



## **Maun Conservation Group**

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

### **Avian Report – January - December 2021**

Survey day is the second Wednesday in the month, commencing at 09:45 (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 observe the Hamilton circle, and returning, to proceed to Quarry Lane nature reserve. Continue on the path under the viaduct and across 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 are an invaluable resource and are now incorporated into the annual report, with an acknowledgement of the recorder. Any photographs taken can be submitted for inclusion into the annual report and are encouraged. Additional comments on activity such as mating, nest building, carrying food, feeding young are very helpful in identifying breeding activity. Survey days give only a snapshot of the avian activity. It is these additional reports that give a fuller picture and enhance the understanding of the comings and goings of the study area.

Total number of species recorded in 2021 stands at 49 and the grand total since Oct 2019 is 64. Species not seen this year include Cormorant, Greylag Goose, Collared Dove, Wigeon, Mandarin Duck, Herring Gull, Lesser Black Backed Gull, Gt White Egret, Goosander, Barn Swallow, House Martin, Sand Martin, Pied Wagtail, Coal Tit and Linnet.

During Nov/Dec the prime warbler habitat on Oakham was vandalized to satisfy the granting of a housing development. Turf from this site was deposited to create a new meadow. Careful monitoring of this area needs to be undertaken to establish the outcome of this translocation.

## Species List 2021

### Canada Goose scarce - visitor

2 birds graced Reed Mill during the surveys of February and May

### Mute Swan

A pair overwintered on Field Mill Pond but departed in April when a single was observed on Reed Mill Pond. No summer activity. A pair returned to Field Mill Pond in October and remained to the end of the year.

This pattern is unusual, a pair successfully raised 7 young last year on Reed Mill Pond and breeding was attempted on Field Mill Pond.

### Shoveler-scarce visitor

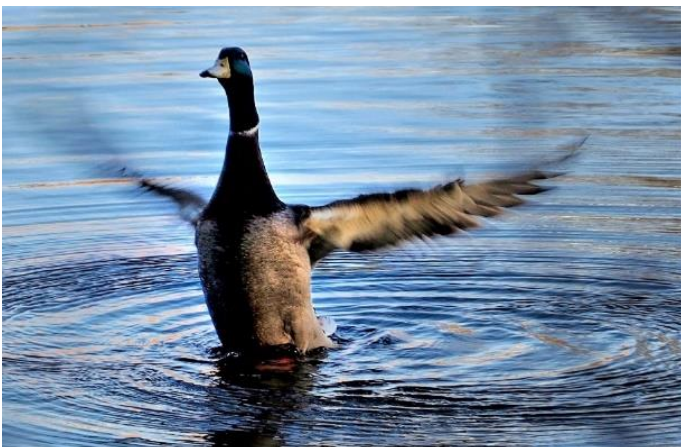
3 pairs were recorded on Reed Mill during the November survey.

### Gadwall - scarce winter visitor

A single male on Reed Mill in December was a welcome return for this handsome duck. It was joined by 2 females by the end of the month (TW). Once present in good numbers it disappeared in 2020. Hopefully this event may be the start of populating a once desirable wintering site.

### Mallard - Resident breeder

Numbers build up during the Winter period, a maximum of 40 birds present in January. Quarry Lane is the stronghold and broods of 8 and 4 were seen in July.



Mallard Field Mill 10/12/2021

### Tufted Duck - regular visitor

Reed Mill is the only site to see this diving duck, Field Mill is too shallow. Present in low numbers.

### Little Grebe - Winter visitor

A visitor to both reserves favoring Reed Mill Pond and Field Mill Pond. Normally seen in pairs. In keeping with previous years, birds had departed by end March and returned from September onwards. Unusually a single bird was seen on Reed Mill Pond in June.

It appears that breeding conditions on both reserves are unattractive for this species.

### Great Crested - Grebe Summer visitor

A single adult in March on Reed Mill Pond and then nothing until July. What a surprise when 2 broods of 3 and 2 juveniles, of different ages, were observed. How had they gone unnoticed? A total of 9 birds were recorded which was down to 7 the following month, but all 5 young had survived. Come September it appears dispersal had taken place but an adult remained until November.

This is the first breeding record, hopefully activity will continue next year.

