

Friends of Weir Wood Newsletter

Newsletter No. 91

Winter 2020



Welcome!

Silver Anniversary Weir Wood Nature Book

The book marking the 25th anniversary of the start of our Society is now complete and we have had 300 copies printed. When we started the project printing costs were estimated, at the March 2019 AGM, as £1500 (£5/copy to break-even). However, costs have increased, mainly because we have used more colour pictures than we predicted. The final cost was just over £1800. So we have set the price at £6 per copy in order to achieve the near-neutral cost that was approved at the AGM.

We think the book is excellent value. Those of you using email communications have already received news of it. A sample page, which is in full colour in the book, is shown. Early purchasers have been impressed and feedback has been very good. Further information is on our web site.

"The Nature of Weir Wood" covers: the open water; the water's edge; the trees; woodland; hedges and the meadows. We also touch on: the geography and history of the site; the story of the Society; a typical year of work; memories of the reserve and the creation of the reservoir. It is A5 sized and contains 150 pages richly illustrated with colour photographs taken at the reserve over the years. The nature we look at includes: birds; mammals; reptiles; butterflies and moths; dragon and damselflies; fish; flowers; fungi; plants and trees. We hope you will like it and find it interesting.

The books are £6 each. Postage and packing for the UK is £2 for a single copy. Please ask for the postage costs of multiple copies. For deliveries to one of the following areas we can arrange personal, free delivery: Turners Hill; Sharpthorne; West Hoathly; Forest Row; Crawley; East Grinstead; Horley; Uckfield and Crowborough.

You can order by email (quicker) or post. Please include: your name; address; the number of books you want and how you wish to pay and this can be by bank transfer or cheque. We will provide our bank details on request. Please make your cheque payable to "The Friends of Weir Wood Society".

All orders, cheques and enquiries should be sent to:-

Tom Howard-Jones (Book editor)

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Membership Renewals for 2021

Your 2021 Membership renewal will become due on the 1st January.

A reminder slip is included with your copy of this newsletter giving all the details. continued....

Please contact Tom Howard-Jones, who is also our Membership Secretary, as already detailed, if you have any questions. You may pay by cheque or bank transfer.

You can even purchase a book and renew your membership at the same time.

2021 AGM & Bluebell Walk

Because of Covid restrictions we have delayed organising our AGM. This will now be postponed until we can assess the long term situation.

There is no reason why the AGM has to be at a certain date, our criteria is only to complete the official business during 2021 i.e. arrange and then declare the audited accounts, have an election of Committee members and allow members to give their views, which could all be done electronically if it eventually proves necessary.

Our Bluebell Walk for members is usually our first outdoor social event, taking place in late April. Again, the confirmation date for this will be delayed until our next newsletter in early April. We should know by then whether it can take place, and any government restrictions that may apply.

Sample page of book



Kingfishers



Trail camera photo of a Sparrowhawk taking a Kingfisher.

Great Crested Grebe



Great Crested Grebes

This is the key species of the open water and was first recorded in 1955. They appeared soon after the reservoir was full. The first record of breeding was in 1959. Since 1963 they have bred nearly every year. The annual maximum count for the whole reservoir increased steadily and reached 100 in 1981. It has fluctuated around that ever since. Unless the reservoir is at a very low level more than 50 are frequently seen from the hide and viewing area which is the best place to watch them. During the nesting season there is often a nest visible from here too.

Great Crested Grebes breed on inland lakes all across the temperate zone from Ireland to Korea. They tend to stay put all year if they can. Their dancing displays in which they paddle upright, breast to breast and offer weed with synchronised head shaking is one of the classic

Little Grebe – 1 on 2/11 & 4/11, 2 on 8/11.

Great Crested Grebe – Regular (counts over 10), 35 on 28/9, 40 on 18/10, 45 on 4/11, 13 on 5/11, 31 on 16/11, 12 on 14/12.

Mute Swan – 2 on 2/11, 3 on 8/12, 4 on 29/12.

Bittern – 1 fly over on 11/12.

Cormorant – Regular (counts over 10), 12 on 18/10 & 4/11, 19 on 8/11, 24 on 16/11, 14 on 14/12, 31 on 15/12, 16 on 29/12.

