

Friends of Weir Wood Newsletter

Newsletter No. 79

Winter '17/'18

Welcome!



FRIENDS 2018 AGM – Friday March 16th

Our AGM has been confirmed for Friday March 16th and as usual we will start with the formal AGM business at 7:15pm, followed by a **Guest Speaker at 8pm**.

For 2018, I am pleased to announce that Nick Aplin, Chairman of the Sussex Fungi Group, has kindly agreed to give us an illustrated talk on fungi. It was Nick who led our October Fungi Foray walk so brilliantly. He is an expert in his field, and those that attended will vouch for how much he knows, and how well he puts the information across. His talk will be illustrated with photos and include some of the fungi found at our foray in October. (See Fungi Foray Report below).

Illustrated talk on Fungi (Focusing on Sussex)

If you thought that fungi were boring, think again. When you find out the life cycle of some fungi, you will be totally amazed. I found out there are species that grow under water, and their spores are even water spread! Not everything looks like a mushroom!!

**Community Centre, Hartfield Road,
Forest Row, East Sussex, RH18 5DZ**

Tea & Coffee will be available in the break

Everyone welcome

Admission - donations appreciated

(doors open 7pm)

Fungi Foray on 15th October - Report

We had a good turnout with a mix of our members and Sussex Fungi Group members many of whom were already knowledgeable about fungi. This helped, as in just 3 hours walking through the study area, Nick identified 59 species, so passing of information on what was being found was vital.

Many fungi are saprophytic on willow and alder which we have in abundance, many of our trees are old and growing in water which proved to be a rich habitat. Some species Nick found were new or rare in Sussex, some even unusual and rare in the UK, so these were exciting finds. (The full species list seen is on our website).

The fungi walk was very well received by those attending. We will try and see if we can organise another Fungi Foray with Nick in 2018, probably in the Autumn.

ESCC contract renewal for 2018/19

I am pleased to be able to announce that East Sussex County Council (ESCC) have advised they will be renewing the Weir Wood contract with Southern Water in April for another 12 months and we will keep our regular Rangers.

Members' Spring Flowers & Birds Walk

We intend having our usual Spring walk event for members. We have decided to have a slightly earlier date of **Saturday 28th April** to try and see the bluebells closer to their best. We will have the same timetable, leaving the hide car park at 9:15. The first part of the walk will take us into our woodland study area for spring woodland flowers and bluebells. We hope to also see some spring nesting birds before returning back to the car park for a short break. (Bring a flask)

The second part of the walk at approx.11:00 will be over Whillet's to have a look at the meadows, pond and reed bed, returning back to the car park for around 12:45.

No need to book, just turn up. Please wear stout walking shoes or boots as the paths could be wet/muddy and are uneven in places.

Open Day – Sunday 8th July 2018

We have decided on a date of Sunday 8th July for our Open Day, and will take the same basic format as last year, with the usual bird ringing & pond dipping. Further details to follow.

Membership Renewal 2018

Your membership of The Friends of Weir Wood Society is due for renewal from 1st January 2018.

If you receive a printed copy of the Newsletter by post you will be sent a renewal request slip with it. Please let us know if you are willing to switch to e-mailed Newsletters in the future.

If you receive your Newsletter by email you will be sent a reminder with it. For the coming year we will also be issuing e-membership cards by email to those who are happy to receive their Newsletters that way. This will save us significant costs and effort.

You can print your own copy of your membership card or store it on your phone so that you can show it if needed.

The annual membership fee is still only £3 per person. Please let the Membership Secretary know if you would like information on how to pay by Bank Transfer.

Any additional donation you are able to make will be much appreciated and will greatly help our important conservation work. Thank you and best wishes for the New Year.

by Tom Howard-Jones

Reed Bunting roost counts

In winter we have been getting increasingly large numbers of Reed Buntings coming in to roost at Whillet's reed bed.

On 18/12 a count of 271 made by myself & Alastair Gray was the third highest Reed Bunting count for Sussex since the 1980's according to the Sussex Ornithological Society. The reed bed is also attracting a wintering Water Rail.

