

## North Cave Wetlands December 2025 Wild Things



It was a wet and windy day so I wasn't surprised that only six made it. The reserve was deserted apart from us and a couple of volunteers. After a soggy start the rain let up around 2.30 and it became pleasant if still dull. We didn't see any Bitterns though one had been seen flying that day. We saw flocks of tits, and a fly-in of larger birds but couldn't tell if they were Redwings or Fieldfares. We spotted a Woodpecker, heard Siskins and glimpsed a Marsh Harrier and a couple of Whooper Swans.



A skein of Pink-foots flew over, honking as ever but not in their usual V-shape. The wind and rain seemed to have flustered them. We went round the usual circuit then up Dryham Lane to the first of the new hides. All the birds of the reserve seemed to be hunkered here, close together on the spits, including the Redshanks, Wigeon and Lapwings above.



There were several huge fly-ups of Lapwings (above) which is a rare site these days with these birds in steep decline. We thought that might be it for anything approaching a murmuration, but no, we were in luck.

Around 3.30 the first Starlings began to fly in and we saw swirlings and ribbons to the west and north. Just as we were about to leave, Gary Day beckoned us over to the covered area by the gate. Far to the north west, beyond the lakes, came the best of the murmuration, distant but still awesome. It's recorded on the website that there were 80,000 Starlings seen that evening. How can they count?

A little research reveals that the birds can travel to suitable roost sites like these reedbeds from up to 30 kilometres. Why? It's surmised the swirls are to confuse predators, and that the density of roosts keeps the birds warm. And perhaps there is a social function? They are certainly not loners. Gary showed us his phone video of the birds leaving one bright morning. Incredibly noisy and very brief, maybe 30 seconds, against the twenty minutes or more of the evening descent. Navigation, despite the

huge flocks, seems to be connected to only the seven nearest birds to any individual. So there appear to be no leaders, just some collective instinct. Thanks to Nancy for sending the link at <https://www.birdful.org/what-causes-a-murmuration-of-birds/> for more information. This site has 35 posts about starlings including this unusual one below, which seems suitable for a Christmas message:

### **“Lessons from Starling Murmuration**

Watching a starling murmuration, people may find spiritual meaning in the lessons it offers us:

- Unity is strength – The power emerges from thousands of starlings sticking and moving together, not from any single bird.
- The whole is greater than the sum of parts – The murmuration as a whole exhibits abilities like swift coordination that no individual bird has.
- Embrace spontaneity – The flock changes direction instantly, with no hesitation. We too can find power in living spontaneously in the moment.
- Living in harmony – Each starling adjusts perfectly to its neighbours, never colliding. This represents the ideal of living in tune with those around us.
- Express your individuality within community – No bird is exactly like another, yet each finds its place in the flock.
- There are forces greater than us – The unity of the murmuration reflects a sacred interconnectivity of all life, transcending any individual.

These kinds of lessons can inspire us to live our own lives with greater harmony, wisdom, flexibility and community. The starling murmuration acts as a metaphor for the human values and practices that create spiritual meaning.”

### **Bird List from John Kitson:**

Carrion Crow	Mallard
Lapwing	Rook
Teal	Shoveler
Moorhen	Long-tailed Tit
Gadwall	Blue Tit
Tufted Duck	Great Tit
Pheasant	G.S. Woodpecker
Coot	Redshank
Cormorant	Herring Gull
Wigeon	B.H Gull
Mute Swan	Little Egret
Whooper Swan	Marsh Harrier
Siskin	Cetti’s Warbler
Great Crested Grebe	Starling
Little Grebe	Blackbird



Wigeon and Lapwings





Above: Hazel Catkins and a Little Egret among the ducks

Below: Nancy laughs at the rain and we watch in vain for a Bittern in the Turret Hide.  
HK December 2025

