

# Friends of STOCKER'S LAKE



NEWSLETTER NO. 90 MAY 2022

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

**AGM 11th May, Mill End Baptist Church, Rickmansworth** See the enclosed/attached card for further details and your calendar of events circulated in January. Agenda, minutes & accounts will be available at the meeting for those not on email.

Further details and updates of all events will be on the website: <https://www.fosl.org.uk/upcoming-events>

**NB We need a secretary.**

### New FoSL Website

Simon Jones Webmaster

This will be demonstrated at our AGM. Meanwhile why not have a browse of all its features and view the videos? Go to [www.fosl.org.uk](http://www.fosl.org.uk)

## Annual butterfly survey recorders needed

We are looking for help with the annual Stocker's Lake butterfly survey. We have three people but need a few more volunteers.

### What does it involve?

A monthly walk round the lake, recording the number



and species of butterfly seen in each section plus simple weather data. Results are also added to the UK Butterfly

Monitoring Scheme

so this survey is not just important for Stockers but nationally and internationally. Contact Barbara James [barbara.james5@btopenworld.com](mailto:barbara.james5@btopenworld.com)

### Work Parties

10 to 1230 hrs first Sunday each month. Meet at 0955 hrs. Meeting points vary month by month according to the work being planned so any members wishing to volunteer who do not receive a monthly invitation should check with our Lead Warden, Jack Westbrook in the first instance. [warden@fosl.org.uk](mailto:warden@fosl.org.uk)

## REPORTS

### Wildfowl Walk 9 January 2022

Dick Beeden

The walk in bright sunshine, virtually no wind and cold but not freezing was attended by 7 other people. This gave good light for identifying the birds most of the time. The number of birds on the lake and in the surrounding trees etc was disappointingly low. We saw all the species we heard and ended with a tally of 32 species. The full list was:

Great-crested Grebe; Cormorant; Grey Heron; Canada Goose; Egyptian Goose; Mallard; Shoveler; Pochard; Tufted Duck; Wigeon (half a dozen plus); Gadwall; Wren; Moorhen; Coot; Lapwing; Black-headed Gull (lots); Lesser Black-backed Gull (several: numbers seem to be increasing); Herring Gull; Woodpigeon; Ring-necked Parakeet; Jay (good views); Robin; Blue Tit; Great Tit; Long-tailed Tit; Goldfinch; Magpie; Wren; Siskin; Carrion Crow; Dunnock and Blackbird. A Goosander was reported and possible seen flying west over the lake. There were some noticeable absentees apart from Smew namely; no raptors; Kingfishers; (seen on the way in by Dick and on the way out by Nicola); Mute Swan; Little Egret; Goldeneye; Red-crested Pochard; Woodpecker; Chaffinch; and Starling.

From the heron watch point on the canal path we could see several birds occupying nest sites among the trees on the island opposite. However they were not yet displaying nesting behaviour. Given that the earliest eggs might well be laid by the end of January it is likely that they soon will be.

### Work Party 6<sup>th</sup> February

Jack Westbrook

A bit sloshy underfoot from overnight rain, but by 10am the skies had cleared into a glorious day. A good turnout of volunteers meant we were able to start on a new section of hedge laying in field 2, carry out a bit of coppicing and complete some hedge

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](http://www.fosl.org.uk)

[www.facebook.com/friendsOfStokersLake](https://www.facebook.com/friendsOfStokersLake)

Twitter @FoStokersLake

planting near the Iron Bridge area. All in all a very enjoyable morning's work.

Many thanks to Josh Kalms and Alex Pople from the HMWT who assisted by helping us to hone our hedge laying skills. Also thanks to Ken Davies, Nilesh Dodhia, Mike Lansdown, Rob & Alex Liddel, Phil Gibbs, Christine & Nick Grey, Philip & Julia Davies, Alison Marriott, Jonathan Drapkin, Nicola Pazdzierska and Russell Ball.

## The Duke of Edinburgh's Award group

Nigel Daley

Again, we had an excellent turnout for February's work party. We were concentrating on preserving the wooden posts in the second wild flower meadow, protecting the tops and bottoms of the posts. We also did some maintenance on the wire fencing where staples were missing or needed knocking in. A job well done, many thanks to Hannah, Stanley, Charlotte, Mimi and Hattie.

## Wildfowl Walk 20 February 2022

Dick Beeden

This year despite the storms in the previous few days, the one on its way and the very damp and quite windy weather 7 brave souls attended and were rewarded with sightings of a good number of species. However overall bird numbers were quite low in part probably, because of the strong winds and in part because it has just not been cold enough to drive the migrants this far south. Even the flooded meadow on Stocker's Farm was very quiet with just Canada Geese and Woodpigeons in evidence.

