

# MOOR GREEN LAKES GROUP NEWSLETTER

January 2012



Dear Members

Happy New Year to you all!

If you get time away from the Olympics and Golden Jubilee celebrations this year don't forget to visit Moor Green Lakes where you will find the usual fascinating wildlife and opportunities to get involved in managing a nature reserve. It is a great pleasure to be able to introduce you to two new team members this time, Chris Edwards our new Secretary and Mike Waterman, our new Fungi Recorder. Read on to find out more about them! I would also like to express thanks to John Hodson who fed the birds for us until recently and to Terry Patton for volunteering to take the task over for the next year. Volunteers are gold dust!

A number of aspects of the reserve have occupied us since we last produced a Newsletter and many of them are mentioned inside. The latest recruits to our workforce are quite unexpected and some of the trials of our Committee members on the subject of car parks are quite revealing!

You can also see that bird recording and considerations of rare wild birds have occupied our thinking. An Eastern Crowned Warbler, only the second record in the UK was found at a reserve in Hertfordshire last year and led to a major 'twitch' with serious repercussions for the reserve managers. With this in mind, plans have been devised to ensure that when our big day comes we can try and cope! In this context, the car park extension mentioned in this Newsletter will not suffice!

For those interested in natural history why not join the Blackwater Valley Countryside Trust and Camberley Natural History Society at a talk about 'The wildlife of the Blackwater Valley' on 13<sup>th</sup> January at 8pm at the Woodmancote Centre, Pinewood Avenue Crowthorne, RG45 6RQ. Bernard is a well known local naturalist, a Trustee of the Blackwater Valley Countryside Trust and our own Mammal Recorder.

Last but not least, we have our own AGM 7.30 to 7.45 pm on Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> March at the usual location, Finchampstead Memorial Hall where refreshments will be provided and be followed by a talk about bird ringing and you only have to look inside this Newsletter to see what an interesting subject that can be. We look forward to seeing you there.

Any items for the next Newsletter will be welcome by email, letter or other means to my address below.

**Colin Wilson, Editor**

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**We apologise for the continuing  
problems in updating the website  
we are doing all we can to resolve  
them.**

**Membership** enquiries to our Membership Secretary:

Dave Bishop, email [dave.bishop@mglg.org.uk](mailto:dave.bishop@mglg.org.uk) or phone 01252 876966



## **Change to bird recording area covered by Moor Green Lakes Group report.**

*Roger Murfitt*

The bird recording area covered by the Moor Green Lakes Group Annual report has historically comprised a large area of approximately 3 square kilometres which has been loosely termed "Eversley Gravel Pits". This has been defined as the area south of Lower Sandhurst Road, west of Mill Lane, east of Longwater Road and north of the golf course access track and encompasses gravel pits in both Hants and Berks. This is a very large area to cover fully and a large proportion is outside the areas overseen by the Moor Green Lakes Group Committee. Therefore, it has been agreed by the Moor Green Lakes Group management committee that the bird recording area will change from 1<sup>st</sup> Jan 2012 to more closely reflect the area of influence of the Moor Green Lakes Group. The new recording area will comprise the Moor Green Lakes reserve (Colebrook Lake North, Colebrook Lake South and Grove Lake) plus the New Workings, all north of the river. This change should make it easier to monitor impacts of reserve management as counts of wintering/breeding birds in the Annual Report will relate directly to the managed reserve areas.

Relevant bird records for the new recording area can be submitted in the normal manner either via berkswild website ([www.berkswild.co.uk](http://www.berkswild.co.uk)) or directly to myself, the MGL Bird Recorder. Details of how to do this, preferably annually except for rarities, will be on the website soon. Records for areas formerly part of the Eversley GP recording area but now outside the new Moor Green Lakes recording area should no longer be submitted to the MGL Bird Recorder but can be submitted to berkswild above or the corresponding Hants website (at [www.goingbirding.co.uk](http://www.goingbirding.co.uk)), or to the relevant County Recorder, according to the location.

We shall continue to publish the wildfowl counts and other notable records for the pits south of the river in a special section of our Annual Report so comparison of data can be made against a long history of records. This section will be written by John Clark.

