

# Rode Pool

## Bird Report 2021



Grey Heron by Chris Parry

## RODE POOL BIRD REPORT 2021

Another exceptional year due to the coronavirus pandemic. Occasional visits were made to the site in periods when lockdown restrictions were eased. A special effort was made to make enough visits so that the nest box usage was recorded accurately and the nests counted in the heronry.

**##** denotes that the species was seen using the feeding station at the bird hide.

### **Little Grebe** (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*)

Continues to frustrate us, with records of one or two in both winter periods but they don't stop to breed. The highest counts were just one in January and five in December.

### **Great Crested Grebe** (*Podiceps cristatus*)

Probably two pairs bred; one pair fledged three young and one pair had eggs taken. Unusually there were no records after end of August.

### **Cormorant** (*Phalacrocorax carbo*)

Singles in January and February, then one, two or three from August to the year end.

### **Great White Egret** (*Ardea alba*)

It was good to see a single take up residence from 8<sup>th</sup> November when it was seen frequently up to the year end.

### **Little Egret** (*Egretta garzetta*)

Up to four were present in the first winter period up to 16<sup>th</sup> March, when they move away to breed. Returning on 29<sup>th</sup> October up to five were then present to the year end.

### **Grey Heron** (*Ardea cinerea*)

Numbers of nests in the heronry were down to 48 this year from 56 in 2020; with 7 on the north bank; 0 on the main island; 32 on the south bank and 9 on the small island. This continues to be an important site, probably still the second largest in Cheshire.

### **Mute Swan** (*Cygnus olor*)

Although two were present sporadically through the year and continuously during June there was no evidence of a breeding attempt.

### **Greylag Goose** (*Anser anser*)

Recorded in all months in varying numbers as flocks move about, with a highest count in the first part of the year of 63 in February. At the end of June we had a total count of 83 birds, with 53 adults and a crèche of 30 juveniles from six broods. This is easily the largest number of young in a year. (I initially wrote this comment as 'the best breeding season so far' but is it 'the best' or do we have too many geese already?). The highest count was 102 on 13<sup>th</sup> July.

### **Canada Goose** (*Branta canadensis*)

More numbers than last year with a peak count in the first winter period of 62 in March. At least three pairs nested and 20 young were seen. The highest count in autumn was 57 in July.

### **Egyptian Goose** (*Alopochen aegyptiaca*)

The pair that appeared in March 2020 have been resident through the year. They seem to favour residing on the side of the island facing the Hall and so not viewable from Poolside. However, from behaviour noted they probably had a nesting attempt in July but failed. Occasionally seen feeding in the grass field across Poolside.

### **Shelduck** (*Tadorna tadorna*)

Two were seen on the pool in November.

### **Mandarin** (*Aix galericulata*)

Another busy year – especially for egg laying! A summary is that 47 eggs were incubated, 27 hatched and a few just hatched ducklings were seen on the water. See the Appendix for details.

### **Wigeon** (*Anas penelope*)

No early winter records, then ten in November and 14 in December.

### **Common Teal** (*Anas crecca*)

Maximum	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Rode Pool	32	28	11	6	1	0	6	10	14	39	28	22

The commonest duck after Mallard, but no breeding records.

### **Mallard** (*Anas platyrhynchos*) ##

Slightly lower numbers with a peak count of 51 in February and 56 in August. Several pairs bred.

### **Shoveler** (*Anas clypeata*)

Maximum	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Rode Pool	9	4	14	1	0	0	0	0	3	15	19	11

Generally normal numbers and pattern, with the last early winter period bird seen on 13 April and the first returning birds on 14<sup>th</sup> September.

### **Pochard** (*Aythya ferina*)

No records this year.

### **Tufted Duck** (*Aythya fuligula*)

Maximum	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Rode Pool	10	17	14	4	0	1	0	0	0	4	3	7

Two pairs were present in April but they disappeared and so no breeding records. They were also late in returning in the autumn.

### **Smew** (*Mergellus albellus*)

These are scarce winter visitors from Northern Europe and we have been fortunate to have one visit here for the past five winters, although this year there was only one sighting of a female type on 19<sup>th</sup> February.

### **Goosander** (*Mergus merganser*)

Monthly maxima of nine in January, six in February, two in March, three in November and a good count of 17 (5 male + 12 female) in late December. Very similar to 2020.

