

# Idle Valley Nature Sightings

## August 2025

### What's On – September 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 4<sup>th</sup> September (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.

**Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> September – 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

**Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> September – Gary's 'Birdwatching & Wildlife' Walk at Idle Valley NR.** 9:00am until midday. Meeting at the main Rural Learning Centre Car Park at Bellmoor Lake. Looking for late summering and migrant birds and other wildlife. Contact email/mobile number: ghlbc@hotmail.co.uk 07464964879.

**Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> September – NWT North Notts Local Group – Indoor Meeting.** An illustrated talk titled 'Willow' by Tim Sexton. Meeting starts at 7:00pm at the Rural Learning Centre, Bellmoor. Parking available at the main reserve car park. Entry is £3.00 per person which includes refreshments.

**Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> September – Idle Valley Wildlife Watch: Hedgerow Harvest. Seasonal wildlife activities for 7 to 12 year olds, with a walk in the reserve.** Meeting Point is the Idle Valley Visitor Centre at 10:30am until 12:30pm. **£2.00 per child.** Leader is Ros Schwarz. Contact email: idlevatch@nottswt.co.uk

**Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> September – Lound Bird Club – Bird Walk at Idle Valley NR.** This is an open to all event led by club Chairman, Stuart Davenport. 9:00am until midday. Meet along Chainbridge Lane on left by kissing gate near the horse paddocks just east of Lound Village. Loop walk to Neatholme Lane, birding from viewing screens and back via Hawthorn Lane and Chainbridge Lane. Contact email/mobile number: stuart.daven@btinternet.com 0776389562

**Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> September – Lound Bird Club – Indoor Meeting.** An illustrated talk titled 'The Birds & History of Idle Valley Nature Reserve'. Meeting starts at 7:00pm at Sutton-cum-Lound Village Hall. Entry fee is £3.00 per person. Parking is available around the hall. Contact email/mobile number: stuart.daven@btinternet.com 0776389562

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### Reserve News

**Alex Morley – Reserves Manager North.**

Our volunteers have had a busy few weeks tackling the problem of Himalayan balsam which grows successfully at the nature reserve. As the name suggests, the plant originates from the mountainous regions of Himalayan Pakistan, Nepal, and Tibet; being introduced to the British Isles in 1839 as an easy to grow and attractive ornamental plant, it has now successfully found its way across most of England & Wales and much of the northern hemisphere. Its method of establishing itself, shallow rooting in ephemeral stream banks, is both its greatest weakness and most potent threat. Individual plants can easily be pulled by hand: the daunting reality though is the sheer dominance of a stand once it is established, and several hundreds if not thousands of individual stems is a sizeable drain on staff & volunteer time. The threat to local ecosystems is not solely the plant's ability to tower over and shade out diversity of wildflowers, it is the weak nature of the roots which can contribute to fine particulate run off into rivers, impacting upon invertebrate breeding opportunities, which then can affect predators such as fish, birds, mammals, and other invertebrates. Although the plant does provide a glut of nectar, populations of Himalayan balsam have been shown to negatively impact on invertebrate diversity. The collapsed stems can also wash away and contribute towards flooding risk. Seed pods of the plant have

evolved to fling seeds up to around 7 metres, and these will easily float downstream to establish new colonies, and these can remain viable for two years. We are piloting a strategic approach to tackling the plant at the Idle Valley, targeting the plant where it can be isolated from other incoming seeds. This means we are not pulling alongside the river, where without a catchment strategy, seeds will still wash to us from upstream. Where necessary, we will remove blocks of bramble and other obstructions which act as inaccessible reservoirs for the plant. Also, we will mechanically cut the plant in its earlier stages where this will cause minimal disturbance to other vegetation. We have begun an annual mapping exercise to track progress and plan land management operations to remove refuges for the plant. Given the reserve's location besides the river, and the inaccessibility of some parts of the reserve where the plant has a successful population, it is unlikely the plant will ever be fully eradicated. Since 2006, CABI (the Centre for Agriculture and Bioscience International) have been researching potential biological control methods for the plant., and initial work in the laboratory on a fungal rust found to only infect the plant have now been rolled out as field trials in various parts of England.