### **Rare birds at Moor Green Lakes.**

*Roger Murfitt*

The Moor Green Lakes Group committee has recently reviewed their approach to handling rare bird occurrences at Moor Green Lakes. The committee has committed to continue to encourage openness around reporting rare bird occurrences at Moor Green Lakes reserve as quickly as possible via the [berkswild.co.uk](http://berkswild.co.uk) website. The only exception to this will be if a rare bird is showing indications of breeding when information will not be released (at least during the potential breeding season) in the interests of the bird.

### **Welcome Mike Waterman - a new Fungi Recorder for Moor Green Lakes**

Mike was a rocket scientist at Marconi until they opted out of space work at the end of the Ariane 4 contract in 2003, when redundancy gave him more time for his satellite watching and fungi recording. His interest in fungi started 1975 when he bought his house next to Yateley Common and he gained experience through attending forays such as the joint Camberley Natural History Society/ British Mycological Society visits to Windsor Great Park. He now records with the Thames Valley, West Weald, Hampshire and Hants & Surrey Borders fungi groups and leads forays for the local Wildlife Trust.

A recent visit to our reserve outside the best period identified 31 species of fungi. Next year we intend to have two visits, spring and autumn. Mike will be leading a Fungus Foray for Blackwater Valley Countryside Trust at Moor Green Lakes next October – the more pairs of eyes, the more we'll find!



## Bird Ringing - The Value of Colour Ring Sightings

Tim Ball, Reading and Basingstoke Ringing, [www.rbringing.co.uk](http://www.rbringing.co.uk)

Colour rings are a very valuable "low-tech" way of getting a lot of valuable data on birds survival and movements. A good example of this is a Lesser Black-backed Gull which was seen at Moor Green in March 2011:

### Blue AZX (hatched 2007)

Ringed	20/10/07	Gloucester landfill site, Gloucestershire
Seen	13/04/08	La Cueva beach, Oviedo, Spain (973 km SSW)
Seen	08-14/02/09	Colmenar Viejo, Madrid, Spain (1251 km S)
Seen	05-31/01/10	Colmenar Viejo, Madrid, Spain (1251 km S)
Seen	30/07/10	Tice's Meadow, Surrey (127 km SE)
Seen	24/12/10	Saint-Vaast-La-Hougue, Manche, France (260 km SSE)
Seen	04/03/11	Moor Green Lakes (113km ESE)

It was ringed in 2007 as a first autumn bird in Gloucestershire and reported seven times before it turned up at Moor Green. It was reported from the north coast of Spain in April 2008, presumably as it was returning north from wherever it wintered. It was then reported near Madrid in February 2009 and again in January 2010 before being seen in Surrey in July 2010. In December 2010 it was seen on the north coast of France. Gulls take several years to mature and the large species like Lesser Black-backs regularly don't start breeding until they are 3 or 4 years old and colour ringing has shown that they often wander widely whilst they are immature and many winter in Iberia. Full adults tend to winter closer to their breeding grounds so Blue AZX could have been wintering in Northern France in 2009/10 or on it's way further south when it was seen. Like this bird some can be loyal to particular wintering grounds for at least a few years so it's possible it went all the way back to Madrid.



Colour ringed White 29C6 photographed in France

We have been colour ringing Black-headed Gull chicks in Berkshire since 2009, mostly at Hosehill Lake LNR, Theale. The 380 birds we have marked have already resulted in nearly 1800 sightings and 42 of the birds have been reported from sites more than 20 km from where they were hatched. Even after just 2½ years the data is showing interesting results about birds returning to their natal colony as immatures and to breed and how long they sometimes stay in places on migration or wintering. Every record helps – including repeats at the same location. Some of our birds have been reported over 60 times.

The British Bird Ringing scheme has now been running for just over 100 years and colour ringing first started around 70 years ago. Normal metal rings aren't expected to be read in the field without capturing a bird first or finding it dead, they are very small with an address and a unique serial number of up to 7 or 8 characters.



Several different types of colour marking systems are used. There are 2 main types of colour ringing systems and in the UK all include a standard metal ring in a specified position:

- A combination of 2-4 small plain or colour banded rings, the exact position of each ring (left or right leg, above or below the "knee") identify either the individual bird or it's cohort (ie ringing location and year).
- A few (typically just one or two) colour rings with up to 4 or perhaps 5 characters in a contrasting colour. The position of all the rings (including the metal one) and the colour of both the ring and the writing are all important.

