

Idle Valley Nature Sightings

April 2025

What's On – May 2025

Every Tuesday each month – Wellbeing Walk (Bellmoor Lake area) from the Idle Valley Visitor Centre Cafe at 10:30am. Volunteer led walk sponsored by Co-op Lincolnshire.

Every Wednesday each month – Wellbeing Walk (Bellmoor Lake) from the Idle Valley Visitor Centre Cafe at the new time of 1:00pm. Volunteer led walk sponsored by Co-op Lincolnshire.

Thursday 1st May (First Thursday in each month) – Idle Adventure Walk (min 8 miles) from the Idle Valley Visitor Centre Cafe at 10:30am until 3:30pm. Volunteer led walk.

Friday 2nd May – Gary's 'Birdwatching & Wildlife' Walk at Idle Valley NR. 2:30pm until 5:30pm. Meeting point is at the junction of Lound Low Road and Walters Lane. Loop walk around the large lagoons, via Doughty's Pit (Trout fishery), Bunker Wood, walking back along the river, Tiln Pits, Lower Sheep Fields and along Walters Lane past Wetlands Lakes. Looking for summer migrants, resident birds and wildlife. Contact email/ mobile number: ghlbc@hotmail.co.uk 07464964879

Saturday 10th May – Idle Valley Wildlife Watch: Migration Matters. Seasonal wildlife activities for 7 to 12 year olds, with a walk in the reserve. Meeting Point is Idle Valley Visitor Centre at 10:30am until 12:30pm. £2.00 per child. Leader is Ros Schwarz. Contact email: idlwatch@nottswt.co.uk

Sunday 11th May – 'Dawn Chorus' Event Start time for this ticket only event is 05:00am until 08:00am. Join us for a magical 'Dawn Chorus' experience. Enjoy the serene beauty of nature's morning symphony while soaking in the sights and sounds of the early birds. For just £10, your ticket includes a delicious breakfast roll with vegetarian, vegan, and gluten-free bread available or scones with jam and cream, plus a hot drink to warm you up as you start your day. Do not miss this peaceful and uplifting event! A few tickets remaining (as of 7th April), please book via the Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust website.

Wednesday 21st May – Gary's 'Birdwatching & Wildlife' Walk at Idle Valley NR. 9:00am until midday. Meet at Chainbridge Scrape (East) viewpoint along Chainbridge Lane. Loop walk around Chainbridge Pit and Alans's Meadow birding from the viewpoint at the start and end of the walk. Looking for summer migrants, local breeding birds and other wildlife. Contact email/ mobile number: ghlbc@hotmail.co.uk 07464964879.

Sunday 25th May – Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) Organised by Lound Bird Club in conjunction with the BTO Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS). If you can help, please contact Phil Cadman on email: philip.cadman@sky.com

Reserve News

Alex Morley - Reserves Manager North.

After winter, the site work programme focuses upon a variety of estate work tasks related to grazing infrastructure: fence & gate repairs and installation. The use of livestock – longhorn cattle & Lincoln reds, and both Hebridean & Herdwick sheep are central to The Trust's wider strategy for habitat management. These habitat engineers fulfil an ecological role left vacant owing to the extinction of our native megafauna. Their habit of ripping up vegetation, breaking branches, maintaining patches of short turf, depositing dung, removing nutrients, and churning up ground, all create a mix of opportunities: sap runs for moths, basking spots for butterflies, bare soil for seed germination, fly habitat for bat food. None of which can be easily replicated through human intervention.

The Idle Valley is the hub for all The Trust's grazing management across the county, and we have just completed another very busy and successful lambing season, with the calves coming soon after. The work of the very dedicated grazing team is supplemented, like much of our efforts, by a number of highly skilled volunteers typically working before dawn until well into the night. We have a plan in place to gradually increase our livestock numbers to meet habitat

management demands. We still need to supplement this grazing approach with mechanical intervention in order to prevent scrub domination on the wet grasslands around our water bodies. Visitors to the site will be aware of the extent of the fencing across the reserve. This is costly to maintain in terms of both finance and time. We are moving towards the use of No Fence collars which allow us to set up virtual fencing, moving livestock around to mob graze and target specific areas, with a potential to replicate lost predator-prey interaction in the absence of wolves. This move also has the potential to downgrade exterior fencing specifications, thereby reducing future maintenance costs.

