

Moor Green Lakes  
Group

Newsletter August 2013



**The Moor Green Pallas's Warbler – just in case you missed it!**

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## **Chairman's Introduction – Adrian Hobbs**

I am pleased to be able to introduce myself as the new Chairman of Moor Green Lakes Group. My wife, Jackie and I have lived close to the reserve since 1978 and we walk the area frequently, enjoying the abundant wildlife.

Although fascinated by natural history and being an avid consumer of nature programmes on television, I am hopeless at identifying most of the birds and plants we are fortunate to have in our area. Nevertheless, I enjoy seeing them.

The major part of my career was spent at the Transport Research Laboratory, in Crowthorne, where I was involved in road accident research and the development of car safety. Having initiated and led the development of the European New Car Assessment Programme (Euro NCAP), I left TRL to run it from Brussels and home, up to retirement. I was then fortunate to receive a CBE, on the first occasion that the Queen held an investiture at Windsor Castle.

During my period in office, I hope to be able to further the interests of the Moor Green Lakes Group and help work towards to successful restoration of the Manor Farm and Fleet Hill Farm excavation sites.

## **The future of Moor Green Lakes**

It is with mixed feelings that we see the possibility of changes to our Reserve. CEMEX the landowners have been planning for the time they leave the site and when we look at Moor Green Lakes, Manor Farm and Fleethill Farm together we can see a huge area of enormous wildlife potential. Such an area was bound to attract the attention of the RSPB who have the vision of a large reedbed and wetland reserve with scope to attract breeding Bitterns and many other birds and wildlife.

Of course, matters like this take time and while CEMEX obtained planning permission for the restoration of the site, the RSPB can see greater potential with some changes. These changes require some negotiation between the parties involved and the planning authorities before any change of ownership is possible but it certainly looks as though there is a chance of a substantial Berkshire RSPB reserve right here at Moor Green.

The Group will undoubtedly be involved in meeting the RSPB about management of the site in the future if a purchase goes ahead, so nothing is likely to happen to change matters for some time. From our representation on the Steering Group for the area we shall continue to input and be updated and will of course, keep you informed.



## **MOOR GREEN LAKES OPEN DAY**

***Sunday, 1st September 2013, 9 am to 1 pm.***

The Moor Green Lakes Group is holding an Open Day, where members and visitors are invited to come, learn more about the wildlife and participate in the many activities. There is much to interest both adults and children. Entrance is Free.

This is the one day in the year where members and visitors can enter the normally closed reserve, meet the experts and take a guided walk.

The programme of events is as follows:

- 9.00 am - 1.00 pm

Meet the experts and view the displays showing the work of the Moor Green Lakes Group and the Blackwater Valley Countryside Partnership. View the displays of Moths and Fungi. Have your own Fungi samples identified.

- 10.00 am - 11.30 am

Join a Bird Walk around the reserve with an expert guide.

- 9.30 am - 11.00 am

10.00 am - 11.30 am

10.30 am - 12.00 noon

11.00 am - 12.30 pm

Join one of the guided walks to view a Bird Ringing demonstration and to learn about the Moor Green Nest Boxes.

- 9.15 am - 10.30 am

Learn about Mammal Trapping and join a foray with an expert guide.

- Various times between 9.00 am and 12.30 pm

Go Pond Dipping in the lake with expert guidance and/or Join a Bug Hunt where the expert will help identify what you find.

Sorry NO DOGS.

The normal entrance from the path linking the Lower Sandhurst Road car park and the River Blackwater will be used. Free parking will be available in the extended car park on Lower Sandhurst Road, Finchampstead, RG40 3TF.

For further information, please visit <http://www.mglg.org.uk/>

Although there are very few security problems at Moor Green lakes we do occasionally have issues to contend with.

If you see people beyond the fences who should not be there (and youths in school holidays have sometimes chosen to swim there!) or over zealous birdwatchers may cross the boundaries from time to time, please report the instances as soon as you can. You can call Blackwater Valley Countryside Partnership on 01252 331353 for advice.

Also, please use normal car security when parking on site. Lock the car with nothing in view to tempt a break in (this would including satnav holders etc). A car break-in should be reported to the police.