Little Egret – 2 on 23/9 & 7/10.

Great White Egret – 1 on 7/10.

Grey Heron – Regular, 5 on 28/9 & 29/9, 2 on 5/10, 7 on 18/10, 3 on 4/11, 1 on 6/11, 2 on 16/11, 1 on 20/11, & 29/11, 2 on 30/11 & 1/12, 1 on 8/12, 4 on 14/12, 5 on 17/12.

Greylag Goose – Regular (counts over 10), 320 on 25/9, 420 on 26/9, 370 on 28/9, 34 27/10, 98 on 4/11, 180 on 5/11, 268 on 8/11, 300 on 10/11, 358 on 17/11, 339 on 16/11, 302 on 30/11, 176 on 14/12, 281 on 17/12. Also seen regularly were several White Domestic Geese and a Greylag/Canada hybrid amongst the flocks.

Canada Goose – 325 on 25/9, 490 on 26/9, 40 on 28/9, 2 on 18/10, 11 on 4/11, 2 on 14/12, 6 on 18/12, 1 on 20/12.

Egyptian Goose – 2 regularly (counts over), 14 on 25/9, 3 on 26/9, 4 on 28/9, 3 on 5/10, 6 on 7/10 & 15/10, 7 on 16/10, 3 on 18/10 & 8/11, 4 on 11/11, 3 on 16/11.

Brent Goose – 1 on 10/11, 16/11 & 22/11.

Mandarin – 6 on 26/9, 1 on 28/9, 5 on 5/10, 4 on 6/10, 1 on 15/10, 7 on 25/10, 18 on 27/10, 19 on 6/11, 10 on 8/11, 19 on 10/11, 8 on 16/11, 5 on 22/11, 7 on 23/11, 3 on 30/11, 7 on 6/12, 5 on 14/12, 31 on 15/12.

Wigeon – 1 on 25/10, 3 on 30/11, 1 on 8/12, 4 on 14/12, 1 on 15/12.

Godwail – 2 from 16/10 to 18/10, 5 on 25/10, 3 on 10/11 & 14/11, 5 on 16/11 & 22/11, 6 on 23/11, 1 on 29/11, 8 on 30/11, 1 on 8/12.

Shoveler – 2 on 23/9.

Teal - Regular (counts over 2), 6 on 23/9, 8 on 25/9, 10 on 26/9, 4 on 28/9, 7 on 29/9, 6 on 5/10, 4 on 16/10, 5 on 18/10 & 25/10 then 3 on 30/11, 5 on 8/12.

Goosander – 2 on 17/12, 1 on 18/12.

Mallard - Resident (counts over 5), 17 on 28/9, 19 on 29/9, 25 on 18/10, 8 on 27/10, 21 on 4/11, 20 on 8/11, 26 on 16/11, 24 on 14/12, 8 on 17/12 & 29/12. A feral hybrid was also occasionally seen.

Tufted Duck – 1 on 5/10, 9/10 & 15/10, 2 on 18/10, 3 on 23/11, 1 on 30/11, 14 on 8/12, 1 on 14/12.

Common Buzzard – 1 reported regularly (counts over), 3 on 6/10, 2 on 7/10, 3 on 2/11, 2 on 6/11 & 16/11, 2 on 14/12.

Peregrine – 1 on 11/11.

Sparrowhawk – 1 on 27/9 & 28/9, 1 on 5/10, 6/10 15/10 & 16/10, 1 on 1/11, 3/11, 5/11, 22/11 & 30/11, 1 on 1/12.

Kestrel – 1 on 28/9, 6/10, 11/10 & 15/10, 2 on 18/10, 1 on 1/11, 2 on 16/11, 1 on 22/11 & 15/12.

Hobby – 1 on 7/10.

Osprey - 1 on 25/9, 1 on 10/10.

Red Kite – 1 on 7/10, 3/11, 16/11 & 22/11.

Goshawk – 1 on 6/12.

Pheasant – Regular (counts over 5), 7 on 2/11, 8 on 20/11.

Coot – 1 on 8/11.

Water Rail - 1 regular from reed-bed 16/10 onwards (counts over), 2 on 23/11, 6/12 & 11/12.