This shows how important our nature reserve reed bed is for local wildlife.

by Bob Johnson

Little Grebe – Up to 2 reported regularly throughout period, with 4 on 8/10 & 6/12.
Great Crested Grebe – Regular (counts over 30), 57 on 6/10, 53 on 8/10, 48 on 16/10, 43 on 21/10, 55 on 28/10, 64 on 29/10, 52 on 5/11, 62 on 13/11, 82 on 18/11, 60 on 26/11, 35 on 3/12, 70 on 12/12 & 14/12.
Cormorant – Regular (counts over 25), 50 on 15/9, 46 on 17/9, 41 on 21/9, 46 on 4/10, 27 on 6/10 & 8/10, 58 on 16/10, 38 on 5/11, 29 on 18/11, 41 on 26/11, 66 on 12/12, 73 on 14/12.
Little Egret – Up to 2 from 13/9 to 4/10 but with 3 on 20/9 & 2/10, 1 on 8/10 & 1/12.
Grey Heron – Up to 2 throughout period (counts over), 3 on 13/9, 6 on 29/9 & 6/10, 12 on 8/10, 5 on 19/10, 4 on 27/10, 5 on 5/11, 3 on 8/11, 18/11, 26/11 & 1/12, 4 on 8/12, 12/12 & 14/12.
Mute Swan – 2 on 8/10 & 3/12, 2 on 12/12 & 14/12. **Bar-headed Goose** - 1 on 15/9, 16/9 & 26/9.
Greylag Goose – Regular (counts over 50), 145 on 15/9, 198 on 16/9, 103 on 21/9, 134 on 25/9, 117 on 19/10, 55 on 21/10, 209 on 22/10, 128 on 27/10, 100 on 30/10, 98 on 5/11, 100 on 8/11, 126 on 13/11, 154 on 14/11, 140 on 19/11 & 24/11, 169 on 26/11, 212 on 1/12, 164 on 3/12, 164 on 3/12, 150 on 6/12, 207 on 8/12, 155 on 10/12, 145 on 12/12, 170 on 14/12, 201 on 17/12, 70 on 26/12. There has also been a Canada/Greylag hybrid.
Canada Goose – Regular (counts over 15), 50 on 13/9, 295 on 15/9, 335 on 16/9, 139 on 21/9, 156 on 25/9, 60 on 29/9, Up to 55 from 19/10 to 22/10, 31 on 30/10, 19 on 18/11, 94 on 12/12.
Egyptian Goose – Up to 2 intermittently (counts over), 8 on 21/9, 15 on 26/9, 5 on 2/10, 3 on 6/10 & 22/10, 4 on 26/10.
Mandarin - Regular (Counts over 5), up to 11 from 13/9 to 21/9, 22 on 29/9, 15 on 1/10 & 2/10, 7 on 4/10, 8 on 8/10, 25 on 27/10, 14 on 28/10, 10 on 30/10, 12 on 31/10, 24 on 5/11, 10 on 8/11, up to 12 from 14/11 to 24/11, 14 on 30/11, 6 on 3/12, 25 on 6/12, 11 on 10/12, 22 on 17/12, 9 on 23/12.
Wigeon - 1 on 25/9, up to 2 from 24/11 to 1/12, 4 on 12/12. **Pintail** – 1 on 13/11, 3 on 19/11, 1 on 6/12.
Gadwall – 1 on 25/9, 5 on 8/10, 1 on 9/10 & 26/10 then up to 2 regularly until 4 on 31/10, 7 on 5/11, 6 from 8/11 to 1/12, up to 9 on 3/12 & 6/12, Up to 12 from 8/12 to 14/12, 13 on 17/12, 12 on 20/12, 7 on 21/12, 4 on 23/12.
