



WORK ON THE RESERVE

Work Party Sunday 1st September *Nigel Daley*



The Chairperson of Three Rivers District Council visits our first work party of the season.

Having read the report we did of FoSL's 659 volunteer hours spent on the reserve in 2018, Cllr Paula Hiscocks decided to come and see us for herself and at the same time to familiarise herself with the district's premier nature reserve.

Cllr Hiscocks very thoughtfully brought with her very impressive chain of office which she wore for photographs with our members. She watched members undertaking jobs such as clearing brambles by a public path, cutting back a hedge that we had planted in the past that is now intruding on another public path, digging up ragwort from the three cattle meadows and fixing more cattle fence wire to the cattle coral and its adjacent kissing gate.

She then had a cuppa with our work party and finally walked down the first cattle meadow to meet our splendid little Dexter cows.

It was super to meet her and I think she was pleased with what she saw.

Much hard work was done by Emma Brading, Julie and Philip Davies, Ken Davies, Nilesh Dodhia, Peter Ewer, Evelyn Fox, Phillip Gibbs, Ray Kristofiak, Marcus King, Mike Lansdowne, Sheila & Tony Lee, Rob & Alex Liddle, Andy Schofield, Paul Ward, Ian Watson, Nigel Daley and Jack Westbrook. Thank you

Work Party Sunday 6th October *Ian Watson*

We all met at the pumping station on the canal side of the reserve and began work on the lake edge just north of Kingfisher Hide. Our job was to clear the ground so that sunlight could reach the lake edge

ground to encourage, among other things, small bird life. This meant felling sapling, sycamores and alders and pollarding some hawthorns. We stripped the saplings to make poles for possible use at a later date by us or the Trust and stacked them by the pumping station.

It was the biggest work party since the 1990s when we did some meadow cutting on the other side of the lake. Those taking part were Ken Davies, Phillip & Julia Davies, Nigel Daley, Nilesh & Varsha Dodhia, Ray Kristofiak, Michael Lansdowne, Sheila & Tony Lee, Rob & Alec Liddell, Alison Marriott, Eileen Petch, Paul Ward, Ian Watson, Jack Westbrook and last but not least, Fred Sabini, an old friend from Boston, Massachusetts. 18 in all. AND we did some good work.

Finally, Ray Kristofiak very kindly took away our 2 ancient first aid kits to have one of them restocked in the light of recent medical advancement.

EVENTS ON THE RESERVE

Wild Flower Walk Sunday 23rd June *Linda Ascroft*

An overcast afternoon but luckily the rain held off and made for quite a comfortable walk. 16 of us gathered on the Causeway to see what wildflowers we would see this year. This was in contrast to the year before, when we had to contend with hot unrelenting sunshine.

Janet Lowndes had the wealth of wildflower knowledge and we cannot thank her enough for joining us again. Quite a number of those who were on the walk also had some knowledge of wildflowers and it was great to share information as we walked around Stockers Lake.

Celery leaved buttercup was found at one of the fishermen's areas, it thrives in damp places at the edge of water. While common, Janet had not seen it at Stockers Lake before.



Unfortunately, this year we did not find Vipers Bugloss which last year we found in one of the

meadows where the cattle are now. We will look out for it next year. We did find tree bumble bees nesting near the base of an old tree. Something most of us had not seen before.

A complete list of wildflowers and grasses identified is listed on page 4

Butterfly & Dragonfly Walk 11th August

Linda Ascroft

Saturday was the day of gale force winds and I very much wondered whether we would have to cancel Sunday. However, Sunday morning was partly sunny, although windy at times.

12 of us gathered on the Causeway. I had enlisted the help of members, Cliff, Alex and Anna and with their expertise we had a great time identifying far more butterflies and dragonflies than we thought we would see. We started off towards the path leading towards Fort Drew and before we had gone very far saw a brown hawk dragonfly and a number of insects.

The insects were mostly found by Arthur, the young grandson of one of our members. He knew so much about insects, butterflies and dragonflies and it was a joy to watch him.

We saw some butterflies as we walked towards Fort Drew and then more as we headed across one of the meadows along the side of Stocker's Lake. We then walked along the River Colne where we found damselflies and demoiselles and the red eyed damselfly. It was a most enjoyable morning.

Butterflies

Gatekeeper
Green veined
Large white (a few)
Meadow brown (at east 2)
Painted lady
Red admiral
Tortoiseshell

Moth

Whitepoint

Dragonflies

Brown hawkler
Common darter
Banded demoiselle (a few)
Banded male demoiselle
Blue tailed damselfly (lots)
Common blue damselfly (lots)
Red eyed damselfly (at least 2)



Insects

Crab spider
Dock beetle (mating couple)
Harvestman
Large hoverfly
Meadow grasshopper (saw at least 2)
Shield bug



FoSL Recruitment Day 20th October

Russell Ball

At our Recruitment Day, despite being a gloomy day, we had a steady flow of folk and we managed to secure nine signed-up members. A number without cash [only cards], took forms away to join on-line.

