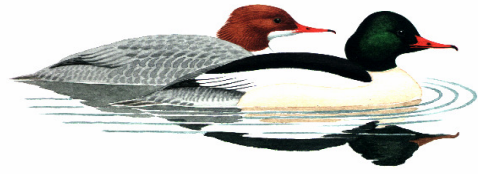


# MOOR GREEN LAKES GROUP NEWSLETTER



August 2009

Dear Members

This year has been eventful and we hope this Newsletter updates you on a few things going on at Moor Green Lakes and in our local area. If you have any stories to tell or information about local initiatives that might interest our members please contact me and we may be able to include them in our next Newsletter.

I always ask for more volunteers and this time is no exception. We need more people to join our work parties, they are either at weekends or in the week so most people should be able to make one or more. You will see inside of a BBQ event to help initiate any newcomers and reward the present team so please come and join in if you can. Dates for all our planned work parties are shown below.

The Berkshire Ornithological Club is about to announce its new programme for the 2009/2010 season and it is packed with highlights for those with an interest in birds. Indoor meetings include an evening about Darwin's 'Voyages of Discovery' and another visit by Dominic Couzens, a well known and entertaining speaker tells about 'Birds behaving badly'! In 2010 we hear from the RSPB about 'The making of Otmoor' a major wetland reserve with a few likely hints for Moor Green and Manor Farm to be expected! Field Trips include weekends in Norfolk, Kent and Yorkshire with days out and local midweek walks also in the programme. Keep your eye on [www.berksoc.org.uk](http://www.berksoc.org.uk) for more details.

Another event you may like to know about is a walk to find bats on 18<sup>th</sup> September at Sandhurst Memorial Park. This is a repeat of a very successful evening last year with Steve Bailey and all you need to do is turn up and bring a torch! More events and activities organised by the Blackwater Valley Countryside Trust are on [www.bvct.org.uk](http://www.bvct.org.uk)

Finally, the Committee were sorry that the bridleway had to be closed for a while earlier this year but hopefully the results will have been appreciated. See inside for more about this work.

Enjoy the rest of your summer at Moor Green Lakes!

## Colin Wilson, Editor

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## Work party dates for the winter

Dates have been set as follows, please come along and enjoy the company and gentle effort:

**September** Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> and Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup>

**October** Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> and Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup>

**November** Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> and Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup>

**December** Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> and Sunday 13<sup>th</sup>

**January** Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> and Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup>

**February** Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> and Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup>

**March** Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> and Sunday 14<sup>th</sup>

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## **Manor Farm / Fleethill Farm Update**

*Peter Scott*

The conveyor to carry sand and gravel from the new workings at Fleethill Farm (west of Longwater Road) to the processing plant south of the river is now in place and CEMEX have begun extraction on that new site. Restoration of the western end of the Manor Farm site may be delayed, as the Environment Agency has raised objections to some aspects of CEMEX's planned approach to that work.

The reeds that we planted this March in the designated reed-bed area of Manor Farm are doing well so far, some of them even 'attempting' to extend their range by putting out quite long runners. However, many of those planted *last* year now look much less healthy than they did at first – a warning that the initial response to transplanting is not necessarily a good guide to the plants' long-term prospects.

The seed mix that was planted late last summer on the easternmost field of the Manor Farm site seems to have achieved little or nothing, none of the species in the mix having shown visible growth. All that seems to have happened is that the ground preparation (before planting the mix) greatly reduced the amount of thistle and dock on the area and paved the way for an invasion by mayweed!

## **Moor Green Lakes Group Finances - 2008/09**

*Bruce Archer*

The income for the current financial year (ending 31 August) is presently £2748, of which £1174 has been generously donated by Members. So far we have spent £811 on running the Group which includes: £108 on postage – not including the Annual Report which has yet to come, £280 for AGM expenses, £250 for insurance and £56 for two more years of website hosting.



Last year we spent £335 on posting the Annual Report (CEMEX undertake the reproduction at their expense). As you will see from the item in this News Letter, we plan to make the 2008 Annual Report available on the website at the time of publication and members, who have internet access, will need to specifically ask for a paper copy if they want one. This will reduce paper consumption and postage costs.

Donations have been spent on additional items including: £330 on bird feeding, £250 for a bench which has been installed opposite the bird feeders, £43 on BBQs for first and last of the 14 volunteer work parties and £160 for rare breed cattle to improve the autumn grazing on the Reserve. Thank you for your generous donations.

