

Idle Valley Nature Sightings

January 2026

What's On – February 2026

Thursday 5th February – Nottinghamshire Environmental Association – Indoor Meeting. An illustrated talk titled '**The Red Fox**' by Professor Carl Soulsbury. Meeting starts at 7:30pm at Hallcroft Community Centre, Randall Way, Retford. Entry is £2 for members (membership is £10 per year) or £3.50 for non-member visitors. Contact email/mobile: paul@paulwillcock.com 07581531595

Sunday 8th February – Idle Valley Wildlife Watchgroup: 'Wonderful Woodlands, joint session with Young Rangers in **Gamston Wood**'. 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: idlwatch@nottswt.co.uk

Thursday 12th February – NWT North Notts Local Group – Indoor Meeting. The subject is '**The State of our Introductions – Beavers, Water Voles and Dormouse**' – a presentation by Janice Bradley. Meeting starts at 7:00pm at the **Rural Learning Centre, Bellmoor**. Entry is £3 per person. Group main contact email: janwilliamson133@gmail.com

Friday 20th February – 'Footsteps into Nature' – 'Birdwatching & Wildlife Walk' at Idle Valley NR. Meet at the reserve car park at Bellmoor Lake at 3:00pm till 5:00pm. Loop walk to Bunker Wood and back looking for wintering birds and other wildlife. Also, weather permitting, we will be doing a short '**Moth Trapping**' session if you wish to stick around for that. Leader is Gary Hobson. email/mobile number: ghlbc@hotmail.co.uk 07464964879

Sunday 22nd February – 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 25th February – Lound Bird Club – Indoor Meeting. An illustrated talk titled '**The Galapagos Islands and the Rainforests of Ecuador**' by Gianpiero Ferrari. 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 07763895265

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.

Reserve News from Alex Morley - NWT Reserves Manager (North).

Along with the new water vole friendly ditches excavated in the Barn Field we have begun a project to plant a small number of trees in that area. Volunteers have been constructing cattle exclusion structures using mostly reclaimed timber from around our reserves. The majority of these trees will be willow, specifically planted for harvesting as timber for cricket bats in around 20 years. The Trust has a long history of producing this timber resource, and the work is an investment which will yield financial results that support our charitable aims. The plan will be to find other suitable locations across the site where similar schemes can take place over the decades to come. The remaining trees will be a mix of suitable hardwoods planted to add diversity to the habitat and provide shelter for livestock during our increasingly hot summers.

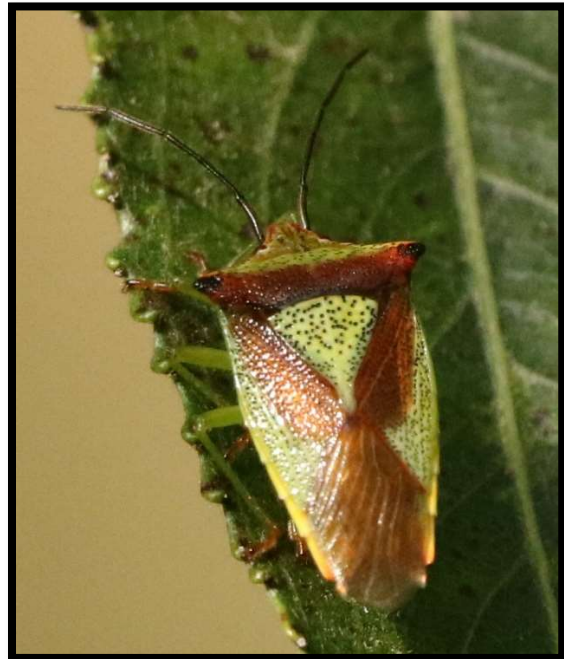
The merits of a more *naturalistic* approach to conservation grazing for managing diverse habitat matrices and creating niche & nuanced micro-habitats, has been written about in numerous articles elsewhere. Our Hebridean and Herdwicks, not only maintain low grass swards allowing wildflowers to compete with vigorous grasses, but in 2025 had a notable impact on excessive ragwort in Alan's Meadow. Whilst this plant has a lot going for it, any plans to become increasingly self-sufficient in hay production for winter feed are hampered by its presence, and a sheep's habit of closely cropping to the ground is known to reduce the dominance of the plant. Our sheep have also proven useful in maintaining some of the site's access routes, away from the public, which we use for work around the reserve. Maintaining these routes typically requires mechanical intervention, but using temporary hurdles and existing fencelines, we have been able to reduce or even eliminate the need for mowing in some cases, whilst also increasing available grazing. This was particularly important in 2025, reported by the Met Office as the driest spring in 50 years, the impacts of which were poor grass growth felt by farmers across the country coupled with an increased cost of hay.

