

BIRDS OF SHARDELOES LAKE

BY

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INTRODUCTION

Shardeloes Lake is situated one mile North-West of Amersham in the Miskbourne Valley on alluvial deposits overlying the chalk. The lake, which is man-made and part of the Shardeloes Estate, was built for scenic value in front of the Manor House. It is now owned by Mr. J. F. Brazil and is managed for shooting and fishing. For this reason the water level of the lake can be controlled and shooting hides have been set up. Recently the lake had become overgrown with vegetation so in 1966 part of it was dredged and cleared, and several small islands were formed.

The lake can be subdivided into three main areas—the Main Part, the Marsh, and the West Part. The Main Part has the largest area of open water, fringed mainly by Great Water Grass (*Glyceria maxima*) with patches of Great Reedmace (*Typha latifolia*) and has several small overgrown islands and a larger wooded one at the eastern end. The Marsh is an area completely overgrown except for a deep channel running through it and a few small areas of open water in the northern half. The vegetation consists of large clumps of bushes, mainly Common Sallow (*Salix cinerea*) and some Purple Osier (*Salix purpurea*) surrounded by Great Water Grass with sedges on the south side and clumps of Great Reedmace. White Willow (*Salix alba*) fringes the north and much of the south side. The West Part is also overgrown with Great Water Grass with an area of open water in the centre. The north bank is fringed by White Willow and the south in places by Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*).

The banks of the lake and the islands in the Main Part are completely overgrown with Great Willow Herb (*Epilobium hirsutum*), Stinging Nettle (*Urtica dioica*), Thistles (*Cirsium* sp.) and Reed Canary Grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*) some of which are invading the edges of the Marsh and West Part. At each end of the lake there is a wood. The East Wood, a mixed deciduous one, consisting of Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), is the largest with a rich undergrowth of Elder (*Sambucus nigra*), Brambles (*Rubus* sp.) and Nettles. The West Wood is a small mature Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) wood with no undergrowth.

The fields around the lake are of permanent grassland. The south field slopes up to the house and has a small wood and an area of Elder bushes.

The south-west field has several clumps of Lime trees (*Tilia vulgaris*) and on many of these Mistletoe (*Viscum album*) can be found. The north field

which slopes up to the A413 has scattered mature trees, mainly Horse Chestnut (*Aesculus hippocastanum*). Clumps of Hawthorn bushes grow in the North West field and behind it is an overgrown walled garden, originally the kitchen garden of the Manor House. The lake can be observed from the public footpath on the south side, the A413 above the lake and the bridge over the Misbourne at Mop End Lane. An interesting variety of birds is to be seen there throughout the year. A total of 131 species have been recorded, of which 57 have bred (47 regularly).

There now follows a checklist of the birds of the lake. They are listed in the revised Wetmore order as in the 1968 edition of the Field Guide (Peterson *et al.*). It should be noted that the general numbers of birds mentioned in the text refer to my own records from September 1966 to March 1970.

LITTLE GREBE (*Podiceps ruficollis*)

About 5 pairs breed regularly. In 1963 following a particularly severe winter only 2 or 3 pairs bred, but this has now risen to 6/7 pairs (1967-69). Numbers rise in autumn to 20-30 birds (adults and young), then fall in October/November to a winter level of 10-15 but during cold spells this can be as high as 25.

BLACK NECKED GREBE (*Podiceps nigricollis*)

One, from 26 May-7 June 1968.

GREAT CRESTED GREBE (*Podiceps cristatus*)

First recorded in 1927 at the lake and from 1930-1940 (except 1933) at least one pair bred, usually successfully. In 1937 and 1940 2 pairs bred. Since then there have only been 6 records, 4 of them in May, till 1969 and 1970 when a pair bred again. Breeding birds leave the lake in winter.

LITTLE BITTERN (*Ixobrychus minutus*)

One shot at the lake during the winter of 1921-22. This is the only record for Buckinghamshire.

HERON (*Ardea cinerea*)

A frequent visitor, present most months of the year, usually singly but occasionally up to 4. Most numerous in August and September, with least records in spring and early summer. In 1952 and 1962 up to 2 pairs appeared to be prospecting for nest sites but without success.

CANADA GOOSE (*Branta canadensis*)

Originally a frequent visitor to the lake. One pair present in April 1937, 2 or 3 birds in March and April 1938, and one in January 1940 are the oldest records. In 1947-49 a single pair were seen at the lake between February and April. In 1950 a pair stayed until May and would probably have nested but were chased off by Mute Swans. In 1951 a pair was again driven off by the swans. The only recent records are: one in April 1968, 3 in April 1969 and one in June 1969.

GREY GESE Sp.

