

## **BODENHAM LAKE DIARY**

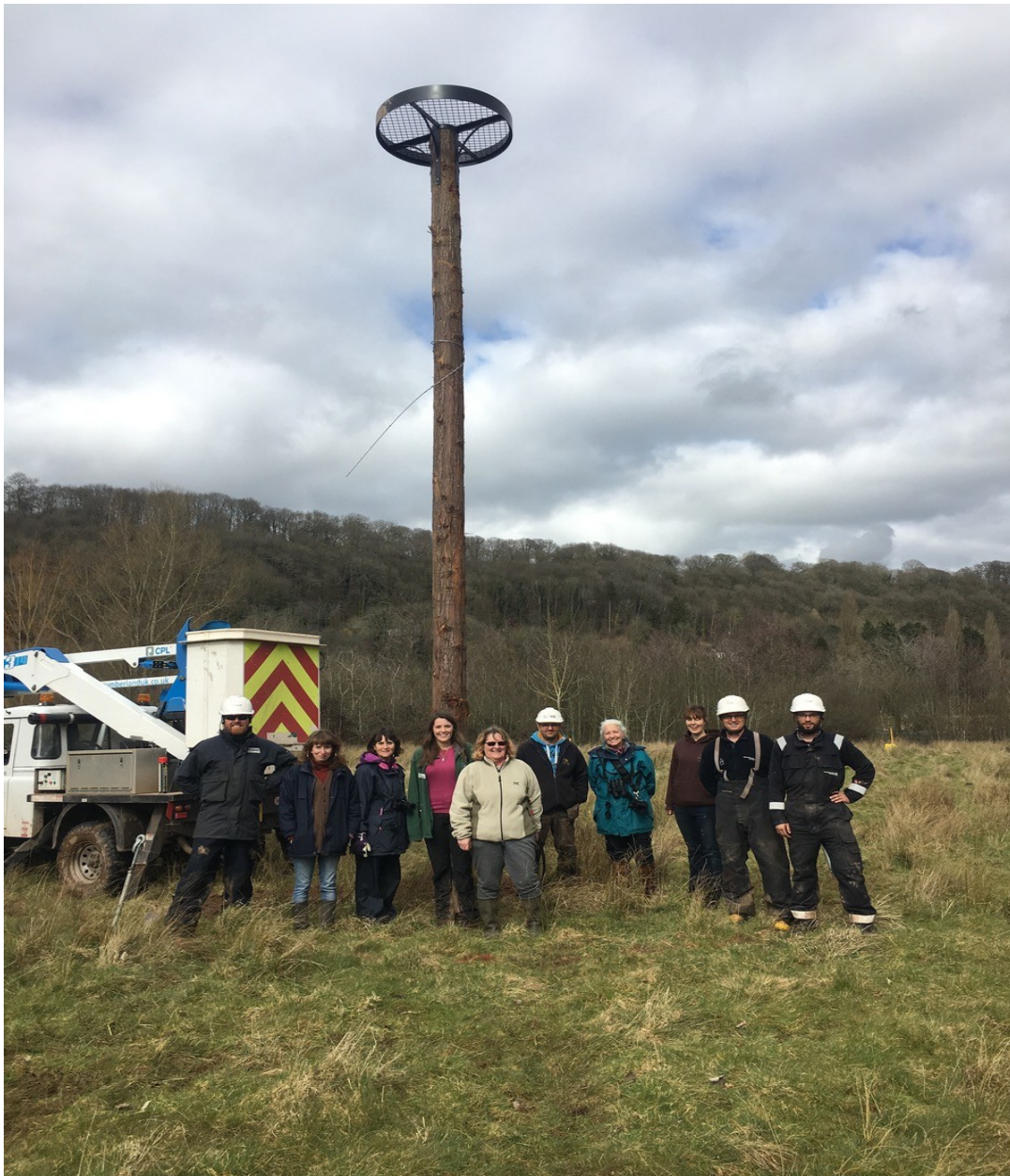
### **Spring and summer 2018**

The camera traps were positioned around the Lake during April and May. Many animals and birds were raising young and there were some lovely photos of baby foxes learning to hunt. Young muntjac, cygnets, ducklings and goslings also made appearances.

From June onwards we moved the cameras on to the five islands in the middle of the Lake to monitor animal and bird activity before and after habitat enhancement works. Records from the islands show that they are less rich in wildlife than they could be.