Teal – Regular (counts over 10), 14 on 20/9, 16 on 21/9, 17 on 25/9, up to 28 from 29/9 to 2/10, 13 on 5/10, 8/10 & 19/10, 24 on 13/10, up to 25 from 22/10 to 28/10, 30 on 29/10, 40 on 13/11, 16 on 14/11, 15 on 17/11, 12 on 19/11, 19 on 24/11, 24 on 26/11, 41 on 1/12, 30 on 3/12, 27 on 6/12, 17 on 8/12, 35 on 10/12, 25 on 14/12, 33 on 17/12, 14 on 23/12.
Mallard - Resident (counts over 25), 52 on 13/9, 49 on 15/9, 43 on 16/9, 30 on 2/10, 66 on 22/10, up to 71 from 26/10 to 5/11, 61 on 18/11, 26 on 26/11, 72 on 30/11, 51 on 1/12, 44 on 10/12, 36 on 14/12, up to 26 from 17/12 to 21/12, 39 on 23/12.
Common Pochard - 4 on 29/10, 2 on 6/11 & 14/11, 1 on 10/12 & 14/12 with 2 on 11/12, 7 on 16/12.
Tufted Duck – Regular throughout period (counts over 3), 4 on 25/9, 7 on 19/10, 4 on 22/10, up to 5 from 26/10 to 30/10, 7 on 31/10, Up to 9 from 5/11 to 14/11, 4 on 16/11 & 24/11, 10 on 20/11, 6 on 30/11, 4 on 1/12 & 6/12, 7 on 3/12.
Goldeneye – 1 on 1/12. **Goosander** – 1 on 5/11.
Shelduck – 1 on 3/12. **Shoveler** – 2 from 29/9 to 2/10, 1 on 30/10, 2 on 5/11, 1 on 8/11 & 26/11.
Sparrowhawk – 1 on 16/9, 4/10, 13/10 & 5/11, 2 on 6/11, 1 on 8/11, 13/11 & 23/11, 1 on 8/12, 11/12, 21/12, 26/12 & 29/12.
Kestrel – 1 on 13/9, 21/9, 25/9 & 8/10, 2 on 16/10 then 1 regularly until the end of the period.
Common Buzzard – 2 regularly throughout period (counts over), 3 on 20/9, 4 on 4/10 & 5/10, 3 on 8/10 & 16/10, 5 on 10/10, 13 on 28/10, 5 on 5/11, 8/11 & 19/11, 3 on 16/11 & 18/11, 6 on 26/11, 4 on 14/12.
Osprey – 1 on 4/10. **Red Kite** - 1 on 22/10.
Pheasant – Ubiquitous - No significant counts received, numbers artificial so not generally counted.
Water Rail - 2 on 15/12, 1 on 18/12, 21/12 & 29/12.
Moorhen – Resident (Counts over 3) – 4 on 13/9, 15/9 & 20/9, 5 on 16/9 & 29/9, 7 on 27/10 & 5/11, 6 on 31/10 & 16/11, 8 on 13/11, 9 on 18/11 & 26/11, 7 on 19/11, 10 on 24/11, 8 on 1/12, 9 on 10/12, 4 on 14/12, 5 on 20/12.
Coot - 1 on 13/9, 14/9 & 16/10, 1 regularly from 26/10 to end of period (counts over), 2 from 17/12 to 23/12.
Common Snipe – 2 on 25/9, 3 on 26/9, 6 on 29/9, up to 12 from 1/10 to 4/10, up to 14 from 5/10 to 13/10 with 15 on 8/10, up to 16 from 16/10 to 5/11, 9 on 8/11, 5 on 13/11, 7 on 16/11, 12 on 17/11, 10 on 18/11, 8 on 19/11, up to 6 from 24/11 to 3/12, 12 on 6/12, 2 on 8/12, 10/12 & 21/12.
