

Friends of Weir Wood Newsletter

Newsletter No. 82

Autumn 2018



Welcome!

Open Day – Sunday 8th July Report

The day went very well, and my thanks to all those visitors that supported our Open Day which from the feedback was well enjoyed by those that attended.

My thanks also go to all those who volunteered and generously helped to run the event and make it a success, with the bird ringing, pond dipping, moth display, bird watching, meadow flowers, bee keeping activities, and the popular refreshments, on what turned out to be a nice warm day.

We had two bee-keepers who were able to attend and brought with them an empty hive box which was dismantled to show visitors the various compartments inside and explain the various honey bee types, Queen, workers etc, and their location and roles within the box.

Our visitors could then watch our bees in an active hive from a safe distance and understand what was happening inside.

We displayed some 60 moths which had been caught locally in a light trap on the previous night, which were released unharmed at the end of the day.

The highlights were the large impressive hawk moths. We had 3 species: Poplar, Elephant and Pine. The more unusual were the twig like Buff Tip & the odd-looking Chinese Character.

The more beautiful included: Swallow-tailed, Peach Blossom, Buff Arches, Brimstone moth, and the Large Emerald impressed many. A popular talking point was the Peppered Moth which was famously studied by Charles Darwin to help prove his theories of "Natural Selection".

The ringing station and nets were set up at the back of the reed bed behind the pond in Whillet's Meadows. As always people were very interested in the processes of trapping, identification, measuring, ringing, recording and releasing the birds. It is always a treat to see the birds so close in the hand.

A favourite activity was the pond dipping with viewing trays and identification guides. This is always popular with the children. There was also an interesting wildlife display table. Among the catches were: a lot of Daphnia, Water Boatmen, Water Shrimp, Blood Worms, Midge larvae, various Diving, Water & Whirlygig Beetles, Newts, Dragonfly & Damselfly larvae, and Pond Skaters, all fascinating to see.

The telescopes at the hide & viewing area were popular, many wanting to watch the 5 pairs of Common Terns that were busy feeding the 14 young that were on our 3 rafts. Cormorants could also be seen nesting, plus the usual Grebes, Herons, Kingfishers, Water Fowl, etc. that reside on the reserve.

There is a full detailed report of the day with many pictures on our website. <http://www.weirwood.me.uk> go to "Members News".

Constitution Rule 21 - Text amendment

The Society's bank has now advised us that they only send out immediate texts to our Treasurer on any debit card transaction over £50, but we will also get a weekly text showing all the transactions for that week. The "Note" attached to our Constitution Rule 21 will now be further amended to reflect this working practice. Your Committee remain confident that the Society's funds will be safe, even with this slight change on the text arrangements.

Fungi Foray Walk on Sunday 16th September 2018

Just a reminder, we will be having our Fungi Foray walk within the nature reserve, open to all our members, on Sunday 16th September, led again by the very knowledgeable Nick Aplin, who is a County Recorder and head of the Crawley Fungi Group.

Meet at the hide Car Park in Legsheath Lane at 9:45 for 10:00 start, with finish at approx. 1PM. No need to book, just turn up. Could be wet underfoot, we advise you have suitable footwear.

2019 AGM – Friday 29th March

We can confirm that our AGM will be on Friday 29th March, so a date for your diary. Usual venue and timings.

Our guest speaker will be Matt Eade, a younger but very experienced and knowledgeable birder, who will be giving us a talk illustrated with his photographs. Matt is a very active recorder in the Sussex area, being based in Seaford, but he has also travelled widely and been birding in some very exotic places.

Whillet's Meadow Butterflies

It has been a mixed year for our butterflies. The early cold wet weather was not good for the early spring butterflies with sightings not really getting going to late April.

Small Tortoiseshell numbers were very low in the spring, but a large number of their caterpillars were found in late May. These should have emerged and now be on the wing, but just one adult has been seen since and that was back in June.

Gatekeeper numbers were well down and only seen over a fairly short period. The Skipper numbers were also down a little.

The winners seemed to be: Ringlet, Common Blue, the Whites, particularly Green-veined White, and Small Copper which have had a good year. We have also seen increased numbers of Speckled Wood & Holly Blue.

A highlight was a new species for the reserve, a female Brown Hairstreak found egg laying on blackthorn on the 2nd September by Alastair, one of our butterfly recorders.

We have had more sightings of Silver Washed Fritillaries this year, normally seen near the tree lined glades. The day flying Six Spot Burnet moth was also seen again after an absence of some years.

