



CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

Nigel Daley

What a marvellous evening we all had at the AGM at The Baptist Church in Mill End last month. Great to catch up with some familiar faces and what a thoroughly entertaining evening listening to Paul Barritt talk and play his violin, he was truly mesmerising. Many thanks Paul and great to see so many FoSL members present. Also, thanks to all on the FoSL committee for playing their part making the evening so enjoyable, thank you one and all.

May I take this opportunity of welcoming all new FoSL members to our group, we hope we can encourage you to stay with us for many years to come and of course, to continue enjoying the Reserve. At the recent AGM, members present were encouraged to recruit a friend or family member to our ranks. This worked reasonably successfully with a number of new members sending in their £5 membership subs. Could I ask all members if they could try and recruit another member between now, and perhaps the next newsletter in the Autumn.

I have heard that one person, who will remain nameless has paid the membership for friends and family on their Birthdays and at Christmas. An unusual but nevertheless effective method of recruitment! The easiest way to recruit is to join online via our website: - setting up a standing order ensures that we achieve continuity of membership year on year, after all, our subs are only £5 (much less than other similar organisations). If we double our membership, it means we can spend another £3500 on the reserve each year or save up for a big capital project such as 'The Cattle Meadow' every couple of years. Our members are the best way of recruiting the public. Go on, FoSL needs you! Of course, membership is not just about money in the bank account it is also about FoSL being a powerful voice both within and outside our community ensuring that Stocker's Lake is protected for years to come.

I would like to make a special thank you to Trish Jeneid, our newsletter Editor who is stepping down after this newsletter. Trish has for some years now tirelessly put together our newsletter, her humour and enthusiasm will be greatly missed on the committee, watch this space in our Autumn newsletter for our new editor

WORK ON THE RESERVE

Work Party Sunday 6th January - Ian Watson

Our third and last work party at the southern, Springwell Lane end of the lake where we continued the job of clearing the shade and undergrowth on the lake shore and removed some of the piles of brash and branches which had resulted from our work.

We also took the opportunity to make 41 poles which can be used for hedge layering. These we stacked in the reserve by Stocker's House. In all a good job on which we were complimented by Josh Wells of the Trust.

Many thanks to Emma Brading, Nigel Daley, Ken Davies Nilesh Dодhia, Mike Lansdowne, Peter Ewer, Tony Lee and Ian Watson

Work Party Sunday 10th February - Ian Watson

This was the work party cancelled for 3rd February. Trouble was that because of the weather and muddy conditions, the work I had planned (delineating the public footpaths through the cattle meadows) wasn't possible. So, what to do? Well, we did a few very useful repairing and strengthening jobs on some old fences; we toured the whole area of the cattle meadows collecting rubbish including stuff left by our tramp (yes, he's back, folks!); we cleared the brambles in front of Fort Drew Hide including 30 or 40 beer cans!

Oh, and we recruited a new member who paid up on the spot Not a bad morning and the biscuits were excellent!

Thanks to Russell Ball, Nigel Daley, Nilesh Dодhia, Peter Ewer, Michael Lansdowne, Sheila and Tony Lee, Alison Marriott, Eileen Petch, Ian Watson and Jack Westbrook

Work Party Sunday 3rd March - Ian Watson

A marvellous turn out considering the foul weather. This enabled us to do a very ecologically important job of hedge planting on the boundaries of the three meadows between the river and the lake which are now fenced in readiness for cattle which we hope to introduce in April or May.



Our work consisted of thickening up the existing hedges that we planted a few years ago, which are now better protected by the cattle fence, and creating new hedges. It is worth noting that FoSL has now planted 1300 hedge plants to create all the hedges to be found in the reserve. We had 290 to plant, mainly hawthorn, but also a smattering of field maple, hazel, hornbeam, spindle, common buckthorn, common dogwood, guelder rose, holly and dog rose. We planted most of them and Jack and I will plant the rest of them on Tuesday along with a few oaks and alders in other parts of the reserve.