Lapwing – Regular (counts over 15), Up to 16 from 14/9 to 25/9, 40 on 29/9, 46 on 4/10, up to 28 from 5/10 to 13/10 with 35 on 8/10, up to 39 from 16/10 to 27/10, 47 on 28/10, 33 on 29/10, 23 on 31/10, 31 on 5/11, up to 47 from 8/11 to 24/11 with 51 on 20/11, 36 on 1/12, up to 60 on 3/12 & 6/12, 83 on 8/12, 21 on 10/12, 31 on 14/12, 30 on 17/12, 40 on 21/12.
Green Sandpiper - Up to 4 from 13/9 to 8/11 then up to 3 until 10/12. **Redshank** - 1 on 3/12, 6/12 & 8/12.
Common Sandpiper – 2 from 13/9 to 20/9, 1 on 21/9 & 22/9, up to 3 from 25/9 to 1/10, 2 on 2/10, 1 on 8/10 & 21/10.
Black Headed Gull – Regular throughout the period (counts over 40), 76 on 15/9 & 25/9, up to 52 from 6/10 to 30/10, 59 on 31/10, 207 on 17/11, 168 on 18/11, 264 on 19/11, 147 on 24/11, 140 on 26/11, 340 on 1/12, c.1200 @ roost on 12/12, 250 on 14/12, 56 on 17/12, 500+ roost on 20/12. **Common Tern** – 1 on 15/9.
Common Gull – 1 on 26/10 & 5/11, up to 2 from 16/11 to 8/12 but 3 on 18/11, 20 on 12/12, 11 on 14/12, 40+ roost on 20/12, 1 on 21/12, 4 on 23/12. **LBB Gull** – 3 on 14/9, 2 on 15/9 & 25/9, 1 on 12/12 & 20/12.
Herring Gull – (counts over 2), 19 on 15/9, 3 on 25/9, 15 on 5/11, 4 on 16/11 & 18/11, 40 @ roost on 12/12, 47 on 14/12, 50+ roost on 20/12. **GBB Gull** - 2 on 13/11.
Stock Dove – 4 on 15/9, 3 on 21/9, 7 on 8/10, 27/10 & 31/10, 13 on 5/11, 4 on 6/11, 15 on 8/11, 7 on 16/11 & 18/11, 4 on 24/11, 2 on 26/11, 4 on 14/12, 12 on 21/12, 1 on 23/12.
Wood Pigeon – Ubiquitous (counts over 40), 733 fly-over on 16/10, 269 on 22/10, 1635 on 6/11, c100 on 16/11 & 18/11, 180 on 17/11, 250 on 17/12, c100 on 23/12. **Collared Dove** – 3 on 6/11, 2 on 3/12.
Tawny Owl – 1 on 16/10, 1/11 & 16/11, 1 on 15/12.
Kingfisher – up to 2 regularly throughout period (counts over 2), 3 on 9/10, but suspect 4 exist a pair at each end of reservoir.
Green Woodpecker – 3 on 25/9, 1 on 8/10, 1 on 6/12 & 24/12.
Gt Spotted Woodpecker – 1 on 10/10, 1 from 27/10 to 31/10 then up to 2 regularly (counts over), 3 on 5/11, 18/11 & 23/12.
Sand Martin – 20 on 13/9, 1 on 15/9.
Swallow - 26 on 13/9, 6 on 17/9, 375 on 20/9, 100 on 21/9, 20 on 25/9, 6 on 26/9, 40 on 29/9, 20 on 1/10.
House Martin - 6 on 13/9, 60 on 17/9, 100 on 21/9, 3 on 29/9, 20 on 1/10, 371 on 4/10.
Meadow Pipit - 2 on 25/9, 1 on 4/10, 5 on 6/10, up to 47 on 8/10, up to 25 on 16/10, 2 on 22/10 & 5/11, 21 on 6/11, 1 on 8/11 & 16/11, 3 on 18/11, 2 on 26/11, 1 on 8/12. **Skylark** – 3 on 16/10.