*Bird ringing demonstration*



## The Moor Green Sandpiper

By Tim Ball



A ringed Green Sandpiper has been seen at Moor Green regularly outside the breeding season since 2010. It was photographed on 30 July by Roger Murfitt well enough for me to decipher the ring number. The ring looked red in the field initially (less so now) but it is a standard metal ring which had become discoloured, not a colour ring. I have now received the original ringing details - it was ringed as an adult on 22 July 2010 at Castricum in The Netherlands (just NW of Amsterdam). This is only the fourth ever Green Sandpiper ringed abroad which has been found in the UK - the previous three were from Sweden, Germany and The Netherlands. The previous Dutch bird was also ringed at Castricum in July. With luck this bird will be seen again at Moor Green and other UK sites.

## Birds of Berkshire Atlas and Avifauna

By Colin Wilson

This terrific book is coming soon! Editing is largely complete and design of the final version is well under way. It will be a large format book, containing full species accounts and original artwork for every bird ever recorded in Berkshire, selected distribution and abundance maps, photographs plus many other sections including 'Where to watch birds' in the county.

There is still time to sponsor a species if you would like to be named in the book. Just contact Brian Clews for the latest list on [brian.clews@btconnect.com](mailto:brian.clews@btconnect.com) or phone him on 01628 526091. You can also buy some of the original artwork from the book and an example is shown here. Let me know if you are interested as we have some excellent drawings available. (01252 837411)



Every attempt has been made to keep the cost of this book as low as possible while also allowing us to build a good fund for bird conservation in Berkshire at the end of the project. We think the price of £35 is a bargain so make sure you get your order into Brian as soon as possible.

It will, of course, make a fine Christmas gift for any local birdwatcher. I know I will be reading my copy by the fire!

## **A new bench at Moor Green Lakes**

***By Steve Arnold***

In February at a committee meeting, I suggested a second bench up from the existing bench near Colebrook hide offering a view of the lake and Tern Island rather than the squirrel feeders aka bird feeders! The idea was accepted so 'work began'!

After a flurry of emails, we finally picked out the bench we wanted and ordered it, a cheque was duly posted and we waited for delivery. And we waited and waited some more. After a few unanswered emails and a couple of phone calls we finally discovered that the two plaques we had ordered with the bench had been mislaid and had to be redone. Finally, two weeks later in May – 3 months after the original order was placed - the bench complete with plaques was delivered. (As a footnote to the ordering process, after delivery the bench company lost our original cheque and we had to send a replacement). After holidays and availability issues, finally on the 2<sup>nd</sup> August, Peter, Ian, Geoff and I installed the bench. Fortunately it was cooler than the previous day, one of the hottest days of the year.

Hopefully this recycled bench will be enjoyed by many visitors over the coming months and years wishing to sit and enjoy the natural beauty and wildlife of Colebrook Lake.

Our thanks go to the Blackwater Valley Countryside Trust for providing funding for the bench, to Peter Scott for leading the small volunteer group, and to Ian Adnams and Geoff Hallam for providing able assistance in the installation of the bench.



## **Cattle-checkers needed**

***By Peter Scott***

As before, cattle and goats will be arriving on site sometime in the next few weeks. [They will probably have arrived by the time you read this]. They help us with site maintenance by grazing / browsing vegetation and thereby reducing what we have to cut back manually. The cattle will stay on the mainland, while the goats will be on Long Island.

The cattle in particular, the goats to a lesser extent, have to be checked regularly – ideally every day, but certainly several times a week. A number of people helped last year but not enough for a daily check. Due to the loss of one team member, we need more volunteers to share this task by undertaking to check on one day each week. [Holidays and absences can be catered for by the team].

You do not need to approach the cattle. They just have to be counted and, as long as they appear well, that's it. Any apparent problems are reported to contact points provided, who will take any further action needed. The goats only need viewing weekly through binoculars. If you are willing to help, please contact Peter Scott: tel. 01252 878205; email [scottpeterp@gmail.com](mailto:scottpeterp@gmail.com).

Help will be given in learning the task if necessary – Please help if you can.

