

Stocker's Lake Bird Report 2014

An excellent year around the lake with plenty of avian interest throughout, most notable was the first instance of Oystercatchers breeding (interestingly on one of the 'cleared' islands). A total of over 100 species was amassed over the 12 months.

Mute Swan – common breeding resident. After no reports last year it was very welcome to hear that there were two pairs with recently fledged young on June 5; one of these still had two cygnets on July 1. The highest counts were: 26 on January 3, followed by peaks of 20 in September and 21 in November.

Greylag Goose – regular visitor and annual breeder. One pair bred and was seen with 5 goslings on April 19. The two highest counts were: 15 on January 3 and 20 on January 5.

Canada Goose – very common resident and breeder. Apart from knowing that they bred, it is not known how many pairs did actually breed. The highest counts were: 103 on January 3, 50 on October 15 and 92 on December 8.

Egyptian Goose – increasingly common resident and breeder. A pair bred again around the seasonal flood at Stocker's Farm and hatched 6 goslings on April 14; at least 5 youngsters still remained on April 27. They then relocated to nearby Bury Lake. The highest count during the year was 8 on November 11 and 15.

Mandarin – very scarce and irregular visitor. One was seen on the adjacent River Colne on May 5.

Eurasian Wigeon – fairly common winter visitor. The year started well with a count of 58 on January 3; the last birds of the spring were at Stocker's Farm with 13 on March 16, declining to 5 on April 2. The first returning autumn birds were back on September 17 when 7 were seen, the highest count during the rest of the year was 35 on December 3.

Common Teal – winter visitor in small numbers. Disappointingly few records this year with 6 on February 21, 8 on March 16, 3 on March 19 and the last 3 birds of the spring at Stocker's Farm on April 7. Just one bird was seen in the second half of the year on December 8.

Garganey – very scarce spring and autumn visitor. A single lucky observer saw one bird on October 8 (and took a few photographs) before it flew off west.

Gadwall – fairly common resident outside the breeding season. The highest count of the year was an impressive 103 on January 3, thereafter birds were present in gradually diminishing number until May 21. An autumn migrant was seen on August 20, but no more appeared until September 17. The highest subsequent count was 53 on December 3.

Mallard – common resident. The highest count of the year was 44 on January 3, however despite being present in every month of the year no reports of breeding were provided (although courtship and display was noted). The next highest count was 25 on December 8.

Shoveler – fairly common winter visitor. A count of 103 birds on January 3

kicked the year off nicely, these numbers declined to 44 by the end of the month. No more than four were seen subsequently with the final bird of the spring being seen on April 15. In the autumn the first bird was seen on September 17, with subsequent peaks of 23 on October 9, 25 on November 19 and no more than 8 in December.

Red-crested Pochard – well-established and colourful resident. Up to 11 were seen in January, 9 in February, 4 in March, 1 in April. Just two birds were seen in June, but no more until one on October 15. Up to 6 birds were seen in November and 9 in December.

Common Pochard – fairly common resident. January started well with a count of 91 on January 7 (the highest of the year), numbers tailed off after this with no more than 10 in February, 15 in April and the last 3 on May 21. Apart from 5 on July 10, no more were seen until August 20, subsequent peaks were 51 in September, 50 in October, 30 in November and 83 in December.

Tufted Duck - common resident and regular breeder. The peaks counts of the year were: 203 in January and 60 in February. Just one brood (of 5 young) were seen thus year, but sadly many ducklings that hatch on the lake fall victim to predators, probably either large pike or terrapins.

Numbers slowly built up during the autumn, with peaks of: 30 in September, 50 in October, jumping to a huge peak of 500 on November 10, then 246 on December 3.

Common Goldeneye – fairly common winter visitor. Numbers gradually built up from 4 on January 2, to a peak of 18 on 12. The best count in February was 15 on 3, but subsequently counts tailed off: no more than 5 were seen in March with the last of the spring on April 14.

The first autumn bird was back on October 31 and slowly numbers built up to a peak of 12 in November and 16 in December.

As has been documented in a [previous bulletin](#), a female was seen at nearby Springwell Lake with 7 very small ducklings on May 15, this had reduced to just one duckling by 22. This bird subsequently fledged.

Smew – scarce winter visitor in small numbers. Sadly, no Smews were seen during 2014.

Goosander – scarce and declining winter visitor. Up to two males and two females were seen in January, but no more than 3 birds were seen at one time. A single female was seen on March 3 and 10 and a very unusual record of a male seen flying over on May 13.

In the second half of the year a male was seen on October 30 and again on December 11 and 12.