Grey Wagtail – 3 on 15/9 then up to 2 regularly seen throughout the period.
Pied Wagtail – Up to 2 regularly throughout period (counts over), 3 on 14/9. 4 on 15/9, 12 on 25/9, 7 on 26/10, 4 on 27/10, 8/11 & 18/11, 10 on 20/11, 4 on 26/11 & 14/12. **White Wagtail** - 1 on 8/10.
Wren - Regular (counts over 5), 6 on 8/10. **Duncock, Robin** – Regularly reported. No counts over 5.
Blackbird – Regular (counts over 5), 7 on 6/11, 11 on 19/11, 6 on 14/12.
Stonechat – 3 on 8/10, 2 on 16/10, 2 on 18/12.
Song Thrush – 4 on 16/10, Up to 2 on 19/10, 27/10, 8/11 & 16/11, 3 on 5/11, 10 on 6/11, 18 on 19/11, 7 on 3/12, 6 on 14/12.
Redwing – 1 on 8/10 then regular (counts over 5) 59 on 16/10, 27 on 26/10, 60 on 28/10, 6 on 30/10, 84 on 6/11, 16 on 8/11, 30 on 16/11 & 18/11, 60 on 3/12, 10 on 8/12, 7 on 18/12, c45 on 20/12, 82 on 29/12.
Fieldfare – 4 on 28/10 then intermittently (counts over 2) 10 on 6/11, 30 on 16/11, 12 on 19/11 & 23/11, 40 on 3/12, 3 on 6/12, 50 on 23/12, 26 on 29/12. **Mistle Thrush** – 1 on 4/10 & 16/10, 3 on 6/11, 1 on 8/11, 2 on 16/11 & 14/12, 1 on 29/12.
Chiffchaff - 1 on 14/9 & 15/9, 10 on 17/9, 6 on 22/9, 3 on 23/9, 5 on 25/9, 1 on 1/10, 2 on 15/10, 16/10 & 30/10.
Blackcap - 1 on 15/9 & 25/9. **Goldcrest** – 11 on 17/9, 1 on 23/9, 5 on 25/9, 4 on 3/10, up to 3 from 8/10 to 22/10, 2 on 5/11 & 19/11, 1 on 8/11 & 18/11, 2 on 6/12, 3 on 24/12.
L.T. Tit – (counts over 2), 3 on 15/9, 5 on 17/9, 6/10, 29/10 & 5/11, 4 on 31/10, 14 on 8/11, 6 on 14/11, 4 on 16/11, 10 on 26/11, 6 on 1/12, 7 on 3/12, 4 on 6/12, 6 on 14/12, 8 on 21/12.
Marsh Tit – Up to 2 reported regularly (counts over), 3 on 26/12.
Coal Tit – Up to 2 reported regularly from 15/10 (counts over), 4 on 17/9, 3 on 8/11, 26/11, 6/12 & 14/12.
Blue Tit – Common in good numbers. (10 Regularly at feeders), 11 on 5/11, 15 on 18/11, 14 on 19/11, 27 on 6/12.
Great Tit – Common (5 Regularly at feeders).
Nuthatch – 1 on 21/9, 2 on 8/10, 1 regularly from 26/10 onwards.
Tree Creeper – 4 on 17/9, 1 on 29/9, 15/10, 26/10, 28/10, 5/11, 8/11, 16/11, 26/11 & 20/12 to 23/12.
Jay – Up to 2 regularly throughout period. **Magpie** – Resident (counts over 5), 6 on 31/10.
Jackdaw – Occasional (counts over 4) 5 on 15/9, c200 on 17/11, c100 on 18/11, 24 on 6/12, c100 on 10/12, 40 on 21/12.
Rook – 2 on 16/10, 10 on 18/11. **Raven** – 1 on 20/9, 25/9, 8/10, 5/11 & 13/11, 4 on 18/11, 5 on 19/11, 2 on 17/12.
Carrion Crow – Resident in low numbers (counts over 5), 10 on 18/11.
Starling – (counts over 5), 250 on 4/10, 17 on 16/10, 275 on 26/10, 30 on 31/10, 88 on 6/11, 29 on 8/11, 96 on 17/11, 150 on 23/11, 13 on 8/12, 50 on 18/12, 8 on 24/12, 475 fly-over on 29/12.
Chaffinch – (counts over 5), 11 on 22/10, 16 on 26/10, 13 on 28/10, 6 on 31/10, 6/11, 8/12 & 14/12, 10 on 19/11, 8 on 17/12.
Greenfinch – 4 on 8/10, 1 on 6/11, 26/11 & 17/12.
Goldfinch – Regular (counts over 5), 12 on 8/10 & 26/10, 26 on 16/10, 46 on 22/10, 8 on 28/10, 6 on 8/11, 10 on 16/11, 7 on 19/11, 14 on 20/11, 6 on 26/11, 17 on 17/12.
Siskin – 4 on 8/10, 2 on 6/11, 7 on 19/11, 2 on 26/11, 6 on 18/12.
Lesser Redpoll - 26 on 8/10, 67 on 16/10, 3 on 22/10 & 28/10, 30 on 26/10, 1 on 6/11, 2 on 16/11, 36 on 19/11, 4 on 3/12, 5 on 17/12.
Bullfinch – 1 on 25/9 & 6/10, 3 on 8/10, 8 on 16/10, 5 on 22/10, 2 on 27/10, 4 on 5/11, 9 on 6/11, 1 on 8/11, 18/11 & 26/11, 3 on 3/12, 2 on 6/12 & 9/12, 1 on 14/12 & 21/12, 3 on 26/12.
Brambling - 1 on 9/12, 3 on 17/12, 1 on 28/12. **Hawfinch** – 7 on 16/10, 3 on 25/10 & 6/11, 8 on 3/12, 1 on 20/12.
House Sparrow – 10 on 3/12. **Yellowhammer** - 3 on 6/11 & 3/12.
Reed Bunting – 4 on 16/10, 26 on 10/11, 6 on 26/11, 3 on 21/12, 35 on 27/12 (Reed-bed roost counts - 70 on 28/10, 109 on 30/10, 113 on 9/11, 103 on 23/11, 100 on 3/12, 171 on 8/12, 193 on 15/12, 271 on 18/12, 162 on 24/12, 235 on 29/12).

