



Registered Charity No. 1070744

# FRIENDS OF RODLEY NATURE RESERVE NEWSLETTER

Autumn 2021



Acorns photographed by Barbara Murphy

## Latest News

You will no doubt recall that there have been attempts previously to develop the derelict Airedale Mills site (formerly Barker's factory) on the canal bank at the entrance to the reserve. Well it now seems certain that this will go ahead. 'Outline planning permission' for housing was granted 2 years ago and it is now planned to install a new swing bridge across the canal this winter starting in January and also to do work on Moss Bridge Road.



The canal will be closed for at least 2 months but access to the reserve will be severely impaired, probably for longer than this. The exact duration of this problem is uncertain but will probably be at least 3 months and will be dependent on progress and the weather. This is far from ideal!

We have been in discussions with Yorkshire Water and the developers over access to the reserve for the duration of the work. With enormous reluctance the trustees have decided that we will be unable to open the reserve to the public during this period. So the reserve will be closed for January, February and probably March too. The date for re-opening is not certain, so we may lose some of April.

Wildlife however can't be closed down so easily and fortunately we have been able to negotiate limited access during this period for our habitat volunteers to attend to important seasonal habitat management work and to maintain site security. So at least the wildlife will be looked after but regrettably not the visitors. The exact timetable for the developers work is uncertain but as things become clearer we will try to keep Friends and the public abreast of the situation.

The details of the new development are not yet known but the developers of the site have to apply for 'Full Planning Permission' – this hasn't happened yet. The outline permission sought to maintain the wildlife corridor along the river. This is crucial to the wildlife and the reserve. This is where you come in; details of applications when they are made can be found at -

<https://publicaccess.leeds.gov.uk/online-applications/>

Members of the public can comment and we hope you the Friends will scrutinise the application and make comments on maintenance and protection of wildlife and the riverside wildlife corridor and the effects on Rodley Nature Reserve. The trust will of course make representations but the more comments the better!

We are sorry this isn't good news but we will look forward to re-opening in the spring.

The Trustees

Rodley Nature Reserve Trust

## Bat Nights Summer 2021

In July, August and September we ran 3 bat nights and on each occasion we were blessed with a clear, still evening.

All our walks started from the Visitor Centre and we headed down towards the river. In August, near the Dragonfly Ponds, we were lucky enough to hear young Barn Owls calling and also see 3 chicks sitting on top of the nest box on the scrubland. Three other owls were seen flying, with one bringing back food for whoever called the loudest! Our visitors all had the privilege to see at least one Barn Owl flying on our walks in July and September.



As dusk fell, we observed Noctules, our biggest bats, flying over the river path. As it got darker, our detectors picked up Pipistrelles near the Education Pond and when walking past Tim's Field in August, a Tawny Owl flew silently, very low over our heads! We identified and saw Daubentons flying over the Duck Marsh and we finished each of our nights on the river bridge where we saw more Daubentons and Soprano Pipistrelles flying in the moonlight.

As the night skies were clear, Jupiter and its 4 moons were visible and the children especially enjoyed pointing out the constellations.

All our visitors said that they thoroughly enjoyed our bat evenings. Everyone left with some fabulous memories, and all couldn't wait to do it all again next year.

Denese Swann

RNR Events Coordinator

## Education Report 2021

Due to the Covid pandemic all education visits to the Reserve had to be cancelled in Spring 2020. We didn't restart until early summer this year, when, due to the easing of restrictions, we were able to welcome back two of our local primary schools, although under stricter conditions.

In June, children from Farsley Farfield Primary joined us and enjoyed walking around the Reserve, pond dipping and watching the wildlife.

Primrose Hill Primary visited us in July and enjoyed glorious sunshine whilst looking at wildlife, pond dipping and watching the birds.

We even squeezed in an extra visit from a new school to us, Hilltop Primary, and the Year 2 children learnt more about the topic of Habitats which they were studying at school.