Moorhen – Resident (Counts over 2), 5 on 28/9, 3 on 29/9, 3 on 18/10, 5 on 25/10 & 16/11, 4 on 30/11, 5 on 14/12.

Common Snipe – 2 on 25/9, 1 on 26/9, 2 on 29/9, 1 on 18/10, 3 on 17/12, 1 on 22/12.

Lapwing – 1 on 23/9 & 28/9, 20 on 29/9, 15 on 6/10, 20 on 7/10, 15 on 15/10, 20 on 17/10, 4 on 18/10, 11 on 4/11.

Green Sandpiper – Up to 2 regularly until 7/10 (counts over), 3 on 23/9.

Common Sandpiper – 1 regularly until 5/10, 2 on 7/10, 1 on 29/10.

Black Headed Gull – (counts over 10), 145 on 15/10, 203 on 16/10, 54 on 18/10, 71 on 4/11, 37 on 5/11, 31 on 17/12 - Roost counts: 850 on 8/12, 3930 on 14/12, c500 on 20/12.

Common Gull – 1 on 15/10, 4 on 29/10, 2 on 8/11, 1 on 29/11, 3 on 30/11, 5 on 8/12, 1 on 17/12.

Herring Gull – 1 on 18/10 & 16/11, 5 on 8/12.

LBB Gull – 1 on 20/12.

GBB Gull – 1 on 6/10 & 8/11.

Med Gull – 1 on 1/10.

Little Gull – 1 on 8/10.

Stock Dove – 12 on 27/9, 20 on 7/10, 2 on 5/11, 7 on 8/11, 1 on 16/11, 5 on 6/12, 7 on 14/12, 1 on 29/12.

Wood Pigeon – Ubiquitous (counts over 25), 30 on 18/10, 460 on 25/10 visual migration (vis mig) count, 30 on 5/11, 150 on 6/11, 95 on 8/11, vis mig counts -1288 on 16/11, 1153 on 22/11.

Barn Owl – 1 on 30/9, 10/10 & 6/12.

Tawny Owl – 1 on 16/10, 3 heard on 6/11, 1 on 16/11, 3 heard on 23/11, 2 heard on 1/12 & 6/12.

Kingfisher – 1 regularly throughout period (counts over), 2 on 25/9 to 28/9, 3 on 18/10, 2 on 20/10 & 25/10, 2 on 6/11, 8/11, 16/11 & 22/11, 2 on 15/12.

Gt Spotted Woodpecker – 1 on 1/10 & 6/10, 2 on 11/10, 1 on 20/10, 1 regularly from 4/11 to 10/11, 2 on 16/11, 1 on 14/12, 17/12 & 29/12.

Green Woodpecker – 1 on 5/10, 6/12, 14/12 & 29/12.

Skylark – 2 on 11/10, 1 on 18/10.

Woodlark – 1 on 4/11.

House Martin – 11 on 28/9, 40 on 30/9, 32 on 5/10, 3 on 6/10, 2 on 7/10, 8 on 11/10, 4 on 29/10.

Swallow - 4 on 30/9, 8 on 5/10, 3 on 6/10, 6 on 7/10, 7 on 16/10, 2 on 25/10, 1 on 2/11, 1 on 11/12.

Meadow Pipit - 18 on 27/9, 9 on 28/9, 14 on 5/10, 40 on 11/10 & 16/10, 25 on 18/10, 20 on 25/10, 30 on 29/10, 25 on 3/11, 3 on 4/11, 8/11 & 15/11, 1 on 16/11, 3 on 14/12, 1 on 20/12.

Tree Pipit – 1 on 30/9.

Grey Wagtail – 2 on 27/9, 1 on 28/9, 2 on 30/9, 1 on 5/10 & 11/10, 2 on 18/10, 1 on 20/10 & 4/11, 2 on 1/11, 1 on 20/11, 1 on 8/12 & 14/12.

Yellow Wagtail – 2 on 22/9, 1 on 30/9.

Pied Wagtail – 2 on 28/9, 1 on 29/9, 2 on 30/9, 1 on 11/10, 2 on 18/10, 1 on 4/11, 2 on 8/11, 5 on 16/11, 1 on 14/12.