About 70 flying down the valley over the lake on 1 March 1964.

WHITE FRONTED GOOSE (*Anser albifrons*)

About 60 flying up the valley over the lake on 27 January 1968.

MUTE SWAN (*Cygnus olor*)

Occasional visitor, not having bred recently. In 1950 and 1952 a pair bred successfully but in 1951 only single birds were present. In 1953 they attempted to breed but failed. From then until 1962 no more attempts were made although singles and pairs were often present with a maximum of 6 on 4 December, 1955. From 1962 to 1965 breeding was again attempted and was successful in 1963 and 1965. Since then there have only been a few records, mainly in winter.

SHELDUCK (*Tadorna tadorna*)

An occasional passage bird and winter visitor: single birds recorded in January 1933, March 1936, February 1938, May 1961, December 1963 and February 1965.

MALLARD (*Anas platyrhynchos*)

Very common and breeds regularly. Numbers vary greatly from year to year due to shooting and the number of artificially reared young introduced. This started in 1956 and 500+ Mallards are introduced each year for shooting. 15-25 pairs now breed though in the pre 1960's there were only about 5 pairs. In autumn numbers rise sharply (e.g. about 650 in September 1967) mainly due to the introduced birds. Numbers drop in winter, due to shooting, to 100-200 (maximum 260 in January 1969) and sometimes to about 20 when the lake freezes over. In spring, numbers fall to about 60 birds.

TEAL (*Anas crecca*)

First recorded in 1933, now a regular winter visitor which occasionally summers and has bred. Birds arrive in September with numbers varying annually, up to 1968/69 numbers averaged 15 with a peak in November and February of up to 40 birds. Since then the average number has risen to 30 with a peak in December of up to 70 birds. Birds depart in April but from 1964-69, except 1966, single pairs have summered. The gamekeeper thought a pair bred in 1933 and a pair almost certainly did in 1968.

GADWALL (*Anas strepera*)

A few recent records: one on 26 November 1967, one on 12 April 1968, 2 from 16-19 April 1968, and one on 20 August 1969.

WIGEON (*Anas penelope*)

Two old records of 6 in March 1932 and 8 in January 1934. In March 1953 4 were seen and since 1960 has been an irregular visitor in varying numbers with only 8 records and a maximum of 35+ in March 1965.

PINTAIL (*Anas acuta*)

Three on 5 April 1932, 2 on 25 December 1958 and 6 on 15 December 1968.

GARGANEY (*Anas querquedula*)

Two on 16 April 1950, 2 on 17 April 1954, and 3 from 30 September to 1 October 1959.

SHOVELER (*Anas clypeata*)

A regular visitor from 1931 to 1938, usually in ones and twos, but there were 15 on 11 September 1933. Since 1953 small numbers have been recorded during winter in 7 out of the 17 years.

POCHARD (*Aythya ferina*)

First recorded in 1927. 1-3 pairs bred regularly from 1933 to 1956, except 1952 when 4 pairs bred. In 1957, 7 pairs bred, 1962 8 pairs, 1964 6 pairs, 1965 2 pairs, 1967 to 1969 4 pairs and 1970 8 pairs. Numbers drop in autumn to under 5, then rise to winter totals of 25-60 (maximum about 150 on 1 February 1936). There is a steady drop in numbers from February to less than 15 in June.

TUFTED DUCK (*Aythya fuligula*)

First recorded in 1927, when they may have bred. Between 1931 and 1941 they bred in 6 of the 11 years, with a peak of 15 pairs in 1933. They next bred in 1947, again in 1955 and regularly since then in varying numbers: 6 pairs in 1963 and 1965, 1967—14 pairs, 1968—4 pairs, 1969—11 pairs and 1970—16 pairs. Numbers drop in autumn to under 10 birds, then rise in November to winter totals of 25-60 birds (maximum about 100 on 13 January 1932). Following a drop, numbers rise in spring to 35-55, and this is followed by an uneven drop to 20 in July.

MANDARIN (*Aix galericulata*)

One on 25 April 1969.

COMMON SCOTER (*Melanitta nigra*)

One ♀ 18-20 October 1958 after severe gales.

LONG-TAILED DUCK (*Clangula hyemalis*)

One ♀ or juvenile on 15 February 1969 during a period of severe cold weather.

GOLDENEYE (*Bucephala clangula*)

One old record of 2 juveniles on 26 February 1933 and one recent record of a ♀ on 16 and 22 December 1968.

GOOSANDER (*Mergus merganser*)

One ♀ 4 March 1938, one ♀ 18 February 1968, and one ♀ 14 December 1969. The size of the lake is probably too small for these wary winter ducks to feel safe, so they move on to the larger waters.

