



## **Maun Conservation Group**

### **Oakham & Quarry Lane Nature Reserves**

#### **Avian Report - October 2019 - September 2020**

Surveys have continued with much enthusiasm and strict adherence to Covid 19 rules in what has been an exciting birding year on the reserves. For reasons unknown, Reed's Mill pond suffered a massive decline in all avian activity. The excessive winter rainfall could have poisoned the water. Time will tell if this hitherto attractive site returns to its former glory. In addition, activity on WhatsApp has enabled a greater knowledge to be gained on a regular basis as opposed to records on a specific day.

In line with other Nottingham bird records the annual report will in future cover the period Jan-Dec. Similarly the species order will follow that adopted by Notts Birders i.e. the latest taxonomy according to the British Trust for Ornithology.

Survey day will continue to be the second Wednesday in the month, commencing at 0930 (weather permitting) from the entrance to Oakham off Bleak Hills lane. The route follows the perimeter of Oakham Meadow and continues towards Hamilton path via the zig zags. Crossing the road to Hamilton area will be considered for 2021. Returning to the Oakham exit and crossing Sheepbridge Lane to, Quarry Lane reserve is entered. Continue on the path under the viaduct and cross Sarah's bridge to finish at Field Mill Pond. Time taken is approximately 2.5 hours.

A big thank you to you all for the WhatsApp reports that are being posted. Records from WhatsApp will be incorporated into the annual report, with an acknowledgement of the recorder. Any photographs taken can be submitted for inclusion into the annual report. Additional comments on activity such as mating, nest building, carrying food and feeding young are very helpful in identifying breeding activity. Survey days give only a snapshot of the avian activity. It is these reports that give a fuller picture and enhance the understanding of the comings and goings of the study area.

Thanks to all those observers who have joined in this activity. Please continue into what is our third year of recording. Tony.

## Mute Swan

During the period Oct-Feb 2020 the Reed's Mill family continued to thrive and at least 6 juveniles departed before the March survey. However the adults also left never to return, most strange!

The field mill pair remained faithful to the pond over winter but no breeding attempt was observed and they had left by May. A pair returned in September, hopefully to overwinter and stay to breed.

## Canada Goose

In April/May a pair appeared to set up territory at Reed's Mill but left the site shortly afterwards.

## Grey Lag Goose

An uncommon visitor and occasional fly over. Singles at Reed's Mill in April and Field Mill in May.

## Great Crested Grebe

Single adults only in November, May and June on Reed's mill.

## Little Grebe

A winter visitor to the reserves. Reed's Mill hosted up to 6 from November to January and Field Mill a pair December to February.

## Grey Heron

An over-summering individual could frequently be seen on Field Mill and fishing on the lower reaches of the Maun during April-August. A single sighting in September on Reed's Mill could have been the same bird.



Grey Heron-Field Mill Pool 14/05/2020

### Little Egret

A flyover at Oakham in April was a first for the reserve.

### Common Buzzard

A bird circling over the football field was seen from Field Mill in December.

### Sparrowhawk

A single sighting over Oakham Meadow in September

### Mallard

Quarry Lane is the mallard stronghold with numbers averaging at 30+ throughout the year. A female with 10 young was present on Field Mill pond in August.

Reed's Mill pond held at least two during the summer but no evidence of breeding was recorded.

### Gadwall

17 were present in October but an exodus was witnessed and by February all had disappeared from Reed's Mill, never to return.

### Tufted Duck

Very low numbers from October to May on Reed's Mill pond with a maximum of 8 in February. Come June all had cleared out, as with many other species that previously had spent the summer at this site.

### Kestrel

Not seen during the surveys but an increasingly reported raptor on the What's App forum in the vicinity of the viaduct.

### Moorhen

A common breeder, present on Quarry Lane every month of the year, maximum of 15 in December.

Lower numbers occur in Oakham, maximum of 5 in December, and drastically falling to the occasional bird thereafter.



Incubating Moorhen on lower reaches of River Maun

### Coot

A massive influx of 35 birds recorded in November which remained high until February then a drastic decline to 7 by March and 2 from May onwards. This was symptomatic of a catastrophic decline in wildlife at Reed's Mill pond over this period. No breeding recorded.

Much lower numbers on Field Mill where a pair raised 4 juveniles from a brood of 5. However the young had cleared out by August.



