

# Idle Valley Nature Sightings

**December 2024**

## What's On - January 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 Café at the new time of 1:00pm. Volunteer led walk sponsored by Co-op Lincolnshire.

**Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> January (First Thursday in each month) – Idle Adventure Walk** (min 8 miles) Meeting Point is the Idle Valley Visitor Centre Café at 10:30am until 3:30pm. Volunteer led walk.

**Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> January – NWT North Nottinghamshire Local Group Talk – Bird Ringing with John Clark.** Join John for an enlightening talk about bird ringing. Includes a feather quiz! At the Idle Valley Visitor Centre at 7:00pm-8:30pm. Contact Jan Williamson on email: [janwilliamson133@gmail.com](mailto:janwilliamson133@gmail.com)

**Friday 10<sup>th</sup> January – Gary's 'Wildlife & Birdwatching' Walk Idle Valley NR.** Meet at Chainbridge Lane by the Chainbridge Scrape East viewpoint at 2:30pm-dusk. General birdwatching from Chainbridge Scrape (East), then watching over Tiln North & Clayworth Common for Owls and hopefully a Starling murmuration. Leader is Gary Hobson. Contact email: [ghlbc@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:ghlbc@hotmail.co.uk) or Mobile: 07464964879

**Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> January – Idle Valley Wildlife Watch: New Year Nature Notes – Bird Feeders .** 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: [idlewatch@nottswt.co.uk](mailto:idlewatch@nottswt.co.uk)

**Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> January – 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](mailto:philip.cadman@sky.com)

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## Reserve News

### **Alex Morley - Reserves Manager North.**

After a period of quite intense scrub management work at the northern end of the Idle Valley, for much of the winter period the ranger team and volunteers will be focusing upon the 18 other northern nature reserves they manage for The Trust. Coppicing in our hazel woodlands on the Mercia mudstone, and scrub removal from heathlands over the Sherwood sandstone are the focus at the moment. Work on the Big & Small Willow Fields' half hectare of scrapes is continuing, being delayed by weather conditions and the process of managing the amount of spoil generated.



Over winter, the Idle Valley is hosting hedge laying training sessions being run by an external trainer, and the first part of this four-year task can be seen near our Hallcroft entrance. Work on the Idle Valley will slow down for a period over the festive period, but in the pipeline are the annual clearance of the Bellmoor Lake island to remove vegetation and prevent the establishment of woody growth; removal of bramble as part of a strategy to eliminate Himalayan balsam in defined area; the installation of two new bird screens at Neatholme Scrape & Neatholme Fen thanks to Countryside Stewardship funding; and at Neatholme Scrape, with funding from Natural England, additional scrub removal along with the creation of additional ditch features thanks to our Water Vole project will be taking place. With support from this project, expect to see further work at the Centre's Boardwalk Wetland creating more areas of open shallow water and scrub removal, along with seeding on the pond margins around the Rural Learning Centre.

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## **Birds News for November 2024**