OSPREY (*Pandion haliaëtus*)

One on 16 September 1958 and one on 6 April 1968.

SPARROW HAWK (*Accipiter nisus*)

Five records of this bird by the lake from 1951 to 1957, and 2 recent ones: one on 24 April 1968 flying slowly over the lake and being mobbed by Pied Wagtails, and one on 20 October 1968 flying south at a high altitude over the lake.

BUZZARD (*Buteo buteo*)

One low over the lake and being mobbed by Rooks on 1 September 1957, one in the West Wood on 7 March 1961, one flying high over the lake on 13 September 1966 and one flying up the valley on 17 January 1969.

MARSH HARRIER (*Circus aeruginosus*)

One on 28 August 1955 which was hunting around the lake for at least two hours, mainly over the Marsh.

PEREGRINE (*Falco peregrinus*)

One on 14 December 1952, one on 25 August 1957, and one, possibly the same bird, on 12 September 1957.

KESTREL (*Falco tinnunculus*)

Single birds are to be seen around the lake throughout the year and in summer one or two pairs breed.

PARTRIDGE (*Perdix perdix*)

Originally a common resident when the fields to the south of the lake were cultivated; numbers then fell to smaller, more irregular coveys of 5-10 birds. A further drop in numbers occurred after 1963 when only ones and twos were recorded. Now an occasional winter visitor to the lake but its numbers are rising. Recently, displaying birds have been seen in spring.

PHEASANT (*Phasianus colchicus*)

Birds, predominantly of the *P.c. colchicus* type, are seen at the lake all the year. 3 or 4 pairs breed, mainly around the walled garden. In autumn, numbers rise to over 20 when the birds are forced away from the fields due to shooting. They remain all winter, roosting in the bushes and willows in the Marsh and walled garden. Numbers drop in spring to form the breeding population.

WATER RAIL (*Rallus aquaticus*)

Regular winter visitor with records from 1933, up to 4 recorded most years with a maximum of 10 in 1967/8 and 1968/9. Normally arrives in September (earliest 9 September 1967) and leaves in March or April (latest 4 April 1967). Birds have summered (1963 and 1968) but there is no definite proof of breeding.

MOORHEN (*Gallinula chloropus*)

15-20 pairs breed in the reeds throughout the lake. Numbers rise during the winter to about 100, with peaks often in November and February (e.g. 180-200 in November 1961). In very cold weather numbers drop to under 50. The birds often feed in the fields around the lake. Summer totals are about 30-45 when many birds move into the Marsh.

COOT (*Fulica atra*)

In the 1930's and 40's about 5 pairs bred, in the 1950's and early 60's about 10 pairs and now 15-20 pairs breed. Numbers originally rose to about 75 (maximum 200 on 22 September 1957) in September, then fell to about 50

in November and December, with another rise in January-March to 75-120 birds (maximum 120 in March 1956 and 1963). Despite the rise in breeding birds there has been a drop in winter numbers since the 1950's and markedly so since winter 1967/68 when totals have been 50% down, with a maximum of only 55 in winter 1968/69 and 30 in winter 1969/70).

LITTLE RINGED PLOVER (*Charadrius dubius*)

One on 15 April 1967, one on 22 April 1968. Both birds were seen on the islands.

LAPWING (*Vanellus vanellus*)

Birds first appear with early movements from late May to July in flocks of 10 to 40, stopping off at the lake during their migration N.W. up the Misbourne Valley. Numbers then drop until the large autumn movements when flocks of 200-400 can be seen (maximum about 560 on 16 September 1962, but only a maximum of 60 in 1968). Then they become more irregular according to weather conditions from November to January with flocks of up to 100 occasionally turning up (700 November and December 1934 and 300 in November 1961 being exceptions), dwindling to under 10 in spring, but leaving one or two summering pairs which may breed in the marshy field N.E. of the lake.

RUFF (*Philomachus pugnax*)

One 5 to 8 September 1965.

REDSHANK (*Tringa totanus*)

One pair probably bred in 1946 in the marshy field N.E. of the lake. Two in the same place on 10 April 1962.

GREENSHANK (*Tringa nebularia*)

One from 14 to 17 September 1934.

GREEN SANDPIPER (*Tringa ochropus*)

Regular spring and autumn passage migrant in ones and twos since 1934. There are also 2 winter records. 2 in 1938/39 and one in 1970/71. Passage birds are seen in April and from July to October.

WOOD SANDPIPER (*Tringa glareola*)

Two on 27 August 1965.