## **Bird News for July 2025**

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

A single report of 3 **Egyptian Goose** at Neatholme Fen on the 11<sup>th</sup>. A single report of 11 **Shelduck** (including 1 juvenile) on Neatholme Fen on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. A single report of a ♂ **Wigeon** on Neatholme Scrape on the 11<sup>th</sup>. Three reports of **Red-crested Pochard** including 2 on Neatholme Scrape on the 5<sup>th</sup>, 10+ there on the 11<sup>th</sup> at 15+ at Neatholme Pit (including 8 large juveniles) on the 25<sup>th</sup>. A single report of 6 **Pochard** on Neatholme Pit on the 11<sup>th</sup>. A couple of counts of **Swift** on the 20<sup>th</sup>, including 75+ over Chainbridge Wood and 200+ over Bellmoor Lake. A single juvenile **Cuckoo** was noted in The Willows (Clayworth Copse) on the 18<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>. Three reports of **Turtle Dove** including single around the Water Ski Pit area on the 11<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> and a pair were noted on Walters Lane on the 20<sup>th</sup>. A trickle of passage waders were noted again this month amongst the more commonly found species. The resident 3 pairs of **Oystercatcher** were noted at Bellmoor Lake, Chainbridge Pit, Chainbridge Scrape and Neatholme Fen throughout. A single report of 100+ **Lapwing** at Neatholme Fen on the 11<sup>th</sup>. All reports of **Little Ringed Plover** were from Chainbridge Scrape (East), including 7 on the 14<sup>th</sup>, 8 on the 21<sup>st</sup> and a pair on the 26<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup> were accompanying 2-3 chicks. Two reports of single **Whimbrel** at Neatholme Fen on the 8<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>. Three reports of **Black-tailed Godwit** from Chainbridge Scrape including 27 trying to land on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, a pair there on the 8<sup>th</sup> and a single there on the 26<sup>th</sup>. Just two reports of **Dunlin** with singles at Chainbridge Scrape (East) on the 27<sup>th</sup> and another at Neatholme Fen on the 30<sup>th</sup>. There were many reports of **Green Sandpiper** throughout. The following table provides detail on number, location and dates: -

<b>Site/Dates</b>	<b>1st</b>	<b>2nd</b>	<b>13th</b>	<b>14th</b>	<b>15th</b>	<b>19th</b>	<b>20th</b>	<b>22nd</b>	<b>27th</b>	<b>30th</b>
Chainbridge Scrape (E)	1	1		1	1		2	2	1	
Neatholme Fen	3							1		4
Chainbridge Pit			3	2		2				
<b>Totals</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>



A single report of a single **Redshank** at Chainbridge Scrape (East) on the 14<sup>th</sup>. A single report of a single **Wood Sandpiper** at Chainbridge Scrape (East) on the 1<sup>st</sup>. Two reports of single **Greenshank** at Chainbridge Pit on the 13<sup>th</sup> and presumably the same at Chainbridge Scrape (East) on the 14<sup>th</sup>. A single report of a first-summer (2CY) **Common Gull** at Bellmoor Lake on the 9<sup>th</sup>. Two reports of **Herring Gull** at Bellmoor Lake, including 5 on the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6 on the 9<sup>th</sup>. A single first-summer (2CY) **Caspian Gull** was at Bellmoor Lake from 20:50pm until 21:10pm on the 18<sup>th</sup>. Two reports of single **Yellow-legged Gull**, including a second-summer (3CY) bird at Bellmoor Lake on the 5<sup>th</sup> and a further first-summer (2CY) bird there on the 13<sup>th</sup>. There were many reports of **Common Tern** throughout. The following table provides detail on number, location and dates: -

Site/Dates	1st	5th	8th	11th	14th	19th	20th	25th
Chainbridge Scrape (E)	5	1	1		2		4	
Neatholme Scrape	2							
Neatholme Fen		1		4				4
Chainbridge Pit						3		
<b>Totals</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>

A single **Black Tern** was present at Chainbridge Scrape (East) from 12:45pm until 14:15pm at least on the 13<sup>th</sup> (Below)  
©P.Hobson.