Well done all, but particularly Jack Westbrook who was in charge and had done an awful lot of organising on the previous two days. We welcomed four new work party volunteers, Maureen & Chris Bowles and Alex & Rob Liddles. It was good to see Dawn Goodair at her first work party of the year. We'd missed her. It was also nice to see Lonneke Klein-Aarts from the London Wildlife Trust who made the interesting comment that hedges that have a tree sticking out every 30 yards or so are particularly good for the environment.

The next work party will probably be on the Uxbridge side of the river, clearing up rubbish left by the Great British Public during 2018.

Thanks for splendid work go to Russell Ball, Emma Brading, Chris & Maureen Bowles, Nigel Daley, Dawn Goodair, Lonneke Klein-Aarts, Ray Kristofiak, Sheila & Tony Lee, Alex & Rob Liddell, Michael Lowndes, Bob Sherrin, Ian Watson and Jack Westbrook.

Work Party Sunday 7th April - Ian Watson

The main job was to clear rubbish from the area on the other side of the River Colne coming down from the Uxbridge Road to the iron river bridge. Despite the fact that we had had a major clearance this time last year we collected an amazing amount of junk - enough to fill 2 large builders sacks plus 3 smaller sacks. We can always rely on the Great British Public!



Russell Ball set up our small marquee and did some good recruiting. The wonderful sign designed by Emma Brading and produced by Nilesh Dodhia caused a lot of interest. Many, many thanks to Nilesh who paid for it and gave it to FoSL.

Meanwhile, elsewhere on the reserve, Jack Westbrook led a small team strengthening the cattle fencing and planting a few of the hawthorns left over from our last work party.

All good work thanks to Russell Ball, Nigel Daley, Ken Davies, Evelyn Fox, Sheila & Tony Lee, Alex & Rob Liddell (Alex is using his FoSL work as part of his Edinburgh Award qualification), Eileen Petch, Ian Watson and Jack Westbrook.

Later in the week Jack and Ian spent a couple of hours or so completing the fence strengthening and planting the last 3 hawthorns.

Work Party Sunday 12th May - Ian Watson

Much excellent work done to prepare our three meadows between the lake and the River Colne for the introduction of cattle in early June. Our strong men moved huge quantities of earth from the middle meadow to repair the ground at the main field gate entrance to the reserve which had been badly damaged by heavy fencing machinery in January, so that every time it rained it turned the path into something from the Western Front. Other members then raked and compressed it into shape and dug a little drainage ditch to one side. Meanwhile, Jack Westbrook led a little party extending and cattle-wiring the fence by the corral. They also managed to sink and cement in a support post for one of the field gates. Finally, Evelyn Fox scattered grass seed on some damaged areas.

Biscuits were at their usual high standard and a whole large tin was demolished. Later a delegation of biscuits, led by Jamie Dodger, asked not to be invited to any more work parties.

Whilst all this was going on, we managed to do some good membership recruitment from passers-by who were very interested in what we were doing and in the prospect of cattle.

Well done! Russell Ball, Nigel Daley, Nilesh Dodhia, Evelyn Fox, Ray Kristofiak, Tony & Ian Lee, Alex & Rob Liddell, Rowena, David & Johnny Peter, Bob Sherrin, Martin Taylor, Jack Westbrook and Ian Watson. It was very nice to welcome the Peter family and Martin Taylor who are new to our work parties.

EVENTS ON THE RESERVE

Wildfowl Walk Sunday 13th January - Dick Beeden

Dick Beeden and Anna Marrett lead the walk which was attended by about a dozen people. Like last year it was dull but not too cold. Unlike last year it was windy and the sun came out during the latter part of the walk. Fortunately, the light was good enough for identifying the birds. There was a good number on the lake but the surrounding trees etc were fairly quiet. We saw all the species we heard and ended with a tally of 36 species (about the same as last year).

