

Friends of Weir Wood Newsletter

Newsletter No. 86

Autumn 2019



Welcome!

OPEN DAY - Sunday 14th July report.

As we were setting up it started to rain, something that was not forecast, and we started to fear the worst. Luckily the weather improved to become a pleasant sunny day which brought us a steady flow of visitors, to a point at times where we had difficulty parking all the cars, so it was a good attendance.

The refreshments were very popular and generated a good donation to the funds of the Society.

The ever popular bird ringing was held in the study area. People do love to see the birds up close and be shown the fine details and learn about the bird recording.

Some 33 birds of 11 species were ringed including Marsh & Coal Tits, Blackcaps, Chiffchaffs, a Great Spotted Woodpecker and a Reed Warbler.

On route to the ringing area visitors got a chance to see a little of the wooded area of the reserve which included a Broad-leaved helleborine in bud growing along the path.

The live moth display in the Car Park was also popular with Elephant & Poplar hawk moths being highlights for some, but also included were Six-belted Clearwing, Scallop Shell, Peach Blossom, a pristine Large Emerald, and the unusual looking Buff Tip which always amazes. The display also included some nice micro moths with over 50 species of moth in total on display. We released them all at the end of the day to carry on their lives, which gave late visitors some good moth photo opportunities.

Over at Whillet's we had various attractions including our bee display, where you could discover the inside of a beehive, learn about the bees lives in a hive. Some local honey was also available. The wild flowers of our meadows gave a good display this year, waist high in places and rich in varieties. Betony flowering in the second meadow gave a particularly colourful show. The meadows also attracted a host of insects with grasshoppers and crickets being particularly common.

For some peeping under the refugia sheets (tins) brought results. They can often hide a wood mouse or vole, toads and frogs and occasional Slow Worm. Our main reason for having the tins is to monitor and support our summer visiting grass snake colony.

The pond dipping is always popular. Several beautiful dragonfly and damselfly species were seen holding territories near the pond. The pond itself is very productive and holds over 50 species, of which a good majority of those were seen by pond dippers on the day, including newts, dragonfly larvae, water stick insect, water beetles, leeches etc.

The bird spotting from the observation point next to the hide was the starting point for most visitors. The 'scopes set up for visitors to use, revealed some of the Common

Terns that had nested on our rafts. Little Egrets were seen on the opposite shore, with Mandarin, Grebes, Grey Herons, Kingfishers, Buzzards. A total of 33 bird species were seen during the day.

We added a few new members, and others renewed their membership in person. I would like to thank all those visitors who gave donations on the day to help support our conservation work. Thanks also goes to Gough's Pet Store in East Grinstead who kindly loaned us their gazebo and supported our event, and to Paul Clark, a local moth enthusiast, who kindly helped provide part of the moth display.

I would also like to give a big "thank you" to all the volunteers who gave up their time manning the various stations, bird ringing, pond dipping, refreshments etc. as they worked so hard to make the day a success. We had very good feedback from visitors about how much they enjoyed their visit.

We hope to see you all again next year. *by Bob Johnson*

FOWW - Silver Anniversary Book

We have started work on the book that will commemorate our 25th anniversary in 2021. It will be a celebration of the wildlife and history of the beautiful Weir Wood site.

The contents will range from: the geography & history of the site; water - fish and water birds; edges - vegetation and shorebirds; trees and woodland - fungi, insects, lichen, birds; Whillet's - meadows, ponds and reedbeds; the history of the Friends and our role in the conservation of the reserve.

Our aim is to complete the writing by the spring of 2020 and to publish early in 2021.

We are very keen to gather any suggestions, memories, photos and contributions that you may have. We are looking for pictures, maps and anecdotes. Don't worry that you are not a writer. We will be pleased to meet with you and capture your thoughts with minimal effort on your part.