A single report of a single **Bittern** flying over Chainbridge Scrape (East) on the 19<sup>th</sup>. A single report of a single **Cattle Egret** at Chainbridge Scrape (East) on the 8<sup>th</sup>. One or two **Grey Heron** were noted regularly throughout on either Chainbridge Scrape (East) or at Chainbridge Pit. A small number of **Great White Egret** (up to three birds on the 13<sup>th</sup>) were noted on both of the Chainbridge Scrapes throughout. A good number of **Little Egret** were present throughout. The following table provides detail on number, location and dates: -

Site/Dates	1st	9th	11th	13th	14th	19th	20th	22nd	25th	27th
Chainbridge Scrape (E)	2	1				2	3	7		1
Neatholme Fen	2								4	
Neatholme Scrape			1							
Chainbridge Pit					7	7				
Bellmoor Lake		1								
Tiln North				1						
<b>Totals</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>

Five reports of **Marsh Harrier**, including a single 'cream-crowned' female at Neatholme Fen on the 11<sup>th</sup> with further (un-aged) female birds noted at Chainbridge Scrape (East) on the 20<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>, at Neatholme Fen on the 25<sup>th</sup> and at Tiln North on the 30<sup>th</sup>. A single **Red Kite** flew over the Rural Learning Centre at Bellmoor Lake on the morning of the 20<sup>th</sup>. Three reports of **Kingfisher**, including a single along the river at Chainbridge Bridge on the 9<sup>th</sup>, two birds there on the 13<sup>th</sup> and a single at Doughty's Pit on the 29<sup>th</sup>. A single report of a single **Green Woodpecker** in The Willows (Clayworth Copse) on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. Four reports of **Hobby**, including a single at Chainbridge Scrape (East) on the 5<sup>th</sup>, 2 over Chainbridge Wood on the 20<sup>th</sup>, 5 over Chainbridge Scrape (East) on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and a single over Tiln North on the 30<sup>th</sup>. Three reports of **Raven**, including a single over The Willows (Clayworth Copse) on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, a single at Tiln Pools on the 27<sup>th</sup> and 5 birds over Retford town on the 30<sup>th</sup>. A single count of 15 **Swallow** over Bellmoor Lake on the 20<sup>th</sup>. Two reports of **House Martin**, including 20 over Chainbridge Wood and a further 50+ over Bellmoor Lake on the 20<sup>th</sup>. A single **Redstart** was noted calling in The Willows (Clayworth Copse) on the 18<sup>th</sup>. A rather unusual record of a juvenile **Stonechat** which was seen at Tiln North on the 16<sup>th</sup>. Normally, this species is a winter visitor here at Idle Valley NR,

but have they bred locally or is this just a post breeding movement from a regular breeding area in Nottinghamshire or Derbyshire? Two reports of single **Grey Wagtail** at Bellmoor Lake on the 10<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>. Just a single report of a pair of **Bullfinch** at Bittern Pools on the 11<sup>th</sup>. A single report of 3 **Greenfinch** at Bellmoor Lake on the 10<sup>th</sup>.

D.Richardson, I.Baxter, A.Reed, C.Clayson, J.Bradley, K.Fisher, A.Merrick, G.Pearson, V.Bell, K.Driver, C.Marsh, I.Cowgill, G.Widdison, S.Thorpe, T.Carter, G.Hobson, D.Housman, M.B.Vickers, 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 the various Idle Valley Walks (What's App). Please submit bird sightings to the above groups/pages or email them to [ghlbc@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:ghlbc@hotmail.co.uk)

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## **Additional Nature Sightings for July 2025**

