



NEW YEAR MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIR

Nigel Daley

Firstly from myself and the Committee we would like to wish you all a Happy New Year and we are all very hopeful that 2021 will be memorable for all the right reasons. Whilst our activities have been curbed due to the ongoing Covid situation, at some stage in 2021 we are planning for and hoping to have the full programme of activities for members depending on your interests. We have planned for all of our usual events so it is business as usual with the proviso that members will need to be flexible with regard to events being ultimately dependent on the pandemic and/or how the Covid vaccine programme is going for you personally. In the meantime, we will carry on with those projects/activities that we can safely put on within the guidelines and I trust that you can bear with us on this. If in doubt, please get in touch with the event organiser or me so that numbers and Covid health and safety guidelines can be adhered to at all times.

I can report that the woodland planting scheme has made significant progress over the Autumn months with Affinity, The Trust, The Jain Community and FoSL working in collaboration to fund and plant 150 trees on the reserve. No doubt you are aware that it has recently been 150 years since Mahatma Ghandi's birth and these trees are being planted in homage to him. Much care and consideration has been given to this project and our thanks go to everyone involved, especially Josh Kalms from The Trust for his valuable advice and help in creating a planting map for this project with nature, wildlife and the reserve being at the heart of this plan. Whilst we at FoSL are the local knowledge and the eyes and ears for Stocker's, it is also great to have the expertise and advice from the Trust with the backing of Affinity Water as the landowners. It has also been extremely valuable for FoSL to work with the Jain Community. I firmly believe that these 'collaborations' will become increasingly important over the next few years, and I look forward to more collaborations in the future.

Plans for the New Year on the Reserve include hedge planting around the cattle meadows (Covid permitting!) plus a refurbished picnic table (many thanks to Arron Corcoran) and opening up and repairing the hides. We

have organised a hedge layering course for 5 FoSL members before February half-term (many thanks to the Trust for organising this) with a view to using these skills around Stocker's. Let me know if anyone is interested as we may have a few spaces still left on this course.

I am reminded of Mahatma Ghandi's often quoted remark "You must be the change that you wish to see in the world" and the one thing that FoSL has always strived to achieve is just that; we can make the difference in and around Stocker's Lake Nature Reserve.

CW Wildlife Rescue

One of the more exciting discoveries that I made just before Lockdown was when I was going for a walk around Stocker's Farm and discovered 'CW Wildlife Rescue' housed in one of the barns, just a stone's throw from Stocker's lock on the far side of the canal. I was met by Chris the patron who runs the wildlife rescue centre who proceeded to give me a truly memorable tour of the 'hospital' where I met all sorts of 'injured patients' ranging from Tawny Owls to a number of different bats and for the first time in 20 years I saw young and old Hedgehogs all being looked after by Chris and his son together with a number of young volunteers. CW Wildlife Rescue have recently celebrated their one-year anniversary and they have just gained their charitable status - congratulations from all of us at FoSL. It is such a great blessing to have Chris and his volunteers on site at Stocker's and we thank them for all that they do for the wildlife on the reserve and beyond Stocker's Lake. If you would like to get in contact with CW Wildlife Rescue or make a donation (the rescue centre runs on donations), their website is <https://cwwildliferescue.com> or call on 07508 010197 or email chris@cwwildliferescue.com

On a final note, Rob Hopkins has moved on from the Trust to pastures new (not one of our cattle meadows!). Rob has been a massive supporter of FoSL over the best part of the last two decades and has done tremendous work in and around the reserve. From all at FoSL we thank you Rob and wish you all the best in your new adventure.

Thank you for your continued support of FoSL. Please have a safe and Happy New Year.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

January

Sunday 3 **Work Party** **Cancelled**
Meet at Fisherman's Car Park end of reserve 0955hrs
unless otherwise directed

Sunday 10 **Wildfowl Walk**
Meet on the Causeway 1000hrs

February

Sunday 7 **Work Party**
Meet at Fisherman's Car Park end of reserve 0955hrs
unless otherwise directed

Sunday 21 **Wildfowl Walk**
Meet on the Causeway 1000hrs

March

Sunday 7 **Work Party**
Meet at Fisherman's Car Park end of reserve 0955hrs
unless otherwise directed

Sunday 28 **Heron and Egret Watch**
Meet on the Causeway 1300hrs for directions to
viewing location. Finish circa 1600hrs

April

Butterfly survey begins plus the wildflower count in the
cattle meadows

Sunday 4 **Work Party**
Meet at Fisherman's Car Park end of reserve 0955hrs
unless otherwise directed.

You will have received the calendar of events as usual with this newsletter either in the post or by email. Please note that it is likely that at least some of the items will be cancelled due to Covid restrictions. Please look at the web site for the latest status of each event you plan to attend and to find out if it is still running. www.fosl.org.uk To take part in a work party please contact Bob Sherren, our work party organiser, to indicate your availability on email to bob_sherren@hotmail.com

AGM

Speaker: Nick Maksimovic our grazier.

