

# Friends of Weir Wood Newsletter

Newsletter No. 85

Summer 2019



## Welcome!

### OPEN DAY - Sunday 14th July *Everyone Welcome!*

Our Open Day as usual will be based from the Nature Reserve Car Park. We will again have our usual bird ringing demonstration by our bird ringers, giving you a chance to see the birds close in the hand. They may ring within the woodland study area this year, rather than the reed bed in the meadows, hoping to catch more variety of species.

In the main Car Park viewing area there will be some volunteers with telescopes to show you the birds and wildlife on and around the water. We have a record number of Common Terns nesting on the rafts and there should be young Terns to see by the time of the Open Day.

We intend to have some moths to show from our moth traps (weather permitting). This has proven to be very popular at previous open days.

Refreshments will be available in the Car Park.

The flood meadows at Whillet's will again be open to allow you to walk the paths to see the flower meadows, birds, butterflies etc. with information charts to help you with identification. You will also be able to visit our meadow pond and do some pond dipping with experts on hand to help and to tell you about the wildlife you find. Come and see the dragonflies and damselflies and the wonderful and varied aquatic life of our pond.

We now have bee hives in the meadows, our bee keepers will be on hand to explain the bee hive process, and will have a dismantled hive so you can see what is inside. They will also have some jars of local honey available for purchase.

We open for visitors at 9:30AM. Park & meet at the Car Park in Legsheath Lane in the first instance. The event will be open until 4:00pm but the bird ringing will finish an hour earlier.

The event is freely open to all. Both adults and children alike will love the bird ringing and pond dipping.

Please come along and support us, bring your friends. The meadows are not normally open to the public, so this is an opportunity to see this normally private area.

*by Bob Johnson*

### Satellite tagged female Osprey Sighting.

You may be interested to know we have been advised that a satellite tagged female Osprey from Kielder Ospreys in Northumberland flew over the reservoir. She has recently returned to the UK as a 2 year old from wintering grounds in N Mauritania, and spent time in Sussex.

She has a blue ring marked 7L in white on her right leg, a BTO ring on her left.

On Tuesday 4 June she was over Weir Wood Reservoir west end at 18.37 BST. She arrived from the west and left to the NW, fixes are every 5 minutes, and we were advised she was not over the reservoir for very long. Apparently she was about 60m above the terrain when the fix was taken.

By chance an Osprey was also seen by our work party that morning, however it was not seen with binoculars so unable to confirm if it was that or a different bird.

*by Bob Johnson*

### Nesting Common Terns

Common Terns are known to try to return to where they were born to breed, so following their successful breeding last year, when 5 pairs of Common Terns produced 15 young, we built and launched an additional raft earlier this year, making 4 rafts in total.

This has been fully justified as this year has been spectacularly better than we could have hoped for. At the time of writing we appear to have 12 pairs in attendance. One raft alone is holding 6 pairs, the other rafts have 1, 1 & 2 pairs respectively making 10 pairs currently nesting on the rafts.

We have already counted at least 15 young on the rafts, with several pairs currently still sitting on eggs, so there should be plenty more chicks to come.

Another pair are trying to settle onto a raft that already holds a pair with 2 hatched young chicks. This resident pair seem very reluctant to share their raft and are continually driving off the other pair wishing to join them.

A later arriving pair have decided to try and nest on Martins Island where the young Cormorants normally hang out. This strategy does seem doomed to failure, as Cormorants are not easily moved and any young chicks produced would be very open to predation.

It is still early in the nesting season, so it will be interesting to see what develops.

*by Bob Johnson*

### ESCC Countryside Access Strategy

We had been awaiting the final decisions from the Committee dealing with the ESCC Countryside Access Strategy which proposed that eight of the countryside sites owned and/or managed by East Sussex County Council (ESCC), including Weir Wood Reservoir, would be considered for transfer to suitable external organizations. The Committee have now met and made their final decisions.

Six of those eight sites have had agreement from other organizations wishing to take over running them.

However, Weir Wood was not in that six. Apparently there was very little interest from other organizations in taking over the ESCC role at our site.

Therefore, ESCC have agreed that they will continue their commitment to the site and provide Rangers under the present contract system with ourselves & Southern Water.

The proviso is, that, if in the future a suitable non-profit organization comes forward that wishes to take over the ESCC role at Weir Wood, the ESCC Director of Communities, Economy and Transport will have the authority to make that decision.

Your Committee are happy with this outcome to continue with the current arrangements at the site, and we will continue with our present Rangers. It would appear that the likelihood of another organisation wishing to take over in the near future, is currently not very likely.