November is typically the time of year when most wintering birds arrive in large numbers, the weather in Northern and Eastern Europe being responsible for an increase in waterfowl into the UK. We have also seen a big movement of winter thrushes, plus lots of Jays, Woodcock and another large number of Hawfinch arriving from the continent. The huge number of **Pink-footed Geese** that arrive in the UK each autumn are normally found wintering in traditional areas like NE Scotland, Lancashire, East Yorkshire and in North Norfolk, usually being noted moving between these areas over the winter. However, in the past few years we have seen Pink-foot's wintering in other parts including nearby South Yorkshire and here in North Nottinghamshire, with recent estimates of circa 10,000+ in the Doncaster area alone. The 1<sup>st</sup> saw around 1,000 birds recorded across the recording area during the day, and this included 450 which flew SE over Clayworth Common, a further 310 were on the deck in the NE corner of Clayworth Common, 100 birds flew E at Blaco, 80 flew SE over The Willows (Clayworth Copse) and 80 flew NW over Neatholme Fen. Two counts of 65 moving NW over Neatholme Fen and 90 N over Blaco on the 10<sup>th</sup>. The 12<sup>th</sup> saw a group of 50 over Chainbridge Pit plus 16 which flew over Neatholme Fen and circa 1,000 flew N over Chainbridge Scrape (East). Finally, just 38 flew N over Neatholme Pit on the 29<sup>th</sup>. A report from BirdGuides of a single **White Fronted Goose** near the Conservation Lale on the 19<sup>th</sup>. Numbers of **Whooper Swan** have so far been fairly low, and a wintering 'herd' hasn't settled yet, a pair with 3 juveniles was at Mattersey Common on the 4<sup>th</sup>, 3 birds few over the Lower Sheep Fields on the 10<sup>th</sup>, a small movement on the 12<sup>th</sup> included 5 over Neatholme Fen, 15 N over the Lower Sheep Fields and 3 SE over Sutton Village flying in the direction of Bellmoor Lake, 7 were on the Conservation Lake on the 19<sup>th</sup> and finally 3 were on/over Neatholme Fen on the 20<sup>th</sup>. **Shelduck** continued to be seen in small numbers throughout the month with up to 10 birds present at either Neatholme Fen, with a maximum of 4 on the 18<sup>th</sup>, 10 were noted on the WeBS count on the 17<sup>th</sup> and up to 5 were at Bellmoor Lake on the 24<sup>th</sup>. Two fairly unseasonal reports of **Garganey** were received, with a first-winter/female on Neatholme Fen on the 13<sup>th</sup> and 2 females present at 14:00pm on Chainbridge NR Scrape (East) on the 19<sup>th</sup>. A WeBS count of 270 **Shoveler** across the recording area on the 17<sup>th</sup> and a large gathering of circa 150+ birds were noted feeding at Bellmoor Lake from the 20<sup>th</sup> to the month end. **Pintail** numbers were still fairly low, with 8 on the 1<sup>st</sup>, rising to 9 on the 4<sup>th</sup>, down to just 6 on the 10<sup>th</sup> & 17<sup>th</sup>, falling to 5 on the 20<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>, then a slight rise to 7 on the 29<sup>th</sup>. All birds were seen from either Neatholme Fen, Neatholme Scrape or Linghurst Pools. **Teal** numbers were only really noted during the WeBS count on the 17<sup>th</sup> where 148 were noted across the recording area. The only **Red-crested Pochard** count came on the WeBS count on the 17<sup>th</sup> with a maximum of 12 birds across the recording area. Numbers of **Pochard** and **Tufted Duck** peaked with the WeBS count with 110 and 322 respectively on the 17<sup>th</sup>. **Goldeneye** arrived in much larger numbers mid-month with 28 noted from the WeBS count on the 17<sup>th</sup>, rising to 35 in three areas on the 18<sup>th</sup>, and peaking at 40 in three areas on the 25<sup>th</sup>. The largest flock was 35 on Neatholme Scrape on the 25<sup>th</sup>, where the largest counts were usually recorded. Numbers of **Goosander** remained fairly low for most of the month with peak counts of 10 at the Water Ski Lake on the 19<sup>th</sup>, 7 at Bellmoor Lake on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 6 again at the Water Ski Lake on the 25<sup>th</sup>. Amazingly though, a massive record count of 83 birds on the Water Ski Lake on the 28<sup>th</sup> was short lived with just 3 there on the 29<sup>th</sup>. This extremely high count involving birds just stopping off whilst migrating through the area. There were 5 **Grey Partridge** at Blaco on the 10<sup>th</sup> and a further 13 on Clayworth Common on the 21<sup>st</sup>. A large gathering of 31 **Red-legged Partridge** at Blaco on the 10<sup>th</sup>. A good count of 35 **Collared Dove** were along Walters Lane in the vicinity of the farm on the 25<sup>th</sup>. Numbers of **Water Rail** across the reserve always increase over winter months as birds start calling in wetland areas. Up to five singles at Tiln North, Bellmoor Lake and Neatholme Fen were noted on four dates until the 10<sup>th</sup>. WeBS count data for **Moorhen** gives their current population at 26 across the whole recording area. WeBS data for **Coot** gives their current population at 780, the highest number present in 2024. **Little Grebe** numbers peaking at just 13 birds on the WeBS on the 17<sup>th</sup>. A count of 4 **Great Crested Grebe** on the WeBS count on the 17<sup>th</sup> with just a single at Bellmoor Lake on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. Neatholme Fen continues to be the popular wader roost site with some impressive numbers. **Lapwing** numbers here rose from 120 on the 3<sup>rd</sup> rising sharply to a peak WeBS count of 1,298 on the 17<sup>th</sup>, falling slightly to 1,120 on the 25<sup>th</sup> then numbers fell off to just 200 there on the 29<sup>th</sup>. **Golden Plover** roosting at Neatholme Fen followed a similar track with just 15 there on the 1<sup>st</sup>, rising to 400 on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, to 500 on the 4<sup>th</sup>, levelling