The full list was:

Great-crested Grebe; Cormorant; Grey Heron; Mute Swan; Canada Goose (lots; one flock had about 50

birds); **Mallard; Shoveler; Red-crested Pochard; Pochard; Tufted Duck; Wigeon** (good numbers compared with none last year); **Gadwall** (several compared with none last year); **Wren; Goldeneye;** (males and females in modest numbers some displaying); **Kestrel; Red Kite** (over the aquadrome car park on the way out); **Moorhen; Coot; Lapwing (40+); Black-headed Gull (lots); Common Gull (2); Lesser Black-backed Gull** (several); **Herring Gull; Woodpigeon; Ring-necked Parakeet; Robin; Blackbird; Song Thrush** (on our way in); **Goldcrest; Blue Tit; Great Tit; Long-tailed Tit; Magpie; Carrion Crow; Magpie; Siskin; House Sparrow.** There were some noticeable absentees apart from Smew and Goosander namely Little egret; Kingfisher; Woodpecker; Chaffinch and Starling but I guess you cannot have everything.

Wildfowl Walk Sunday 10th February - Dick Beeden

Unlike last year it was dull, dull, dull with a cool breeze. But at least it was not raining for the 5 of us as we walked from the causeway down the canal side. Unsurprisingly birds generally were conspicuous by their absence. Again, without some really cold weather up north bird numbers on the lake remain low. But it does not explain the lack of birds among the trees. Of course, they are not calling yet and the light was poor, which makes spotting and identifying them harder.



So, what did we see? On the lake: The dabbling ducks were represented by some **Wigeon, Mallard, Gadwall,** and **Shoveler.** The diving duck representatives were **Tufted, Pochard, Red Crested Pochard, Goldeneye both male and female** (some mating display this year). No sawbills (Smew, Goosander or Mergansers) or Kingfisher. The lake also produced **Coot, Moorhen, Great Crested Grebe, Canada Geese, Cormorant, Lapwing,** numerous **Black Headed Gull** (a few gaining their black heads as they come into breeding plumage), a possible **Herring,** and a few **Lesser Black Backed Gull** and **Mute Swans.**

So much for the lake what about in the trees? A good flock of siskins, (a first for some) on the walk, **Longtail, Blue and Great Tits, Woodpigeon, Ring-necked Parakeet, Magpie and Crows.** We also saw **Blackbirds and Robin** and that was about it. Good numbers of **Grey Herons** were sitting on nests in the trees in the usual area and a first for a number of years, a couple of nests are visible from the causeway, and a **Buzzard** was spotted over the trees by the canal, not a common sight.

All in all, not too bad a morning given how quiet it was ornithologically among the trees with a tally of 30 species by the end of the morning.

Heron & Egret Watch Sunday 24th March Dick Beeden

Different again this year. Spring really has sprung. There were lots of Little Egrets in the trees among the herons though it did not look as though they were nesting yet. But the herons were well on with raising their next generation with chicks still in their eggs some a few days old and even some 3 or 4 weeks old meaning they were laid around the end of January! How do we know all this? Because the cameras are up and running this year. We have pictures on our web site and video on our Facebook page

<https://www.facebook.com/FriendsOfStokersLake/videos/312431255664325/>

It was a glorious sunny day although the breeze had a bit of a bite to it. This year we had a recruitment tent on the

causeway thanks to Russell and Nilesh in particular together with help from Larry, Linda and the Lee's to name those I know about. They had the laptop with the pictures and videos from the nests resulting in 19 new members signed up! plus some straight donations from people not local to the area but willing to give us their support. About £120 in all. Great for our balance sheet and great for raising awareness and putting what we are doing among and before the wider public.

Again, we posted notices from the causeway and it clearly worked because Anna Carol and I were kept pretty busy most of the afternoon and were able to show people a variety of nests with herons on them plus lots of little egrets. There were a good few oo's and ah's as they saw herons up close for the first time. Most were surprised that they were looking at the far side of the lake. We handed out some 30 or so recruitment leaflets. Let's hope we get some returns. A successful afternoon.

What else was about? To tell the truth we were so busy we had little time to look. There were some small birds. Tits, **Chaffinches, Wrens and Dunnock**, kept us entertained as they flitted in and out of the trees and bushes around us. **Greenfinch** too but no Cetti's Warbler or red kites this year. Butterflies included **Brimstone and Peacock** and a couple of others where we did not get a positive ID. There was a scattering of ducks out on the lake (**Tufted, Mallard, Shoveler** and unexpectedly a pair of **Goldeneye**) as well as **Coots, Moorhens, - Great-crested Grebe, some Lesser black backed and numerous Black headed Gulls** in full breeding plumage. We saw **Cormorants, Swans, Canada and a couple of Greylag Geese all flying or cruising by** during the afternoon.

