



Moor Green Lakes Group

Newsletter January 2018



Winter Stonechat by Jerry O'Brien

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Bird feeding and volunteering

By Simon Weeks

Recently the group was contacted by some members who noticed the regular volunteer work party busy maintaining the reserve. Recognizing that they were no longer able to provide physical help on the reserve, they kindly offered to purchase some bird food to be used on the feeding station close to Colebrook Hide. We are lucky to have a volunteer, Terry Patton, who keeps the feeders topped up during the winter

months. However, MGLG spends several hundred pounds every winter to provide

this bird food, so if there are any members who would like to assist by providing stocks of bird food or alternatively donations towards our ongoing bird food purchases please do let me know.

Simon Weeks email - siteliaison@mglg.org.uk

Record Year for butterflies at Moor Green Lakes.

By Paul Richards

Last year 2016, was a very poor year for butterflies at MGL. We saw low numbers of most species and some, such as the common blue, were not seen at all. So, it was with some anticipation that we waited to see what 2017 brought. The cool dry winter and warm spring was a good sign for the coming season and we were not to be disappointed. Nearly every species of butterfly we record here showed an increase over last year's numbers including a strong return of common blues. In particular, three species; the small skipper (*Thymelicus sylvestris*), meadow brown (*Maniola jurtina*) and marbled white (*Melanargia galathea*), were observed at record numbers since we first started records in 2000.



Small Skipper



Marbled White

What is particularly nice is the marbled white has become firmly established in several colonies around the reserve since it was first observed as a single specimen in 2004.

Numbers were low with two or three specimens observed until 2013 when nine were seen and this year 21 were spotted on our transect walk, although other colonies are establishing at other places at Moor Green Lakes.

The meadow brown is our commonest butterfly and we have always seen reasonable numbers. Over the last few summers we have been observing numbers of meadow browns in the 60s to 70s on a walk; this year a record maximum count of 160 was recorded. It can be quite difficult keeping count especially with all the other species on the reserve! Hopefully next year numbers will continue to increase, and maybe new species will arrive.



Meadow Brown

Small mammals at Moor Green Lakes

By Bernard Baverstock

The autumn survey of small mammals was joined by 14 visitors and helpers.

A very slow start was a bit concerning, we usually have animals in the first set of traps, and it was not until trap 17 that we got our first. This was a female Common Shrew and the first of four of this species that were trapped on the day, more than any previous trapping session.

The next traps had a number of Wood Mice, with the other occasional common shrews, spread amongst the traps up until trap 41. Altogether there were seven Wood Mice, four males and three females, but no Yellow-necked mice this session, just as in May. Unfortunately, one of the mice was a very young animal which had died in the trap overnight, this is the first time I have ever had a mouse die in a trap and was probably because it had not learned how to make a nest from the hay in the nest box of the trap.



Wood Mouse

Trap 41 had a very small Shrew which always needs to be examined closely, to be sure you have a Pygmy Shrew and not just a young Common Shrew. This was an adult female Pygmy Shrew and therefore very special, as we rarely catch this species in our survey.



Bank Vole

Surprisingly, the next two traps both had Bank Voles in them, one of each sex. It was good to share these animals with the visitors, especially the youngsters, who helped with opening the traps, releasing animals and collecting the marker sticks which we use. Altogether this was a very interesting and pleasant session, with fine weather, a keen group, a good variety of animals and even a close visit from the young cattle that were grazing the reserve.

Many thanks to those that helped on the day, especially Mary and Grant, for their photographs.



G.Evans photos

Pygmy Shrew

Volunteer Leader Update

By Duncan Clark



View Before



View During

The conservation volunteer work parties got off to a good start this season with Jon Needs leading a task to clear invasive bramble from Colebrook North shore and cut back earth verticals to provide home for bees and wasps. In October Jane led a task to clear in front of Grove Hide where we had good attendance, including some new younger volunteers. There were dense reeds, bramble and willow in front of the hide that needed to be cleared.

With waders and wellies donned, the reeds and other vegetation were cut back including opening up the stream. This resulted in a clear view of the lake and island, ideal for winter birdwatching.



Superb new view

Back at Colebrook Lake in November we also had a successful day clearing Plover Island. Despite the cold northerly wind, we had a good turnout of 16. Having cleared the island last year, it was amazing how much had grown back.





As well as the normal vegetation clearing, Roger and Jon re-profiled an area of the shore to provide shallows for wading birds and Tony, Sarah and Angus extended the jetty towards the shore, so we could barrow the piles of vegetation off without dropping off the end of the pontoon into mud.

Roger and his team completed a nice shallow muddy edge providing a loafing/ feeding area for water birds and by the end of the day the island was looking really clear.

