



News Release

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Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust welcomes first record of breeding success in the county for Little Egrets

Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust, which is currently celebrating its 50th Anniversary, has today announced that its Besthorpe Nature Reserve in the Trent Vale, has been confirmed as the first breeding site in the county for Little Egrets.

In June and early July, a total of 16 Little Egret chicks were located in nests at the reserve, situated beside the River Trent near Collingham, Newark. The birds were found during a long-term study of Grey Herons at the reserve and following their discovery each Egret chick was fitted with a special coloured ring to help with future monitoring and research. The ringing operation was carried out by volunteers from the North Notts Ringing Group with support from the British Trust for Ornithology.

The Little Egret is a small, white heron which feeds on small fish and crustaceans. Once a very rare visitor from the Mediterranean, Little Egrets are now a common sight around the coasts of southern England and Wales as they expand their range, possibly due to climate change.

Speaking on behalf of Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust, Head of Estate Management Charles Langtree said: "The discovery of breeding Little Egrets at one of our Trent Vale Nature Reserves was very exciting. As this was the first confirmed breeding site for the county we decided to keep the news under wraps until the chicks had fledged safely, but now that they have left their nests, we want to share the good news so that people can help us with tracking the birds once they leave the reserve."

Speaking on behalf of the North Notts Ringing Group, Adrian Blackburn, who initially discovered the birds said:

“Little Egrets first nested in the UK in 1996 on Brownsea Island, Dorset. Since then they have gradually expanded their breeding range northwards but mostly near the coast. The latest information available suggests there are less than 700 breeding pairs in the UK so the discovery of at least eight pairs breeding in the Trent Vale at Besthorpe is significant. As usual they are breeding alongside a well established colony of Grey Herons. As far as we know these Egrets are the most northerly inland breeding birds in the UK and it will be interesting to monitor the birds’ northward expansion in Nottinghamshire and beyond.”

Mr Langtree added: “The support of North Notts Ringing Group and the BTO in ringing the chicks is invaluable and we are now asking birdwatchers and local residents to let us know if they see the chicks. Each bird has a special coloured ring on its leg with a number which should be clearly visible for people using binoculars. If people can see the numbers on the rings, these sightings of Egrets or Herons should be reported to Jim Lennon on 07900 608 437.

For photos and video of the ringing please contact Erin McDaid at Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust on 0115 958 8242 or 07734 573862

Adrian Blackburn of the North Notts Ringing Group can be contacted on 01777 706 516 or 07718 766 873

Further information:

- The chicks are now being spotted around the villages of Besthorpe and Collingham
- In 2012 just over 100 Little Egret chicks were ringed in Britain & Ireland
- Little Egrets can be seen regularly at a number of other nature reserves in Nottinghamshire, including the Attenborough Nature Reserve south-west of Nottingham.

Notes for Editors

1. Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust, a registered charity, manages over 70 Nature Reserves throughout the county of Nottinghamshire. It advises local authorities, community groups and landowners on nature conservation issues, and makes a major input into decision-making on planning matters and other issues.

2. The Trust is part of a nation-wide network of local Trusts which work to protect wildlife in town and country - The Wildlife Trusts. The Wildlife Trusts now boast almost 800,000. For more information please see our website: www.nottinghamshirewildlife.org