(Below Left) - **Volunteers installing gate and fence** ©T.Biddulph

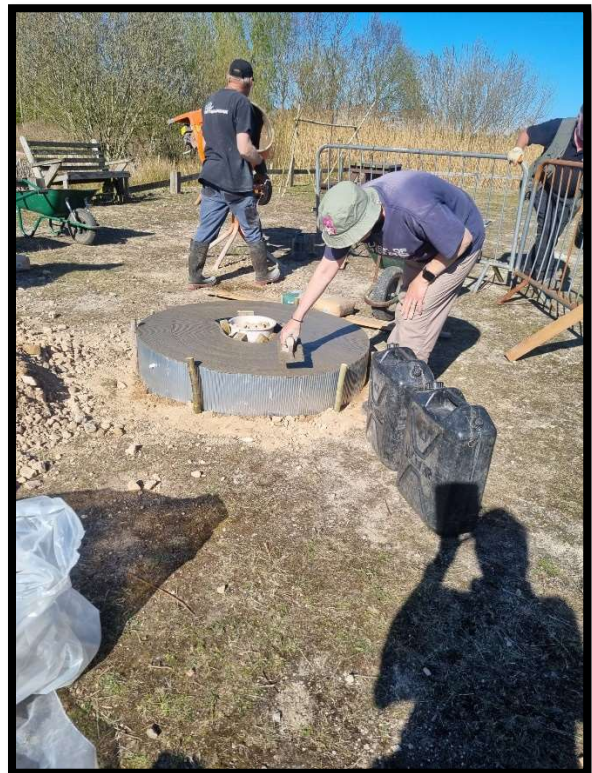
(Below right) - **Volunteers assisting with Lambing** ©C.A.Campbell



Following from last month's update on some of the groundworks taking place at the reserve to enhance opportunities for water voles, the volunteers have deployed a number of pre-seeded coir mats around the ditches and excavations. These mats include obvious marsh marigold, along with sedges & rushes, and are also seeded with other water favouring species. The excavated ditches at Neatholme Scrape were already busy with water boatmen and newts during the coir workdays. Our teams have also been undertaking work on site furniture, drainage structure maintenance, and - if you are curious about the strange concrete circle which our volunteers have installed at the Rural Learning Centre - the Idle Valley will soon be hosting a new piece of nature themed artwork funded through Bassetlaw Pride. The sculpture will be unveiled in May to include designs generated by members of the public.

(Below Left) - **Volunteers planting the ditches** ©A.Morley

(Below right) – **Volunteers creating the statue plinth** ©J.Pegram



Birds News for March 2025

March is always a mixed bag in terms of the crossover from winter visitors leaving the area and the early arrival of summer visitors. There was also a couple of surprise reports of bird species that were generally thought to be locally extinct.

Please remember to not post rare or sensitive breeding birds on any public groups between the 1st March and 31st August.

Just a single report of **Pink-footed Goose** with a party of 55 flying N over Bellmoor Lake on the 9th. **Whooper Swan** were clearly 'on the move' during March with the following reports: - 17 resting on Neatholme Scrape on the 2nd, 13 were on Chainbridge Pit on the 4th, 23 flew SW over Doughty's Pit on the 6th, 3 were resting on Bellmoor Lake on the 9th with birds calling there in the fog on the morning of the 10th, a single on Neatholme Scrape on the 16th, 63 flew N over Blaco Pits on the 21st, 6 were noted over the recording area and another single was at Neatholme Scrape on the 22nd (Below left) - ©M.Lambert.



