



The Queen's Award
for Voluntary Service



(Formed January 2012)



Milford Environment
Group
(Formed 1989)



Wildlife Recording
Group
(Formed 2001)

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NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2020

DRONING 'on and on'

Here is a story with a sad beginning but a happy ending. A female Griffon Vulture had paired with a 7-year old male. The female being at least ten years older than her mate. The birds are part of a programme called '*Under our Wing*' which tags and monitors wild birds and is managed by the Israel Nature & Parks Authority and the Israel Ornithological Centre.



On 29 December 2019 the mature female laid a single egg in a nest at a secret location in Israel and was monitored by webcams. After 56 days of incubation, the chick finally hatched. The little one was developing nicely when disaster struck! The female met an untimely death when she collided with an electric power line and was killed. The dad was left alone to carry on feeding the growing youngster. Conservationists saw that dad was struggling on alone and it was feared that he wouldn't be able to provide sufficient food for the growing juvenile.

“This is the bit you have to imagine you hear music from the Dam Busters being played in the background”.

After monitoring the nest site using webcams, the partners felt that they would reluctantly have to intervene. They needed to do something quite drastic if they were to save this critically endangered bird. There are just 180 birds in the wild and saving this youngster was now a priority.

Initially, it was thought likely that someone would have to climb up the mountain, capture the bird and placing it in captivity. However, an alternative option was suggested, which was considered ‘far-fetched’, but was nevertheless intriguing. The idea was to approach the Israeli Army to see if they could help by using one of their drones to drop food onto the rocky ledge for dad to help feed the youngster.



***Dad picking up a drone-dropped food parcel
to feed to his youngster***

A mock-up of the rocky nest site area was created by the army at one of their bases. Practice runs were made to test their skills at dropping in these food parcels into this precarious location.....

“There, I told you that the Dam Busters would come into this story!”

You can go onto the internet to see the drone delivering food to the youngster by typing in ‘Israeli Army Drone saves Griffon Vulture’.

‘Mama’, as the drone was promptly named, successfully delivered the food packages close to the nest every two or three days and all worked out perfectly. The youngster fledged successfully on the 26 July and we are told is now doing very well in the wild.

DOWNTON MANOR FARM FRESHWATER LAKES NATURE RESERVE

Part of New Milton Sand & Ballast Co’s extraction permission conditions for a 15 year extension at Downton Manor Farm, is to provide a permissive footpath around the new lakes area. The condition imposed said that upon completion of Phase 1, the public footpath should be opened.



The lakes area cover about a third of the site and stretch north to south. A public footpath will run around the lakes and will provide beautiful views of the wildlife using them. The other two-thirds of the site will return to agricultural use.

A second HCC condition is that the restoration is to provide ‘site-wide’ biodiversity enhancement features.

MCV has asked NMS&B to provide a variety of these wildlife enhancements across the site.

MCV has ambitious biodiversity and public benefit aspirations for the site which include: an island (haven for wildfowl), perching rails, an artificial sand martin colony nesting wall, screening where appropriate to ensure minimum disturbance to the birds, bird viewing screens to look through, or even a public bird hide, nesting boxes (birds and dormice) and have been given permission by NMS&B for our local BTO licenced bird ringer to undertake ongoing surveys and ringing to record what is actually using the site. All this could lead to the long term protection of the lakes site by applying for local nature reserve status. We have been successful before, with the Pleasure Grounds, Studland and Sturt Pond over the last two decades.



Example of a viewing screen



Example Sand Martin Bank

We shall not of course achieve everything we have asked NMS&B to consider, but we will give it our best MCV shot by working closely with the landowner, HCC and the Parish Council to ensure that we have a site and habitat worthy of being designated a formal (or informal) nature reserve.

2021 – YOUTH BURSARY AWARD

The recipients of our 2019 and 2020 awards, Daisy Scott and Jackson Taylor (respectively) are both now 13 year olds. Daisy’s aspiration is to become a fully qualified ‘bird ringer’. She is training under BTO licenced ringer Graham Giddens.

To date, Daisy has ringed over 450 birds and retains all her enthusiasm, including getting her mum up at unearthly hours of the morning for them both to meet Graham to record and ring the birds. Jackson had his original pair of binoculars stolen whilst on holiday, but now has a brand new pair provided by MCV

fundraising, and he can now watch the birds around his home and at our local nature reserves.