### **Butterflies**

The excellent summer for butterflies continues and we also saw a rare visitor in the form of a single **Silver-washed Fritillary** at the western side of Bunker Wood on the 25<sup>th</sup>. Four reports of **Small Skipper** including, 2 at the Lower Sheep Fields on the 4<sup>th</sup> and a single there on the 18<sup>th</sup>, a single at Chainbridge Pit on the 12<sup>th</sup> and 3 from Linghurst Lakes (Parish Park) on the 14<sup>th</sup>. Just two reports of **Brimstone** including, 2 at the Rural Learning Centre on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 2 at Chainbridge Pit on the 9<sup>th</sup>. (Below left) ©G.Hobson. The only notable count of **Ringlet** was 30 at the Lower Sheep Fields on the 4<sup>th</sup>. A single notable count of **Meadow Brown** was of 120 at Tiln Meadow on the 18<sup>th</sup>. Four good sized counts of **Gatekeeper** were 60 at the Lower Sheep Fields on the 4<sup>th</sup>, 100 at Neatholme Pool/Linghurst Lake on the 14<sup>th</sup> and counts of 75 at Chainbridge Pit on the 21<sup>st</sup> and Chainbridge Meadows on the 28<sup>th</sup>. (Below right) ©V.Bell.



Three counts of **Red Admiral** were noted including, 6 at Chainbridge Pit on the 9<sup>th</sup>, 8 at Chainbridge Pit on the 21<sup>st</sup> and 7 at Bunker Wood/Bellmoor Ponds on the 25<sup>th</sup>. Two single **Painted Lady** were at Tiln Meadow and in a Lound village garden on the 18<sup>th</sup>. A single report of a single **Small Tortoiseshell** at Chainbridge Pit on the 9<sup>th</sup>. Just three single **Small Copper** were noted, at Chainbridge Pi on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> and at Chainbridge Wood on the 12<sup>th</sup>. Just two records of single **Holly Blue** at Bellmoor Ponds on the 10<sup>th</sup> and at Chainbridge Meadows on the 28<sup>th</sup>. Three records of **Brown Argus** including, 3 at the Lower Sheep Fields and 3 at Tiln Pasture on the 4<sup>th</sup> and a single at Tiln Meadow on the 18<sup>th</sup>. A total of 12 reports of a total of 30 **Common Blue** noted across the reserve throughout, with peak counts of 7 at Linghurst Lakes (Parish Park) on the 14<sup>th</sup>, 7 at Tiln Meadow plus a further 7 at the Lower Sheep Fields on the 18<sup>th</sup>.

### **Moths**

The following records are a small selection species of moth that are significant for reasons explained and was compiled and by local birder and resident moth expert, Philip Cadman, who is also our local Entomology Recorder for the Idle Valley NR. The general recording of moths is done in several ways, visual sightings, catching using a sweep net and by identifying them visually during a moth trapping session using a light trap. There were two trapping sessions at Bellmoor Pits on the 18<sup>th</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup> July.

**72.0290 *Callimorpha dominula* (Scarlet Tiger)**, a single moth was discovered by NWT Volunteer Mick Dockerty at Muddy Fork on 3<sup>rd</sup> July. It was a Reserve addition. (Below Left) ©M.Dockerty/Muddy Fork.

**28.0080 *Metalampra italica* (Italian Bark Moth)**, was netted and potted for identification purposes from the hedgerow opposite the Lower Sheep Fields on Friday July 4<sup>th</sup>, within 20 metres we had netted and potted a second individual this was confirmed and later photographed and confirmed by Trevor Pendleton (Entomology Expert). They were the first records for the Reserve but a further record of a single of this specie was at Bellmoor Lake on the 24<sup>th</sup>. (Below right) ©Trevor & Dilys Pendleton ([www.eakringbirds.com](http://www.eakringbirds.com)).





**49.2230 *Rhopobota naevana* (Holly Tortrix)**, a single moth was netted and potted on Friday July 4<sup>th</sup> and was only the second reserve addition, the other was recorded on Aug 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023. (Below Left) ©Trevor & Dilys Pendleton ([www.eakringbirds.com](http://www.eakringbirds.com)).

**49.1440 *Eudemis profundana* (Oak Marble)**, only the fourth Reserve Record which was recorded around the Lower Sheep Fields on July 4<sup>th</sup>. The previous sightings were recorded on 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2014, 7<sup>th</sup> July 2015 and 16<sup>th</sup> July 2019. (Below right) ©Trevor & Dilys Pendleton ([www.eakringbirds.com](http://www.eakringbirds.com)).



