

Moor Green Lakes Group

Newsletter August 2018



Larvae of the Cinnabar moth by Paul Richards – see his interesting article on Page 10

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IMPORTANT NOTICE

We are sorry that the resurfacing and extension of the car park in Sandhurst Lane has taken longer than agreed. We are assured it will be finished by 10th August

BTO Tawny Owl Point Survey Update Wokingham 8 Aug 2018

by Ken and Sarah White

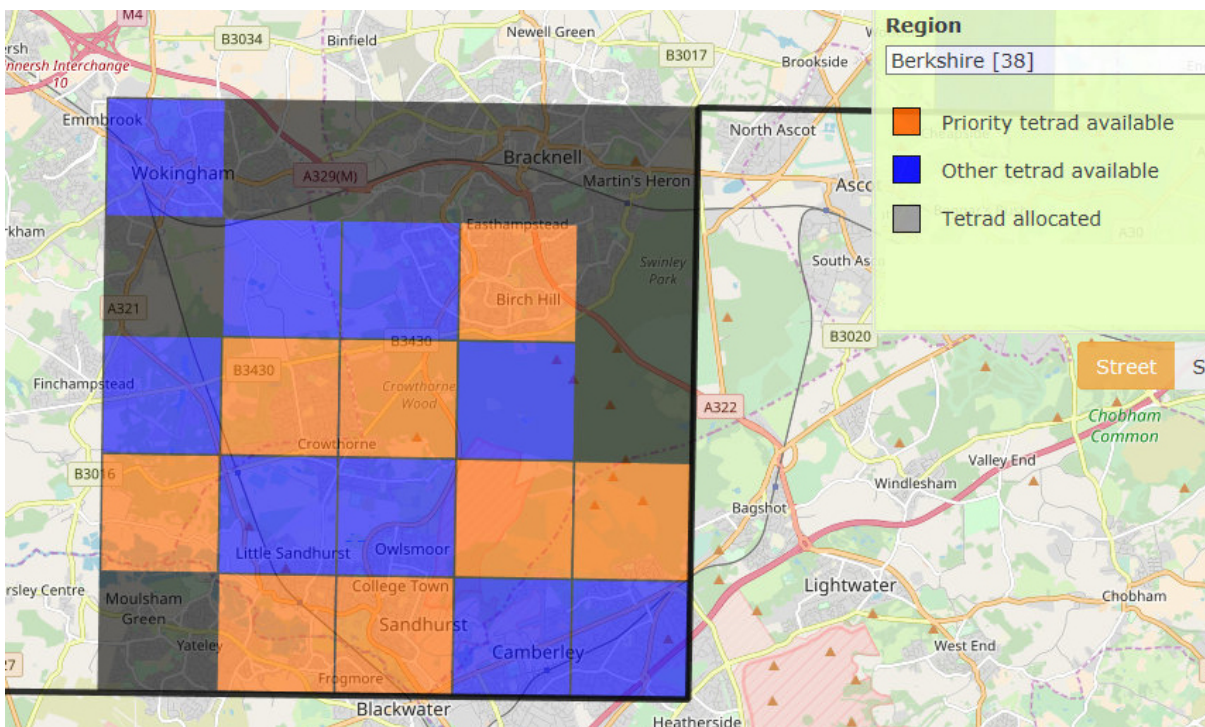
The BTO's core monitoring schemes suggest a recent decline in Tawny Owls, but as they are daytime surveys, they do not give a full picture for this species.

The new BTO Tawny Owl Survey starts on the 15th August and of the 25 squares in the Wokingham area there are still 17 up for grabs. Our thanks for the 8 that have to date been taken and allocated, however there are still **8 priority tetrad squares available**, and a further 9 lower priority squares as well. We need as many of these surveyed as possible please, and the methodology for this new survey is **very easy and very** straight forward; it is a point count from within 300m of the centre of a tetrad [2kmx2km square] as possible. Start the 1st count from the chosen point for 10 mins and then immediately start a 2nd count for 10 mins from the same point. This means that a couple of tetrads could easily be completed in the same evening. The survey is open to anyone who would like to take part.