*by Bob Johnson*

**Little Grebe** – 1 on 10/4, 22/4 & 28/4, 1 on 7/5, 2 on 2/6 to 4/6, 3 on 17/6.

**Great Crested Grebe** – Regular (counts over 10), 60 on 31/3, 14 on 1/4, 16 on 8/4, 43 on 13/4, 26 on 19/4, 42 on 22/4, 24 on 2/5, 24 on 12/5, 41 on 19/5, 24 on 27/5, 47 on 17/6. (No successful nests seen).

**Cormorant** – Regularly up to 10 (counts over 10) 14 on 1/4 with 14 active nests noted within Heronry, 46 on 8/4, 30 on 13/4, 38 on 22/4, 31 on 2/5, 56 on 12/5, 48 on 19/5, 38 on 27/5, 41 on 17/6. (Eventually 13 nests produced 28 fledged young – See Heronry article).

**Little Egret** – 1 on 19/6.

**Grey Heron** – Regularly up to 10 (counts over), 35 on 1/4, 18 on 8/4, 32 on 22/4, 15 on 2/5, 19 on 19/5. It was confirmed that 18 nests produced at least 27 young. (See Heronry article)

**Mute Swan** – 2 on 8/4, 1 on 13/4 & 26/4, 1 on 6/5, 7/5 & 19/5, 2 on 28/5.

**Greylag Goose** – 3 on 31/3, 5 on 19/4, 1 on 19/5, 50 on 3/6, 79 plus a white hybrid bird on 17/6.

**Canada Goose** – Regular (counts over 3), 9 on 31/3, 6 on 7/4, 8 on 22/4, 4 on 16/5, 8 on 3/6, 2+2Young on 17/6.

**Egyptian Goose** - Up to 2 regularly throughout period (counts over), 4 on 31/3, 6 on 1/4, 5 on 8/4, 3 on 11/4, 5 on 12/4, 6 on 19/4, 5 on 19/5, 4 on 3/6.

**Mandarin** – Regularly up to 2 (counts over 2), 5 on 31/3, 4 on 6/4, 3 on 8/4 & 19/4, 6 on 22/4, 3 on 26/4, 30/4 & 7/5, 18 on 19/5, 10 on 17/6.

**Gadwall** - 4 on 13/4, 6 on 13/6.

**Teal** – 2 on 6/4.

**Pochard** – 2 on 1/6 & 2/6.

**Mallard** - Resident, (counts over 10), 11 on 1/4, 18 from 2/4 to 9/4, 43 on 22/4, 18 on 26/4, 23 on 2/5, 16 on 7/5, 40 on 19/5, 30 on 23/5, 11 on 27/5, 56 on 17/6. (Also 1 Domestic Mallard hybrid.)

**Tufted Duck** – 3 on 31/3, 1 on 6/4 & 7/4, 2 on 8/4 & 18/4, 1 on 21/4, 3 on 26/4, 4 on 30/4, 1/5 & 6/5, 2 on 11/5 & 19/5.

