

Friends of STOCKER'S LAKE



NEWSLETTER NO. 87 MAY 2021

MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIR Nigel Daley

After protracted periods of lockdown it makes a rather pleasant change to be able to look forward to returning to a certain degree of normality. Although I do find myself being wary of tempting fate by being overly optimistic, but fingers crossed eh!

Stocker's Lake Nature Reserve has certainly seen some usage over the last 12 months (despite a very wet and rainy Winter!). Numbers walking around the Lake certainly seem to be up and this was especially the case during the lockdown. Getting closer to nature is a fine thing, but of course, with extra usage, there comes certain management issues with a very small minority of users. With this in mind, I would ask you to remain vigilant on your walks around the lake. If you have alarm bells ringing due to humans forgetting that they are passing through a nature reserve of outstanding beauty and quality, please call the police in an emergency situation. They are based only 5 minutes up the road in Rickmansworth, or feel free to email me if you have any other general concerns that are not emergencies and I will try my best to help. I am relieved to report that The Trust have asked the local constabulary for PCSOs to patrol the reserve. Without getting involved in tete a tetes with strangers, we at FoSL are 600 members strong, and that's a lot of eyes potentially on and around the lakeside.

Whilst it may appear to have been a quiet last twelve months for FoSL, I can assure you that things are very much happening in the background with your FoSL committee planning 'future jobs and projects' on the reserve, working in collaboration with various groups and individuals to ensure that Stocker's Lake nature reserve is preserved for the future.

One of our recent projects was to return a Tern Raft to the lake after one of our old rafts was downed in the heavy winds several years back. On Saturday 3rd April, the merry band of four volunteers (ably led by Master Seaman Jack Westbrook, our Lead Warden, Russell Ball, Bob Sherren and myself) launched our FoSL boat (the original and true Boaty Mcboatface) It's amazing

how some groups just jump on the bandwagon when it comes to catchy names, not us here at FoSL. The two halves of the raft were ready to row to its final position in somewhat difficult and very windy conditions and two hours later, having rowed solidly without rest with bloodied palms and much blood, sweat and yes tears, our job was done. Well done to our now fittest members Jack and Russell. Next time, we will use the recently purchased electric propeller with the wind behind us, not to mention checking out the weather forecast for both temperature and prevailing wind direction. Many thanks to all involved with special mention to Dick Beeden for running this project from research, to collection and delivery of the said raft .



We are in the process of revamping our website so would be grateful for your input to our survey.

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

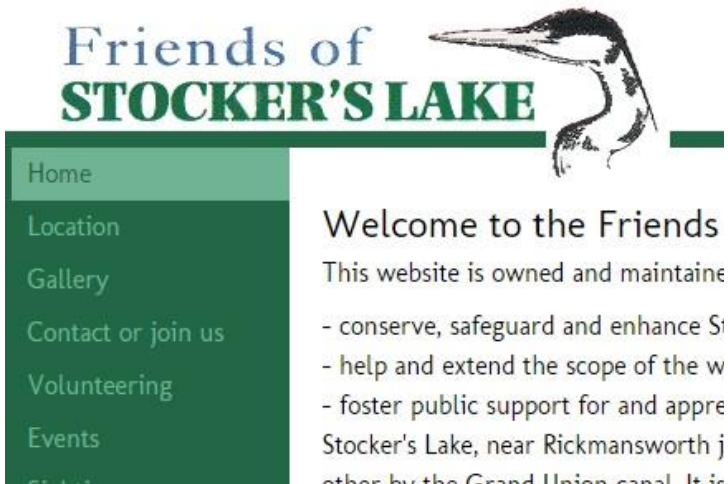
www.facebook.com/friendsOfStokersLake

Twitter @FoStokersLake

FoSL Website – tell us what you think

An online survey, open to all FoSL members, has now been launched to help us decide how our website might better serve our members. We intend to start work soon on a proposed upgrade but first please help us shape the changes by completing our survey at <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/FoSL2021>. (You can also link to it from our website.)

Why are we doing this? The current version of our website (www.fosl.org.uk) was launched back in 2013. In technology terms eight years is a long, long time. So there are things which a modern site can do which ours simply can't, e.g. format itself to optimise access via a smartphone. Also whilst our heron cameras are now generating some stunning footage we can't currently host any of it on our website. Most of all we want our website to be the best possible showcase of FoSL's work that it can be and to serve FoSL members as best it can. Hence our survey.



The survey, which should take no more than 10 minutes to complete, will remain open until 30 June. We encourage all FoSL members to contribute. Whether or not you are a previous user of the current website your voice needs to be heard!

Following closure of the survey we shall analyse the results over the Summer and provide feedback in the next newsletter. All being well we hope to start work on an upgrade some time in the autumn.