The first survey period will run from August 15th until October 15th 2018. During this time, we ask you to make ideally at least two evening visits to your chosen tetrad within as short a period as possible [2 to 4 weeks]. The whole process is planned to be repeated between mid-February and mid-March 2019.

Please check the tetrads available in your area and sign up to survey one of them at:

<https://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/project-owl/tawny-owl-point-survey>



The calls of Tawny Owls are so distinctive and well known that this survey is very suitable for those new to bird surveys as well as our reliable core BTO surveyors. The resources page of the same website has a number of recordings for you to listen to as practice:

<https://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/project-owl/tawny-owl-point-survey/survey-resources>

For more information contact Ken White or Sarah Priest on white.zoothera@gmail.com

In the Wokingham area there are the following **priority** [orange] squares: They are all SU: (Cont..)

	Priority		Lower Priority
86T	Birch Hill & Hanworth	86E	Wokingham
86C	Nine Mile Ride	86I	East Hampstead
86H	Heathlake N.R	86N	Ringmead
86M	Crowthorne Wood	86S	Caesars Wood
86B	Finchampstead Ridges & Moor Green Lakes	86G	Wellington College
86F	Sandhurst West	86L	Wildmoor & Owlsmoor
86K	Shepherd Meadows	86R	Broadmoor & Bagshot Heaths [RMA ?]
		86W	"" "" ""
		86Q	RMA & Camberley
		86V	Camberley East

Hornets in Grove Hide

Some of you will have noticed Grove Hide has been closed off. We currently have a hornets nest inside. The plan is to leave them alone until they have finished their business and reopen the hide in the autumn when they should have gone. All wildlife needs protection so we hope to allow these to finish nesting in Grove Hide. The males will die off and we will be able to remove the nest in cooler times!



Bird walks at Moor Green Lakes, Spring 2018

By Roger Murfitt

This spring I offered MGL Group members the opportunity to join a guided walk to see and hear the birds on the reserve. There was a good deal of interest and groups of ten and nine were escorted on the mornings of 6th and 20th May. On both days we were blessed with good weather and there was lots of bird song from recently arrived summer visitors. This gave ample opportunity to highlight some of the subtleties of separating the rather similar song of the Blackcap and Garden Warbler. Whitethroats were also very active and on the 20th May one was already carrying food to young in a concealed nest. On both visits a Kingfisher was periodically flying up and down the river and almost all were able to get good views as it dashed past us in the sun.

On 6th May we saw what is normally a scarce visitor to the reserve in the shape of two adult Mediterranean Gulls (see Recent Bird Sightings for full update) and also a single Redshank on Tern Island. A pair of Mute Swans on Colebrook Lake had 6 newly hatched cygnets and a pair of Great Crested Grebes were displaying. An adult Grey Wagtail was feeding two juveniles along the river and the visit was rounded off nicely with two Little Ringed Plovers on the New Workings. On 20th May the two Mediterranean gulls were again on Tern Island and by now one was sitting on a nest. We also saw a Kestrel mobbing a Buzzard along the north side of Colebrook Lake North, no doubt one of the pair that were nesting in the Barn Owl box in this area. On the way to the New Workings we paused so that I could show everyone through my telescope the Barn Owl which was stood in the entrance to the Manor Farm owl box. At the New Workings we again saw a Little Ringed Plover and also two Shelduck.

On both visits we enjoyed good weather, interesting birds and a good time was had by all.

Recent bird sightings at Moor Green Lakes, Jan to July 2018

By Roger Murfitt

Hawfinches continued to be seen regularly during the first winter period, with up to 5 recorded usually around the pony paddock, with the last record being on 2nd April. Redwings reached a good peak count of 142 in the pony paddock on 1st Jan. Wildfowl numbers were fairly typical with a peak count of 180 Wigeon noted on 4th Feb, 122 Tufted Duck on 20th Jan and a good count of 101 Shoveler on 3rd Mar. Two female Goldeneye were around until 19th Mar. Numbers of roosting Goosanders were relatively low with a peak of 29 on 14th Jan, though the last of this species was recorded on the relatively late date of 2nd May. Snipe reached a very good peak count of 60 on 2nd Jan, almost all on East Fen. The Cormorant roost on Grove Island reached a peak count of 74 on 14th Jan and the Belgian-ringed bird (white lettering KRP), previously seen here in 2012 and 2014, was seen again on 31st Jan on Plover Island. A Dartford Warbler was seen on the New Workings on 14th Feb.

