



Registered Charity No. 1070744

FRIENDS OF RODLEY NATURE RESERVE NEWSLETTER

Summer 2024



Juvenile Kestrels

Photograph by Peter Humphrey July 2024

Latest News



Otter on Duck Marsh photo by Peter Humphrey

2022 had been the best year so far for daytime sightings of Otters with an adult and two juveniles seen on numerous occasions. In 2023 there were sightings in 10 months of the year with peak activity in February and two animals seen on several occasions. An adult and two juveniles were reported in April 2023 and three animals were also reported on two subsequent dates.

In sharp contrast sightings have been few and far between this year. However, the above photograph was taken from the Willow Path Hide on Wednesday 3rd July.

Nest Box Update



The Kestrels' new nest box proved very successful in its first year in 2022, five young fledging successfully. It was the same again last year with five young again fledging. It was looking like a repeat again this year with five eggs laid, one of which was all white and looking very different to the others.

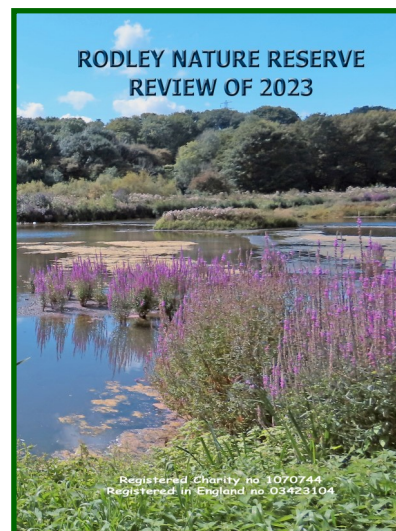
However, only two chicks resulted but both did fledge successfully. They were still doing well when the photo on the front cover was taken on 10th July

Visitors were able to follow the Kestrels' progress on the monitor in the centre. Unfortunately, images from the Barn Owls' box on the Scrubland were rather less clear but, like last year, seven eggs were laid though only three chicks could be seen.



At the time of writing this on 21st July one had fledged and two remained in the nest box.

Annual Review 2023



The 2023 Annual Review is now available. Members of the Friends of Rodley Nature Reserve are entitled to receive a free copy if they would like one. The cost to non - members is £6. Please ask one of the volunteers in the Visitor Centre if you would like a copy.

Work at the Dragonfly Ponds



Marsh area when first dug in 2008

The dragonfly ponds area is undergoing a major maintenance programme this year. The marsh area has been difficult to maintain and had become completely overgrown with reeds. It has now been cleared, using a digger, and the reeds placed to the north of the marsh, where they should grow to restore this habitat.



The next stage is to repair the liner. It will then become a large 'lake', measuring about 20 m x 15 m. This should encourage the Common Blue Damselfly to breed, as this is a species that prefers large bodies of water. Planting out this pond will include two native White Water Lillies. Some of the King Cup, which gave an amazing display this Spring, has been retained.

The next phase is to remove, as far as possible, the willow stump adjacent to the Beach Pond. This had grown so

close to the pond that it was pushing the liner down. After removal the far edge will be levelled and the pond refilled. This and the pond linked to it by a gravel strip will make a diverse habitat as well as an attractive feature.



The Woodhead pond will then be cleared of most of the reeds at the near side and at least 85% of the Water Soldier, thereby providing an area of open water. Following this, the ditch will be cleared entirely of Water Soldier at its north-western end; also of the reeds at its south-eastern end.

This leaves four other ponds in need of attention. These will be left until the Autumn to give the eggs of dragonflies (and other insects) time to hatch. There will then be a massive reduction of the vegetation, leaving it at the pond edges so that any aquatic animals can make their way back into the ponds. For example, all of the Water Soldier will be removed as well as about 80% of the Greater Spearwort. This is a major undertaking but hope that we (and the dragonflies) will all see the benefits in 2025.

Peter J Mill

Dragonfly Recorder

Nature Quest Day – Saturday July 20th

Our volunteer teams at Rodley had been working hard in the week prior to this event, getting everything ready to give our local families a wonderful day. The weather all week had been hot and sunny but the local weather forecasters were saying that it would break down into thunderstorms by Saturday. Would this be Groundhog Day like in 2019, when the day before our event it was 33 degrees on our thermometer at Rodley and then on our event day we had torrential rain all day? Happily, even though cloud was forecast, Saturday dawned warm and sunny and stayed that way all day, ensuring everyone had a wonderful experience.