**Red Kite** – 1 on 12/4 to 14/4, 2 on 7/5, 1 on 12/5 & 19/5, 2 on 27/5, 1 on 2/6 & 3/6.

**Hobby** – 1 on 6/5, 2 on 7/5 & 13/5 to 15/5, 1 on 16/5, 20/5, 23/5 & 25/5, Up to 2 from 27/5 to 3/6, 1 on 18/6.

**Sparrowhawk** – 1 on 2/4, 2 on 13/4, 1 on 15/4, 1 on 6/5.

**Honey Buzzard** – 1 on 25/5 & 1/6.

**Common Buzzard** – Up to 2 throughout period (counts over 2), 3 on 8/4, 4 on 22/4 & 6/5, 3 on 17/6.

**Osprey** - 1 on 24/4, 1 on 4/6.

**Peregrine** – 1 on 6/5.

**Kestrel** – 2 on 7/4, then 1 regularly until 7/5, 1 on 19/5 & 3/6, 2 on 17/6.

**Pheasant** – Regular & resident (Counts over 4), 6 on 22/4.

**Red Legged Partridge** – 1 on 1/4.

**Moorhen** – Regular & resident (Counts over 2) 5 on 17/6.

**Coot** – 2 on 1/4, 1 on 11/4 & 18/4, 2 on 19/4 & 21/4, 3 on 22/4 then up to 2 until 19/5.

**Oystercatcher** – 1 on 20/4.

**Redshank** – 1 on 13/5.

**Whimbrel** – 5 on 15/4.

**Greenshank** – 5 on 13/5.

**Lapwing** – 1 on 1/4, 1 on 6/5, 19/5 & 27/5, 1 on 3/6, 12 on 17/6.

**Common Snipe** – 1 on 31/3, 7 on 6/4, 2 on 8/4, 1 on 16/4.

**Common Sandpiper** – 5 on 22/4, 1 on 28/4, 3 on 2/5, 1 on 4/5, 12 on 7/5, 4 on 8/5, 1 on 13/5 & 19/5, 5 on 25/5.

**Green Sandpiper** - 3 on 13/4.

**Little Gull** – 2 on 12/4.

**Mediterranean Gull** – 23 on 22/4.

**Black Headed Gull** – 2 on 11/4, 1 on 22/4, 4 on 13/5, 2 on 19/5 & 3/6, 5 on 17/6.

**Common Gull** – 2 on 8/4, 1 on 19/4.

**LBB Gull** – 3 on 6/4, 1 on 15/4, 4 on 6/5, 6 on 7/5, 3 on 19/5, 2 on 3/6 & 17/6.

**GBB Gull** - 1 on 3/6.

**Herring Gull** – 1 on 6/4, 27 on 7/4 & 8/4, 1 on 26/4 & 28/4, 2 on 1/5, 90 on 6/5, 14 on 16/5, 12 on 19/5, 4 on 3/6, 2 on 17/6.

**Arctic Tern** – 1 on 9/5.

**Black Tern** – 1 on 11/4 & 12/4, 1 on 7/5 & 9/5.

**Common Tern** - 3 on 21/4, 7 on 22/4 & 26/4, 11 on 30/4, (counts over 10) 13 on 8/5 & 12/5, 21 on 19/5, 14 on 23/5, 20 on 25/5, 16 on 27/5, 21 on 3/6, 19 on 9/6, 14 on 13/6, 24 + 15 young on 17/6.

**Stock Dove** – Up to 2 intermittently reported.

**Wood Pigeon** – Ubiquitous (No counts taken).

**Cuckoo** – 1 on 2/6.

**Barn Owl** - 1 on 8/4, 1 on 29/5.

**Tawny Owl** – 1 on 23/4.

**Swift** – 2 on 6/5, 20 on 8/5, 1 on 16/5, 4 on 19/5, 16 on 25/5, 38 on 3/6, 6 on 17/6.

**Kingfisher** – 1 on 31/3, 2 on 7/4 then 1 regularly until 6/5, 1 on 19/5, 2 on 17/6, 1 on 19/6.

**Green Woodpecker** – 1 on 31/3, 1 on 7/5 & 8/5.

**Gt Spotted Woodpecker** – Up to 2 regularly (counts over 2), 3 on 19/5.

**Skylark** – 2 on 1/4, 1 on 7/4, 1 on 7/5 & 17/6.

**Sand Martin** – 20 on 31/3, 60 on 1/4, 4 on 6/4, 10 on 7/4, 1 on 22/4.

**Swallow** – 7 on 31/3, 10 on 1/4, (Counts over 4), 25 on 6/4, 40 on 7/4, 30 on 9/4 & 10/4, 17 on 13/4, 10 on 6/5, 6 on 16/5.

**House Martin** – 4 on 6/4, 10 on 10/4, (Regular - counts over 4), 10 on 6/5, 9 on 19/5, 10 on 3/6, 6 on 17/6.

**Meadow Pipit** – 1 on 8/4 & 10/4.

**Yellow Wagtail** – 2 on 19/4.

**Grey Wagtail** – 1 regularly until 2 on 2/5, 1 on 7/5, 16/5 & 19/5, 3 on 2/6, 1 on 3/6, 3 on 13/6, 2 + 6Juv on 17/6.

**Pied Wagtail** – Up to 2 regularly (counts over 2), 4 on 7/4 & 8/4, 6 on 11/4, 8 on 13/4, 3 on 22/4, 6/5 & 16/5, 5 on 19/5.