**63.1160 *Cataclysta lemnata* (Small China-mark)** Male to the left and female to the right. Only five sightings in the last five years, one was netted and potted for identification purposes at Linghurst Lakes (Parish Park) on 9<sup>th</sup> July. Between 2011-2020 there were 152 records. ©Trevor & Dilys Pendleton ([www.eakringbirds.com](http://www.eakringbirds.com)).



**35.0120 *Anacampsis blattariella* (Birch Roller)**, recorded on a Moth Trapping evening around Bellmoor Ponds on the Friday 18<sup>th</sup> July, and was only the second record for the Reserve, following a single recorded on 19<sup>th</sup> July 2013. (Below left) ©Trevor & Dilys Pendleton ([www.eakringbirds.com](http://www.eakringbirds.com)).

**72.0100 *Lymantria monacha* (Black Arches)**, a total of 12 were recorded on a Moth Trapping evening around Bellmoor Ponds on the Friday 18<sup>th</sup> July, and were only the second record for the Reserve, following a single that was recorded on 18<sup>th</sup> July 2018. (Below right) ©G.Hobson.





**70.2050 *Abraxas grossulariata* (The Magpie)**, a single was netted and potted for identification purposes on the Western edge of Chainbridge Pit on Monday 21<sup>st</sup> July and was only the seventh record at the reserve. (Below left) ©Trevor & Dilys Pendleton ([www.eakingbirds.com](http://www.eakingbirds.com)).

**15.0300 *Parornix scoticella* (Rowan Parornix)**, a single was netted and potted for identification purposes on the Western edge of Chainbridge Pit on Monday 21<sup>st</sup> July and was yet another Reserve addition. (Below right) ©Trevor & Dilys Pendleton ([www.eakingbirds.com](http://www.eakingbirds.com)).



**49.1100 *Agapeta zoegana* (Bright Straw)**, a single attracted to light on the 6w Actinic Heath Trap on Friday 25<sup>th</sup> July, Only the 2<sup>nd</sup> Reserve record. (Below left) ©G.Hobson.

**72.078 *Catocala nupta* (Red Underwing)**, a single was noted resting on the Idle Valley Rural Learning Centre building on the Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> July. (Below right) ©T.Carter





The image below shows Tim Carter checking our 6v 'Actinic Heath' trap purchased from Watkins & Doncaster. This type of trap, though not as successful, in attracting large numbers of moths, as the much larger and brighter MV 'Mercury Vapour' traps can, but at almost 30 years old, it still does the business.



### Dragonfly & Damselflies

Four reports of **Willow Emerald Damselfly** including, 4 at Chainbridge Pit on the 9<sup>th</sup>, a single at Linghurst Lakes on the 14<sup>th</sup>, 6 at Chainbridge Pit on the 14<sup>th</sup> and a single at Chainbridge Meadow on the 28<sup>th</sup>. A single report of 3 **Red-eyed Damselfly** at Bellmoor Lake on the 5<sup>th</sup>. A single report of a single ♂ **Small Red-eyed Damselfly** at Chainbridge Pit on the 30<sup>th</sup>. (Below left) ©V.Bell. Just two notable gatherings of **Common Blue Damselfly** including, 50 at Linghurst Lakes on the 14<sup>th</sup> and 50 at Chainbridge Pit on the 21<sup>st</sup>. A ♂ **Southern Hawker** was photographed at Chainbridge Pit on the 30<sup>th</sup>. (Below right) ©V.Bell.



The following table gives the daily maximum sightings of the more common species of Dragonfly and Darter across the recording area throughout the month: -

Species	4th	5th	9th	10th	11th	12th	13th	14th	18th	21st	25th	28th	30th
Migrant Hawker												1	
Southern Hawker						1					4		1
Brown Hawker	2	1	6		2	5		2	1	6	5	2	
Emperor Dragonfly					1	2		2					
Four-spot Chaser		1	1										
Broad-bodied Chaser		1		2									
Black-tailed Skimmer		2		1									
Common Darter	1		1			5		1		1	2		
Ruddy Darter						1	1					1	