off to 450 on the 12<sup>th</sup>, then a huge rise in number from 565 on the 17<sup>th</sup>, peaking at 920 on the 18<sup>th</sup> and falling to just 100 birds there on the 25<sup>th</sup> & 29<sup>th</sup>. The photo below shows part of the Golden Plover flock at Neatholme Fen on the 3<sup>rd</sup> (©G.Hobson).



A single **Ringed Plover** dropped into Neatholme Fen briefly on the 4<sup>th</sup>. Wintering **Ruff** continued to favour Neatholme Fen with counts of 6 birds there on the 4<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> with a further 3 birds noted at Chainbridge Pit on the 5<sup>th</sup> and a WeBS count of 12 on the 17<sup>th</sup>. A single **Dunlin** was noted at Neatholme Fen on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> and the only other count was of 3 birds noted at this same site on the 12<sup>th</sup>. A single **Woodcock** flew from the lake edge of Chainbridge NR Scrape (West), in the direction of Cross Lane. **Snipe** were associating with other waders at Neatholme Fen throughout. Numbers were still fairly low compared with previous winters with at 7 there on the 4<sup>th</sup>, peaking at 13 on the 10<sup>th</sup>, then dropping to 7 birds on the 17<sup>th</sup> and to just 5 on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. Elsewhere just singles were noted from Mattersey Common on the 4<sup>th</sup>, and Chainbridge Pit and Tilm North on the 21<sup>st</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup>. **Green Sandpiper** were seen throughout with singles at Neatholme Fen on eight dates from the 1<sup>st</sup> until the 29<sup>th</sup>, with further singles at Chainbridge NR Scrape (East) on the 3<sup>rd</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup> and a single on the Lower Sheep Fields on the 27<sup>th</sup>. **Redshank** have had a very poor year at Idle Valley NR so a mini influx on the 10<sup>th</sup> was nice to witness. There were 3 birds at Neatholme Fen, 2 at Chainbridge Pit and a single on the Lower Sheep Fields. Another count of just 2 birds was noted during the WeBS count on the 17<sup>th</sup>. The only count of **Black-headed Gull** was done on the 22<sup>nd</sup> when a total of 1,030 were noted from three locations, the main being Neatholme Scrape with 830 birds. Interestingly a regular returning 'leucistic' bird was seen again on Neatholme Scrape on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. A single adult **Mediterranean Gull** roosted with Black-headed Gulls at Chainbridge NR Scrape (East) on the 19<sup>th</sup> and at Neatholme Scrape on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. A single report of 7 **Great Black-backed Gull** on Neatholme Scrape on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. A single report of 45 **Herring Gull** on Neatholme Scrape on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. The pair of 2<sup>nd</sup>-winter **Caspian Gull** (first noted in early October) were noted again at Chainbridge Pit on the 10<sup>th</sup>, with just a single 2<sup>nd</sup>-winter on Chainbridge NR Scrape (East) on the 19<sup>th</sup> and on Chainbridge Pit on the 24<sup>th</sup>. Single adult **Yellow-legged Gull** were noted at Neatholme Scrape on the 23<sup>rd</sup> & 28<sup>th</sup>. A single report of 30 **Lesser Black-backed Gull** roosting on Neatholme Scrape on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. Just three records of **Cormorant** with 14 at Neatholme Fen on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 20 in the northern half of the reserve on the 14<sup>th</sup> and 30 during the WeBS count on the 17<sup>th</sup>. The following table shows the daily maxima per location of **Cattle Egret** reported during the month, and as always, the Lower Sheep Fields are the key location:-