Shelduck were noted throughout from three areas. A pair were at Bellmoor Lake on the 7th, 11th and 16th. 2-4 birds were at the Lower Sheep Fields on the 21st, 27th & 29th, and finally, a single was at Neatholme Fen on the 23rd with 4 there on the 26th & 29th. **Shoveler** numbers remained high at Neatholme Fen which held 310 on the 9th, 376 on the 16th and 362 on the 23rd. Smaller numbers in other areas including Bellmoor Lake which held 15 birds on the 23rd with just 6 at Chainbridge NR Scrape (East) on the 27th. A nice count of 114 **Gadwall** were noted at Chainbridge NR Scrape on the 27th. **Wigeon** numbers remained at c220 birds on both Tiln North or the Conservation Lake on the 21st, with just 10 at Linghurst Pool on the 23rd. Four reports of **Teal** including 3 at The Lower Sheep Fields, 4 at the Parish Park on the 23rd, c50 at Neatholme Fen on the 23rd and 15+ at Bellmoor Lake on the 27th. The Parish Park (Linghurst Lakes) was the only site holding **Red-crested Pochard**, with between 3-9 birds there from the 16th until 26th with 9 there on the 23rd. Only a single notable count of **Goldeneye** on the 1st when 27 were recorded on Neatholme Scrape, with just a single on Bellmoor Lake on the 16th, up to 4 at Linghurst Pool/Neatholme Pit on the 23rd and a single at Chainbridge NR Scrape (East) on the 27th. **Goosander** reports were limited to just five dates with 11 on the Water Ski Lake on the 1st, a pair on Neatholme Fen on the 4th, 20 were noted on the river in the Bellmoor area on the 7th, 3 were at Bellmoor Lake on the 10th and just a single male on the Water Ski Lake on the 18th. Single report of **Grey Partridge** with calling birds noted at Neatholme Scrape on the 1st. Single report of **Red-legged Partridge** with 5+ at Blaco/Wildgoose Farm area on the 4th. **Water Rail** were reported from five locations across the reserve throughout, at Neatholme Scrape, Tiln North, Chainbridge NR Scrape (East), Cross Lane Marsh and Tiln Works Pits. Notable **Little Grebe** counts from three areas, 5 at Tiln North on the 21st, 5+ and 10 were at Parish Park (Linghurst Lakes) on the 23rd & 26th respectively and 7 were at the Conservation Lake on the 27th. Pairs of **Great Crested Grebe** were at Bellmoor Lake 10th onwards, at Tiln Pool from the 16th onwards and up to 6 birds (three pairs?) at Neatholme Fen from the 16th onwards. (Above right) - ©G.Hobson. There was a flurry of early wader reports across the recording area in March with a number of resident **Oystercatcher** pairs being seen at Blaco Pits, Neatholme Fen, Tiln North, the field by Wetlands Lakes and Bellmoor Lake. It would seem that three to four pairs seemed to tally with the reports being received but these birds are very mobile and often join into smaller noisy groups of several pairs. A single record of an **Avocet** at Neatholme Fen on the 9th present from 10:00am until 16:15pm at least. **Lapwing** numbers were poor compared to numbers present over the winter with maximum counts of 16 on Tiln North on the 21st and c20 on a recently ploughed field on Clayworth Common on the 27th. Tiln North seems to be the only likely part of the reserve where we may see any breeding attempts. Just two reports of single **Curlew** at Blaco Pits on the 4th and at Tiln North on the 22nd. Just a single report of **Dunlin** with a lone bird at Neatholme Scrape on the 18th, this site has had lots of recent work done to create suitable shallow margins for the Water Vole release scheme which in turn creates habitat for wading birds, maybe we need to keep an eye on

this area over the year? A single report of a single **Woodcock** that flew right past the Idle Valley Café windows on the 11th. Very few **Snipe** records with just singles at Neatholme Fen on the 4th & 17th and 5 birds onto the Cross Lane Fishery marshland on the 21st. A single unseasonally early record of a **Common Sandpiper** reported by a visiting birder at Hayton Lakes Fishery off Smeath Lane on the 25th. A few **Green Sandpiper** reports with 2 at Neatholme Fen on the 7th and singles at Cross Lane Marsh on the 26th and at Neatholme Fen again on the 29th. Single **Redshank** were noted at Neatholme Fen on the 4th & 9th and at Neatholme Scrape on the 18th. Gulls are always going to be a focus for many local birders with both scarce and rare species often seen across the site. There was a large roost of circa 5000 **Black-headed Gull** gathered on Neatholme Scrape on the 1st, which again included a single 'leucistic' individual. The same large gull roost on Neatholme Scrape on the 1st saw circa 3700 **Common Gull** gathered including a probable 2nd-winter '**Russian**' **Common Gull** *Larus canus heinei*, which have a darker mantle colour (noted in the image below) plus other less striking features (Below) - ©P.Hobson.



