

Lagoon platform

The platform you are standing on was funded by Brighthouse Ladies' Circle and provides arguably the best view on the reserve: the lagoon.

The area was originally a gravel pit which was quarried and later re filled with pulverized fly ash during the life of the Elland Power Station, demolished in 1996.

Over time, the area has developed into a unique habitat which boasts the largest reed bed in Calderdale, supporting swathes of phragmites, or common reed as it is better known.

The diversity and cycle of wildlife here varies with the changing seasons, largely due to the variation in the depth of rainwater.

Spring sees amphibians such as frogs, toads and newts moving in providing a food source for herons and kingfishers with the vegetation providing a food source for the bird population in general.

Breeding waterfowl, such as coots, moorhens and little grebes, can often be heard at this time of year but not always seen due to the density of reeds. Canada Geese are among the more common sightings.

The lagoon fringe near the platform provides an ideal breeding ground for small birds such as wrens who can move undisturbed in the undergrowth.

Summer sees reed buntings and reed warblers move in to nest among the reeds along with blackcaps. Summer visitors such as chiff chaffs, swifts, swallows and house martins can also be spotted at this time of year. Tufted ducks, geese and the occasional whooper swan are also visitors.

In the autumn and winter months the occasional water rail and jack snipe have been spotted, along with more common species such as black headed gulls, teal, mallard, herons and a variety of small waders. You may be lucky enough to spot roe deer feeding in the reed beds.

To the left of the lagoon is a habitat called a wet woodland. This used to be part of the lagoon but the invasion of trees has changed its appearance over the years.

The lagoon itself needs annual maintenance to preserve its important status as a reedbed. Volunteers cut channels into the reeds to create

edges and openings where waterfowl and waders can feed in a secure environment.

Sadly, the lagoon suffers from an invasive species of pond plant called New Zealand Pygmy Weed, or '*crassula helmsii*'. During dry spells, the weed takes hold and forms a thick green carpet in the centre of the lagoon, blocking out natural light and impacting negatively on the aquatic life underneath and therefore reducing the food source for waterfowl.