Snowfall and low temperatures in March (the "Beast from the East") resulted in some unusual sightings for those of us who ventured out, as birds were displaced around the country in search of better feeding areas. The highlight of this period was a male Marsh Harrier which flew east across the New Workings on 3rd Mar. A Ruff was briefly on the New Workings on 4th Mar before being flushed by a Peregrine! It was odd to see the newly arrived summer visiting Little Ringed Plovers feeding on a snow-covered New Workings on 18th Mar, where they were joined by a Dunlin on 19th Mar. Other wader migrants appearing during March were the expected Ringed Plover, Green Sandpiper and Redshank. Also during March a Kittiwake was recorded on Colebrook Lake briefly on 14th. This was only the third record for the site of this normally coastal species. Summer migrants were generally rather later than usual, for example the first records of Swallow and Sand Martin were on 4th and 8th April respectively whilst Willow Warbler and Garden Warbler were first recorded from 14th and 21st April, respectively. Single Wheatears were seen on six dates during April on the New Workings and Yellow Wagtails were seen on four dates in April and May, again on the New Workings. A scarce visitor was a Black Redstart found on 11th April in the area where lorries enter the New Workings. It often perched on some old ironworks in this area and obligingly stayed around to 15th April but could be quite elusive.

Other spring wader migrants, all at the New Workings, included a single Whimbrel briefly on the 14th April, a flyover Curlew on 28th April and a summer plumaged Sanderling on 24th May.



Whimbrel on New Workings – 14th April 2018 (Roger Murfitt)

It was good to record the increasingly scarce Cuckoo once again this year after none in the last two years, with a male seen and heard on the New Workings on 12th May and one heard on 17th June. A drake Garganey was a scarce visitor to East Fen on 7th June and was then seen again with a female on 9th June.

Turning to breeding species, the Black-headed Gull colony was considerably larger in size this year with at least 150 nests (probably more) on Tern Island and 6 nests on East Fen. This increased activity at the Black-headed Gull colony may have helped to attract the pair of Mediterranean Gulls which first appeared on Tern Island on 26th April. They were seen mating on 28th April and were sitting on a nest on Tern Island from 10th May. The nesting pair were closely monitored but the time when the eggs should have hatched came and passed without any change in behaviour and the adults continuing to sit tight and so, unfortunately, it became clear that the eggs were infertile. They were last seen still sitting on 27th June before finally giving up and departing. This is thought to be the first time this species has nested in Berkshire so it is a shame the attempt was unsuccessful but maybe they will try again next year. It is a relatively scarce but increasing breeding species in the UK with approximately 600 pairs in Britain (BTO BirdFacts). The breeding pair were joined on 3 dates in late Apr/early May by a colour-ringed first summer Mediterranean Gull. I was able to read the ring and establish that it had been ringed the previous year as a nestling in Saxony, Germany and during the winter moved to Wales before visiting Moor Green Lakes.



The later arriving Common Terns squeezed onto the west end of Tern Island and 5 or 6 pairs were attempting to nest there by mid-May. Unfortunately on 9th June it became clear that the nesting Terns had been evicted, apparently by further expansion of the gull colony.