COMMON SANDPIPER (*Tringa hypoleucos*)

Now a regular spring and autumn passage migrant in small numbers, though originally it was very scarce. One in September 1931 and one in October 1939 are the only old records. Since 1965 up to 3 recorded most years between August and early September during its autumn passage (earliest 11/7/70), and from late April to early May on spring passage.

CURLEW (*Numenius arquata*)

9 on 4 August 1965 and one on 13 May 1967.

WOODCOCK (*Scolopax rusticola*)

One on 14 December 1968 and one 1 January 1971.

SNIPE (*Gallinago gallinago*)

Before the winter of 1962/63 this bird was a numerous winter visitor with a maximum number of 34 in March 1962. Now birds arrive in late August (earliest 19 August 1969) and only number about 5 until March when there is a rise to about 10 due to passage migrants calling in at the lake. The birds leave in late April (latest 22 April 1967). There are a few old breeding records: 3 pairs in 1933, one pair in 1934 and 2 pairs in 1935.

BLACK-HEADED GULL (*Larus ridibundus*)

An increasingly regular visitor since 1927. Birds, mainly immature, arrive in mid-July and from then till August up to 15 are usually recorded. In October numbers rise to winter totals of 60-200, varying annually (maximum 550 on 11 January 1970). In winter the lake is used as a local gathering point for birds that feed in the area before they fly to their roosting sites at the large London Reservoirs. Birds coming from as far as the Vale of Aylesbury often stop at the lake just before dusk on their way to their roosting sites. Numbers drop sharply in mid-March and most birds eventually leave at the end of the month. Breeding behaviour was observed in the spring of 1965 and 1966 but no attempt was made to nest despite the introduction of islands.

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL (*Larus fuscus*)

Records from 1956 of birds singly or in flocks of up to 40 flying over the lake mainly between July and August, and only occasionally settling. Singles recorded most winters from November to February and in recent years have become more regular (maximum of 8 on 27 December 1968). Spring records are fairly unusual, though 20 on 29 April 1956 and about 60 on 4 April 1958 are noteworthy.

HERRING GULL (*Larus argentatus*)

Many records of birds flying over the lake along the Misbourne Valley in flocks of 5-50 mainly between August and September. In winter, from October to late March, up to 20 birds can be seen in the fields by the lake. At this time of year birds pass over the lake on roost flights from the Vale of Aylesbury to the London Reservoirs. In 1956 a large flock of about 200 juvenile Herring-Lesser Black-Backed Gulls was present from the end of April to mid-May.

GREATER BLACK-BACKED GULL (*Larus marinus*)

One on 17 January, 1970.

COMMON GULL (*Larus canus*)

One old record for November 1938, but since 1960 this bird has become a regular winter visitor. It arrives in mid-November and numbers rise steadily to 25-40 by December. Numbers are then variable but build up to 100 by mid-March then drop to about 5 by the end of March when most birds leave (latest, one 19 April 1968).

BLACK TERN (*Chlidonias niger*)

One old record of a bird taken near Amersham in July 1906 almost cer-

tainly refers to the lake. Other records are—one on 16 May 1934, 3 on 22 September 1935, one on 22 April 1956, 2 in mid-June 1957, one on 13 May 1967 and 1 May 1970.

SANDWICH TERN (*Sterna sandvicensis*)

One on 20 April 1935.

COMMON TERN (*Sterna hirundo*)

One on 12 September 1932 and a Common or Arctic Tern on 13 July 1966.

PUFFIN (*Fratercula arctica*)

One record of a juvenile which stayed from 18 to 20 October 1958 after strong gales causing a "wreck" of this species.

WOOD PIGEON (*Columba palumbus*)

During the summer small flocks of up to 30 birds can be seen, and 5-10 pairs breed. Numbers increase greatly in winter with flocks of up to 250 in the fields by the lake. Occasionally during cold spells the size of these flocks increases greatly (e.g. about 3000 in December 1966). The birds often roost at the lake, mainly in the East Wood and on the Island (maximum 2000 in November 1958).

STOCK DOVE (*Columba oenas*)

Recorded in small numbers throughout the lake area at all times of the year. Has bred in the Lime trees, south of the lake, and probably in the East Wood. Small flocks of up to ten are occasionally seen in winter.

COLLARED DOVE (*Streptopelia decaocto*)

First recorded in July 1964 at the lake. During most winters about 5 birds are present by the walled garden. A juvenile was seen in June 1968.

TURTLE DOVE (*Streptopelia turtur*)

Usually arrives late April or early May (earliest 9 April 1953) and departs at the end of August (latest 30 September 1967). 2-4 pairs breed most years in the walled garden, Marsh and East Wood.