Sitting Coot-Field Mill Pond-14/05/2020

### Black Headed Gull

A winter visitor to Field Mill pond with occasional spill over to Reed's Mill. Numbers build up from October onwards with a maximum of 37 in February. A steady decline follows and by April the vast majority have left the site to head for breeding areas inland. The return is September when records start to rise.

### Common Gull

An uncommon visitor, a single to Reed's Mill in March being the only observation.

### Herring Gull

Like all the bigger gulls, visits to the reserve are infrequent. A single at Field Mill in December was the only record.

### Lesser Black-backed Gull

Two graced Reed's Mill in March, a new sighting for the reserve.

### Wood Pigeon

Seen in low numbers throughout the year. A maximum of 24 in January at Quarry Lane.

### Collared Dove

A single in Quarry Lane reserve in September.

### Common Swift

A party of 6 were observed over the quarry entrance in June.

### Kingfisher

A single resting bird on Reed's Mill in December.

### Great Spotted Woodpecker

A lone bird was first heard and then spotted high in the trees in Oakham.

### House Martin

A small party of 4 over-flew Oakham and 5 were later seen passing Quarry Lane in July. This is post breeding and may have been a general movement South.

### Grey Wagtail

Irregular sightings on the River Maun through Quarry Lane all year. A pair were seen feeding 2 fully grown young at Field Mill Lake in May



Grey Wagtail juvenile Quarry Lane 14/05/20

### Blackbird

A common resident over the whole reserve. However, no young were seen.



Blackbird-Quarry Lane-14/05/20

### Song Thrush

Singing males were first reported in January in both Oakham and Quarry Lane and singing continued until April. Birds continued to be seen throughout the summer but no young were reported.

## Robin

A common resident seen throughout the year with several territories identified. Breeding was proved in Quarry Lane where two young were photographed alongside the Maun.



Recently fledged Robin - River Maun, 14/05/2020

## Tree Creeper

Not seen during the surveys but an increasingly reported incidence on the WhatsApp forum on Quarry Lane.

## Wren

More common on Quarry Lane and seen all months but August. Parents carrying food behind an ivy clad wall was evidence of breeding.



Wren - Quarry Lane - 14/05/2020

### Dunnock

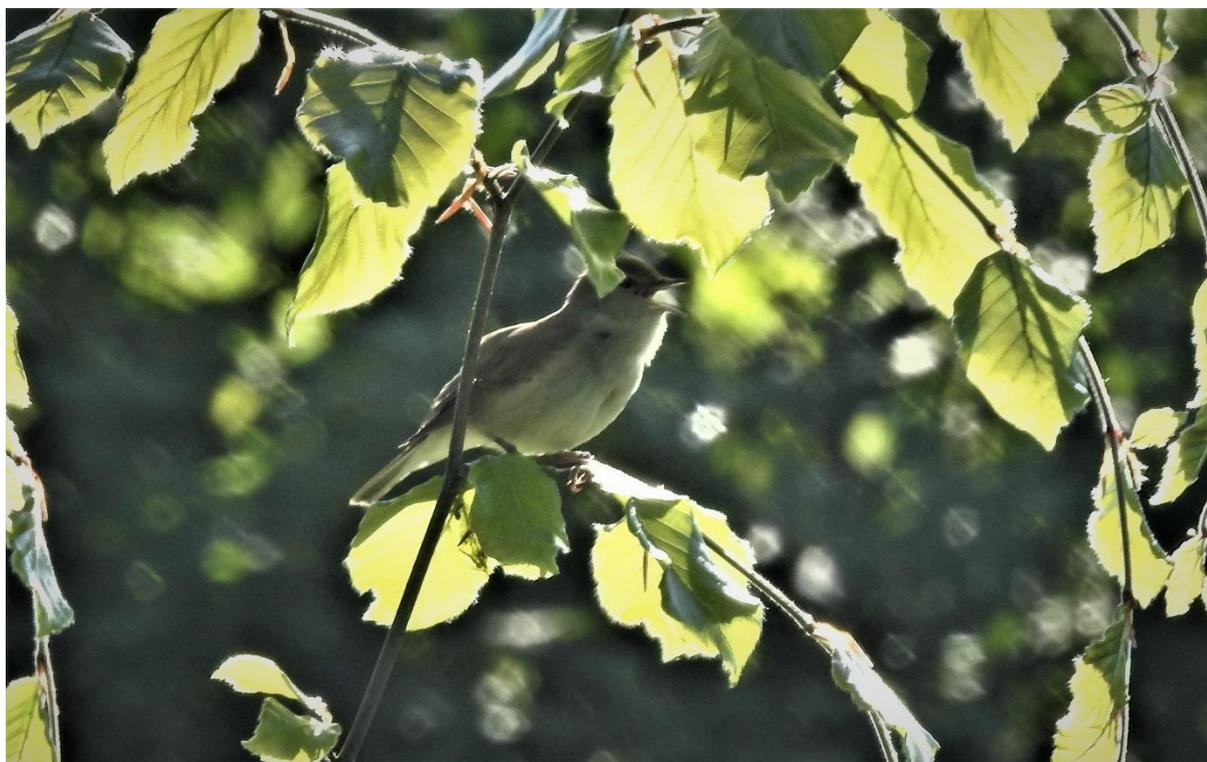
Sporadic observations over both reserves. Seen mostly as singles.