## Recent bird sightings at Moor Green Lakes (Jan to July 2013)

*By Roger Murfitt*

After the excitement of the Pallas's Warbler (see picture on Page 1), there were also



*Marsh Harrier by Jerry O'Brien*

many other interesting bird sightings at Moor Green Lakes in the first half of 2013. A Firecrest was seen along the river on 13<sup>th</sup> Feb by observers searching for the Pallas's Warbler – could this be the bird that was ringed on the reserve in Nov 2012 wintering in the area? A redhead Smew were seen on a couple of occasions in

Mar/April and the recent upsurge in Marsh Harrier sightings has continued with a male from 25<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> Mar including a female which took up residence on New Workings/West Fen from 6<sup>th</sup> June to 14<sup>th</sup> July. It would have been interesting if these two had overlapped in occurrence! Passerine migrants included the expected Wheatears, Whinchats and Yellow Wagtails but also included scarcer visitors in the form of a male Pied Flycatcher on 27<sup>th</sup> April, a Wood Warbler on 19<sup>th</sup> April and a reeling Grasshopper Warbler that remained from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> May. Spring wader passage was relatively light but included a Whimbrel on 15<sup>th</sup> May.

The new Tern rafts were christened by a single pair of Black-headed Gulls on one raft which hatched two young and then, eventually, a pair of Common Terns took to the other raft and, as this is written, currently have a single large chick yet to fledge. Single Ospreys were seen on 3 occasions in late Spring on 31<sup>st</sup> May, 4<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> June. Finally, the Autumn wader migration is getting under way with a Wood Sandpiper seen on 20<sup>th</sup> July and 9 Black-tailed Godwits on 21<sup>st</sup> July being the highlights so far.

## Work programme: 2013/2014

*By Peter Scott*

The following is a 'draft' programme of site maintenance work to be carried out by volunteer groups this autumn / winter. The Sunday tasks will be run by Moor Green Lakes Group itself on the second Sunday of each month, unless unforeseen events force changes. The Tuesday tasks will be run by Blackwater Valley Countryside Partnership (BVCP), but volunteers from MGLG will always be welcome. Some task dates have not yet been fixed, but they are likely to be in the second half of each month, so as not to be very close to the Sunday work. All work parties begin at 10.30 and finish mid-afternoon.

We always need more helpers: the work to be done has always exceeded that which we have been able to accomplish. Members and friends are more than welcome to join any of our work parties, if only for part of the day. Try us out – there is no obligation!

	<b>Sunday</b>	<b>Tuesday</b>
<b>September</b> (8 <sup>th</sup> & 24 <sup>th</sup> )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Clear vegetation from the scrape in front of Colebrook hide.</li> <li>b) Clear vegetation directly in front of hide to maintain view.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Cut back bramble patches on north bank of Grove Lake.</li> <li>b) Thin bramble on south bank of Grove Lake, to give cattle access to central grassland in south.</li> <li>c) Re-cut path through north woods to NE corner of Grove Lake.</li> </ul>
<b>October</b> (13 <sup>th</sup> , 15 <sup>th</sup> , 22 <sup>nd</sup> – i.e. 2 Tuesdays)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Cut back bramble on north-west shore of Colebrook Lake north.</li> <li>b) Continue clearance of scrub eastwards along north shore of Colebrook Lake.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Clear scrub and cut back bramble on the SW part of Long Island.</li> <li>b) Clear <i>Typha</i> from west scrape on south side of Long Island.</li> <li>c) Cut back access path on island.</li> </ul>
		Cut back Blackwater Valley Path & replace 4 fence posts by SW Grove Lake.
<b>November</b> (10 <sup>th</sup> & 19 <sup>th</sup> )	Clear Plover Island.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Cut back invasive plants on north bank of Colebrook Lake.</li> <li>b) Clear scrub from shore of Colebrook Lake North.</li> <li>c) Stack prickly cuttings beside NE boundary fence to deter trespassers.</li> </ul>
<b>December</b> (8 <sup>th</sup> * tba)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Clear saplings from bund of acidic scrape near Grove hide.</li> <li>b) Try to thin vegetation within 'sweet' scrape.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Clear scrub from shore of SW Long Island.</li> <li>b) Brush-cut Sandpiper Island.</li> <li>c) Thin trees on Snipe I. for nesting swans.</li> </ul>
<b>January</b> (12 <sup>th</sup> & tba)	Clear Tern Island.	Cut back verges and hedge along footpath and bridleway between car park and river.
<b>February</b> (9 <sup>th</sup> & tba)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Clear 'scallops' on north bank of Grove Lake.</li> <li>b) Restore small scrape in front of Grove hide.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Lay hedge south of Colebrook Hide.</li> <li>b) Finish path cutting.</li> <li>c) Clear in front of Colebrook bird-viewing screen.</li> </ul>
<b>March</b> (9 <sup>th</sup> & tba)	Protect coppiced stumps with guards.	Plant reeds on Manor Farm site.