Three **Herring Gull** reports from Bellmoor Lake including 12 birds on the 7th, a single on the 10th and an amazing 115 birds there on the 24th. A single report of a third-winter **Caspian Gull** present at Bellmoor Lake on the 24th. A few **Yellow-legged Gull** reports from Bellmoor Lake including a 3rd-winter on the 7th, an adult on the 10th, 2 birds present on the 23rd and a single adult again on the 27th. The majority of **Lesser Black-backed Gull** returned to Bellmoor Lake to start another year of breeding, let us just hope their impact on other breeding bird species remains low. One or two probable '*fuscus*' or '*intermedius*' race **Lesser Black-backed Gull** were noted here on the 1st, 23rd & 24th. The following table shows the daily maxima per location of **Cattle Egret** reported during the month: -

Area/Date	1st	2nd	4th	13th	17th	21st	22nd	27th	28th
Walters Lane Field				6					
Lower Sheep Fields								7	1
Walters Farm Pool					4				
Tiln North	3	2			2	9	8	4-8	
Conservation Lake			3						
Whole Site Totals	3	2	3	6	6	9	8	11-15?	1

Grey Heron are still present in small numbers and local breeding is unlikely to happen soon. Two birds at Neatholme Fen on the 4th, with singles at Tiln Pool on the 21st and at Neatholme Fen on the 23rd. Small numbers of **Great White Egret** were noted from four locations: - three at Chainbridge NR Scrape (West) on the 9th with singles there on the 21st & 29th, singles at Cross Lane Marsh/Fishery on the 17th & 26th, a single at Walters Farm Field on the 13th and a single at Neatholme Fen on the 21st. Small numbers of **Little Egret** were noted from five locations: - three at Neatholme Fen on the 4th, 2 at Chainbridge NR Scrape (West) on the 9th, with singles at Cross Lane Marsh/Fishery on the 17th, and at Neatholme Scrape and Parish Park on the 26th. A single **Osprey** was reported as flying high over the reserve at 13.52pm on the 25th. Four records of single **Marsh Harrier** noted on four dates including a female at Neatholme Pit on the 4th, a single at Neatholme Pit on the 9th, a male at Chainbridge NR Scrape (East) on the 9th and a single over Neatholme Lane on the 18th. A single **Red Kite** was noted at Wildgoose Farm on the 31st. Single **Kingfisher** were reported from five areas on five dates from the 4th until the 23rd. A small number of **Great Spotted Woodpecker** were noted from three areas on three dates including: - three birds in Linghurst Wood/Parish Park plus another at Tiln Pits on the 16th, 2 at the Parish Park on the 26th and a single at Chainbridge Wood on the 27th. Multiple sightings throughout the month of **Green Woodpecker** from seven locations across the recording area from Bunker Wood, Tiln Pits, Chainbridge Wood, Hawthorn Lane, Neatholme Fen, Parish Park to Blaco Pits. A minimum of 2 pairs (possibly more) are present on site which is encouraging for any possible breeding attempts and shows that the local Ant populations must be back to good levels. A single **Merlin** was reported as being seen from Chainbridge Lane at Clayworth Common on the 15th. A single **Peregrine** flew low heading south over Bellmoor Lake on the 23rd. A small number of **Jay** were noted from three

locations with 3 at Blaco Pit on the 16th, followed with singles at Tiln Pits on the 16th and at Parish Park on the 23rd. A single report of two **Raven** circling high in thermals over Bellmoor Lake and nearby Babworth Wood east of the river on the 27th. A singing **Coal Tit** was noted near to the Bailey Bridge on the 7th. The first **Sand Martin** sighting of the summer was an early single over Neatholme Fen on the 7th. This early bird was followed by 13+ at Bellmoor Lake on the 23rd, 6+ there on the 28th with a further 2 birds at Neatholme Scrape on the 28th. The first **Swallow** sighting of the summer was two birds with Sand Martin over Bellmoor Lake on the 23rd. With spring upon us, our now resident **Cetti's Warbler**, which are generally silent over the winter months, have begun singing and it has become much easier to identify territories. A full census of this species would be useful, but birds were present at Bellmoor Lake, Tiln Pool, Tiln North, Chainbridge Scrape, Neatholme Fen and Linghurst Pool. The three common Tit species over the recording area, the **Blue Tit**, **Great Tit** and **Long-tailed Tit** were very active during the month with singing, display, and the collecting of nest material noted by many. Adrian Blackburn from North Notts Ringing Group tells us that from recent ringing reports, it is now known that the number of adult birds currently far outweighs the number of immature birds in the local populations. This worrying statistic would normally be opposite to this, with more immature birds than adults usually present in spring. So, between a very poor breeding season last summer and possibly high mortality of immature birds over the winter we are now in this unusual position. Let us hope that the fortunes of these birds changes this year. The following three photos of a **Blue Tit**, a **Goldfinch** and a **Chiffchaff** being processed, were taken during the **North Notts Ringing Group** ringing session at Hallcroft Sewage Works on the 9th March (Below left to right) - ©G.Hobson.