The staff and volunteers at Herefordshire Wildlife Trust were kept busy. In Spring an osprey nesting platform was erected in the restricted area of the Nature Reserve. Osprey are seen passing over Bodenham Lake as part of their migration every year. The combination of the close proximity of the River Lugg and the density of Lakes makes the floodplain of the River Lugg ideal for osprey.

Western Power Distribution erected the platform and staff and volunteers collected nesting material to line the platform in the hope of attracting an osprey in the future.



A trail camera was focussed on the platform in the following weeks, but no osprey was filmed.



Trail cameras positioned in the wildlife refuge area photographed a variety of animals during April and May. The camera positioned by the small pond next to the lake filmed several fallow deer in the evening.



Video of the fallow deer can be seen on <https://youtu.be/TvGC6C2FMBM>

The camera also photographed several muntjac and a badger in this sheltered area.



Badger at night : <https://youtu.be/TCYCDaNkCDs>

Hérons used this area for resting and drying their plumage.



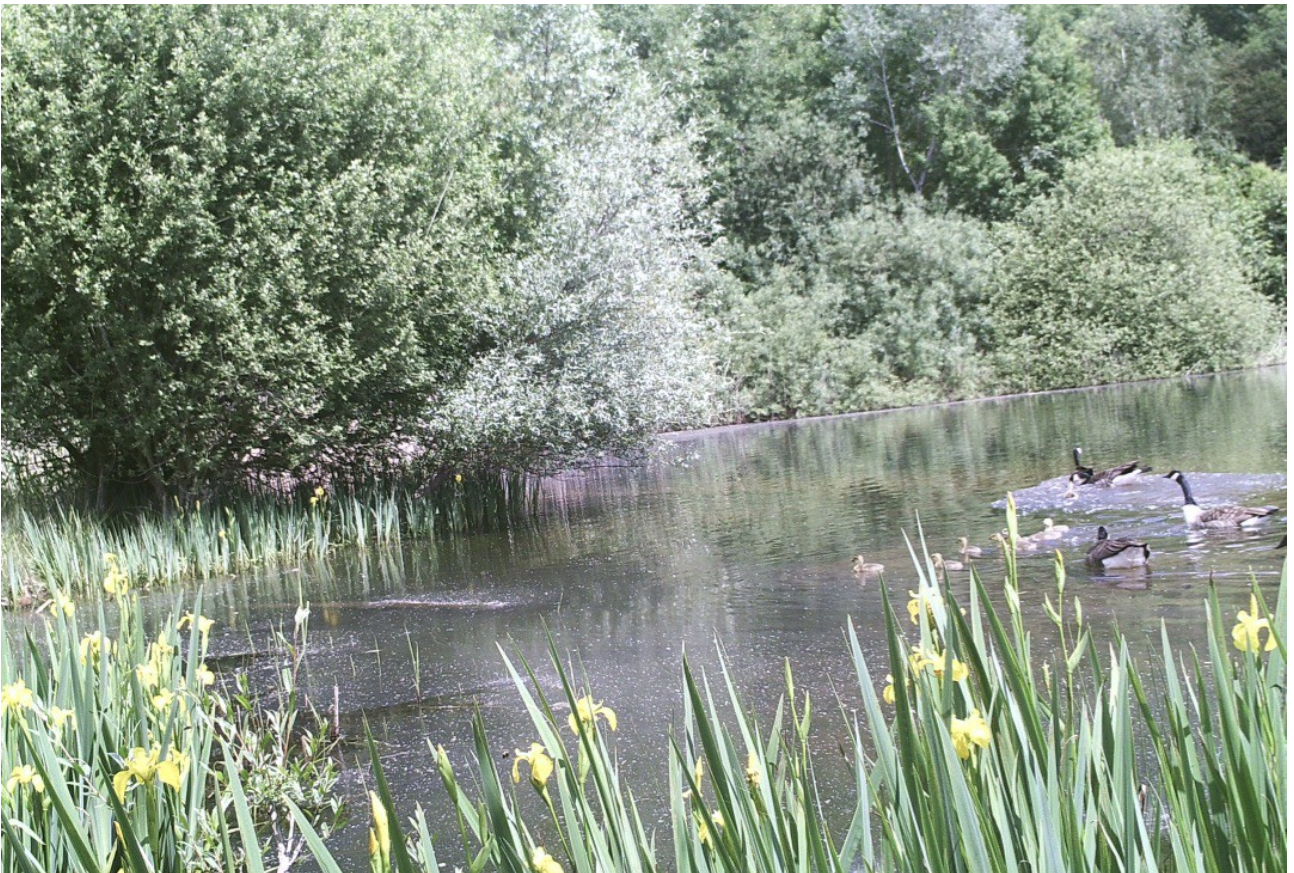
The Heron Shuffle

<https://youtu.be/XIJZ7yzgAoo>



Young fox cubs appeared in May and were videoed playing and hunting by the lakeside.  
<https://youtu.be/c85B75ayW5U>

A trail camera was positioned at the far end of the lake. Foxes, fallow deer and a family of Canada geese were filmed in this area.