### Grey Heron - regular visitor

Absent only in March and April. This is the prime breeding period and presumably birds have become domiciled at the heronry at King's Mill.

### Little Egret - occasional visitor

Under recorded as only one record in February, on Reed Mill, exists. During this period a bird regularly frequented the fisheries at Bleak Hill.

### Sparrowhawk - Occasional visitor

Seen circling and hunting over Oakham Common in July, October and December. A bird was terrorizing the adjacent gardens in Nov (ME).

### Kestrel - resident non breeder

Both male and female frequently seen around the viaduct and Field Mill area. Regularly reported on WhatsApp (SD, TS, SS) A nest box has been erected in the area to encourage breeding.

### Buzzard - scarce visitor

3 sightings this year, a single at Quarry Lane in February and two at Oakham in October and December.

### Moorhen - resident breeder

As last year present all period at Quarry Lane with only sporadic sightings at Oakham. An excellent late summer breeding activity swelled the numbers on Field Mill Pond to a maximum of 13.

### Coot - resident occasional breeder.

Present in low numbers on Reed Mill Pond for most of the year. A pair were in residence from February onwards and 3 young were seen in July.

### Black - Headed Gull - Winter visitor

Numbers peaked to 48 on Field Mill Pond by March after which the annual breeding dispersal cleared out all birds. Youngsters started appearing amongst the adults from July onward but numbers remained in single figures for the remainder of the year. Only rarely seen on Reed Mill Pond.

### Common - Gull occasional visitor

A single was present during the December survey on Reed Mill.

### Herring Gull – occasional visitor

A single was present on Reed Mill in April.

### Wood Pigeon - resident

A common resident, numbers probably under recorded. A maximum of 10 on Quarry Lane in August. Probably breed on site but evidence never gathered.

### Common - Swift

Up to 5 birds circling overhead on both reserves during the August survey. This is migration time for swifts. We were privileged to observe what was probably a feeding break for this declining bird, now placed on the “at risk” list as a breeding bird in the UK. A welcome reserve first.

### Kingfisher - resident.

A growing awareness of the presence of at least one bird elevates the status of this jewel to resident. Regularly reported flying the Maun in Quarry Lane and in December many records of perching birds, between Matlock Bridge and Sarah’s Bridge (SD, SS, SP, IB, NS).

On 27 Dec 2 together were seen for the first time (SD).



Kingfisher-Matlock Bridge - Quarry Lane - 27-12-2021

### Great Spotted – Woodpecker – Rare visitor

One heard at the entrance to Oakham opposite the fisheries in November (TW)

### Magpie - resident

Low numbers in both reserves, no proof of breeding.

### Jackdaw - resident

Irregular flyovers during the winter period over Oakham Meadows

### Carrion - Crow resident

Small numbers observed as irregular flyovers over both reserves.

### Blue Tit - resident breeder

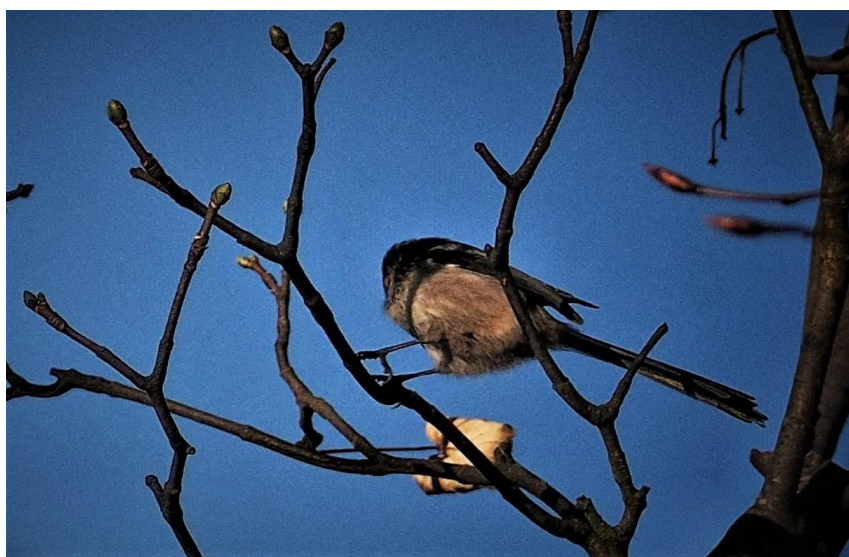
Present all period in relatively low numbers never reaching double figures. Known nest box users on both sites.

