

Bodenham Lake Diary - Autumn and winter 2020 - 2021

Work was restarted in autumn 2020 on three of the islands within the lake to make them better for wildlife . The contractors, JPR Environmental, were forced to abandon the project the previous year due to extensive flooding, which made further progress impossible at that time. The large island at the western end of the lake was redesigned with large areas of shallows created, as well as a vertical sandy bank suitable for nesting sand martins and kingfishers.

Images show this island before and after work, plus a close up of construction of the sand martin bank.

Before



After



Constructing the sand martin bank



JPR then moved on to the final stages of the work; transporting large amounts of stone to cap some of the islands near the new bird hide on the south side of the lake, as well as removing a large pile of timber that needed to be chipped and logged.

Creating new islands



All Photos by Sue Griffin

These three new islands in front of the new bird hide, two of which were capped with gravel, kindly donated by Tarmac, soon became popular with the birds, with regular sightings of green sandpiper and a great white egret, as well as many other common species. Peace soon returned to our beautiful lake.

Misty Morning in November

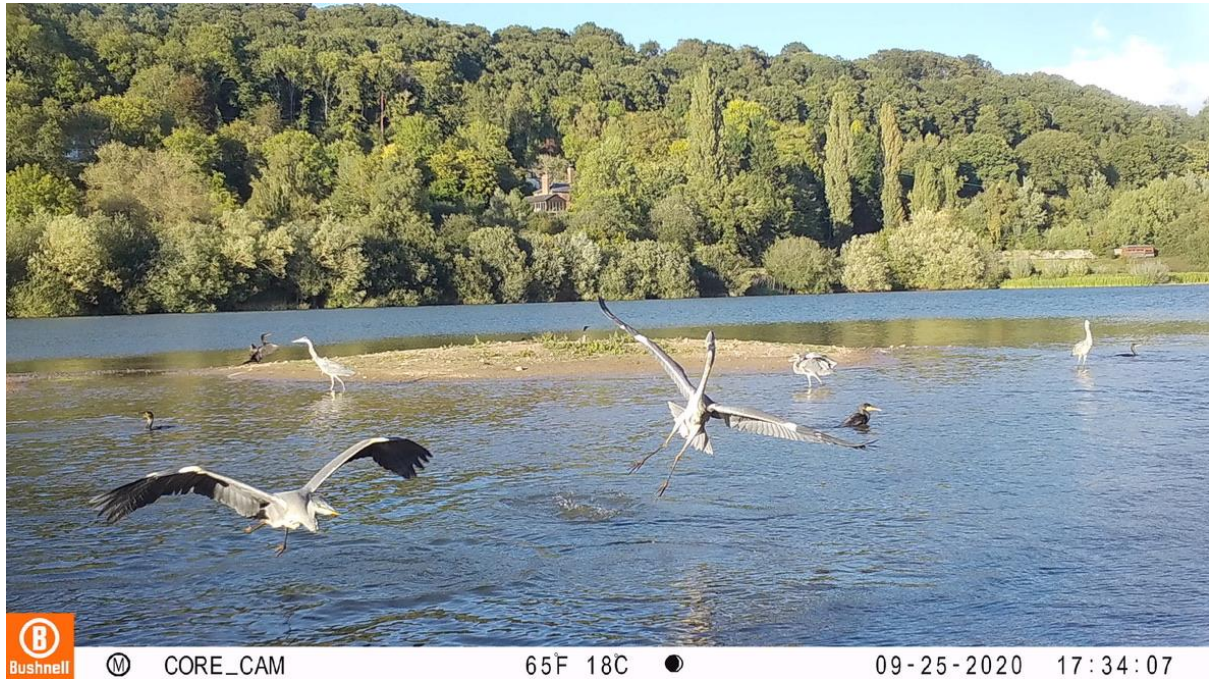


Sue Griffin

A popular island



Herons and cormorants fishing



Young foxes were filmed playing chase around the newly planted reeds

<https://youtu.be/FQaOtisiZ90>

It was also play time for young fallow Deer:

<https://youtu.be/E0BzzXZKyDg>

And a beautiful fallow buck also made an appearance in October.



In October, one of the cameras was relocated to a path in the refuge where eagle-eyed Sam had spotted some otter spraint.

We hoped to get a few closeups – and were not disappointed!