Please contact Tom Howard-Jones (membership@weirwood.me.uk): If you have anything that might be of interest; if you know someone else who might be able to help or if you would like to be involved. We are particularly hoping someone may have photos or memories from the 1950s of the developing reservoir which we could possibly use in the book.
by Tom Howard-Jones - Editor

Great Crested Grebe video

According to historical notes we have found in the Weir Wood Nature Reserve Committee files, a video was made in 1992 of Great Crested Grebes at Weir Wood. If anyone has a copy we would be pleased to hear from them.

Little Grebe – (pair raised 2 young) 1+2Juv on 7/7 & 22/7, 1 on 4/8, 11/8, 12/8, 18/8, 25/8, 30/8 & 13/9.
Great Crested Grebe – Regular (Only 1 fledged chick) (counts over 60), 78 on 27/6, 71 on 3/7, 89 on 3/7, up to 87 from 5/7 until 99 on 14/7, 90 on 16/7, 81 on 17/7, 103 on 22/7 then up to 73 until 3/8, 92 on 4/8, 97 on 18/8, 99 on 19/8, 92 on 1/9.
Cormorant – (13 successful nests fledged 28 young) (Counts over 20), 44 on 4/7, 27 on 7/7, 22 on 30/7, 35 on 4/8, 25 on 7/8, 22 on 9/9, 29 on 13/9.
Little Egret - 1 on 30/6, 2 on 2/7, 3 on 4/7, 5 on 7/7, 4 on 10/7, 8 on 12/7, 7 on 14/7 & 15/7 then up to 6 regularly with 11 on 24/7, 12 on 27/7, 8 on 28/7, 9 on 2/8, 11 on 4/8 to 6/8, 9 on 10/8, 7 on 15/8 then up to 6 until 26/8, 4 on 30/8, 2 on 1/9 then 1 until end of period.
Great White Egret – 1 from 30/7 to 3/8, 1 on 25/8, 3 on 11/9, 1 on 12/9.
Grey Heron – Regular - (18 successful nests fledged 27 young) (Counts over 6), 8 on 3/7, 12 on 7/7 & 14/7, 11 on 23/7, 8 on 26/7, 19 on 28/7, 15 on 29/7, 7 on 30/7, 16 on 4/8, 13 on 6/8, 18 on 7/8, 10 on 18/8, 9 on 1/9, 10 on 13/9.
Egyptian Goose – 4 on 1/7 & 7/7, 2 on 19/7, 5 on 28/7 & 4/8, 2 on 6/8 & 8/9, 6 on 10/9, 8 on 12/9.
Greylag Goose – Regular, 70 on 27/6 & 3/7, 52 on 5/7, 72 on 7/7, 17 on 10/7, 11 on 17/7, 29 on 3/8, 90 on 6/8, 82 on 7/8, 132 on 8/8, 124 on 14/8, 100 on 19/8, 94 on 1/9, 307 on 8/9, 238 on 11/9, 225 on 13/9. Also **Greylag/Feral hybrid Goose** – 1 on 7/7 & 7/8, 1 on 1/9, 7 on 8/9, 5 on 13/9.
Canada Goose – (Counts over 2), 4 on 7/7, 16 on 4/8, 32 on 11/8, 12 on 18/8, 29 on 19/8, 18 on 9/9, 104 on 10/9, 151 on 11/9, 171 on 13/9.
Gadwall – 1 from 25/8 to 30/8, 3 from 1/9 to 3/9, 2 on 9/9 to 13/9.
Tufted Duck – (pair produced 8 young), 2 on 22/7, 3 on 24/7, 1+8Juv on 4/8, 8 on 11/8, 12/8 & 19/8, 2 on 25/8 & 30/8, 1 on 1/9 & 13/9.
Mandarin – Regular (3 pairs fledged 32 young but losses are high) (Counts over 3), 11 on 24/6, 4 on 30/6, 12 on 3/7, 10 on 4/7, 15 on 7/7, 12 on 12/7, 7 on 14/7 & 15/7, 8 on 17/7, 28 on 19/7, 9 on 22/7, 6 on 29/7, 14 on 2/8, 5 on 4/8, 9 on 5/8, 5 on 11/8, 4 on 18/8, 6 on 25/8, 10 on 26/8, 6 on 27/8, 4 on 1/9 and from 8/9 to 13/9.
Teal – 2 from 26/7 to 28/7, 2 on 15/8 & 19/8, 1 on 25/8, 5 on 26/8, 1 on 27/8, 4 on 30/8, 3 on 1/9 & 2/9, 5 on 8/9, 4 on 9/9, 6 on 10/9, 10 on 11/9 & 12/9, 13 on 13/9.
Mallard - Resident – (broods of young seen) (counts over 10), 49 on 7/7, 18 on 17/7, 11 on 29/7, 36 on 4/8, 23 on 18/8, 36 on 25/8, 27 on 9/9, 15 on 13/9. Also 1 Domestic feral hybrid Mallard on 7/7.
Pintail - 2 on 11/9.
Red Kite – 1 on 27/6 & 14/7, 1 on 30/8 & 1/9.