Many thanks to all the volunteers that come out on Sundays, you have made an incredible difference.



Our sincere thanks go to our Volunteer Leaders: Duncan, Jane and Jon for their dedication and perseverance to get these tasks done for the benefit of our wildlife and Members – Ed.

Recent bird sightings at Moor Green Lakes, July to 4rd Dec 2017.

By Roger Murfitt (Bird Recorder)

An eventful second-half of the year has brought no less than three new species for the reserve and Eversley Gravel pit complex! All of these came during a purple patch in November, more of which later. First though in terms of breeding activity, at least 6 young Common Terns were seen from the Tern Island colony with at least 3 fledged by 8th July. At least 25 fledged juvenile Black-headed Gulls were counted with a minimum of another 7 young yet to fledge on 15th July. Three broods of Tufted Ducks were seen, and a pair of Great-crested Grebes produced 3 juveniles in late August. There was evidence that at least one pair of Little Ringed Plovers produced young on the New Workings. A Sedge Warbler seen carrying food from Colebrook hide on 31st July indicates it was feeding young nearby.

Autumn wader migration was boosted when the water level on East fen dropped markedly during August to reveal good areas of mud for feeding which, together with low water levels on the New Workings, increased the attractiveness of the area. Dunlin were recorded on nine dates during August and Black-tailed Godwit on three dates, with 9 seen on 12th August. Greenshank were seen on four dates during the Autumn and other regular passage waders passing through included Common and Green Sandpiper, Ringed Plover and Little Ringed Plover. A party of 4 Whimbrel flew west along the valley on 21st August and a Wood

Sandpiper was found on East Fen on 13th August where it clearly found conditions to its liking, remaining until 24th August. Also on East Fen a Little Stint was seen briefly on 21st August and a Ruff was present 11 – 12th October. The rarest wader of the year was a Pectoral Sandpiper which was found on 18th Sept on the New Workings. It made an extended stay until 1st October and was often seen on East Fen, though it did go missing for periods, maybe moving along the valley. This was only the second record for the site of this scarce passage migrant from N America and Siberia.



Pectoral Sandpiper East Fen, 23rd Sept 2017 (Roger Murfitt)

Other passage migrants during this period included Whinchats on at least four dates, Yellow Wagtails on five dates with up to four seen on 17th September and records of Spotted Flycatchers on 10th and 24th August. On the latter date a pair with a juvenile were seen at the sewage works suggesting breeding locally. A Dartford Warbler was reported on the New Workings on 28th August, which means this species has been recorded on the reserve post-

breeding in 3 of the last 4 years. The only previous site record was in 1998 and the recent increase may reflect an increase in the local breeding population and also increasing suitability of the habitat as broom bushes develop. A Firecrest was seen on 6th Sept and subsequently one was caught and ringed on 24th November. Amongst the raptors, the most notable records were several records of up to 3 Hobbies in Aug/early Sept and a Peregrine on three dates during the period.

The first of the new species for the site was Hawfinch. This large, colourful finch is a scarce and declining species in the UK (approximately 800 breeding pairs) and is normally a shy bird of mature woodland which is rarely seen in the county. However, this last autumn there has been an unprecedented influx of migrants to the UK, apparently from eastern Europe where it appears there has been a failure of their food supply. I had hoped we might be able to record this species at Moor Green Lakes and was pleased to find one feeding in the hedge along the eastern edge of the pony paddock next to the car park on 12th November. Subsequently up to 5 have been seen in this area and are still being seen as I write this in early December. They have been feeding on sloes, tree seeds and also foraging on the ground below the hedge.



Hawfinch at Moor Green Lakes, 26th November 2017 (Roger Murfitt)

On 20th November a second new species was found in the shape of a Great White Egret which was seen briefly on Colebrook Lake South and then subsequently on 3rd and 4th December. This is a somewhat overdue addition of a species that has been increasing across the country in recent years and now breeds in small numbers in Somerset and Norfolk. Much larger than the more familiar Little Egret with an orange rather than dark bill and with black rather than yellow feet, it is worth keeping a look out for this species as we should expect to see it more often in the future.



Great White Egret at Moor Green Lakes, 20th November 2017 (Michael Hunt)

The third new species for the site was Bearded Tit. Despite its name, this reedbed specialist is not a member of the tit family but is more correctly called Bearded Reedling. I found an adult male of this species in the small reedbed at the edge of Manor Lake at dusk on 26th



Bearded tit at Moor Green Lakes, 26th November 2017 (Roger Murfitt)

November. Despite low light conditions I managed the record shot below. The bird was subsequently heard by other observers at dusk in the same area on 27th and 28th Nov, but has not been reported since. As you can see from the picture, its name is something of a misnomer in that it has more of a moustache than a beard!

