

Friends of Weir Wood

OPEN DAY

3rd July 2016

The day started grey and showery. But by late morning it had cleared and the afternoon was fine and sunny. We estimate that some 100 people came during the day. It was nice to meet people who had never been to the reserve before and to see so many children and young people. It was good to tell them about Weir Wood and our activities and to see their pleasure in seeing the wildlife. A number of visitors joined our society and several kindly gave donations to support our work.

The activities included: bird watching; a display of moths; information and refreshments; pond dipping; bird ringing; snakes and reptiles and nature trails.

From the view point and the hide visitors enjoyed the revelation of seeing birds through telescopes. We had: 3 young Common Terns just about to fledge from one of the rafts being fed by the adults; Great Crested Grebes sitting on nests; Mandarin Ducks; Ravens; Great Spotted Woodpeckers; Goldfinches; Buzzards and Marsh Tits among others.

The moth display included some impressive specimens. Those present at the end of the day enjoyed releasing them back into the wild.

The bird ringing demonstration was set up at the reed bed in Willet's meadows. During the day 3 Kingfishers, a Tree Creeper, several Reed Warblers and a range of other birds were measured and ringed. It is a privilege to see such iconic birds up close in the hand. When the radio calls came through to say that, for example, a Kingfisher had been netted visitors hurried from the car park all the way to the ringing site to see it.

The pond dipping was as entertaining as always. The children, of all ages, liked the anticipation of what they might catch and the excitement of seeing such a wide range of strange creatures spill out into their viewing trays. We learnt that Greater Water Boatmen swim on their backs and Lesser Water Boatmen swim on their front. The experts helping with the identification were very patient, informative and encouraging.

During the day a number of Grass Snakes, Slow Worms and Lizards were caught. They were exhibited for a short time and then released back into the meadows.

We had cut trails through the high grasses in the fields in Willet's Meadows and put out identification boards. It made a nice afternoon walk with the added pleasure of recognising the butterflies, insects and flowers.

I spent some time with an extended family from Russia. They were very keen on the birds and we entertained ourselves trying to work out the Russian names for the ones they saw. Гусь, pronounced "gus", means goose while поганка means grebe - and curiously it also means toadstool. The Russian name for a kingfisher is зимородок which translates as winter birth.

One family was doing a planned walk which happened to pass the car park. They popped in to see what was going on. I met them again at the end of the day. They had abandoned the walk and had

thoroughly enjoyed the serendipity of discovering the open day. Similarly some cyclists stopped off for a break and got involved. They had the advantage that they could cycle quickly between the car park and the meadows when new birds were netted.

Our open day was generally felt to be a success and it will be run again next year. Please watch out for the date.

All the hard work and contributions of the many helpers was greatly appreciated by everyone - a big "thank you" to you all.

Tom Howard-Jones

Photos by Bob Johnson and Richard Lowe.

09 July 2016



Information, refreshments and moth display at the car park.



Bird watching from the view point and the hide.



Bird ringing demonstration at the reed bed in Willet's meadows.



One of the Kingfishers ringed during the open day.



Another one of the Kingfishers.



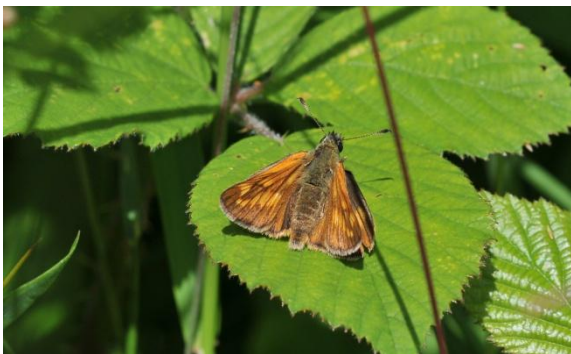
Dipping at the pond in Willet's Meadows.



Common Froghopper



Azure Damselfly



Large Skipper



Lilac Beauty Moth