Sparrowhawk – 1 on 14/7, 1 on 2/8, 15/8, 18/8 & 19/8, 1 on 1/9, 2 on 11/9.
Common Buzzard – 1 regularly (counts over), 2 on 11/8, 7 on 18/8, 4 on 22/8, 2 on 25/8, 3 on 30/8 to 2/9, 2 on 3/9, 5 on 5/9, 3 on 7/9, 2 from 8/9 to 13/9.
Kestrel – 1 regularly (counts over), 2 on 5/7, 7/7 & 12/7, 2 on 6/9, 1 on 13/9.
Pheasant – Resident & regular - Up to 2 occasionally.
Moorhen – 2 regularly (counts over), 4 on 5/8, 5 on 12/8, 3 on 18/8, 4 on 19/8, 7 on 9/9, 14 on 10/9, 5 on 11/9, 7 on 13/9.
Coot - 1 on 19/8, 25/8 & 26/8.
Lapwing – Regular (counts over 2) -14 on 27/6, 10 on 2/7 & 3/7, 3 on 5/7, 4 on 7/7, 5 from 12/7 to 19/7, 3 on 24/7, 24 on 28/7, 4 on 29/7, 3 on 2/8, 4 on 3/8, 4 on 4/8 & 5/8, 5 on 8/8, 13 on 14/8, 14 on 16/8, 4 on 1/9, 3 on 2/9, up to 3 from 2/9 to 9/9, 6 on 10/9.
Common Snipe – 1 on 11/9 to 13/9.
Dunlin - 1 on 28/7.
Green Sandpiper – 1 on 15/7, 4 on 19/7, up to 2 regularly from 22/7 onwards (counts over), 3 on 29/7 & 8/8.
Common Sandpiper – 1 regularly from 1/7 (counts over), 2 on 19/7 & 22/7, 13 on 24/7, 3 on 27/7, 9 on 28/7, 4 on 29/7 & 31/7, 6 on 2/8 & 4/8, 3 on 8/8, 2 on 12/8, 3 on 19/8 & 25/8, 4 on 30/8, 3 on 1/9, 10/9 & 12/9, 2 on 13/9.
Black Headed Gull – 1 on 27/6, 48 on 1/7, (counts over 10), 16 on 7/7, 12 on 14/7, 80 on 22/7, 88 on 24/7, 31 on 18/8, 28 on 19/8, 220 on 10/9.
Mediterranean Gull – 1 on 25/8.
LBB Gull – 1 on 27/6, 2 on 7/7, 1 on 22/7, 4 on 24/7, 1 on 4/8, 5 on 11/8, 1 on 12/8, 2 on 25/8 & 11/9.
Common Gull – 1 on 15/8, 2 on 25/8.
Herring Gull – 11 on 1/7, 1 on 3/7, 10 on 7/7, 9 on 22/7, 37 on 24/7, 3 on 4/8, 1 on 18/8 & 19/8, 4 on 11/9.
Common Tern - (8 pairs successfully bred - 19 young hatched, minimum of 13 fledged) (Counts over 5), 36 on 22/6, 38 on 27/6, 20 on 2/7, 19 on 3/7, 36 on 7/7, up to 15 from 8/7 to 16/7, 17 on 17/7, 30 on 22/7 & 24/7, 6 on 26/7 & 29/7, 4 on 30/7, 2 on 3/8, 1 on 4/8 & 11/8, 2 on 15/8, 1 on 22/8 was the last report for period.
Stock Dove – Up to 2 intermittently (counts over), 4 on 14/7, 3 on 4/8.
Collared Dove - 1 on 4/8.
Barn Owl – 1 on 11/7.
Swift – 4 on 1/7, 25 on 7/7, 1 on 5/8 & 10/8, 12 on 11/8, 5 on 12/8, 1 on 19/8, 2 on 22/8, 4 on 25/8.
Kingfisher – 1 regularly (counts over) 2 on 5/7, 3 on 7/7, 2 on 14/7, 15/7 & 22/7, 2 on 2/8 & 4/8, 4 on 15/8, 2 on 18/8, 4 on 22/8 & 25/8, 2 regularly from 27/8 to 13/9.
Green Woodpecker – 1 on 7/7, 22/7 & 12/8, 1 on 25/8, 27/8, 8/9 & 10/9.
Great Spotted Woodpecker – 1 on 7/7, 14/7, 17/7 & 22/7, 2 on 4/8, 1 on 16/8, 18/8 & 24/8, 1Juv on 3/9, 2 on 3/9.
Sand Martin – 2 on 7/7 & 12/7, 1 on 17/7, 2 on 27/7 & 28/7, 5 on 30/7, 1 on 11/8, 14/8 & 16/8, 4 on 18/8, 2 on 6/9, 4 from 9/9 to 12/9.
Swallow – Regular in low numbers (counts over 4), 25 on 7/7, 6 on 30/7 & 11/8, 50 on 12/8, 6 on 16/8, 30 on 18/8, 25 on 1/9, 10 on 3/9, 9 on 5/9, up to 6 from 8/9 to 11/9, 60 on 12/9, 6 on 13/9.
House Martin – Regular (counts over 10), 17 on 7/7, 25 on 17/7, 44 on 4/8, 45 on 5/8, 26 on 6/8, 200 on 10/8, 40 on 11/8, 200 on 12/8, 15 on 14/8, 60 on 19/8, 60 on 21/8, 80 on 30/8, 30 on 1/9, 120 on 2/9, 50 on 3/9, 30 on 5/9, 180 on 6/9, 25 on 7/9, 31 on 8/9, 48 on 10/9, 40 on 12/9, 20 on 13/9.
Grey Wagtail – 2 on 7/7, 1 on 4/8, 11/8 & 19/8, 1 on 1/9 to 5/9, 2 from 8/9 to 11/9, 1 on 13/9.
Yellow Wagtail – 1 from 30/8 to 2/9.