Date and venue to be announced once venues are
taking bookings.

Cattle Update 2020

Bob Sherren

The meadows at Stocker's Lake welcomed back Nick Maksimovic's Dexter cattle again this year. Six arrived in June including a mother and her calf. Later in the Summer these two left as Spike, the bull, arrived to fulfil his necessary function in order that calves will arrive in 2021! When Spike was taken back to the farm in September he was replaced by a young heifer that had been weaned on the farm.

FoSL were given permission to keep the cattle grazing longer than last year and the level of nutrients in the grass and other plants remained sufficient for them to stay right until the end of Autumn. They left in late November rather than the beginning of October. This change to the grazing licence also means that the cattle could arrive as early as April next year.

A careful rotation of each area to be grazed is important to manage the site without damaging it and allows for flexibility in responding to the ground conditions. During the very wet weather, when two of the three fields were quite waterlogged, the cattle were moved to the field nearest the Aquadrome. This meant that the cattle didn't churn up the ground and, although this field has less by way of grass growing on it, it always remains dry underfoot so that the cattle can continue to graze.

Our merry band of 'Cattle Lookers' have kept up a good level of visits to ensure the cattle are looking healthy, that they have access to water and finally that the fencing and gates are secure so the cattle don't leave - because as we all know the grass is always greener on the other side of the fence!

Such visits from the 'Lookers' also provide an opportunity to engage with passing members of the public who enjoy looking at the cattle are often sufficiently interested to ask about them or even on one occasion to email in and ask why the number of cattle went down and were the 'missing' ones alright. These conversations might even mean that we gain a few members too.

There is always room for additional members to join the group. If you would like more information please don't hesitate to contact Bob Sherren by text to 07929394120 or by email to bob_sherren@hotmail.com

Butterflies at Stocker's Lake 2020

The recording scheme

A dedicated band of enthusiasts under the leadership of Barbara James again carried out weekly counts of butterflies seen in 12 transects around the lake each week entering their results directly onto the UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme. However, due to Covid lockdown restrictions, it wasn't possible to commence surveys until mid-May which severely reduced the value of comparing results to previous years, and this will be reflected in the report.

Total butterflies counted by year

Butterfly numbers vary throughout the season with distinct peaks occurring in April and July for different species. This year, Spring was unusually warm, so the April peak was both larger and earlier than usual but due to Covid restrictions was entirely missed in our counts. Summer was disappointingly dull, and this is also reflected in the counts for later in the season.

It is therefore not surprising that this year's total of 518 is below average, but still exceeds the total counts in 2012 and 2016. Had the April peak been included, it is fair to assume that 2020 would have been close to, but slightly below the long-term average, and well down on 2017–2019.

The national picture

The report on Butterfly Conservation's Big Butterfly Count held each Summer notes a worrying 34% reduction compared to 2019. It speculates that this may again be due to the very warm Spring which led many species to emerge earlier than usual, causing the Count to catch only the tail end of their flight period.

Butterfly species counted by year

As the April peak is largely dominated by Orange Tip, Brimstone, Large and Small Whites and Holly Blue, it is not surprising that they all show large falls compared to normal. Perhaps the biggest positive news is the increase in Marbled Whites which for many years were very scarce but are much more common now on the meadows in June/July.

The number of different species recorded each week was average for most of the period. This year, due to the prevailing weather conditions, there was no influx of Summer migrants such as Painted Lady.

| | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 |
|---------------------|------|------|------|------|
| Small Skipper | 7 | 5 | 22 | 10 |
| Essex Skipper | 0 | 4 | 11 | 0 |
| Large Skipper | 0 | 1 | 7 | 2 |
| Clouded Yellow | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Brimstone | 10 | 18 | 35 | 2 |
| Large White | 60 | 136 | 103 | 50 |
| Small White | 109 | 358 | 170 | 115 |
| Green-veined White | 21 | 69 | 13 | 43 |
| Orange Tip | 38 | 47 | 58 | 6 |
| Small Copper | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Common Blue | 4 | 18 | 17 | 5 |
| Holly Blue | 8 | 27 | 22 | 5 |
| Red Admiral | 50 | 16 | 35 | 30 |
| Painted Lady | 2 | 0 | 10 | 0 |
| Small Tortoiseshell | 15 | 5 | 4 | 5 |
| Peacock | 13 | 23 | 16 | 25 |
| Comma | 52 | 24 | 28 | 19 |
| Speckled Wood | 64 | 123 | 68 | 29 |
| Gatekeeper | 66 | 39 | 57 | 30 |
| Meadow Brown | 235 | 154 | 126 | 115 |
| Small Heath | 0 | 4 | 3 | 0 |
| Ringlet | 49 | 36 | 19 | 7 |
| Marbled white | 12 | 5 | 2 | 19 |

More statistics and charts are available on our website
www.fosl.org.uk

Bird Report 2020

Steve Carter

January started with a few Fieldfare and Goldeneye (up to 16 individuals), high numbers of Shoveler, a few Siskin and a hunting Peregrine. Later in the month 26 Wigeon and a yellow legged Gull were spotted.

