

Friends of STOCKER'S LAKE



NEWSLETTER NO. 92 JAN 2023

CHAIR'S NEW YEAR MESSAGE

Nigel Daly

I trust that all FoSL members had a safe and satisfying New Year, and for those that have had to face difficult times and challenges over the last 12 months, my thoughts are with you.

In this New Year, I am reminded by Plato that "The beginning is the most important part of the work". However, sometimes 'a good ending' can be equally important, especially when leaving a lasting legacy in a will for a favoured charity. We have received bequests from members over recent years which have enabled FoSL to purchase new hand tools, a petrol hay/grass cutting mower and of course, the current CCTV system on the heronry, not to mention the gifting of the island on the River Colne. Thanks to all our members (past and present) and their families for this generosity. We on the committee will ensure that these funds are used wisely and for the benefit of Stocker's Lake local nature reserve. If you would like to leave a bequest for FoSL (or for that matter, any other charity) in your will, these gifts are always very gratefully received. My late Mother and Father-in-law included 'a letter of wishes' as an addition to their existing wills which provided guidance for me and my wife whilst dealing with their estate, no need to change their will, no need for witnesses, simple with no fuss at all.

Happy New Year to one and all.

SUBSCRIPTIONS AND MEMBERSHIP

Dick Beeden Treasurer

It is that time of year again. I would urge you all to renew because in the main it is your £5 subscriptions (no change again this year) and donations that enable us to continue our good work on the reserve. 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 members who now pay by standing order. If you are, 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. The banking details are the same for all on line payments:

Standing Orders or one off payments namely:

Account Name: Friends of Stocker's Lake
(It is a business account with Barclays bank Your system may ask/check this)

Account number: 73219968

Sort Code: 20-91-79

Please, please, please use your surname and postcode as the reference. Otherwise it can be tricky for me to match the payment to you.

For most of you, no doubt the greatest benefits of membership 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. Clearly, many of you have done just that as membership is again around 700.

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 so please everyone, make a special effort to renew and help to make our voice heard and heeded. And while you are at it, why not encourage friends or other family members to join?

A copy of our updated Financial Report is available on our website www.fosl.org

Friends of Stocker's Lake is a registered charity No. 1080501. It aims to support conservation at Stocker's Lake Local Nature Reserve.

www.fosl.org.uk

www.facebook.com/friendsOfStokersLake

Twitter @FoStokersLake

If you get this newsletter by post but have an email address we can use, please email it to treasurer@fosl.org.uk

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Please help if you can

We are looking for volunteers/surveyors to help us with the following activities and exciting projects:

Surveyors: with a reasonable/some knowledge of wildflowers (and possibly grasses) wanted for FoSL's monthly wild flower surveys on the 3 cattle meadows during the months April – October. Time required is half a day, once a month. The information is collated by HMWT, with a view to seeing how the wildflower population changes as the years go on. Please contact Linda Ascroft 07791 971 323

Work Party Volunteers: for a few hours on the first Sunday morning most months (though you don't have to do every month) to help maintain our beautiful Stocker's Lake. Contact Jack Westbrook 07716 296 093

Bat and Bird Box survey: to use 3 word app to log their location so we can monitor their breeding success. Now is a good time of year to do this before the trees leaf up. Please contact Dick Beeden 07711 655 078

Secretary: This is not an arduous job. For job description and more information Contact Chair Nigel Daley 01923 282 844.

Recruitment: to help at our recruitment days in May and possibly September. Please contact Russell Ball 07884 426 671

LINKS TO CHORLEYWOOD RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

As a marketing exercise we recently established a link with Chorleywood Residents Association (CRA). As a result FoSL is now promoted on the Association's "Friends page" at <https://chorleywoodresidents.co.uk/our-village/friends/>. Also Chorleywood residents who subscribe to CRA's monthly email newsletter should in future notice the occasional article highlighting FoSL events or activities.