Pied Wagtail – 2 on 2/7 & 3/7, 3 on 4/7, 1 on 7/7, 3 on 12/7, 12 on 15/7, 1 on 17/7, 12 on 2/8, 4 on 3/8, 1 on 11/8, 3 on 12/8, 10 on 25/8, 22 on 26/8, 37 on 8/9, 1 on 11/9 & 13/9, 2 on 12/9, 1 on 13/9.

Wren, Dunnock, Robin, Blackbird Nb. All are regular and resident – no counts over 5 reported.

Stonechat – 1 on 11/7. **Whinchat** - 3 on 26/8, 1 on 10/9.

Northern Wheatear – 1 on 19/8. **Meadow Pipit** – 1 on 10/9.

Redstart – 1 on 22/8, 27/8 & 30/8. **Skylark** – 1 on 7/7.

Spotted Flycatcher – 1 on 30/6 & 18/8, 1 on 8/9.

Song Thrush - 1 on 4/7 & 7/7, 1 on 4/8, 11/8 & 12/8, 2 on 25/8 & 1/9, 1 on 12/9.

Mistle Thrush – 1 on 11/8, 2 on 25/8, (flyovers – 9 on 26/8, 22 on 1/9, 1 on 2/9, 9 on 3/9, 10 on 8/9, 3 on 10/9, 7 on 12/9.