(Below) Photo of Longhorn mother and her calf scratching against new tree planting spot in the Barn Field by ©Dave Kerchel.



Idle Valley Watch Group from Ros Schwarz - Group Organiser.

The theme for the January meeting of the Idle Valley Watch Group, our monthly club for nature-lovers from 7 to 12 years old, was "Investigating Nature". We went out on a scavenger hunt, finding prickly things, smooth things, rough and gnarly things and what worms eat. Back in the centre we matched animal footprints to their poo – surprisingly tricky - and had a table of "Nature Mysteries" to identify. Species of the month was Shield Bugs, and we talked about the different colourful species, all of which suck up their food. Mostly they are herbivorous, but some are carnivores feeding on the insides of caterpillars. (Below Images) Hawthorn Shield Bugs ©G. Hobson



Next month on Sunday 8th February, we will be joining the Young Rangers in Gamston Wood and on Saturday 14th March we will be back at the Idle Valley visitor centre for "Life Underground". Please contact Ros on idlewatch@nottswt.co.uk for more information.



Nottinghamshire
Wildlife Trust

North Notts Local Group from David Schwarz - Chairman.

The North Notts Local Group is now mid-way through the winter programme. We kicked off the season with a beautifully-illustrated talk around species linked to Willow, from an old friend, Tim Sexton. This was followed by David Fox, one of our regular speakers, talking about the history and wildlife of Creswell Crag, then a second appearance by John Clark of the Treswell Ringing Group, who gave a talk about the non-avian wildlife of the Reserve to a massive attendance. Light relief was provided by the December Quiz night, where food and good company were enjoyed by everyone, with the intellectual stimulation provided by Colin Watkin and Gary Hobson. Also in December, we were delighted to be able to present swift boxes for the Idle Valley Buildings to Paul Wilkinson, CEO of the Notts. Wildlife Trust, at the Volunteers' Christmas Party - these have been funded by the modest surplus we make from our monthly talks.

The risk of extreme weather led us to postpone our January meeting, which was a shame, given our interest in hearing Neve Bradley of Nottinghamshire County Council, telling us about their Nature Recovery Strategy - we're working to re-arrange this one.

Coming up on 12th February, Janice Bradley of Notts. Wildlife Trust will be bringing us up to speed on recent species re-introductions, covering Dormice, Beavers and Water Voles - learn about this and find out what's next to appear on our doorsteps.

If you would like more information and would like to be added to the local group mailing list the main contact email is:- janwilliamson133@gmail.com



Footsteps into Nature

Local Birdwatching & Wildlife Walk Group

Review of the 'Birdwatching & Wildlife' walk from the 17th December 2025

We set off walking along Hawthorn Lane, and a couple of Jays were heard behind us off Chainbridge Lane. At Chainbridge Scrape (West) viewing screen, we saw a single Great White Egret, a nice adult male Marsh Harrier was seen quartering the reeds at the back of the scrape, and a Green Woodpecker was heard calling behind us. Plenty of Wigeon, Shoveler, and Teal with small numbers of Teal and a single Pink-footed Goose went over us. Rain began as we stood