Area/Date	1st	2nd	3rd	7th	8th	9th	10th	12th	14th	15th	17th	21st	24th	25th	26th	27th	30th
<b>S Fields</b>	16	13	5	14	21	20	21	16	8	21	20		8	8	8	8	4
<b>Tilm N</b>												3	1				
<b>Chain Pit</b>												1					

There were 5 **Grey Heron** over two areas on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 2 at Chainbridge Pit on the 21<sup>st</sup> with just singles noted from two areas on the 8<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>. The following table shows the daily maxima per location of **Great White Egret** reported during the month, and from this data a maximum of 5 birds were present between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>. The photo below shows one of two Great White Egret surrounded by Lapwings at Neatholme Fen on the 25<sup>th</sup> (©R.Scott).

Area/Date	3rd	4th	6th	8th	10th	12th	15th	17th	18th	19th	20th	22nd	24th	25th	28th
Chainbridge Pit					2	2	2		1					1	
C Scrape (W & E)							2								
Bellmoor Lake			2	1						1	1	2	1		
Neatholme Fen	1	2			1	2	1							2	
Bluebell Fishery													1		
Neat Scrape														2	4
Blaco Pits		1			1										
WeBS								5							



The following table shows the daily maxima per location of **Little Egret** reported during the month, with a maximum of 8 birds present across the recording area during the WeBS count on the 17<sup>th</sup>.

Area/Date	3rd	4th	6th	10th	12th	13th	15th	17th	20th	22nd	24th
Neatholme Fen	1	2		6		3	4				
Bellmoor Lake			1						1	1	
Chainbridge Pit					2						
Bluebell Fishery											1
WeBS								8			

A good month for **Marsh Harrier** sightings and from the numerous reports up to five different birds were present including adult male and female, first-summer male, and two different 'cream-crowned' first-winter/female birds. There were 6 birds sighted in three areas on the 1<sup>st</sup>, 3 birds on the 4<sup>th</sup>, 4 on the 10<sup>th</sup>, then 1-2 birds regularly noted to the month end. Birds were seen from Blaco/Mattersey Common, in the far northern part of the recording area, right through to Bellmoor Lake at the southern edge of the reserve, but Neatholme Fen, Neatholme Pit & Neatholme Scrape was key locations. If you do see Marsh Harrier and can age and/or sex the bird please note this on submission of the report, this makes for better and more accurate data recording and monitoring. The photo below shows one of the two first-winter "cream-crowned" Marsh Harriers flying over Neatholme Fen on the 1<sup>st</sup> (©A.Pykett).



