

## Stocker's Lake Bird Report 2020

JANUARY started with a few **Fieldfare** and **Goldeneye** (up to 16 individuals), high numbers of **Shoveler**, a few **Siskin** and a hunting **Peregrine**. Later in the month 26 **Wigeon** and a **Yellow Legged Gull** were spotted.

FEBRUARY started wet and windy and on the 11th Storm Clara blew in followed by Storm Denis causing some damage to trees and the River Colne to rise. An escaped **Carolina Wood Duck** was seen near Stocker's House and a single **Goosander** at month's end with Storm Jorge and more rain.

MARCH arrived drier followed by showers and Coronavirus. Mid month 20 **Wigeon** were on the flooded field at the farm. 2 **Oystercatcher** on the 7th, 3 **Redpoll** on the 8th and then with the pandemic kicking in confined to barracks. **Fieldfares** on the 31st.

APRIL saw **Ringed Plover** and the first **Swallow** on the farm plus a **Whitethroat** singing on the 11th. **Cuckoo** on the 17th opposite Cook's wood. More waders at the farm and **Greenshank** on the 19th, followed by 3 **Little Ringed Plover** and 3 **Ruff**. **Swallows** were increasing, **Lapwing** were displaying and a single **Dunlin** was seen on the 27th. Towards month's end **Yellow Wagtails** took our mind off the Virus with excellent birding.

MAY arrived with hailstones and heavy showers and a single **Ringed Plover** obliged at the farm. By the 2nd there were two **Ringed plover**. **Dunlin** were still present. On the 4th **Whimbrel** arrived with four **Wood Sandpipers**. Migration interrupted on the 5th with a **Barn Owl**. On the 7th we were up to 3 **Ringed Plover** and 2 **Little Ringed Plover**. Water was receding on the 9th. It was a busy month with up to 8 **Common Tern** and 6 Calling **Cetti's Warblers**. **Stock Dove** were seen at the nest box and **Greylag geese** had juveniles. A rare **Brown Argus Butterfly** obliged while walking the cow meadow. **Warblers** were increasing in particular **Cetti's** and **Garden** but just a single **Willow Warbler** due to habitat loss.

JUNE arrived with the **Willow Warbler** predated by a Jay, 3 **Kingfishers**, 26 **common Tern**. On the 8th a rare **Marsh Warbler** arrived along the Colne. **Linnets** were at the farm. More rain on the 18th with Kingfisher feeding young. At the end of the month the Tern hide was vandalised.

JULY and Covid boredom was kicking in causing more vandalism from bored, ignorant people on the reserve. 18 **Common Tern** still present with numbers fluctuating due to Gull predation. A small passage of **Hirundines** on the 8th. Mid-month more vandalism to hides, temperatures increasing to 33c. More

disturbance on lake with canoes etc. A single **Barnacle Goose** at month's end was probably an escapee.

AUGUST hit 37c and no early records from lake. There was significant litter along the Colne from the lemming like public, isolated thunderstorms and most **Common Tern** chicks taken by **Lesser Black Backed Gulls**.

A **Hobby** flew over on the 18th. Two **Raven** were over the West side of lake on the 21st. On the 27th a **Great Crested Grebe** was seen eating a crayfish.

SEPTEMBER gave us a proven breeding record of **Common Buzzard** as an adult fed a juvenile. A passage of **Sand Martin** (around 50) on the 14th, 5 **Chiffchaff** on the 19th. Two **Stonechat** on the farm.

OCTOBER and another **Peregrine** flew over plus we had significant rain from storm Alex flooding the Colne and boundary paths. A few **Siskin**, **Redwing** and **Meadow Pipit**, continuous rain. Contractors removing Japanese knotweed, month's end a **Merlin** flew over the West of the lake.

NOVEMBER and on 13th **Egyptian Geese**, **Stonechat** and **Redwing** were on the farm. A single **Goosander**, while a **Kingfisher** caught a Dace on the Colne. Mid-month a few **Fieldfare** were showing with up to 80 walkers visting in an hour. A foggy end to the month.

DECEMBER - a single **Great Black Backed Gull** was showing, Stonechats were on the farm and we had up to 61 **Red Crested- Pochard** and 40 **Siskin**.  
. **Goldeneye** were increasing and a single **Barnacle Goose** was present at the end of the month.

I would like to thank all the contributors, contractors, bailiffs, fishermen and birders who have contributed to this report in these difficult times, especially when the general public were overrunning the lake causing a degree of mayhem and destruction. The poachers were better mannered! In particular, the fishing bailiffs of the Colne and Stocker's who were on the front line, however there was a disappointing response from the conservationists. We are all in this together so thank you all.

List of contributors, in no particular order: D Jones, C Ashton, P Graham, G Hinton, S Middleton, Alan Gardiner, Ian Jackson, Pinner RSPB, the late Geoff Lapworth, J Thompson, Anna Marett, Steve Hughes, Roger Harbird, Ian Bryant, John Newson, P Luckhurst, Chris Sharp, Lee Evans, Roger Dewey, R Ness, Charles Ramsay, Graham Clark, Paul Ward, David Neal, M Searle, Simon Jones, Stephen Younger, Paul Lewis, Peter Harman, James Gibson, Gary Mason, Axel Kirby, Dale Ayres, Quentin Cobham, Sam Clare, Tony Atkins, Andy Longfellow, Richard Beeden, Tony Shine, Simon Hibbert, All members of North

Harrow Waltonians and BACAS. Please forgive anybody not mentioned and please use Herts Bird Club for your sightings as the hides and lists are out of use since Covid in March 2020.

*Steve Carter*