Nature Reserve News**Winter 2017**

Whillet's Meadows Grass Cutting: In the last newsletter I advised both meadow bridges had been fitted with new decking, were now operational for vehicles, and we could look to arrange meadow grass cutting. However, we were not able to find a contractor that could cut and remove the cuttings at reasonable cost. We therefore had to rethink the problem. We could get the cutting done at a reasonable price, it was the collection and removal that was expensive. Leaving the cuttings laying on top is not okay for a flower meadow. The cuttings act as a mulch which is to the detriment of the wild flowers which compete best in low fertility soils, so collecting any cuttings was necessary.

In the past we had to cut a 100% of the meadow, as we needed to make enough hay to pay for the work. But, in an ideal world, cutting only 50% of each meadow is best overall for wildlife. This gives fresh low areas in spring for annual plants but also leaves uncut areas that carry overwintering insect eggs etc, and gives winter seeds and cover for small animals. Also, not all plants benefit from being cut down to the ground every year. This management plan gives a 2-year cut cycle. We therefore decided to trial and see if we could use our volunteers to hand rake the cuttings into piles, and then use a land rover and trailer to pick up the piles and just transport them to the meadow edge rather than taking them off site. We eventually made just a few large piles at the meadow edges which we hoped would also act as wildlife hibernaculum for snakes and small mammals.

During October we completed 50% of Meadow 1, and a little less than 50% of Meadow 2, and probably only 25% of Meadow 3. We purposefully did not want to cut more than we could clear, which would have been counter-productive. The result of the trial proved this would be a feasible way to manage the meadow, although hand raking is hard work and relies on having a good number of willing volunteers. It will be interesting to see if we notice any beneficial change in wildlife numbers by adopting this new meadow management system.

Other Grass cutting & Picnic area: We have been grass cutting in other areas as well as Whillet's. Some of the meadows on North Bank from in front of the picnic area down towards the dam also received a partial cut this autumn to ensure the area does not revert to scrub from the encroaching Blackthorn. The Pintail Bank meadow was also cut to keep the sward suitable for grazing wildfowl.

The East Grinstead Rotary Club offered to help us, and they kindly agreed to maintain the picnic area on North Bank. They have been doing this all year. Our thanks go to them for all their good work.