## Hoverflies

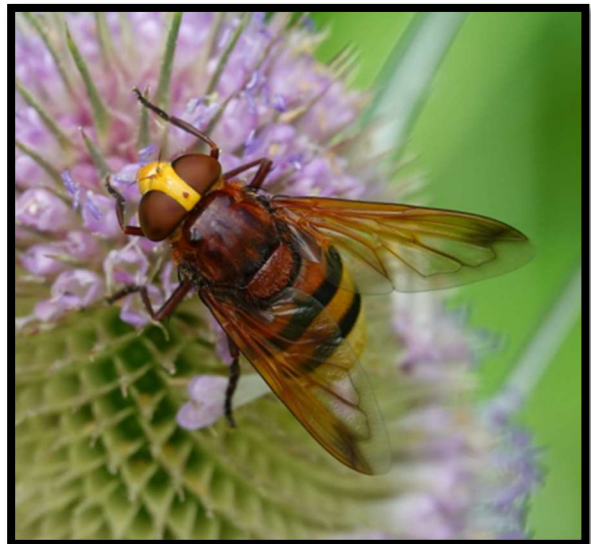
Highlighting more of the many different species seen in July. This ♂ *Myathropa florea* (**Batman Hoverfly**) was in the Woodland belt at Bellmoor Lake on the 10<sup>th</sup> (Below left) ©G.Hobson. This ♀ *Eristalis nemorum* (**Stripe-faced Dronefly**) was at Bellmoor Lake on the 10<sup>th</sup> (Below right) ©G.Hobson.



This ♀ *Scavia pyrastris* (**Pied Hoverfly**) was along Neatholme Lane on the 11<sup>th</sup> (Below left) ©V.Bell. This ♂ *Eupeodes luniger* (**Common Spotted Field Syrph**) was in Muddy Fork on the 13<sup>th</sup> (Below right) ©G.Hobson.



This ♂ *Eristalis arbustorum* (**Plain-faced Dronefly**) was photographed in the small meadow by the notice board at the Rural Learning Centre on the 13<sup>th</sup> (Below left) ©G.Hobson. This ♀ *Volucella zonaria* (**Hornet Hoverfly**) was noted in the Chainbridge Pit area on the 30<sup>th</sup> (Below right) ©V.Bell.





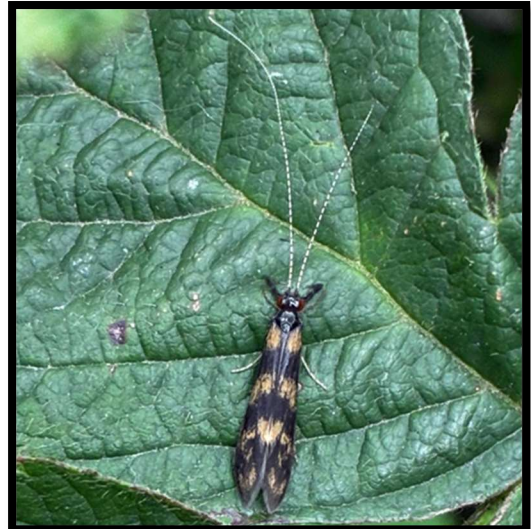
### **Beetles, Weevils & Bugs**

This **Lesser Stag Beetle** *Dorcus parallelipedus* was noted in darkness at 1:30am, at Bellmoor Ponds, during a moth trapping session there on the 18<sup>th</sup> (Below) ©G.Hobson.



### **Insects**

This single unidentified '**Digger Wasp**' sp? with a missing rear leg, was noted near Chainbridge Pit on the 30<sup>th</sup> (Below left) ©V.Bell. A single **Grousewing** *Mystacides longicornis*, a type of small caddisfly, was noted on the 30<sup>th</sup>. (Below right) ©S.Davenport. This



### **Mammals & Fish**

A dead **Eel**, which would weigh roughly 4lb, was found dead at Bellmoor Lake on the 20<sup>th</sup>. Another **Polecat** was noted at Neatholme Bridge on the 25<sup>th</sup> and two **Fox** cubs were noted at Neatholme Fen on the 25<sup>th</sup>. This single ♀ **Roe Deer** was noted at Tilm North during the Bird Walk on the 30<sup>th</sup> (Below) ©S.Davenport.