Next year I am hoping to do a live show from Kingfisher hide so watch this space.

Warbler Walk Sunday 5th May - Dick Beeden

Seven of us this year gathered on the causeway at half past eight for a walk round the lake. The weather was sunny, but chilly and blustery and even the sun had largely disappeared by the time we finished. We saw or in many cases only heard most of the expected birds. There were good numbers of **swallows, no house martins and swifts** over Bury and Stockers Lakes. We had only glimpses of most birds. They were really well buried in the foliage which was in most cases well developed. Several **Cetti's Warbler** called from various points round the lake but as ever remained well hidden. **Warblers, Reed, a few Sedge, Garden, Blackcap, Chiff Chaff** were heard at many spots and we debated about a **Whitethroat** near the Iron Bridge. Otherwise **Blackbirds, Wrens (in profusion), Robins, Chaffinches**, and plenty of **Blue, Great and Long Tail Tits (with young)** were seen and serenaded us as we passed along.

We saw several **Common Terns**. However, the tern rafts seem to have been taken over completely again by **Black Headed Gulls**. No raptors seen this year which was a little surprising as **Red Kites** are now quite frequently seen over the lake. There are numerous **Heron and Little Egret** nests in the heronry and we used our new cameras to have a close-up view of them and their young. As far as we could tell all the Heron chicks have now hatched. Not many **cormorants** this year. There were a couple of **Pochards a few Moorhens** and small numbers of **Tufted Ducks, Coots and Canada Geese** (with young). Including the other common species like **Woodpigeon, Crow, Magpie** and so on, we spotted and/or heard about 46 species altogether (see list below).

Too cold for butterflies this year and no deer either although they had left scat on one of the cattle meadows. All in all, a good morning.

Great crested grebe	Blackcap
Great cormorant	Wren
Grey heron	Dunnock
Little egret	Robin
Mute swan	Blackbird
Greylag goose	Swift
Canada goose	Cetti's warbler
Egyptian goose	Sedge warbler
Mallard	Reed warbler
Pochard	Garden warbler
Tufted duck	Whitethroat (heard)
Stock dove or feral pigeon	Gt Spotted Woodpecker (heard)
Moorhen	Chiffchaff
Common coot	Long-tailed tit
Black-headed gull	Blue tit
Herring gull	Great tit
Common tern	Common magpie
Woodpigeon	Barn swallow
Collared dove	House martin
Ring-necked parakeet	Chaffinch
Jay	Common treecreeper
House sparrow	Reed bunting
Common tern	Barn swallow

Rickmansworth Festival

FoSL Recruitment Days - Russell Ball

On 18th and 19th May, 16 FoSL volunteers turned up to our stand in the Fisherman's car park. to assist in the recruitment of new members. Whilst the weather was good, new recruitment (17) was down on last year (34+). Was this due in part to the Watford cup-final? Or is it time to try another recruitment spot? Perhaps by the Kingfisher hide?

We also collected £10.00 in donations and as is proving to be the case, ably assisted with our new colourful membership pop-up banner: kindly sponsored by Nilesh Dodhia. Despite the relatively low number of signed up new members over those two days it was good to chat to passing FoSL members many of whom were pleased to see the FoSL conservation works progressing around the lake.

*My special thanks to all those who helped to recruit new FoSL members: your time is very much appreciated.
Linda, Nilesh, Alex & Rob, Alison, Larry, Jack, Tony & Sheila, Eileen, Evelyn, Krishna, Nigel, Martin, Ken and Russell.*

GENERAL NEWS

Heron viewing Camera

Affinity Water has agreed to and is now providing power to the receiver in Kingfisher hide. Both the fixed and pan tilt zoom cameras are working. Unfortunately, the bad weather/high winds at the start of May seem to have destroyed the nest in front of the fixed camera.