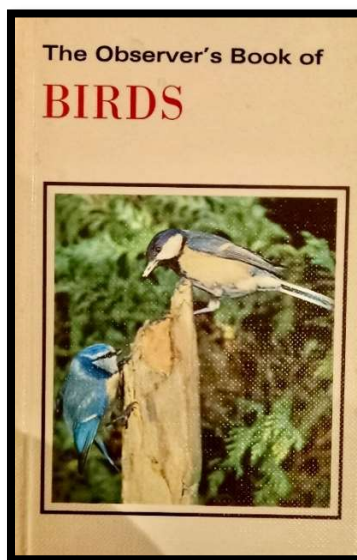
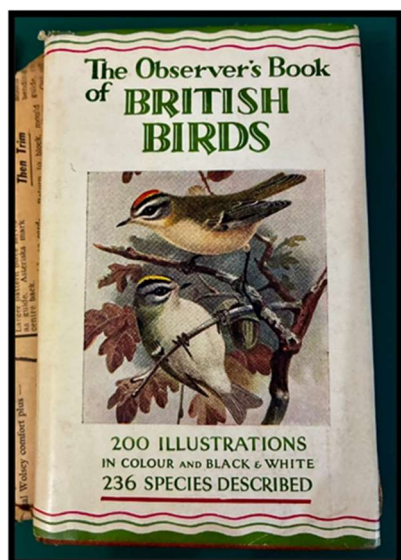
watching over the scrape, so we moved on towards The Water Ski Pit. Here, we saw a couple of Egyptian Geese, a Great Crested Grebe, and a mix of waterfowl. Moving on towards Neatholme Scrape we walked past the Hawthorn scrub alongside the Water Ski Pit where lots of Redwing and a few Blackbird were noted, and a little further along the lane I heard a female Chiffchaff calling once. Here, a few more small birds were noted, Blue Tit, Dunnock, Long-tailed Tit and a few more Redwing. From the viewing screens, we saw another Great White Egret, around 8+ Goldeneye, around 10 Lapwing plus plenty of Shoveler, Wigeon, and Teal alongside lots of Greylag Geese. Rain continued, but we were hopeful of a break in the rain soon. We headed towards Neatholme Pit, where we saw another Great White Egret, a few Goldeneye, and a large group of Lapwing flew in from the Blaco area. Four Mute Swan also flew in from that direction and over our heads. We then walked along Neatholme Lane towards Neatholme Fen, where we saw plenty of waterfowl again, including big numbers of Shoveler and Teal, a single Little Grebe and 3 Shelduck. There were plenty of Lapwing on the edges of the islands here, but it was difficult to count them. Moving on towards the two western viewing screens, we saw a few more bits, another Great White Egret, and I heard a small group of Redpoll go overhead. More Blackbirds were noted along Neatholme and Cross Lane with a single Goldcrest noted in the hedgerow by the Water Ski Pit. Turning back onto Hawthorn Lane again, we came across a feeding flock of around 40 Redpoll feeding on Birch mast. The rain had eased off but began again just as we approached Chainbridge Lane and the end of the walk. A single Jay flew from Chainbridge to the Windsurf Pools, and a few Long-tailed Tit were feeding in the hedgerow along Chainbridge Lane. Some of us then headed to the centre for a drink, and despite the rain, it was still a nice and productive walk.

If you would like more information about the group and be added to the group WhatsApp page, contact Gary Hobson (Walk Leader) via email/mobile: ghlbc@hotmail.co.uk 07464964879

Lound Bird Club

Shared Memories from Stuart Davenport - LBC Chairman.

Happy New Year! I hope 2026 brings you all plenty of good birds and wildlife sightings. As a bird watcher, one of the most common questions I have been asked is "How long have you been into birding?" The answer is usually the same. I don't actually know. Birds and wildlife has always been part of my life, but I don't actually know how it started. As a young kid I grew up in Newark-on-Trent, and the council estate that I lived on was hardly a hot bed of nature. Our overgrown garden, the playing field and a walk along the river Devon on the way to town were the only chance I got to see anything. Snails, Ladybirds and ant nests were the first contact with wildlife I remember. And butterflies, butterflies everywhere! The almost overpowering sweet smell of Buddleia on our street with dozens of butterflies on every bush, how times have changed. Surprisingly, apart from the boy a few doors down with a pet Jackdaw that he would take to school, which would sit on the fence during lessons and fly down and steal our power balls during breaktime, I have few memories featuring birds. I must have shown some interest as at the age of 7, my "Auntie" Jean bought me the Observer's Book of British Birds. I was fascinated by this little book (Below Left) ©Frederick Warne and Co Ltd, London, 1952 and (Below Centre & Right) ©Frederick Warne and Co Ltd, London, 1972.