Spring and summer were a great time for the volunteers to get together and help out at the Lake.



May saw the start of the reptile surveys to see what species there are on site and population sizes. A training session was organised with expert Nigel Hand. Nigel quickly found several grass snakes and slow worms. He advised where these reptiles would be most likely to be found.



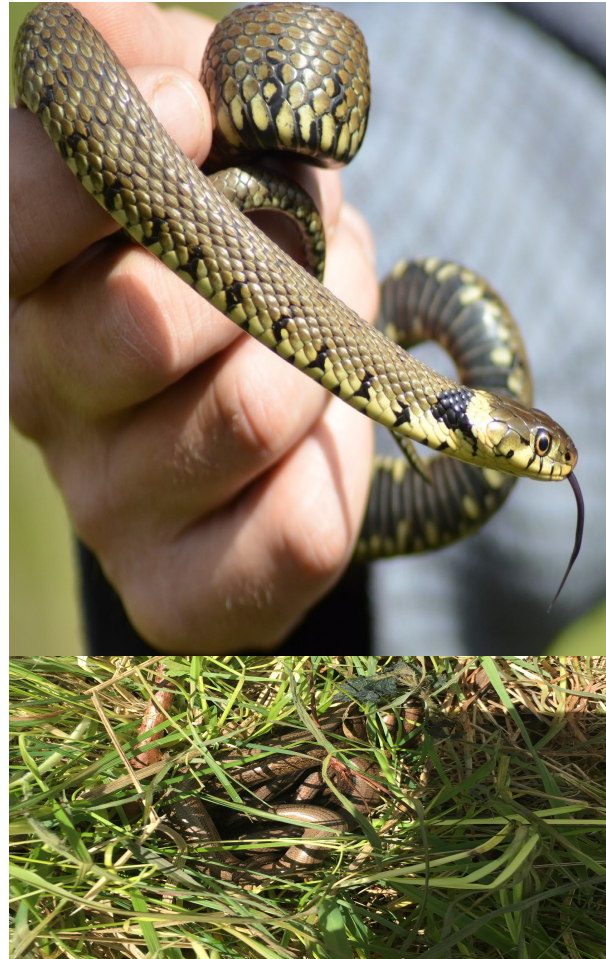
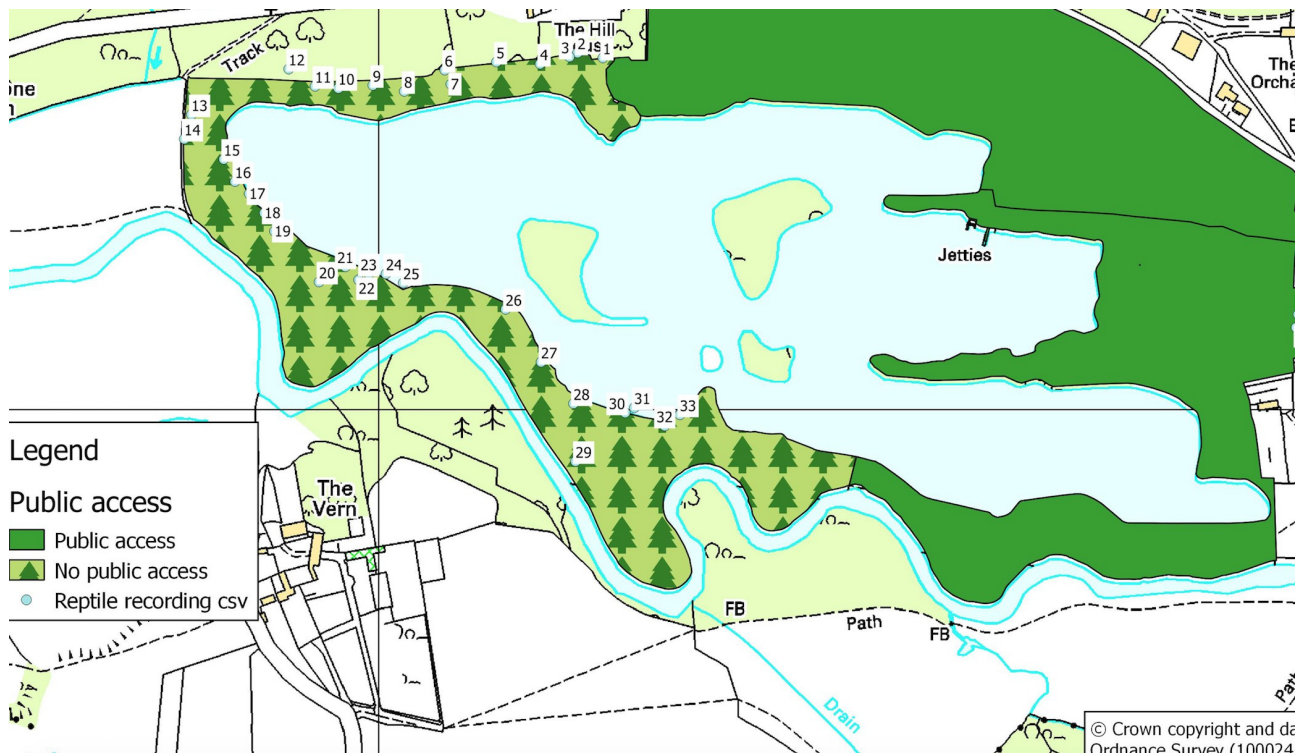
Slow worms



