



Milford Conservation Volunteers

www.milfordconservation.org



December 2023 Observatory Report.

Bearded Reedling: Were only recorded on two days during the month. Five were present on the 2nd and three present on the 3rd.



One of the three birds present on the 3rd December.

Blackbird: Common for the site.

Black Headed Gull: Present every day.

Blue Tit: Recorded every day with 6 being the highest number seen.

Brent Goose: Recorded most days with over 300 seen flying over the site on the 18th December.

Carrion Crow: Recorded every day.

Cormorant: Have been recorded every day during the month with 8 being the highest number present on 4 occasions.



A '*swim*' of Cormorants at the Pans.

Coot: Large numbers are present every day. 85 were recorded on the 21stDecember.

Curlew: Have been recorded flying over the site every day since the 14th, with 24 being the highest number on the 17thDecember. The photo below shows a Curlew flying over the site on the 18th.



Gadwall: Present most days. Over 105 were recorded on the 11thDecember.

Goldfinch: Recorded daily since the 9thDecember.



Goldfinch on one of the feeders and one on the central hedge.

Goosander: A single bird was present on the 19thDecember. **This was a new species for the site.**



Goosander near the Observatory on the 19th.

Great Tit: Recorded on 25 days during the month. Photo below.



Greenfinch: Present on 12 days during December.



A Greenfinch on the central hedge.

Great Black Backed Gull: Recorded on 10 days during the month.

Grey Heron: A single bird was recorded on 12 days during the month.



A Grey Heron adjusting its position on one of the perches near the Observatory.

Kingfisher: There have been two birds present during the month. An adult female and an adult male. The photo below shows the adult female.



Lapwing: Have been recorded flying over the Pans on 13 days during the month. Over 300 were seen on the 14thDecember.

Little Egret: Recorded most days with 6 being present on Christmas day.

Little Grebe: Present most days with 31 recorded on the 22ndDecember.

Mallard: Seen every day with over 78 recorded on the 11thDecember.

Marsh Harrier: Recorded most days. On one occasion three birds were observed.



A Marsh Harrier tried to catch a Coot on several occasions but without success.

Red Breasted Merganser: A male Red Breasted Merganser was seen on Avon Water on the 28th December. **This was a new species for the site.**



Red Breasted Merganser on Avon Water.

Redwing: 14 birds were recorded flying over the Pans on the 14th with 3 present on the 15th and 2 present on the 16th December.



A Redwing on the central hedge.

Robin: A single bird was recorded nearly every day. 2 were present on the 29th and the 31st December.



Starling: Recorded on 16 days during the month. 31 were seen flying over the Pans on the 4th but all the other sightings were of 11 birds or less.

Stonechat: A male bird was seen on 4 days during the month, usually on the central hedge.



A male Stonechat posing on the central hedge.

Water Rail: Recorded on 20 days during December.



A Water Rail in the gap between the two hedges.

Birds recorded but not mentioned in this report.

Black Tailed Godwit, Buzzard, Canada Goose, Carrion Crow, Cetti's Warbler, Chaffinch, Collared Dove, Dunnock, Fieldfare, Goldcrest, Golden Plover, Greylag Goose, Herring Gull, House Sparrow, Kestrel, Magpie, Mistle Thrush, Moorhen, Mute Swan, Lesser Black Backed gull, Pheasant, Pied Wagtail, Pintail, Raven, Redshank, Shelduck, Snipe, Song Thrush, Sparrowhawk, Stock Dove, Teal, Tufted Duck, Wigeon, Woodpigeon and Wren.

Thanks to: David Horne, Keith Betton and Keith Metcalf for their additions to the bird records.

Observatory Bird species count soars to new heights.

The number of bird species recorded at the Pans reaches 150. With the addition of Goosander on the 19th December and Red Breasted Merganser on the 28th December the bird count has now reached 150. *2023 has been a good year with the following 8 new species recorded. Common Scoter, Goosander, Great Crested Grebe, Grey Phalarope, Mistle Thrush, Pied Flycatcher, Red-Breasted Merganser and Turtle Dove.*

Open Morning.

This was run by Chris Barrass and David Horne. A very cold and misty morning with the temperature down to -2.5°C . The birds seen were close to the Observatory. Birds recorded included Coot, Gadwall, Little Grebe, Mallard, Moorhen and a Kingfisher. The highlight was 5 Bearded Reedlings seen on the Avon Water side of the hedge.

Trail Cameras.

Birds Recorded: Blackbird, Carrion Crow, Coot, Cormorant, Grey Heron, Herring Gull, Little Egret, Little Grebe, Mallard, Moorhen, Mute Swan and Water Rail.



Grey Heron.



Lesser Black Backed Gull.



Carrion Crow.



Gull on the attack.

Animals Recorded: Rat, Fox and Otter.

Some photos of the Otters recorded on the trail cameras during December.



Luckily, it appears that despite the work being carried out near the Observatory the Otters are still around and were photographed on the 1st, 18th and the 31st.

Current situation regarding the tidal flap replacement

In recent months water levels across the Keyhaven Pans site have reached and remained at unprecedented high levels. To address this issue the Environment Agency have promised that the tidal flap on the seawall serving the site will be replaced by their contractors in the near future. However, before this can be safely achieved overall water levels on the landward side need to be reduced.

They started by investigating the brick chamber located just west of the observatory.



The photo above shows the old metal sluice gate mechanism inside the brick chamber. They were unable to shift the gate either up or down as it was rusted solid.

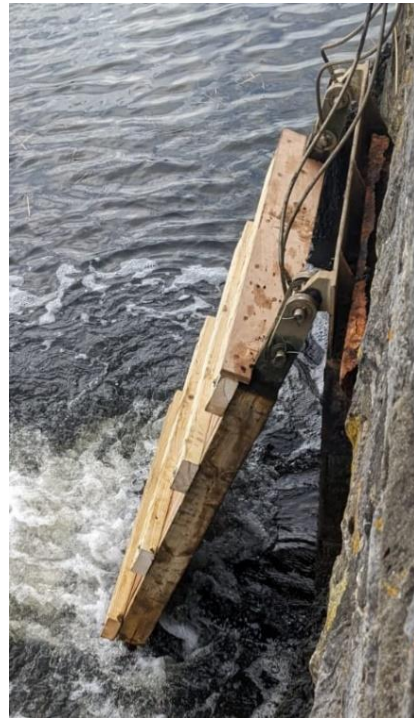


The contractors then placed a sheet of stout plywood wood down the brick chamber with the intention of restricting the flow. However, this only had a minor effect on the overall flow rate.

More recently the old and severely damaged tidal flap located on the outside of the seawall below the small car park, has been replaced by a newly constructed but temporary tidal flap.



1



2



3

The photos above show the temporary tidal flap on the harbour wall.

As can be seen in photo 3 the tidal flap is only attached to the rusty old frame and not flush with the sea wall, so that seawater is still entering the Pans on every high tide.

It would appear that there is now an equilibrium with water entering and leaving the Pans so that the overall water level on site Pans remains stubbornly high.

The newly fabricated long term tidal flap is due to be delivered on site soon. However internal water levels, tidal cycles and overall weather conditions need to be optimal before the installation can commence.

I'll keep you posted with the progress!!!!

Wishing everyone a very happy New Year.

Chris Barrass 31.12.2023