



July to
September
2026



Issue 112

Friends Newsletter



Thanks John

Peter, my husband, and I have known John for over 30+ years. We first met at Keyworth Walking Club where we used to chat whilst walking in the countryside. During one of these conversations I suggested he might like it at Rushcliffe Country park as a volunteer. I knew he was meticulous in everything he did and thought he would fit in well with the Friends. I was correct in that John took on every challenge in a serious way, often adding his own practical solutions to any problem, proving to be a very capable member,

He loved hedge laying and I enjoyed working with him. We were poles apart, him being very thorough and me being very slapdash. It took a while but I managed to get him a bit quicker and myself a bit slower. We made a good team. He was very guarded with his hedge laying tools which he purchased himself and kept them in tip top order. You were very honoured if you were allowed to use them! Being a knowledgeable person' he was very keen to show newer members how to lay a hedge with skill and precision.

Although I had known John a long while, he was a very private person. I did know he enjoyed a glass or three of red wine. This became apparent on a field trip in Derbys where we were dry stone walling. We were camping and, in the evening, decided to walk up Jacob's Ladder, but I believe the bottle went up also!! He enjoyed camping with the group at Wytham wood, the research woodland of Oxford University, he was very adept at helping build deer fencing and any task the Rangers set for us. This was then followed by an enjoyable meal at the local hostelry and a noisy return journey on the back of a van to watch for badgers. I don't think we saw many!!!

If John took on a job, he made sure he finished it to the best of his ability. As you know, latterly he undertook the job of editing the newsletter and did an excellent job producing it like a professional.

There is not much else I can add to this obituary but John will be sadly missed by all his Friends at the Country Park.

RIP John.

Dorothy

The Lake Reed bed 'restoration'

Over the past few years, the areas behind the bunds at the north west corner of the lake and the main reed bed at the south have become silted up. A decision was made to dredge out the area behind the bunds and the large area behind the reed bed, and deepen the rides through the main reed bed. This work was done in January by Mike and colleague from EMEC ecology (East Midlands Environmental Consultants – ecology), Mike worked at the Park on a years placement while at college so he knew the area they were dredging well.



North West end of the Lake

The bunds were originally created to break up wave action on the lake, thereby preventing erosion of the bank. The water behind them has proved to be a good breeding ground for frogs.

The bank area was protected and the area behind the bunds dug out with great care avoiding the grassy bank where our southern marsh orchids grow. This spring, the orchids have flowered well with more than 400 at the west end of the Lake.



As it was



As it is after clearing

The bund at the west end of the lake

Behind the reed bed

The area behind the main reed bed had silted up allowing the reeds to spread almost up to the wood. Normally this area is cleared manually each autumn and rides cut through the reeds, the last cut at the end of 2025 proved a mammoth task,

The clearing behind the reed bed was a bigger task, made more difficult by the wet weather, turning the area into mud. The area was successfully

cleared and the rides cut. The mud is now drying and proving to be an area of interest.

Two plants I had not recorded before have made a comeback Water Plantain, *Alisma plantago-aquatica* and Celery-leaved crowfoot, *Ranunculus scleratus* both were first recorded in in 2003.

The swans nested in the reeds down one of the rides, you can just see her in the picture.

Badger, muntjac and various water bird have been leaving prints in the mud.

I am continuing to survey and record the regrowth of these areas.



Before the work

After the work



Behind the reed bed on the Lake

Rosemary

Park Honey Now Available

Later than last year, but we now have a supply of honey for sale. The crop is not as plentiful as 2025, but the price has been held at £6.50 a jar.

Our smaller and later honey harvest is due to a combination of factors. One reason is 2 of our 3 colonies did not survive the winter. This compares to all 4 of our over-wintering colonies surviving the year before. There are many theories as to why this happened, but our winter loss did reflect the national average.



The Bee Team at Work

Additionally, the very wet spring hindered the build-up of numbers in our viable colony as bees could not fly to forage. Furthermore, queen mating flights in our newly created, 'rescue colonies' were also hampered.

Last year, we had a large surplus of capped honey ready to take from the hives in early summer. This year there was none at that time, so we have had to wait a little longer to remove some super boxes for honey extraction.