Just six dates recorded **Kingfisher**, a single along the river on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, singles at Chainbridge Pit on the 10<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>, one heard at Bellmoor Lake on the 18<sup>th</sup>, 2 on Neatholme Fen and a single on the river on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and finally a single again at Neatholme Fen on the 29<sup>th</sup>. A scattering of **Great Spotted Woodpecker** sightings, in the Linghurst Wood, Parish Park, Chainbridge NR Scrape, Chainbridge Lane & Chainbridge Wood areas throughout. Single **Green Woodpecker** were noted from Chainbridge NR Scrape, Cross Lane Marsh & Neatholme Lane/Fen/Scrape on seven dates throughout, a species more typically found in the northern half of the reserve. The regular first-winter male **Kestrel** continued to entertain along the riverside at Bellmoor Lake and Bunker Wood. A single **Peregrine** was noted over Clayworth Common on the 29<sup>th</sup>. A single **Raven** flew over Neatholme Fen on the 15<sup>th</sup>, this was followed by a series of sightings on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, where a single was again over Linghurst Wood, 2 birds flew E over the Bailey Bridge at Bellmoor and a short time later a 'family party' of 6 birds flew very low over the Bunker Wood area before being heard calling in the direction of the Old Ash Lagoon near Doughty's Pit before they eventually headed off south calling as they went. Photo below of the two Raven that flew East at the Bailey Bridge on the on the 22<sup>nd</sup> (©G.Hobson). **Coal Tit** is a fairly common species here at Idle Valley NR, but it is usually found near to or in pine trees or pine woodland. Two were at the Bailey Bridge at Bellmoor on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>, singles were noted in Yew trees at Lound Village Memorial Garden on the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> and finally, 2 were at the Parish Park on the 25<sup>th</sup>. **Chiffchaff** have in recent years begun to overwinter locally with singles noted at Wildgoose Farm on the 10<sup>th</sup>, near Chainbridge NR Scrape (West) on the 12<sup>th</sup>, three individuals in the Parish Park, Neatholme Lane & near the Windsurf Pools on the 18<sup>th</sup> and finally at Neatholme Lane again on the 25<sup>th</sup>. Two wintering male **Blackcap** were noted, at Chainbridge Wood alongside the riverbank on the 10<sup>th</sup> and in Lound Village Memorial Garden on the 21<sup>st</sup>. **Treecreeper** were noted on just two dates, 2 birds in Linghurst Wood on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and a single along Cross Lane on the 25<sup>th</sup>. Murmuration's of **Starling** are a popular event at Idle Valley NR and if you can brave the cold winter air you will be rewarded with a spectacular show. The first one to note was over Water Ski Pit on the 9<sup>th</sup> but numbers were not recorded. The second and undoubtedly largest murmuration was of a fairly accurate estimation of around 15,000 birds (split into several groups) over Tiln Trout Lake and Tiln Pits (both having large reedbeds) on the 12<sup>th</sup>. This massive gathering was videoed by Daz Housman and posted on the Idle Valley Bird Sightings Facebook page. And finally, around 8,000 were massing over Neatholme Scrape on the 28<sup>th</sup>. Winter thrushes were still quite thin on the ground this month. There were 10 **Redwing** at Chainbridge NR Scrape (East) on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, c30 feeding in Yews at Lound Village Memorial Park on the 20<sup>th</sup>, and 10 birds were feeding on apples in a Lound Village Garden on the 28<sup>th</sup>. Photo of the Redwing below feeding on apples in a Lound Garden (©M.Vickers).



**Fieldfare** numbers were a little better with around 50 over Lound Village on the 20<sup>th</sup>, 24 were on the Lower Sheep Fields plus 7 at Bunker Wood on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and finally 8 were in a Lound Village Garden on the 28<sup>th</sup>. Up to 8 **Stonechat** were noted on seven dates from five areas across the site from Blaco Pits on the 4<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>, at Bellmoor Lake on the 6<sup>th</sup>, Lower Sheep Fields on the 10<sup>th</sup>, Conservation Lake on the 10<sup>th</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup> and at Tiln North on the 20<sup>th</sup>. A group of circa 50 **Pied Wagtail** were noted on the Lower Sheep Fields on the 7<sup>th</sup> and just two birds were at Lound Sewage Works on the 29<sup>th</sup>. Up to five **Grey Wagtail** were noted on four dates from five areas across the site from singles over Neatholme Fen and the Lower Sheep Fields on the 10<sup>th</sup>, a single a Chainbridge Pit on the 12<sup>th</sup>, a single at Bellmoor Lake on the 15<sup>th</sup> and finally a single at Lound Sewage Works on the 29<sup>th</sup>. Single **Hawfinch** were noted again in trees at Lound Village Memorial Park on the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> with two birds present here on the 21<sup>st</sup>. This species is a fairly uncommon resident in woodlands in Nottinghamshire nowadays and these records may well be from continental birds coming here in late autumn to winter. Always a nice sighting no matter where you see them. **Bullfinch** tend to be seen more in the southern half of the reserve, the habitat being more suitable for feeding. Four birds were in the Bunker Wood/Bellmoor Pits area on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, a single was seen at the Water Ski Pit on the 18<sup>th</sup>, 5+ were again in the Bunker