February started wet and windy and on the 11th Storm Clara blew in followed by Storm Denis causing some damage to trees and the River Colne to rise. An escaped Carolina Wood Duck was seen near Stocker's house and a single Goosander at month's end with Storm Jorge and more rain.

March arrived drier followed by showers and Corona Virus. Mid month 20 Wigeon on the flooded field at the farm.

2 Oystercatchers on the 7th, 3 Redpoll on the 8th and then with the Pandemic kicking in confined to barracks. Fieldfares on the 31st.

April saw Ringed Plover and the first Swallow on the farm, and a Whitethroat singing on the 11th. Cuckoo on the 17th opposite Cook's wood. More Waders at the

farm and Greenshank on the 19th, followed by 3 little Ringed Plover and 3 Ruff.

Swallows increasing, Lapwing displaying and a single Dunlin on the 27th. Towards month's end Yellow Wagtails, taking our mind off the Virus with excellent birding.

May arrived with hailstones and heavy showers and a single Ringed Plover obliged at the farm, by the 2nd two Ringed plover. Dunlin still present. On the 4th Whimbrel arrived with four Wood Sandpipers. Migration interrupted on the 5th with a Barn Owl, on the 7th up to 5 Plovers, 3 Ringed and 2 LRP. Water receding on the 9th. A busy month with up to 8 Common Terns and 6 Calling Cetti's Warblers. Stock dove at nest box, Greylag with juveniles.

A rare Brown Argus Butterfly obliged while walking the cow meadow. Warblers increasing in particular Cetti's and Garden. A single Willow Warbler due to habitat loss.

June arrived - the Willow Warbler predated by a Jay, 3 Kingfishers, 26 common Tern. On the 8th a rare Marsh Warbler arrived along the Colne. Linnets at the farm, more rain on the 18th. Kingfisher feeding young. At month's end Tern hide vandalised and the bridge over the Colne between Inns and Stocker's.

July Covid boredom kicking in caused more vandalism from bored, ignorant people on the reserve. 18 Common Tern still present which fluctuates due to Gull predation. A small passage of Hirundines on the 8th, mid month more vandalism to hides, temperatures increase to 33c. More disturbance on lake with canoes etc. A single Barnacle at month's end probably an escapee.

August hits 37c and no early records from lake, significant litter along the Colne from the lemming like public, isolated thunderstorms and most terns taken by Lesser Black Backs. A Hobby over on the 18th. Two Ravens over the West side of lake on the 21st. On the 27th a great crested Grebe eating a crayfish.

September a proven breeding record of Common Buzzard as an adult fed a juvenile. A passage of Sand Martin (around 50) on the 14th, 5 Chiffchaff on the 19th. Two Stonechats on the farm.

October another Peregrine over, significant rain from storm Alex flooding the Colne and boundary paths. A few Siskin, Redwings and Meadow Pipit, continuous rain. Contractors removing Japanese knotweed, month's end a Merlin over West of lake.

November 13th Egyptian Geese, Stonechat and Redwing on farm. A single Goosander, while a Kingfisher caught a Dace on the Colne. Mid-month a few Fieldfare showing up to 80 walkers in an hour, foggy end to the month.

December a single GBB Gull showing, Stonechats on the farm and up to 61 Red Crested Pochards. 40 Siskin,

Goldeneye increasing and a single Barnacle at month's end.

I would like to thank all the contributors, contractors, bailiffs, fishermen and birders who have contributed to this report in these difficult times, especially when the general public were over running the lake causing mayhem and destruction. The poachers were better mannered! In particular, the fishing bailiffs of the Colne and Stocker's who were on the front line, however there was a disappointing response from the conservationists. We are all in this together so thank you all. List of contributors, in no particular order: D Jones, C Ashton, P Graham, G Hinton, S Middleton, Alan Gardiner, Ian Jackson, Pinner RSPB, the late Geoff Lapworth, J Thompson, Anna Marett, Steve Hughes, Roger Harbird, Ian Bryant, John Newson, P Luckhurst, Chris Sharp, Lee Evans, Roger Dewey, R Ness, Charles Ramsay, Graham Clark, Paul Ward, David Neal, M Searle, Simon Jones, Stephen Younger, Paul Lewis, Peter Harman, James Gibson, Gary Mason, Axel Kirby, Dale Ayres, Quentin Cobham, Sam Clare, Tony Atkins, Andy Longfellow, Richard Beeden, Tony Shine, Simon Hibbert, All members of North Harrow Waltonians and BACAS. Please forgive anybody not mentioned and please use Herts Bird Club for your sightings as the hides and lists are out of use since Covid in March 2020.