Numbers of spring arriving singing **Chiffchaff** present over the reserve increased from counts of 10+ in the Bellmoor Lake/Pits area on the 7th, to 15+ from Bellmoor Lake/Pits, Tiln Pool/Wood, Parish Park/Linghurst Lakes on the 16th to a count of 20+ from all areas north of Chainbridge Lane on the 28th. A total of 6 were ringed at Hallcroft Sewage Works on the 9th. The first spring arrival of a singing **Blackcap** was a single at the junction of Cross Lane and Hawthorn Lane on the 22nd, with a further single in the SE corner of Linghurst Pool on the 23rd, with 6+ birds then noted from all areas north of Chainbridge Lane on the 28th. A total of four singing **Goldcrest** were in the Bellmoor Pits area on the 7th. Pairs of **Treecreeper** were present at Bellmoor Pits on the 7th and 16th with a further two pairs noted from Linghurst Wood/Parish Park on the 16th. A presumed breeding pair of **Song Thrush** were noted feeding together in bramble and birch scrub at the edge of Bellmoor Lake on the 7th, with a further bird noted in this same area on the 10th. A number of **Redwing** seemed to flow through the recording area during the month with 3 at Neatholme & Hawthorn Lane on the 9th, a large roost flock of circa 80 birds were noted leaving roost at Linghurst Wood and 2 more were at Bellmoor Lake on the 16th, 6 were at the Tiln Pits/Lower Sheep Fields on the 21st, 3 were feeding in the hedge along Neatholme Lane on the 23rd, a further 8 were noted leaving roost at Linghurst Wood on the 26th and finally a single was noted in birch scrub at Bittern Pools on the 28th. Just a single report of 120+ **Fieldfare** noted at Blaco Pits on the 1st. The first **Wheatear** for this year was a male feeding in a ploughed field on Clayworth Common opposite Tiln North from 10:00am until at least 13:30pm on the 27th. An interesting report of 4 **Tree Sparrow** noted a Blaco on the 1st, this record being unusual in the fact that the observer had not recorded this once common species there for around three years. It is notable also by the fact that the Tree Sparrow has seen a massive decline in population in the East Midlands and their general decline nationally seems to be following this downward trend. Two reports of single **Grey Wagtail** at Bellmoor Lake on the 23rd and 27th. A single report of 5 **Pied Wagtail** feeding on the Lower Sheep Fields on the 21st. Two pairs of **Meadow Pipit** were noted from the Lower Sheep Fields on the 21st and at Tiln North on the 27th. Two records of **Brambling** included a pair feeding alongside resident Chaffinch in Oaks north of Bunker Wood on the 16th and a single calling in the treetops in the woodland belt to the west of the Parish Park/Linghurst Lakes on the 26th (Below left) - ©G.Hobson.



A small number of **Bullfinch** were noted with 4 at Bellmoor Pits area on the 16th and a pair on Neatholme Lane on the 18th. Small numbers of **Greenfinch** were noted with 5 birds at Blaco Pits on the 1st, a singing bird near Hallcroft Tip on the 25th and 2 singing birds at Bellmoor Lake southern viewpoint on the 27th. Just a single report of **Linnet** with 15 birds at Bellmoor Pits on the 7th. With very few **Lesser Redpoll** being noted over the winter it was nice to get a flurry of records including 5 in the Boardwalk Woodland belt at Bellmoor Lake on the 16th, a flock of 30+ in the Parish Park/Linghurst Wood area on the 23rd and finally 4 birds were noted high in the Poplars along Poplar Walk on the 26th. Just a single report of 30+ **Siskin** feeding in Alder around Bunker Wood on the 16th (Above right) - ©G.Hobson. A single **Corn Bunting** was heard singing at Tiln North on the 2nd, a very rare bird locally these days and another surprise sighting alongside the Tree Sparrow at Blaco on the 1st. Just a single report of 5 **Yellowhammer** at Blaco on the 1st. Two reports of **Reed Bunting** with a single at Tiln Pits on the 21st and 5+ feeding on Crab Apple blossom along Neatholme Lane on the 23rd.