CUCKOO (*Cuculus canorus*)

Although this bird is a regular visitor to the Shardeloes Estate, arriving in mid-April, it is uncommon around the lake. From 1961-1964 a bird was occasionally heard, but there are no recent records except a late bird on 29 August 1969.

BARN OWL (*Tyto alba*)

One was shot on 14 September 1952 on the Marsh. Not recorded again till spring 1958 when one was seen in a cavity in a wall near the walled garden. It was last reported on 27 April 1958. One recent record of one in August 1970.

LITTLE OWL (*Athene noctua*)

An occasional visitor to the lake throughout the year. Mainly seen amongst the trees in the North West field and in the hedge south of the East Wood where it may breed some years.

TAWNY OWL (*Strix aluco*)

A few records of birds in the wood east of the Lodge Gates, the East Wood and the Island, where they almost certainly breed most years. In 1969 a pair also bred in the Lime trees south of the Marsh.

SWIFT (*Apus Apus*)

Summer visitor, arriving at the end of April (earliest 24 April 1958). In May and early June many passage Swifts are present, with up to 50 (maximum 200 on 5 June 1957) feeding over the lake. From mid-June large numbers of local breeders are to be seen in the evening often hawking in company with Noctule Bats (*Nyctalus noctula*). There is no noticeable autumn passage and most birds leave in mid-August (latest 13 September 1952).

KINGFISHER (*Alcedo atthis*)

An occasional visitor to the lake mainly in autumn with a single bird usually present from mid-July to October although 4 have been recorded. Each year there are a few winter records. According to the gamekeeper they bred fairly regularly up to the bad winter of 1962/1963 and again in 1965.

GREEN WOODPECKER (*Picus viridis*)

Before 1960 recorded regularly in the spring and summer. Now, however, it is only occasionally recorded by the lake between August and December. No positive breeding proof at the lake.

GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER (*Dendrocopos major*)

Single birds occasionally visit the East and West Woods mainly in winter but there are a few summer records.

LESSER SPOTTED WOODPECKER (*Dendrocopos minor*)

Occasional visitor to the lake mainly in winter between November and April. Since 1969 however there have been a few summer records. Nest holes have been found in the wood by Shardeloes House and in the willows on the north side of the Marsh but there is no positive proof of breeding.

SKYLARK (*Alauda arvensis*)

When the fields to the south of the lake were cultivated this bird was a common breeding resident. Now, however, it is only occasionally seen flying over the lake during autumn and winter movements.

SAND MARTIN (*Riparia riparia*)

A spring and autumn migrant, arriving during late March (earliest 22 March 1940) with the main spring passage from mid-April to May when up to 30 birds can be present. There are a few summer records usually of single birds, probably juveniles moving south. The autumn passage takes place from mid-August to September with flocks of 5 to 50 often present (latest 9 October 1959).

SWALLOW (*Hirundo rustica*)

Arrives in mid-April (earliest 3 April 1940 and 1951) and numbers build up to about 30 in May with many birds passing through on migration (maximum 50 on 24 April 1953). In June and July only local birds remain in-

cluding 1 to 3 pairs which nest in the boathouse and other suitable buildings near the lake. There is a return passage from late July to September with up to 50 birds present, often just stopping for a few minutes to feed and drink. On 5 October 1958 there was a large mixed flock of about 500 Hirundines, mainly Swallows and House Martins. Most birds leave in October (latest 27 November 1938).

HOUSE MARTIN (*Delichon urbica*)

Arrives in mid-April (earliest 7 April 1952). Numbers then build up to 30-50 in May. In June and July local breeding birds are often present with numbers increasing when the young are on the wing. The autumn passage starts in August and continues to September/October with flocks of up to 100 present (maximum 200 on 11 October 1958). Many birds, like the Swallow, only stay for a short time to feed and drink. Birds leave during October (latest 11 November 1967).

MEADOW PIPIT (*Anthus pratensis*)

A few old winter records from when the fields to the south of the lake were ploughed. Recently they have been seen feeding in the fields by the lake amongst the cattle during very cold spells in small parties of up to 10 birds. One or two occasionally roost in the Marsh with the Wagtails.

YELLOW WAGTAIL (*Motacilla flava*)

An unusual spring and autumn passage migrant. One on 11 April 1966, one on 26 August 1967, up to 5 around the cricket ground in August and September 1968, 7 on 27 April 1969 and 5 on September 1970 which roosted in the Marsh.

GREY WAGTAIL (*Motacilla cinerea*)

From the 1930's to the 1960's there are 8 records of a single pair breeding. In other years the birds were just present. Since 1960 one pair has bred regularly in the East Wood and recently a pair has bred by the Misbourne, west of the lake. This pair feeds in the West Wood, and in 1969 bred there. In winter 3 or 4 birds are present and roost in the Marsh with the Pied Wagtails.