Spinning honey is a logistically tricky process and we are very grateful to Shirley and David Higgins for allowing us to use their kitchen for this. The electric motor we purchased a couple of years ago is an invaluable aid to spin the frames. I hope you didn't find too many sticky areas around the kitchen after we left, Shirley!

At the moment, we have 2/3 small colonies and hope there will be another limited honey harvest before we settle the bees for the coming winter. We will course be leaving them enough food to see them through.

Jan Riffat on behalf of the Bee Team.

May 2026 Nature Diary by Janet Crowe

March winds and April showers all rolled into one this month, with moody skies, occasional cracking thunderstorms and hail mid month, then later in the month some beautiful bright, sunny, mild days albeit with cool frosty starts. Total nearby rainfall was low at 12.5mm (11mm in 2025).

Rosemary noticed Badger paw prints in the mud at the back of the reed beds early in the month. They live in large underground burrows called a sett that they dig out with their strong front paws. Badgers are fond of earthworms and can eat several hundred a night, also taking birds eggs, small mammals, plants and fruit. If food is scarce they may venture out foraging in the day as well as the night.

Birdsong was plentiful with arriving Chiffchaffs, Blackcaps, Whitethroats, Reed Warbler and Willow Warblers together with our resident species. At least 5 Buzzards were seen high above the meadow calling and wheeling about, being mobbed by smaller birds attempting to drive them away.

Nest building continued, with at least two Coot nests at the edge of the reed bed and one on a floating island. A pair of Jackdaws loaded up with material from grass near the lake and the Mute Swan pair finally got down to business with a nest totally hidden away from view in the reed bed.

The first youngsters to appear, waywardly paddling rapidly around in all directions were Mallard chicks, a lovely big brood of 12, (reducing to seven by the end of the month). The following week the first Coot chicks arrived, just three young when I photographed them, both parents busily diving underwater for food morsels to feed them (the floating island brood was bigger).



Buzzard



Willow Warbler



Whitethroat



Male Blackcap



**Jackdaw with
nesting material**

Lots of tree blossom, Bluebells, Garlic Mustard (loved by Orange-tip butterfly caterpillars), Cuckoo flower (so named because it appears at about the same time as the Cuckoo arrives, also known as Lady's smock) and Speedwell came into flower. The Cowslips round the lake and in the meadow looked gorgeous.

Near the end of the month a male duck arrived with unusual markings that was subsequently thought to be a Mallard/Gadwall hybrid, a Brewer's duck, the type originally named, described and painted in 1822 by ornithologist John James Audubon.

Weather during early/mid May was more unsettled and the rainfall total for the month nearby was

37.5mm, the same as in May 2025. Towards the end of the month however, we had a hot, dry summery spell.

The Coot chicks that hatched in April are growing fast, the younger ones reliant on the adults for food and the older ones diving for their own.

Mallard ducklings too grew significantly and by the end of the month were almost adult sized.

Having hidden their nest away in the reed beds at the back of the lake the Mute Swans eagerly awaited cygnets appeared mid-month, seven cute little bundles of grey down.

The adults were soon back to their old habit however, of challenging their reflections in the visitor centre viewing window.

Butterflies were out and about, enjoying the sunny days, including Green-veined Whites, Holly Blues, Orange-tips, Peacocks, Brimstones and Speckled Woods.



Brimstone



Orange-Tip



Green-veined White



Peacock



Holly Blue



Speckled Wood

Warmer weather brought with it an abundance of different insects, Sarah capturing a great photo of an immature Red-eyed Damselfly one damp morning. Those, Common Blue and Blue-tailed damselflies and an emergent Black-tailed Skimmer dragonfly were seen on a later sunny morning. Apologies to all the Arachnophobes out there, but I just had to include the rather splendid Nurseryweb spider, so named because of the silky protective cover the female spins around her brood to protect them when they are about to emerge. They actively hunt their prey of flies and other insects rather than catching them in a web. Another interesting note is that the male apparently presents the female with a food gift but plays dead until she investigates, then quickly mates with her and beats a hasty retreat in case he becomes dinner.