MCV are now asking local parents and their youngsters to think about **wildlife, conservation, re-wilding and climate change** and to consider what help MCV might be able to give them to develop their skills, knowledge, training and aspirations to tackle their wildlife future. The 2021 bursary will be £100.

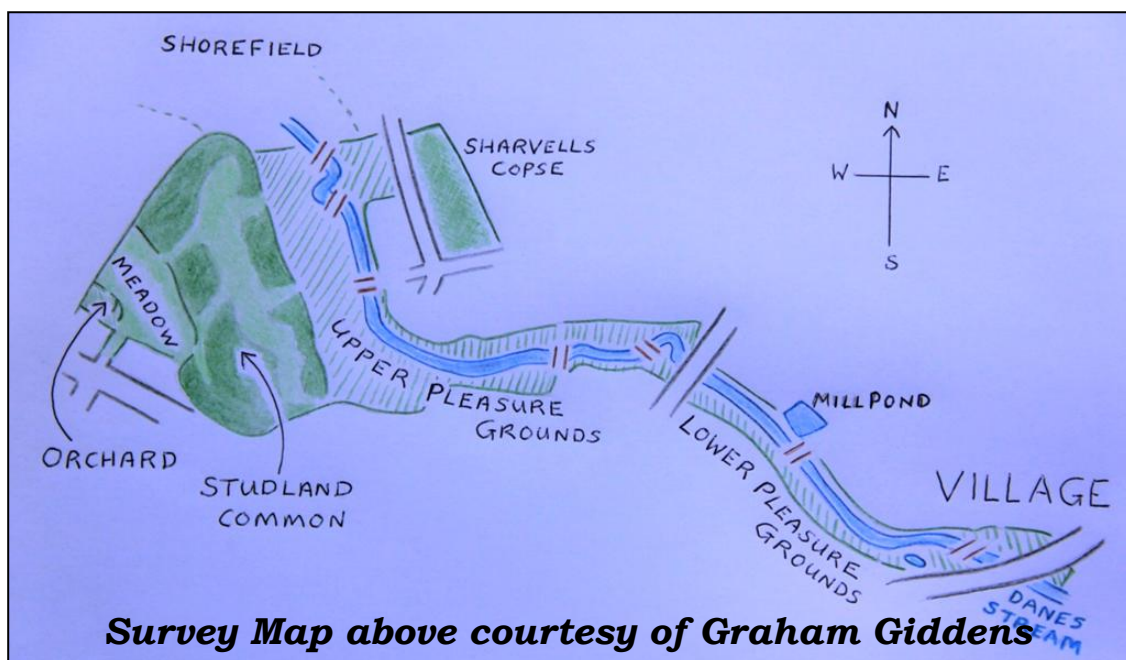
All we need is a one page letter (or email) telling us a little about their thoughts on the issues identified above and on what they would spend their bursary award.

Send to: Keith Metcalf, 'Fledglings' 25 Swallow Drive, Milford-on-Sea, SO41 0XD or email: keithmetcalf@btinternet.com

BIRD SURVEYS & RINGING REPORTS

Pleasure Grounds, Studland Common and Sturt Pond

Last year, MCV commissioned a six-month breeding bird survey and ringing report on birds using Studland Common, Studland Meadow, Studland Orchard and the Pleasure Grounds (woodlands). Graham Giddens, licenced British Trust for Ornithology bird ringer, with assistance from Daisy Scott (trainee ringer) and her mum Vicky conducted their survey between March and August 2020.



Summary of their findings at the above site:

- 55 species were recorded of which 34 species were considered to be breeding in the survey area, including; Mallard (with 9 ducklings), 3 pairs of Stock Dove, 3 pairs of Tawny Owl, 2 pairs of Green Woodpecker, 5 pairs of Great Spotted Woodpecker, 3 passage migrant Tree Pipits, 1 pair of Cetti's Warbler (that might have bred), 1 pair of Lesser Whitethroat (that might have bred), 12 pairs of Blackcap, 8 pairs of Chiffchaff, 1 pair of Firecrest (thought probably to have bred) and 3 pairs of Bullfinch
- First known record of two Crossbill's flying over the site
- 107 birds were ringed of 20 different species
- Ringed birds included; 17 House Sparrow, 15 Blue Tit, 9 Great Tit, 8 each of Long-tailed Tit, Dunnock and Blackbird.
- Other wildlife recorded were: fox, roe deer, rabbit, grey squirrel and a number of unidentified bats

Sturt Pond Nature Reserve - Survey

We also asked Graham to conduct a full twelve-month survey and ringing report at Sturt Pond, which was undertaken between September 2019 and September 2020. Graham last surveyed Sturt Pond in 2002/03 and this allows us to make some comparisons for the 18 year period.