It took over 30 of our wonderful volunteers, giving up their time on the day, to make sure we delivered a fun day filled with lots of nature activities. Many more volunteers had helped quietly behind the scenes during the week, ensuring everything was ready on time.



On the day we were joined by local experts who engaged the children in finding bugs, watching birds, dissecting owl pellets, learning the value of hedges, showing them how to identify our native wildflowers and grasses, taking part in The Big Butterfly Count



and seeing which marvellous moths had spent the night quietly sleeping in our moth traps. Some even got the opportunity to try and catch damselflies and dragonflies under the watchful eye of our dragonfly expert. We had a bee observation hive containing live honey bees and lots of fascinating fungi specimens for children to look at and touch. There was even a hat made from fungi which they enjoyed trying on!

Children also put on wellies far too big for them and jumped on the ground, pretending to be birds dancing on the ground in search of worms!! We had a few in our temporary compost bin to show them when the worms stayed firmly underground!



For the younger children we had a crafts area. They could work out how many legs an insect had, make paper bees and build Lego creatures or just sit quietly colouring in the shade.

Our very popular pond dipping ran throughout the day. Our volunteer dipping team worked like trojans to ensure everyone had time to have a go and catch some wonderful creatures before letting another family try. This was the most popular activity of the day and I'm sure all the pond creatures breathed a big sigh of relief at the end of the day when we all went home!

We would also like to give a big "thank you" to Rodley Cricket Club and William Merritt for allowing us to use their car parks on the day, which allowed more families to come and join in the fun.

Thank you for all your lovely, positive feedback throughout the day and also the comments we received from other visitors commending us for educating children and teaching them how to look after nature and its creatures. We hope you'll all come and support us next time.

Denese Swann

RNR Events Coordinator

Supervised Pond Dipping 2024



Our summer season of 'Supervised Pond Dipping' sessions has got off to a great start. From the beginning of June the reserve is running these sessions every Saturday and Sunday from 1.30pm-3.30pm for families to come along free of charge to explore the incredible creatures we have living in

our ponds. These sessions will be extended to include Wednesday afternoons during the school summer holidays.

This is a very popular activity with many families becoming regulars. We have found that it also attracts many new visitors, who are discovering the reserve for the first time. The success is due in the main part to the input from our amazing team of volunteers who support each session.

Each family is provided with a tray, kneeling mat, net and identification sheet and is shown how to use them safely and with respect to the pond-life. The sessions are as exciting for our volunteers as the children because we can never be sure what we are going to find and learn something new from each other every time! This enthusiasm is very infectious and it is lovely to see families learning and discovering together. It is common to find parents and grandparents as reluctant to leave as the children!

Some of our favourite finds include water scorpions, newt tadpoles (called efts which the children compare to axolotls) and dragonfly larvae (loved for the fact that they can squirt water out of their bottoms!). Other regular finds include greater and lesser water boatmen, diving beetles, three spined sticklebacks, damselfly larvae and of course the ever-popular tadpoles.

Anyone interested in joining our fantastic group of volunteers can get in touch via our website

[Volunteering | Rodley Nature Reserve | Rodley, Leeds](#)

Rachel Gander

Supervised Pond Dipping Coordinator

Edna's Retirement



Edna with her retirement present - a framed painting of two Pied Wagtails by Andrew Woodall. Pied Wagtail is her favourite bird.

Rodley Nature Reserve volunteer Edna Cowan has retired after over 20 years of loyal service working in the Visitor Centre shop. Edna, who will be 90 in October, first became aware of the Reserve after visiting a stall at Pudsey Carnival along with her husband David back in the early noughties. A Reserve leaflet caught Edna's eye and it wasn't long after that she and David became regular visitors enjoying the peaceful atmosphere and the friendly faces as they walked round.

They invested in a bird ID book and soon became avid birders recording their sightings which were lodged at the Visitor Centre. When David retired they were soon signed up as volunteers in the Visitor Centre doing regular weekend shifts serving teas, coffees and buns as well as promoting a friendly and welcoming atmosphere for visitors. Sadly, Edna lost her husband to covid four years ago but found solace at the Reserve and continued with her volunteering activities.

Edna said "I've got a lot more out of Rodley than I ever put in to Rodley. It

became a sanctuary at times and when I'm here it's so peaceful and at times an oasis and you don't have any troubles - it keeps me sane."