PIED WAGTAIL (*Motacilla alba*)

Two pairs breed each year around the West Part and the Lodge. In autumn and early winter small flocks of 10-20 birds feed on the cricket ground and adjacent fields. From September to December there is a large roost at the east end of the Marsh. Numbers slowly build up to a maximum between mid-November and mid-December (e.g. 60 on 11 November 1967 and 150 on 30 November 1968). Numbers then decrease rapidly and only 5-15 birds come in until April when the roost breaks up.

GREAT GREY SHRIKE (*Lanius excubitor*)

One by the West Part and Marsh on 11 February 1967.

DIPPER (*Cinclus cinclus*)

One Black-Bellied bird was present from 14 January to 17 February 1967

on the Misbourne by the waterfalls west of the lake and in the West Wood. One, probably the same, was by the waterfall in the East Wood from 5 November 1967 to 6 March 1968, and one, again Black-Bellied, was seen at the West Wood on 31 October 1968.

WREN (*Troglodytes troglodytes*)

About 15 pairs breed each year around the lake especially in the Marsh. 20+ birds usually winter.

DUNNOCK (*Prunella modularis*)

About 8 pairs breed each year through the lake area. 5-10 birds are present during winter.

ROBIN (*Erithacus rubecula*)

About 5 pairs breed most years mainly around the West Lake and East Wood. Numbers drop to around 5 birds in winter.

NIGHTINGALE (*Luscinia megarhynchos*)

One singing at the walled garden on 11 May 1958.

REDSTART (*Phoenicurus phoenicurus*)

A spring and autumn passage migrant: 2 or 3 in April 1958, one in September 1966, one in April 1967, one in August 1967, 2 in April 1968 and one in August 1968.

WHINCHAT (*Saxicola rubetra*)

Now a fairly regular spring and passage migrant. Singles in April 1934, May 1935, May 1956, September 1967, 3 in May 1968, 2 in September 1968 and one in August 1969.

STONECHAT (*Saxicola torquata*)

A rare autumn visitor: one October/November 1934 and one in September 1952.

WHEATEAR (*Oenanthe oenanthe*)

Only 2 recent records: one in April 1969 and one in August 1969.

BLACKBIRD (*Turdus merula*)

10 to 15 pairs attempt to breed each year throughout the lake area. Many fail due to eggs being stolen by squirrels, stoats and magpies. In the winter, numbers rise to about 40 and many roost in the Marsh and the walled garden.

FIELDFARE (*Turdus pilaris*)

A regular winter visitor, although in the pre 1950's it was fairly scarce. Birds first arrive in October or November (earliest 10 October 1968) then small flocks feed in the fields or on the Hawthorn throughout the winter. Numbers vary annually with flocks of up to 60 usually present (maximum about 200 on 31 December 1967). Additional birds come into roost in the Marsh, up to 200 being recorded. In March large flocks of restless birds gather in the fields before migrating (maximum 300 in March 1967). Most birds leave by mid-April (latest 26 April 1967).

REDWING (*Turdus iliacus*)

A regular winter visitor arriving in October (earliest 10 October 1968). Small flocks of up to 40 feed in the Hawthorn bushes and fields by the lake throughout the winter (maximum 100 February 1958). Many roost in the Marsh with the Fieldfares. Birds leave in March (latest 28 March 1967).

SONG THRUSH (*Turdus philomelos*)

About 10 pairs attempt to breed each year at the lake but again there is a high failure rate. There is no appreciable rise in numbers in winter, though occasionally small flocks turn up with other migrant Thrushes.

MISTLE THRUSH (*Turdus viscivorus*)

Present in small numbers, throughout the year. Small flocks have occasionally been recorded (e.g. 20 on 19 August 1957). One to three pairs breed most years.

SEDGE WARBLER (*Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*)

Birds arrive in April (earliest 13 April 1959), and there is a small passage movement in spring. About 10 pairs breed each year mainly in the Marsh, though occasionally in the East Wood and walled garden. Most birds leave in September (latest 5 October 1953).

REED WARBLER (*Acrocephalus scirpaceus*)

Has bred regularly since the 1960's before which it was just an occasional visitor. 3 to 5 pairs breed each year. Birds arrive in May (earliest 17 May 1968) and leave in September (latest 17 September 1966), often with a small autumn passage movement.

MARSH WARBLER (*Acrocephalus palustris*)

One 18 May 1956.

GARDEN WARBLER (*Sylvia borin*)

Before 1960 this bird appeared to be a rare visitor. Now one or two pairs breed each year in the East Wood. The birds arrive in May and leave in August/September. A few birds pass through the lake in autumn and less frequently in spring on migration.