## **Become a cattleman! We need you!!**

In August the cattle will be returning to graze around lakes. During their stay, we need to check regularly that they are all accounted for and are in good health.

Can you spare an hour or two once a week? You won't need to handle the cattle, just check that they are all present and appear healthy. Most of the time this can be done quickly from the footpath but occasionally it is necessary to walk over the reserve to find them. So a perk of the role is an excuse to visit parts of the reserve you can't normally reach!





Ideally we would like to get enough people, so that the cows are checked on every day of the week.

If you are interested, please contact us for more information. Your help would be greatly appreciated and this task allows us to continue to manage the lake edges as important wildlife-rich grassland.

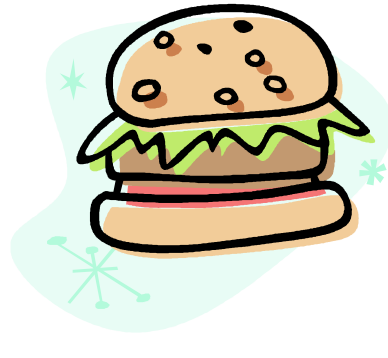
We will provide all training, advice and back up. Please contact us Sue or Alex on: 01252 331353 or email on: [blackwater.valley@hants.co.uk](mailto:blackwater.valley@hants.co.uk)

## Can you spare some time to help us to keep Moor Green Lakes in great shape?

Why not come along and join a Conservation Work Party






### Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> September

First task of the year special free BBQ for the workers!



**Meet in the car park off Lower Sandhurst Road at 10.30am**

**Don't worry if you haven't done conservation work before, all training and tools are provided.**

-  No special skills are needed
-  Tools and training are provided
-  Refreshments are provided but bring lunch if you are staying all day
-  Just wear outdoor clothing, boots or wellies and waterproofs
-  Children under 16 must be accompanied by an adult

For more details please contact Stuart on 01252 331353

## Bridleway repairs completed

Representatives of the Partners involved in resurfacing the stretch of bridleway alongside Moor Green Lakes Nature Reserve attended the 'official' reopening of the route on 10<sup>th</sup> July. Members will know previously the bridleway was very narrow and overgrown and the surface had become badly rutted and muddy making it difficult for horse riders to access and impassable for cyclists. Now that work has been completed, access for both riders and cyclists has vastly improved. Prior to the work Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) Countryside Service had received complaints from horse riders and cyclists about the poor condition of this popular public right of way.

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Those attending included: Cllr Simon Weeks (WBC's Executive Member for Environment), Emma Tweed (Countryside Ranger, WBC), Cllr Wally Chapman (Footpaths Committee Chairman, Finchampstead Parish Council), Andy Scott (Development Manager, CEMEX, UK), Dave Pilkington (Chairman, Blackwater Valley Countryside Trust) and Sue Dent of the Blackwater Valley Countryside Partnership. Local horse rider Jane Richardson with her horse Gofar, who are regular bridleway users, were also in attendance. A 700m length of the bridleway was re-surfaced from Lower Sandhurst Road southwards to where it meets the Blackwater. A non-digging method was used to lay the path, which included a 'cellular confinement' system, so tree roots were not damaged. The system consists of a 3D plastic honeycomb that is filled with large gravel and topped with hoggin (sandy gravel mix) this protects the tree roots by allowing water and air to get to the them, and prevents compaction.



The project was managed by Emma Tweed of WBC's Countryside Service and cost £32,000. Funding was organised by Sue Dent at the Blackwater Valley Countryside Partnership from Natural England, through Defra's Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund (ALSF).

The ALSF contributed 75% of the total cost with the remaining 25% match funded by Wokingham Borough Council, Finchampstead

Parish Council, the Blackwater Valley Countryside Trust and minerals extraction company CEMEX, with a significant contribution also being made through volunteer work.

## **Birds of Berkshire Atlas project 2007-2011**

*By Colin Wilson*

The organisers are pleased to report excellent progress. Results, including from last winter (2008/09), show 60% of winter tetrad surveys completed and 42% of summer surveys completed after just eighteen months surveying.

