

Lye Valley Wildlife News – What to see in the valley in WINTER

Judy Webb



Winter sunset with altocumulus clouds in the north fen area of the valley, 2nd Dec 2021

Winter is a time for stunning landscape views in the valley. Cutting and raking has mostly finished so everything is short and the 'bare bones' of the valley visible. Plants and insects are all asleep, frogs, toads, newts, lizards and slow-worms are all hibernating safe in the habitat piles. What is there to see? It's a good time to see birds, including some winter visitors. All photos in this newsletter were taken by Tony Gillie (thanks!).



Robins are with us year round and especially like to perch near where volunteers are working in the hope our cutting and raking will disturb some insects!

Grey wagtails (which have quite a lot of yellow on the undersides) have become much rarer in recent years (now Red Listed) so we are lucky one or two can be seen along the brook and ponds at the valley head; catching flies.





With the vegetation short it is easier for many birds to forage and of course much easier for us to see them. Many birds prefer open and short conditions as they can easily spot predators coming, like our valley foxes and cats. We often hear the distinctive call of green woodpeckers and just look at that green mossy coloured back and crimson head stripe!

At this time of year you may be lucky enough to see one of our rarest visitors, a beautiful white little egret, usually around the ponds at the valley head. This is really a type of heron and is a visitor from the Mediterranean area. They have a white crest and strikingly yellow feet –look hard to see these.



The newest bird sighting in the valley is this ring-necked parakeet, here snapped enjoying an apple. This is a non-native species that comes from tropical regions but escaped from captivity and is now naturalised, coping with our winters. Now found frequently in London parks.

Expect more brief news of wildlife sightings in the Valley in spring and just a date next year for your diaries - **Saturday 22nd May 2022, in the afternoon, Flowers of Rock Edge** – we hope to have a gentle stroll around to look at all the attractive wildflowers that have been increasing under the care of Friends of Lye Valley. Hear the story of seeding and which species now thrive. Details will be on our website <http://www.friendsoflyevalley.org.uk/> where you can see more wildlife in our **Facebook** and **Twitter**. **Merry Christmas!**