Reed Warbler - up to 2 regularly until 1/9 (counts over), 3 on 30/6 & 2/7, 6 on 7/7, 3 on 25/7, 23 on 28/7 was a Reed bed ringing count at least 7 pairs bred many seen were juveniles), 10 on 2/8, 3 on 4/8, 5 on 11/8, 4 on 25/8.

Sedge Warbler – 1 on 2/8, 4/8 & 13/8, 1 on 22/8, 25/8 & 26/8, up to 3 from 30/8 to 2/9, 4 on 7/9, 1 on 10/9 & 13/9.

Grasshopper Warbler – 1 on 22/8 & 2/9.

Lesser Whitethroat – 1 on 25/8, 26/8 & 1/9.

Whitethroat – Regular (counts over 2), 10 on 22/6, 6 on 30/6, 5 on 2/7, 10 on 3/7, 8 on 8/7, 15 on 2/8, 14 on 4/8, 8 on 8/8, 5 on 12/8, 3 on 13/8, 4 on 18/8, & 19/8, 20 on 22/8, 5 on 25/8, 10 on 26/8, 9 on 27/8, 3 on 28/8.

Garden Warbler – 1 Regularly (counts over), 2 on 22/6 & 30/6, 3 on 7/7, 2 on 2/8 & 22/8, 1 on 30/8 was the last record in this period.

Blackcap – Regular (counts over 2), 8 on 7/7, 3 on 11/7, 4 on 14/7, 8 on 21/7, 7 on 22/7, 5 on 24/7, 13 on 25/7, 4 on 12/8, 8 on 25/8, 5 on 26/8, 25 on 1/9, 10 on 2/9, 9 on 3/9, 15 on 7/9, 5 on 8/9 & 10/9, 6 on 12/9, 20 on 13/9.

Chiffchaff – Up to 4 reported regularly (Counts over) 5 on 3/7, 9 on 7/7, 6 on 14/7, 10 on 21/7 & 2/8, 6 on 11/8, 10 on 15/8, 20 on 22/8, 17 on 25/8, 25 on 26/8, 7 on 27/8, 50 on 1/9, 20 on 2/9, 11 on 7/9, 15 on 8/9, 18 on 10/9, 10 on 12/9, 30 on 13/9.

Willow Warbler – 1 on 22/6, 2 on 8/7, 1 regularly from 21/7 (counts over), 2 on 8/8, 3 on 12/8, 2 on 20/8, 4 on 22/8, 3 on 25/8, 6 on 26/8, 4 on 27/8, 30 on 2/9, 2 on 3/9 & 7/9, 1 on 12/9.

Long Tailed Tit – 1 on 4/8, 8 on 7/8. **Coal Tit** – 1 on 14/7 & 17/7, 2 on 25/7 & 1/9.

Marsh Tit – 1 on 7/7 to 12/7, 2 on 14/7, 1 on 17/7, 3 on 22/7, 1 on 25/7, 2/8, 4/8, 18/8 & 22/8, 2 on 24/8, 25/8, 1/9 & 3/9, 1 on 7/9 & 13/9. **Goldcrest** – 2 on 12/9.

Blue Tit – Regular (counts over 5), 7 on 25/7, 12 on 3/9. **Great Tit** – Regular (counts over 5), 8 on 11/7, 9 on 14/7.

Nuthatch – 2 on 7/7, 1 on 12/7 & 17/7, 2 on 29/7, 1 on 4/8, 18/8 & 1/9.

Treecreeper – 1 on 2/7, 7/7 & 10/7, 2 on 23/7, 1 on 25/7, 4/8 & 25/8.

Jay – 2 on 11/8, 1 on 6/9 & 8/9, 2 on 10/9 & 12/9.

Starling – 2 on 11/8, 1 on 25/8, 11 on 1/9, 16 flyover on 8/9, 4 on 12/9.

Jackdaw – Occasional - 5 on 11/9, 1 on 13/9. **Rook** – 8 on 8/9.