I would sit and dream about seeing the birds pictured, with the alternating colour and black and white plates, with Nuthatch and Ring Ouzel in particular, being dream birds. To say that book changed my life sounds over dramatic but it's true. I don't know what happened to that copy but around thirty years ago I bought a replacement copy. Auntie Jean is long gone bless her soul, but the legacy of her gift lives on and for that I will be eternally grateful.

If you would like to join **Lound Bird Club**, please send your Name, e-mail address and a contact number to Gary Hobson (Membership Secretary) to ghlbc@hotmail.co.uk Membership of the club is free. We have been an established local bird watching group since 1990, recording the birds and wildlife at the Idle Valley Nature Reserve (Sutton & Lound Gravel Pits SSSI), and support the work of Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust. We offer a program of free walks throughout the year and a series of monthly indoor meetings with guest speakers giving talks on birds and occasional alternative wildlife subjects. Meetings are held on the fourth Wednesday each month from September through to April, at Sutton-cum-Lound Village Hall, with a £3 entry fee to cover refreshments and hire costs.

Bird Sightings for December 2025 compiled by Gary Hobson.

With the increasing popularity of 'Thermal Imaging' equipment being used in birdwatching, and we were lucky enough to have the use of one on the night of the 23rd we recorded Woodcock, Jack Snipe, Fieldfare, Skylark and Redwing through a monocular. Once again, no WeBS (Wetland Bird Survey) count was conducted this month and is something which we are trying to resolve in 2026. Any volunteers to help with these once a month counts are most welcome. It's a very large count area, but it is much quicker and easier to count with more hands on deck so to speak. If you can help count or assist someone else, please contact Paul Hobson .

Just two notable records of **Pink-footed Goose**, including 60 moving N over Chainbridge Scrape (West) on the 11th and 11 birds on Clayworth Common on the 27th. A single record of 2 **Whooper Swan** on Chainbridge Pit on the 27th. A count of 18 **Egyptian Goose** was made on the 7th, including 16 birds on the Lower Sheep Fields and 2 on Hayton Common. Further pairs were at Water Ski Pit on the 21st and at Clayworth Common on the 26th. Two records of **Shelduck**, including three at Neatholme Fen on the 21st and just two there on the 29th. A single record of 4 ♂ **Pintail** at Neatholme Scrape on the 29th. Just two records of **Red-crested Pochard**, including a pair at the Water Ski Pit on the 29th and 4 (two pairs) at Linghurst Lakes on the 30th. A single record of 4 **Pochard** at Bellmoor Lake on the 27th. Two notable counts of **Goldeneye**, including 8+ at Neatholme Scrape on the 21st and 24 split over three locations, Neatholme Pit, Neatholme Scrape and Chainbridge Pit on the 29th. Numbers of **Goosander** were fairly low early in the month with just 4 birds at Bellmoor Lake on the 2nd & 4th, and up to 5 birds there on the 26th. Larger counts of 40+ at dusk on the Water Ski Pit on the 28th with a count of 13 there on the 29th. An incredible count of 120+ **Stock Dove** was made at Clayworth Common on the 31st. Just 4 records of single **Water Rail** across the site, including at the Rural Learning Centre Moat area on the 2nd, at Neatholme Pit on the 11th, at Tiln North on the 20th and finally at Neatholme Fen on the 29th. Just a single count of 20 Lapwing on Bellmoor Lake on the 27th. Just a single record of a single Dunlin at Bellmoor Lake on the 26th. A small number of **Woodcock**, presumably continental wintering birds, were noted throughout, including singles present at Alan's Meadow on the 20th & 23rd, a single disturbed at Bunker Wood (in the recently felled Poplar Plantation) on the 27th and 2 birds noted in flight at Neatholme Lane & Cross Lane at dusk on the 28th. A single record of a single **Jack Snipe** at Tiln North on the 23rd. Three reports of **Snipe**, including 10+ at Alan's Meadow and a further 10+ at Tiln North on the 23rd and just two birds at Neatholme Fen on the 23rd. Several reports of **Green Sandpiper** throughout, including 2 birds reported on the 2nd, a single calling at Chainbridge Pit on the 7th, a single at Chainbridge Scrape (East) on the 11th, 2 at Chainbridge Scrape (West) on the 11th and finally a single at Clayworth Common on the 27th. A single partial 'leucistic' **Black-headed Gull**, presumably the same bird seen in November, was noted in the Neatholme Scrape roost on the 29th. A single adult **Mediterranean Gull** was in the roost at Neatholme Scrape on the 29th (Below) ©R. Scott.