Wood area on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and finally a single was at Bellmoor Lake on the 24<sup>th</sup>. Some impressive **Linnet** gatherings as we head towards winter, with 20 at Wildgoose Farm and a larger gathering of circa 280 birds nearby at Blaco Pits on the 4<sup>th</sup> and finally a further 30 were at Blaco Pit on the 10<sup>th</sup>. **Siskin** numbers were still quite low and only reported in the southern half of the reserve, 120 were around the Bailey Bridge on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 20 were at Bunker Wood on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 30 were at the edge of Bellmoor Lake on the 24<sup>th</sup>. No reports from the Lingham Wood area where there are usually large numbers present around the woodland in winter.

A.Merrick, S.Wilkinson, C.Booth, S.Harrison, A.Gaddas, R.Scott, G.Sharply, G.Bralford, M.Newman, G.Hobson, D.Housman, T.Crook, M.B.Vickers, A.Pykett, S.Davenport, V.Giles, P.Cadman, P.Hobson, I.Hunt, I.Cowgill, 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 to [ghlbc@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:ghlbc@hotmail.co.uk)

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### **Additional Nature Sightings for November 2024**

As winter draws nearer dragonfly species become much scarcer so 5 **Common Darter** at Chainbridge NR Scrape (East) on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3 **Common Darter** at Lingham Lakes on the 13<sup>th</sup> was nice to see but was not unexpected. The Common Darter has previously been seen into December. Very few Butterfly species were noted in November with just a single **Peacock** at Neatholme Pit on the 11<sup>th</sup> and a late **Red Admiral** at Bellmoor Lake on the 26<sup>th</sup>. This **Grey Squirrel** was busy eating Rosehips on the reserve.

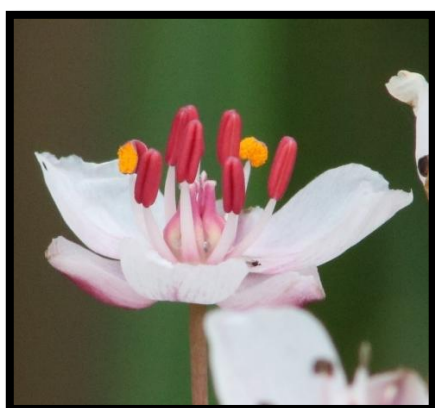


P Freeman, P.Cadman, I.Hunt, T.Pendleton, V.Giles, T.Tomlinson, G.Hobson, V.Bell, M.McCallum, S Harrison, Gary's Birdwatching & Wildlife Walks (What's App) plus Idle Valley Wellness Walks (What's App).

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## Common 'Pink' Flowers found at Idle Valley Nature Reserve

The following gallery of photos are just a selection of the many species of 'Pink' flowers that have been found over the Idle Valley NR over the past year so far. All participants of the various walking/wildlife groups are now taking time to record and photograph the wide variety of flowers which can be found throughout the year. It is great to learn from each other and learn to use a growing selection of online applications (Apps) as tools to help with flower identification. Books do still come in very handy because these AI applications are not perfect and can often throw incorrect identifications when trying to identify species. It is going to be 'Pink' flowers for next month so please send your images.



(Top left to right) – **Greater Bindweed** at Bellmoor Pits, 1st July 2024 (©M.McCallum). **Common Centaury** at Bellmoor Pits, Summer 2024 (©M.McCallum) and **Himalayan Balsam** at IVNR, Summer 2024 (©M.McCallum).