T.Carter, S.Hughes, W.Hill, S.Harrison, K.Beaumont, A.Griffin, R & P.White, C.Parker, S.Horne, J & J.Shephard, P.Ramsey, A.Merrick, T.Tomlinson, A.Kiemel, L.Mason, I.Baxter, I.Cowgill, D.Richardson, M.Lambert, G.Hobson, D.Housman, M.B.Vickers, A.Pykett, S.Davenport, V.Giles, P.Cadman, P.Hobson, I.Hunt, BirdGuides, Lound Bird Club (Website), Nottinghamshire Birdwatchers (Website), Idle Valley Bird Sightings (Facebook), Lound & Idle Valley Bird News (What's App), Notts Bird News (What's App), Notts Rare & Scarce (What's App) plus Idle Valley Walks (What's App). Please submit bird sightings to the above groups/pages or email them to ghlbc@hotmail.co.uk

Additional Nature Sightings for March 2025

Butterflies

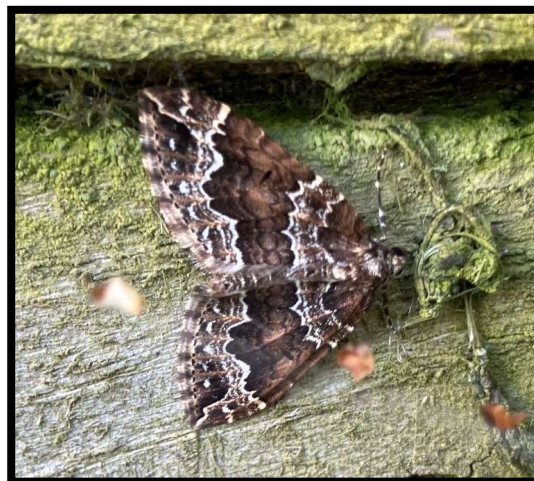
The first records of several butterfly species for this year were **Brimstone** (1) on the 1st, both **Small Tortoiseshell** (2), **Peacock** (1) and **Comma** (2) on the 9th, **Small White** (1) on the 29th, with both **Orange-tip** (2) and **Green-veined White** (1) on the 31st. Good numbers of **Brimstone** were noted across the recording area with a notable 15 individuals note on the 31st (Below left & right) - ©G.Hobson. Let us hope 2025 is a better year for butterfly than 2024!



Moths

Some interesting moth species were recorded with a **Common Brindled/Banded Brindled Brown** was at Bunker Wood on the 2nd (Below left) - ©P.Cadman, two different **Orange Underwing** at Chainbridge Scrape (East) and Neatholme Scrape on the 7th, a single **Oak Egger** caterpillar was noted at Neatholme Scrape on the 14th, a single **Grey**

Shoulder-knot at Neatholme Scrape on the 17th and finally, a single **Water Carpet** was on Neatholme Scrape southern viewing screen on the 31st (Below) - ©M.N