Blackbird – Regular & resident (counts over 5), 6 on 18/10, 10 on 8/11, 8 on 16/11, 7 on 22/11, 8 on 29/11.

Wren, Dunnock, Robin & Magpie – Regular and resident. No counts over 5.

Stonechat – 1 on 28/9, 2 on 1/10, 1 on 11/10, 2 on 18/10 & 20/10, 1 on 8/11 & 11/11, 1 regularly from 15/11 to 23/11, 1 on 5/12.

Song Thrush – 2 on 28/9, 15 on 5/10, 1 on 6/10, 6 on 18/10, 3 on 20/10, 5 on 1/11, 2 on 5/11, 5 on 6/11, 6 on 8/11, 1 on 10/11, 2 on 16/11, 1 on 20/11, 4 on 22/11, 7 on 29/11, 1 on 1/12, 4 on 6/12, 2 on 29/12.

Mistle Thrush – 4 on 27/9, 16 flyover on 28/9, 2 on 5/10, 1 on 18/10, 2 on 16/11 & 29/11, 1 on 6/12.

Redwing – Regular - 1 on 28/9, (counts over 5), 29 on 11/10, 135 on 16/10, 24 on 2/11, 56 on 8/11, 15 on 10/11, 25 on 14/11, up to 60 on 16/11, 25 on 22/11, 45 on 23/11, 24 on 6/12, 30 on 14/12.

Fieldfare – 20 on 16/10, 3 on 29/10, 1 on 14/11 & 15/11, 30+ on 16/11, 12 on 22/11, 2 on 23/11, 1 on 6/12, 20 on 14/12.

Blackcap – 1 on 5/10, 1 on 5/11.

Lesser Whitethroat – 1 on 23/9.

Chiffchaff - 4 on 26/9, 3 on 27/9, 6 on 28/9, 9 on 5/10, 2 on 6/10, 3 on 11/10, 1 on 18/10, 25/10 & 1/11, 2 on 16/11 & 18/12.

Goldcrest - 2 on 5/10 & 15/10, 1 on 27/10, 3/11 & 4/11, 4 on 8/11, 1 on 20/11, 5 on 14/12.

L.T. Tit – 3 on 6/10, 6 on 15/10, 3 on 18/10 & 20/10, 1 on 27/10, 8 on 5/11, 3 on 6/11 & 10/11, 24 on 16/11, 4 on 1/12, 10 on 14/12, 2 on 17/12, 1 on 29/12.

Marsh Tit – 1 reported regularly from 4/11 (counts over), 2 on 8/11, 3 on 11/11, 2 on 14/11, 7 on 15/11, 10 on 8/12, 2 on 15/12.

Coal Tit – 2 on 27/10, 1 on 4/11 & 8/11, 2 on 14/11, 1 on 16/11 & 14/12.

Blue Tit – Regular (counts over 5), 8 on 8/11, 6 on 16/11 & 14/12, 8 on 29/12.

Great Tit – Regular (counts over 5), 6 on 14/12.

Nuthatch – 2 on 18/10, 1 regularly from 27/10 to 16/11, 2 on 14/12, 1 on 15/12 & 29/12.

Treecreeper – 1 on 4/11 & 14/11, 4 on 15/11, 1 on 16/11, 2 on 22/11, 1 on 14/12, 15/12 & 17/12.

Jay – 4 on 28/9, 1 on 1/10, 2 on 5/10, 1 on 6/10, 3 on 11/10, 1 on 15/10, 2 on 18/10, 1 on 1/11, 3 on 16/11, 2 on 22/11, 1 on 1/12, 2 on 6/12, 1 on 14/12 & 29/12.

Jackdaw – Occasional, 6 on 25/9, 1 on 6/10, 6 on 18/10, 2 on 16/11.

Rook – 33 on 14/12.

Carrion Crow – Resident in low numbers (counts over 2), 4 on 18/10, 3 on 6/11, 5 on 16/11 & 14/12.

Raven - 1 on 22/9 & 28/9, 3 on 1/10, 1 on 6/10, 2 on 25/10 & 2/11, 1 on 5/11, 16/11 & 1/12.