(Second row left to right) – **Flowering Rush** at the Boardwalk Wetland, 4<sup>th</sup> August 2024 (©G.Hobson). **'Wild' Water Lily** at Bellmoor Pits, Summer 2024 (©G.Hobson) and **Ragged Robin** at IVNR Cafe, 21<sup>st</sup> May 2023 (©G.Hobson).

(Third row left to right) – **Common Dog Rose** at IVNR, 4<sup>th</sup> June 2023 (©G.Hobson). **Milk Thistle** at Bellmoor Pits, Summer 2024 (©M.McCallum) and **Pink Campion** at IVNR on 16<sup>th</sup> May 2023 (©G.Hobson).

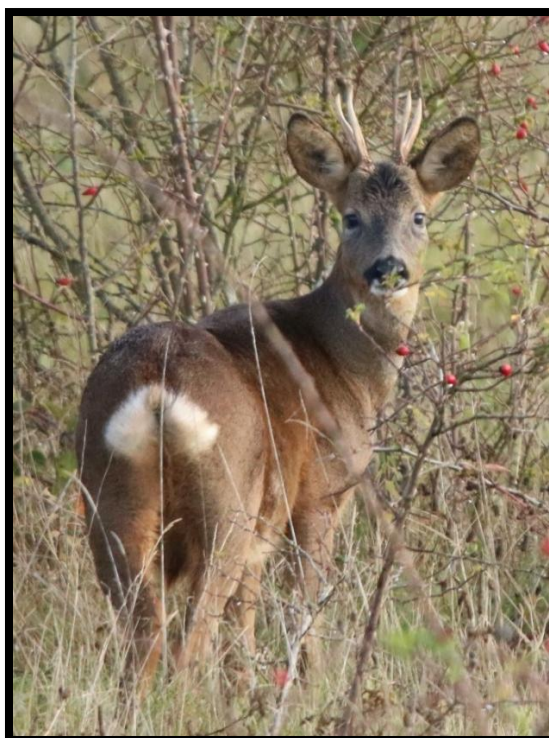
## **Roe Deer on the Idle Valley Nature Reserve**

### **Basic Facts**

The Roe Deer *Capreolus capreolus* is our most common native deer species. Found across the UK in woodland, farmland, grassland and heathland. It can grow to 1.3m in length, a shoulder height to 75cm, weigh up to 25kg and has a lifespan of 7-10 years. It tends to be solitary in summer but forms small loose groups in winter. It is protected in the UK under the Deer Act 1991. A fairly regular sighting at Idle Valley NR and most visitors should come across them browsing in a meadow, jumping a fence line or crossing a lake body.

### **Identification**

The male Roe Deer, referred to as the 'Roebuck', are easily identified. From a young age they will begin to grow antlers, usually three pointed, around November time. Initially these are covered in a velvet like skin which is lost during the following spring ready for the summer 'Rut' season. Males are slightly larger in size to females and have a smaller white bum patch.





The female Roe Deer, referred to as the 'Doe', is slightly smaller, does not have antlers and in most cases has a much larger white bum patch, something observers pick up quite easily at distance, see the image below of a group photographed by Tiln Wood.



### **Population**

Today, Roe Deer are abundant throughout much of the British Isles. They are strongly associated with woodlands and have increased in both population and distribution with the increase in woodland planting in the 20th century and strategic reintroductions in Victorian times. Previously, Roe Deer suffered almost catastrophic decline due to over-hunting and deforestation. Roe deer are not found in Northern Ireland.