V.Giles, T.Carter, C.Marsh, S.Thorpe, G.Widdison, V.Bell, P.Cadman, R & P.White, I.Hunt, M.N, G.Hobson, P.Hobson, S.Davenport, M.B.Vickers, Trevor & Dilys Pendleton ([www.eakringbirds.com](http://www.eakringbirds.com)), C & C.Parker, K.Moss, Gary's Birdwatching & Wildlife Walks (What's App), plus the various Idle Valley NR - Wellness Walks (What's App).

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## **Owls at Idle Valley Nature Reserve – Part 1.**

### **Barn Owl *Tyto alba***

A direct quote from 'The Wildlife Trusts' website: - **"The beautiful Barn Owl is, perhaps, our most-loved owl. With its distinctive heart-shaped face, pure white feathers, and ghostly silent flight, it's easy to identify. Look out for it flying low over fields and hedgerows at dawn and dusk."**



A wonderful sight for anyone lucky enough to witness at close hand. Not the most common owl species to be found across the Idle Valley NR, or even in the surrounding farmland, but certainly the one that most people could see regularly with a little patience. As described above, they are very often seen hunting during daylight hours, usually just after dawn or in the late evening. Several nest boxes have been provided, and specifically, for Barn Owl and are now placed across the reserve and on adjoining trees/buildings around suitable farmland settings. These boxes are monitored each year by the North Nottinghamshire Ringing Group and over many years, numerous adult and juvenile Barn Owls have been ringed. Sadly, the pole mounted nesting box in Muddy Fork has now seemingly been abandoned by these owls and the live camera and regular encounters around the café at Bellmoor Lake is an experience we all miss very much. However, birds are still noted regularly along Mattersey Road, regularly seen across Clayworth Common and the Tilt North part of the reserve and are occasionally seen at Blaco Pits or Wildgoose Farm just north of the reserve's northern boundary.



Barn Owls can breed early in the year and can be sitting on eggs from March onwards, with breeding occurring throughout the spring and summer and in some cases into August. The nest comprises of old nest debris of mainly old pellets. The female will lay 4-6 eggs over a period of 8-21 days and will incubate the eggs for 31-32 days. This will



mean that the difference in the age of the oldest and youngest chicks can be as much as three weeks, but this can also be problematic to fledging success, based solely around food availability. The male Barn Owl has the task of providing all the food for his partner and their chicks for up to 3 weeks, if he provides sufficient food all the chicks can survive and as we see below, these five almost fledged chicks are healthy and likely to head out into the world soon.



This (and other) Owl species sadly suffers high mortality from poisoning, impact with road & rail vehicles and even occasional drownings, but the main problem can come from starvation in winter months through heavy prolonged snow fall. If you have a suitable site for a nesting box, a large rodent rich grass field and the time to monitor the owls, you too can help this species continue on. Please consider using poison free pest control in your gardens, it may save many owl and other birds of prey lives. The image below left shows a male owl (very pale, clean disk around face and lack of spots on breast and belly) at a nest box. The image below right shows a male Kestrel attempting to rob the Barn Owl of its prey. This can happen often during the breeding season when the male owls are very active, and the opportunistic Kestrel wants an easy meal or something to take back to his nest.



Always exciting to watch these birds. Let's hope they do well again this summer. (Image credits) ©I.Cowgill, ©M.B.Vickers, ©A.Blackburn, ©T.Tomlinson, ©G.Hobson, ©S.Davenport)

### **Next month's - September 2025 issue**

**What's On - October 2025 Events + Reserve News + Bird News for August 2025 + Additional Nature Sightings for August 2025 + Owls at Idle Valley NR (Part 2).**

**Submissions for inclusion in this publication** can be sent to **Gary Hobson** via [ghlbc@hotmail.co.uk](mailto: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 or Photography 'WhatsApp' & 'Facebook' groups** linked to Idle Valley NR.

Submit all **Lepidoptera (moths and butterflies)** plus any **Dragonfly & Damselfly** sightings to our recorder, **Philip Cadman**, via [philip.cadman@sky.com](mailto:philip.cadman@sky.com)