Grass Snake

Following Nigel's advice, about 38 metal sheets (100cm x 50cm) were placed around the Lake, as shown on the map, numbered and checked periodically by volunteers.

The photo below shows volunteers and Nigel looking for likely sites with the metal sheets. Nigel was adept at snake catching! Two slow worms were found in an embrace under one sheet.



The reptile survey is being done to monitor changes in species abundance at the Lake before and after the Lake reprofiling and reed bed creation, due to start in September. Also as evidence for planning permission. Reptile surveys continued throughout May and June. There were 90 grass snake records up to the beginning of July. The weather was then so hot during the mid-summer months, that surveying was suspended until September.

Photo of Sloe Bug by Lorna Price



Photo of Banded Demoiselle by Susan Griffin



However there were plenty of activities at the Lake to keep the volunteers busy. Help was needed by the Wildlife Trust for surveys of populations of water shrews, newts and crayfish. There was also moth trapping, and butterfly and dragonfly surveys.



Painted Lady Butterfly – photographed by Susan Griffin

The Trust planned to undertake botanical surveying and monitoring of the meadows and orchards in order to manage the site effectively. A professional biologist, Stuart Hedley, was engaged on the 4<sup>th</sup> July to train volunteers so that they could assist with future monitoring.

The Wildflower Meadow – photographed by Susan Griffin from the old hide





## Time for a cruise



In May the five cameras, which had been which filming by the lakeside, were taken to the islands in the middle of the Lake. A survey of the wildlife on the islands, together with any otter activity, was the main object of the voyage. Cameras were inspected at regular intervals, but there was unfortunately no footage of the otters.

Sophie updated us on progress in June as follows: "A few of us went out with mammal expert Johnny Birks last week, and our results were similar to the survey in May, very little otter activity on the islands. We hypothesised that there could be two causes, 1. That the large number of Canada geese was detrimental to the otter population and 2. That the otters are spending the summer months by the river making the most of the signal crayfish snacks. This survey is going to carry on over the next year, with the next survey session at the end of October."

Greylag Geese filmed on an island in the Lake



## Re-profiling the Lake

Sophie gave details of the project:

“Bodenham Lake, formed by the extraction of gravel, is the largest water body in Herefordshire. It is crucial for breeding otter and wildfowl. However, the value of Bodenham Lake as a nature reserve is limited by the habitat; aquatic vegetation grows in very small quantities as the Lake is steep sided and extremely deep. The re-profile project aims to enhance the biodiversity value of the Lake. The planned restoration work includes re-profiling areas of the lake’s steep sides, creating shallower banks to allow aquatic plants to grow, and create habitat for wading birds to feed in. In some of the re-profile areas we hope to plant common reed (*Phragmites*) in order to establish a reed bed, a nationally scarce habitat which supports a wealth of wildlife including many iconic wetland species such as **bearded tits, bitterns and reed warblers.**”

During August several work parties met to clear vegetation in re-profile areas in order to discourage the reptiles from staying in/ travelling through these areas so that they didn't get injured by machinery.