By the time we left the causeway by Stocker's House for the canal path we had already seen: Kite, Great Crested Grebe, Coot, Tufted Duck, Wigeon, Mallard, Cormorant, Egyptian Goose (on Bury Lake) Robin, Wren, Bluetit, and Blackbird. We soon added Siskin (quite a flock) Goldfinch, Long-tailed Tit, Great Tit and Dunnock. By the time we reached the binocular leaning post opposite the heronry we had added Magpie, Ring-necked Parakeet, Chaffinch, Grey Heron, Shoveler, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Black-headed Gull a solitary Common Gull (which are anything but common round here) Herring Gull and Mute Swan. The stars of the show were the Goldeneye pairing up. We also found a Gadwall and Pochard.

We did not do the full circuit partly due to the deteriorating weather and partly as it was reported

that there was a tree down making the path on the river side difficult to use. So we retraced our steps and added Great Spotted Woodpecker, Moorhen and Carrion Crow to the list before ending our walk and returning to the car park with 36 species under our belts.

Just one more treat on the way out. A widespread but uncommon, bright red fungus called an Elf Cup which appears in winter on dead and decaying twigs etc. this is a first as far as I know for the reserve and certainly for one of our walks. There are two red varieties (it comes in green too apparently), the ruby and the scarlet which



the book says can only be separated with the aid of a microscope. (Stock picture below of the scarlet variety).

Whilst in Kingfisher hide we took the opportunity to monitor the heron nests out on the island using our cameras. There are herons sitting on about 30 nests in range of the cameras so there must be as many again if not more altogether on the islands. On most of those we could see the birds are sitting tight so are likely to be incubating eggs, and some of them have been doing that for about 2 weeks already. We expect 3 to 5 eggs in each nest. Incubation takes about 27 days so we might get chicks any time from the end of Feb. Fledging takes about a further 7 to 8 weeks. So watch this space.

10 days or so earlier walking round Bury Lake a pair of Egyptian geese making a lot of noise crossed our path heading for the water. Reason: they had one tiny gosling with them! Now that is early given that the incubation period is 28 to 30 days. So the egg must have been laid between about the 9<sup>th</sup> and 13 January assuming the gosling was no more than a few days old.

## Work Party March

Jack Westbrook

This month we split our resources into two groups. Russell led one group to work on the Jain tree area which we planted back in the early days of lockdown. These young trees are still at a tender stage and winter can be a challenging time. The group set to

work, pulling up grass and weeds around the tree stems to suppress competing growth.

The second group worked on the Tern and Kingfisher hide flooring, levelling and laying grade 1 gravel. They were greatly assisted by the British Airways fishermen, who were on their own work party improving their fishing swims around the lake.

Many thanks to Russell Ball, Nicola Pazdzierska, Ken Davies, Nilesh Dodhia, Evelyn Fox, Tony & Sheila Lee, Rob & Alex Liddel, Nick Gray, Jonathan Drapkin and Josh Kalms.

### **Duke of Edinburgh Group**

Nigel Daley

An excellent turn out from the young Duke of Edinburgh's pupils; they continued shoring up the 2nd cattle meadow, preserving the tops and bottoms of the fence posts and putting staples through all the wire that had not been attached to the wooden fence posts when the fence was originally put up.

There was a rumour that the D of E group took a break part way through the morning to take part in wheelbarrow races (with real people in real barrows), a rumour perhaps..... but I have the video footage to prove it happened! .Next month will be the last month that the students are officially taking part in their Bronze Service but we are hopeful that we will see them down at Stocker's again as volunteers or just enjoying the reserve. What an absolute delight it has been to have these pupils from Rickmansworth and St Clement Danes School mucking in on the reserve. Many thanks from all of us to Charlotte, Hannah, William, Stanley, Hattie and Mimi (and thanks to Bob Sherren, although I think he is too old to be doing the D of E Award).

### **Heron Watch Sunday 27 March 2022**

Dick Beeden

We had just had a week of glorious sunshine and warm weather but for heron watch it was cold, grey with a cool damp breeze; not the best weather for this watch. None-the-less there were lots of Little Egrets in the trees among the Herons to see and they were clearly nesting. But the Herons were well on with raising their next generation with some 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! The Egrets on the other hand have only just started laying. How do we know all this? Because we

have our wildlife cameras up and running on the islands. We have pictures and videos on our web site so go to [www.fosl.org.uk](http://www.fosl.org.uk)

Like last year Peter Jenkins and I set up at the recently rebuilt and rather splendid binocular leaning post on the canal side path complete with seat (thank you Affinity Water). We had the laptop with the pictures on a small table by the path with a video showing one of the Heron nests with chicks a few weeks old and another showing an Egret with eggs at its feet. Great for raising awareness and putting what we are doing before the wider public. It proved very popular and was especially useful for the children who find it hard to use a telescope. I think the most frequently asked question we had this year was from those looking at the laptop and asking if it was live (it wasn't) followed by how long is the incubation period for the Herons (about 27days) and how long to fledging (50 to 55 days from hatching).