**Sparrowhawk** (*Accipiter nisus*)

Occasionally seen chasing through the wood by the hide.

**Buzzard** (*Buteo buteo*)

Seen regularly and bred. In late December there was a wake of up to 20 Buzzards seen for a few weeks feeding in the grass field across from Poolside.

**Kestrel** (*Falco tinninculus*)

Probably present.

**Hobby** (*Falco subbuteo*)

One seen on 17<sup>th</sup> August.

**Common Pheasant** (*Phasianus colchicus*) ##

Seen all year,

**Water Rail** (*Rallus aquaticus*)

A very much under-recorded winter visitor although three were seen on 21<sup>st</sup> February and one was caught on camera on 20<sup>th</sup> March.

**Moorhen** (*Gallinula chloropus*) ##

Resident with a maximum of seven seen and just one brood of two young seen this year.

**Coot** (*Fulica atra*)

Resident with a maximum of nine seen and just one brood of two young seen this year.

**Oystercatcher** (*Haematopus ostralegus*)

Singles were seen in April and late May.

**Lapwing** (*Vanellus vanellus*)

A flock of 60 over in late December.

**Woodcock** (*Scolopax rusticola*)

One was flushed in the woods in February.

**Snipe** (*Gallinago gallinago*)

Present during the winter periods although with a peak count of just one in the first winter period but a good count of 13 in the second winter period. However, they are difficult to count accurately since they blend in so well with the phragmites reeds.

**Common Sandpiper** (*Actitis hypoleucos*)

Three were recorded on 20<sup>th</sup> April.

**Black-headed Gull** (*Larus ridibundus*)

Scarce in the first part of the year, then numbers built up slowly with post-breeding dispersal. 70 in October, 200 in November and up to 300 in December.

**Lesser Black-backed Gull** (*Larus fuscus*)

One was present on the cricket field in May.

**Common Tern (*Sterna hirundo*)**

One was recorded on 9<sup>th</sup> June.

**Stock Dove (*Columba oenas*) ##**

Present all year and at least three pairs bred.

**Wood Pigeon (*Columba palumbus*)**

Common resident and the largest flock noted was 70 in December.

**Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*)**

There were two sightings in June.

**Tawny Owl (*Strix aluco*)**

Resident in the woods and in May fresh down feathers were seen snagged on the entrance to the nest box, so presumably successful this year.

**Swift (*Apus apus*).**

Eight on 30<sup>th</sup> June, also seen on 30<sup>th</sup> July.

**Common Kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*)**

One or two recorded in most months and three in March.

**Lesser Spotted Woodpecker (*Dryobates minor*) ##**

A welcome record of this now rare bird when we watched one drumming by the gate into the wood on 9<sup>th</sup> February.

**Green Woodpecker (*Picus viridis*)**

Recorded several times through the year and very vocally active during the summer in the woods so presumably bred there.

**Great Spotted Woodpecker (*Dendrocopos major*) ##**

The commonest woodpecker and a few pairs bred on the estate.

**Grey Wagtail (*Motacilla cinerea*)**

Two recorded in January, then singles from September to the year end..

**Pied Wagtail (*Motacilla alba yarrelli*)**

Present all year, particularly around the cricket club where they usually breed and two were seen carrying food there in June.

**Wren (*Troglodytes troglodytes troglodytes*) ##**

Common resident.

**Dunnock (*Prunella modularis*) ##**

Common resident.

**Spotted Flycatcher (*Muscicapa striata*)**

Just one record of a singing male on 15<sup>th</sup> June in the usual clearing in the trees along Poolside – very frustrating!

**Robin** (*Erithacus rubecula*) ##  
Common resident.

**Pied Flycatcher** (*Ficedula hypoleuca*)  
One was seen and photographed in early May.

**Blackbird** (*Turdus merula*) ##  
Common resident.

**Fieldfare** (*Turdus pilarus*) ##  
Recorded in December.

**Song Thrush** (*Turdus philomelos*)  
Common resident.

**Redwing** (*Turdus iliacus*)  
Winter visitor with a peak count of 30 in December.

**Mistle Thrush** (*Turdus viscivorus*)  
A pair seen carrying food in June and a count of 17 in late July.

**Long-tailed Tit** (*Aegithalos caudatus*)  
The largest flock recorded was just six in February.

**Sedge Warbler** (*Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*)  
A male was heard singing and seen on 27<sup>th</sup> April but not subsequently.