Committee Members/Contact Details

Nigel Daley Chairman	07921 650322 ndaley@ntlworld.com
Richard Beeden Treasurer & membership	07711 655 078 treasurer@fosl.org.uk
Jack Westbrook Lead Warden	07716 296093 warden@fosl.org.uk
Larry Hurst Fundraiser, Publicity	07831 767420
Simon Jones Website	07799 477902 webmaster@fosl.org.uk
Linda Ascroft Events organiser	07791 971323
Susan Thomas Newsletter editor and Data Protection Officer	susanethomas@ btinternet.com
Russell Ball Assistant Warden Membership recruitment	07884 426671
Bob Sherren Assistant Warden Cattle Lookers	07929 394120
Steve Carter Wildlife recorder	07917 796976 Text preferred
Nicola Pazdzierska Assistant Warden	07910697723 nvpaz1@yahoo.com

FoSL 2023 Wall Calendars Project Update

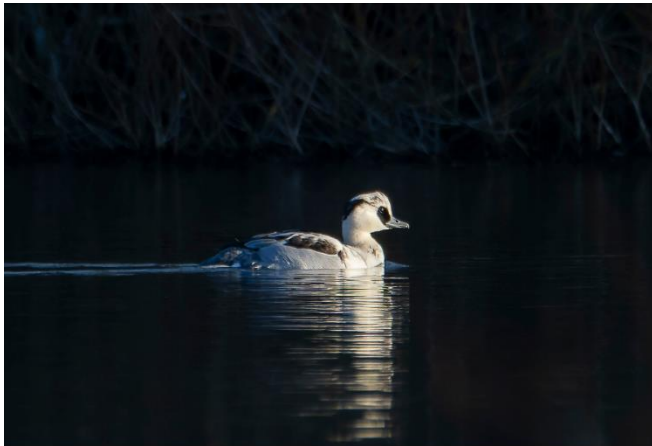
At its September meeting our FoSL Committee authorised the printing of 150 FoSL 2023 Wall calendars with a view to selling as many as possible at a price of £10 each and hopefully making a good profit. 3 calendars were given as courtesy Christmas gifts to each of Josh Kalms (HMWT), Sophie Mortimer (Affinity Water) and Ian Watson (our former Chairman). After postage and packing etc we made a profit of **around £550**. There have been other benefits too. It has attracted at least one new (photographer) member and has generated some positive publicity beyond our existing membership.

Rare Visitor to the Lake

A rare visitor, the Smew, was being seen regularly on the lake during early December.

The Smew is a small, attractive, diving duck which is a rare winter visitor to the UK. In a normal year only between 100 and 200 birds are reported nationally and it is several years since one was last recorded at the reserve. So the news that one was being seen regularly at the western end of the lake, day after day, was very exciting. It led to plenty of birdwatchers visiting, hoping for a glimpse.

The bird was seen daily from December 4th to 9th inclusive but then the recent severe, cold spell of weather set in and the lake froze over. This forced



Smew at Stocker's Lake on 8th December 2022 - © Dave Watson

many of our over-wintering wildfowl including, we think, the Smew, to depart, just temporarily we hope. To keep up to date with latest news of the Smew as well as of any other sightings of note please monitor the sightings page of our website at www.fosl.org.uk/sightings.

Cold snap freezes lake almost completely

The recent cold spell of weather resulted in Stocker's Lake being almost completely frozen over. As a result most of our over-wintering wildfowl seem to have temporarily departed. On the plus side the lake looked incredibly beautiful in the still, frosty conditions.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Further details and updates will be on the website

<https://www.fosl.org.uk/upcoming-events>

AGM 27 April 7.30 pm

Mill End Baptist Church, Rickmansworth

January 2023

Sunday 8th Work Party 0955 hrs

Check location with Jack Westbrook

Sunday 15th our 1st Wildfowl Walk

Meet at the Causeway Seat 1000 hrs

February 2023

Sunday 5th Work Party 0955 hrs

Check location with Jack Westbrook

Sunday 19th 2nd Wildfowl Walk

Meet at the Causeway seat 1000 hrs

March 2023

Sunday 5th Work Party 0955 hrs

Check location with Jack Westbrook

Sunday 26th Heron and Egret Watch

Meet at the Causeway Seat 1300 hrs for directions to viewing location. Finish circa 1600 hrs

April 2023

Butterfly survey begins plus the wildflower count in the cattle meadows

Sunday 2nd Work Party 0955 hrs
Check location with Jack Westbrook

May 2023

Sunday 7nd Work Party 0955 hrs
Check location with Jack Westbrook

Sunday 14th Spring Chorus & Warbler Walk

Meet at the Causeway Seat 0830 hrs

Saturday 20th & Sunday 21st Recruitment Drive

Details nearer the time. Let Russell Ball know you are available to help

If possible check our website for the latest info. Reminder emails for work parties may say meet elsewhere. Walks are free, about 2.5 km (1.5 miles) and take about 2.5 hours. Wear stout shoes or wellies. Bring insect repellent if you need it and gardening gloves to work parties. To help you find where to go please use the what3words app. Some locations are given below

Fisherman's Car Park: [tester.goal.pipe](#)
Iron Bridge films: [wink.tile](#)
Causeway Seat list: [chase.from](#)
Stockers House entrance: [verse.track.hint](#)

REPORTS

Work Party 2 October

Jack Westbrook

This month we put our resources into tackling some encroaching willow around a small patch of grassland. It was a very satisfying morning's work in helping to maintain a balance between grassland and woodland, thus encouraging a more biodiverse area.

