



Maun Conservation Group

Oakham & Quarry Lane Nature Reserves

Avian report for the period October 2018 -September 2019

In the Autumn of 2018 it was considered desirable to initiate a bird survey of Oakham and Quarry lane. Although many of the frequently observed birds were well known to the many volunteers no record of the numbers, the seasonal variation and breeding success of the area existed. To remedy this, and put the reserves on an official footing, a monthly survey was established, on the morning of the second Wednesday of the month. Nest boxes were strategically placed and feeding stations put up and kept well stocked. This report is the results of the first survey of the birding year October to September.

Mute Swan

Two pairs set up territories in January and in April the Reed's Mill pair were sitting on eggs in the NE corner of the pond. 8 cygnets were hatched by June and all continued to thrive and grew to adult size. By September at least 6 remained with the parents.

The Field Mill pair never got started and come July had left the pond. A pair were later present at the September count.

Canada Goose

A single bird graced Field Mill Pond in March

Great Crested Grebe

First seen in May on Reeds Mill, a single. June saw a pair displaying and thereafter just a single until September when one adult plus a fully grown juvenile was located.

Little Grebe

A winter visitor to Reed's Mill, first appearing in November rising to a maximum of 5 in March

Grey Heron

An infrequent visitor to the reserves, two on Reed's Mill in May and a flyover in September.

Great White Egret

As the November count was ending one flew over Sarah's Bridge. Perhaps a never to be repeated record!

Mallard

Quarry Lane is the mallard stronghold with numbers peaking to 41 in Sept after the annual moult.

Oakham hosts the occasional flyover. Strangely Reed's Mill pond is largely void of Mallard, a pair with 3 young in June was the only sighting.

Gadwall

Reed's Mill pond is the Gadwall stronghold. Up to 32 birds (January) were present over the Winter period (Nov-mar) but by April they had largely dispersed.

Tufted Duck

Present on Reed's Mill Nov- July rising to a peak of 14 over Mar-May but falling away completely by August. These may be non breeders, the disappearance over the late Summer corresponding to the annual moult, when males gather in large flocks on reservoirs/large lakes.

Kestrel

Two observations over Oakham High Meadow in Feb and April. A pair were present around the Quarry Lane viaduct in August

Moorhen

A common breeding resident on Quarry Lane and Reed's Mill.

Coot

A breeding resident on Reed's Mill pond, numbers peaking to 19 in February. A pair attempted to breed in the relatively shallow Field Mill pond.

Black Headed Gull

A winter visitor to Field Mill pond and Reed's Mill with double figure numbers Nov-Jan. Infrequent flyovers over Oakham.

Common Gull

Two on Field Mill in November.

Herring Gull

One in December on Field Mill

Wood Pigeon

Seen in low numbers throughout the year. A maximum of 17 in September on Quarry Lane.

Collared Dove

A pair visited Field Mill in January.

Sand Martin

A mixed hirundine flock, estimated at 60 birds, was seen feeding over Reed's mill in May. Small numbers up to 8 were regularly observed feeding over the lake June-August.

House Martin

A mixed hirundine flock estimated at 60 birds were seen feeding over Reed's mill in May.

Swallow

In the large May flock over Reed's Mill 6 swallows were counted.

Pied Wagtail

A flyover at Oakham High Meadow was the only record of the year

Grey Wagtail

Irregular sightings on the R. Maun through Quarry Lane all year. A pair were seen feeding 2 newly fledged young at Field Mill Lake in April

Blackbird

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

Song Thrush

Up to three birds favoured the picnic area beyond Sarah's Bridge. A single bird set up territory at the base of Matlock Steps but no breeding activity was reported

Robin

A common resident seen all months but August, a time typical of the post breeding moult. However, no young were ever observed.

Wren

More common on Quarry Lane and seen all months but August. No evidence of breeding observed.

Dunnock

Sporadic observations over both reserves. Seen mostly as singles.

Blackcap

The first singing males were present downstream of Dury's Dam in April and 3 continued to hold territory until July. 2 further males were singing on Oakham Field during May-July. By August all birds had dispersed. No females were reported and no evidence of breeding claimed.

Garden Warbler

One record of a singing male on Oakham Field in May

Whitethroat

One record of a male in song flight on Oakham Field in July.

Chiff Chaff

One heard calling on Oakham in October.

From April to July 3 singing males held territory at Oakham, which had reduced to 1 in September.

Singing males heard in Quarry Lane only in the Month of April

Blue Tit

Low numbers present throughout the year. Nest box occupation observed from May onwards.

Great Tit

Low numbers appear to be swelled by an influx in Winter. No nest box occupation was reported.

Coal Tit

A scarce visitor. 1 in Oakham High Meadow in Oct and 2 on the Hamilton Path in Feb were the only sightings recorded

Long Tailed Tit

Present in low numbers in most months of the year.

Magpie

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

Starling

An uncommon visitor to the reserves. Several were sitting on the lamp standards surrounding Field Mill in October.

Jackdaw

Flyovers during the winter period over Oakham Meadows. A maximum of 5 in March.

Carrion Crow

Small numbers observed as irregular flyovers over both reserves.

House Sparrow

Just a single sighting of 1 in Quarry Lane in December.

Siskin

An infrequent winter visitor, in small numbers, to Oakham Low Meadow. A large flock of 40 plus birds were feeding on Hamilton Path in December.

Chaffinch

Possibly 2 pairs occupying territory during the summer on Oakham Low Field. A rare visitor to Quarry lane.

Greenfinch

A singing male maintained territory around Field Mill Pond from Feb to July and was joined by a second bird from April onwards. A single bird visited Oakham High Meadow in February.

Goldfinch

Observed in every month except October. Small charms of up to 10 birds could often be seen roving around Oakham meadows.

Bullfinch

Present Dec-July, mainly seen in Oakham, rarely in Quarry Lane, usually in pairs.

Breeding

10 nest boxes were placed around the reserve and 5 were found to have been occupied. In particular Blue Tits were observed to be inspecting boxes. At least one box became home to field mice and one was attacked by woodpecker or squirrel. Boxes have now been numbered and entry points have been protected by metal plates.

Breeding was proven by Mute Swan, Moorhen, Grey Wagtail, Mallard and almost certainly by Blue Tit and Great Crested Grebe. Failed attempts were noted by Coot and Mute Swan, both at Field Mill.

Targets for next year

Closer observation for evidence of breeding.

Obtain access to Reed's Mill Lake

Photographs for illustration of the reserves and their inhabitants

Tony Wardell

With special thanks to Shannon, 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

Want to get involved? Just ask, maunconservation@googlemail.com