

Friends of STOCKER'S LAKE



NEWSLETTER NO. 91 SEPT 2022

Chair's Message Nigel Daley

After a blazingly warm and dry Summer, I find myself sitting here with my thick winter jumper on reflecting back on those hot, halcyon days of July and August. We have both a new Prime Minister and a new King. The world does turn. Autumn is such a beautiful time on the reserve and there is still much to look forward to.

Many thanks to Simon Jones and Giles Lury for organising the production of our own FoSL 2023 calendar and to all those photographers who have contributed to this project. More details on how to purchase this calendar are in this newsletter.

After the splendid talk at our AGM earlier in the Summer, Chris Wicks has retired and we regret to inform you that CW Wildlife Rescue has had to close - hopefully temporarily - whilst the trustees seek a new manager. We will keep you updated via our website as things develop.

Work parties now continue throughout the calendar year and we are heading towards that time of year when we plant hedges around the cattle meadows and of course, some of you may want to learn how to layer a hedgerow this Autumn. If you can help out at work parties, and you have the energy to help on the first Sunday of every month (10.00 am till 12.30 pm). Please contact Jack Westbrook our Lead Warden on warden@FoSL.org.uk

AVIAN FLU.

We regret to say that we are currently experiencing an outbreak of Avian Flu at Stocker's Lake. Several dead birds have recently been found. To help us manage things, and until further notice, please do the following whenever you visit the lake.....

Make sure you keep your dog (and yourself!) out of the water

If you come across a dead bird please do not touch. Instead please report it by emailing HMWT at birdflu@hmwt.org. If you know the species of bird please state this in your email. Please also describe the number of birds involved, their condition and, as accurately as you can, their location. (What3 Words is great for this.)

To avoid spreading the disease please clean your footwear when you get home.

For the duration of this outbreak we have discontinued the use of our bird feeders. This is because feeders can potentially act as a hub for transmission of the disease.

For further information, including how to report a dead bird found elsewhere, please refer to [HMWT's Avian Flu advice webpage](#).

We will keep you updated via our website.

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

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Further details and updates will be on the website

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

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

Committee Members/Contact Details

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FoSL's 2023 Wall Calendar Simon Jones

With the help of some very talented photographers amongst our FoSL membership we have just produced our first ever, 2023, wall calendar. Available from early October the calendars are A3 sized and wire bound with a hanging loop. Each month's page contains one of a series of stunning colour photographs taken at the lake plus below it a calendar grid with space for writing your engagements. Further photographs are included on front and rear cover pages. All photographs were taken at Stocker's Lake by members of FoSL.

The calendars cost £10 each. They can be paid for by cheque or bank transfer and can either be collected from one of our three collection points, reserved for delivery in late November to any address within 7 miles of the lake or else posted to anywhere in the UK at an additional charge of £3 to cover p&p. Further information can be found either on our website www.fosl.org.uk or by emailing webmaster@fosl.org.uk.



Winter landscape © Dave Watson

January						
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
<small>Road holiday</small>	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

REPORTS

AGM 11th May Mill End Baptist Church, Rickmansworth

The Minutes of this meeting are available on our website.

Work Party 1st May 2022 Jack Westbrook

This month a group of us led by Russell Ball revisited the Jain woodland area. Back in March we did some undergrowth clearance around the young whips, but at that time it was too early to take stock of any young trees that may have perished. This time round more clearance was required and we were able to assess the number of replacements that we need to plant in late Autumn.

We also decided to have a good session clearing litter from several areas around the lake, along with the Duke of Edinburgh group. Not always an enviable

task, but judging by the amount we collected it was well worthwhile.

Many thanks to Nilesh Dodhia, Mike Lansdown, Tony & Sheila Lee, Christine & Nick Grey, Hazel Wickham-Youngs, Nicola Pazdzieska, Russell Ball, Bob Sherren and Nigel Daley.

Spirits were again running high when The Duke of Edinburgh's group treated the reserve to another thorough litter pick at the May work party. It is so refreshing to see young people just get on and do a job especially when that job is clearing up other people's mess, thank you and well done to the young people.