One thing that is apparent is the shortage of confirmed breeding records and we hope birdwatchers from all over the county will help us with this in future. Seeing a bird carrying food for young is not a rare birdwatching sight but it is exactly what we need to know about. Also, it is easy to assume someone has already confirmed breeding of a common bird such as a Wren or Dunnock and Swifts and House Martins for example, but it is often not the case. We don't have access to all the gardens in the county! If birds bred in your garden or street this year and you can supply a date for your record we would be very glad to hear from you. There are lots of ways to tell us, just see the last paragraph of this note. One more thing, owls are hard to locate, Tawny Owls are noisy in September and October and we need to know where they are. Please use the form to tell us if you hear one or see any other Owl at any time.

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Fund raising continues and while some success has been achieved around two thirds of the expected cost remains to be raised or pledged. The amount raised will affect the size and content of the Atlas so we continue to need support by local authorities and conservation bodies that will benefit from the publication. You can help via our 'Sponsor a Species' initiative, from only £20 – see <http://www.berksoc.org.uk/atlas/index.shtml> . Companies can also help by sponsoring a species or sponsoring other parts of the publication. One hundred species have been sponsored so far but we need your help to increase the number. Please have a look at the list available on the website above or ask the Editor (contact details on front page) for more information.

The taster of our progress below shows Common Buzzard summer sightings from the 1986 Atlas (green dots) and results from summer 2008, reflecting an enormous increase in population. There will be other fascinating stories to tell as well with your help.

You can submit records to Atlas projects by any one of the following ways:

1. Join up as an Atlas recorder (no charge) on <http://www.bto.org/birdatlas/> You can take on a tetrad and do timed visits or just submit your records as a Roving Recorder. It's easy and enjoyable and lots of interesting data is on the website to enthuse you to do more.
2. Join up on berksbirds our local website where all the information you need about local birds is available. Just set up an account (it's really simple and no charge) and add your records. Don't forget to enter any breeding evidence when you enter your sightings. See <http://www.berksbirds.co.uk/login.asp?referer=submitbirdnews.asp>
3. Fill in the simple form at the end of this report with your record details and send them to the Editor. Send them anytime you want and a new form will be sent to you in return or email [colin.wilson@berksoc.org.uk](mailto:colin.wilson@berksoc.org.uk) for a form you can send by email.

### **Shop at Waitrose Sandhurst and help the Blackwater Valley Trust!**

For the month of August the Blackwater Valley Countryside Trust is one of the three local good causes supported by Waitrose at Sandhurst. When you shop there you collect a green token which you can place in the receptacle for the cause you choose. There's no minimum spend at the store so you can pop in for everyday items like a bottle of milk and still receive a token.

From previous exposure in the Frimley and Hawley Waitrose stores the trust has received over £500 so this is a valuable source of funds. The trust uses the money to support projects in the Blackwater Valley, the donation for the bridleway resurfacing mentioned earlier in the Newsletter is just one example. Other projects so far completed include habitat work to successfully increase Common Tern breeding, grassland restoration and lakeside clearance with a bench at Frimley, opening up a small nature reserve called Snaky Lane at Ash and work to improve access and control cattle at Hawley Meadows. Another major path improvement project is also planned in the Aldershot area with funding arranged by the Trust.

The strength of the trust lies in its membership so the more we have the better it can bid for grants and awards. Please support the trust which is there to help all recreational and wildlife activities along the valley. You can join by picking up a leaflet at your local library or by visiting [www.bvct.org.uk](http://www.bvct.org.uk) and requesting a leaflet. For only £5 a year your whole family is included and can join in the activities offered and help improve our environment for all. Even if you don't join the Trust please pop along to Waitrose, Sandhurst and vote with your green token in August.



## How many people does it take to sit on a Moor Green Lakes bench?



This new bench, paid for by your subscriptions and donations, has been located just opposite the birdfeeders a short walk from the car park. People can now sit and enjoy the sight of birds feeding in relative comfort. We expect the bench to be a popular spot once the feeding recommences in earnest. From late summer we will be supplying peanuts but it will be autumn and winter before seed is provided, when food in the countryside is beginning to get scarce. Let's hope there won't be any fighting for places by members once the winter birds start their serious feeding!

### **Gulls and Terns breeding at Moor Green Lakes – 2009**

*By Bruce Archer*

The result of the Black-headed Gulls and Common Terns breeding at Moor Green Lakes in 2009 is best described as a total disaster.