**Reed Warbler** (*Acrocephalus scirpaceus*)  
A good year with five singing males recorded in the reed beds.

**Blackcap** (*Sylvia atricapilla*)  
Common summer visitor.

**Garden Warbler** (*Sylvia borin*)  
One heard singing well on 6<sup>th</sup> May.

**Chiffchaff** (*Phylloscopus collybita*)  
Common summer visitor and breeding proved in June.

**Goldcrest** (*Regulus regulus*) ##  
Several records through the year.

**Blue Tit** (*Parus caeruleus*) ##  
Seven pairs nested in boxes with 72 eggs laid, 61 hatched and 39 young fledged.

**Great Tit** (*Parus major*) ##  
Three pairs nested in boxes with 13 eggs laid, 10 hatched and ten young fledged.

**Sand Martin** (*Riparia riparia*).  
15 in April and also recorded in August.

**Swallow** (*Hirundo rustica*)

Several records through the summer, highest was 45 in April.

**House Martin** (*Delichon urbica*)

A few autumn records.

**Nuthatch** (*Sitta europaea*) ##

A common breeding resident.

**Eurasian Treecreeper** (*Certhia familiaris*)

Common breeding resident.

**Eurasian Jay** (*Garrulus glandarius*) ##

Resident.

**Magpie** (*Pica pica*) ##

Common resident.

**Eurasian Jackdaw** (*Corvus monedula*)

Many pairs bred and the largest flock recorded was 140 in March. An amusing sight in June was to see 40 together squabbling to get into rain puddles along the drive to bathe.

**Rook** (*Corvus frugilegus*)

Common resident.

**Carrion Crow** (*Corvus corone corone*)

Common resident.

**Raven** (*Corvus corax*)

It was reported that the resident pair nested in the Bathing Wood and fledged four young.

**Starling** (*Sturnus vulgaris*)

Recorded in both winter periods.

**Chaffinch** (*Fringilla coelebs*) ##

Common resident.

**Bullfinch** (*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*)

A late record with three males and one female seen on 31<sup>st</sup> December.

**Greenfinch** (*Carduelis chloris*)

Occasional records.

**Goldfinch** (*Carduelis carduelis*)

Common resident but no groups recorded.

**Siskin** (*Carduelis spinus*) ##

The only Siskin recorded were two on 31<sup>st</sup> December.

**Reed Bunting** (*Emberiza schoeniclus*) ##

None recorded this year.

Colin Lythgoe and the Rode Pool Regulars and John Triner.



## Appendix

### **Mandarin Duck nesting on Rode Estate in 2021**

Another busy year – especially for egg laying! A summary is that 47 eggs were incubated, 27 hatched and a few just hatched ducklings were seen on the water.

I find the Mandarin to be something of a phantom bird during the breeding season. Sightings are usually of one or two and rarely more than four females, but a total of 185 eggs were laid. Considering the speed of laying most boxes must have had at least two females laying in each one and a few possibly had three females. The details of this year's breeding efforts are that 6 nest boxes were used, 3 successful and 3 failed; a total of 185 eggs were laid of which 87 were removed to try to reduce the clutch size to a level where the female could successfully incubate all of the eggs. Of the 98 eggs left in 6 clutches, 51 in 3 nests were abandoned or incubation never started (I wonder if the females involved in egg laying could not agree who was going to do the incubation for four weeks!) The remaining 47 in 3 boxes were incubated and 27 hatched. A few young were seen but only when very small and they soon disappeared.

Mandarins are increasing in numbers and spreading through South Cheshire. There are several confirmed nesting sites at scattered locations, some using Barn Owl nest boxes and some using natural sites. Mandarins first nested in a box here in 2012 and we have played a part in their increase locally. However, due to predation from pike and Grey Herons the fledging success at this site is very low. It may be more productive to either move some boxes or provide additional boxes at waters that do not have a well stocked fishery or a large heronry at the same site!

Rode Pool Regulars

# Rode Pool Heronry 2002 to 2021

