



Registered Charity No. 1070744

FRIENDS OF RODLEY NATURE RESERVE NEWSLETTER

Autumn/Winter 2025



Freckled Dapperling
Photo by Rachel Gander

Latest News

Following the decision to cancel our Nature Quest Day in July thanks to adverse weather the final Bat Night scheduled for Saturday 20th September suffered a similar fate. The weather forecast for the Fungus Foray on Sunday 19th October was also far from ideal but both the morning and afternoon forays were able to take place despite a wet afternoon. You can read more about this later in this Newsletter.

Sandwiched between two dry days with plenty of sunshine the Halloween Event endured a grey, damp day but this didn't deter our events team or the public and it proved to be a successful day with plenty of interesting costumes on display and much enjoyed by the children.

Work at the Gazebo



In our last Newsletter we showed a photograph of the gazebo with scaffolding around it and partially re-roofed. We also said we would provide further information about the work being done in this Newsletter.

The construction of the gazebo was one of three projects undertaken by our volunteers in 2014. It was completed in December of that year using reed from our own reedbed to

thatch the roof. Being close to the Education Pond this would prove an invaluable asset for school visits but would also be very welcome for any visitors caught in a downpour at this otherwise very open eastern end of the Reserve. The first lodger turned up in 2014 even before the work was finished – a Barn Owl which roosted in the eaves overnight for the remainder of that December. It was to become a popular site for roosting Barn Owls every year since.

Sadly reed doesn't last forever and it was decided to carry out re-roofing using cedar shingle tiles. Work was almost finished when this was written. Barn Owls have continued to use the site overnight while work was in progress and will hopefully continue to do so in the future.

A Visitor from Cheshire

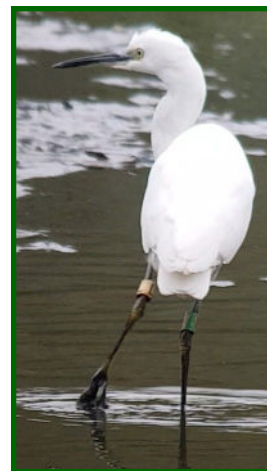
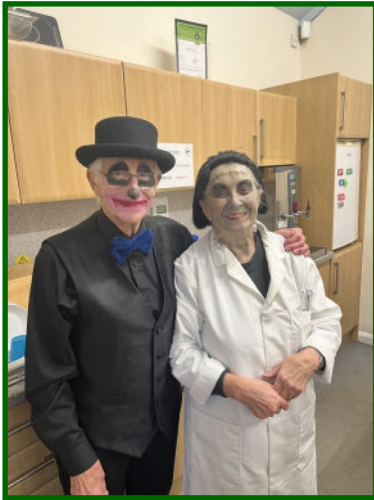


Photo by John W Cooper

Little Egrets are regular visitors to the wetlands but ringed birds are few and far between. However, the bird shown above, which was photographed on the Duck Marsh on 18th October, proved to have been one of a brood of five ringed in the nest at Hale Duck Decoy, Hale Cheshire on 22nd May this year by a member of the Merseyside Ringing Group.

Halloween Event Sunday 26th October 2025

A selection of photos from a successful day



Visitors to the tearoom were assured of a warm friendly welcome



One young visitor looks pleased with his pumpkin carving



Perhaps we should have made the skeletons a bit lower?



Don't look behind you!



Our expert pumpkin carvers were on hand to help the children



Friendly ghost poses for a photo with two young visitors

What to look out for this Winter

The summer visitors have now gone but winter brings a whole range of new species to the Reserve along with a few that we perhaps don't usually think of as winter visitors. This is the time of year when skeins of geese pass over the Reserve and ducks such as Wigeon, Goldeneye and Teal arrive on the wetlands. Large flocks of Redwings and Fieldfares fly over, a few hopefully dropping in to enjoy the berries in the hedgerows.



Redwing photographed by
Elaine Lessani

Water Rails can be seen all year round on the Reserve on any of the wetland areas but numbers are at their highest in the winter months with the arrival of birds from mainland Europe. You might not be lucky enough to see this secretive bird but you will certainly hear its pig-like squeal.



Water Rail photographed by
Peter Humphrey



Cetti's Warbler photographed by
Mandy Haxby

Cetti's Warbler first bred in Britain in the early 1970s and it has undergone a range expansion in recent years. It was first recorded on the Reserve on 17th December 2014 and is now regarded as a "Common Resident". Like the Water Rail it can be found on all the wetland areas; it is far from easy to spot and also has a very distinctive explosive call.



Linnet photographed by
Barbara Murphy

Away from the wetlands look out for small flocks of birds visiting Tim's Field for the abundant seed crop there. The very large flocks of Linnets that visited the field in years gone by are no more but counts of around 50 birds are still possible. Interestingly, this species only shows up when there is a seed crop on this field.

The local Chaffinch population certainly increases at this time of year with small flocks regularly seen visiting Tim's Field. In winter the British Chaffinch population swells with large

numbers of migrants arriving from north and north eastern Europe. A close relative the Brambling is still classed as a Scarce (Winter) Visitor on the Reserve and even the best years produce no more than a handful of sightings but it is one worth looking out for.

Alder and Birch trees along the entry road are good places to look for Siskins, another small winter visitor which likes to feed on the small nuts produced by these trees.



Chiffchaff photographed by
Chris Tordoff

We tend to think of the Chiffchaff very much as a summer visitor and while many breeding Chiffchaffs do depart for southern Europe and North Africa in the autumn increasing numbers are now overwintering and this is certainly the case here on the Reserve.