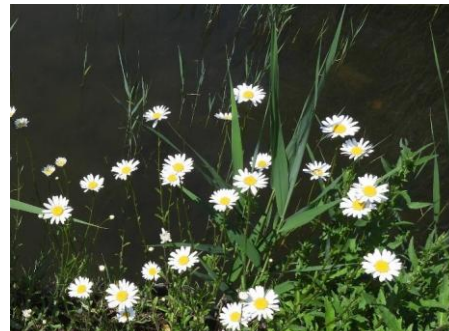
A Greenfinch was heard in the woodland behind the Staff/Volunteers car park and I got a brief sighting of one of the Reed Warblers singing in the reeds at the edge of the lake, too elusive for a photo on this occasion.



Bee Orchid



Cow Parsley



Ox-eye Daisies



Monkey Flower

2026 has all the signs of being a Painted Lady Butterfly abundance year. They are long distance migrators from North Africa, the Middle East and central Asia. Their caterpillars enjoy a wide range of foodplants including thistles, nettles, mallows, Vipers Bugloss and various cultivated plants. Peacock, Common Blue, Speckled Wood and Red Admiral butterflies were also seen.

Southern Marsh Orchids, Yellow Flag Iris, Oxeye daisies, Cow Parsley and Monkey Flower all started blooming on the lakeside margins during May and the meadows were amassed with Buttercups, daisies and flowering grasses. Appropriately named Bee Orchids started to flower too at the end of the month, in dry grassland habitat, their leaves shrivelling as the flowers open.

June 2026 Nature Diary

June started cool and wet, with some amount of showery rain most days, however the latter part of the month was just the opposite, with hot dry sunny days and temperatures soaring into the 30's. Nearby rainfall for the month was 41mm (26mm in 2025).

Rosemary and Mick performed a lakeside Orchid count on 9th June with the following results. Southern Marsh Orchid -1095 (1090 in 2025) and Bee Orchid -16.

No Common Spotted Orchids (however 7 were found by Rosemary elsewhere on the park)

In addition, Rosemary discovered Common Twayblade Orchid for the first time and Ranger Chris just managed to avoid mowing a Pyramidal Orchid.



**Common Twayblade
Orchid**



Pyramidal Orchid



**Southern Marsh
Orchid**

June 2026

There were plenty of Butterflies around in the hot weather including:



Ringlets



Meadow Brown

Meadow Browns, Ringlets, Commas, Large Skippers, Small Tortoiseshells, Painted Ladies, Green-veined whites, Large Whites, Common Blues and at the end of the month Sarah spotted Small and Essex Skippers too, plus a Cinnabar moth caterpillar that feeds on Ragwort.



Large Skipper Butterfly



Essex Skipper Butterfly



Cinnabar Moth Caterpillar (Sarah)

The photo of the Comma Butterfly with its dead-leaf like wings folded, show the white 'comma' mark on the underside which is thought to be an anti-predatory feature that confuses predator recognition.



Comma Butterfly

A number of Dragonflies appeared this month including Britain's largest, the colourful Emperor. These two were seen on the same day, with the male mainly patrolling up and down the southern end of the lake, seeing off smaller species such as the Black-tailed Skimmers and Four-spotted Chasers while the female was repeatedly settling on lake vegetation to lay her eggs.



Male Emperor Dragonfly



Female Emperor Dragonfly



Four Spot Chaser

A Broad-bodied Chaser was very active in the channel at the Northern end of the lake. Common Blue damselflies numbers increased this month too. Sarah got a superb shot of a Female banded Demoiselle, a stunning Damselfly with translucent greenish iridescent wings.



Female Banded Demoiselle

The cygnets continue to grow apace, there has been another clutch of ducklings and a juvenile Grey Heron has been around.

More soaring temperatures are forecast for early July, so let's see what the next quarter brings.

Janet C

Work Days

The Friends' work days will be held every Wednesday.

Meet at the Rangers' Office at 9.30 am.

New volunteers always welcome

Registered Charity No 1079665

REMEMBER THE WILDLIFE DAY AT THE PARK.

26 AUGUST 2026

10.00 – 15.00

**BIG CROWDS EXPECTED WITH LOTS TO DO
AND ENJOY.**