We are hoping to welcome more schoolchildren back to Rodley next year and if you are a teacher at a local primary school, please visit the Education page on our website for more details. We are already taking bookings for 2022!

Denese Swann

Education Team

## Autumn Seed Trail Event – Sunday September 26th

Aireborough Rotary Club's annual Easter Egg Hunt at the Reserve has been very popular for a number of years, raising valuable funds for local charities. Sadly, due to Covid restrictions it could not take place last year or this year.

With an easing of restrictions it was decided to run a similar event in autumn this year and the answer proved to be the Autumn Seed Trail with the prizes not chocolate eggs but various fresh fruits. Families would be sent off on a marked route round the Reserve looking for baskets containing various items such as acorns, conkers, pine cones and beech nuts etc. finishing by the Dipping Ponds near the Visitor Centre and collecting their prize.

A pre-booking system was tried for the first time, giving families a start time to enable numbers to be spread out throughout the period of the event and avoid overcrowding at any point. This worked very well and will almost certainly be something to use again in the future for bigger events.

Once they had completed the trail there were plenty of stalls for families to enjoy with more activities for children such as "Hook a Duck" and rope making.



The weather had been unsettled and often windy in the few days running up to the event and, as we know from previous experience, wind and gazebos are not a good combination. However, the Sunday turned out to be a beautiful sunny day with light winds and temperatures reaching 20°C and the event proved to be a great success.



A big thank you must go to the Reserve's and Aireborough Rotary Club's volunteers who worked so hard on the day and to the Cricket Club for again allowing us to use their parking facilities.

## **Pie & Peas Saturday October 23<sup>rd</sup>**

Our popular Pie and Peas event returned in October and over fifty hungry visitors enjoyed quality pies with the option of peas, gravy and onions, in the warmth of our Visitor Centre.

Thank you to Harvey's Quality Butchers of Farsley for supplying the pies and a special thank you to our lovely volunteers who served up and distributed food on the day!

## **Fungus Foray Saturday October 23<sup>rd</sup>**

After enjoying our pie and peas, many visitors joined Andy and Ian for a walk around the Reserve on our annual Fungus Foray. It was a mild October afternoon and over thirty adults plus a small number of children spent two hours looking for and identifying various fungi found on the reserve.

The children were the best at finding the fungi in the long grass of our Wildflower Meadows and were always one step in front of the adults, waiting for Andy or Ian to come and identify what they had found. A beautiful yellow fungus, Golden Spindles was found in large quantities in the meadow and we believe this was a first for the Reserve.

Andy and Ian regaled us with many tales of fungi, some nice, some not. We learnt that many fungi were poisonous and we should never pick and eat them. We also found out that fungi were not plants nor animals but were their very own group, called a kingdom!

Time flew and before we knew it, it was 4pm and time for home. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed the afternoon and all went home a little wiser about the fungi that grows here in the UK.



Golden Spindles photographed by  
Meg Stone

Thank you to both Andy and Ian for a wonderful afternoon and for sharing their vast knowledge of fungi with us.

Denese Swann

RNR Events Coordinator

## **2022 Calendar**

Not got your calendar yet ? There were only a few left at the time of going to print. They are available in the Visitor Centre at a cost of £6 or we can post you a copy if you are unable to get down to the Reserve.



## Halloween Event Sunday October 31<sup>st</sup>

October so far had been very mild and dry but today started with heavy rain which drenched our volunteers setting up. This didn't dampen our spirits though and as the sun began to shine everyone's spirits lifted.

Once again, we were determined to celebrate Halloween with a spooktacular day, full of Halloween themed fun. All our children got a free pumpkin to take home, expertly carved by our creative volunteers. It was lovely to see all the children disguised in the most frightening Halloween costumes, and our volunteers joined in the fun too!



How many of you dared to walk our Skeleton Trail past the scary skeletons, gruesome ghouls and spooky spiders' webs? Did you crack our clues to find Grizelda, our chief witches name? Children were enthralled by her terrible tales, her bubbling cauldron and fiendish friends.