Otter marking its territory



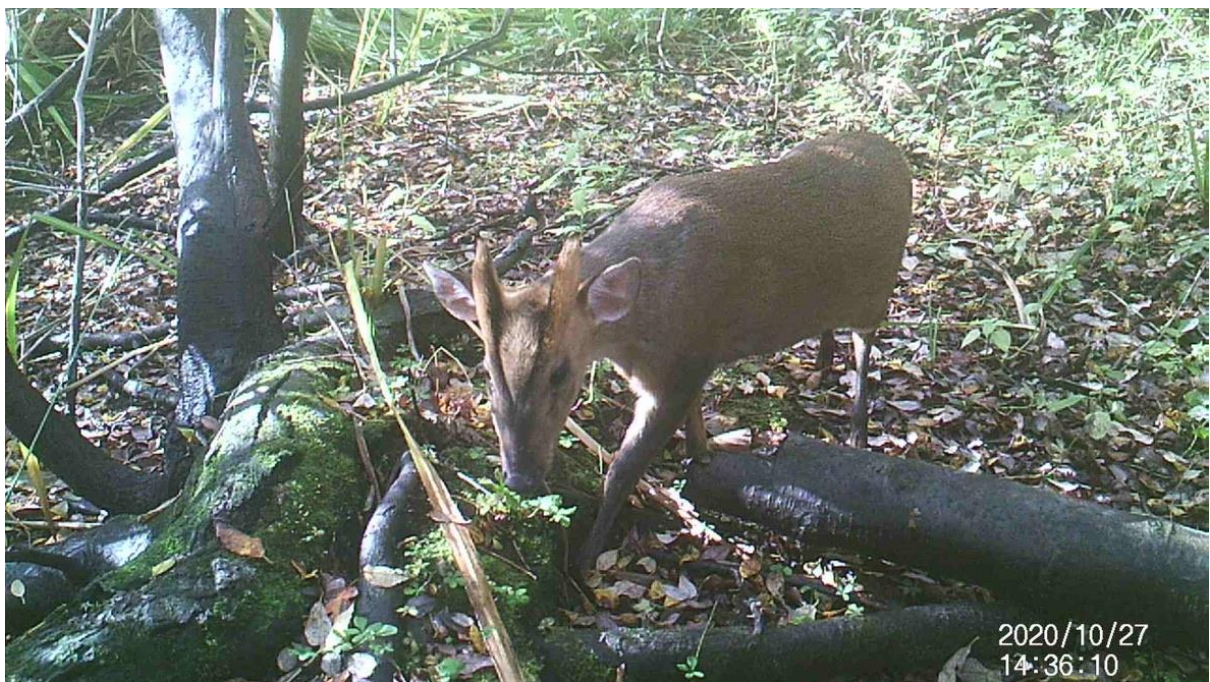
Mink



The Elusive Water Rail



And a Muntjac



There were also frequent sightings of heron, fox, fallow deer, and rabbit.



Focus on Trevor Hulme

Trevor is the part-time warden of Bodenham Lake. Not only does he keep a watchful eye on the refuge but he is also an excellent photographer.

Trevor spotted this gathering of the heron clan at the lake on a Friday in October; two little egrets, a grey heron and a great white egret.

He regularly supplies photos taken at the lake to the Bodenham Lake Reserve Facebook page, including the six photos featured below.



Buzzard



Common Snipe



Field fare



Golden Eye



Reed Bunting



All these photos were taken by Trevor.

A good sport! Trevor allowed me to include this picture taken by a trail camera. One of the occasions when he was taken off guard by the cameras!



The islands continued to be very popular in October.



A great white egret was caught on the trail camera for the first time, and was joined by several herons and little egrets at the far end of the refuge.



It was exciting to be able to monitor the wildlife enjoying the newly created habitats even though, due to Covid restrictions, access to the Lake was restricted.

In November, the camera team split into two pairs to check cameras at fortnightly intervals. Sam and I met some locals .

A very small toad



and a friendly squirrel



On the 19th December there were flood alerts in the area, so Sue and Viv braved the deluge and brought all cameras in to safety.



Otters

Log pile

Tracks were observed next to the camera, leading from the log pile to the river. The previous position here had only given a glimpse of what we thought was an otter, so we turned the camera at right angles to attempt a close up.

Success !!

A short video was filmed of a mother otter and kit, heading for the river. The otter was filmed on four other dates.

https://youtu.be/IVz_y_m1W5I



34°F 1°C

03-11-2021 19:46:04



42°F 5°C

11-28-2020 22:40:45

In January the oyster catcher was filmed in the refuge.



<https://youtu.be/7BICOahBIYg>

The video posted on You Tube shows the oyster catcher feeding on fresh water mussels.

And the Mandarin ducks courted the less colourful females



At the end of January the floods returned and the weather turned cold.

Before the floods Sam had placed a camera in a most unlikely location in the small wood, attracted by some deposits on a tree trunk, probably moorhen. However, the rest of the team, fearing she was growing whiskers, as she was starting to think like an otter, were delighted to discover some great footage before the floodwater entered this camera.



A video of the mink, otter and water rail filmed here during January can be seen at <https://youtu.be/Dtu1Qa36zsY>

Water rail



Viv and Sue braved the rising flood waters on 10th February to check the cameras and service those that were accessible. The path through the wood was flooded.



Another camera had been placed at the end of the path, focussing on a fallen tree trunk. The camera was clear of the flood, but inaccessible. Photos by Viv.

At RF2 (middle beach in the refuge), the water level had come perilously close, but the camera was accessible. Mandarin duck, moorhen, heron, mallard, coot, Canada geese and crow were recorded; also seven little grebes, the first time they had been recorded on camera.



The Floods return

As the flood waters continued to rise in February, access to the cameras was impossible.



The swans enjoyed the extended lake



Sam and I were able to visit all cameras on the 7th March when the floods had subsided, but the water level was still too high to replace two cameras. The elusive jay was filmed by the log pile.

Jay



And these Canada geese objected to a rabbit on “their” lake.



The Toad Patrol – a success story

A small but brilliant team of local patrollers helped 630 toads (lots of nice big females), 6 frogs and 54 newts across the road to Bodenham Lake that winter.



Toads were collected from the road in buckets by teams of two persons, with a maximum of four, in accordance with Covid guidelines.

They were then taken down to the Lake, counted and then released by the lakeside.

We hope for a good number of tadpoles in the spring.

Toads released by the lakeside



Photos by Viv and the toad patrol