The chicks that hatched at the end of April are no longer there. Pictures and videos of the nests and chicks are available on our web site and Facebook pages and there is a YouTube video taken at the end of April of nearly fledged chicks being fed at <https://youtu.be/F1vOqRkXMPk>

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

STOP PRESS

Cattle return to the Meadows between the River Colne and the lake for the first time in 50 years

A big thankyou goes to the Heritage Lottery Fund who granted us £12,000 of the total £24,000 cost of fencing, gates and signs. FoSL members supplied the remaining £12,000

The cattle will be released into our meadows at

10.00 am, Saturday June 8th

Come to the entrance gate to the reserve which is very near the iron bridge over the river on the path from Uxbridge Road.

Dragonfly and Butterfly Walk

Sunday August 11th 2019 10.30am

A walk round Stocker's Lake identifying Dragonflies and Butterflies

Meet: 10:30 on the Causeway between Stocker's Lake and Bury Lake

Working Parties for 2019

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, strong gloves and also garden cutters if you can.

Working Parties 2019

Sunday September 1st 2019
Sunday October 6th 2019
Sunday November 3rd 2019
Sunday December 1st 2019
Sunday January 5th 2020

All start at 9.55am

Meet: usually at Fisherman's Car Park but it is a good idea to check with Emma Brading (01923 779008) before the date in case we have changed meeting place.

Wildflower Walk

Sunday June 23rd 2019 2pm

Join us for a walk around Stocker's lake to identify wild flowers

Meet: 2pm: on the causeway between Stocker's Lake and Bury Lake

FoSL Committee

Nigel Daley (<i>Chairman</i>)	01923 282844
Ian Watson (<i>Secretary and Vice chair</i>)	01923 282136
Dick Beeden (<i>Treasurer & membership</i>)	0208 421 9958
Simon Jones (<i>Web Site</i>)	01923 285763
Trish Jeneid (<i>Newsletter editor</i>)	01923 770221
Emma Brading (<i>Volunteers organiser</i>)	01923 779008
Linda Ascroft (<i>Events organiser,</i>)	01923 772170
Russell Ball (<i>Membership recruitment</i>)	07884426671
Larry Hurst (<i>fund raiser and publicity organiser</i>)	01923 848440
Steve Carter (<i>wildlife recorder</i>)	07917796976 Text preferred

A.G.M.

Minutes of Friends of Stocker's Lake AGM

Thursday 18 April 2019, 19.30 - Mill End Baptist Church, Field Way, Rickmansworth

1 Apologies for Absence

Linda Ascroft (committee member), Sue Girvan, Josh Kalms (HMWT)

2 Treasurer's Report (y/e 2018)

Income over £400 down because 2017 income was inflated by the inclusion of £1250 Gift Aid due from a £5000 bequest made in 2016. Otherwise memberships and membership income were slightly up.

Expenditure was greatly increased by our work on the reserve in particular on the nest camera project. We also contributed £500 to the Trust water vole project. We work closely with the Trust and once a year support the good work they do elsewhere in Herts & Middlesex. The final result was a deficit of £7,508.

Expenditure on the reserve will increase this year as the total cost of the cattle introduction is likely to be in the region of £24,000. £12,000 of this will be paid from a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund raised by our Chairman, Nigel Daley, through Groundwork South, Denham. We are very grateful to HLF and GW South for this very substantial support.

At the end of the 2018 our reserves stood at £24,745. It is not our policy to hold large cash reserves. We believe our members' money should be used as quickly as possible to conserve or improve our reserve. However, sometimes it is necessary to accumulate funds to pay for large expensive projects, such as nest cameras and cattle.

We thank Rachel Rooker of Acumist Accounting, Lower Road, Chorleywood (01923 616902) for checking our accounts free of charge.

The 2018 Accounts were approved unanimously.

Proposed: Anthony Abadjian Seconded: Peter Jenkins

3 Chairman's Review

Nigel Daley reviewed the year's work and introduced some of committee members to tell us about their contributions (as a matter of practise a FoSL committee member always has a specific job to do).

