

Rostherne Mere Newsletter Apr-Jun 2023

Spring was slow to get going with cooler than average temperatures seen in Apr but it ended with the warmest Jun on record, characterised by the arrival of many newly fledged birds and high densities of butterflies, dragonflies and other insects!



Young Barn Owl on 25th Jun, photo Bill Bellamy

Wintering wildfowl finally left the Mere with the last Goldeneyes seen on 26th Apr and Goosanders on 18th Apr. Furthermore, only a few Teal and Wigeon were recorded in Apr. Mandarins were often seen with 12 in Jun but no ducklings were reported. In contrast, there were several broods of Mallards, Tufted Ducks and Coots. The first Canada Goose goslings were seen on 17th May and there were at least two broods of large juveniles seen into late Jun. There were around 25 Great Crested Grebes seen throughout the quarter with a lot of displaying but no sign of young birds. Single, Black-necked Grebes dropped in on 17th Apr and 29th Jun. A Little Egret was seen on two dates in May. A total of 178 occupied Cormorant nests were seen in May, setting a new record for the Reserve. A pair of Mute Swans were present almost daily in Jun but there was no evidence of breeding. Several Shelduck were seen in Apr and a Common Scoter was recorded on 12th.

Waders visiting included a Curlew in Apr and Common Sandpiper in May. It was great to see Lapwings breeding in fields opposite the Reserve with up to 13 chicks recorded. Twenty-one Lapwings landed on the Dolls Meadow shoreline in Jun. Oystercatchers were recorded on 10 dates.

One of the highlights of the quarter was the arrival of a Black Tern which stayed all day on 1st Jun. Another was that of a female Marsh Harrier hunting low over the reed beds on 14th Apr. Two Hobbies were first seen on 26th Apr, near where they successfully bred in 2022. There were several sightings throughout the following months but no signs of nesting. A pair of Kestrels were seen around Wood Bongs during Apr but they didn't appear to breed in the wood. A Peregrine was recorded on three dates.

Barn Owls bred in two of the boxes on the Reserve. One of the owlets was ringed on 25th Jun just before it was fully fledged and it is thought another had left earlier. Unfortunately, it appears that the other brood was most probably predated when the owlets were very young. A pair of Tawny Owls bred near Briddonweir Farm and two young owlets were seen in Jun.

Great Spotted Woodpeckers bred at several locations on the Reserve with adults seen feeding juveniles on several occasions. A Green Woodpecker visited in late Apr. Skylarks were seen



Spotted Flycatcher on 16th May, photo Steve Collins

and heard singing near the Sprout Field in Apr and a Spotted Flycatcher was recorded in Wood Bongs during several days in May.

A Kingfisher was often seen perched in front of the Bittern Hide from late May through Jun.

There were around 350 Sand Martins feeding over the Mere in Apr. The first Swallows and House Martins arrived in Apr but

numbers were generally low, usually in single figures. The first Swifts were recorded on 30th Apr and there were 15 feeding over on 27th Jun.

Warblers recorded included Blackcap, Chiffchaff, Cetti's Warbler, Garden Warbler, Reed Warbler, Sedge Warbler, Willow Warbler and Whitethroat. Malcolm Calvert and John Adshead ringed several female Cetti's Warbler with brood patches at various locations around the Reserve. They had caught 88 adult Reed Warblers by 29th Jun. A male Reed Warbler originally ringed in France in 2021 was caught on two dates in May.

A Cuckoo was heard on 8th May and the almost daily from 2nd to 16th Jun at various locations around the Reserve.

A pair of Raven were seen on several dates near Mere Meadow and it is thought they bred nearby.

There was a male Wheatear in Old Meadow on 3rd May.

There were very good numbers of Orange-Tip butterflies recorded in Apr and May while densities of Meadow Browns and Ringlets were high in Jun. The first damselfly to be seen was a Large Red Damselfly in late Apr. Several species were recorded including Banded Demioselle, Red-eyed Damselfly and Emerald Damselfly. There were good numbers of Broad Bodied Chaser dragonflies seen around the wetlands with Four-spotted Chasers, Emperors, Black-tailed Skimmer and Common Darter also recorded.

Several groups visited the Rostherne throughout the quarter and it was a pleasure to show them around. They enjoyed themselves, savouring the tranquillity of the Reserve. I would like to thank all the volunteers who assisted in these visits.

Bill Bellamy



Female Marsh Harrier on 14th Apr, photo Geoff Blamire



Female Cetti's Warbler with brood patch caught on 26th May, photo John Adshead



Tufted Duck ducklings on 29th Jun, photo Sheelagh Halsey



Male Broad Bodied Chaser on 18th May, photo Pete Kelly



Emerald Damselfly on 22nd Jun, photo Pete Kelly



Ringlet on 20th Jun, photo Sheelagh Halsey



Bank Voles on the table adjacent to the Bittern Hide on 25th Apr, photo Sheelagh Halsey



Hale U3A Visit on 10th May, photo Bill Bellamy