Winter visitors began to appear from September with the first Wigeon on 5th September, Redwings on 15th October and Fieldfares from 29th Oct and up to 15 Golden Plovers were seen on East Fen on 2 dates in early November. A Little Owl seen in the pony paddock on 25th Nov was the first record of this species on site for over two years and has not been seen again so may have been a wandering individual.

A Yellowhammer seen and heard as it flew across the New Workings on 18th November is now only a vagrant, non-annual visitor to the area. The first returning Goosanders were noted on 10th November and the peak count so far has been 10 on 2nd December.

Wintering Snipe numbers are building up with a peak count so far of 44 on 3rd Dec, with 40 of these resting on Plover island, taking advantage of the areas newly cleared of vegetation at the most recent working party. A Starling roost has appeared in Manor Lake reedbed as in previous autumns and has numbered up to approximately 700 so far and has on occasion attracted Sparrow hawks looking to make a kill.

It just remains for me to wish you the best of luck with your birding in 2018 and please remember to submit your Moor Green Lakes records (preferably to Berksbirds.co.uk) as they all count.

Moor Green Lakes Nature Reserve – Reference Library

By Iain Oldcorn

Blackwater Valley Countryside Partnership holds on behalf of MGLG some 50 to 60 documents about Moor Green Lakes. These vary from Site Management Plans through miscellaneous survey reports to a complete set of over 20 Annual Reports. We recently conducted an audit of the Library, identified that a few documents had been misplaced and sourced their replacement. The Library is available for inspection and if necessary documents can be borrowed for a reasonable period.

A list of the Library's contents is available in the MGLG Annual Report and if you do not have a copy of this report it can be viewed at our website:

<http://www.mglg.org.uk/annualreports.php>

If anybody would like to view the information please contact BVCP on 01252 331353 to make arrangements to visit at Ash Lock Cottage, Government Road, Aldershot GU11 2PS.

If you have information about the reserve, however small, please could you deposit a copy with us? In the first instance, if you have something which you feel should be archived, then please contact me by email: iain_oldcorn@yahoo.com. Electronic versions of material are the easiest to deal with, but hard copy can often be photocopied at BVCP. We are particularly keen to obtain photographs showing the terrain before and during the extraction phases at the site plus ones of the early years of the reserve.

Bird Ringing at Moor Green Lakes

By Colin Wilson

Sadly, Tim Ball has been unable to carry on his bird ringing programme for the British Trust for Ornithology, but Colin Wilson has taken on the challenge! More details will be in the Annual Report, but this is a snapshot of birds processed in the second half of 2017.

	Full grown	Pulli	Retraps & Recoveries	Total
2017				
Moor Green Lakes				
Woodpigeon	1	0	0	1
Great Spotted Woodpecker	2	0	1	3
Tree Pipit	1	0	0	1
Meadow Pipit	2	0	0	2
Wren	17	0	4	21
Dunnock	13	0	6	19
Robin	15	0	7	22
Stonechat	2	0	0	2
Blackbird	11	0	4	15
Song Thrush	4	0	1	5
Redwing	1	0	0	1
Sedge Warbler	2	0	0	2
Reed Warbler	2	0	0	2
Whitethroat	25	0	0	25
Garden Warbler	6	0	1	7
Blackcap	38	0	1	39
Chiffchaff	20	0	0	20
Goldcrest	28	0	4	32
Firecrest	1	0	0	1
Long-tailed Tit	20	0	5	25
Blue Tit	22	0	4	26
Great Tit	12	0	6	18
Treecreeper	2	0	0	2
Greenfinch	3	0	0	3
Goldfinch	23	0	1	24
Siskin	1	0	0	1
Bullfinch	3	0	0	3
Reed Bunting	1	0	0	1
Total for: Moor Green Lakes	278	0	45	323
Annual Total:	278	0	45	323

MGLG Word Search

By Iain Oldcorn

Can you find 17 resident and visitor bird species that you might expect to see on a visit to MGLG during the winter season? Words can run forwards, backwards or diagonally but always in a straight unbroken line. Solution in the next Newsletter.

K	C	O	N	N	U	D	W	R
F	I	E	L	D	F	A	R	E
I	S	R	L	R	R	A	E	H
T	H	M	T	A	L	M	N	S
N	O	W	E	L	R	T	I	I
A	V	A	N	L	O	O	R	F
R	E	D	N	A	S	O	O	G
O	L	K	I	M	B	C	A	N
M	E	C	L	I	N	D	A	I
R	R	A	N	J	W	M	T	K
O	O	J	A	A	O	E	I	S
C	C	A	L	Y	A	M	M	I
C	Y	L	A	L	L	A	M	S