

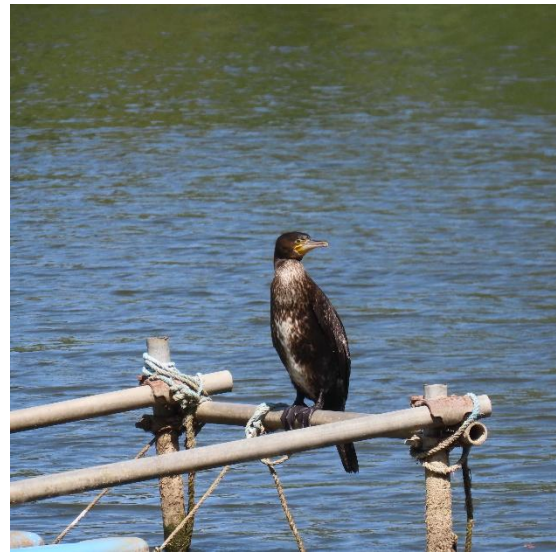
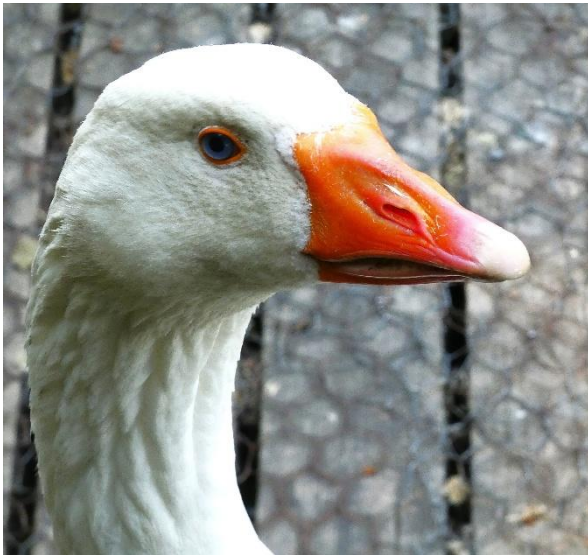
Sugar Mill Ponds August 2026

A new site for us, which offered tranquillity and a breeze beneath the trees to give respite from this summer's relentless heat. Plenty of benches too, just a few fishermen, and within metres of the Aire and Calder Canal. Most of the group managed to catch a flash of one of the two kingfishers resident there, though most birds were lurking at this time of year, quietly moulting while at their most vulnerable. We saw a few dragonflies, mainly hunting Brown Hawkers, too busy to pose for photos.

A site with interesting history and this sculpture, called *Breaking the Mould* by Andrew McKeown, created in 2000 as part of a national environmental regeneration scheme called 'Changing Places'. Variations of this sculpture by McKeown are in other regeneration sites around the country, the concrete representing industrial moulds and the steel seed pod showing nature breaking free from the site's industrial past.



Former hand-dug clay pits, this site became a brickworks, then housed a sugar mill, then a glucose factory, then became a storage site for the nearby Croda factory. By the 1990s it was a derelict mess but various funding sources, with particular efforts from local community and angling groups, restored the site to its current nature reserve status, with two ponds and some fen and reedbeds. We walked around both ponds before taking a short walk down the canal towards Rawcliffe Bridge.



Above: David's picture of a farmyard goose sharing the pond with a juvenile cormorant.

Below: David's close-up of a Common Darter and below that a Red-eyed male Damselfly guards its territory on a Waterlily leaf.



Over: A Common Plume Moth and what is probably the caterpillar of a plume moth;
Water Boatmen in a huge conglomeration. These are gentle herbivores eating algae and plant debris. The males can 'sing' by rubbing their legs and genitals together. These numbers suggest it's the start of their second annual mating season. Sadly for us they

only call at night, producing one of the loudest songs in nature relative to their size, loud enough to be audible across bodies of water. Now that, to paraphrase Chris Packham, would be worth paying your u3a subs to hear.





Above: Speckled Wood and a Holly Blue, both second broods. The Holly Blue should be called the Ivy Blue at this time of year, as it takes advantage of late-flowering ivy rather than early-flowering holly for the first brood's larvae.

Below left: a large Swan Mussel, a freshwater filter feeder that helps keep pondwater clean. Used for bait by carp fishers and a favourite food for otters.

Below right; a Buff-tailed Bumblebee nectars on wild Angelica, a marginal plant of slow-moving water.



Over: some of the plants by and in the ponds clockwise from top:

Yellow Water Lily; an exotic pink variety of Water Lily; Branched Burweed; Perennial Sowthistle; Amphibious Bistort; Water Mint.

Last pages: White Water Lily; some of the group by the Aire and Calder Canal; Reeds by the lake.

Report HK, pictures David Lepper and HK