By Bob Johnson

Great White Egret

This impressive rarer British bird has been seen almost continually on the reserve since 17th July. When at odd times it has gone missing for a few days, one has suddenly been seen at Bough Beech Reservoir, so it may have been commuting between the two occasionally.

It was showing up to 8th Sept, but not reported the following day. It has gone missing before and can hide itself away surprisingly well for a big bird, so could still be around.

Little Grebe - 2 on 17/6, 1 on 8/9.

Great Crested Grebe – Regular (No successful nests seen) (counts over 50), 51 on 17/6 to 24/6, 57 on 26/6, 92 on 1/7, 89 on 3/7, up to 104 from 8/7 to 30/7, 107 on 3/8, 117 on 5/8, 119 on 6/8, 84 on 7/8, up to 92 from 11/8 to 17/8 but with 99 on 12/8, 75 on 21/8, 106 on 9/9.

Cormorant – (8 pairs nested successfully raising 16 young) (Counts over 16), 32 on 17/6, 21 on 24/6, 26 on 1/7, 29 on 15/7, 25 on 22/7, 27 on 30/7, 22 on 12/8, 27 on 15/8, 24 on 9/9.

Little Egret - 1 on 8/7, 3 on 10/7, 2 on 13/7, 3 on 15/7 & 28/7, 2 on 29/7 & 30/7, 1 on 31/7, 3 on 5/8, up to 2 from 6/8 to 27/8, 1 on 28/8, 2/9 & 9/9.

Great White Egret – 1 from 17/7 to 13/8, 1 from 21/8 to 23/8, 1 on 27/8, 4/9, 7/9 & 8/9.

Mute Swan – 1 regularly from 16/6 to 3/7, 1 on 15/7, 22/7 & 24/7, 1 regularly from 5/8 to 22/8, 2 on 27/8, 1 on 2/9, 3/9 & 9/9.

Grey Heron – Regular - (Counts over 5), 7 on 17/6, 14 on 24/6, 6 on 1/7, 9 on 10/7, 6 on 12/7, up to 18 on 15/7, 13 on 23/7, up to 9 regularly from 28/7 to 7/8, 12 on 12/8, 16 on 19/8, 8 on 27/8, 15 on 9/9.

Egyptian Goose – 1 on 15/7, 2 on 19/8.

Greylag Goose – Regular (Counts over 25), 38 on 17/6, 53 on 19/6, 55 on 24/6, 44 on 1/7 & 15/7, 114 on 5/8, 156 on 6/8, 47 on 11/8, 130 on 12/8, 158 on 13/8, 153 on 15/8, 105 on 17/8, 220 on 19/8, 187 on 21/8, 152 on 27/8, 29 on 8/9, 84 on 9/9. Also **Greylag/Feral hybrid Goose** – 2 on 12/8 & 15/8.

Canada Goose – Regular (Counts over 4), 15 on 17/6, 24 on 15/7, 74 on 5/8, 112 on 6/8, 38 on 11/8, 66 on 12/8, 92 on 15/8, 66 on 17/8, 63 on 27/8, 21 on 9/9
Canada/Greylag hybrid Goose - 1 on 11/8 & 12/8.

Shelduck – 1 in 24/6.

Garganey – 1 on 7/9 & 8/9.

Mandarin – Regular (Counts over 3), 7 on 17/6, 11 on 24/6, 12 on 27/6, 4 on 1/7, 5 on 8/7, 6 on 10/7, 18 on 13/7, 10 on 15/7, 8 on 17/7 to 24/7, 13 on 26/7, 6 on 29/7, 12 on 30/7, 5 on 31/7, 7 on 3/8, 20 on 5/8, 8 on 6/8, 9 on 11/8, 22 on 12/8, 5 on 19/8, 4 on 21/8 & 25/8, 6 on 9/9.

Teal – 4 on 29/7, 2 on 30/7 3 on 5/8, 4 on 6/8, 3 on 12/8 & 13/8, 1 on 27/8, 6 on 28/8, 3 on 2/9 & 3/9, 8 on 4/9, 6 on 7/9 & 8/9, 3 on 9/9.

Mallard - Resident - (counts over 10), 18 on 17/6, 11 on 24/6, 21 on 13/7 & 15/7, 39 on 30/7, 17 on 5/8, 33 on 6/8, 15 on 7/8, 34 on 11/8, 68 on 12/8, 72 on 13/8, 24 on 15/8, 52 on 21/8, 48 on 27/8, 38 on 4/9, 74 on 9/9.