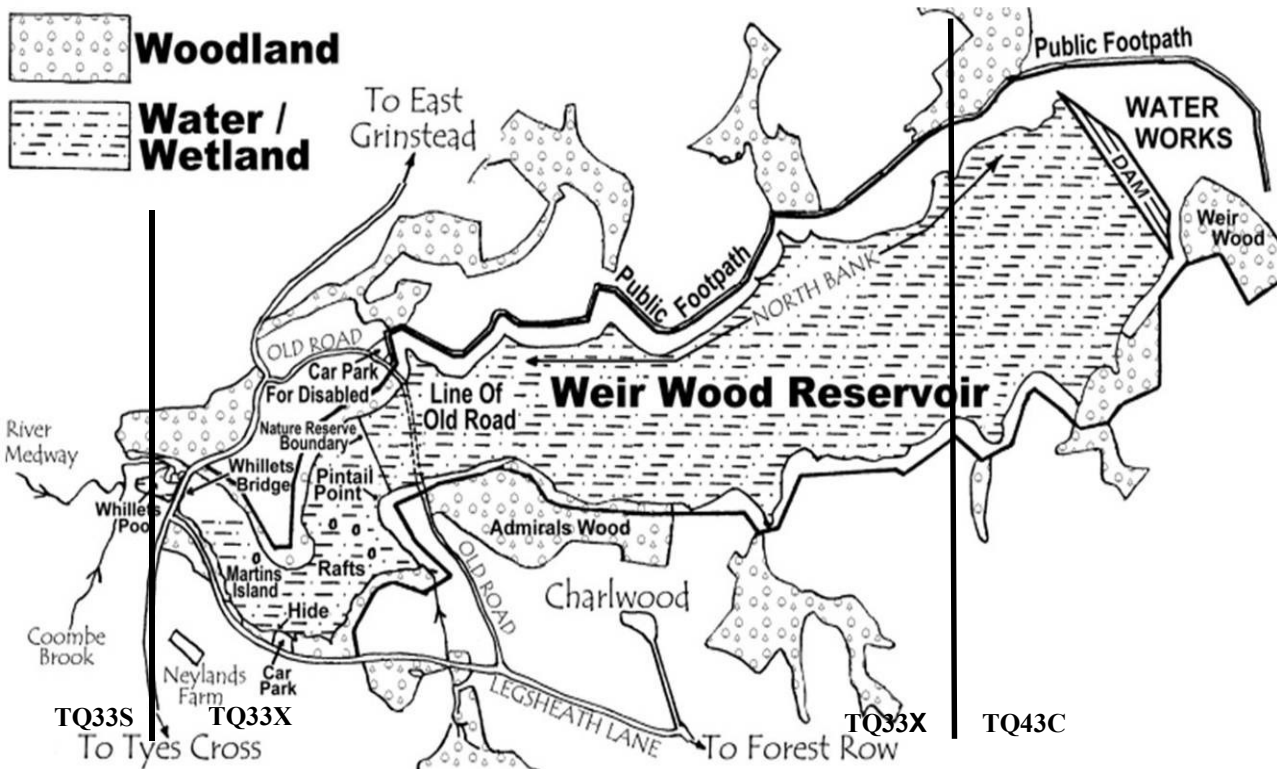
New Reed Bed: There has been an interest in improving the water edge vegetation at the main reservoir by planting phragmites reeds. The fishery are interested as they act as a nursery area for young fish. For birds and general wildlife it is considered to be one of the best waterside plants. Southern Water (SW) are interested in adding some waterside tall fen type vegetation to better meet their requirements for this SSSI site.

A scheme is now taking place, which has funding from Southern Water, to plant some reeds. It was decided that the best chance for planting success was in the shallows (Wales Beach), along the South Bank, and this area can be viewed from the North Bank picnic area, as it is directly opposite.

This will be a longer term project, but so far our volunteers have spent weeks clearing the large area of waterside Willow trees, where the reeds will be planted, and left the tree stumps standing. This was intentional as Southern Water contractors will be attending to treat the stumps to kill them, otherwise the Willow will just keep re-growing.

Once the stumps have been treated and suitably dealt with, the blocks of reeds can then be planted in the summer when water levels are low enough. The reeds will initially be planted in enclosures to protect them from wave action and browsing by geese and deer until they are established. In the longer term the reeds will naturally spread. We will update you as the scheme progresses.

New Tern Raft: We have just completed the building of a new Tern raft which is now in place. We have also towed the old Tern raft that was listing back to the water edge for inspection, it looks likely that it will have to be scrapped.



Friends of Weir Wood Society General Information

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|------------------------------|--------------------------------|---|
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