Nigel Daley

Spring Chorus Walk 8 May 2022

Dick Beeden

A very popular walk this year. 16 of us gathered on the causeway at half past eight for a walk round the lake. The first half hour was pretty chilly but then the sun came out and it was perfect weather for the rest of the walk. We saw or in many cases only heard most of the expected birds. There were Swallows over the flood meadow by Stocker's farm but not over the lake and no Martins. There were Swifts high up for a while too. 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 and Wren were present in large numbers and called from many points round the lake but with just one exception for each, as ever, remained well hidden. Reed and Sedge Warblers were few and far between but Garden Warblers, Blackcap and Chiff Chaff were heard quite a few times. No Whitethroat or Lesser Whitethroat this year. Otherwise Blackbirds, Robins and plenty of Blue, Great and Long Tail Tits were seen and serenaded us as we passed along. We had an unusual sighting of a Reed Bunting. We saw several Common Terns with a couple on our year old raft near the remains of Ark Royal. A pair of Canada geese passed by whilst we assembled on the causeway with their brood of half a dozen goslings. No raptors seen this year apart from one Red Kite. There are numerous Heron and a few Little Egret nests in the heronry. There were a couple of Pochards a few Moorhens and small numbers of Tufted Ducks, Coots, Canada and Greylag Geese out on the lake. Including the other common species like Woodpigeon, Crow, Magpie and so on. We spotted and or heard about 43 species altogether. A complete list is on the website.

Recruitment Day 22 May 2022

Russell Ball

Our first recruitment day for this year coincided with the welcome return of the Rickmansworth Festival. Stationed by the Iron Bridge, with pop-up banner and table in place, we were able to talk to and engage with the many folk steaming towards the Festival. While many were in a hurry, a number stopped to hear about the valuable conservation work that we do. Of these, some grasped a membership form promising to join at a later date (here's hoping) whilst others joined FoSL on the spot. The recent acquisition of the Sumup machine means that we can process on-line contactless payments with ease: a real bonus given that many folk no longer carry cash. I'm pleased to report that we signed-up 40 new members plus £90 odd in donations.

My special thanks go to all those FoSL volunteers* who helped to recruit new members: your time is very much appreciated.

* In no particular order: Linda Ascroft, Nicola Pazdzieska, Evelyn Fox, Nilesh Dodhia, Martin Taylor and ably assisted by Jack Westbrook.

Wildflower Walk 17 June 2022

Linda Ascroft

Sunday afternoon was overcast and a pleasant temperature in which to look for and identify wildflowers. The area around the Causeway meeting point was cleared earlier this year and is now beginning to grow up well. A good number of wildflowers were identified here, including Dittander (which we believe is not found anywhere else in Hertfordshire – but we stand to be corrected). We continued along the Causeway towards the entrance to Stocker's Lake (near Drew's Hide) where, among other wildflowers, we found Orange Balsam and Common Valerian. Our walk continued into Meadows 2 and 1 (where we found Red Bartsia, Meadow Cranesbill and Angelica to name a few) and then along the path towards the weir. This path had recently been strimmed on both sides (together with the areas of bank along the River Colne and Stocker's Lake where angling takes place) and therefore very few wildflowers could be identified in these places. We did see Marsh Woundwort, Broad-Leaved Helleborine, Water Figwort among others which can be found on the full list on the website. Our walk took us through the Fisherman's Car Park – which again had been heavily strimmed back and many of the wildflowers we identified here last year could not be seen. Although

we did not stop to see it, a small area of Large Bittercress is growing between the canal and Stocker's Lake. I believe that it used to be quite prevalent in this area but over the years as the brambles and nettles have taken over, it has mostly disappeared.

Thanks to Kathi, Marion, Alex, Lynda, Brian, Alan, Pam, Jean and Kate for joining Janet and me on an enjoyable couple of hours.

Janet Lowndes (plant identifier) and Linda Ascroft

A complete list of plants identified and more photos are available on the website.

Butterfly and Dragonfly Walk 31 July 2022

Linda Ascroft

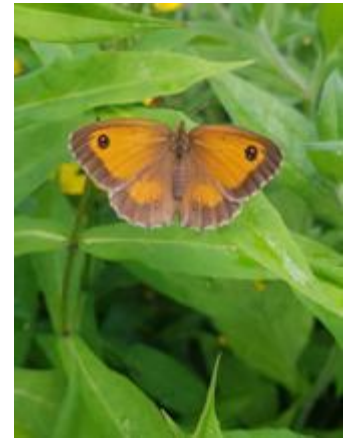


Sunday morning was overcast and windy but warm and I seriously hoped we would not have history repeat itself with a zero turnout as in 2021. I couldn't have been more wrong. We were 12 in number, a great turnout. Philip Gibbs identified butterflies and Christina Bessant identified dragonflies. Nicola Pazdziarska, with her