Mediterranean Gull sitting on nest on Tern Island – 10th May 2018 (Roger Murfitt)

A pair of Oystercatchers was again nesting on Tern Island from early April but unfortunately, they failed to hatch young this year. A second pair was around Colebrook Lake North at times showing an interest in Plover Island and the two pairs were at times seen in dispute. This may have played a part in the nest failure if the brooding adult left the nest to chase an intruding bird leaving it open to predation. It was pleasing for the second year running to confirm successful breeding of Pochard when a female with seven ducklings was first seen on East Fen on 7th June. It appears that the conditions on East Fen were not to the females liking as she was later seen on Colebrook Lake North with only three ducklings on 14th June and then finally on Grove Lake with a single duckling from 17th June! After recent failures it was good to see a Shelduck pair successfully rearing seven ducklings on the New Workings and at least four broods of Tufted Ducks have been seen in July.

Other breeding birds included a pair of Barn Owls with three chicks in the Manor Farm nest box and a Kestrel nest with one chick in the Colebrook Barn Owl box, both confirmed during Stuart Croft's Spring check of the Barn Owl boxes. Three broods of Great Crested Grebes have been seen and one of Little Grebe. At least two broods of Little Ringed Plovers have been seen on the New Workings where we are again grateful to the company managing the infill operations for leaving the central area, where nesting activity was concentrated, undisturbed during the crucial Spring period.



Black-tailed Godwits on East Fen – 2nd July 2018 (Roger Murfitt)

As the year moved into July, return southbound passage of waders began with a group of four summer plumaged Black-tailed Godwits on East Fen on 2nd July. As the month on, there was a marked drop in water levels on East Fen creating good conditions for waders and this area has already played host to a few Dunlin, Green Sandpipers, Ringed Plover, a further three Black-tailed Godwits and a brief visit from a Turnstone. Hopefully we can look forward to an interesting autumn migration period!

(Note: We welcome all photos of birds or any wildlife or sense on the Reserve. You can send them for consideration for publication in the Newsletter newsletter@mglg.org.uk, put them on our Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/MoorGreenLakes/> or send them to webmaster@mglg.org.uk for inclusion there.)

Water rail survey

by Roger Murfitt

In April 2018, Robert Godden, my daughter Rosie and I carried out a survey to look for breeding Water Rails on Moor Green Lakes and the neighbouring Fleethill Farm workings. This was done to support a Berkshire Ornithological Club initiative which is trying to better understand the status of this secretive species as a breeding bird in Berkshire. The survey involved walking around suitable habitat (reedbed or other narshy rank vegetation) in favourable weather, in the early morning, and stopping regularly to play the "song" of the Water rail from a portable speaker and then listening for a reply. We covered suitable habitat on Grove and Colebrook Lakes and the New Workings and, despite a late sighting of a Water Rail on 2nd April, the survey produced no responses from any Water Rails suggesting it is unlikely they are breeding in the area.

Volunteer Work Programme: 2018- 2019

By Jenny Sibley, BVCP Ranger

The following is a programme of site maintenance work to be carried out by volunteer groups this autumn / winter. The Sunday tasks will be run by the Moor Green Lakes Group itself and will take place on the second Sunday of each month. The Tuesday/Thursday tasks will be run by the Blackwater Valley Countryside Partnership (BVCP). Volunteers from the MGLG will, of course, be welcome. 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. Anyone is more than welcome to join any of our work parties, if only for part of the day.

All dates / tasks are provisional, so please check the website and / or organisers if uncertain.

Last updated 23/07/2018

	Date	Sunday	Date	Mid week
August	Sun 12th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Ragwort pull · Bracken bash (Leader – Jane Backup – Jon) 	Thurs 16th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Fix fencing on Moulsham bridge and bridleway/footpath
			Tues 21st	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Cut back scrape in front of Colebrook North hide · Hay cut paddock
September	Sun 9th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Clear reeds and vegetation in front of Grove hide and viewing screen · Cut back cow looker paths (Leader – Jane Backup - Duncan) 	Tues 18th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Repair Tern rafts · Cut back in front of Colebrook viewing hide
October	Sun 14th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Clear Tern Island · Create sloped edges · Cut back willow saplings on Colebrook shore (Leader – Duncan Backup – Jane, Jon) 	Tues 23rd	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Clear scrape NW Long Island. · Bramble and Bracken bash · Move pontoon to Plover Island
November	Sun 11th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Clear Plover Island. (Set up pontoon using waders and MGL key. Wheelbarrow vegetation off island). · Create sloped edges (Leader – Duncan Backup – Jane, Jon) 	Tues 20th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Clear scrape on SW of Long Island scrape · Haycut Long Island grassland
December	Sun 9th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Cut access and open up Colebrook Lake SE + ochreous stream · Cut hedgelaying stakes and binders (Leader – Jon Backup – Jane, Duncan) 	Tues 18th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Clear Goose Island trees · Clear saplings from nearby meadow shoreline