Domestic feral hybrid Mallard – 1 on 17/6 & 9/9.

Tufted Duck – 1 on 21/8 & 2/9.

Red Kite – 1 on 8/7 & 22/7.

Marsh Harrier – 1 flyover on 3/9.

Sparrowhawk – 1 on 5/8.

Goshawk - 1 distantly on 17/8.

Common Buzzard – up to 2 regularly (counts over) 3 on 3/7, 8/7, 22/7 & 5/8, 4 on 6/8, 3 on 12/8, 9 on 17/8, 3 on 4/9, 4 on 9/9.

Osprey - 1 on 4/9.

Kestrel – 1 on 19/6, 22/6 & 8/7, 2 on 9/7, 1 on 17/7, 22/7 & 3/8, 3 on 5/8, 2 on 6/8, 1 on 11/8 to 13/8, 2 on 19/8, 1 on 21/8, 2 on 25/8, 1 on 27/8, 2/9 & 9/9.

Peregrine – 1 on 28/7.

Pheasant – Resident & regular - Up to 4 intermittently during period.

Moorhen – 1 regularly (counts over), 2 on 15/7, 29/7 & 30/7, 2 on 5/8 & 7/8, 5 on 12/8, 2 on 15/8, 3 on 27/8 & 4/9, 8 on 9/9.

Coot - up to 2 regularly (counts over), 3 on 17/8.

Water Rail – 1 on 5/8, 22/8 & 28/8.

Lapwing – Regular -1 on 15/6, 7 on 19/6, 3 on 24/6, (counts over 3), 10 on 8/7, 11 on 15/7, 8 on 22/7, 4 on 24/7 & 28/7, up to 8 from 30/7 to 17/8, 10 on 19/8, 7 on 27/8, 6 on 28/8, 9 from 2/9 to 4/9, 8 on 7/9, 7 on 8/9.

Common Snipe – 1 on 2/9, 2 on 7/9, 3 on 8/9, 1 on 9/9.

Greenshank – 1 from 1/9 to 3/9.

Green Sandpiper – 1 regularly from 8/7 onwards (counts over), 3 on 26/7, 2 on 5/8 & 7/8, 2 on 3/9, 8/9 & 9/9.

Common Sandpiper – 1 regularly from 12/7 onward (counts over), 3 on 15/7, 19/7, & 22/7, 2 on 24/7, 3 on 5/8, 5 on 6/8, 4 on 12/8, 2 on 13/8, 2/9, 7/9 & 8/9, 3 on 9/9.

Little Ringed Plover – 1 Juv on 9/9.

Black Headed Gull – 1 on 17/6, 3 on 24/6 & 30/6, 4 on 1/7 & 3/7, 8 on 10/7, 15 on 12/7, 146 on 13/7, 200 on 15/7, (counts over 25) 160 on 22/7, 30 on 29/7, 26 on 30/7, 175 on 5/8, 110 on 12/8, 210 on 19/8, 80 on 27/8, 115 on 9/9.

Mediterranean Gull – 1 on 19/6.

Yellow-Legged Gull – 1 on 21/8.

LBB Gull – 1 on 17/6, 19/6 & 24/6, 1 on 8/7 & 13/7, 4 on 15/7, 1 on 17/7, 22/7 & 3/8, 2 on 5/8, 1 on 6/8 & 13/8, 3 on 19/8 & 21/8, 2 on 22/8, 1 on 27/8.

Common Gull – 1 on 17/7 & 29/7.

Herring Gull – 7 on 13/6, 3 on 19/6, 1 on 1/7 & 3/7, 6 on 13/7, 14 on 15/7, 3 on 12/8, 2 on 21/8, 5 on 9/9.

Common Tern - (5 pairs successfully bred raising 14 young) (Counts over 5), 7 on 15/6 & 16/6, 10 on 17/6, 24 from 19/6 to 17/7, 11 on 18/7, 19 on 22/7, 7 on 26/7 then numbers dropped and 3 on 5/8 was the last report for period.

Black Tern - 1 on 26/8, 2 on 27/8, 1 on 4/9.

Stock Dove – Up to 2 regularly.

Feral Rock Dove – 1 on 1/7.

Wood Pigeon – Ubiquitous - (No counts over 10).

Swift – 12 on 17/6, 2 on 19/6, 1 on 1/7, 15/7, 22/7 & 28/7, 3 on 12/8, 1 on 13/8 & 27/8.

