

Naturetrek 'Vale of Mowbray' Day Trip 25 June 2026

The day started in the car park at Nosterfield Local Nature Reserve at 9am. The previous few days had been a heatwave with the danger area being to the south of us, but with another dry and hot weather forecast, the day was fine-tuned to capture as much shade as possible using hides and tree cover, the walking distance was reduced and iced water was provided after walks. After introductions and a briefing we viewed the Main Lake from the viewing screen. The first thing that struck us was the cacophony of noise and the amount of young birds. The water level was lowish, exposing islands which were well populated by birds. We got to work identifying them. We spotted many ducks and geese including Tufted Duck, Teal, Mallard, Shelduck, Canada Goose and Greylag Goose. Waders were in evidence with Lapwing, Curlew, Redshank, Ringed Plover, Oystercatcher and Avocet. We found Great Crested Grebe on the nest and two Little Grebes in front of us. At one point many birds rose into the air and we watched a Sparrowhawk fly over the reserve.

We then set off to walk to the North Lake viewing screen. Enroute we could hear birds singing in the bushes but with the dense vegetation we only caught glimpses of some including Wren, Willow Warbler, Chiffchaff, Lesser Whitethroat and Blackcap. The insects were the stars on the walk. There were many damselflies and we discussed the identification of the Blue Damsels. Butterflies were active in the sun and sightings included Large Skipper, Small Skipper, Meadow Brown, Ringlet, Painted Lady and Small Tortoiseshell. A feature of the path and the day as a whole was the number of orchids. We were pleased to see good numbers of Common Spotted Orchids, lesser numbers of the darker Marsh Orchids, Pyramidal Orchids and a few Bee Orchids. Once at North Lake we added Little Egret to our bird list but the star was a Humming-bird Hawk-moth nectaring on the thistles inches from the hide windows. On the way back we diverted into the trees to see one of the three Thornborough Henges, thought to be Neolithic and Bronze Age 'ritual landscapes' dating from 3500 to 2500BC.

From the car park we drove the short distance to Nosterfield Quarry. We examined a Cherry tree near the picnic tables which was covered in moth bivouacs from which Bird-cherry Ermine micromoths were emerging. We then chatted over an early lunch before making use of the facilities and then checking the viewing screen looking over Lingham Lake. This has been neglected of late with vegetation being allowed to grow in front of the screen and along the edge of the lake. We did see a male Brimstone butterfly and an enormous orchid.

After lunch we drove to Nosterfield to save a walk, and set off towards Flasks Lake and the causeway to the Reedbed hide. The amount of wild flowers and the palate of colours along the causeway was wonderful. We checked the birds on the exposed mudbank in Flasks Lake and added Great Cormorant, and amongst the many Black-headed Gulls found both Herring and Lesser Black-backed Gulls. Sand Martin was hawking over the water and a few House Martins were over lakeside vegetation. At the shaded Reedbed hide we settled in to see what we could find. We were delighted to have three extended flying views of Bittern which was an absolute delight. We also had good views of two Marsh Harriers, a Kestrel flew past, and a perched view of Reed Bunting. Most of the time we were there a Reed Warbler was singing but it didn't show itself. After a magical session we eventually returned to our vehicles.

After our walk we drove to Masham where we sat in the Market Square at a café and enjoyed ice-creams. Our last stop was at Marfield Wetlands just outside Masham. We did a circular walk past lakes, alongside a stream, through a couple of fields and back through woodland, stopping at a viewing screen. At the water's edge we had good views of Four-spot Chaser and Black-tailed Skimmer Dragonflies, and a Banded Demoiselle. Grey Heron and Chaffinch were added to our bird sightings.

Eventually we arrived back at the car park where we reflected on a lovely day before saying our goodbyes and departing after an enjoyable day in the Vale of Mowbray.

Sightings

Whilst not everyone saw everything, the following list reflects sightings noted by group members during the day.

Birds (In order of finding during the day)(H – heard only)

Black-headed Gull
Mute Swan
Greylag Goose
Avocet
Lapwing
Ringed Plover
Coot
Moorhen
Mallard
Canada Goose
Tufted Duck
Jackdaw
Rook
Starling
Carrion Crow
Sparrowhawk
Shelduck
Wood Pigeon
Redshank
Curlew
Oystercatcher
Common Sandpiper
Teal
Great Crested Grebe
Little Grebe
Wren (H)
Willow Warbler
Chiffchaff
Lesser Whitethroat (H)
Blackbird
Little Egret

Garden Warbler
Blackcap
House Sparrow
Swallow
Swift
Collared Dove
Great Cormorant
Lesser Black-backed Gull
Herring Gull
House Martin
Sand Martin
Reed Warbler (H)
Bittern
Reed Bunting
Marsh Harrier
Feral Pigeon
Kestrel
Grey Heron
Chaffinch

Butterflies and Moths

Small Skipper
Meadow Brown
Ringlet
Large Skipper
Peacock
Small Tortoiseshell
Brimstone
Speckled Wood
Large White
Painted Lady
Red Admiral

Humming-bird Hawk-moth
Bird-cherry Ermine

Damselflies and Dragonflies

Azure Bluet Damselfly
Blue-tailed Damselfly
Common Blue Damselfly
Banded Demoiselle

Four-spotted Chaser
Blue Emperor
Black-tailed Skimmer

Other insects

Marmalade Hoverfly
Tree Bumblebee
Honey Bee
Common Carder bee
White-tailed Bumblebee
Greenbottle fly

Orchids

Common Spotted Orchid
Marsh Orchid
Pyramidal Orchid
Bee Orchid