

JANUARY 2022



# Moor Green Lakes Group Newsletter

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*Well? What are we waiting for? Photo by Jane Heritage.*

*See page 2!*

## Happy New Year to all our Members

Thanks for being a member of Moor Green Lakes Group, we appreciate your support and look forward to seeing you in 2022. Please make sure your nature records are shared with us - contact details are all on the website. Photos are also welcome.



This fabulous sequence of an Osprey over Fleethill Farm 19 September 2021 deserves a special place! Courtesy of Peter Craig.

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# Moor Green Workparties Continue!

By Jane Heritage - Joint Work Party Leader

Sunday monthly work parties began again in September with over 18 volunteers attending each session. Each one was followed up by a BVCP work party on the following Tuesday, allowing multiple tasks to be undertaken and ensuring that each one was completed.

In September work was carried out around Grove Lake. The view in front of the hide was cleared ready for the autumn and winter bird watchers and willow saplings were cleared from around the acidic scrape. Also, the view from Grove Lake viewing slot was improved by clearing immediately in front and removing scrub and small trees from a section of the north shore of the lake opposite the slot.

The October work parties operated in two areas, Tern Island and Long Island. All vegetation was removed from Tern Island and those volunteers not keen on boat trips were able to walk onto Long Island via the pontoon. Work on Long Island included cutting back the access and removing willow from the scrapes. Having the new boat and moving the pontoon to the Colebrook Hide end of Long Island means that we have much better access to the whole of the reserve so we hope to be able to do more work on the south shore of Long Island in January 2022.

November saw a large party working on the north bank of Colebrook North. Shoreline willow was cleared to provide a view of the meadow and extend the view to the planned swift tower site. The owl box can now be seen clearly from the hide and the wire fence around the hibernaculum was removed. In addition, work was started on bringing the two tern rafts back into use.

Finally, December's task was to clear Plover Island and the shoreline willow nearby. Plover is always a difficult task as there is so much bramble and bracken growing there. By the end of the Tuesday session the island was clear and a dead hedge built; additionally, both Tern rafts were back in position and can be clearly seen from Colebrook Hide.

Fencing work has also continued, led by Tony Elston, and about 180 new posts have now been installed and others reinforced during 2021. Thanks again to Tony for directing operations.

Many thanks to all the volunteers for their hard work throughout the year – every hour counts and it really does make a difference.

## JOIN A WORK PARTY

**Anyone interested in joining us can make contact via [workparties@mglg.org.uk](mailto:workparties@mglg.org.uk). Meet nice people, learn about nature and the reserve and get some exercise – it's great fun.**

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# The reptiles of Moor Green

by Alan Holmes

Nothing is more memorable on a walk in the summer countryside than a good sighting of a grass snake. To see one swimming across a lake with big sinuous waves coming off their body is quite an experience.

This one below, apparently gravid (i.e. pregnant), is our last recorded snake from 31 May 2019. Recent research suggests that the British grass snakes should be a separate species from the Continental varieties and given a new name, barred grass snake, *Natrix helvetica*.

Unhappy at being disturbed by a dog walker, this slow worm was crossing the Colebrook path on the 22nd of May 2021. Probably there is a population happily living out of sight in our dry hedges.

Both species are relatively long-lasting and may live 20 years but are vulnerable to predation and disturbance by cats and dogs. Both are protected and should left in peace and marvelled at from a distance.



Grass snake 31 May 2019



Slow worm 22 May 2021

## **Our reptiles need your support.**

You can help by photographing and recording your sightings in the Colebrook hide. They can be identified at <https://www.arc-trust.org/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=9493c965-0279-45d7-b271-015067ec87b5>

# Mike Waterman 1940-2021

By Bernard Baverstock

It was a great shock to hear of the sudden death of Mike Waterman, our Fungi recorder, in May of this year.

Mike's involvement in fungi arose from an initial interest in foraging for food, sparked by Richard Mabey's book 'Food for Free'. I first knew Mike when he joined the Camberley Natural History Society more than forty years ago. His enthusiasm and skill soon had him leading fungus forays for the Society and then for various groups, including the county Wildlife Trusts.

He became recorder for the West Weald Fungus Recording Group, from which he has collated and passed on to the national recording scheme, over 26,000 records. All the people who have ever been on one of his forays, or met him at our open days, will not have forgotten the unique sight of Mike with his fungi identification equipment dangling from his neck, plastic bags and pots for specimens and particularly that Duffle coat, which he had when we first met all those years ago. Michael was also a gifted mathematician, with a master's degree from University College, London, and his working life was spent in various parts of GEC Ltd, where he worked mainly on guidance systems for rockets, initially ELDO and later Ariane 1-4. Apart from work, he was a keen observer of artificial satellites and for some time in the 1980s he was involved in a project observing the decay of satellites as a means of examining the structure of the upper atmosphere.

Michael will be much missed, for his great knowledge, helpful nature and great sense of humour.



