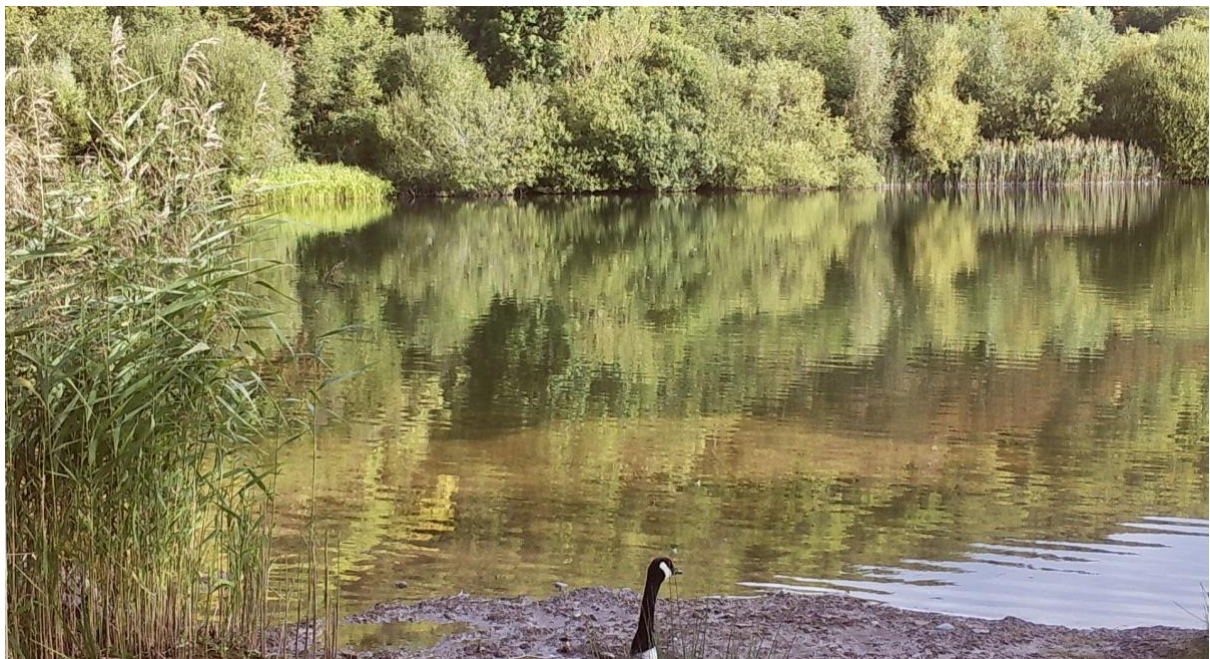


BODENHAM LAKE DIARY – AUTUMN and WINTER 2019 – 2020

Autumn is especially lovely at the Lake.



After a busy summer when staff at HWT and volunteers planted reeds and protected the newly profiled areas with netting to stop young plants being eaten by hungry geese, it was encouraging to see how well the reeded areas had developed.



The camera trap team continued to monitor wildlife using several trail cameras which were positioned around the lake in the refuge area. These cameras recorded during the day and night, filming activity that is rarely witnessed. Muntjac and fallow deer were frequent visitors, together with foxes, herons and the occasional badger.

Muntjac





Through September and October, Contractors JPR Environmental worked on the second phase of works to improve the Lake for wildlife. These works were focused on three of the five islands, improving them for a wealth of different species, particularly ground nesting birds.

The aim was to create new islands of reedbed, one of the most important habitats in the UK for birds to roost, nest and feed.

Dense scrub and alder in front of the Southern bird hide was cleared to make muddy areas in which wading birds such as snipe and oystercatcher could feed on insects in the mud.



Mandarin ducks and Canada geese enjoying the new areas next to the southern bird hide



The floods

Unfortunately, before these earthworks were completed, the River Lugg, which runs alongside the reserve, burst its banks. Although the river regularly floods, this was the worst flood in 30 years. The work halted and the machinery was removed from site.

On the 27th October, a camera positioned on the lakeside caught dramatic footage of the flood waters rushing from the river into the lake before the camera was submerged.



This video can be viewed on Youtube at <https://youtu.be/RuTjolkagJ4>
The sound and sight of the flood is impressive! This camera was submerged for two months, but amazingly survived to provide these pictures.

The path next to the lake and the picnic bench were both submerged.





The camera team were unable to visit the Lake for several weeks, but the extended Lake was enjoyed by the residents.

Birds eye view - <https://youtu.be/-o65dRs28uU>



56°F 13°C

10-27-2019 12:10:51

9th December, and the floods still prevented the camera team from reaching all but two cameras. Young reeds and netting with camera attached were swamped by the flood water.



1.



Viv, Sam, Sue and I (the camera trap team) enjoyed mince pies and mulled wine in the old bird hide on the 16th December. The cameras were still mostly inaccessible, but we toasted Christmas anyway.

After Christmas, Sue and Viv managed to reset the cameras in front of the old hide and by the little pond in the refuge area.



Three otters were filmed in front of the old hide. All three can be viewed on the You tube video <https://youtu.be/syfegDg6WBg>



The water level was still high after two months, as can be seen from the partially submerged trees.



Viv and I made a return visit on the 8th January. Everywhere was very muddy, as Viv discovered!. We reset the cameras.

We were pleased to see a pair of otters enjoying the muddy areas when we checked the camera footage. Herons, mandarin ducks, Canada geese, mallards and a badger had also foraged in the mud.



TROPHY CAM

41 °F 5°C

04-01-2020 07:07:51

The camera in front of the old hide provided some lovely photos



On a very cold day at the end of January, Sam and I were able to visit the far end of the refuge area. The grass had grown well after the volunteers efforts in seeding this area in Spring 2019, but we were concerned about the cameras under water.



e



The water level was high, but the newly created islands provided a safe refuge. The Browning Trail camera that took this shot was subsequently submerged for nearly six months. The SD card survived, but the camera didn't.

And again, rain stopped play!



On the 18th February, after heavy rainfall, the River Lugg again burst its bank and flooded the refuge area of the lake, including land around the small pond. The ducks didn't mind.

Neither did this family of otters.



The heron and otters found plenty of food after the water retreated





The otter family spent several days playing and feeding in this flooded area.

Videos of them are on youtube at <https://youtu.be/RGYjGPiZxts>
And <https://youtu.be/3MKhx3HdjQU>



Mandarin ducks and Canada geese also fed on the flooded banks

National Spotlight

BBC Country File again visited Bodenham Lake to film the toad patrol and the floods which lasted for several months made the headlines in the Guardian.



Photo by Christopher Furlong/Getty

Back at the Lake, Herefordshire Wildlife Trust artist in residence, Richard Bavin, did his regular rubbish collection.



And over 100 volunteers helped Sophie, the Senior Project Manager, with so many different tasks, which helped make Bodenham Lake Nature Reserve so special.



Sophie and Ellie Harrison (Country File) enjoying the mud !