Kingfisher – 1 regularly (counts over) 2 on 17/6, 19/6 & 30/7, 4 on 5/8 & 6/8, 2 on 12/8, 21/8, 22/8 & 28/8, 3 on 9/9.

Green Woodpecker – 1 on 13/7, 1 on 5/8 & 12/8, 1 on 2/9, 3/9 & 9/9.

Great Spotted Woodpecker – 4 on 5/8, 1 on 6/8, 3 on 21/8, 1 on 22/8, 1 Juv on 3/9, 2 on 9/9.

Sand Martin – 1 on 17/7, 3 on 3/8, 1 on 12/8, 15/8, 17/8, 8 on 19/8, 1 on 25/8, 10 on 27/8, 25 on 28/8, 1 on 4/9 & 9/9.

Swallow – Regular – (counts over 6), 10 on 8/7, 8 on 17/7, 100 on 29/7, 10 on 3/8, 20 on 19/8, 25 on 23/8, 80 on 26/8, 50 on 27/8, 12 on 4/9.

House Martin – Regular – (counts over 10) 50 on 29/7, 70 on 3/8, 40 on 5/8, 20 on 6/8, 50 on 12/8, 70 on 13/8, 22 on 17/8, 65 on 19/8, 60 on 21/8, 35 on 22/8, 50 on 23/8, 100 on 25/8, 50 on 27/8, 15 on 2/9, 40 on 4/9, 7/9 & 8/9, 75 on 9/9.

Grey Wagtail – 4 on 17/6, 1 on 1/7, 3 on 15/7, 2 on 12/8 & 19/8, 1 on 21/8, 2 on 25/8 & 28/8, 1 on 2/9 & 9/9.

Pied Wagtail – 3 on 17/6, 2 on 19/6, 2 on 24/6, 1 on 12/7, 3 on 15/7, 1 on 19/7, 2 on 25/8, 4 on 2/9, 2 on 9/9.
Yellow Wagtail – 5 flyover on 2/9.
Wren, Dunnock, Robin, Blackbird Nb. All are regular and resident – no counts over 4 reported.
Stonechat – 1 on 15/8, 2/9 & 9/9. **Whinchat** - 1 on 2/9.
Northern Wheatear – 1 on 21/8 & 2/9.
Song Thrush - 2 on 24/6.
Mistle Thrush – 15 flyover on 22/8, 22 flyover on 22/9.
Reed Warbler - up to 3 regularly until 15/7 with breeding confirmed, 1 on 29/7, 6 on 5/8, 2 on 6/8, 1 on 11/8, 2 on 17/8, 1 on 19/8 & 21/8, 4 on 25/8, 1 on 28/8, 2 on 2/9, 1 on 4/9.
Sedge Warbler – 2 on 5/8, 1 on 12/8, 13/8, 25/8 & 28/8.
Grasshopper Warbler – 1 on 25/8 & 27/8.
Lesser Whitethroat – 1 on 19/8.
Whitethroat – 2 on 22/6, 1 on 24/6, 5 on 30/6, 1 on 13/7 & 22/7, 4 on 5/8, 2 on 6/8, 1 on 11/8, 3 on 12/8, 6 on 13/8, 5 on 19/8, 2 on 22/8, 3 on 23/8, 7 on 25/8, 2 on 27/8, 3 on 28/8.
Garden Warbler – 1 Regularly (counts over), 4 on 7/7, 2 on 10/7, 5 on 5/8, 3 on 11/8 & 21/8.
Blackcap – 1 Regularly (counts over 1), 2 on 17/6, 3 on 24/6 & 7/7, 9 on 10/7, 7 on 15/7, 10 on 5/8, 2 on 11/8, 18/8 & 19/8, 4 on 21/8, 11 on 22/8, 14 on 23/8, 12 on 25/8, 5 on 27/8, 4 on 28/8, 9 on 2/9, 1 on 9/9.
Chiffchaff – Up to 2 reported regularly (Counts over 2) 4 on 17/6, 3 on 24/6, 5 on 10/7, 4 on 31/7, 5 on 5/8, 4 on 11/8 & 13/8, 14 on 17/8, 10 on 18/8, 5 on 19/8 & 21/8, 11 on 22/8, 4 on 23/8, 8 on 25/8, 5 on 27/8, 6 on 28/8, 12 on 2/9, 7 on 9/9.
Willow Warbler – 2 on 5/8 & 11/8, 3 on 17/8, 1 on 22/8 & 25/8.
Goldcrest - 2 on 10/7, 1 on 15/7, 6/8 & 13/8, 2 on 18/8, 1 on 22/8.
Long Tailed Tit – 1 on 19/7, 10 on 29/7, 1 on 11/8 & 23/8. **Coal Tit** – 1 on 18/8.
Marsh Tit – 1 on 22/6, 24/6, 7/7, 10/7 & 29/7, 1 on 5/8, 11/8 & 21/8, 4 on 25/8, 3 on 4/9.
Blue Tit – Regular (counts over 5), 14 on 19/8. **Great Tit** – Regular - No counts over 5.
Nuthatch – 1 on 13/6 to 17/6, 1 on 5/7, 1 on 17/8, 1 on 4/9 & 11/9.
Treecreeper – 1 on 29/7 & 23/8.
Jay – 1 on 30/6 & 7/7, 1 on 22/8, 2/9, 8/9 & 9/9. **Magpie** – Resident (Up to 2 regularly).
Starling – 5 on 6/8, 3 flyover on 9/9.
Jackdaw – Occasional - 120 on 15/7, 60 on 5/8, 2 on 8/9.
Raven – 1 on 10/7, 2 on 17/8, 21/8 & 9/9.
Carrion Crow – Resident – (No counts over 5).
Chaffinch – 1 on 12/7, 6 on 2/9.
Goldfinch – Regular (counts over 4), 25 on 10/7, 10 on 19/7, 96 on 5/8, 125 on 6/8, 20 on 11/8, 100 on 13/8, 55 on 19/8 & 22/8, 40 on 23/8.
Greenfinch – 5 on 2/9.
Bullfinch – 1 on 22/6 & 24/6, 2 on 7/7, 3 on 22/7 & 5/8, 1 on 11/8, 2 on 12/8, 3 on 19/8, 5 on 21/8 & 22/8, 4 on 23/8, 5 on 27/8, 7 on 28/8, 3 on 2/9, 2 on 3/9 & 9/9.
Reed Bunting – 1 intermittently throughout period (counts over) 2 on 22/6, 3 on 30/6 & 5/8, 2 on 6/8 & 13/8, 3 from 19/8 to 23/8.