Summary of findings for 2019/20:

- 113 bird species recorded, 26 of which bred at the site
- 215 birds of 24 species were ringed
- Birds recorded, included; Goosander (up to 4), Marsh Harrier (flying over), Water Rail (2 territories held), Jack Snipe (2 birds present), Black-tailed Godwit (up to 300), Brent Goose (up to 400), Black-headed Gull (peak count of up to 750), Kingfisher (3 different birds identified), Tree Pipit (2 ringed), Redstart (rare passage migrant), Black Redstart (2 present), Whinchat, Stonechat and Wheatear, Grasshopper Warbler (4 ringed), Bearded Reedling, Wryneck, Pochard (a first for this site) and an Osprey seen briefly hovering over pond

- Of the 215 birds ringed, this included; 44 Meadow Pipit, 27 Reed Warbler, 25 Sedge Warbler, 17 Linnet, 14 Chiffchaff, 12 Reed Bunting, 11 Willow Warbler and 11 Robin.

Many of the birds ringed were passing migrants and do not all live at Sturt Pond.

Comparisons with the 2002/03 Survey: The following points and suggestions were raised in Graham's detailed report:

- Increased use of the site appears to have had a negative effect with many people walking their dog's 'off lead', resulting in a rise in attacks on wildlife using the Pond
- Most birds escape by fleeing to the western side of the pond, but in 2019 at least one Mute Swan was killed by a dog
- In 2002/03 112 bird species were recorded of which 18 bred. This new survey revealed that 113 birds were recorded of which 26 bred. *A huge increase in recorded breeding species.*
- Most notable increases were of birds using the gorse and scrub in the grazing meadow to the west of the Pond
- Ground nesting birds, Little Grebe and Mute Swan failed to nest, possibly owing to Fox predation and increase sightings of otter. Otter's have been photographed and videoed at the mouth of the Danes Stream and further up stream in 2020
- Several of the wintering wildfowl species have increased e.g. Black-tailed Godwit numbers
- There has been a drop in the number of wintering Common Snipe. In 2002/03 peak counts were 30+ of which 14 were caught and ringed, whereas, this year only 20 were recorded of which just 1 was ringed
- It is thought that more regular Sparrowhawk activity around the pond and scrape areas has moved Snipe to other less predated local sites
- Migrant warbler numbers were much the same. 2 x Cetti's Warbler territories were occupied throughout the survey year.
- Ringing activities were suspended during the Covid 19 lockdown. Therefore, a lower number of birds were ringed this

year, but this should not be seen as a reflection of fewer birds being present.

Both survey reports will shortly be made available on our MCV website at: www.milfordconservation.org

WIND TURBINES

Painting a single wind turbine blade black reduces bird collision, and is particularly effective for large birds of prey. At least, so says evidence in a report carried out at the Smola Wind-power Plant, an archipelago located off the coast of More and Romsdal County in Norway.

The survey started some years ago, when in 2002 one of three rotor blades were painted black on twenty wind turbines. Further single blades were painted, while other non-painted wind turbines acted as a 'control turbines' in order to be able to compare those painted black and those not having a blade painted black. During the period 2006 to 2016 the overall fatality rate decreased by an average of 71.9% at the turbines with a painted black blade. The report says that no White-tailed Eagle carcasses were recorded at the sites after single blades had been painted black.

PARISH COUNCIL OFFER MCV LOG STORE SITE

MCV are hugely grateful to the Parish Council for offering a site to store and dry woodland logs, which are then sold locally to the community. In the last couple of years, the sale of logs has enabled MCV to make substantial funds available for local conservation inspired projects e.g. £2,000 towards Old Milford Meadow, £500 to the School Wildlife Garden, £500 to purchase 6 new pairs of binoculars (used by youngsters at various saltmarsh trips) and to date £200+ for two youth bursary awards. In 2021 we are hoping to set up a youth coastal wildlife explorers group, which will also need to be funded, possibly from the sale of logs.

Log Sales Contact: Lorraine Mabbett: lorrainemabbett@sky.com