Single record of three adult **Great Black-backed Gull** on the 28th. Two reports of **Herring Gull**, including 5 at Bellmoor Lake on the 27th and a roost estimate of c200 at Neatholme Scrape on the 28th. There were three records of **Caspian Gull** over the month, including a first-winter (1CY) bird at Bellmoor Lake on the 2nd, an adult at Bellmoor Lake on the 26th and another first-winter (1CY) at Chainbridge Scrape (West) on the 28th. The two **Glossy Ibis** remained being noted at Bluebell Fishery on the 3rd, with a long gap until the pair were seen again on Chainbridge Pit on the 26th. A single was noted there again on the 27th and a further single (presumed the other bird) noted flying over Retford town heading North towards the Idle Valley later that same day (Below) ©S.Davenport



A single report of a single **Bittern** being noted on the reserve on the 2nd. The number of **Cattle Egret** remained stable with 12 birds noted at Tiln North on the 12th & 14th, then 13 were spread over two locations, 8 at Clayworth Common and 5 at Pusto Hill Farm, off Eel Pool Road at Drakeholes on the 27th. A good sprinkling of **Great White Egret** were recorded throughout, including a single at Tiln North on the 7th, two at Chainbridge Scrape on the 11th, up to 4 birds from four locations in the North of the reserve on the 21st and up to 5 birds from four locations across the reserve on the 29th. Just two single **Little Egret** were recorded on the 29th, at Linghurst Lakes and the Water Ski Pit. Just a single **Sparrowhawk** record with a female over Clayworth Common on the 31st. Up to three different **Marsh Harrier** were noted throughout, including a single (not aged/sexed) reported on the reserve on the 2nd, an adult female was at Bellmoor on the 4th, it then flew south over the Lower Sheep Fields on the 7th, and finally a pristine adult male was noted at Chainbridge Scrape (West) on the 21st and at Neatholme Fen on the 27th. Two reports of single **Red Kite**, including a bird reported over the reserve on the 2nd and one photographed over Chainbridge Scrape (East) on the 27th. A single **Barn Owl** was noted at Tiln village on the 20th. Just two records of single **Green Woodpecker** at Chainbridge Scrape on the 21st and at Linghurst Wood on the 29th. A 'possible' **Merlin** (although the observer having initially thought it was a Hobby?) was noted sat on a post near the caravans by the Water Ski Pit on the 29th. A single report of a **Peregrine** over Clayworth Common on the 31st. Three **Jay** were noted from Chainbridge Lane & Hawthorn Lane on the 17th. Just a single **Raven** was reported on the reserve on the 2nd. A few wintering **Chiffchaff** were noted, including a single reported on the reserve on the 2nd, an amazing five birds were noted around Neatholme Scrape on the 11th with a single there again on the 21st, a single at Bellmoor Lake on the 26th and two at Lound Sewage Works on the 29th. A single record of a ringed male **Blackcap** on the edge of Linghurst Wood on the 30th. A single record of a single **Treecreeper** at Bunker Wood on the 27th. A single notable count of 150+ **Redwing** noted around Bunker Wood on the 27th. Just a single record of 20+ **Blackbird** noted around Bunker Wood on the 27th. Two records of single **Fieldfare** at Tiln North on the 23rd and at Bunker Wood on the 27th followed by reports of 20+ flying NE over Neatholme Scrape and 95+ flying N over Chainbridge Pit on the 29th. Just a single record of 30+ **Chaffinch** near The Willows (Clayworth Copse) on the 31st. Just two records of **Bullfinch**, including a pair at Neatholme Scrape on the 11th and 2 at Bunker Wood on the 27th. Three notable records of **Lesser Redpoll**, including 50+ at Bellmoor Lake on the 4th, 40+ near Bittern Pools on the 21st and 30+ at Bunker Wood on the 27th. A single report of 50+ **Goldfinch** at Bellmoor Lake on the 4th. Very few **Siskin** were present with the only record being 15+ noted on the reserve on the 27th.