**Dunnock, Robin, Blackbird** – Regular and resident reported in low numbers (no count over 5).

**Wren** – Regular and resident (counts over 3), 18 on 16/4.

**Whinchat** – 1 on 11/5.

**Nightingale** – 1 on 18/5.

**Northern Wheatear** – 1 on 18/4.

**Fieldfare** – 8 on 31/3, 2 on 1/4, 38 on 6/4.

**Redwing** - 1 on 31/3.

**Song Thrush** – 5 on 31/3, 4 on 7/4, 1 on 8/4 & 18/4, 2 on 19/4, 4 on 21/4, 2 on 22/4, 1 on 30/4, 1 on 11/5, 2 on 19/5, 1 on 23/5, 27/5 & 17/6.  
**Mistle Thrush** – 1 on 7/4, 2 on 13/4, 1 on 19/4, 2 on 22/4, 1 on 19/5, 5 on 2/6.  
**Reed Warbler** - 1 on 19/4, 2 on 21/4 & 22/4, 1 on 30/4, 3 on 4/5, 2 on 11/5, 1 on 12/5, 5 on 19/5, 1 on 23/5, 2 on 27/5 & 10/6, 3 on 17/6.  
**Whitethroat** – Regular, 1 on 17/4, 7 on 19/4, 8 on 21/4, 12 on 22/4, 4 on 28/4, then up to 2 regularly until end of period, (counts over 2), 3 on 1/5, 2 on 4/5, 3 on 19/5, 12 on 17/6.  
**Lesser Whitethroat** – 1 on 13/5 & 19/5.  
**Garden Warbler** – 4 on 22/4 & 28/4, 1 on 30/4, 3 on 1/5, 2 on 4/5, 3 on 11/5, 1 on 12/5, 2 on 19/5, 1 on 23/5, 27/5 & 1/6.  
**Blackcap** – Regular, 3 on 31/3, 5 on 1/4, 14 in song on 7/4, (counts over 3), 5 on 8/4, 6 on 13/4, 17 on 16/4, 7 on 17/4, 20 on 19/4, 23 on 22/4, 5 on 28/4 then up to 3 regularly until end of period.  
**Chiffchaff** – Regular, 18 on 31/3, 23 on 7/4, then up to 3 regularly until end of period (counts over 3), 8 on 13/4, 11 on 16/4, 16 on 19/4 & 22/4, 5 on 17/6.  
**Willow Warbler** – 1 on 16/4. **Spotted Flycatcher** – 1 on 12/5.  
**Goldcrest** - 2 on 31/3, 1 on 7/4, 1 on 19/4, 22/4 & 28/4.  
**L.T. Tit** – 2 on 7/4 & 8/4, 4 on 22/4, 1 on 26/4, 2 on 28/4 & 30/4, 2 on 19/5.  
**Marsh Tit** – 1 on 2/4, 2 on 7/4, 1 regularly from 18/4 to 1/5. **Coal Tit** – 1 on 2/4, 8/4 & 22/4.  
**Blue Tit & Great Tit** – Common in good numbers, but no counts taken.  
**Nuthatch** – 1 regularly until 9/4, 1 on 19/4 & 22/4, 2 on 26/4, 1 on 30/4 to 2/5, 1 on 11/5, 2 on 17/6.  
**Tree Creeper** – 1 on 8/4, 17/4 & 18/4, 2 on 19/4 & 22/4, 1 on 26/4, 30/4, 1/5 & 11/5, 2 on 19/5 & 27/5.  
**Jay** – 1 on 8/4, 2 on 19/4 & 28/4, 1 on 6/5 & 11/5, 2 on 19/5, 1 on 23/5.  
**Magpie & Carrion Crow** – Resident with regular reports (No counts over 5).  
**Rook** – 1 on 31/3, 3 on 19/5.  
**Raven** – 1 on 7/5, 8/5 & 12/5, 2 on 19/5, 1 on 17/6.  
**Jackdaw** – Occasional sightings, but no date counts.  
**Starling** – 1 juvenile on 17/6. **House Sparrow** – 1 on 30/4.  
**Chaffinch** – Occasional, 2 on 7/4, 3 on 8/4, 2 on 22/4.  
**Greenfinch** - 1 on 4/5.  
**Goldfinch** – 8 on 31/3, then up to 3 until 13/4. 2 on 28/4 & 30/4, 3 on 16/5, 4 on 19/5, 2 on 23/5, 8 on 17/6.  
**Linnet** – 2 on 28/4.  
**Bullfinch** – 9 on 31/3 & 7/4, 3 on 8/4, 2 on 19/4, 4 on 22/4, 1 on 19/5 & 23/5, 4 on 17/6.  
**Yellowhammer** – 1 on 31/3, 3 on 7/4, 1 on 21/4 & 22/4, 1 on 11/5 & 12/5, 3 on 19/5, 1 on 23/5, 1 on 3/6, 10/6 & 17/6.  
**Reed Bunting** – 1 regularly throughout period (counts over), 2 on 31/3, 3 on 1/4, 5 on 7/4, 2 on 21/4 & 22/4, 2 on 4/5 & 11/5, 4 on 19/5, 2 on 27/5, 1/6 & 10/6, 3 on 17/6.

