



Maun Conservation Group

Oakham & Quarry Lane Nature Reserves

Avian Report for the period Jan-Dec 2023

Survey day is the second Wednesday in the month, commencing at 0945 (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 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.

The What's App chat line continues to play an important part in reporting for the site, not only for birds but for all aspects of wildlife. Photographs are welcome, please keep them coming. 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 2023 stands at 55, 9 more species than last year. New records were a very respectable 6 to include Whooper Swan, Pochard, Red Kite, Redwing, Teal and Rose Ringed Parakeet.

Species List 2023 (IOC Taxonomic order)

Canada Goose- scarce visitor

Not a frequent visitor, seen on the June, September and November surveys. Never in large numbers so the September count of 25 on Reed Mill Pond (RMP) was exceptional.

Mute Swan

No breeding activity was observed on RMP although birds were present for most of the year.

The resident pair on Field Mill Pond (FMP) chased off their single offspring on 9 March (CW), who retreated upstream as far as Sheepbridge Lane culvert, not leaving the Maun until 15 April (SP).

A clutch of 8 eggs were laid, 7 of which were incubated to hatching. The first cygnets were seen on 17 May followed by 2 more the following day and a final cygnet on 20 May. 2 eggs failed. However, by the June survey only 2 had survived and these were healthy and looking good come the end of the year.



Sarah's Bridge 23-12-2023

Whooper Swan- rare visitor

2 adults graced King's Mill in Spring, failing to return to Siberia. Both were observed on RMP in June and a single took up residence In October until the end of the year. A new bird for the site.



Reed Mill Pond 23-12-2023

Mallard - Resident breeder

Favouring FMP, numbers peaking at 47 in November. This is a similar pattern to previous years.

For some reason RMP does not prove attractive to this species. A double figure count is unusual and was noted in August.

Shoveler- scarce visitor

6 in October and 2 in December saw a welcome return of this surface feeding duck to RMP.

Pochard scarce visitor

First noted on the January survey it was still present on 31 Jan (ACW) and last seen on 13 Feb (SP) on RMP. A new record. A male returned on 22 December (SP)

Gadwall irregular visitor

A welcome return for this attractive surface feeder to RMP in October. Still present at the end of the first winter period just in double figures.

Teal scarce visitor

A male, first noted on the Maun at Matlock bridge on 28 February (IB) was present until at least 26 March (ACW). A new record.

Tufted Duck - regular visitor

RMP is the only site to see this diving duck, FMP is too shallow. Present in low numbers during the winter months. Can be absent in mid-summer.

Goosander scarce visitor

4 female types first noted on 4 Nov on FMP (SP) were seen regularly until the end of the year.

Little Grebe - Winter visitor

A visitor to both reserves. Jan/Feb surveys noted, with up to 3 birds present. No further sightings until October 18th when a single appeared on FMP (NS) and probably the same bird had translocated to RMP by December.

Great Crested Grebe - Summer visitor

Just one observation, a single on RMP in November.

Little Egret scarce visitor

Fishing on Quarry Lane first seen on 26 Jan (ME) and again on 13 Feb (IB). A single was present on FMP 22 Aug.

Grey Heron - regular visitor

Probably under-recorded. Singles noted on RMP in June and August, and on FMP in July and October.

Sparrowhawk - Occasional visitor

Like last year just 3 records of adults, at Oakham in January and Quarry Lane in January and September. However, 2 juveniles were calling for food on Oakham wildflower meadow during August (SD).

Buzzard -regular visitor

Following the national trend this raptor is becoming more common. Seen mainly flying over Quarry Lane, just one sighting over Oakham in September.

Red Kite scarce visitor

A single bird seen drifting over the Maun from Matlock Steps on the March survey.

A new record.

Moorhen - resident breeder

Seen throughout the year on Quarry Lane but much less frequently on Oakham. Common throughout both reserves all year though never in large numbers on Oakham.

Breeding only observed on Quarry Lane.

Coot - resident occasional breeder.

Present in low numbers on RMP all year. Bred on FMP in late summer, 5 young being present in September.

Black Headed Gull - Winter visitor

A very similar pattern to 2022 noted. Birds absent from April onwards, returning in numbers in November. FMP is the stronghold, birds rarely venturing in numbers to Oakham.

Common Gull-scarce visitor

2 birds graced RMP during the December survey probably seeking refuge from an iced-up King's Mill reservoir.

Lesser Black backed Gull-scarce visitor

A single adult on RMP during December survey probably visiting from King's Mill.

Common Cormorant-irregular visitor.

Becoming more frequent being seen during the September, October and November surveys on RMP. A maximum of 3 in December.

Wood Pigeon - resident

A common resident, numbers probably under recorded. No evidence of breeding.

Collared Dove - scarce visitor

No records in 2023

Common Swift - Occasional summer visitor

No 2023 records.

