



The LOWER URE  
CONSERVATION  
TRUST

News Sheet

Winter 11/12

## Activated Avocets

The receding water levels played havoc with our breeding avocets. Up to four pairs were on site during the early spring but only one pair fledged young on the Reserve this year.

The adults nested just off the reserve and then led their three-vulnerable downy chicks on a journey across the Masham-Nosterfield road and round the North lake before settling around the main lake to feed.

Prior to taking to the wing, the young were colour-ringed as part of a national survey by the British Trust for Ornithology and two have already been seen some distance away. Both were spotted at Alkborough Flats in north Lincolnshire, one at the very end of August and then two by 11th September. Several other colour-ringed birds from other parts of the UK, including Suffolk, were also present.

We await news of where they

might have gone but it will be intriguing to find out whether or not they return to Nosterfield in 2012. It will be worth giving each avocet an extra check to see if any are wearing the distinctive colour rings.



Supported through Defra's  
Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund

 [www.nosterfield.org](http://www.nosterfield.org)



Avocets and chicks (above) by Whitfield Benson



## Take a closer look!

**S**ix nationally scarce beetles, a similar number of uncommon UK flies and two species of wasp previously unrecorded in Yorkshire.

Just a few of the fascinating highlights from Nosterfield's most comprehensive survey of its invertebrate life.

The Invertebrate Survey of Nosterfield Nature Reserve has been produced by Martin Hammond. It's a 74-page report in which Martin logged every type of beetle, fly and aquatic invertebrate between August 2009 and October 2010. It was commissioned by the Lower Ure Conversation Trust with financial support from the Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund.

Martin had the assistance of several experts and other enthusiasts; they went to extraordinary lengths to ensure that nothing was left unrecorded. Hand-searches, pitfall traps, sieving, sweep-netting, bottle traps, hand netting and light traps were all used during the survey.

In total 635 invertebrate species were recorded during the period. Add that figure to other data, notably moth-trapping, butterfly and dragonfly records, and more than 1,250 invertebrate species have been recorded on the 58.5 hectares of the reserve since 1998.

In his summary, Martin says the survey, supplemented by the LUCT's lepidoptera recording,

has provided valuable information about the invertebrate diversity of this former aggregate quarry.

He adds, "There appears to be little data of comparable scope for former gravel pits elsewhere in the north of England, so Nosterfield Nature Reserve is an important focus for the recording and monitoring of invertebrate communities on mineral sites.

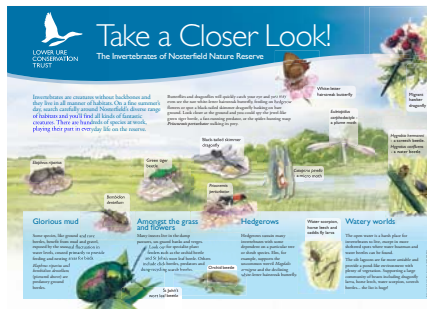
"The results of this survey provide ample evidence of the importance of Nosterfield NR for biodiversity. Notably, although design and management of the reserve has been focused strongly on the requirements of breeding waders, this approach has also produced high quality habitat for a wide range of

wetland and grassland invertebrates.”

For the record those nationally scarce beetles which Martin identified are as follows: a ground beetle, small diving beetle, seed-weevil, aquatic weevil and two types of rove beetle.

And those wasps being welcomed to God's county for the first time? - *Netelia ocellaris* and *Woldstedtius biguttatus* to give them their Sunday-best names. They are, apparently, parasitic ichneumon wasps.

New invertebrate interpretation board installed above the East Silt Lagoon



Gorse shield bug by Mike Samworth



Damselflies by Whitfield Benson

## Warden's Notes

Our keynote breeding wader species - lapwing, red-shank and little-ringed plover - had a relatively poor year. A dry spring and early summer failed to provide sufficient invertebrate food for growing young and the much-reduced water margins increased chances of predation by crows. Shoveler and gadwall attempted to breed but no ducklings fledged.

On a more optimistic note our resident pair of barn owls reared two young and both were ringed on 20th June. Tree sparrows bred in reasonable numbers in the nest boxes, a pair of enterprising swallows reared young above the door to the main hide and a quail called throughout the summer and may have bred though confirmation

is not possible.

On the rare bird front, Nosterfield attracted its by now almost annual record of a pectoral sandpiper, a common crane which arrived in late July remained into the winter and as 2011 began to draw to a close up to 61 European white-fronted geese, plus several tundra bean geese and single black-bellied brent and barnacle geese added extra spice to our winter bird watching.



## Horse before the.....

It was not badly corroded, it was made of iron, its size indicated it belonged to a working heavy horse and close inspection revealed it was from an off-hind hoof, as opposed to a front one. There was a chip on the front indicative of a horse in agricultural work coming into contact with something hard and heavy. But how long had the horseshoe been lying, undetected on the reserve before Simon Warwick, out on essential maintenance, stumbled across it?

To find the answer to that we went to three sources: a local farrier, trustee Christopher Bourne-Atton and "Robert", a West Tan-

field resident of "a certain age" who remembered seeing horses working the land. The latter was, conveniently, a chance encounter at the bar of the Bull in Tanfield.

The consensus is that the heavy horse was a Shire Horse, as opposed to a Cleveland Bay. He, or she, would be used for ploughing or pulling carts probably full of potatoes. The horse would have stood 17hh tall (for the unequine-types that is 68 inches at the shoulders) and they were last used on the land in the early 1950s before making way for tractors. But this shoe pre-dates that. Despite its good condition it was almost certainly pre-WWII

and probably cast by the horse during the winter time because the shoe had been attached with frost nails for extra grip.

So the horseshoe is, we believe, a relic from no later than the middle/end of the 1930s....a piece of agricultural history which has survived not only the passage of 70+ years but also quarrying.



North Lake by *Whitfield Benson*

## Looks good.....

Seen here, Karen giving up a Sunday, with her husband Dave, to help give parts of the reserve a facelift. Those observant enough to look INSIDE the main hide, as opposed to using it to look OUTSIDE, will have noticed the walls newly decorated with a colour described by the less sensitive as "cow pat green". Actually it looks great and we have Karen and Dave to thank for their efforts. They

were not alone. Others - Alex, Simon, Dave, Jill, Richard, Steve among them - pulled ragwort, painted doors, cleaned windows and made sure woodwork in the main hide was fit to withstand the oncoming winter.

Thanks to all of those who gave a helping hand. It is yet another example of the importance of voluntary effort in the work carried out by LUCT.



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