3.1 2018 AGM The minutes were approved unanimously.

Proposed: Anthony Abadjian Seconded: Tony Lee

3.2 Committee Since the last AGM, Linda Ascroft has joined the committee and as Events Organiser and is also skilfully typing and laying out reports on various topics.

Larry Hurst joined the committee late in 2018 as Fundraiser and Publicity Officer. He has plenty of ideas for the jobs. Dick Beeden has done his usual good and time-consuming job of Treasurer & Membership Secretary and has made the nest camera project his own. In this respect he is very grateful to Affinity Water, who have been cooperative. Trish Jeneid continues to produce 3 newsletters a year and is looking to train her successor before she retires. Simon Jones, our Webmaster, continues to expand the scope of our fine website. Steve Carter produces our valuable Bird Report, which has come out every year since the 1970s. In 2019 Barbara James and her team will be conducting our 11th annual Butterfly Survey. Russell Ball our Membership Recruiter, will also head a small team monitoring mink rafts for the Trust – part of a process which we hope will lead to the return of water voles (and who knows? otters). Ian Watson has this year taken on the role of Secretary.

All present committee members were re-elected unanimously.

Proposed: Jenni Watson Seconded: Joan Thompson

3.3 Membership Recruitment

Nigel emphasised the need to grow our membership. In January this year it stood at 633. Three Rivers District Council, like most Councils, is under central government pressure to build many new houses. Possible sites being considered include the fields on the north side of the River Colne, adjacent to Stocker's Lake. This would be disastrous for our nature reserve. We need to represent Stocker's Lake strongly and in numbers. Official bodies can more safely ignore individuals but a thousand local voters will be listened to. In 1995 our membership stood at 1002.

Russell Ball, in charge of membership recruitment, is very active and is pushing for 700 members by the end of the year. It would greatly help him if all our members were to each recruit just one new member.

In this respect we have a splendid new recruitment banner, designed by Emma Brading and produced, paid for and donated by Nilesh Dodhia. Thank you, Nilesh.

3.4 Bats

Emma Brading reported that it was too early to expect any bats to be using the roost that she had prepared by converting an old wartime pillbox. Late summer is the time when bats start looking around for a winter roost. Earlier this year she had helped the Trust in erecting 38 bat boxes throughout the reserve.

Emma, a determined conservationist and eco-warrior, stressed the importance of everyone getting involved in protecting the environment, which is why she includes Stocker's Lake in her many environmental activities. Her contribution produced a spontaneous round of applause.

3.5 Volunteer Hours

We have produced a report which shows that in 2018 FoSL spent 685 volunteer hours supporting our work for Stocker's Lake. The report was sent to the Managing Director of Affinity Water, the Chairman of Three Rivers District Council and the Director of Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust, who sent us a charming letter of appreciation. The Chairman of Three Rivers District Council would now like to meet us and we will be arranging for him to come along to a Sunday work party in September or October.

3.6 Cattle

It has been agreed with the Trust and the grazier that the cattle will be introduced in June and will stay until Autumn, at the discretion of the grazier. Next year we will introduce them in March and take them off in April and re-introduce them in July.

Much work still to be done by FoSL, the Trust and Affinity Water before the June introduction.

3.7 Nest Camera Project

Dick Beeden is still working on this, but already some good pictures are being produced. See our website and Facebook page.

3.8 H&MWT

Unfortunately, Josh Kalms could not make the meeting. However, the Trust is very active on the reserve, as can be seen with the many ponds they have dug. They will be giving an emphasis on what they do by involving the general public in nature, particularly children.

Family work parties start in May/June. Contact Josh Kalms (josh.kalms@hmwt.org) or Nigel Daley for details. FoSL now have 2 formal meetings with the Trust every year to swap ideas and to mutually agree our annual programme of work.

3.9 Work vehicle

FoSL has always been lucky in having a work vehicle supplied by a member. Firstly, it was Richard Drew's small lorry and since he left the district, it has been Ian Watson's Citroen Berlingo van. The Citroen is now 19 years old and for the first time is becoming expensive to repair. We need to find a replacement. Any ideas? Someone suggested that Affinity might be willing to donate an old van – an idea which we will pursue. Members were asked to let Ian Watson or Nigel Daley know if they had any suggestions.