We received donations of £15.00. There was much recognition during the day of FoSL's valuable conservation works round the lake, particularly the introduction of the Dexter cattle for wildflower meadow management. And of course, we were able to showcase our new Council for the Protection of Rural England conservation award, framed and proudly placed on the recruitment desk. Lastly, the appearance of the plastic heron was a humorous talking point - a definite star attraction for future recruitment days.

. OTHER FoSL NEWS

Cattle at Stocker's Lake Ian Watson

What will cattle do for our meadows?

Conservation grazing is a traditional way of managing and improving grassland for the benefit of wildflowers, insects, small mammals and birds. The main way grazing animals benefit wildflowers is by removing biomass and nutrients, as this helps less competitive species (such as the more delicate wildflowers) to get a foothold by reducing the more dominant and vigorous species (such as hardy grasses). Cows will also nibble scrubby bushes which helps to keep them under control. Wildflowers prefer nutrient-poor ground and grazing cattle effectively reduces the available nutrients.

As cattle roam across a site they create areas of bare ground. This encourages seeds that have lain dormant in the ground, just waiting for the ideal conditions to spring into life. Bare ground is not only good for flowers but also for animals that like to bask in the sun on the warm ground, such as insects and reptiles.

Cattle are best!

Cattle are better grazers for conservation as they are non-selective, unlike sheep which tend to prefer nice flowers to other vegetation. Sheep and horses also crop vegetation close to the ground resulting in a flat, uniform sward. Cattle, however, pull up tufts of vegetation. This means they are not cropping close to the ground and results in the tussocky appearance of grazed meadows.

Cow dung is another benefit of having cattle. Dung not only creates pockets of nutrients and pockets of bare ground but also benefits at least 250 species of insects which just can't stay away from it! This in turn attracts animals, such as bats and birds that feed on insects.

...And Dexters are perfect

Dexters are good grazers for land crossed by people. Dexters are a breed of friendly cattle that originated in Ireland. They are the smallest native breed in the British Isles, reaching a height of 44". They can be farmed for beef and milk and are perfect for conservation grazing. To start with, we will have five cows and a calf on our meadows. In the future, we might even see a bull. Whatever we introduce, walkers must proceed with care and consideration for the cattle. Please keep to the edge of the meadows and no dogs allowed.

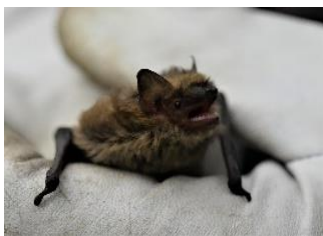
FoSL have wanted to reintroduce cattle to the Stocker's Lake meadows ever since we were founded in 1990. That's why we have been spending £1000 every year to cut and collect the meadow grass, to stop the meadows reverting to scrubland and woodland. But cattle do the job so much better!

In 2013 we started the lengthy process of introducing cattle, with the agreement of our friends at Affinity Water (the landowners) and Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust (the official managers). We found a local and enthusiastic grazer and a source of funding for the necessary fences and gates from the Heritage Lottery Fund through more friends at Groundwork South, Denham; £12,000 of which, you, our members, added a further £12,000.

So now, FoSL are cattle graziers and will be for at least the next 10 years. Maybe, forever.

Bats-Emma Brading

Matt Dodds (HMWT) inspected the new bat boxes and 5 of the boxes were inhabited by 15 soprano pipistrelle bats. This is great news as we only installed them in February.



Soprano pipistrelle. Photo credit: Tony Booker

FoSL members, Jo Sutherland and Emma Brading, joined Patty and Brain Briggs in trapping and surveying bats at Stocker's Lake in September. The evening was considered a success as they managed to ring 4 male Nathusius' pipistrelle as part of the National Nathusius' Monitoring Program.

Social Media

Join our new, members only, Facebook group to share photos, wildlife sightings and to connect with other FoSL members. To join, search "Friends of Stocker's Lake community forum" on Facebook. You can also find us on Twitter @FoStockersLake.

Finance - Dick Beeden

Subscriptions! Last chance reminder for people who have not yet paid their 2019 subscriptions. Please do so as it is so important.



FUTURE EVENTS

We are as usual preparing our programme for 2020 co-ordinated with the HMWT, so that our programme will mention their events that concern Stocker's Lake and vice versa; an example of our closer working relationship with the official managers of the Lake.

AGM 2020 – 16th April Diary Date

The 2020 AGM will be held at 19.30hrs on 16 April at Baptist Church, Field Way, Rickmansworth.

