b>Emma Brading</b> ( <i>Volunteers organiser</i> )	07428 790460
<b>Steve Carter</b> ( <i>Wildlife recorder</i> )	07917 796976 Text preferred

### Your FoSL group needs you!!!

We need people for the following roles:

Fundraiser, a recruiting officer and somebody to handle publicity, could that be you in 2018?

**John Little:** Brownfield Gardener has dedicated his 4-acre garden in Basildon, South Essex, to experimenting with this ethos of reimagining industrial landscapes. He thinks of brownfield sites as "the rainforests of the UK". He wants to bring brownfield design back into the landscaping of gardens. Essex has the most brownfield sites in the UK. It's also one of the driest areas in the UK, so could be an indicator of the possible future effects of global warming. An entomologist has studied the brownfield section of John's garden, and confirmed it is the most biodiverse area within the 4-acre plot.



John likes playing with the notion that a garden can be designed by the soil rather than the plants. He uses crushed materials including crushed brick, concrete and rubble, crushed ceramics like old toilets and sinks. He's even been known to bury the odd car in the ground... apparently rabbits, robins and wrens are more than happy to move in to a rather unconventional new home!