Warbler Walk 2 May 2021

Dick Beeden

No Spring Chorus event last year of course so it was good to get back to it this year. Just three of us this year gathered on the causeway at half past eight for a walk around the lake. The weather was perfect; bright sunshine, clear sky, not much of a breeze and not too chilly. However, the sun had largely disappeared by the time we finished and the temperature had dropped quite a bit. We saw or, in many cases, only heard most of the expected birds. There were good numbers of swallows and swifts over Bury and Stocker's Lakes but no house martins. We had only glimpses of most birds. They were really well buried in the foliage which was, in most cases, well developed. Cetti's Warbler called from many points round the lake but as ever remained well hidden. Warblers, Reed, a few Sedge, Garden, Blackcap, Chiff Chaff were heard at many spots. We were fortunate to have excellent views of a Whitethroat right at the start on the causeway; quite unusual. Otherwise Blackbirds, Wrens (in profusion), Robins (lots), Chaffinches, and plenty of Blue, Great and Long Tail Tits were seen and serenaded us as we passed along.

We saw three Common Terns, however the tern raft by Tern Hide seems to have been taken over completely again by Black Headed Gulls, the odd Canada goose and a pair of Lesser Black-backed Gulls. No raptors seen this year apart from one Red Kite way above the tree line towards the motorway. There are numerous Heron and a few Little Egret nests in the heronry and we used our wildlife cameras to have a close up view of them and their young. There are a lot of chicks in nests and in at least one they are not far off fledging. Cormorants are now nesting on the lake and have chicks. There were a couple of Pochards, a few Moorhens and small numbers of Tufted Ducks, Coots, Canada and greylag Geese (with young). Including the other common species like Woodpigeon, Crow, Magpie and so on, we spotted and or heard about 41 species altogether (see list below).

An orange tip or two was the total butterfly count. All in all a good morning.

Great Crested Grebe	Reed Warbler
Great Cormorant	Cetti's Warbler
Grey Heron	Whitethroat
Little Egret	Garden Warbler
Greylag Goose	Blackcap
Canada Goose	Chiffchaff
Mallard	Blue Tit
Pochard	Great Tit
Tufted Duck	Long-tailed Tit

Moorhen	Jay
Common Coot	Common Magpie
Black-headed Gull	Crow
Lesser Black-backed Gull	Starling
Common Tern	House Sparrow
Woodpigeon	Chaffinch
Stock Dove	Greenfinch
Feral Pigeon	Barn Swallow
Ring-Necked Parakeet	Swift
Wren	Duncock
Robin	Blackbird
Sedge Warbler	



young birds by the end of April (30th)



and beginning of May (2nd) just under 11 weeks from eggs to birds!



And where has bird 3 gone in this last picture? Unfortunately, during the earlier part of March when the chicks may have hatched we never caught the adults standing so we do not know if they were incubating eggs or brooding chick when I saw them hunkered down in the nest during this time. Of course some herons lay eggs later. For example, in one nest there were young chicks on 22 April so the eggs must have been laid sometime in the first week of April. However, as far as we can see, there are no more herons with eggs. The little egrets lay much later and it

Heron Report

Dick Beeden

The birds breed colonially in Spring in "heronries", usually building their nests high in trees. A clutch of usually three to five bluish-green eggs is laid. Both birds incubate the eggs for around 25 days, and then both feed the chicks, which fledge when 7-8 weeks old. (11 or 12 weeks in all). Many juveniles do not survive their first winter, but if they do, they can expect to live for about 5 years.

We are well into the breeding season now. There are a lot of nests out on the islands, many with young. Our cameras capture eggs in the nest as far back as 16 February (see photo);



well developed chicks by the 29 March,

was not until 15 April that we got our first glimpse of an egg in a nest; clear evidence that they are breeding on our lake. Unfortunately we have only managed to capture that on video so no picture I am afraid. What is more, the foliage is now developing and sadly we may not be able to see that chick or chicks develop.

I have mentioned video above. We have quite a lot of video footage. A few have been posted on our facebook page (link via our web site www.fosl.org.uk) and currently that is the best we can do. Is there anyone out there who can help?

Finally, we hope that by next season we can live stream the cameras to our web site, so watch this space.

Sunday 20 June Wildflower Walk

Linda Ascroft

We are pleased to announce that the Wildflower Walk planned for Sunday 20 June will go ahead. Meet as usual on the Causeway at 2pm. Looking forward to seeing you.



Cattle Update

Bob Sherren

The much anticipated return of Nick's friendly and docile Dexter cattle has unfortunately been delayed for a few weeks. There simply isn't enough food for them at the moment!

The Met Office have confirmed what we all knew. This April has been particularly cold ... it has, in fact, been the coldest one in the UK for a hundred years or so. Despite following a very wet February, which saw such

high water levels and caused all our local lakes to be full to overflowing, April has been much drier than normal with some areas having had only 10% of normal rainfall amounts.