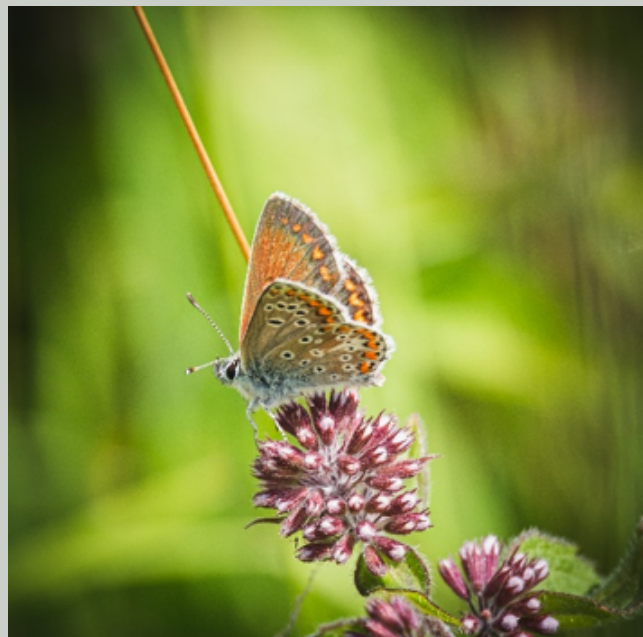
# The Brown Argus at Moor Green Lakes

by Paul Richards

It is always nice to see new species establish at Moor Green. In the past few years we have seen the Marbled White butterfly become firmly established in the meadows around the lakes. More recently the Brown Argus butterfly has become a regular visitor. Until about thirty years ago the Brown Argus was mainly found on warm, south-facing chalk downland. The larval foodplant was common rock-rose, a plant that has suffered a major decline as downland has been lost and land enriched with fertilizer. Along with decline of the rock-rose, the Brown Argus also declined dramatically, vanishing from many former strong-holds. In the 1990s something strange started to happen when the butterfly started to appear on grassland containing crane's-bill. Along with the butterfly now using crane's-bill as a larval food-plant something else was starting to happen. The butterfly was being seen away from its traditional south-facing slopes. A warming climate meant that the butterfly could now establish on sites that were previously too cold.

Here at Moor Green there is plenty of crane's-bill which has provided the habitat for the Brown Argus to start to colonise. We have seen it in small numbers over the past few years. We saw with Marbled White a sudden increase in numbers after a few years of becoming established. It will be interesting if this happens with the Brown Argus.

Despite its colouration and name it is in fact a 'blue butterfly'. This image (below left) was taken on the meadow just down from the hide on Colebrook Lake. Look out for them in spring and summer along the path from the car park and please record them in the hide.



## Bird sightings - July to late December 2021

by Roger Murfitt - Bird Recorder

There was further evidence of successful breeding in the summer, with at least four broods of Tufted duck, two of Great Crested Grebe, one of Little Grebe and one of Mandarin duck seen. Passage waders comprised of up to two Common Sandpipers on three dates in July and one in Sept, single Redshanks on two dates in July, single Greenshanks on five dates in Aug/Sep and a Black-tailed godwit seen briefly at the west end of the New Workings on 13th Aug.



Peregrine chasing Common Tern at East Fen  
23rd August 2021 (R F Milligan)

Green sandpiper, which is a passage and winter visitor, was more regular after the first record of the period on 30th July, with up to three seen on two dates in Aug and Sep and records continued into Dec. On 23rd Aug, a juvenile Peregrine was seen trying to take a Common Tern on East Fen causing the Tern to dive under water in order to escape (see the dramatic photo above). What is presumably the same juvenile Peregrine was seen on the ground on the New Workings on 25th Aug. Records of autumn passerine migrants were rather thin on the ground this year but single Yellow Wagtails were recorded on 23rd and 24th Aug. Amongst the wildfowl, an eclipse male Red-crested Pochard on Manor Lake on 13th Sep and a single Pintail on 19th Sep were the only records of these species so far this year. The Barnacle geese were seen on occasion with a peak count of 23 the same as last year, whilst the feral Snow Goose was also recorded on a couple of dates. Counts of roosting geese included 225 Canada geese on 7th Aug and 83 Egyptian Geese on 26th Aug. The first returning wintering Wigeon were on 2nd Sep and the first Goosander was a male on 4th Nov. A Cetti's Warbler seen along the river near the sewage works on 19th Sep was the first record since 2013 and was shortly followed by a singing bird heard in Grove Lake reeds on 15th Oct. These may be individuals exploring from the Fleethill Farm area where there have been a number of recent records. Hobbies were recorded on at least eight dates with up to three seen, two of them juveniles. A juvenile Osprey was seen flying west over the New Workings mobbed by Crows on 20th Sep. This will be the same bird that was seen at Fleethill farm between 8th and 20th Sep. Peter Craig captured this great sequence of photos of the bird in flight (see Page 1). A Great White Egret was seen on five dates in Oct and wintering Water Rails were recorded from 25th Oct with at least three present. Other scarcities included up to two Ravens on three dates and a Yellow-legged Gull in the gull roost on three dates in November. There have been some sizeable flocks of wintering finches with up to 50 Lesser Redpolls on 19th Sept and up to 70 Siskins on 20th Nov.