



Registered Charity No. 1070744

FRIENDS OF RODLEY NATURE RESERVE NEWSLETTER

Autumn 2020



Stonechat on Quinoa

Photograph by Barbara Murphy

Latest News

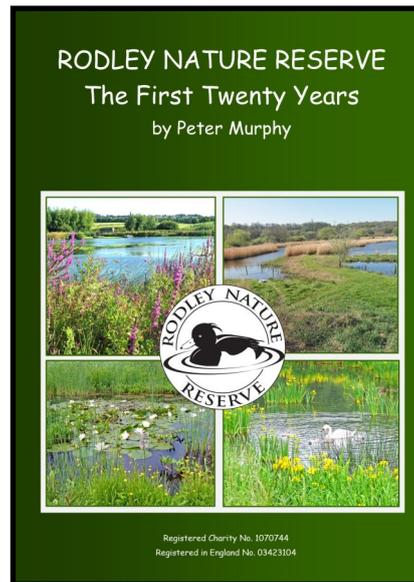
Sadly, we are unable to report on any events this year as there haven't been any thanks to Covid-19 and so our 20th anniversary in July passed off very quietly. As a result this Newsletter is very much about the wildlife and habitats.

Opening the hides, visitor centre and toilets seems a long way off at the moment and for the foreseeable future the Reserve grounds will continue to be open to the public just two half days each week - Wednesdays and Saturdays. Winter closing times will apply from the beginning of November and the open hours will be 12.00 to 4.00pm. It is still well worth a visit though as winter wildlife can be very good here but please remember to follow the social distancing guidelines and remain two metres apart from other visitors. Things will no doubt change over the coming weeks so keep checking our Facebook for the most up to date news.



Finally, we must thank all our volunteers who have worked so hard over this very difficult period and often in wet conditions looking after our visitors and maintaining the paths and habitats round the Reserve.

“Rodley Nature Reserve - The First Twenty Years”



Despite all the uncertainties with regard to Covid-19 we are still hoping to have this new book available for sale before the end of November. We will be making an announcement in due course on our Facebook and website. The book explains how the Reserve came into being and how it has developed year by year. There are colour photographs on nearly every page. It would make an ideal Christmas present for a Rodley “regular”. The price of the book is £10.

2019 Annual Report

Members of the Friends of Rodley Nature Reserve are entitled to a free copy of the Annual Report as part of their membership if they would like one.

The Report was published in March this year but due to lockdown some of you may not have had opportunity to collect your copy before the Visitor Centre closed.

If you would like a copy reserving please let us know by emailing us at

info@rodleynaturereserve.org.

Winter Visitors on the Wetlands

Although some of our ducks can be seen all year round, numbers often increase in the winter months with an influx of visitors from the continent. Some ducks, however, are very much winter visitors only. The Goldeneye is a classic example. Being a diving duck this species is only likely to be seen on the Lagoon and late winter usually produces the best counts. The first bird last year arrived on 10th November.



Late winter also tends to produce the best counts of Pochard but it can turn up from October and has been seen in every month of the year, though it is essentially a winter visitor here.



The first Wigeon can arrive as early as September and did this year but they quickly move on. Up to seven were reported in October.

The Lagoon is the best place to spot this species.



Teal have been recorded in every month but numbers are at their highest in the winter months. They can be found on all four main wetland areas though the Wet Grassland and Duck Marsh are the best places to look.



The Tufted Duck used to be a regular breeder here up until 2009 but the best counts have always been in the winter months. The record count of 122 was made in December 2010.



Quinoa

This grain crop is grown for its edible seeds and you may know it from supermarket shelves as a popular health food these days. Pronounced “Keen-wah” it originated in the Andean region of South America and was first used for human consumption between three and four thousand years ago. It is now cultivated in more than 70 countries.



But did you know that we grow it on Tim’s Field for the birds? It is usually the tallest crop on the field and the seed heads come in a range of colours from yellow through to red. It provides a valuable source of winter food for species such as Linnets, Goldfinches, Greenfinches, Chaffinches and Reed Buntings.

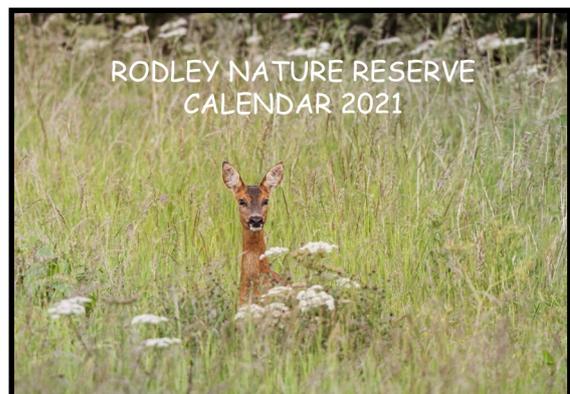
The Quinoa is also popular with another bird, the Stonechat. This species is a passage visitor at Rodley and the best time to see it is in September and October when birds are passing through on their way to their wintering areas. Some may be going as far as Spain and North Africa but others no further than the east coast. Tim’s Field is always the best place to look for them. They like to perch on the top of low bushes and the Quinoa provides an ideal perch for them. While they do feed on seed and

fruits such as blackberries their main food item is invertebrates and they are probably only using the Quinoa for perching purposes.



2019 was a poor year for Stonechats here but this year has been much better with as many as five spotted on top of the Quinoa.

2021 Calendar



Our 2021 calendar is now available for sale at a cost of £7.50 including postage. In normal times it would have been on sale in the Visitor Centre but at the present it is only available by post. Payment can be made by bank transfer or cheque. To order a copy you should email us at the address shown below telling us your address and stating your preferred method of payment.

info@rodleynaturereserve.org.