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**Nature Reserve News****Summer 2019**

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**2019 - Small Nest box results**

Within the Nature Reserve we have a 127 small nest boxes. Of that 127, 57 boxes were used by nesting birds with the following results: 157 Blue Tits and a 110 Great Tits fledged. Cold eggs in nests – 18 Blue Tit & 4 Great Tit. Dead birds in nests – 29 Blue Tit, zero Great Tit.

Three boxes were used by Nuthatches which seal the box entrance. We prefer not to disturb Nuthatch boxes as it requires breaking the seal the bird made, so these boxes were not checked internally. We therefore have no exact brood numbers but chicks were heard in all the boxes and we assume the broods fledged successfully.

All other boxes were either Empty/Leaves/Part nests/Bees.

Additional known nest: Treecreepers nested under bark in a tree in the Car Park.

**2019 - Heronry breeding results**

Some Grey Heron nests are strong enough to survive each year and are re-used by the same pair returning to the nest and adding more sticks. On the 17<sup>th</sup> February, 20 Grey Heron nests were showing signs of occupation, by the 1<sup>st</sup> March this had risen to 34 nests with a mix of new nests and returning pairs. By the 7<sup>th</sup> March 39 nests were evident but it was estimated up to 44 nests had been started and shown some activity.

In early March there are no leaves on the Willow trees in the Heronry and nests were easy find and see. By late March the trees are in leaf, and those nests away from the front become more and more hidden from view. By the 17<sup>th</sup> March only 36 nests were visible, and this figure dropped to 21 by the 18<sup>th</sup> April.

On the 1<sup>st</sup> April the first nest with young was confirmed with 3 young, a good number, 1 to 3 is most usual. Egg incubation is around 26 days, so those eggs would have been laid in early March. Young chicks take about 50 days on average to fledge, so these will not have fledged before mid-May.

By the 18<sup>th</sup> April 11 nests held 18 young, and by the 30<sup>th</sup> April 18 nests held 26 young, but no new nests with young were located after 30<sup>th</sup> April.

The final number of young we could confirm was 27 from 18 nests. But this figure will be lower than actual. 38 nests were considered to have had long term activity, the continuous begging call of young could still be heard in June, but few nests were still visible.

A white leucistic Heron was first noted at a nest in late February, having paired with a conventionally coloured mate. The pair produced 1 young, which looked to be normally coloured. This is the first time this white bird has successfully raised young, previous breeding attempts had failed.

Within the Heronry is a Cormorant colony which is increasing in size. Last year there were 10 active nests, but this year the number has risen to 14 active nests.

We noted that this year a nest previously used by a Grey Heron was taken over by a Cormorant pair early season, they produced 3 young by the 8<sup>th</sup> April. The next young were seen in the oldest Cormorant nest on the 19<sup>th</sup> April. Most other pairs had to spend time nest building, so the next young after that were not seen until 30<sup>th</sup> April. Cormorants do tend to nest slightly later than Herons.

By the 27<sup>th</sup> May thirteen nests had produced 28 young, with only one nest failing to produce, and this will be the final total. For comparison, in 2018 eight nests produced 16 young, so they are increasing in number.