What else was about? To tell the truth we had little time to look. There were some small birds. Tits, Chaffinches, Wrens and Dunnock, flitting about whilst we were serenaded by black caps and Cetti's Warbler now and again. The odd Red kites flew over during the afternoon but unlike last year no Swallows or Martins but last year we held the watch in mid April. Rather sensibly the butterflies had taken shelter from the cold and sunless skies despite having been pretty prolific during the previous week. There were a scattering of ducks out on the lake (Tufted, Mallard, Shoveler); a pair of Egyptian Geese flew by 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 and Canada Geese (quite a few) during the afternoon.

A successful afternoon.

### **Work Party 3rd April**

Jack Westbrook

We are hoping to get the cattle back in the fields in May, so with this in mind our work party set about some maintenance on the cattle fences. This included post straightening and preserving and re-tensioning the wire fencing.

A smaller group continued some pollarding we started in March and improved some dead hedging alongside the Fort Drew hide.

It was a great pleasure to have our long serving ex chairman and warden Ian Watson join us.

Bob Sherren led our D of E youngsters Charlotte, Hannah, William, Stanley, Hattie and Mimi on a litter picking trip around the lake, no arduous task on such a crisp and sunny day.

Many thanks to Ken Davies, Nilesh Dodhia, Mike Lansdown, Evelyn Fox, Phil Gibbs, Christine & Nick Grey, Jonathan Drapkin, Nigel Daley, Nicola Pazdzierska, Russell Ball and Bob Sherren.

## 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)

The banking details are the same for all on line payments be that a Standing Orders or one off payment namely:

Account Name: Friends of Stocker's Lake  
 Account number: 73219968  
 Sort Code: 20-91-79  
 (It is a Barclays account)

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

Membership runs 1 January to 31 December each year so the renewal date is 1 January unless you are among the 200 or so members who now pay by standing order, in which case your renewal date is the date of your standing order. Please use the standing order facility on your bank account if you can as it will save both you and me work in the long run and avoid me sending you those irritating reminders.

## Report from C W Wildlife Rescue The Dangers of rubbish!

Chris Wicks

C W Wildlife Rescue has been at Stocker's Farm for just over two years and we are still in love with the area. Stunning views, rolling fields, ancient hedgerows and it seems, unlimited wildlife. The amazing beauty of the Aquadrome with its plethora of waterfowl of all types and of course, our own Stocker's Lake. A stroll around this tranquil nature reserve at almost any time of day will reveal swans, grebes, many duck species, dragonflies and much more.

One of the most beautiful sights must be a family of Mute Swans majestically gliding through the water

with beauty and grace. One of the least beautiful sights is seeing one of their cygnets with a fishing hook stuck in its mouth and yards of line trailing behind it. What about the mallard drake that had a plastic ring from beer can packs around its beak and slowly starved to death?

These incidents are not accidents or mistakes, but deliberate carelessness and stupidity. Our group gets many call outs to deal with these sorts of occurrences all through the year. It is a minority of anglers that thoughtlessly discard tackle but these few account for many hundreds of deaths.

Many small rodent species are trapped in discarded bottles and cans. They crawl in to find the sweet fluid but can't get out again.

Of course, one of the biggest and potentially most devastating of all man's disgusting habits is the amount of plastic that is dumped. There was a recent report that said 98% of washed-up dead creatures contained plastic in their digestive systems.

If we don't wake up very soon it won't be long before we never wake up again.

### Committee Members/Contact Details

|  |                                       |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| Nigel Daley<br>Chairman                        | 07921 650322<br>chairman@fosl.org.uk  |
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| Jack Westbrook<br>Lead Warden                  | 07716 296093<br>warden@fosl.org.uk    |
| Bob Sherren Assistant<br>Warden Cattle Lookers | 07929 394120                          |
| Steve Carter<br>Wildlife recorder              | 07917 796976<br>Text preferred        |
| Simon Jones<br>Website                         | 07799 477902<br>webmaster@fosl.org.uk |

**Could you help us reimagining our newsletter? Please contact anyone above**

### 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.**