In recent years leg flags have also been used these are colour rings with a horizontal "flag" that sticks out from the ring and can have writing on. Neck rings are also used on some water birds and nasal saddles are also used on the continent, these are engraved plastic plates that are attached to the bills of ducks.

Some letters are used infrequently on colour rings because they are easily confused with other letters or numbers – Z and 2 for instance. The range of available colours is also limited because distinguishing them accurately at long range can be awkward, they are also prone to getting stained. All this means that the available colour and code combinations is fairly limited, when you combine this with the lack of space for adding something that identifies the ringing country and birds mobility the need for international co-ordination becomes obvious.

Colour ringed birds can be reported on-line at <http://www.euring.org/>, details of the majority of European colour ring schemes are also given on <http://www.cr-birding.be/> which has enough information for you to track down individual schemes and gives the relevant contact details, this site is currently being re-engineered and so probably won't be fully up to date for a few months. Colour ring projects are almost all run by amateurs working in their own time but most are enthusiasts and will respond pretty promptly to a sighting – responses for colour rings are almost always much faster than they are for metal rings. If you have trouble tracking down details from a bird you've seen locally then please feel free to contact me at [tim.ball@rbringing.co.uk](mailto:tim.ball@rbringing.co.uk).

## Hedgelaying

*Sue Dent*

In October the MGL Group were very pleased to welcome the Surrey Hedgelaying Group back to lay another section of the hedge north of Colebrook Hide, they were joined by some of the MGLG volunteers who cleared away all the 'brash' so that by the end of the day there were 80m of newly laid hedge and a beautifully tidy site.



Eric, a local member of the SHG, then kindly came along to two Tuesday tasks in December and worked with the BVCP Ranger Stuart Croft and volunteers to lay some of the hedge to the south of Colebrook Hide. The team were able to use 'stakes and binders' for the hedge that had been cut a few weeks earlier from a coppice block between Colebrook and Grove lakes so it was great to be able to use our own produce.



## **An introduction to Chris Edwards, our new Secretary**

I have lived in Yateley since 1984 with my wife Alison, our daughter, Charlotte, aged 21 and son, Graeme, aged 17 (also 2 eccentric cats!). My career to date has been in finance, having trained as an accountant following graduation from Liverpool University in 1975. Since then I have held a variety of finance, audit and systems related positions in banks, food processing companies and accountancy firms. My current employer is Quadriga Worldwide, a company based in Theale, which develops media software and equipment leasing services for the hotel industry.



I have always possessed a deep interest in the natural sciences, especially biology, and hold a degree in Zoology. Now that my family is grown up, I am looking to have more time to develop my interests in this area and in recent years have got involved with voluntary work restoring and maintaining local nature reserves. This has included joining the Sunday morning work parties at Moor Green Lakes, Yateley Common (with the Yateley Society) and Fleet Pond (with the Fleet Pond Society). I have also participated in other voluntary community roles holding positions such as Parent Governor for Yateley School from 2006 to 2010, Treasurer for the Bracknell evening cricket league and "Honorary Auditor" for Potley Hill School PTA.

I am particularly interested in the economic, ecological and practical issues of habitat restoration which is why I have an interest in Moor Green Lakes. I make frequent visits to the Horseshoe Lake/Moor Green area for walking and leisure and feel strongly that this is a very valuable resource that should be both protected and further developed as a wetland and wildlife habitat and I am looking forward to making a contribution as Secretary.

### **Robert Gillmor Exhibition – Free Events for all – Jointly arranged by Reading Museum and Berkshire Ornithological Club**

12 January 2012 - **Talk: Tufted Ducks and their cousins - behind the image** – Ray Reedman – at Reading Museum 13.00 – 13.45

23 February - **Walk: Tufted Ducks and their cousins** – Find the ducks - Led by Ray Reedman at Dinton Pastures, Car Park Mohawk Way, Woodley, RG5 4UE at 10.00 – 12.00

25 February - **Birders' Day at the Museum**: a day when BOC Committee and volunteers will talk casually to visitors about birding experiences and encourage interest in birds. There will be two talks '**150 years of birds and birdwatching in Berkshire**' by Renton Righelato at 12.00 to 12.45 and another from Neil Bucknell entitled '**The Birds of Berkshire - the challenge of recording and illustrating our avian history**' at 14.00 to 14.45.