Meanwhile, Nigel led a group including the Duke of Edinburgh students in the Iron Bridge area, mowing path edges, preserving the coral gate and kissing gate, and removing more graffiti.

Finally, Vasha undertook some much needed clearance of undergrowth around the Gandhi commemorative tree.

We were all spurred on with a coffee and tea break, and a few nibbles supplied by Nilesch and me.

Thanks to Nilesch & Vasha Dodhia, Ken Davies, Tony & Sheila Lee, Josh Kalms, Russell Ball, Cathy Green, Nigel Daley, Stanley, Hattie and Mimi.

Work Party 6th November

Jack Westbrook

British weather eh! Well it was a deluge that forced me to belatedly call off the work party. However I got to the meeting point to inform anyone who missed the postponement email. Low and behold it stopped raining and brightened up. We had five volunteers that arrived, fully armed with loppers etc who were keen to stay, so we managed to work albeit a bit soggily, on Tern and Kingfisher hides, clearing overhanging branches and widening the view for the bird enthusiasts.

Many thanks to Christine and Nick Grey, Mike Lansdowne, Philip Davies and Cathy Green.



Work Party 4th December

Jack Westbrook

Nothing like a bit of hedge laying to keep warm, now that temperatures are falling. This month we continued along from a section we completed successfully last winter. We were greatly assisted by Alex, who gave instruction to a number of us in the art of hedge laying last year, and is now a member of FoSL.

Meanwhile, we had another group cutting back overhanging hawthorn from a pathway that was becoming hazardous to walkers.

Our resident group of Duke of Edinburgh youngsters set to work on some whip planting around the cattle fields.

Finally, near the Uxbridge Road entrance, we cut down a large non-native Cherry Laurel shrub, enabling more light for native species.

Many thanks to Ken Davies, Rob Liddel, Peter Ewer, Cathy Green, Alison Marriott, Alex Popple, Josh Kalms, Bob Sherrin, Russell Ball, Nicola Pazdzierska, Nigel Daley, Hattie, Mimi, Hannah and Stanley.

Our Annual Butterfly Survey showed that 2022 Butterfly numbers were up but were disappointing again



As usual a team of FoSL observers monitored the reserve's butterflies in 2022. Given the hot, dry weather during parts of the summer, which would normally be expected to be good for butterflies, 2022 must be classed as another disappointing year even though the total number recorded (547) was better than both 2021 (446) and covid curtailed 2020 (518).

Our thanks to Cliff Buckton and team for conducting the survey and for producing this report. Earlier reports

covering each calendar year back to 2014 can be viewed or downloaded from our Sightings Page. Our full FoSL Butterflies report 2022 can be viewed or downloaded from our website. www.fosl.org.uk

Bat Survey September 2022

Patty Briggs

The season started well and in a very short trapping session we caught 3 *Nathusius pipistrelles*, 9 Soprano pipistrelles & 1 Daubenton's bat. A recording breaking year for Stockers!



The National Nathusius Monitoring Programme

came to a grinding halt with the outbreak of Covid. There was a serious concern that bat workers might give Covid to the bats. Following much discussion, some strict protocols were introduced by the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources) and Natural England issued the national licence to restart surveying this autumn.

Stocker's Lake Nature Reserve has always been one of the best sites for *Nathusius pipistrelles* (*Pipistrellus nathusii*). Three surveys have been carried out at Stocker's resulting in 14 *Nathusius* being ringed including 5 females. 2022 has been a record breaking year for the site. The best survey was on 28th September when we caught 10 *Nathusius* in just 1 1/2 hours before we had to stop mist netting due to the low temperature. We were obviously in the right place at the right time for *Nathusius* to be passing through - maybe they had recently migrated to the UK?

Other species encountered were Common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*), Soprano pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*) and Daubenton's bat (*Myotis daubentonii*).