knowledge of dragonflies in particular, also joined us on our walk around Stocker's Lake. The other members of the group were: Janet, Doreen, Christine, Christopher, Marion, Alex, Kate and Michael and myself. Within a few minutes we saw a Common Blue Damselfly, however this was the sum total on our walk for these beautiful insects. We fared much better with butterflies and saw 4 Holly Blue; 6 Speckled Wood – one of which landed and stayed for a while on my clipboard, giving us all a great opportunity to see it up close; 1 Red Admiral which very kindly showed itself by landing on one of our group's sweatshirt; 2 Gatekeeper; 2 Comma; 2 Meadow Brown; 7 Green Veined White and 6 Small White. Thanks to Christopher for providing the photos. We also saw 2 Mint Moth; 3 Hornet Hoverfly; lots and lots of Pond Skater and a few Water Measurer. All in all a most enjoyable and successful walk.

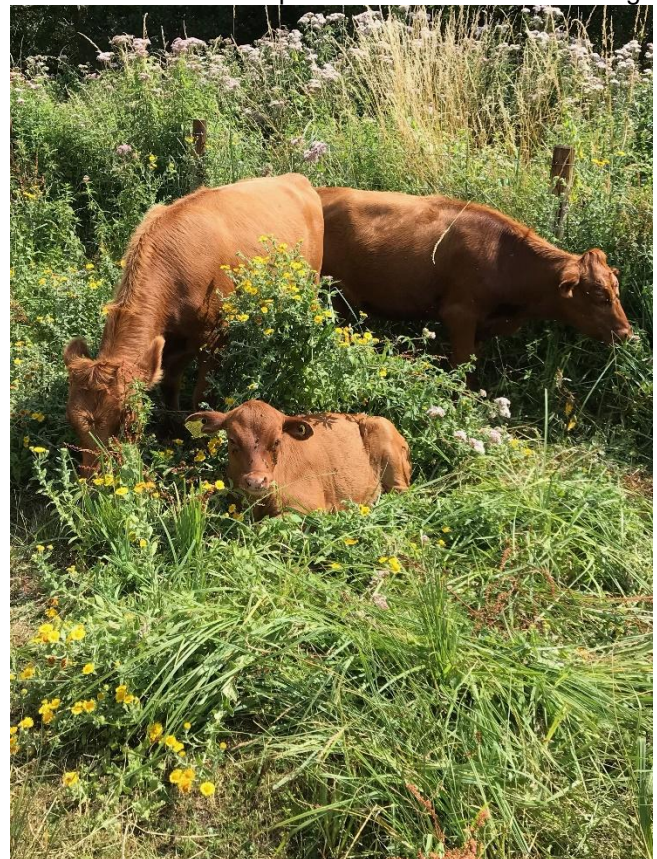
Work Party 7th August 2022 Jack Westbrook

This month we set to work on two sections of pathway clearance; the route to Fort Drew hide and cattle fields, and on the opposite side of the field to keep clear access for the grazier and his vehicles.



Some young whips planted last autumn were cleared of choking undergrowth.

We also carried out repair work to the cattle fencing.



As a result of previous storm damage by a fallen tree, a section of fencing needed some attention and we took the opportunity to check around the entire field.

Many thanks to this month's volunteers who, in spite of exceptionally hot conditions, achieved a great deal. Sophie Benger, Ken Davies, Mike Lansdown, Tony and Sheila Lee, Rob & Alex Liddel, Evelyn Fox, Alison Marriott, Peter and Nigel Daley.

HELP REQUIRED

Committee Secretary

Main responsibilities include but not limited to:

Organising 4 Committee meetings a year. To include minute taking, distribution and follow up.

Responsible for the administration, minute taking and smooth running of the AGM.

Assisting Chairman and Treasurer with admin work including liaison with external organisations on their behalf.

Full job description available on request. Contact Dick Beeden at treasurer@fosl.org.uk.

Surveyors wanted

Wild Flower Survey on the Cattle Meadows -

FoSL has begun a monthly survey of the wildflowers on the cattle meadows with a view to keeping records to note how the wildflower population changes as the years go on.

We are looking for volunteers with a reasonable/some knowledge of wildflowers (and grasses) to help with this exciting project.

If interested please contact Linda Ascroft, Events Organiser. Contact details can be found on the 'Contact' page of FoSL website and at the head of this newsletter.

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.