

Bodenham Lake Diary Autumn and Winter 2018-2019

Exciting times at the Lake. The last diary ended at the beginning of September with the start of the reprofiling to create an enhanced habitat for wildlife at the Lake. Sophie, the project officer, explained on BBC Hereford and Worcester how these works would benefit the environment and encourage a greater diversity of wildlife there. The interview is available on this link.

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1384195778390659>



At the end of September JPR Environmental had completed the tree clearance work, allowing much needed light to reach the lake margin, and enabling the diggers to shallow the banks of this ex-gravel pit. Although this work looked unsightly in the short term, it would help to create one of the most important habitats in the UK for birds – reedbed.

Members of Herefordshire Wildlife Trust were taken on escorted tours around the refuge area to see how the works were progressing. Carl Mackay from JPR Environmental answered questions about the design and creation of the new reedbed system. (Photos – Sue Griffin)

Wildlife at the Lake

Despite the works, wildlife continued to thrive around the lake.

On the 9th September an otter was filmed on the lake margins in front of the old hide. On the 22nd he had a lovely roll there. This is best viewed on the Youtube link:

<https://youtu.be/PLqzBITIKXY>



In the shallow area in front of the old hide the camera successfully captured a lot of wildlife, including, in September and October, a heron and a common snipe, showing how important shallows are for wildlife.



The water rail.

On this video you can hear the water rail calling, again in front of the old hide.

<https://youtu.be/8FVCiYxeIPE>



And the otter made an appearance at 8.30 in the morning.



Countryfile

The ambitious reprofiling works at the Lake attracted widespread attention, including BBC Countryfile.

Director Matt came for a preliminary visit on the 4th September and was delighted to meet his first slow worm. Filming started in earnest on the 11th September at the Lake and adjacent orchard.



Presenter Sean Fletcher interviewed Sophie as she explained about the works in progress.



The Countryfile team with the diggers working in the background. (Photo Sue Griffin)

Its a Wrap!

As well as filming the reprofiling, the BBC team were keen to find and film a grass snake. Finally, under the very last tin in the refuge area, Sophie managed to find and catch a large specimen. A good day's work for the lovely team from the Beeb!

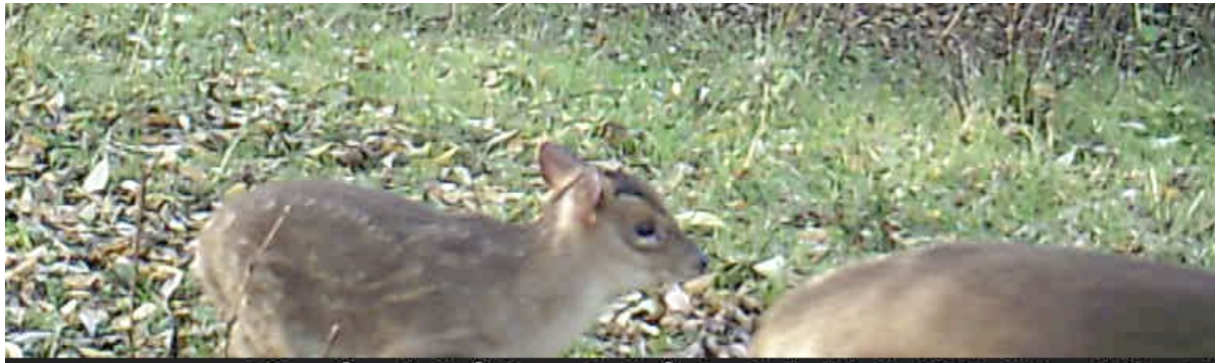


Camera at the Small Pond in the refuge area

Meanwhile the wildlife at the Lake carried on regardless! In the refuge area a camera was positioned to film animals and birds travelling between the woodland area and the lake. The young fox cubs played, whilst the parents hunted.



Muntjac were frequent visitors. There was a fleeting glimpse of a baby muntjac,



and a lot of adults.



Hérons were frequently photographed, as well as glimpses of otters at night, and a variety of water fowl, including the water rail.



By the 15th November **JPR Environmental** had moved 30,000 tonnes of soil to transform the steep sides of Bodenham Lake (an ex-gravel pit) into 1 hectare of shallow waters, that are perfect for wildlife to thrive in. Some of the rarest species in the UK rely upon areas of common reed, also known as reedbed. The HWT has given the reedbed a head start in the newly created shallow waters, by adding in turfs of reed. In spring additional reed plants will be added to the reprofiled areas by volunteers. Cameras were re-positioned around the reprofiled areas to see how quickly these areas were repopulated.



It wasn't long before the mallards moved in.



The lake was lovely, whatever the weather.

Canada geese, a heron, mandarin ducks and the swans soon returned.

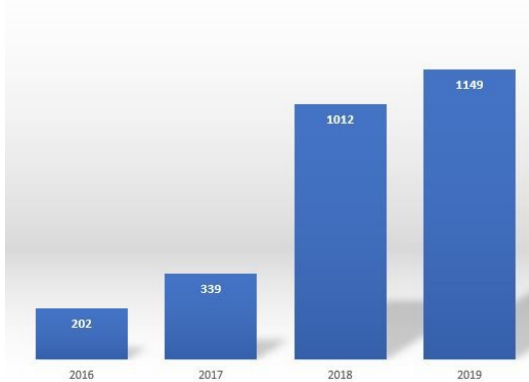


A success story – the Toad Patrol

The toad patrol had a huge impact on the toad population of Bodenham Lake. Helping toads across the road increased the population from only 202 toads in 2016, to over 1149 toads this year.

Survey results up to 4th March 2019.

Toads helped across the road



Toad Spawn



Photos from around the lake

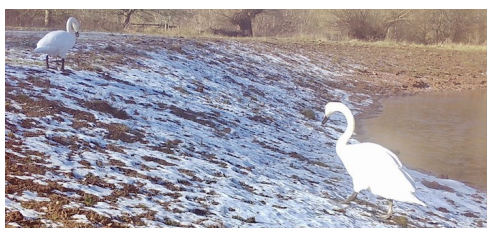


Bird food (Viv Quinn)

Winter Rainbow (Sam Cox)

Winter Day (Sue Griffin)

Viv, Sam and Sue helped with the cameras and data entry, so that wildlife at the lake could be recorded and monitored. Swans and widgeon were filmed, and it was very satisfying to see how quickly the reprofiled area was re-colonised.



Footage from the camera in front of the old hide continued to surprise, showing the importance of shallow waters. An little egret was filmed in January.
https://youtu.be/7_RYFtx7LB4



A heron visited regularly. The water rail and otter were filmed several times during the winter, which ended on the 20th March.

Spring and Summer 2019 at the Lake will be the subject of the next diary.