### Blackcap

The first singing males were present on both sites in April and a female was seen carrying food on Quarry Lane in May. Come June and females were feeding young at both sites which continued into July. As of last year all families had dispersed by August.

### Garden Warbler

Two singing males on Oakham Field in May appeared to fail to attract a mate and no further sightings were observed.



Garden Warbler-Oakham Fields-14/05/2020

### Chiff Chaff

No over-wintering observed, the first singing male appeared in March in Quarry lane and a large influx in April registered a count of 7 birds. Breeding probably occurred as all singing stopped in June only for it to start up again in August.



Singing Chiff Chaff - Quarry Lane - 14/05/2020

### Blue Tit

Present all year in relatively low numbers never reaching double figures. Known nest box users on both sites

### Great Tit

Less numerous than Blue Tit and was absent June to August. As last year, an influx in winter months swelled the population. No nest box occupation was reported.

### Coal Tit

A scarce visitor. 1 in Quarry Lane in December and singles in Oakham in March and April

### Long Tailed Tit

Up to 18 birds present from December to August, being mobile across both reserves. A magical moment in May when at the entrance to Gregory's Quarry several young were lined up in time honoured fashion waiting to be fed.

### Magpie

A resident in both reserves with total number of up to 6 birds roaming over the study area.

### Jackdaw

Irregular flyovers during the winter period over Oakham Meadows. A maximum of 5 in January.

### Carrion Crow

Small numbers observed as irregular flyovers over both reserves.

### House Sparrow

Sightings of singles in February and June in the area adjacent to the dipping pond. In July a pair were present in the same area collecting food, an indication of breeding.

### Siskin

Two birds were present in Oakham between March and May and a single in Quarry Lane in April, representing a poor year for Siskin.

### Chaffinch

Present in ones and twos throughout the study area. A juvenile, seen in Oakham in August, was not considered proof of breeding on the site.

### Greenfinch

A single male was observed around field Mill pond from April to September. In August 2 birds were discovered feeding 2 young. Another breeding success for Quarry Lane.

### Goldfinch

Most often seen on Oakham A charm up to 26 was seen roving around Oakham meadow in December.

### Bullfinch

A poor year for this attractive finch. A pair were present from February to May around the old railway track at Oakham. Occasionally heard in the viaduct area of Quarry Lane.

### Linnet

A bird called as it flew over Oakham Meadow in October.

## Breeding

Numbered nest boxes have been strategically placed and entry points have been protected by metal plates.

Breeding was proven by Moorhen, Grey Wagtail, Mallard, Blackcap, Robin, Wren, Greenfinch, Long Tailed Tit, almost certainly by Blue Tit and probably by Chiff Chaff.

## Absentees

Birds seen previously but not this year include Great White Egret, Shoveler, Mandarin Duck, Wigeon, Sand Martin, Swallow and Whitethroat.

## Species list

Total species seen on the reserves since monitoring began in Oct 2018 now exceeds 50.

What will be new for 2020-2021 season?

## **Tony Wardell**

With special thanks to Steve Cross and Sarah Spurry.

Note: Please see Maun Conservations Group website for the monthly survey results, updated during the year.

[www.maunconservationgroup.co.uk](http://www.maunconservationgroup.co.uk)

Want to get involved? Just ask, [maunconservation@googlemail.com](mailto:maunconservation@googlemail.com)