Raven – 2 on 4/8, 1 on 22/8, 3 on 25/8, 2 on 8/9. **Carriion Crow** – Resident – (No counts over 5).

Chaffinch – 2 on 8/9, 1 on 12/9. **Linnnet** - 4 on 18/8.

Goldfinch – Regular (counts over 4), 18 on 30/6, 45 on 3/7, 25 on 5/7, 8 on 7/7, 45 on 17/7, 50 on 28/7, 30 on 2/8, 72 on 4/8, 60 on 12/8, 160 on 25/8, 40 on 1/9, 200 on 8/9, 25 on 11/9. **House Sparrow** – 24 on 5/8.

Greenfinch – 1 on 4/8, 2 on 18/8 & 22/8, 9 on 25/8, 2 on 26/8, up to 12 from 1/9 to 8/9, up to 3 from 10/9 to 13/9.

Bullfinch – 1 on 30/6, 1 on 25/7, 29/7, 3 on 4/8, 1 on 11/8, 12/8 & 18/8, 4 on 25/8 & 26/8, 20 on 1/9, 2 on 6/9, 4 on 7/9, 6 on 8/9. **Siskin** – 4 on 12/9.

Yellowhammer - 1 on 27/6, 1 regularly from 3/7 to 8/7, 1 on 28/7, 2/8 & 4/8, 1 on 1/9 & 2/9.

Reed Bunting – Up to 2 regularly (counts over), 3 on 27/6 & 5/7, 4 on 25/8 & 26/8, 3 on 2/9, 5 on 10/9.

Fungi Foray Walk - Saturday 9th November:

Just a reminder, we will be having our Fungi Foray walk within the nature reserve, open to all our members on 9th November, led again by the very knowledgeable Nick Aplin, 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, finish at approx. 13:00. No need to book, just turn up. It will probably be wet underfoot and uneven ground, so we advise you have suitable footwear.

Common Tern Nesting:

In the last newsletter I advised we had 12 pairs of Terns, with 10 pairs nesting. The update was that the last 2 pairs failed to nest. Of that 10 pairs one pair decided to nest on Martins Island, having managed to remove all the Cormorants that normally loaf there, however, their efforts were unsuccessful with no chicks seen. Of the 9 pairs nesting on the rafts, one failed to produce any young leaving 8 successful pairs on the rafts.

On the 27th June we had the following: LHR raft = 5 pairs with 11 young. LHF raft = 1 pair with 3 young. RHR raft = 1 pair with 2 young. RHF raft = 1 pair with 2 young. (8 pairs had 18 young so far) which went on to become 19 young in total from those 8 pairs.

All 19 young got to near fledging, but some in exercising their wings managed to lift off over the wire and fall in the water. Some did not have the skills/strength to fly from the water, their young feathers which were not fully waterproof became wet and heavy, and they eventually tired and weakened and were lost. In past years any young that got into the water had eventually managed to fly back to their raft, but perhaps that was luck.

We intend to carry out some modifications to the rafts and fit a water level perch where birds can stand and dry off if they get into the water, and also allow adults to feed them from the perch until they re-join the raft.

We know that at least 13 young did successfully fledge, possibly even 14-15 fledged but not proven. We are fairly certain of 4 losses, including a weakened young Tern that managed to get out of the water, but flew back to the wrong raft. The family of Terns there attacked it as an intruder, and it being too weak to defend itself or fly off, it eventually perished. Nature can be cruel.

Whillet's News:

You may have noted in bird sightings some high counts for warblers such as Chiffchaff & Blackcap, many of these high counts were obtained in the meadows. Our bird ringers have carried out extensive ringing there this autumn. The survey work is highlighting the high numbers of migratory birds the meadows attract, confirming the quality of the habitat for birds.