"I think it's time now that I had a bit of a rest although I'm planning a few holidays including a trip to Miami later in the year. I'm not going to leave the Reserve though; I'll be walking round recording and if I notice something that needs doing I'll report it - I could be the visitor from hell!"

Peter Murphy, Company Secretary and Trustee commented: "For many of our regular visitors Edna is the face of the Reserve. Whether working in the Visitor Centre or recording wildlife round the Reserve she always had time to talk to people and make them feel welcome - a rare quality".



Edna cutting her special cake

Edna's last day on duty was on Sunday 30th June and she will leave a huge gap but she is keen to promote the volunteering opportunities available at the Reserve which include Visitor Centre, habitat maintenance, education and pond dipping. Anyone interested in joining a very happy team should visit our website at the following address.

www.rodleynaturereserve.org

Uniformed Organisation Visits

Volunteer Brian Hargreaves has been organising and running evening visits for uniformed organisations and initially school visits for around 17 years and has decided to take a well earned retirement at the end of the current season. The visits involve various organisations such as Brownies, Beavers, Rainbows, Cubs, Scouts and Guides with ages ranging from 6 to 14 in groups as small as 6 or as large as 36.

Various activities are provided by Brian and his team including pond dipping, bird watching, bug hunting and tree and flower recognition along with a talk about nature/conservation and the history and work of Rodley Nature Reserve. Around 15 such visits are arranged each year mainly during the Spring and Summer school terms.

Not only do these visits provide a very enjoyable evening for the children they are also a valuable learning experience. As the Reserve receives a grant from Natural England for educational visits they also provide a valuable source of funding for us. A big thank you goes to Brian and his team for all their hard work over so many years. We will see Brian at the Reserve as he will continue to work as a volunteer in the Visitor Centre along with his wife Ella.

This means that we are now looking for someone to take over Brian's role as organiser for the 2025 season. If you think this is a volunteering role that would appeal to you please get in touch by emailing us at the following address.

info@rodleynaturereserve.org

Mute Swans



Keep a look out for ringed Mute Swans. Being a large bird the leg ring is of a reasonable size and it is usually quite easy to read the numbers and letter on it through binoculars once the bird is out of the water. On 29th May this year a pair of Mute Swans was recorded with seven cygnets. One of the adults was ringed and the details 512Y on the red ring could easily be seen. It would be nice to think that the bird had been ringed at some far distant place but it hadn't. It was actually ringed at Yeadon Tarn on 28th December 2016 as a 2015 cygnet.

Mute Swans usually start breeding at four years of age. Our records showed that this bird had been first recorded at Rodley on 31st January 2021 and on the Lagoon with two juveniles on 1st April 2022. It was possibly the same bird that was on the Lagoon with six cygnets on 22nd May 2022 and on the Duck Marsh with seven new cygnets on 15th May 2023 though no ring numbers were recorded on those occasions.

If you do see a Mute Swan that is ringed please try and get details of the colour of the ring, the number and the letter if you can so that we can check the birds history. Eight different ringed Mute Swans have been recorded on the Reserve in the last four years.



SUMMER/AUTUMN EVENTS

Moth Trap Opening	Saturday 24th August 10am	Join Dave Nesham to open the moth trap set the previous evening	Meet near Visitor Centre
Autumn Seed Trail	Sunday 29th September 10.30am to 2.00pm	An autumn family walk in association with Aireborough Rotary Club	Visitor Centre area and around the reserve
Halloween	Sunday 27th October Time to be advised	"Jump on your broomstick and come in fancy dress for some Halloween fun"	Visitor Centre area and around Poplar Field Wildflower Meadow

Reserve Opening Times
Wednesday, Saturday & Sunday 9am - 5pm (4pm Nov – end Feb)
Visitor Centre Opening Times
Wednesday, Saturday & Sunday 10am - 4pm (3.30pm Nov- end Feb)
Telephone No. on open days 0113 2040441

For Rodley Nature Reserve Trust Matters:
Trust Secretary:
 Peter Murphy
 Email: info@rodleynaturereserve.org

Visitor Centre Volunteers Coordinator:
 Louise Staniland Email: Istaniland17@outlook.com

Friends Membership:
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Education Bookings:
 Sue Henderson Tel: 0113 2298919

Newsletter:
 Peter Murphy

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