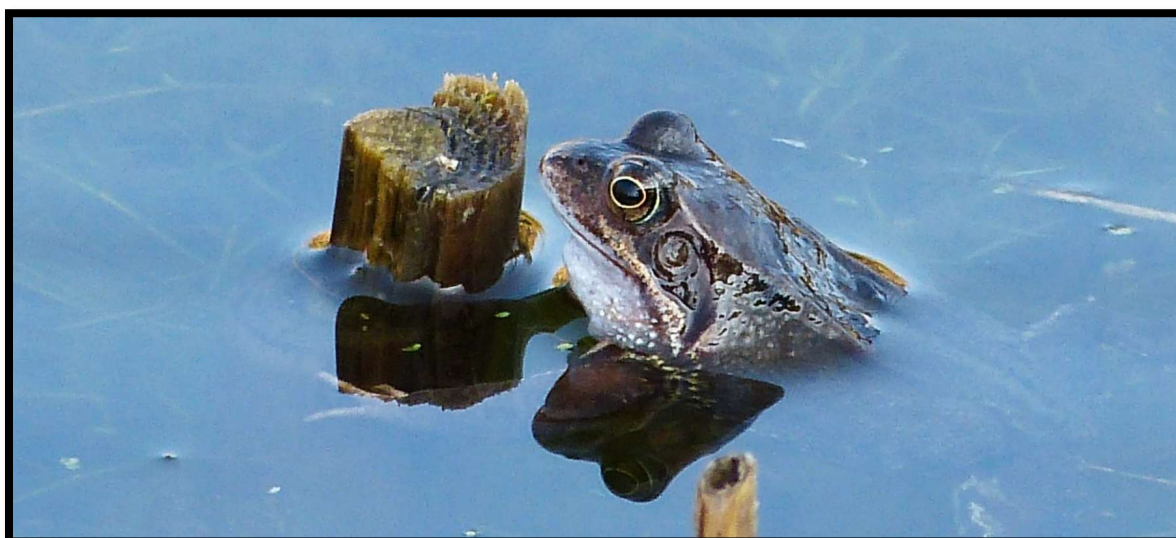
Insects

A single **Dung Beetle**, possibly *Aphodius foetidus*, was near Tiln Pool on the 21st (Below right) - ©G.Hobson. **Dark-edged bee-fly** *Bombilius major*, were first noted at the Parish Park on the 26th (Below centre) - ©G.Hobson. A single **Box Bug**, a species of Shield Bug, was at Linghurst Wood on the 28th (Below left - ©P.Cadman). There were many **7-spotted Ladybird** noted from mid-March across the whole reserve, being noted from participants of both the Wellbeing Walks undertaken around Bellmoor Lake/Bunker Wood and from Gary's Birdwatching & Wildlife Walks in the northern half of the reserve.



Amphibians

A notable gathering of **Common Frog** were photographed in the Idle Valley Centre Building moat on the 20th (Below) - ©C.Booth.



Mammals

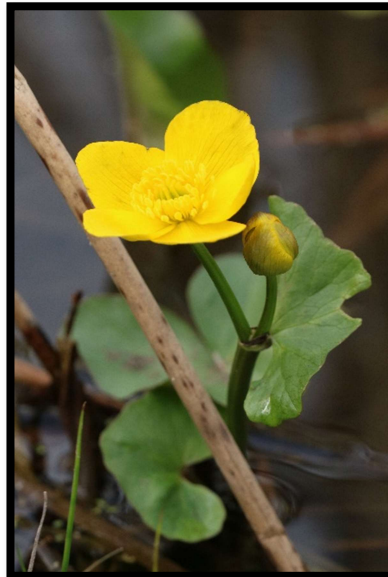
A single unidentified **Bat** species was noted at Chainbridge Lane on the 4th. A single **Weasel** was hunting near the mist nets during the bird ringing session at Hallcroft Sewage Works on the 9th.

Flowers

Several wild **Primrose** were first noted along a field hedgerow between the car park and the main road on the 11th. (Below left) - ©G.Hobson. A patch of **'White' Sweet Violets** were bordering the edge of the Bellmoor Lake walk on the 11th (Below centre) - ©G.Hobson. A large patch of **Sweet Violet** were noted along the shaded tree belts at the southern edge of the Lower Sheep Fields on the 21st (Below right) - ©G.Hobson.



Many **Lesser Celandine** plants were noted from early March in many areas but predominantly along the riverbank and shaded areas around Bellmoor Lake walk. **Coltsfoot** was also flowering across the reserve from mid to late March with a nice patch in the moat around the Idle Valley Learning Centre Café on the 23rd (Below left) - ©G.Hobson. Several **Marsh Marigold** plants were notable from all areas of recently graded margins at Bellmoor, including the recently cleared boardwalk scrape on the 25th (Below centre) - ©G.Hobson. Early flowering **Cowslip** were also noted in the Bellmoor Pits area on the 25th (Below right) - ©G.Hobson.



P.Cadman, I.Hunt, M.N, G.Hobson, P.Hobson, S.Davenport, P.J.Freeman C.Booth, T.Pendleton, Gary's Birdwatching & Wildlife Walks (What's App) plus the various Idle Valley NR - Wellness Walks (What's App).

Warbler Identification – Part 2

The second of three short articles, with written detail and related images to aid in the basic identification of the common species of warbler found here on the Idle Valley Nature Reserve. The first part covered mainly woodland dwelling species, this one includes mainly species found in scrubland including Bramble, Blackthorn and Hawthorn. Of the following four species only Cetti's Warbler is a sedentary resident, only colonising the reserve in more recent years. The

other three are generally summer visitors, arriving in late April and are all locally found breeding species, normally leaving the reserve to migrate to Southern Europe and Africa in late August and mid-September.

Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cettia*

This species first bred in North Kent in 1972 and is our newest UK breeding species. Likewise, it is also the newest breeding species here at Idle Valley Nature Reserve, with the first sighting in November 2014 and first bred after it fully colonised the reserve between 2015-2018. This 'Bush-Warber' is typically sculking, choosing to remain more often than not concealed in scrubby undergrowth often near water or in reedbeds. It is a small compact bird with rounded head with a narrow pale grey supercilium, a long tail which interestingly has 10 feathers, and has short broad wings. Overall body colour is warm reddish-brown upperparts, with a pale grey/buff throat, breast and flanks and the legs are pinkish brown. The call is a loud 'scolding' burst usually given from cover so you will generally hear this bird before you see it. They are 14cm in length, weigh 12-15 grams and can live 2 years on average. This species is sedentary, generally remaining in the same location year round so is susceptible to mortality in severe winters. (Two images below left to right:- ©M.Vickers)



Grasshopper Warbler *Lucostella naevia*

The Grasshopper Warbler is a distinctive, yet secretive summer visitor, arriving in late April. It is found in reedbeds, grassland, thick scrub, forest and in the case of local birds, also around gravel pits. Here at the Idle Valley NR, they are becoming very scarce with very few records annually, usually reported around spring and early summer. The adult has a streaked brown back and whitish grey underparts which are unstreaked except on the undertail coverts. The song is a grasshopper-like 'reeling' given from a perch, often hidden from view. They are small, only 12.5 to 13.5cm and weigh 11-16 grams. An interesting fact is that many people just cannot seem to be able to hear their reeling song because of the frequency pitch of the sound. (Two images below left to right:- ©I.Cowgill, ©I Sexton)



Lesser Whitethroat *Curruca curruca*

This elusive summer visitor can be found from mid-April and is often found in thick Hawthorn and Blackthorn hedgerows, Willow and Bramble scrub. Arriving in the 3rd week of April this species, although superficially similar to Whitethroat, it has wholly silky white underparts with its own white throat not so distinctive as on Common Whitethroat which has buff underparts. It has distinctively toned grey-brown upperparts and a grey head, which is slightly darker on the lores and ear coverts, giving a 'bandit' like mask. There are 13cm in length and weigh 13 grams. It has a distinctive song that begins with Blackcap like notes and ends with a chaffinch like rattle. In summer juvenile birds often show much better than those heard in spring. An interesting fact is that Lesser Whitethroat has several other distinct forms globally with a Siberian Lesser Whitethroat *blythi* form being found in the recording area at Hallcroft Fishery & Sewage Works from December 2013 to January 2014. (Three images below clockwise from top left:- ©M.B.Vickers)



Common Whitethroat *Curruca communis*

Unlike Lesser Whitethroat, the Common Whitethroat is a very obvious bird which inhabits low scrub but can also be seen taking frequent 'song flights' during their erratic spring courtship displays. Key features in their identification are the rusty fringes to the flight feathers in the wings, the mantle, back and scapulars are a rather drab brown, the head of the female is brown, the male having a contrasting greyish cap, the belly and flanks are pinkish (males) or light buff brown (females) and the white throat in both sexes is an obvious feature, even at long distance. The red-brick coloured eye can to the trained eye age the bird. They are long tailed and measure 14cm in length and weigh 12-18 grams. The song is a loud mix of notes and phases, described as sweet, throaty and scratchy and given in short 3-4 second bursts. This species is highly migratory wintering in central Africa south of the Sahara. Here is an interesting fact, a Common Whitethroat that was ringed in The Willows (Clayworth Copse) on the 5th August 2014 was re-trapped at the same location, by the same ringer, Adrian Blackburn on the 5th September 2023, a gap of 9 years and 1 month making it the oldest Common Whitethroat in the UK! (Four images below clockwise from top left:- ©G.Hobson, ©G.Hobson, ©M.B.Vickers and ©I.Sexton)



Next month's May 2025 issue

What's On - June 2025 Events + Reserve News + Bird News for April 2025 + Additional Nature Sightings for April 2025 + Warbler Identification - Part 3.

Submissions for inclusion in this publication can be sent to Gary Hobson via his email at ghlbc@hotmail.co.uk Please state (species/observer/location/date) for all images. In the case of regular bird and wildlife sightings, please submit sightings via the relevant **Wellness/Birdwatching/Photo 'WhatsApp' & 'Facebook' groups** linked to Idle Valley NR. Submit all Lepidoptera (moths and butterflies) plus Dragonfly & Damselfly sightings to philip.cadman@sky.com