28 March - **Talk: Spring Chorus in Reading** – Colin Wilson, learn birdsong you'll hear around Berkshire this year. At 13.00 – 13.45

19 April - **Walk: Spring Chorus in Reading** – Find the singing birds - Led by Colin Wilson at Dinton Pastures, Car Park Mohawk Way, Woodley, RG5 4UE at 09.00 – 11.00



## Car Parking - Lower Sandhurst Road

*Iain Oldcorn*

Many are aware that, even though we have recovered space from encroaching shrubbery on the eastern edge, there are still occasional difficulties finding a slot in the car park; these difficulties can be severe when events coincide leading to parking along the road.

You may also be aware that we have a plan to improve the situation - but it is not proving easy to implement. Mid 2008 we presented local residents with a proposal to roughly double the size of the car park by extending into the field at the east; with a mixed reception.

In late 2009 we returned to the project and, taking on board the constructive suggestions from one local resident, developed a less ambitious plan for a southward extension alongside the line of the bridleway. An outline proposal was then sent to the Wokingham Borough Council (WoBC) Planning Department in January 2010 for "pre-application advice"; and late in November the detailed proposal was formally submitted to their "Planning Portal".

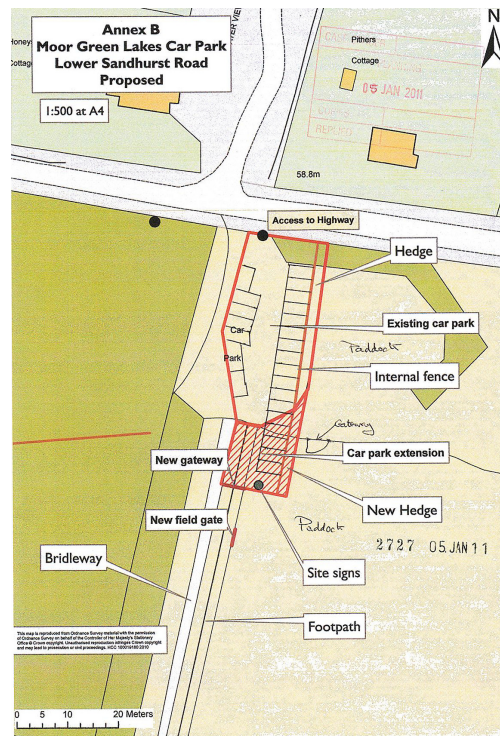
However, WoBC had four problems with our submission - unfortunately they were unable to tell us about them in one hit. Thus initially they advised us that our drawing was not to an approved scale; so it was reworked. By December they also wanted more details of the number of cars we seek to accommodate in the area - so a response was provided around the time that we submitted the revised drawing. Then in March 2011 the authority was able to tell us that we had not adequately shown the new position of the relocated horse barrier/motorbike inhibitor; so parts of the submission were suitably reworked and the application was resubmitted. Then in mid April we were advised that our kind of "change of use" application is subject to a higher fee; so we sent them some more money.

Success! At last in June 2011, Peter Scott was able to advise the rest of the MGLG committee that he had won - subject to getting approval for our (yet to be written) "Approved Method statement for Arboricultural Works scheme". CEMEX are now coming to the rescue and have allocated time for Alex Finn, the Senior Restoration and Arboricultural Manager in their Planning Department to prepare the required statement.

I reckon the three years left on the approval should just about get us through.

### **Project Parakeet – help us learn more about them and their impact**

If you have parakeets regularly visiting your garden you can help an important project gather more information about them. Put simply, all that's required is for you to allow the project to install a feeder in your garden (food paid for) and monitor birds present for 20 minutes a week. This would be for twelve months and the type of feeder would be changed by the project after 6 months to stop the parakeets feeding. So this is an easy way for you to help some important research from the comfort of your own house! For more information you can visit [www.projectparakeet.co.uk](http://www.projectparakeet.co.uk). Hannah Peck from Imperial College, Silwood Park is the main contact and you can email her and volunteer or ask questions at [parakeet@imperial.ac.uk](mailto:parakeet@imperial.ac.uk)



## Four New Volunteers Successfully Recruited

*Sue Dent, Blackwater Valley Countryside Partnership*

In December Moor Green welcomed its four newest volunteers. The four goats, two standard and two pygmy, have been introduced to Long Island, their task - should they choose to accept it - is to tackle some of the bramble and scrub that dominates some parts of the island.