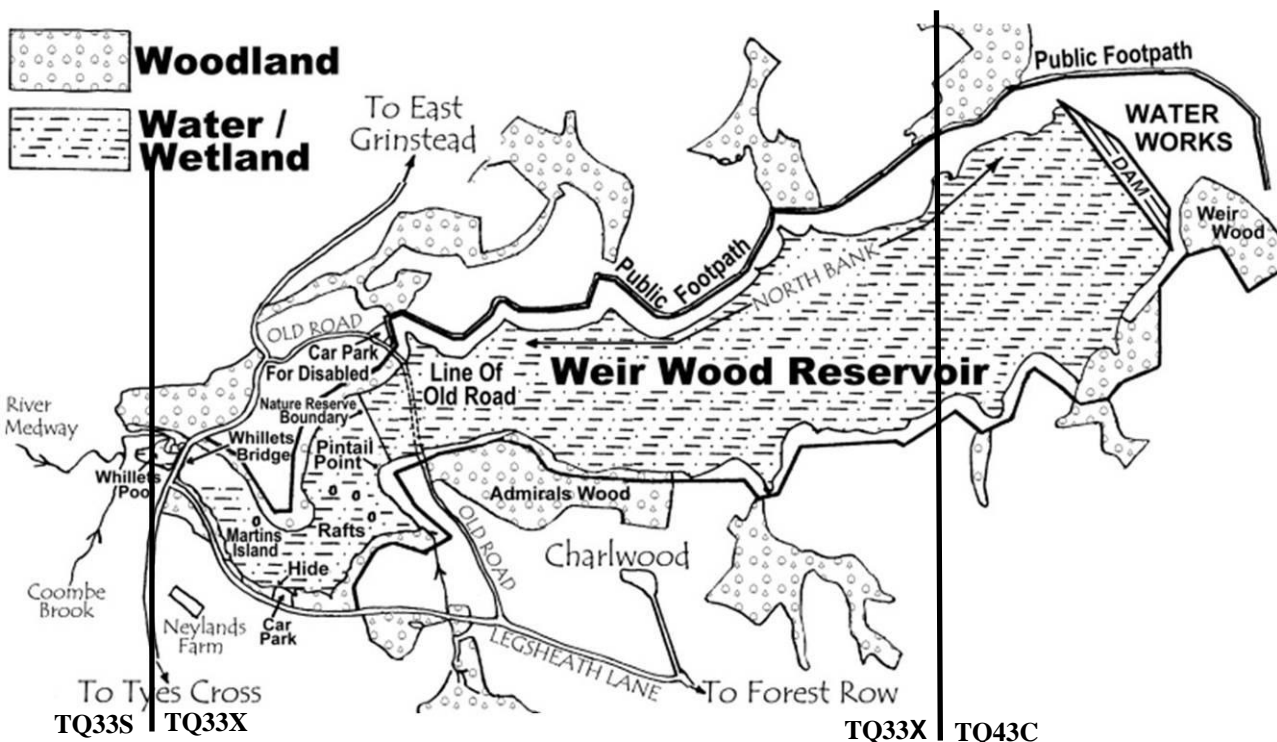
From the observer point of view Cormorant nests are easier to monitor than Herons. Their white poo is very acidic and tends to kill the trees so there is less leaf covering, the trees eventually showing a very visible white covering below the nest area, also they tend to nest lower in the trees than Herons.

**Recent Nature Reserve work:** We have been carrying out our usual maintenance of the site. You should find that we have improved views at the Ted Lecomber seat view point by cutting down the increasing Willow trees growing at the water edge. This has also given some open water edge in this area for birds and waterside plants. The cut trees are currently stacked and awaiting disposal.

We have also spent time controlling several pest species from the meadows area, Hemlock Water Dropwort, Bracken and to a lesser extent Bramble which tend to take over if not kept in check.

Over in the study areas, we replaced the bridge over Plaw Hatch Stream with all new timbers because it was becoming unsafe. We also dug out a silted up pondlet to improve the habitat for wildlife. Interestingly a freshwater leech was found after completion of the work, a new species for the reserve.

**Fungi Foray – Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> November:** A reminder that we have arranged to have another Fungi Foray led by Nick Aplin. Usual Saturday morning start, full details will be given nearer the time.



### Friends of Weir Wood Society General Information

**Chairman:** Bob Johnson, 01892 661548  
**Membership Secretary:** Tom Howard-Jones, 01293 883039  
**Treasurer:** Bob Hastings, 01825 763573  
**Newsletter Editor:** Peter Johnson, 01892 661548  
**Website Editor:** Tom Howard-Jones, 01293 883039

**E-Mail:** [info@weirwood.me.uk](mailto:info@weirwood.me.uk)  
**E-Mail:** [membership@weirwood.me.uk](mailto:membership@weirwood.me.uk)  
**E-Mail:** [treasurer@weirwood.me.uk](mailto:treasurer@weirwood.me.uk)  
**E-Mail:** [newsletter@weirwood.me.uk](mailto:newsletter@weirwood.me.uk)  
**E-Mail:** [sightings@weirwood.me.uk](mailto:sightings@weirwood.me.uk)

#### Other Contact Information

**Tuesday Work Party Volunteers:** [work@weirwood.me.uk](mailto:work@weirwood.me.uk) **Website Photos:** [photos@weirwood.me.uk](mailto:photos@weirwood.me.uk)  
**Friends General E-Mail address:** [info@weirwood.me.uk](mailto:info@weirwood.me.uk)

**Friends of Weir Wood Website Address:** <http://www.weirwood.me.uk>