Pheasant – uncommon resident. The occasional bird was seen in April, May and June.

Little Grebe – occasional winter visitor. Up to 3 birds were seen in January, but no more until 1 on August 20, but more interestingly 3 birds were seen on September 8, including 2 juveniles. Two in October and 1 in December concluded the year.

Great Crested Grebe – a common resident and breeder. Monthly peak counts were: 6 in January and February, 10 in April, 6 in May, 12 in June, 3 in July and August, 6 in September, 2 in October, 6 in November and 5 in December. Although it did breed successfully, we have no data available on the number of broods.

Cormorant – all year round resident. Up to 57 were counted in January, but no more than 12 in February. One bird was seen sitting on a nest on April 10, but it had been abandoned by April 18. Although present throughout the summer, the next double-digit count didn't occur until 14 were seen on October 15, then no more than 12 in November and a peak of 40 in December.

Little Egret – all year round fairly common resident and scarce breeder. The peak monthly counts in the winter months were as follows: 2 in January, 8 in February, 10 in March and 17 in December. At least 5 pairs bred successfully in the usual place on the islands, viewable from the watch-point; at least 7 young were reared, although in reality the actual total is far higher.

Grey Heron – common resident and breeder. An ever-present sight around the lake from dawn until dusk! The BTO Heronries survey count in April to assess the number of nests reached an impressive total of 27, most of which were undoubtedly successful. Investigations are ongoing to see if drone surveillance might be an effective way of monitoring breeding success. Watch this space! Up to 12 birds were counted in January and 20 in February, which is an indication that breeding starts early for this species.

Red Kite – fairly common resident. Reported over the lake in almost every month of the year, with an impressive peak count of 6 on November 27 and counts of up to 3 in January, March, April and December.

Sparrowhawk – regular visitor throughout the year. One or two birds seen over the reserve on many dates. One bird was seen to try and attack a Ring-necked Parakeet, but was chased off by 5 other parakeets.

Common Buzzard – fairly common resident. Single birds seen on 5 dates.

Kestrel – scarce local resident. About 16 sightings this year, although no more than single birds were seen at any time (but this did include a male and a female) between July and December. How nice it would be if a nest-box could be placed around the lake to try and encourage this species back as a regular breeder.

Hobby – scarce resident. Single birds were seen on June 17, July 10, five dates in August, September 9 and 10, with two on September 17.

Water Rail – uncommon winter visitor, more often heard than seen. Single birds were seen on 3 dates in January and February, but then no more until October 31. One or two birds were present in November, but just one in December.

Moorhen – common resident and breeder. At least 20 birds were present in January, 30 in February and 20 in November.

Coot – common resident and breeder. The peak counts were: 216 in January, 500 in November and 490 in December. There was no assessment of the number of pairs breeding.

Lapwing – regular visitor throughout the year, scarce breeder. The lake is often

used a refuge and roost site by birds feeding on nearby farmland. The peak counts were: 116 in January and 80 in February. Two pairs were seen in courtship and display at Stocker's Farm in April, but no successful breeding was documented. No birds were seen between June 21 and November 10. Numbers had risen to 85 by December.

Oystercatcher – occasional visitor and possible breeder. The arrival of a pair on one of the islands on March 8 was unknowingly the precursor of a most momentous moment in the history of Stocker's Lake. With the appearance of 2 chicks on June 24 this represents the first instance of breeding at the reserve. One youngster soon disappeared, but the surviving chick went on to fledge successfully.

Little Ringed Plover – uncommon passage migrant. Two birds dropped into Stocker's Farm on April 18, with one remaining until April 20. Another very confiding bird appeared at the same venue from June 21 to 24.

Black-tailed Godwit – scarce passage migrant. Two birds, almost certainly a pair, were all too brief visitors to the flood at Stocker's Farm on Mar 8 before flying off high to the south at 11:47.

Dunlin – rare passage migrant. One bird at Stocker's Farm on April 22 was the only bird of the year.

Common Snipe – rare winter visitor. Singles on the flood at Stocker's Farm on January 23 and April 18. At the end of the year three on the flood on November 14, one on December 8, 13 and two on 14.

Common Sandpiper – scarce passage migrant . Just three records this year – all in July: two birds on 6, one on 16, and two on 20.

Green Sandpiper – Scarce visitor. The only record was of one seen on the islands on April 18.

Black-headed Gull – common resident and breeder. At least 5 pairs bred on the raft opposite the tern hide and at least 3 more pairs on one of the islands – this is probably a conservative estimate; a minimum of 6 young were reared. The highest counts were: 500 in January, 200 in November and up to 240 in December.