Before



After

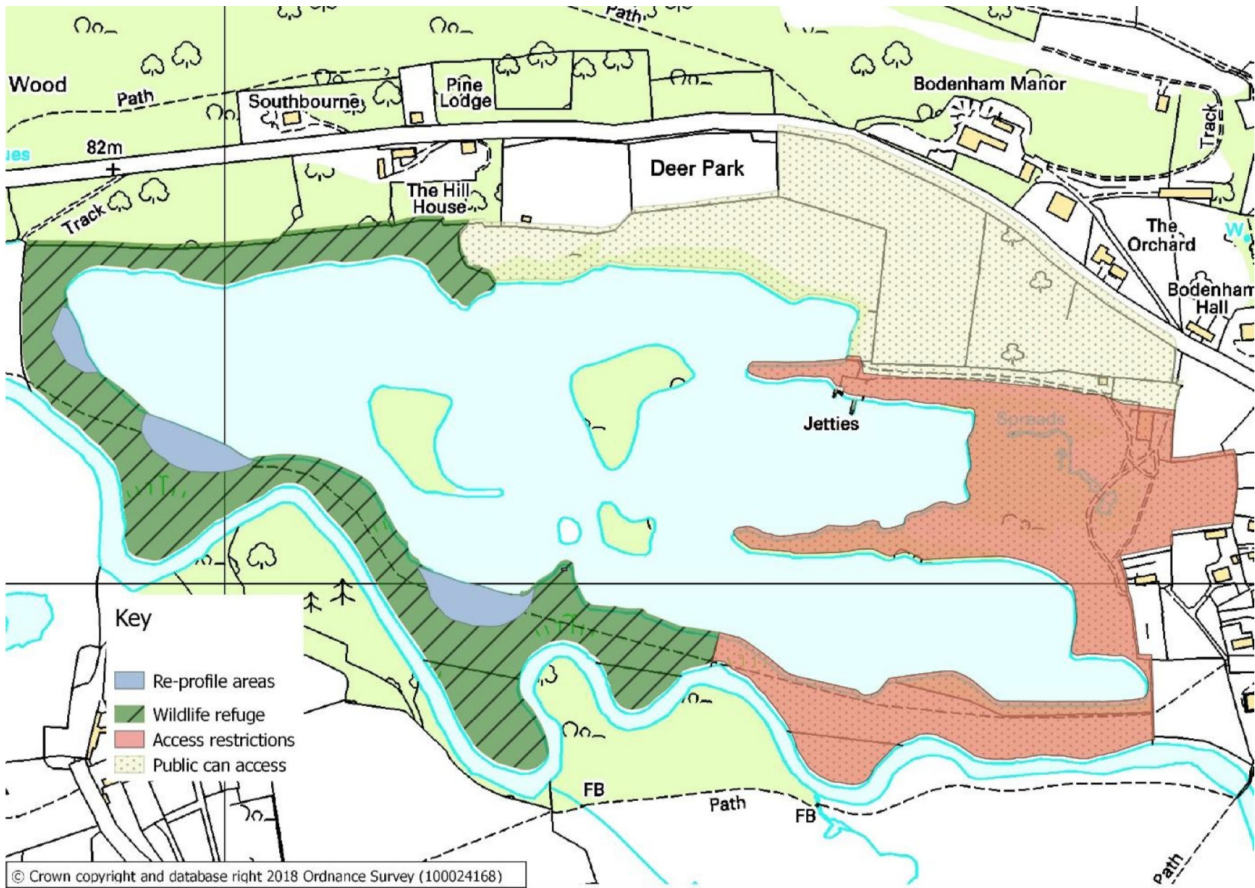


Areas to be re-profiled were cleared by hand and checked as much as possible to make sure that any reptiles, especially slow worms, were not hidden in the scrub.

## A well-earned rest



Map showing areas to be re-profiled



The digger moves in



Work starts



Being a volunteer during spring and summer of 2018 was a great experience. We all love the outdoors and share a common interest in wildlife. This, combined with good company and the satisfaction of being useful was very rewarding. The next diary will chart the progress of the re-profiling and the recolonisation of the re-profiled areas.