January	Sun 13th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Lay bridleway / footpath hedge following on from last years tasks. · Cut back paths. (Leader – Duncan Backup – Jane, Jon) 	Tues 15th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Lay bridleway/footpath hedge following on from the Sunday task. · Cut back paths
February	Sun 10th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Clear saplings from first clearing on Grove Lake NW · Cut back vegetation from bench view (Leader – Jon Backup – Jane, Duncan) 	Tues 19th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Clear saplings along the shoreline of Colebrook N to maintain view · Dig bee exposures
March	Sun 10th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Clear scrub from Grove scallops (Leader – Jane Backup – Jon, Duncan) 	Thurs 22nd	Mystery task – backup for one that was changed earlier.

Back up tasks in order of priority:

- Cut the cow looker path around Grove Lake.
 - Cut in front of all the hides.
 - Cut all the paths back.

Volunteering at Moor Green Lakes– A view from the other side of the fence

by Jane Heritage

Have you ever wondered how Moor Green Lakes stays looking so good?

I have been volunteering there, on and off, for several years. I have always been interested in all aspects of wildlife and this provided an opportunity to find out more and, at the same time, help create a habitat where Moor Green Lakes wildlife can thrive – plants, birds, mammals, butterflies, reptiles & insects.

At the end of 2016 I became rather more involved by taking on the job of team leader, which I share with Duncan and Jon. Fairly early on we all attended a course on 'Leadership of Practical Projects for Local Conservation Groups' and I continue to learn on the job, in particular from those who have been volunteering for far longer than I have. We have constant support from Jenny, Countryside Ranger at BVCP.

Onshore jobs include cutting down unwanted saplings and trees, brambles, clearing scrapes for wading birds - basically clearing anything in an area where it is not wanted. Providing viewing for bird watchers is always a consideration. We get access to Plover and Tern islands, clearing them for the birds that like the gravel, e.g. little ringed plovers and terns.

Why do I enjoy it? Not only does volunteering enable me to access parts of the site normally closed to the public, it provides a chance to learn new skills, free exercise in the fresh air, free tea & biscuits and the chance to spend time with like-minded, friendly people. Also, and probably most importantly, I can make a difference. Come and try it, you may like it! No need to come every time or stay all day, any time you can give is a help and much appreciated.

If you want to try it please contact either Jenny.Sibley@hants.gov.uk or Simon Weeks on siteliason@mglg.org.uk and they will keep you informed of all the events.

Plover Island

Before Volunteer work



After



Website – Recent updates

By Steve Arnold

Over the last few months, I have been giving the website an upgrade. It is a background activity when I have a bit of spare time. One big area still to do is to modernise the image galleries.

Also a few weeks ago, I moved the whole website to a new provider. I look after a handful of websites and wanted to consolidate them to one provider. The new provider is Krystal hosting, which is an independent UK based host. Sadly, many other hosting providers are part of either GoDaddy or Endurance International Group. These two companies own over 100 hosting brands offering consumers little choice. One good thing that Krystal offered was the easy and free use of HTTPS rather than HTTP so communication is secure between the browser and the server.

Future

At some point I may convert the whole site to use a Content Management System. It is more initial effort, but once set up, means day to day adding content will be a lot easier. Also, it could mean that more than one person could add content. However, for me the main challenge is getting the time to do it.