Common Gull – regular visitor in small numbers. No more than 12 were counted at any time during the year.

Lesser Black-backed Gull – common visitor and nearby breeder. A frequent sight around the lake in small numbers (the highest count was 7). Two adults and a begging juvenile were seen on September 9 – presumably a local breeder.

Great Black-backed Gull – uncommon visitor. Just one record of a single bird on December 26 and 27.

Black Tern – rare passage migrant. 1 on May 9 was the only record.

Common Tern – regular passage migrant and breeder in small numbers. Two birds on April 16 were the first of the year. At least ten pairs bred and raised at least 10 young on the anchored tern-raft, although these totals are likely under-estimates, an additional pair nested on an island.

Stock Dove – common year-round resident and breeder. The highest count was

of 10 birds on July 2. Birds could be heard calling frequently around the reserve during the spring and summer, but only one pair was documented to have bred.

Woodpigeon – common resident and breeder. The maximum count during the year was 24 in January.

Collared Dove – fairly common nearby, but infrequent visitor to the lake. One or two seen on a few dates during the year.

Ring-necked Parakeet – common resident. This gaudy introduction has now become very much part of the avifauna around the lake and their screeching call can be heard almost daily! The highest count was 18 on October 31.

Cuckoo – increasingly scarce summer visitor. A male was seen and heard on April 19, then another, or the same, on May 4 to 6 and 19 to 21. Another was calling at Stocker's Farm on June 3.

Tawny Owl – scarce breeding resident. A pair bred very close by at Bury Lake and fledged two youngsters in early May.

Little Owl – uncommon resident and breeder. Sadly, no more than a single bird was seen at Stocker's Farm during the year and there were no sightings at all between March and June. Hopefully they will return to breed in future years.

Common Swift – summer visitor in small numbers. Almost ever-present throughout the summer over the lake, but there were surprisingly few reports. The highest count was 50 on May 12.

Kingfisher – common year-round resident; subject to cold weather fluctuations. A rather difficult bird to census as they fly so rapidly from one end of the lake to another! However, at least one pair bred successfully and raised a minimum two broods of youngsters and maybe even three. Up to four birds were counted on some days.

Green Woodpecker – fairly common resident, most often seen at Stocker's Farm. Recorded in almost every month of the year, with the highest count being 5 birds on November 19. There were no reports of breeding.

Great Spotted Woodpecker – common resident and breeder. One of the most familiar sounds around the lake in spring is the drumming of this species. Up to 3 birds were seen during the year and they must have bred here as well, but no proof was supplied. A pair was seen excavating a nest-hole along the canal, but it was abandoned before any eggs were laid.

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker – very scarce resident. A good year with the first sighting in January along the causeway, followed by five sightings between March and April, one bird was seen excavating a nest-hole. Sadly, breeding was not confirmed and the only other observation was a female with a tit-flock along the river on Sep 14

Sand Martin – uncommon summer visitor. The first three birds were seen on March 20 and reached a spring peak of 50 birds on April 14. Rather surprisingly, no more birds were reported until August 19 when 12 were counted and then the last 2 birds of the year the next day.

Swallow – common summer visitor and nearby breeder. Although frequently seen around the lake, they are more often seen at Stocker's Farm where quite a

few pairs breed in the stables and farm buildings. The first sighting of the spring was on April 2, the peak count was 60 on August 14 and the last bird of the year was seen on September 24.

House Martin – common summer visitor and nearby breeder. The first arrival was on the early date of March 20, peak counts were 50 in the spring and 100 in the autumn clearly comprising migrants passing through. The final 3 birds were seen on October 10.

Meadow Pipit – scarce passage migrant. All records came from Stocker's Farm: up to 24 in January, 15 in March, then no more until up to 50 in October, 27 in November and 18 in October. Probably the best year ever for this species.

Yellow Wagtail – scarce summer visitor. Up to five birds on the flooded field at Stocker's Farm from April 15 to 24.

Grey Wagtail – scarce visitor, occasional breeder. Sadly no more than one bird was seen during the year and there was no evidence of breeding.

Pied Wagtail – scarce resident and occasional breeder. A pair bred successfully at Stocker's Farm and raised 2 young.

Stonechat – scarce migrant and winter visitor. A pair arrived at Stocker's Farm on October 1 and were present intermittently until the end of the year. They proved very popular with local birders.

Robin – abundant resident and breeder. The best count was 12 on January 13.

Northern Wheatear – uncommon passage migrant. One or two were seen at Stocker's Farm between April 16 and 24.

