

Day Trip Summary

Name of trip: Vale of Mowbray (GBR271)

Date of trip: Thursday 24 September 2026

Species highlights: Excellent view of Bittern in flight; a splendid perched Buzzard; close prolonged view of Goldcrest at eye level; A large, mixed flock of woodland birds; A large flock of foraging Linnets.

Summary of the day: The day started in the car park at Nosterfield Local Nature Reserve at 9am. The weather was very kind to us for late September. We had some light high cloud with the sun shining through on and off throughout the day, a very light southerly wind and excellent visibility. Whilst the temperature was round 10 degrees when we met, it rose steadily to 20 degrees by the time we finished. After introductions and a briefing we viewed the Main Lake from the viewing screen. The first thing that struck us was the low water level, however it concentrated the birds into a smaller area which was helpful. On and near one of the few islands we counted six Little Egrets and eight Grey Herons, some in the water with lovely reflections. Greylag Geese were in abundance and the ducks included Mallard, Wigeon, Teal and Tufted Duck. There were several Little Grebes in the water. Lapwing showed well and we found our first Curlew. Other waders were in short supply but we did find Common Sandpiper and Dunlin. A Kingfisher sped low over the water but only Alan spotted it.

We then set off to walk to the North Lake viewing screen. We kept adding species as we walked including Blackbird, Canada Goose, Chiffchaff, Gadwall and a splendid Red Kite. Butterflies included Red Admiral and Speckled Wood. Many Common Darter were seen, mainly on the path in sunny, sheltered spots. Due to the low water levels the Dragonfly and Dipping Pond was almost a scrape and provided little of note. We did, however, use the time walking around to discuss the merits and pitfalls associated with Artificial Intelligence (AI) on birding and some of the phone apps. Once at North Lake viewing screen we could see that the area in front was dry and the water was concentrated to our right. On a fencepost we enjoyed good views of a Buzzard and noted Stock Dove and Magpie. On the dry lake bed we watched a flock of circa 50 Linnets foraging and nearby several Meadow Pipits and a couple of Pied Wagtail.

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. Whilst five thousand years of history was interesting, our delight was to find a mixed flock of obliging birds and we spent some time watching Blue, Great, Marsh, Coal and Long-tailed Tits, Nuthatch and Treecreeper but the star was an obliging Goldcrest.

From the car park we drove the short distance to Nosterfield Quarry where we chatted over an early lunch before making use of the facilities. We then set off along the path to Flasks Lake. Of note was an Oak tree containing dozens of bright and varied Harlequin Ladybirds.

Once at Flasks Lake we checked the many birds on the exposed mudbank. We discussed gull identification as we watched Lesser Black-backed, Herring, Common and Black-headed Gulls. There was an abundance of geese, mainly Greylag with a lesser number of Canada Geese. Another addition to our day list was Great Crested Grebe. Next we moved through the trees towards the Causeway adding a Puffball to a growing list of Fungi sightings. Viewing Kiln Lake from the Causeway was not easy as the vegetation was overgrown, but we did manage to spy Cormorant and Mute Swan. Moving on we arrived at the viewing screen overlooking the Reedbed. The star was a Bittern which rose from the reeds and flew in front of us to land in another area of reed, completely disappearing again. We also heard a Cetti's Warbler but it didn't show. Walking back to the car park we added some more butterflies to our sightings including an obliging, although past it's best, Brown Argus.

After our walk we drove to Masham where we sat outside the Café on the Square and enjoyed a coffee (and one of us a piece of delicious coffee cake). 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. On the water were several Coot, a species we were surprised to have missed so far. On a wooden perch were five Great Cormorants and it was good to be able to see the different age plumages. For some the walk produced flight views of Green and Great Spotted Woodpeckers, and our last record was the song of Willow Warbler.

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.