Although it does overwinter locally and close to the Reserve another small summer visitor the Blackcap is rarely seen here in the winter months. However, there was one very early record this year on 8th March so one to look out for. Interestingly, in the autumn our breeding Blackcaps depart for southern Europe and are replaced by birds from central Europe.

Celebrating 25 years: Our Memory Tree blooms with love for the Reserve.



Memory Tree

As part of our 25th anniversary celebrations we invited visitors to share their memories and feelings about the Reserve by adding a leaf to our Memory Tree.

Each leaf carried a handwritten message. From peaceful walks to encounters with wildlife and moments of calm, every note added a new layer to the story of the Reserve. Reading through them, one thing shined through, the deep affection our community feels for this landscape and the wildlife it shelters.

Thank you to everyone that took time to contribute. Together you helped our tree grow, just as the Reserve has flourished over the past 25 years.

Here's to the next 25 years of protecting, exploring and cherishing this wonderful place.

David Booth

Education Team

See back cover for some of the comments made by visitors.

Fungus Foray 19th October 2025



Parrot Waxcap photographed by
Rachel Gander

Our Autumn fungus forays held at the Reserve are always popular, so this year we ran two sessions which were pre-bookable through our website. Both sessions were quickly fully booked.

We are always at the mercy of the weather for our events and Sunday was no exception. The morning was mostly grey but stayed dry whereas the afternoon was very wet! Thankfully the weather didn't put off our visitors and the day was a great success.

Both sessions began with a search of Mike Fisk Meadow; led by our very knowledgeable fungi expert, Andy. There were only a few children among us, but they were very keen eyed and once they knew what to look for, were able to spot many species of waxcaps and bonnets. These included the Drab Bonnet, Common Bonnet, Browndge Bonnet, Parrot Waxcap, Blackening Waxcap and the Snowy Waxcap. Andy explained that the prevalence of waxcaps is an indication that Mike Fisk Meadow is recovering from the nutrient rich environment of the original sewage works and reflecting the fact that the Nature Reserve hasn't used fertilisers or pesticides in its 25 years as a reserve. The Parrot Waxcap (*Gliophorus psittacinus*) which was seen didn't display the usual strong colours as the green pigment is water

soluble. It can be a spectacular mushroom with varied rich colours mainly green and yellow with a shiny, slimy cap and stem.

In the afternoon session Andy had no difficulty enticing a group of 15 willing participants out of the visitor centre despite the pouring rain. Several people braved pulling down their hoods as we clustered around Andy to listen to the fascinating information he was giving us about each species of fungi found. They were not only visually very interesting but also had characteristic smells and Andy was asking the group to have a good sniff at the mushrooms being passed around.



False Artist's Bracket photo by
Rachel Gander

In the Coppice someone found a good example of Candle Snuff Fungus also known as Stag's Horn growing on rotting dead wood. Andy said it is being researched for its medicinal properties as it contains compounds that are anti-viral and active against tumours. It is also bioluminescent. Although the sky was gloomy it wasn't dark enough to be put to the test.

No one could believe two hours had passed, a testament to Andy's ability to keep his audiences captivated.

Rachel and Pragna

Events Team

Lapwings Take Flight at Rodley Nature Reserve



On Saturday 13th September Rodley Nature Reserve played host to the very first Leeds Lapwings birdwatching walk, marking an exciting start for this new community group aimed at younger people across the city.

Leeds Lapwings was co-founded earlier this year by Blane Watson and Ro Kisby – a Chartered Accountant and Community Organising Manager respectively – with a simple mission to make birdwatching more accessible, welcoming and sociable for people aged roughly 20-45. Their free, beginner-friendly walks aim to help more people to discover the joy of birdwatching, building on Leeds' strong community of local nature lovers,

Attendance is capped at 16 people per walk to keep things relaxed and personal. Thanks to Rodley's visitor centre, participants were able to borrow binoculars for the first outing – a huge help for those just starting out. Since then Leeds Lapwings has proudly announced a partnership with Opticron, who have generously donated five pairs of binoculars for future events.

Rodley was the natural choice for the group's debut walk, being Blane's local patch and one of Leeds most treasured reserves. The weather was kind - dry and bright after several unsettled days and spirits were high

as the group explored the trails and hides. Highlights included sightings of lapwing, little egret, teal, little grebe, red kite, gadwall and mute swan with cygnets. For many attendees it was their first time seeing some of these species up close, creating a real sense of shared excitement and discovery.

The afternoon finished with tea, coffee and cake at the visitor centre café where everyone enjoyed views of bluetits and great tits visiting the feeders – the perfect way to round off a memorable first event. It was here that Blane and Ro spoke with Emily Mustafa, a Consultant Ornithologist who was an attendee and has since kindly agreed to help deliver future Leeds Lapwings walks.

Since that inaugural event Leeds Lapwings have hosted four more fully booked walks at Golden Acre Park, Yeadon Tarn, Roundhay Park and Middleton Park. Each has been met with fantastic enthusiasm and feedback with the many returning attendees demonstrating that they "come for the birds but stay for the community" which Leeds Lapwings has created. For Blane, Ro and Emily, seeing the community grow so quickly has been rewarding.

Blane Watson

Co-founder – Leeds Lapwings



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:

Christine Cooper Email: ducksbeek@hotmail.co.uk
 78 Acres Hall Crescent, Pudsey, Leeds LS28 9DZ

Education Bookings:

Denese Swann

Email: events@rodleynaturereserve.org

Newsletter:

Peter Murphy

Events Coordinator

Denese Swann

Email: events@rodleynaturereserve.org



RODLEY NATURE RESERVE

X @ RodleyNR

Website: www.rodleynaturereserve.org