Throughout the day children enjoyed playing Halloween games outside. We hope you all took some frightening photos with our Halloween Face in the Hole Board! Children also made spectacularly spooky Halloween lanterns and spiders with many eyes, with a little help from our volunteers.

Calverley Beekeepers served up petrifying popcorn, scrumptious pancakes and a wicked, spicy hot apple drink and our Visitor Centre welcomed everyone with hot drinks and snacks.

We would like to thank all our fantastic volunteers for their hard work before and on the day itself and all our lovely visitors for helping to make the event a success.

Denese Swann

RNR Events Co-ordinator

### Visitor Centre

Following the recent enhancement to the exterior of our toilet/workshop block similar work has now started on the Visitor Centre. Stage 1 is now complete - thanks to Ashley Milson for donating his time, skills and equipment in rendering the northern elevation of the Visitor Centre ready for painting and art work.



Huge thanks to Ashley for a super job and if anyone needs any rendering or plastering work Ash is the man.

Ashley Milson, Plastering and Building Services, 07341 335800.

## Where do Goosanders go?

The Goosander is a common bird on the river here and the adult male is particularly striking with its mainly white plumage and dark green head. Family parties are frequently seen on the river in the spring and summer months and in September and October there were numerous reports of up to 12 birds together, all looking like females with their ginger brown heads. So where were all the adult males during this time?



Well, the Goosander is rather unique among British birds. The complete disappearance of the majority of adult males at the end of the breeding period was for a long time a mystery but it is now known to be due to a moult migration to the area of four large fjords in northernmost Norway. Having completed their annual moult they gather in Tana Fjord during September. The females moult within Britain after raising their broods to fledging. Migrant males start to return from Norway from late October to rejoin the females and first winter males.

In November and more so in December Goosanders start to gather on the Lagoon towards the end of the day. This always seems an occasion for socialising with groups of birds

dashing round in a very excited fashion. Most then settle down to roost on the Lagoon but have gone by early the following morning.



Goosanders nest in holes in trees and will use nest boxes. We have two such boxes in trees on the riverbank. Sadly, neither were used by Goosanders this year but a number of owl pellets found in one of them suggested that a Tawny Owl had been in residence.

## Yellow-browed Warbler A new bird for the Reserve

Described as "agile and restless" in one bird book and similar in size to a Goldcrest, the Yellow-browed Warbler is a rare autumn visitor from the Siberian taiga. It often first attracts attention by its loud penetrating high-pitched call and this was the case on the Willow Path on 16<sup>th</sup> October this year. The bird was again heard and seen briefly the next day.

September to November is the most likely time to see this species and most records are in trees and bushes along the east coast. You may not spot this species but keep a look out for the similar sized Goldcrests and even a Firecrest in the next few weeks.

## Final Event of the Year

### Christmas Craft & Gift Fair



**Saturday December 4th**

**11am—3pm or until all sold**

**Buy some early hand-made  
Christmas Gifts**

### Important Notice

The Reserve opening times shown below are subject to change at short notice due to the pandemic and Government restrictions. Please check our Facebook and Website for the current position before planning a visit

#### 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

#### For Rodley Nature Reserve Trust Matters:

##### Trust Secretary:

Peter Murphy Tel: 0113 2930188  
Email: pandbmurphy@ntlworld.com

##### Visitor Centre Volunteers Coordinator:

Claire Ducker Tel: 0113 2909365  
Email: claireducker53@gmail.com

##### Friends Membership:

Christine Cooper Email: mrwetlands@hotmail.com  
78 Acres Hall Crescent, Pudsey, Leeds LS28 9DZ

#### Education Bookings:

Sue Henderson Tel: 0113 2298919

#### Newsletter:

Peter Murphy

#### Chair of Friends of RNR

Barbara Murphy Tel: 0113 2930188  
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**Website: [www.rodleynaturereserve.org](http://www.rodleynaturereserve.org)**