### Great Tit - resident

Less numerous than Blue Tit, breeding unproven.

### Long Tailed Tit - resident breeder

Large winter flock in Hamilton Circle in November (TW). Active all year on both reserves.



Long Tailed Tit-Quarry Lane-10/12/2021

### Willow Warbler - summer visitor

A scarce spring visitor. One male sang in the trees above the old railway line on Oakham during May. No further observations.

### Common Chiff Chaff - resident

A single seen flycatching in Quarry Lane in late March, was the first arrival. April to August numbers remained stable at 3 singing males on each reserve but no young seen. By late September all had departed. This was a disturbing observation as in previous years some birds had overwintered, suggesting food shortages may be the problem.

### Blackcap - summer visitor

Large influx with at least 6 birds holding territory in April. Both adults seen collecting food in June but come August only one male was seen and the site was deserted by mid-September. Thus a similar pattern to Chiff Chaff behaviour.

### Common Whitethroat - summer visitor

A single bird heard singing on Oakham during the April survey was a disappointing showing.

### Garden Warbler - summer visitor

One heard singing on Oakham during the June survey. This was in keeping with what was a poor year for warblers on both reserves.

### Goldcrest- regular visitor

Most often reported from Quarry Lane and the Hamilton circle. A single was noted actively feeding near the viaduct during the October survey.

### Wren - resident

Present in low numbers on both reserves though proof of breeding difficult to obtain.

### Tree Creeper-scarce winter visitor

First record of the year at Hamilton Circle (SS) of a single. A few days later another single (same bird?) seen climbing silver birch trees opposite the new meadow on Oakham (IB)

### Nuthatch

A new record. A single seen to come briefly to the relocated feeding table at the top of the zigzags during the December survey. (NS)

### Starling

Seen occasionally on the football club floodlights. 6 seen in January and 11 spotted in October (SC).

### Blackbird - resident

A stable population augmented in Winter by continental birds with black beaks.

### Song Thrush - resident

Seen only on Quarry Lane. Territories held in the Matlock Steps and Field Mill picnic site areas, often seen foraging but young never located.

### Robin - resident breeder

Probably up to 5 territories defended on both reserves. Breeding proved on both reserves.

### House Sparrow - sporadic visitor

Four were seen actively collecting food in the vicinity of the viaduct in May. A further single was recorded during the July survey. It is probable that breeding occurred in the gardens in this area.

### Dunnock - resident

Seen every month in ones and twos except in August and September. Possible cause is the need to hide during the post breeding moult.

### Grey Wagtail - resident breeder

Rarely seen on Oakham. A pair bred where the Maun enters Quarry Lane and one juvenile could still be seen in the same area until the end of the year.



Grey Wagtail-juvenile-Quarry Lane-10/12/2021

### Chaffinch - resident

Present in ones and twos throughout the study area.

### Greenfinch - resident



Observed in Oakham for the first time. Never plentiful, a declining species nationally.

Goldfinch - resident

Most often seen on Oakham where the winter charm regularly exceeds 20.



Goldfinch-Oakham-10/12/2021

Bullfinch scarce visitor

Absent from site until December when a family of 2 adults and two young were recorded in Hamilton Circle in November (TW). A similar gathering was observed on Hamilton Path during the December survey. This is encouraging, especially as a noted decline occurred in 2020.



Bullfinch-Oakham-10/12/2021

## Siskin - winter visitor

First birds of the year were seen during December. 3 were feeding on Alder seeds at the top of the zig zags. A large flock had gathered at the top of Oakham meadow by the end of the month, gorging on Alder seeds (IB).

## **Tony Wardell**

With special thanks to regular survey volunteers Steve Cross, Sarah Spurry, Nat Singhal and Barbara Hough.

### Contributors

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### Photography

Courtesy of Ravenshead and District Wildlife Group who visited the site 10/12/2021

Kingfisher forwarded by Isobel Bounford 27-12-2021

**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)