4 Paul Barritt

The meeting ended with a delightful, informative and amusing talk on the relationship between bird song and music. Paul illustrated the points he was making by playing his violin which quickly showed us why he is such a distinguished and renowned violinist. His group, Tring Chamber music, plays in Hertfordshire and Buckinghamshire in venues around Tring. www.tringchambermusic.co.uk. We who have been to their concerts cannot but highly recommend them.

Altogether, a lovely end to the evening.

Stocker's Lake Bird Report 2018

Steve Carter

JANUARY 2018 started with heavy rain. The river and lake rose by 12 inches at least. Some Pike were showing for anglers. Up to 15 **Wigeon** and **Goldeneye** were displaying. Circa 50 **Siskins** and the odd **Kingfisher** were recorded. It wasn't cold enough for rarer wildfowl. There was some vandalism in hides. Mid-month there were big flocks of **Shoveler**. The highlight was mid-month; 2 **Woodcock** were flushed while picking litter. At the end of the month there were displaying **grebes** and **goldeneye** and a pregnant muntjac in the reed bed near the Pulpit.

FEBRUARY started cold with NW winds. At least four species of **gull** were present. **Goldfinch** were feeding on teasel and pike up to 20lb were caught prior to the "Beast from the East" arriving. Some coppicing was done towards the end of the month.

MARCH The "Beast from the East" arrived and the lake was frozen. A pair of **Bullfinch** and **Goldcrest** obliged and two redhead **Smew** were the main attractions. Mid-month: **Cetti's** were calling and **lesser spotted woodpecker** was heard. The fishing season closed on the 14th with some pike up to 10lb in the margins. The first **Chiffchaff** was heard in sub-song on the 13th. There was then heavy rain through to Easter. Finally, a pair of **Oystercatcher** and a **Sand Martin** were reported at month's end.

APRIL started over the Easter holiday with rain and ten pairs of breeding **Little Egrets**. Mixed **warblers** were singing up to mid-month. Also, **hirundine** were arriving. A rare **Black-tailed Godwit** landed at Stocker's Farm briefly on 14th. **Swallows** were nesting at the farm. Vale Side volunteers found two **Willow Warblers** singing on 18th and a **Cuckoo** was heard the next day. At the end of the month **whitethroats** and **swifts** arrived plus possibly two **firecrests** along the Colne. Finally there was a **wheatear** on the farm.

MAY saw a sunny start. **Greylags** were with juveniles. A **cuckoo** and **swifts** were reported on 3rd. The female **Goldeneye** had 6 juveniles on adjacent Springwell Lake which is over the border and so sadly this was not a Herts record. A **mandarin** put in a rare appearance and a **Great White Egret** was seen in the heronry. A few red eared terrapins were seen but otherwise it was a quiet month's end.

JUNE saw low numbers of **common terns** due to predation by black headed gulls. **Wren** and **Song Thrush** had bred. 3 **Cetti's** were holding territories. There were no records at month's end.

JULY - the warm weather continued and no records were submitted to Herts Bird Club for 10 days. 30 **swallows** were seen over the farm and **Oystercatcher** was heard. On 15th 2 **Sandwich tern** were seen over the causeway. **Common tern** were breeding. One juvenile was seen. **Cetti's** were proven to be breeding. On the 25th a **Great Crested Grebe** was on its second clutch and **Kingfishers** were active along the river.

AUGUST - the heat was on and not many records were being reported other than one of two **Mediterranean gulls** over adjacent Bury Lake. A **Barnacle Goose** was reported on 21st. Few observers or anglers were on the reserve. Thanks to junior birders for their records - Ella, Issy, Thomas, Natalie and Daniel. A single **Hobby** and the odd **Swift** were seen at month's end.

SEPTEMBER provided a couple of **Whinchat** and a **Yellow Wagtail** on the farm and a **Common Sandpiper** on the lake. There was a lack of observers again. A passage of **House Martins** was seen on 22nd. A large willow tree blocked the path on the canal side. At the end of the month two **Ravens** were seen over the farm.