2021 Calendar Competition Winner

Congratulations to Ana Maria Thompson (age 9) of Horsforth who is the winner of our 2021 Calendar Competition. Ana's drawing of the bridge over the long ditch at the Dragonfly Ponds appears for the month of August. Ana told us she drew this picture because she remembered walking across the bridge and seeing lots of frogspawn in the ponds when she came to the Reserve with her grandparents. Ana will receive a free copy of the calendar.

Harvest Mouse Introduction An Update

Further releases of Harvest Mice have been made since the article in our Summer Newsletter. Five releases have now been made in total this year, four of these at the site near the Lagoon and the last at the beginning of October on the Scrubland. A total of 212 mice were released at the Lagoon site between May and August and 55 at the Scrubland site.



While you would be very lucky to see one of the mice it is worth keeping a look out for their nests at the edge of Tim's Field or in patches of bramble around the Reserve.

The Manager's Garden

The small lined pond in the Manager's Garden has attracted a range of wildlife over the years, from Mallard to Moorhen and Fox to Roedeer but it had become very overgrown and was in need of a facelift.



Volunteers have now started work digging out a much larger pond which should attract even more wildlife and provide some excellent views and photo opportunities from the hide when we are finally able to open it again.



An interesting discovery was made when the old pond liner was lifted - a network of Woodmouse tunnels and hundreds of acorns under the liner, the acorns having been gathered from under the big Oak tree which is just a few yards away. If this was the work of just a few mice they were obviously expecting a bad winter!

Nestbox Sponsorship Scheme 2020 Nesting Season

Thank you to everyone who supported the scheme in the 2020 nesting season. Not all boxes are included in the scheme as many now are in areas of the Reserve too difficult to access for regular checking. However, there is still a good range to choose from and the following sponsored boxes were successful this year with Blue or Great Tits using them.

Manager's Garden - Box nos. 1 and 2

Willow Path - Box nos. 114 and 117

The three Barn Owl boxes are always popular choices for sponsorship and one was certainly successful this year, but not with Barn Owls. The east facing box in the Yorkshire Water compound is used by a pair of Kestrels most years and a pair again nested successfully raising three young this year.



The pole box on the Scrubland was used by Barn Owls and birds were in residence from the start of year but whether they raised any young this year is unknown. Volunteers monitored the box early mornings and late evenings and though adults were seen regularly there were no reports of juveniles.

The Little Owl box in the Manager's Garden is another popular one for sponsorship. Regular monitoring of this site has been difficult this year due to hide closure but there have been a few reports of Little Owls in the vicinity.

Grey Partridge Introduction

Found on farmland and grassland, the Grey Partridge has undergone a massive decline of more than 80% since the 1970s. As such it is a red listed species - one of the birds of the highest conservation concern.



The habitat on the Reserve is ideal for them and small releases have been made here in the past, the last in 2017. At least one pair bred successfully the following year but sightings since then have been few and far between. But don't be surprised if you encounter a few birds this autumn and winter. Five breeding pairs were released in July and at the beginning of October 25 young birds were released, the majority on Tim's Field. There have been numerous sightings since then of up to eight birds together and we would welcome any further sightings.

Poplar Field Development



Work started last year on a project to create a wildflower meadow on an area of what was fairly uninteresting rough grassland on Poplar Field. Having taken expert advice a lot of time was spent preparing the site and seed and plug plants were introduced that autumn.



The result was a nice display of various wildflowers and good numbers of bees and butterflies taking advantage of them this year. Unfortunately, a lovely but very dry late spring resulted in a poor seed set for some species and more seeding is being done this autumn, particularly Yellow Rattle. This annual species is an essential component of any wildflower meadow as it suppresses excessive grass growth but the seed needs exposure to winter cold before it will germinate.

Other wildflowers being sown this autumn include Red Bartsia which performs a similar function, more Red Clover, Wild Carrot, Knapweed, Dog Daisy and Weld to augment that sown last year. More plug plants will include Wild Marjoram, Viper's Bugloss and Field Scabious, all wonderful butterfly and bee plants and plants that are doing well elsewhere on the Reserve.

This mini-meadow is going to provide a stunning display of wildflowers in years to come if this first year is anything to go by. It can only get better and will certainly increase the wildlife diversity of the area.

The development has been made possible thanks to a very generous donation from our good friends Andrew and Hilary Woodall and Suzanne Macauley in memory of their mothers Joyce and Audrey.





River Aire from the reserve

Reporting Your Sightings

With the visitor centre closed at the moment there is no access to the sightings books. However, we still want to hear about any interesting sightings you may have had on the Reserve during your visits.

You can report these by sending an email to:

info@rodleynaturereserve.org

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

<p>For Rodley Nature Reserve Trust Matters: Trust Secretary: Peter Murphy Tel: 0113 2930188 Email: pandbmurphy@ntlworld.com</p> <p>Visitor Centre Volunteers Coordinator: Claire Ducker Tel: 0113 2909365 Email: Claire.ducker@hotmail.co.uk</p> <p>Friends Membership Christine Cooper Email: rnwetlands@hotmail.com 78 Acres Hall Crescent, Pudsey, Leeds LS28 9DZ</p>	<p>Education Bookings: Sue Henderson Tel: 0113 2298919</p> <p>Newsletter: Peter Murphy</p> <p>Chair of Friends of RNR Barbara Murphy Tel: 0113 2930188 Email: pandbmurphy@ntlworld.com</p>
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