

## **BODENHAM LAKE DIARY**

I started filming the wildlife at Bodenham Lake in August 2017 after joining a guided walk around the lakeside organised by Sophie Cowling, Lugg Living Landscape Project Officer for Herefordshire Wildlife Trust. Four trail cameras were positioned around the Lake in positions where otters or their spraints had been spotted during a survey by Swift Ecology in 2008. Their map shows areas where the cameras have been sited.

My first diary, **Summer into Autumn**, described wildlife captured around the Lake. This, the second diary, continues this investigation, capturing the private lives of the animals and birds who have either made this place their home or a temporary refuge.

### **Autumn into winter**

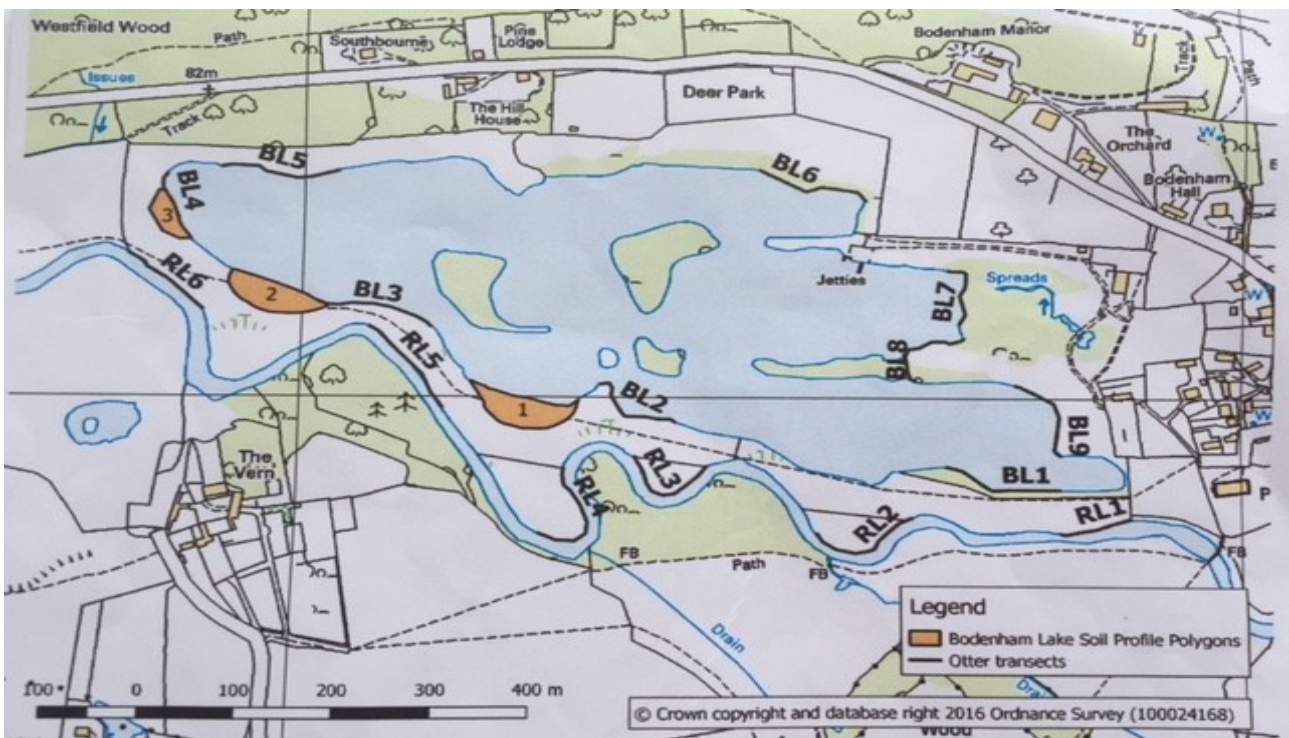
**8<sup>th</sup> - 14<sup>th</sup> October**

No otters were captured by the cameras since monitoring started in August.

As the survey of 2008 had identified several spraint sites at BL7, BL8 and BL9, these were surveyed on the 8<sup>th</sup> October.

Cam 1 was relocated to BL9

Cam 4 was relocated between RL3 and 4.



Cam 3 was positioned at BL4

One of the resident foxes was caught on film coming to the Lake for a drink at BL4.

Morning Fox



At BL 9 no otter spraint was found. However the camera caught a nice close up of a heron



At BL7 old otter spraint was found on a tree trunk. A large half-eaten pike was found on the beach close by.



**On 17<sup>th</sup> October** a short film of a polecat was captured by Cam 2 at BL2. After some discussion, the definitive authority on polecats, Dr. Johnny Birks\* and Sophie Cowling identified this visitor as a polecat. This was the first time a polecat had been caught on camera during the current monitoring session. The youtube video can be found at <https://youtu.be/R9m-RUiAZr8>

\*Polecats (The British Natural History Collection)

Polecat at night



Peaceful scene at the lake, BL4.