Kingfisher - resident.

Mainly an Autumn/winter visitor, rarely seen during the breeding season. Many casual sightings of singles (NS, SS, IS) but 2 seen 28/9/2023 by Sarah's Bridge (AC).

Rose Ringed Parakeet

A pair making a right racket at Matlock Bridge was a first for the site. (SP)

Great Spotted Woodpecker - Scarce visitor

No 2023 records

Common Kestrel - irregular visitor.

Just 2 sightings of singles, January on Quarry Lane and February on Oakham.

Magpie – resident

Present in low numbers throughout the year on both reserves. No evidence of breeding.

Jackdaw – resident

May and July records on Oakham only. Probably under-recorded.

Rook – Occasional visitor

No records for 2023

Carrion Crow - resident

Seen throughout the year in low numbers. A record of 9 on Oakham in July was unprecedented.

Jay- increasingly common visitor

Single birds were seen on Oakham in March, June and September. Rarely seen on Quarry Lane.

Blue Tit - resident breeder

Present in single figures throughout the year. A beneficiary of the nest boxes on Oakham but does also use natural sites on Quarry Lane. A maximum of 11 birds on Quarry Lane during the April survey.

Coal Tit- A rare visitor

Two sightings for this conifer dwelling tit, on Oakham in January and February.

Great Tit – resident

Relatively common all year on both reserves but strangely no evidence of breeding.

House Martin- irregular visitor

A bird overflew Oakham Meadow during the June survey.

Long Tailed Tit - resident breeder

Present all year on both reserves. Up to 20 strong in winter groups on Oakham

Common Chiff Chaff – summer visitor

Was absent during the first winter period, first observed on Quarry Lane on 23 March (SD), returning in low numbers from April onwards. Several records of singing males but no young observed although probably bred. Come September and all had deserted both reserves. This is exactly the same pattern as last year. Over wintering chiff chaff seems to be a thing of the past.

Willow Warbler - summer visitor

One male singing on Oakham during June but no evidence of breeding. Similar pattern to last year.

Blackcap - summer visitor

First arrivals noted at Oakham on 23 April (ME). Thereafter, singing males recorded on both reserves. By the end of July most had departed. One record in early August. Probably bred but no evidence gathered.

Goldcrest- irregular visitor

Probably this tiny crest is under recorded. Seen 6 January (SD), and during the March and June surveys on Oakham.

Wren – resident

Up to six birds present on both reserves throughout the year.

Tree Creeper - scarce winter visitor

A bird foraging on the railway track, Oakham, (SD) on 29 January was seen again on 12 February (IB). Further sightings in July (PB) and August indicate this tiny elusive insect eater may be present all year.

Song Thrush – irregular visitor

Seen only during the first half of the year, absent from mid-August onwards.

Redwing- vagrant

A new bird for the reserve, 2 seen on Oakham opposite BM works, feeding on berries during the December survey.

Blackbird – resident breeder

Present all year but rarely getting to double figures on either reserve. A maximum of 10 in July on Quarry Lane, probably the result of breeding.

Spotted Flycatcher - vagrant

Not seen in 2023

Robin - resident breeder

Present all year on both reserves. On 25 April young were being fed on Oakham by the feeding platform at the top of the zig zags. (SP)

House Sparrow - sporadic visitor

A small colony in hedge to the East of Matlock steps died out when the house changed hands. Just one sighting of 2 birds on July survey.

Dunnock – resident

One pair present on both reserves Jan-June. Strangely no further records thereafter.

Grey Wagtail - resident breeder

Sporadic sightings only on Quarry Lane of just single birds. No young seen this year.



Grey Wagtail-Sheepbridge culvert 22-12-23

Pied Wagtail-scarce visitor

2 birds on Oakham Common during the April survey

Chaffinch – resident

A resident of Oakham only. A maximum of 3 birds seen in January and August.

Bullfinch - resident

Sporadic sightings throughout the year of this most colourful finch.

Greenfinch – former resident

Becoming increasingly scarce. Not seen or heard on either reserve post July survey.

Goldfinch – resident

Winter flocks boosted counts on Oakham to 17 in November and 20 in December.

Siskin - winter visitor

Very small flocks seen on Oakham January-March. 3 on the June survey on Quarry Lane was unusual.

Tony Wardell

The compilation of this report would not be possible without the regular survey volunteers and What's app contributors Sarah & Tim Spurry (SP), Nat Singhal (NS), Isobel Bounford (IB), Steve Dale (SD), Claire Wickham (CW), Sandra Cleator (SC), Aggie Ce (AC), Martin Ellis (ME), Paul Bridges (PB) and Tony Wardell (ACW).

Photography by ACW

Legend

First Winter period Jan - March

Summer period April – September

Second Winter period – October - December.