Reserve News**Autumn 2018**

There has been plenty of work completed around the reserve since my last report.

The “Don Smith” seat that is along the North Bank footpath had its base supports rotted and was unusable, the seat was completely overhauled with new supports being fitted back in June. We had also previously installed two additional new seats at the millennium picnic area back in February.

The picnic table in the Hide Car Park, which was already in poor condition, had been vandalised and destroyed. We replaced it with a brand new one in August. We also repaired the bench seats in the Car Park, as we noticed the supports were rotting and becoming unsafe.

The hide has had a new coat of wood preservative, and repairs carried out to damaged/vandalised access door. The Car Park had some very old large trees which were dying and deemed unsafe due to their size and proximity to roads and car park. These were cut down to a safe, but still wildlife friendly size by specialist contractors in May. We also cut back some Willows at Car Park edge that were becoming unsafe. The broken fencing post at the viewing area was also replaced.

The intended new reed-bed along South Bank has taken another step forward.

The previously cut willow stumps from last year had made new re-growth whilst awaiting water levels to drop so that contractors could treat and kill off the stumps. With water levels now low enough, we helped cut back all the re-growth to allow Southern Water contractors to get access to the stumps to treat them, that treatment should now be complete.

The stumps will have to be left to die back for up to 6 months, before their final removal by chain saw. Next year, the contractors should start to build the support cages for the new reeds once water levels are suitable. In the interim we will clear and burn all those re-growth cuttings.

Meadow pond has had to have remedial work. The silt trap inlet has not been working effectively, and over the years silt has been building up in the pond. Our rangers brought in an excavator to clear around the silt trap area.

The old silt trap was removed and the rangers and volunteers installed a new sandbag based silt trap in August. The early signs are that it is working well.

The pond has also been leaking water, this had increased and become a problem. Investigation showed leak holes along the bank next to the outlet pipe. Last week holes found in the bank were clay filled before a sandbag wall was installed against the bank, the early signs are this has cured those leaks

The dipping platform was starting to lean. This was rectified in August with the platform being lifted and re-levelled and its centre support timber and back anchorage replaced as these had rotted and were becoming ineffective.