The management of **Long Island** has improved greatly since the 'pontoon' was bought about five years ago. This has made it much easier to get groups of volunteers onto the island and also made it possible to get access for small machinery, such as the walk-behind mower. This has meant that much of the western end of the island, closest to Colebrook Hide, has been cut back and is now much closer to the 'ideal' of open grassland, rather than tall bramble and small trees!

BUT, as the island is over 1.5 hectares in size volunteer effort alone simply isn't enough to have an impact on the whole island. So these new volunteers have been recruited, we have started off with four as a trial but, if all goes well, we hope to increase the numbers to really start to get Long Island back into shape.

Goats are notorious for escaping from fields but they should be an excellent choice for an island – they will eat scrub and trees in preference to grass, they are tough and hardy and they don't like water so they should stay put. However their one indulgence is that they do need a shelter to protect them from the worst of the weather. A huge thank you to Tony Elston who designed and built our new de-lux goat des-res which was installed on the island by the volunteers in early December.



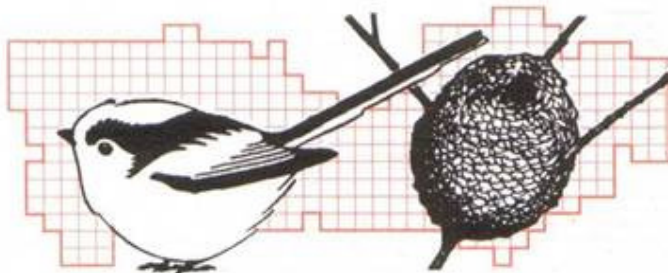
At the time of writing the goats have been in residence for 2 weeks and so far, so good. They appear to have settled in and can be regularly spotted eating their way through the bramble bushes. A sight to gladden the heart of any regular volunteer!



## Birds of Berkshire Atlas 2007-11

Colin Wilson

We are delighted to report that the fieldwork has been completed and every tetrad in Berkshire has been adequately covered to provide our revision of the Birds of Berkshire with a wealth of information and detail on breeding, visiting and wintering birds.



A few facts may interest you about the results so far – they have yet to be totally collated and validated.

- The number of species breeding in the County is almost exactly the same as in the previous Atlas work twenty years ago, but this time new birds have appeared and others have disappeared
- The average number of birds confirmed in a tetrad as breeding is 31 across the County similar to 1986.
- Species richness in summer shows in some tetrads we recorded a maximum 130 species with a low of 35, however, the average was 62.
- The equivalent counts in winter varied from 107 to 29 with an average of 54.
- The total number of species (subject to validation of a few records) was 222 in summer and 188 in winter.

The cost of production of the Atlas has been recalculated at about £37,000 of which we are delighted to have raised about £25,000. We need a last push to find the balance, this will ensure the maximum possible will be available for ornithological projects in Berkshire on successful sale of the books. Many people have helped in their own small way by sponsoring a species. A list of some of those available at the time of writing is below and how you can reserve one. You will be mentioned in the book and also get a minimum 20% discount off the published price of it when it is available.

Available species include:

£30 Woodcock	£20 Garganey
£20 Wood Sandpiper	£30 Gadwall
£20 Water Pipit	£20 Great Northern Diver
£30 Water Rail	£30 Crossbill
£30 Teal	£30 Dunlin
£30 Stone Curlew	£20 Aquatic Warbler
£20 Snow Goose	£20 Ferruginous Duck
£30 Spoonbill	£30 Grasshopper Warbler
£20 Snow Bunting	£30 Hawfinch
£20 Ruff	£30 Laughing Gull
£20 Rock Pipit	£20 Little Bittern
£30 Sandwich Tern	£20 Little Gull
£30 Goldeneye	£20 Night Heron
£20 Glaucous Gull	And plenty more at <a href="http://www.berksoc.org.uk/atlas/species_available.pdf">http://www.berksoc.org.uk/atlas/species_available.pdf</a>

If you are interested visit [http://www.berksoc.org.uk/atlas/sponsor\\_a\\_species.shtml](http://www.berksoc.org.uk/atlas/sponsor_a_species.shtml) or contact Brian Clews on 01628 525314 or email him at [berksbirdatlas@berksoc.org.uk](mailto:berksbirdatlas@berksoc.org.uk)