The number of herons spotted at the lake had increased to at least seven, attracted by the cormorants. Video previously posted - <https://youtu.be/Ky27ADacOxI> captured a cormorant fishing frenzy.

Sophie suggested I contact Sheffield University to ask the expert on bird behaviour, Professor Tim Birkhead, who confirmed that cormorants act as a team, shepherding the fish on to the shore. Herons and egrets take advantage of the feast.

This was witnessed at BL4 on the 24<sup>th</sup> October.

### **24<sup>th</sup> October - BL4**



Video - <https://youtu.be/ka6MaRNk9bo>



Cam 1 was relocated during October to BL5 after reported spraint sightings. Several muntjacs and foxes were filmed visiting this area, but no otters.



At night the beach at BL4 was a favourite haunt for the local fallow deer, fascinated by the camera. Several deer “selfies” were taken.



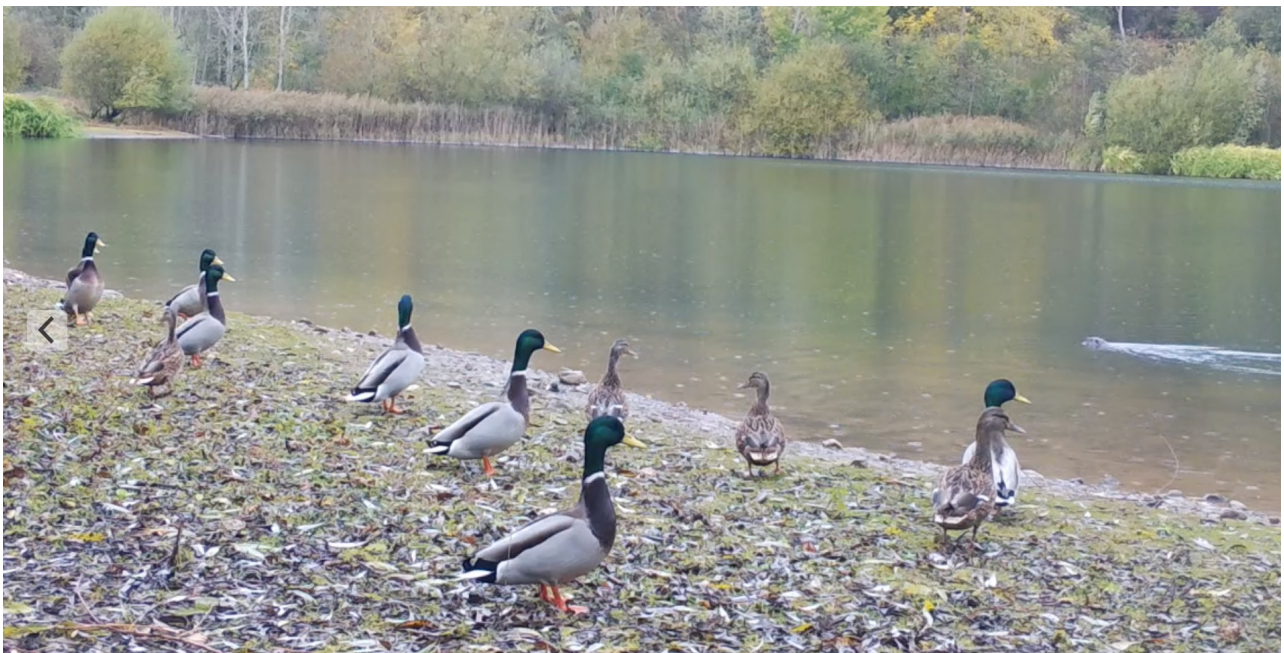
Although no otters had been seen by 5<sup>th</sup> November, the autumn colours were lovely.



On the 7<sup>th</sup> November at BL4 in daylight, an otter was captured swimming across the lake, watched by some very worried ducks.

<https://youtu.be/mOs8Fj00xH8>

Ten minutes later another otter followed the first. <https://youtu.be/9tQ-yq1SVqI>



Later that day the elusive water rail was filmed at BL4



On the 13<sup>th</sup> November an otter was filmed at BL4 at night.

<https://youtu.be/YnZHANqUyKE>



There was a heavy fall of snow that month and very few animals were photographed that week. During the thaw a fine heron was photographed at BL4.

Video - <https://youtu.be/zN9X-at1B2c>



On the 24<sup>th</sup> December at BL4 a fine flock of mandarin ducks were filmed. The video captured the object of their attention – two otters. [https://youtu.be/qz\\_BwSufkAA](https://youtu.be/qz_BwSufkAA)







During the autumn several work parties of volunteers started to clear scrub land by the lake to create areas for waders.



By the end of the year at BL2, Canada geese were regularly using these cleared areas to rest and access the grassed area next to the Lake.



A badger wandered through the clearing and a fox admired the view at BL2.



The diary for this year concludes at the end of December 2017.