We have carried out some bracken management in Whillet's meadows, Pintail bank, in front of the viewing area, and opposite on the North bank open area. The bracken was cut down in June/early July as a means to help control its unwanted spread. The main meadow grass cutting will not be carried out until later this month as there are a lot of late flowers still remaining.

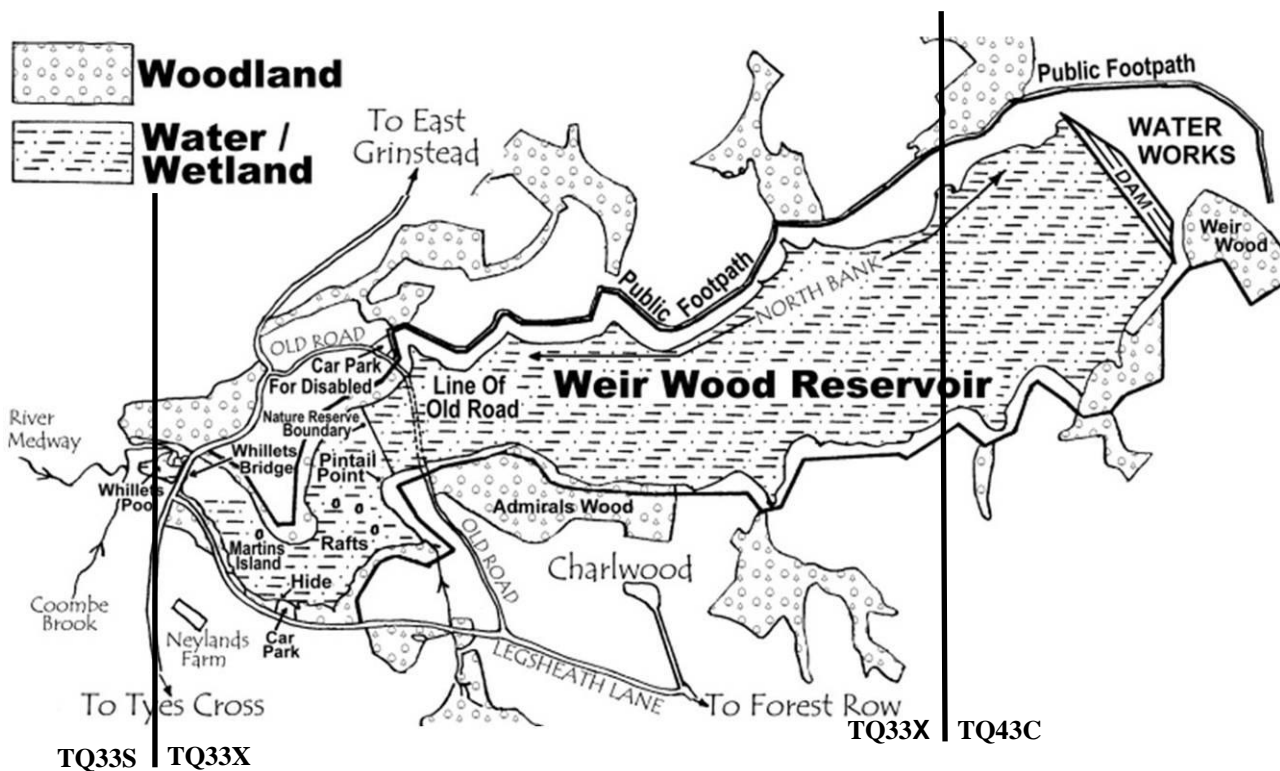
We have had some excessive flooding problems in the second meadow, particularly around our access path, due to a defective section of land drain. Investigation showed the best way to rectify was to dig a low ditch to divert the water to the land drain section further along where it was still effective.

We then laid a small sleeper bridge over this new ditch to reinstate the access path for our grass cutting tractors etc. We completed this in June and so far this seems to have worked successfully.

The two barn owl boxes in the meadows have had recent work. One box has had a complete new 16' pole with ground supports, the box was repaired & remounted after the old post failed. The other box, which had increasing tree growth around the flight path to the box, has had this all cut back to give a more open aspect which hopefully will be more attractive to Barn Owls.

Also, we have still carried on with our regular work of nest box survey & maintenance, butterfly & grass snake surveys, rubbish clearance, hedge cutting, maintenance of all access paths, control of invasive plants (such as Himalayan Balsam, Hemlock Water Dropwort), pond vegetation maintenance, willow & scrub control and its clearance, and dealing with minor fence repairs.

by Bob Johnson



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