I heard one of the tv weather forecasters say, "Climate is what we expect, but weather is what we get." Another clever way of telling the difference between the two words being ... weather tells you what to wear on any given day; and climate tells you what wardrobe to own!

The net effect of our recent weather, however, is that the grass has not grown and, whilst we may not have welcomed back the cattle, there have been other visitors who have been munching on what little grass there is. I refer to the large number of Canada Geese that have been spotted simply doing little else. I have seen them described as "basically flying cows."

When the cattle do return they will be playing an important part in restoring the Stocker's Lake fields back to wildflower meadows and in so doing, will increase the level of biodiversity.

Checking on their welfare is the least we can do and we welcome anyone to join our merry band of Cattle Lookers, whether you are a frequent visitor or can only make it on the odd occasion.

There was some interest in the recent free Cattle Lookers training session that was held via zoom but for those interested who were unable to attend, it has now been made available online via this link:

<https://youtu.be/PIIBuelwQnA>

If you would like to more involved, or need further information about joining the group, please text me on: 079 2939 4120 or send an email to:

bob_sherren@hotmail.com



SUBSCRIPTIONS

Dick Beeden

It's not too late to pay your 2021 subscription

There are still some members who, our records show, have not yet paid their 2021 subscription. Those members have a message on the address label on the front of the envelope containing this newsletter which says "Your subscription for 2021 is now overdue" or a message to the same effect in the email this newsletter was attached to.

If your envelope or email carries this message and you have paid recently please ignore the message. Otherwise please pay your £5 subscription plus any donation you are making either by bank transfer or cheque. The bank details you need for a bank transfer (or better still setting up a standing order so you don't have to do this again) are:

Account Name	Friends of Stockers Lake
Sort Code	20-91-79
(A Barclays Bank Account)	
Account Number	73219968
Reference	Your surname and post code

(You will get your receipt/permit by email)

OR send your cheque made out to Friends of Stocker's Lake to me, Dick Beeden, at 1 Finch Lane, Bushey, WD23 3AH. Please put your postcode on the reverse. Please don't forget a stamped self addressed envelope for your receipt/permit if you would like one.

Please telephone me on 020 8421 9958 or email me on rhbeeden@gmail.com if you think our records are wrong or you no longer wish to be a member so that I can amend our records accordingly. If you decide you no longer wish to be a member we would like to thank you for your past support.

AGM

Speaker: Nick Maksimovic our grazier.

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

CW Wildlife Rescue

When we first came to our home in Rickmansworth nearly 2 years ago, we were a fledgling rescue with 20

cages and a lot of enthusiasm. The people of the area have since adopted us into their lives and I know that we have found our forever home.

We are located in a beautiful old barn within 260 acres of Stockers Farm, a place surrounded by magnificent fields, woodland, ancient hedges and wonderful lakes.

We have been adopted by Rickmansworth Aquadrome as the official go to rescue when there is a problem with animals or birds and are frequently seen, nets in hand, patrolling the area.

This is how we first came across Stocker's lake and the nature reserve, a genuine oasis in one of the most beautiful locations possible. We feel very protective towards this special place and even when not working I often spend free time in the hides around the lake watching the wildlife!!

A few months ago we were given a donation by Friends of Stocker's Lake of £1000 and to say we were grateful is a huge understatement!! Many lives have been saved because of this. We were able to buy much needed intensive care units and vital equipment! We are so grateful to everyone concerned with FoSL and are delighted to be linked with such a dedicated and caring organisation.

Regards
Chris Wicks
Founder / CEO
CWWR



a very very young fox cub

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

Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust

Friends of Stocker’s Lake are supporting Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust which is the leading voice for wildlife conservation in Hertfordshire and neighbouring areas. With over 40 nature reserves spanning 1,900 acres, from beautiful woodlands and wetlands to rare patches of heath and orchard, they take practical action every day to help wildlife flourish.

The Trust’s latest appeal is to purchase Astonbury Wood – stunning ancient woodland near Stevenage, to protect it (amongst other things from development). **Astonbury Wood is home to badgers and butterflies as well as woodpeckers and nuthatches. In spring, bluebells, wood anemones, lesser celandines and primroses cover the woodland floor.**

Ancient woodlands like Astonbury Wood have been growing for hundreds of years and provide an irreplaceable habitat for wildlife - but they continue to be lost at an alarming rate.



If you would like to find out more or to make a donation please follow the link to their website. www.hertswildlifetrust.org.uk

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 and Data Protection Officer)	01923 240764 susanethomas@btinternet.com
Russell Ball (Membership recruitment)	07884 426671
Bob Sherren (Volunteers organiser)	07929 394120 bob_sherren@hotmail.com
Steve Carter (Wildlife recorder)	07917 796976 Text preferred

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.