Photo Request

As mentioned above I hope to modernise the Photo Galleries, and more content is always welcome. I am particularly interested in extending the species photos that we have plus adding general shots from around the reserve providing they are interesting or extremely scenic. (These are also welcomed as Newsletter items or on our Facebook page –see other articles in this Newsletter). Also, if anyone has any pictures of the reserve before the quarrying starting, which is probably pre-digital photography do get in touch on webmaster@mglg.org.uk .

Basic rules for photos

Pictures must be from Moor Green Lakes, Manor Farm or Fleethill Farm (eg the larger reserve), or adjacent ground such as the River Path, Horseshoe Lake, or parts of Lower Sandhurst Road near the car park.

Send pictures at maximum resolution (I can crop and scale), ideally 1200px width minimum.

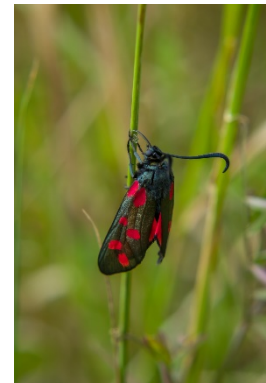
Any featured wildlife should be clear and well focused, unless the species is really rare. It is helpful if the species is correctly identified, I can tell a kite from a duck but that is about it.

Don't put any copyright info or watermarking on to the image. I will give appropriate attribution on the page, but you must be happy that they are "out there on the web" and shown at my discretion.

Day flying moths at Moor Green Lakes - article and pictures by Paul Richards

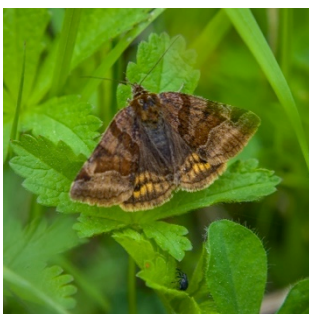
As well as the good numbers of butterflies we see around Colebrook and Grove Lakes we also find quite a number moths, either easily disturbed or flying during the daytime.

One of the most recognisable is the six spot burnet (*Zygaena filipendulae*), it can often be seen on sunny day flitting between the flowers of it's preferred nectar source, knapweed. In some years we can see quite large numbers of this moth, with almost every flower host to at least one insect. The caterpillars feed on birds foot trefoil.



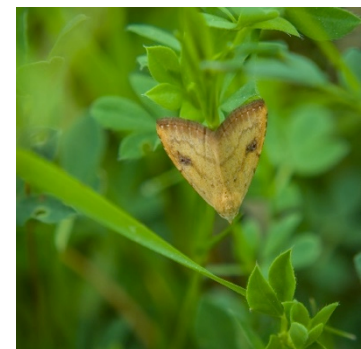
A moth that is often seen in the daytime and some years in very large numbers is the silver Y (*Autographa gamma*). It is a migrant species, arriving from May to September and sometimes in large swarms. The larvae can be a pest of crops such as cabbage. It is unable to survive our winter.

An attractive little moth often disturbed from hedgerows around Moor Green is the yellow shell (*Camptogramma bilineata*). It can be quite variable in appearance, with examples from pale yellow to brown and different strength of markings.



The burnet companion (*Euclidia glyphica*) is an active day flying moth and often mistaken for a butterfly. As it's name suggest it is quite often found in the same habitats as the burnet moth and at Moor Green it is often seen on the meadows around the western shore of Colebrook, Like the burnet moth the larvae feed on birds-foot trefoil.

The straw dot (*Rivula sericealis*) is a smallish moth of damp meadow like some of the areas around Moor Green. It can be seen in early and then late summer and is often disturbed from long grasses.



Another moth often disturbed from grass is the shaded broad-bar (*Scotopteryx chenopodiata*). This moth flies in July and August and the larvae feed on vetch and clovers.

Finally, quite a familiar moth, the cinnabar (*Tyria jacobaeae*) equally know for it's stripy yellow and black caterpillars feeding on ragwort. The moths are on the wing from May until August.



(If you see any interesting moths or butterflies around the reserve please tell Paul Richards on pgr1965@gmail.com or put it on our facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/MoorGreenLakes/>)