

ORRELL WATER PARK

by Dave Broome



Above: Orrell Water Park upper lake

Orrell Water Park, a site of about 8 hectares owned by Wigan Council, lies on the course of Smithy Brook, part of the River Douglas catchments. The main entrance to the site is on Lodge Road, about two minutes' walk from Orrell railway station. There is a large car park.

It was formerly the site of stone-lined reservoirs and there are few bird records from that period, though a Leach's Petrel did occur in 1978. In the early 1980's a major landscaping scheme was undertaken, involving converting the reservoirs in to two shallower lakes. Little Ringed Plover occurred during this transitional period. The lakes are now mainly run as a coarse fishery. Great Crested Grebes nest on the site, doing so more regularly since structures were provided for them to attach nests to. The aim of this was to improve the structure of the fish population, due to the greater presence of a prey species. The upper lake contains an island on which Greater Manchester's largest flock of Collared Doves was recorded.

Below: Orrell Water Park





The reedbed

There is a network of footpaths around the entire site. South of the main lakes is an area of wetland and woodland. This has been designated as the Greens Lane Meadows Local Nature Reserve. Farmland surrounds much of the site and as such Yellowhammers and finch flocks often occur in the hedges around the park. The reserve area often holds Bullfinch and can be good for warblers, with Garden Warbler, Reed Warbler and Lesser Whitethroat having bred.



The southern edge of the Water park and right,



The feeding station.

Any one visit may not produce a great deal and the main lakes themselves often hold little more than the confiding Mallards. The lakes can be quickly scanned from the car park and have held Garganey, Goosander, Wigeon, Kittiwake, as well as photogenic Grey Herons. The site is well-placed for visible migration and over 500 Meadow Pipits have been counted moving south in a day. A total of 129 species have been recorded at the site, including Osprey, Marsh Harrier, Honey Buzzard, Arctic Skua, Firecrest, Mealy Redpoll, Pied Flycatcher, Crossbill and Ring Ouzel. It is one of those little-watched sites which would re-pay more regular visits by birders. From the south end of the site public footpaths lead through agricultural land at Longshaw. This area holds decent numbers of Yellowhammer and Skylark. Visible migration can be excellent and is probably best watched from Park Road. The conifers of Moss Wood and Chair Wood have attracted Crossbills to the area on several occasions.



Dave Broome, July 2008

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