

Stocker's Lake Bird Report 2018

JANUARY 2018 started with heavy rain. The river and lake rose by 12 inches at least. Some Pike were showing for anglers. Up to 15 **Wigeon** and **Goldeneye** were displaying. Circa 50 **Siskins** and the odd **Kingfisher** were recorded. It wasn't cold enough for rarer wildfowl. There was some vandalism in hides. Mid-month there were big flocks of **Shoveler**. The highlight was mid-month; 2 **Woodcock** were flushed while picking litter. At the end of the month there were displaying **grebes** and **goldeneye** and a pregnant muntjac in the reed bed near the Pulpit.

FEBRUARY started cold with NW winds. At least four species of **gull** were present. **Goldfinch** were feeding on teasel and pike up to 20lb were caught prior to the beast from the east arriving. Some coppicing was done towards the end of the month.

MARCH : The "Beast from the East" arrived and the lake was frozen. A pair of **Bullfinch** and **Goldcrest** obliged and two redhead **Smew** were the main attractions. Mid-month : **Cetti's** were calling and **lesser spotted woodpecker** was heard. The fishing season closed on the 14th with some pike to 10lb in the margins. The first **Chiffchaff** was heard in sub-song on the 13th. There was then heavy rain through to Easter. Finally a pair of **Oystercatcher** and a **Sand Martin** were reported at month's end.

APRIL started over the Easter holiday with rain and ten pairs of breeding **Little Egrets**. Mixed **warblers** were singing up to mid-month. Also **hirundines** were arriving. A rare **Black-tailed Godwit** landed at Stocker's Farm briefly on 14th. **Swallows** were nesting at the farm. Vale Side volunteers found two **Willow Warblers** singing on 18th and a **Cuckoo** was heard the next day. At the end of the month **whitethroats** and **swifts** arrived plus possible two **firecrests** along the Colne. Finally there was a **wheatear** on the farm.

MAY saw a sunny start. **Greylags** were with juveniles. A **cuckoo** and **swifts** were reported on 3rd. The female **Goldeneye** had 6 juveniles on adjacent Springwell Lake which is over the border and so sadly this was not a Herts record. A **mandarin** put in a rare appearance and a **Great White Egret** was seen in the heronry. A few red eared terrapins were seen but otherwise it was a quiet month's end.

JUNE saw low numbers of **common terns** due to predation by black headed gulls. **Wren** and **Song Thrush** bred. 3 **Cetti's** were holding territories. There were no records at month's end.

JULY - the warm weather continued and no records were submitted to Herts Bird Club for 10 days. 30 **swallows** were seen over the farm and **Oystercatcher** was heard. On 15th 2 **Sandwich tern** were seen over the causeway. **Common tern** were breeding. One juvenile was seen. **Cetti's** were proven to be breeding. On the 25th a **Great Crested Grebe** was on its second clutch and **Kingfishers** were active along the river.

AUGUST - the heat was on and not many records were being reported other than one of two **Mediterranean gulls** over adjacent Bury Lake. A **Barnacle Goose** was reported on 21st. Few observers or anglers were on the reserve. Thanks to junior birders for their records - Ella, Issy, Thomas, Natalie and Daniel. A single **Hobby** and the odd **Swift** were seen at month's end.

SEPTEMBER provided a couple of **Whinchat** and a **Yellow Wagtail** on the farm and a **Common Sandpiper** on the lake. There was a lack of observers again. A passage of **House Martins** was seen on 22nd. A large willow tree blocked the path on the canal side. At the end of the month two **Ravens** were seen over the farm.

OCTOBER is when Pike fishing begins. 2 **Stonechats** were seen on the farm and **Red Crested Pochard** were increasing. Mid month : 5 **Chiffchaff** and a late **Hobby** were reported. Winter **thrushes** were increasing. Josh Kalms (HMWT) recorded increasing wildfowl and Anna recorded 28 **Red Crested Pochard**. A U3A group recorded circa 40 **Goldfinch**. A month's end wildfowl count included 22 **Cormorant**, 150 **Coot**, 100 **Tufted Duck**, 91 **Pochard** and 30 **Gadwall**.

NOVEMBER was a little colder with rain. A single **Water Rail** was heard along the Colne. Wildfowl were increasing and a few **Siskin** and a **Crossbill** were heard overhead. **Common Gull** were seen plus a party of **Fieldfare**.

DECEMBER saw the weather turning colder. There was a small flock of **Lapwing** plus a few gulls. A party from HMWT were at work on the lake. A **great black-backed gull** obliged and **Grey Wagtail** showed at the weir.

A full species by species report follows.

LITTLE GREBE - A few odd birds throughout the year
GREAT CRESTED GREBE - Breeds, regular, also winters
CORMORANT - A few breeding birds present
GREAT WHITE EGRET - on 19th May
LITTLE EGRET - 31 birds roosted in June
GREY HERON - Large heronry of up to 30 birds
GREYLAG GEESE - a few breeding pairs

CANADA GEESE - abundant
BARNACLE GOOSE - One odd bird, possibly an escape
EGYPTIAN GEESE - Another breeder
WIGEON - up to 40 birds some winters
MALLARD - Common breeder
MANDARIN - 1 bird in May
GADWALL - Common breeder
COMMON TEAL - Declining Visitor
SHOVELER - Large numbers in winter
RED CRESTED POCHARD -Increasing Breeding Bird
POCHARD - Winter influx mostly
TUFTED DUCK - Common breeder
GOLDENEYE - Bred on adjacent Springwell Lake; double figures over-wintered
SMEW - March record during "A best from the East"
GOOSANDER - the odd single
SPARROWHAWK - Resident Breeder
PEREGRINE - Regular; mostly in winter
COMMON BUZZARD - Regular breeder
KESTREL - Least common raptor
HOBBY - spring and autumn records
PHEASANT - heard more than seen
WATER RAIL - winter records along Colne and flooded areas
MOORHEN - Common breeder
COOT - Common breeder
OYSTERCATCHER - March record and with a juvenile in June
LAPWING - Increasing; probably bred on islands
BLACK TAILED GODWIT - 1 over Stosker's Farm 14th April
COMMON SANDPIPER - Single Record
WOODCOCK - 2 flushed near pumping station
COMMON SNIPE - A few records in March
BLACK HEADED GULL - Large colony nester
COMMON GULL - Winters
HERRING GULL - A few present; breeds locally
LESSER BLACK BACKED GULL - A few present; breeds locally
GREATER BLACK BACKED GULL - A few in winter
COMMON TERN - Breeder; declining due to gull predation
SANDWICH TERN - Migrant flyovers
WOODPIGEON - Common breeder
CUCKOO - 1 April record; declining species
RING NECKED PARAKEET - Increasing numbers
KINGFISHER - Resident Breeder
GREEN WOODPECKER - Local Breeder
GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER - Common breeder
LESSER SPOTTED WOODPECKER - Rare Breeder

SAND MARTIN - Rare
HOUSE MARTIN - Rare locally
SWALLOW RESIDENT - Breeder on Stocker's Farm
MEADOW PIPIT - Stocker's Farm
PIED WAGTAIL - Common
GREY WAGTAIL - Has bred; Stocker's Lock
YELLOW WAGTAIL - September 13th on fields on Stocker's Farm
WREN - Common
DUNNOCK - Common
ROBIN - Common
WHINCHAT - 2 in September on Stocker's Farm
STONECHAT October 25th on Stocker's Farm
BLACKBIRD - Common

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