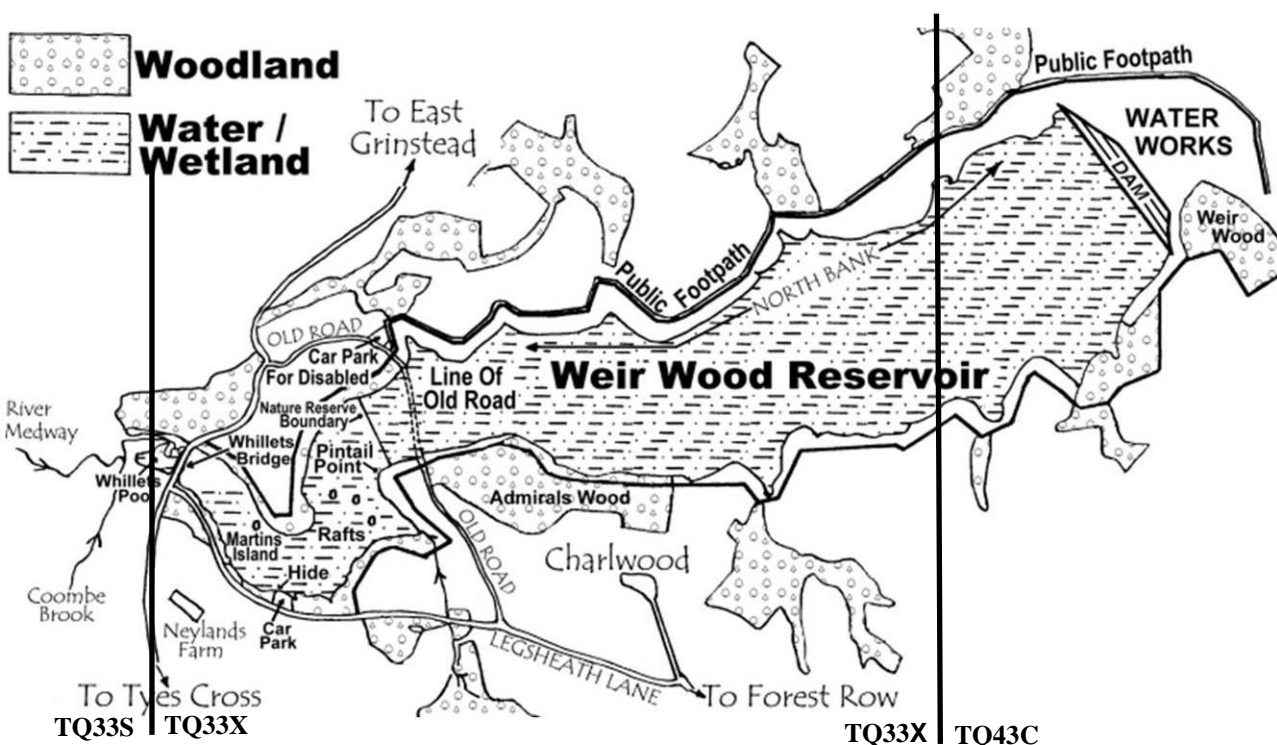
The private fields just behind Whillet's on the south slopes were recently planted as vineyards. The vines are only just a year old and yet to fruit, but we expect this habitat will benefit the general area for birds.

The reed bed has also been naturally expanding, and we have been cutting back Willow to allow further expansion and habitat improvement. Orange Foxtail, a rare grass, is still doing well despite the invasive alien New Zealand Stonecrop being present. The more unusual plants of Trifid & Nodding Burr-Marigolds are also doing well in the new more open muddy areas we are creating.

General Reserve Work:

The habitat improvement work at Pintail bank is now complete, with a wide mud spit being added. We used the soil that was dug out from the sloping scrapes that are to the left of this spit which go back to the line of posts. Though the scrapes are not easily visible to the public, we hope this area will make the Pintail bank area more attractive to wildfowl and waders. The meadow grass has also been cut, and some bracken cutting control carried out.

I am aware of the state of the hide Car Park surface with deep potholes everywhere. I have repeatedly spoken to Forest Row Parish Council who are responsible for its maintenance. The Council keep making promises to organise repairs, but unfortunately nothing is happening!!! Maybe we all need to start complaining?



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