### **Other jobs.**

Led by BVCP

- a) Cut back hedge between car park and road to reduce anti-social behaviour.
- b) If necessary, clear trees to open up view from bench on SW Grove.
- c) Brush-cut sandpiper island – do on Dec Tues if 2 staff available, or on another small task.
- d) Spray off Plover and Tern Island.
- e) Move Tern raft back and re-fix
- f) Collect SHLG hedging materials from Rowhill & deliver to Moor Green.

Led by MGLG

- g) Host Surrey Hedge-laying Group, to complete the laying of the hedge between car park and Colebrook hide. Volunteers will be needed to collect and dispose of the brash created.
- h) Organise cattle grazing and checking.

Others

- i) Check fences and mend where necessary.
- j) Make a start on clearing / pruning large trees on Long Island. Outside help will be needed to 'break the back of' this job, after which it may be possible to maintain the situation with volunteers.

## **BUTTERFLIES OF our GRASSLAND**

*By John and Rachel Westmacott*

The commonest butterflies seen at Moor Green Lakes are associated with grassland, and appear in the height of summer. Three species, Meadow Brown, Ringlet and Gatekeeper regularly feature as the most abundant of all those recorded in our surveys.

The **Meadow Brown** appears during May and flies on into the autumn. It is the commonest butterfly in the British Isles, and will be found especially on wild grassland, but also in a variety of other habitats. The male butterfly is a dull brown colour on the upper surfaces of both fore- and hindwings with an eyespot, a tiny white spot surrounded by a black circle within an orange halo, in the corner of each forewing. The underside of the forewing is orange with the eyespot repeated, and that of the hindwing is brown with small black spots. The female insect is larger than the male, and has a bright orange patch on the upper wings surrounding the eyespot. The Meadow Brown has a slow wandering flight and may be seen not only on bright sunny days, but on dull or drizzly days also.

The **Ringlet** is similar to, and can easily be confused with, the male Meadow Brown. It is



a dark butterfly, almost black when first emerging, but fading to brown with age, and it has a distinctive white fringe to the wings. Instead of the Meadow Brown's eyespot, it has a number of circles on both upper and lower wings. It prefers more shaded situations than the Meadow Brown, and has a slow, bobbing flight as it works its way through the longer grasses. Emerging in late June, the Ringlet has a flight period of only five or six weeks, so will

generally be seen in greatest numbers in the latter part of July.

The third of our meadow butterflies is the **Gatekeeper**. This species is not dissimilar to the female Meadow Brown, but has much more orange on the upper wings, and the eyespot on the forewings has two white dots in the black circle rather than the usually single dot of the Meadow Brown. On the underside of the hindwings the small dots are white, not black, and it is overall a smaller and much brighter butterfly. The Gatekeeper emerges in early to mid-July, and is at its most prolific in the first part of August, disappearing by the end of the month. It will be seen in scrubby meadow and hedgerows and often basks in the sun with wings open on bramble or ragwort. During the period in which surveys have been carried out at Moor Green, it has been the most abundant butterfly seen.

The year 2012 was a disappointing year for the three species because of the prolonged cool summer, so we hope that this year will see an abundance of them.

Please remember to record sightings on the record sheet in the hides. Thank you.

The above reminder applies to all wildlife sightings of course. The quality of our Annual reports is due to the records we collect and often these rely on far too few observers. If there are no recording sheets in the hides please contact the appropriate Recorder with details or at least email a Committee Member. Or use the Contact form on our website.