### **Breeding**

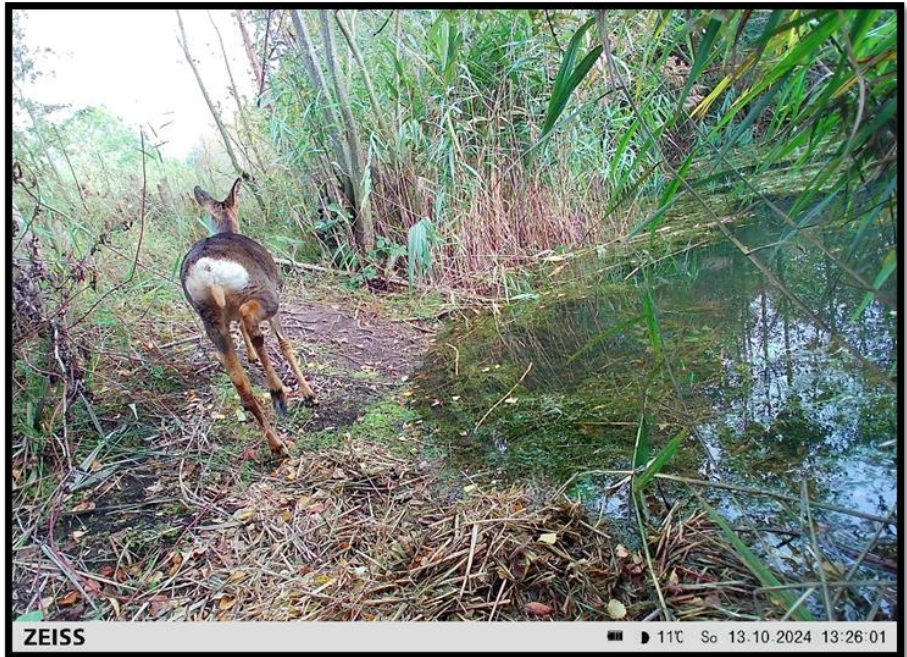
Mating occurs in July and August, but females delay implantation of the fertilised egg until January of the following year, so that the young are not born during the harsh winter months. Two or three, white-spotted kids are born in May or June. The young soon become independent and with luck thrive within their group over the winter and following spring.





### **Habits and Movements**

As well as regular sightings across the reserve, more evidence of the deer's presence is to be found easily. Their hoof tracks are left in the muddy pools, their obvious bark 'scratchings' usually seen on Willows where they have been browsing and we have even captured trail camera footage from within the Chainbridge NR Scrape Beaver enclosure. Roe Deer are frequently seen to cross water bodies and the river and can often be seen swimming which they do very well.





### **Pressures**

Roe Deer (like all deer species) are by their very nature 'browsers' and they do take much of the low lying vegetation within woodlands and plantations across the reserve and nearby farmland. This will have some impact on breeding birds and other wildlife, but we are not overrun by this species and animals do come and go from other nearby areas. There is plenty of browsing habitat, even within the larger woodland belts across the area, like Bellmoor/Bunker Woodland, Tiln Wood, Chainbridge Wood and Linghurst Wood on the northern edge, so the negative impact is fairly minimal.

### **Credits**

A huge thank you to the following for the use of their photos within this article. It is very much appreciated and gives the reader a better understanding of the life of the Roe Deer on the Idle Valley NR. Thanks to Mike Vickers, Vicky Bell, Stuart Davenport, Gary Hobson, Darren Housman and Jack Scarborough from NWT for use of the trail camera image.

**British Deer Society Leaflet** [https://bds.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Roe\\_Leaflet\\_web.pdf](https://bds.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Roe_Leaflet_web.pdf)

**Wildlife Trusts Website** <https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/wildlife-explorer/mammals/roe-deer>

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### **Next month's issue**

**What's On - February 2025 Events + Reserve News + Bird News for December 2024 + Additional Nature Sightings for December 2024 + Common 'White' Flowers.**

Submissions for inclusion in this publication can be sent to Gary Hobson via his email at [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/Photo 'WhatsApp' & 'Facebook' groups** linked to Idle Valley NR. Submit all Lepidoptera (moths and butterflies) plus Dragonfly & Damselfly sightings to [philip.cadman@sky.com](mailto:philip.cadman@sky.com)