BLACKCAP (*Sylvia atricapilla*)

Arrives in April (earliest 31 March 1938). About 3 pairs breed each year in the East Wood and walled garden. There is a small spring and autumn passage.

WHITETHROAT (*Sylvia communis*)

Arrives in April (earliest 17 April 1968). Two or three pairs breed most years in the walled garden and East Wood. There is a spring and autumn passage of birds (maximum 6 on 22 April 1968) and most birds depart in August/September.

LESSER WHITETHROAT (*Sylvia curruca*)

A summer visitor not often seen, except single birds on autumn and occasionally spring passage. In 1968 a pair bred near the walled garden.

WILLOW WARBLER (*Phylloscopus trochilus*)

Arrives in April (earliest 9 April 1967) with quite a noticeable spring passage. In summer its position is obscure. It may breed but there is no proof. In July one or two families which are certainly local breeders appear by the lake. In autumn there is another noticeable passage. Most birds leave in September (latest 16 September 1957).

CHIFFCHAFF (*Phylloscopus collybita*)

Birds arrive at the end of March (earliest 19 March 1967) and there is a spring passage through to the end of April. Birds are often heard singing by the lake up to early May but there is no proof of breeding. In mid-July single birds and family parties are occasionally present. The birds pass through in varying numbers till September and sometimes early October. On 15 November 1967 there was a very late Willow/Chiff and on 24 December 1969 there was a wintering Chiffchaff.

GOLDCREST (*Regulus regulus*)

A fairly regular winter visitor to the lake most years in small numbers between November and March, with a few spring and autumn records.

PIED FLYCATCHER (*Ficedula hypoleuca*)

One on 3 and 4 September 1966, and one 24 April 1969.

SPOTTED FLYCATCHER (*Muscicapa striata*)

Arrives in May (earliest 6 May 1968) and about five pairs breed. In July, family parties are to be seen flycatching around the lake. Depart in September (latest 6 October 1957).

LONG-TAILED TIT (*Aegithalos caudatus*)

A winter visitor to the lake occurring in flocks of 5-10 birds, with one or two flocks present most of the winter. In summer odd pairs are occasionally seen and they have bred, though very irregularly.

MARSH TIT (*Parus palustris*)

An occasional visitor to the East Wood and West Part in small numbers mainly in summer. There are no definite breeding records though one was heard singing in June 1968 and one was present throughout June and July 1969.

WILLOW TIT (*Parus montanus*)

Single birds occasionally seen around the walled garden where there was a pair in July 1968.

COAL TIT (*Parus ater*)

A regular winter visitor to the East and West Woods usually in ones and twos. There are only a few summer records but in 1969 a pair bred in the East Wood.

BLUE TIT (*Parus caeruleus*)

5 to 8 pairs breed each year around the lake. In winter small flocks of 5-10 birds are present throughout the lake area with maximum numbers of about 25 in January.

GREAT TIT (*Parus major*)

Two to 4 pairs breed each year mainly in the East and West Woods. Numbers rise slightly in winter with up to 10 birds present.

NUTHATCH (*Sitta europaea*)

Bred in 1954 and 1961 and almost certainly in 1962 and 1964. On all occasions bred in old Lime trees to south of the Marsh and West Part. Usually an irregular winter visitor.

TREE CREEPER (*Certhia familiaris*)

One or two pairs breed most years by the Marsh, West Part or East Wood. In winter one or two birds remain around the lake.

CORN BUNTING (*Emberiza calandra*)

Roosts in the bushes and reeds in the Marsh. The roost starts in November, reaches a peak in January and breaks up in early March. Recently the birds have become more numerous. In winters 1966/1967 there was a maximum of 10, and this has risen to 120 in 1970/71 winter. In December 1970, 15 were feeding in the fields during a cold spell.

YELLOW HAMMER (*Emberiza citrinella*)

In some winters, especially during cold spells, large flocks are seen feeding on hay put out for the cattle. From December 1957-January 1958, 100-150 were recorded in the field to the south of the Marsh, from January to March 1967 up to 75 and in December 1970, 120. However, it is usually an irregular visitor to the lake though small numbers occasionally roost in the walled garden.

REED BUNTING (*Emberiza schoeniclus*)

Has increased from one or two breeding pairs in the 1950's, five pairs in the early 1960's to 13 pairs in 1969. In winter there is a large roost in the Marsh. This starts in September and numbers build up to a maximum in December and then steadily decline till the roost finally breaks up in March. The maximum numbers at the roost have increased in recent years from 80 in 1968 to 170 in 1969).