List of species highlights.

Barnacle Geese, Red crested Pochards, Mandarin, Carolina Wood Duck, Cuckoo, Ringed Plover, Little Ringed Plover, Whimbrel, Ruff, Dunlin, Green Sandpiper, Greenshank, Wood Sandpiper, Yellow legged Gull, Honey Buzzard, Buzzard, Barn Owl, Merlin, Hobby, Peregrine, Raven, Yellow Wagtail, Marsh Warbler, Spotted Flycatcher, Stonechat, Redpoll.

Summary 110 species recorded which was very good considering the current restrictions.

Stay Safe and above all protect Stocker's for everyone.

Tern Raft

Dick Beeden

In the October newsletter I mentioned that we were considering buying a new tern raft, using a design pioneered by Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust and Ely Wildspaces. We have now placed an order for one raft with K K Mouldings, a boat builders in Ely. Hopefully we will have delivery in the early Spring so that we can launch the raft ready for the terns when they arrive, usually mid April onwards. We thought we would try out one and, if it works, replace our other rafts as needs be

over the coming few years. Herts and Middx have expressed an interest too. So watch this space.

Cameras

Dick Beeden

Annual maintenance took place in December as usual. Despite the vandalism earlier in the year in Kingfisher hide the functioning of the cameras was not affected. The power supply from the pumping station has been reliable after some initial problems. As I write this I am hoping for good news on the possibility of streaming the pictures and live video straight to our web site and I will keep you updated on that.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Dick Beeden

It is that time of year again. I would urge you all to renew because in the main it is your £5 subscriptions and donations (no change again this year) that enable us to continue our good work on the reserve, particularly when we need to meet the cost of using outside contractors as we did with the cattle fencing. Without it our work would be severely restricted. Membership runs 1 January to 31 December each year and technically the renewal date is 1 January (unless you are among the 200 or so that now pay by standing order where your renewal date is the date of your standing order). Whilst I am happy to receive money at any time of the year, renewing early in the New Year would save me from jogging your elbow later on. Your renewal form is either with this newsletter or will follow shortly. May I urge you to use the standing order facility on your bank account as it will save both you and me work in the long run and avoid me sending you those irritating reminders.

For most of you, no doubt the greatest benefits are to have somewhere local to walk among nature's wonders and know that you are doing your bit to help preserve the habitats of the many plants and creatures that call Stocker's Lake home. It has also, of course, been one of the few pleasures permitted during these strange lockdown days. Clearly, many of you have done just that as membership has held up well in 2020 despite the restrictions on what we have been allowed to do at the lake.

Membership numbers are important. The bigger our organisation, the more influential we can be. Big business, local and national governments tend to ignore one person speaking for themselves; but if that person is speaking for hundreds, they are more likely to hear that voice and act. Stocker's is always under pressure

and the position has changed little in recent years. 40 years ago, it was the M25, now it is cutting the track for HS2 and the effect that could have on the water in the area. Land is still wanted for yet more housing, not to mention the warehouse proposals just along the river at Maple Cross. Both Three Rivers and Hillingdon have already identified 3 large pieces of land close to our reserve as possible sites for housing. We will, of course, voice our views and objections as strongly as possible. We would like to think that all of you are behind us. So please everyone, make a special effort to renew and help make our voice heard and heeded. And while you are at it, why not encourage friends or other family members to join?

COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND CONTACT DETAILS

| | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Nigel Daley (Chairman) | 01923 282844 |
| Dick Beeden (Treasurer & membership) | 0208 4219958 |
| Jack Westbrook (Work Party Organiser) | 07716 296093 01923 448 316 |
| Larry Hurst (Fundraiser, Publicity) | 01923 848440 |
| Simon Jones (Web Site) | 01923 285763 |
| Linda Ascroft (Events organiser) | 07791 971323 |
| Susan Thomas (Newsletter editor) | 01923 240764 |
| Russell Ball (Membership recruitment) | 07884 426671 |
| Bob Sherren (Volunteers organiser) | 07929 394120 bob_sherren@hotmail.com |
| Steve Carter (Wildlife recorder) | 07917 796976 Text preferred |

HELP REQUIRED

**The Committee is looking for a Secretary
Any volunteers out there?
Please contact Nigel Daley, our Chairman**

**Leaving a Lasting Legacy
If you enjoy nature, a legacy can ensure
the future of our wonderful reserve. Please
consider leaving a Gift to Friends of
Stocker's Lake in your Will. There are
inheritance tax advantages of leaving a
legacy to a Charity.**