Feral/Escapees

A single **Bar-headed Goose** was at Bellmoor Lake on the 26th. A single ♂ **Lady Amhurst's Pheasant** was in a Mattersey village garden on the 21st, probably the same one that was seen in spring 2025 at the Water Ski Pit on the recording area.

R. Scott, K. Driver, S. Horne, K. Bowler, B. Foster, W. Fiuk, A. Pickles, P. Ramsey, D. Richardson, P. Cooper, P. Cottam, K. Fisher, P. J. Freeman, S. Came, J & J Shepherd, C & C Parker, B. Merrick, V. Bell, T. Carter, G. Hobson, D. Housman, M. B. Vickers, S. Davenport, V. Giles, P. Cadman, P & E Hobson, I. Hunt, RBA, 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

Nature Sightings for December 2025 compiled by Gary Hobson.

Butterflies - No species were recorded to our knowledge in December 2025.

Moths - The following are just a small selection of moth species that were significant during the month. List compiled from data held by resident moth expert Philip Cadman, who is also the local 'Entomology Recorder' for the Idle Valley NR & Lound Bird Club recording area.

A trapping session was held at Chainbridge Wood/Pit/Meadows on Sunday 7th where just three species were recorded, 40+ (All male) **70.1060 *Operophtera brumata* Winter Moth**, two **70.2560 *Erannis defoliaria* Mottled Umber** (Below left & right) ©G. Hobson and a single **73.1950 *Conistra ligula* Dark Chestnut**.



A second **70.2560 *Erannis defoliaria* Mottled Umber** was found on the window of the Rural Learning Centre building during the NWT Local Group Christmas Quiz event on the 11th. Tim Carter had three **70.1060 *Operophtera brumata* Winter Moth** at Carr Hill School on the 16th with a further 22 plus a single ♂ **70.2470 *Phigalia pilosaria* Pale-brindled Beauty** noted at Bellmoor Lake on the 21st (Below) ©P. Hobson.



Two species were netted at Bellmoor Lake on the 27th, three **70.1060 *Operophtera brumata* Winter Moth** including a wingless female and single **73.1940 *Conistra vaccini* The Chestnut**. Finally, the last record for 2025 were the 17 **70.1060 *Operophtera brumata* Winter Moth** noted from three areas in the North of the reserve on the evening of the 28th. A great year for recording with thanks to everyone who has been involved in the trapping sessions, for providing their time, their equipment and help and advice with identification throughout the year.

Dragonfly & Damselflies - No species were recorded to our knowledge in December 2025.

Fungi - Two specimens of the fungi, **Collared Earthstar *Geastrum triplex*** were found by members of the Wednesday Wellness Walking Group on the 3rd December. Both specimens, one split open forming a 'star' shape, were found together under a small Oak Tree adjacent to the River Idle footpath. Not a common species on the reserve, but it has been recorded previously in the Bellmoor area. (Below left & right) ©G. Hobson.



Mammals & Amphibians - A single **Hare** was seen on Alan's Meadow on the night of the 23rd. Four **Roe Deer**, a single Buck and 3 Doe's, were at Chainbridge Scrape (East) on the 27th (Below images) ©V. Bell, and another single **Roe Deer** was noted there on the 29th.



C. Watkin, A. Verkade, M. McCallum, S. Horne, B. Merrick, C & C. Parker, P. Ramsey, J & J. Shepherd, T. Carter, V. Bell, P. Cadman, I. Hunt, M. N, G. Hobson, P & E. Hobson, S. Davenport, Trevor & Dilys Pendleton (www.eakringbirds.com), Gary's Birdwatching & Wildlife Walks (What's App) Group, plus the various Idle Valley NR - Wellness Walks (What's App) Groups.

Next month's - February 2026 issue

What's On - March 2026 Events + Reserve News + Bird News for January 2026 + Additional Nature Sightings for January 2026

Submissions for inclusion in this publication can be sent to **Gary Hobson** via 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