WILDFOWL WALK



Sunday 12th January 2020

Guided walk to look at wintering wildfowl on the Lake.

Meet: on the causeway 10am

WORK PARTIES

Sunday 3rd November 2019

Sunday 1st December 2019

Sunday 5th January 2020

Meet: at Fisherman's Car Park 0955hrs
(but it is a good idea to check with Emma Brading (07428 790 460) in case we have changed the meeting place.

COMMITTEE

Nigel Daley (Chairman)	01923 282844
Ian Watson (Vice chairman, secretary)	01923 282136
Dick Beeden (Treasurer, membership)	208 421 9958
Simon Jones (Web site)	01923 285763
Susan Thomas (Newsletter editor)	01923 240764
Emma Brading (Volunteers organiser)	07428 790460
Linda Ascroft (Events organiser, posters)	07791 971323
Russell Ball (Recruitment)	07884 426671
Steve Carter (Wildlife recorder)	07917 796976
Larry Hurst (Fundraiser, publicity)	01923 848440

*****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 Stockers Lake in your Will. We are a Registered Charity and your legal advisor can help you to include a legacy in your Will.

Water Vole and the Mink Survey- Ian

Watson

Following a chance meeting with Martin Ketcher of the Herts & Middx Wildlife Trust (HMWT), Martin asked FoSL to help him with the work of encouraging the return of the delightful water vole to the River Colne that borders one side of our reserve. The water vole is of course "Ratty" in the "Wind in the Willows". I can remember seeing water voles on our reserve in the 1990s but then came the mink and the water voles disappeared overnight.

Richard Drew, our warden, laid traps for the mink and indeed, caught one but the blighter escaped when his back was turned.

So we've started doing what we did over 20 years ago, we've floated two mink rafts on Stocker's Lake and to spread the net, one on Springwell Lake. These float on the water and with a flat clay box the surface of which is kept wet via a layer of oasis that absorbs water from the underlying lake, the clay can then record the footprints of any creatures stepping onto the raft: notably mink or water voles.

We've formed a small FoSL group which inspects the rafts every week and reports its finding to Martin at the HMWT. This good work is done by Pam Pike, Jackie Knott, Tony & Sheila Lee, Anna Marett, Nan Millette and Jacky Buckton and co-ordinated by Russell Ball.

GREAT NEWS! "Ratty" is Back.

A small party consisting of Martin Ketcher and Josh Kalms from the Trust and our very own Barbara James discovered Water Voles on the reserve by the little side stream that runs behind our Margaret Partridge Plot that we purchased three years or so ago. This is the first sighting since the 1990s when they were wiped out by mink. More details in the next newsletter as I have asked Martin to write us an article.

STOCKER'S LAKE Wildflowers found and identified: 14th June 2019

Agrimony
Angelica
Birdsfoot trefoil
Bittercress
Bittersweet
Black horehound
Bramble
Bristly ox tongue
Broad leaved dock
Broad-leaved helleborine
Bulrushes
Cat's ear
Celery-leaved buttercup
Cleavers
Clematis (old man's beard)
Coltsfoot
Common comfrey
Common knapweed
Common meadow-rue
Common mallow
Common mouse ear
Common ragwort

Common sorrel
Common valerian
Common vetch
Cow parsley
Creeping buttercup
Creeping thistle
Creeping cinquefoil
Curled dock
Cut leaf cranesbill
Daisy
Dandelion
Dittander
Dog Rose
Dogs' mercury
Enchanter's nightshade
Field rose
Forget-me-not
Garlic mustard
Germander Speedwell
Greater Burdock
Great Willowherb
Greater Plantain
Green alkanet
Ground ivy
Hedge Bindweed
Hedge bedstraw
Hedge mustard
Hedge woundwort
Hedgerow cranesbill
Hemlock water dropwort
Hemp agrimony
Himalayan/Indian balsam
Hoary willowherb
Hogweed (common
Ivy
Lesser stitchwort
Marsh chickweed
Meadow cranesbill,
Meadowsweet,
Meadow vetchling
Mugwort
Nettles
Nipplewort
Orange balsam
Oxeye daisy
Pineapple weed
Prickly sow thistle
Red bartsia
Red campion
Red clover
Red poppies
Remote sedge
Ribwort plantain
Rosebay willowherb
Russian comfrey
Self-heal
Silverweed
Smooth sow thistle
Smooth hawksbeard
Spear thistle
Stinking iris
St John's Wort Square stalked
St John's Wort Imperforate
Tufted vetch
Water chickweed
Water dock
Water figwort
Water mint
Wavy bittercress
White clover
White dead nettle
White water lily
Wood avens
Yarrow
Yellow iris
Yellow waterlily