Dunnock – abundant resident and breeder. An impressive count of 30 birds was amassed around the lake on Nov 14.

House Sparrow – common nearby resident and breeder. A very frequent sight around Stocker's Farm where at least 20 birds live and breed, but only occasionally seen around the lake.

Fieldfare – common winter visitor. There were no significant counts this year, indeed the numbers were well down on previous years.

Song Thrush – common resident. The highest count was of 6 birds in April.

Redwing – common winter visitor. As was the case with Fieldfare, it proved to be a poor year for this attractive thrush. The peak count was of 60 birds on October 14.

Mistle Thrush – fairly common resident. There were no reports between April and November and the biggest count was of 4 birds on October 15.

Blackbird – abundant resident and breeder. Up to ten were counted on several dates.

Cetti's Warbler – scarce resident. A single bird could be heard frequently from January until May 19, but strangely there were no sightings after this date.

Sedge Warbler – summer migrant. The first arrival was on April 16 and there were 5 singing birds by April 18; the last of the year was on August 20.

Reed Warbler – summer migrant and breeder. Four on April 20 were the first arrivals and there were 6 singing birds by May 21; the last 2 of the year were on September 10.

Blackcap – common summer visitor and breeder. One was spotted on January 20, but the first spring arrival was on March 19, up to 15 were counted in July and no doubt many pairs bred. The last sighting of the year was on October 15.

Garden Warbler – summer visitor and breeder. The first spring migrant was on April 17, but no more than two birds were seen during the summer; a juvenile was seen on August 5, which was probably locally bred.

Common Whitethroat – summer visitor. Three birds on April 20 were the first of the year, followed by 1 on May 13, 3 on June 20, 1 on July 10 and 2 juveniles on August 5, the latter record suggesting that at least 1 pair bred.

Lesser Whitethroat – scarce passage migrant. One on August 5 was the only sighting.

Common Chiffchaff – scarce winter visitor, summer migrant and breeder. Up to 3 birds were present in January; the first spring migrant was on March 8, followed by counts of up to 10 in April. Only a single bird was seen in November and December.

Siberian Chiffchaff – rare winter visitor. The bird first seen along the River Colne in December 2013 was seen intermittently until January 25.

Willow Warbler – uncommon passage migrant. Just four records this year with the first on April 7 and 8, four on April 10 and one on 13.

Goldcrest – uncommon visitor, usually in winter. There were a few sightings in the first four months of the year, including a bird nest-building on April 20. No more were seen until November and December.

Spotted Flycatcher – scarce passage migrant. One on May 14 was the only sighting during the year.

Blue Tit – common resident. Frequently seen around the lake, with a peak count of 12 on January 13.

Great Tit – common resident. Another common sight around the reserve. Best count was 12 on November 14.

Coal Tit – uncommon visitor. Just one record on January 3.

Long-tailed Tit – common visitor, usually outside the summer period. Up to 20 were logged in January and 14 in October and November.

Nuthatch – uncommon resident. Up to two birds were seen between January and March and from June to November, with reports in between.

Treecreeper – uncommon resident and breeder. At least 2 birds were present in January and February, but disappointingly there were no more sightings until 1 on November 19 and December 17.

Wren – abundant resident and breeder. Probably one of the commonest small birds around the lake. The highest count was 10 in April.

Carrion Crow – common resident. This opportunistic predator is seldom missed on a walk around the lake. The highest count was 15 on April 20.

Raven – rare visitor. The first records for the reserve were single birds seen on February 7 and another flying over on November 6.

Chaffinch – common resident and breeder. Up to 30 birds were counted in November.

Linnet – uncommon visitor. Two on May 1 and 10 on October 23 were the only reports.

Bullfinch – uncommon resident. Just 3 sightings this year in October and November.

Greenfinch – uncommon resident. A mere 8 sightings this year involving a maximum of 3 birds.

Lesser Redpoll – uncommon winter visitor. One on January 3 and 1 on October 25 were the only sightings.

Goldfinch – fairly common resident. A fairly regular sight around the lake, the best count being 60 in October. The first autumn returnees were seen on October 29, but no more than 20 were around until the end of the year.

Siskin – common winter visitor. Up to 70 birds were around the reserve in January and February.

Yellowhammer – very scarce visitor. A record of one at Stocker's Farm on October 1 was the first for many years.

Reed Bunting – scarce resident and breeder. A pair was present during the summer and probably bred; a count of 6 on October 15 was noteworthy.

Obvious Escapees:

Black Swan – regular bird seen on many dates.

Cackling Goose – seen again on July 28 and August 7.

Andrew Moon