As usual Black-headed Gulls began to congregate on Tern Island from February onward. Common Terns started to arrive from the west coast of Africa on the 10<sup>th</sup> April and took up residence on the Island. By the end of April there were at least 10 Common Terns and 135 Black-headed Gulls in residence.

All went well with clement weather throughout May with an estimated 75 Gull nests and 8 Common Tern nests being incubated. About two-thirds of Tern Island is fenced off to prevent ground predators from pillaging the nests. Most of the gulls were within the fenced area and the terns, which start nesting a bit later, were relegated to the area outside. Moorhens, Tufted Ducks and a Little Ringed Plover also nested on the Island. A few gulls occupied Sandpiper Island on Colebrook Lake South, behind the hide. Some Moorhen chicks were present on the Islands by the end of May.



On one of my usual morning visits, on the 4<sup>th</sup> June, it was immediately clear that something was seriously wrong; there were very few gulls on nests. The terns and the Little Ringed Plover nesting outside the fence were still there, but most of the gulls on Tern Island and Sandpiper Island were missing. Over the next few days it became apparent that about 50 Black-headed Gull nests had been destroyed. It was not clear what had caused the problem. Things seemed settled among the remaining gulls and a few appeared to produce replacement eggs.

On the 18<sup>th</sup> June several of the terns, which were on the outside of the fence, were no longer on nests, only one or 2 of the 8 or so nests remained. Terns can be very aggressive, and readily attack predators, so something determined had been at work.

We had been planning a couple of visits to the Island to ring the young gulls and terns, but this was looking less productive as time passed, so on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of June Tim Ball, Tony Elston and myself made the boat trip to Tern Island to see what was happening. We found: a Moorhen nest with 3 eggs outside the fence, inside the fenced area were 3 Tufted Duck nests, two of which contained broken egg shells, and one with 8 warm eggs. There were 3 gull nests with 1,3 and 3 eggs (3 is the norm) and one tern nest with 2 eggs (the norm for terns). During the next week another gull and a tern restarted nests on the Island.



Black-headed Gull nest - 23 June 2009

Then on the morning of the 6<sup>th</sup> July, I arrived to see that none of the nests were occupied. There were just a few terns and gulls in the area. Over the next few days all gulls and terns disappeared from Tern Island.

The pattern of overnight raids destroying a large number of nests is inconsistent with an avian predator, such as Carrion Crows, Jackdaws or Grey Herons. It is most likely that feral American Mink were responsible. They have been seen in the area this year and their footprints have been seen in the monitoring rafts on Colebrook and Grove Lakes.

During the visit to the island on 23<sup>rd</sup> June it was apparent there were some gaps in the fencing where the gravel has washed away from the bottom of the fence, and also the netting was rusting. There were several holes which Mink could have used to get inside the fenced area.



Common Tern nest - 23 June 2009



The plan for this winter is to replace at least the lower part of the fencing on Tern Island and to do some work to repair the eroded island edges close to the fencing, or perhaps move the fence away from the water's edge.

This is the third year of declining breeding results on Tern Island and it would be a real shame if the established nesting colony of gulls and terns is lost.

**Annual Reports – Saving costs**

Paper versions of our reports have been provided to all members since the Group began. Our aim is always to maximise the funds to benefit the reserve so one way to cut costs is to provide reports electronically. Members wanting a paper copy will still have one posted to them but a recent email to members who gave their email addresses to us, explained that we would not send one to them unless they specifically ask for a paper version.

Reports can be viewed, including all back copies on <http://www.mglg.org.uk/annual-reports.htm> Let Dave Bishop, our Membership Secretary, know if we normally email you but you want to stay on the postal list. Dave is contactable on [davidrbishop@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:davidrbishop@yahoo.co.uk)

If you do not have an email address don't worry you will still receive your reports by post!

Cut here -----

**Bird Record Form (breeding birds and Owls)**

**Name** .....

**Address**  
.....  
.....

**Postcode** ..... **Tel No. (for queries)** .....

Date of record	Species	Location (postcode, map ref or exact place name)	Breeding evidence if available (not essential for Owls) (e.g. nest building, nest with young/eggs, Carrying food for Young, juvenile bird etc)

Tick here if you want to know more about sponsoring a species for the Berkshire Atlas

Send to: Colin Wilson, Blakeney, St Catherine's Road, Camberley, Surrey, GU16 9NP as soon as possible