CHAFFINCH (*Fringilla coelebs*)

More than 10 pairs breed each year throughout the lake area. In winter, 15-20 birds are present, mainly in the East and West Woods. Occasionally large flocks are present, e.g. 50-100 in Winter 1958/59. These are birds that have been feeding in neighbouring fields and have come to the lake to drink.

BRAMBLING (*Fringilla montifringilla*)

An unusual winter visitor—about 10 on 19 February 1934 and several amongst other finches on 7 December 1952, 8 March 1953, and a few December 1970.

GREENFINCH (*Carduelis chloris*)

One or two pairs breed most years in the East Wood or walled gardens. Originally when the fields to the south of the lake were cultivated large flocks were seen in winter. Now, however, only a few are seen in the bushes by the lake.

SISKIN (*Carduelis spinus*)

One record of 3 on 4 March 1967.

GOLDFINCH (*Carduelis carduelis*)

Two or three pairs breed in the East Wood and walled garden. From July to September large flocks and family parties of up to 25 birds feed on the thistles. Then till late November only about 5 birds remain. After this, only ones and twos are occasionally seen but most years the birds completely leave the area and do not return till February or March.

TWITE (*Acanthis flavirostris*)

One record of about 25 on 1 April 1962 in the fields to the north-east of the East Wood.

LINNET (*Acanthis cannabina*)

One pair probably breeds in the walled garden most years. This species, however, is fairly uncommon, with only single birds or small winter flocks around the walled garden or on the embankment of the A413 by the walled garden (maximum 35 on 8 December 1968).

REDPOLL (*Acanthis flammea*)

Originally a scarce winter visitor it has recently become more frequent. There are two old records—3 on 16 December 1934 and 2 on 2 April 1937. Recent records are about 10 on 14 June 1967, one on 3 November 1968, one on 8 February 1969 and 3 records during winter 1969/70.

BULLFINCH (*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*)

Before the 1960's this bird appeared to be an irregular visitor. Now 2 pairs breed most years in the East Wood and walled garden.

HAWFINCH (*Coccothraustes coccothraustes*)

There are 2 old records—about 10 on 6 April 1932 and one on 20 January 1934, and 4 recent ones all referring to birds drinking in the West Wood—one in June 1967, one on 6 July 1968 and a pair in August 1968 and 1 pair July 1970. This bird is probably more common in the area than it appears to be.

HOUSE SPARROW (*Passer domesticus*)

About 10-15 pairs breed in the walled garden and around the Lodge Gates. It is in these areas that this bird is usually seen. In winter up to 40 gather around the walled garden and roost there. Up to 20 are also seen around the Lodge Gates and occasionally in the East Wood feeding on grain put out for the ducks.

TREE SPARROW (*Passer montanus*)

First records date from 1959 when one pair bred. Since then this bird has bred regularly with one or two pairs in the East and West Woods and in the Lime tree copses south of the Marsh where there is a small colony. In winter about 10 birds remain, usually around the West Part where they roost.

STARLING (*Sturnus vulgaris*)

Each year about 10 pairs breed around the lake. In winter, flocks of up to 400 gather in the fields there between August and March. Only very few birds roost at the lake but there are some years when large numbers do. In 1947, about 60000 including an albino bird, were recorded at the end of July and probably twice this number by September. In 1951 and 1952 large numbers were present in August and September and several hundred roosted and wintered at the lake.

JAY (*Garrulus glandarius*)

An irregular visitor. A bird was occasionally present between August 30 and October 6, 1957. In 1969 a bird was seen on 22 February, 18 June, and a pair on 17 April.

MAGPIE (*Pica pica*)

A pair used to breed fairly regularly by the walled garden but in 1968 they were shot. Since then only one or two birds are seen occasionally each year.

JACKDAW (*Corvus monedula*)

5-10 pairs breed in the East and West Woods on the island and many more in the Lime copses south of the Marsh and in the wood to the south of the Main Part—amongst the rooks. This makes a total breeding population of at least 25 pairs. In winter, up to and often more than 50 (maximum about 800 in November and December 1956) gather in the fields by the lake with the rooks.

ROOK (*Corvus frugilegus*)

There is a small rookery in the wood south of the Main Part. In 1952 it contained about 80 nests and in 1965 about 50 nests. In summer, small flocks feed in the fields by the lake and these increase greatly in winter when up to and over 150 birds can be present. There is a large rookery to the southwest of the lake in Round Dell or Bellhouse Wood where 3000-5000 birds roost.

CARRION CROW (*Corvus corone*)

An occasional visitor to the lake in small numbers throughout the year. It is commonest in winter. A single pair has bred in the East Wood.

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