OCTOBER is when Pike fishing begins. 2 **Stonechats** were seen on the farm and **Red Crested Pochard** were increasing. Mid month : 5 **Chiffchaff** and a late **Hobby** were reported. Winter **thrushes** were increasing. Josh Kalms (HMWT) recorded increasing wildfowl and Anna recorded 28 **Red Crested Pochard**. A U3A group recorded circa 40 **Goldfinch**. A month's end wildfowl count included 22 **Cormorant**, 150 **Coot**, 100 **Tufted Duck**, 91 **Pochard** and 30 **Gadwall**.

NOVEMBER was a little colder with rain. A single **Water Rail** was heard along the Colne. Wildfowl were increasing and a few **Siskin** and a **Crossbill** were heard overhead. **Common Gull** were seen plus a party of **Fieldfare**.

DECEMBER saw the weather turning colder. There was a small flock of **Lapwing** plus a few gulls. A party from HMWT were at work on the lake. A **great black-backed gull** obliged and **Grey Wagtail** showed at the weir.

A full species by species report follows:

LITTLE GREBE - A few odd birds throughout the year
GREAT CRESTED GREBE - Breeds, regularly, also winters
CORMORANT - A few breeding birds present
GREAT WHITE EGRET - on 19th May
LITTLE EGRET - 31 birds roosted in June
GREY HERON - Large heronry of up to 30 birds
GREYLAG GEESE - a few breeding pairs
CANADA GEESE - abundant
BARNACLE GOOSE - One odd bird, possibly an escape
EGYPTIAN GEESE - Another breeder
WIGEON - up to 40 birds some winters
MALLARD - Common breeder
MANDARIN - 1 bird in May
GADWALL - Common breeder
COMMON TEAL - Declining Visitor
SHOVELER - Large numbers in winter
RED CRESTED POCHARD -Increasing Breeding Bird
POCHARD - Winter influx mostly
TUFTED DUCK - Common breeder
GOLDENEYE - Bred on adjacent Springwell Lake; double figures over-wintered
SMEW - March record during "The Beast from the East"
GOOSANDER - the odd single
SPARROWHAWK - Resident Breeder
PEREGRINE - Regular; mostly in winter
COMMON BUZZARD - Regular breeder
KESTREL - Least common raptor
HOBBY - spring and autumn records
PHEASANT - heard more than seen
WATER RAIL - winter records along Colne and flooded areas
MOORHEN - Common breeder
COOT - Common breeder
OYSTERCATCHER - March record and with a juvenile in June
LAPWING - Increasing; probably bred on islands
BLACK TAILED GODWIT - 1 over Stocker's Farm 14th April
COMMON SANDPIPER - Single Record
WOODCOCK - 2 flushed near pumping station
COMMON SNIPE - A few records in March
BLACK HEADED GULL - Large colony nester
COMMON GULL - Winters
HERRING GULL - A few present; breeds locally
LESSER BLACK BACKED GULL - A few present; breeds locally
GREATER BLACK BACKED GULL - A few in winter
COMMON TERN - Breeder; declining due to gull predation
SANDWICH TERN - Migrant flyovers
WOODPIGEON - Common breeder
CUCKOO - 1 April record; declining species
RING NECKED PARAKEET - Increasing numbers
KINGFISHER - Resident Breeder
GREEN WOODPECKER - Local Breeder
GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER - Common breeder
LESSER SPOTTED WOODPECKER - Rare Breeder
SAND MARTIN - Rare
HOUSE MARTIN - Rare locally
SWALLOW RESIDENT - Breeder on Stocker's Farm
MEADOW PIPIT - Stocker's Farm
PIED WAGTAIL - Common
GREY WAGTAIL - Has bred; Stocker's Lock
YELLOW WAGTAIL - September 13th on fields on Stocker's Farm
WREN - Common
DUNNOCK - Common
ROBIN - Common
WHINCHAT - 2 in September on Stocker's Farm
STONECHAT October 25th on Stocker's Farm
BLACKBIRD - Common