



## **HATTONS HEY 2018**

January started wet, windy and cold with some overnight frosts. A few Coot and a single Cormorant were the only occupants in the lagoon throughout this month.

February was again cold with the lagoon icing over leaving little space for the few duck, of which, Shoveler were in the majority with 7. A lone Water Rail could be heard calling from the reedbed.

Early March was relatively warm and rather Spring like. Many species of duck now occupied the lagoon with numbers of Tufted Duck peaking at 9 (still low for the time of year compared to 17 in 2014). There was lots of activity in the woods with small birds calling. On warm days Buzzards circled in the sky and several Pheasants called from the woods.

By mid-April as temperatures had begun to rise summer migrants began arriving and several Chiffchaffs were heard singing throughout the reserve. Only a few Swallows were seen flying low over the fields but no signs of any other hirundine as yet. A pair of Mute Swans had started building a nest in the reed bed. A Barn Owl was observed in a nearby erected nest box. Spring brought with it the emergence of Bluebells, which covered the floor of the wood and the aroma of wild Garlic filled the air.

Also, during April nest boxes were becoming occupied with Blue Tits and Great Tits. Once again like last year 1 Blue Tit box had a clutch of 7 eggs and another 9 eggs, which were laid early but did not hatch and also a similar pattern with a Great Tit box. It was noted that the weather had been milder than usual earlier in the year (see reference above to early migrants) and could have encouraged some birds to nest early; but a cold Spring could have resulted in a lack of insect life. This year 2 Nest Boxes had pairs of Nuthatches, which laid 12 eggs and raised 12 young. 172 eggs in total were laid and 143 young were produced compared to 2017 when 151 eggs were laid and 141 young were produced. So, the success rate has decreased from 93% in 2017 to 88% this year even though the total number of eggs laid had risen from 153 to 172. It was interesting to note that in 2017 the split in occupation between the two dominant species was the same i.e. 11 each, but in 2018 Blue Tit boxes outnumbered those of Great Tit by 17 to 7. Although 29 nest boxes had been erected, only 26 were occupied - 1 was occupied by a wasp's nest, in another was a Great Tit that had appeared to have died from starvation and was therefore unable to hatch the eggs and 1 was not occupied.

In May the "Beast from the East" had blown in and the low temperatures severely damaged the new emerging shoots. But in no time nature had recovered and once again the wood was ablaze with colour with plants such as Dogs Mercury, Bluebell, wild Garlic, Lesser Celandine and Blackthorn coming into full bloom. Plants here need to be hardy to survive our ever-changing climate.

June the wood was devastated by storm Hector leaving many trees fallen and many branches broken. As Summer progressed the Mute Swans remained but did not produce any young. A Kingfisher was more regularly seen sitting atop one of the blue feeder drums.

The year ended quietly with flocks of Redwing and Fieldfare seen in the nearby Warburton's Wood. The woods held many Pheasants (obviously had a good breeding season) and good numbers of Titmice.