

# 2021 Highlights Report



## Nature Conservation and Biodiversity

Standlake Common Nature Reserve supports important populations of wintering waterfowl but there has been a decline in the numbers of breeding waders in recent years as a result of vegetation encroachment along the shorelines. We are currently reviewing management activities to address this, including having an excavator on site in October to scrape vegetation off part of the north shoreline. This autumn was the first year with cattle grazing the south shore of the lake and meadows instead of sheep. With support of the landowner we plan move cattle on to the northern shoreline next year to help with vegetation management and some poaching.



At Rushy Common Nature Reserve we have been gradually increasing the species diversity of grassland areas through introduction of native wildflower seeds, including yellow rattle, and cutting and removing arisings.



## **Volunteer recording network**

As part of our target to increase the amount of volunteering recording across the valley, we launched the LWV reptile survey group in April. The group has 10



members who joined training sessions in April and then surveyed from April to October. Surveys were carried out at 8 sites using artificial refugia. The results of these surveys will help to inform management decisions and creation of habitat features for reptiles, for example, grass snake egg laying heaps and basking banks were created at Rushy Common Nature Reserve this year. We now also have a group of volunteers trained to carry out riverfly monitoring across the valley to help assess water quality.

## **Standlake nature recovery project**

We've been working in partnership with the Standlake & Brighthampton Nature Recovery Network to increase biodiversity and provide opportunities for residents to engage with nature by supporting with creation, monitoring and management of a wildflower area. A grant has been secured from Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment to create a wildflower bank at the village recreation ground and install bird, bat and insect boxes in public greenspaces including the school and church.



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## Access to the Countryside

We secured funding from Thames Water to install two new interpretation panels at Witney Lake and Country Park. These help visitors navigate around the site, highlight links to local footpaths and provide information on the site's history and wildlife.



## Community Engagement

### Friends of the Lower Windrush Valley

The majority of our volunteer activities were put on hold during the first three months of this year due to the Coronavirus pandemic. Despite this, over 400 hours have been contributed by volunteers this year.



Pond dipping workshops



Cubs group visit to Tar Lakes and Rushy Common



### Bird ringing

We held two bird ringing events for our Windrush Path nest box sponsors. The new boxes have been a great success with 100 birds ringed from 12 out of the 16 boxes - 62 Blue Tits and 38 Great Tits.

Thank you to all of our supporters, volunteers and funders in 2021