Starling – 2 on 28/9, 46 on 6/11, 3 on 8/11, roost count (rc), 372rc on 16/11, 505rc on 23/11, 1176rc on 1/12, 2050rc on 6/12, 1480rc on 11/12, 1340rc on 15/12.

Chaffinch – Regular (counts over 3), 12 on 5/10, 6 on 7/10, 125 on 16/10, 6 on 6/11, 5 on 16/11, 4 on 22/11, 9 on 29/11, 4 on 20/12 & 29/12.

Brambling – 1 on 7/10 & 8/10, 2 on 16/10, 1 on 11/11.

Yellowhammer – 1 on 25/10.

Greenfinch – 5 on 28/9, 6 on 11/10, 2 on 15/10, 3 on 8/11, 4 on 16/11.

Goldfinch – 10 on 28/9, 6 on 11/10, 3 on 18/10, 1 on 27/10, 18 on 2/11, 2 on 4/11, 4 on 5/11, 1 on 6/11, 30 on 8/11, 11 on 16/11, 6 on 6/12, 5 on 17/12.

Linnet – 20 on 7/10, 18 on 18/10.

Bullfinch – 6 on 27/9 & 28/9, 2 on 6/10, 4 on 11/10, 2 from 18/10 to 5/11, 4 on 8/11, 5 on 16/11, 1 on 20/11, 2 on 22/11, 1 on 6/12, 6 on 14/12, 1 on 15/12.

Siskin – 3 on 23/9, 19 on 27/9 & 28/9, 7 on 5/10, 2 on 7/10, 4 on 15/10, 1 on 18/10, 15 on 25/10, 12 on 1/11, 5 on 2/11, 15 on 6/11, 18 on 8/11, 12 on 15/11, 32 on 16/11, 30 on 20/11, 1 on 22/11, 6 on 29/11, 1 on 6/12, 6 on 20/12.

Lesser Redpoll – 1 on 27/9 & 28/9, 14 on 30/9, 3 on 7/10, 50 on 11/10, 9 on 15/10, 11 on 16/10, 4 on 18/10, 3 on 8/11, 1 on 14/11, 13 on 16/11, 1 on 22/11 & 23/11, 21 on 29/11, 2 on 6/12, 7 on 14/12, 40 on 20/12.

Common Crossbill – 2 on 23/9, 7 on 27/9.

Red Bunting – 1 on 28/9, 1 on 11/10, 35 roost count(rc) on 16/10, 1 on 25/10, 84rc on 2/11, 75rc on 6/11, 3 on 8/11, 108rc on 16/11, 5 on 22/11, 102rc on 23/11, 112rc on 1/12, 140rc on 6/12, 123rc on 11/12, 83rc on 15/12.

Reserve News by Bob Johnson

We have been managing to carry on in a limited way with work parties. Although changing Covid rules on outdoor volunteer numbers has been challenging at times. We have been able to carry out work, and keep sensible social distancing, so managing to keep everyone safe.

In fact, we have managed to complete most of the routine tasks for maintenance of the reserve.

The new South Bank reed-bed opposite the picnic area was completed by Southern Water contractors in late September/ early October. The original plan was to build 96 (3 rows of 32) new protective enclosures, each enclosure being planted with 16 phragmites reed plug plants, some 1500+ reed plants in total.

In the end due to difficult ground conditions a few less were built, but overall we were happy with the contractors work. The completion was just before heavy rains and rising water levels, so we now wait to see how many of the plants survive a winter of flooding. Reeds can be difficult to establish so some plant losses must be expected.

We recently carried out work at the North Bank picnic area with the cutting of its hedges and the provision of a fence with hedging to make a full hedge boundary. We also cleared some more willow growing along the water's edge to improve the views of the water from the picnic area.

The new Tern raft has been completed and is now afloat anchored just off Pintail Bank. We hope to arrange with the Fishery to tow it with their boat into its final position in the New Year.

We started the winter bird feeding at the Car Park on the 27th October and will continue through the winter if we can.

We carried out work on a stream that feeds into the reservoir, the culvert under Legsheath Lane being blocked at the outlet. The outlet was cleared, and a silt trap dug. We also generally cleared the stream along its length including the feed to our pondlet which is now full.

Recent work in the study area included widening the rides in the areas where the Common Spotted Orchids grow to improve the habitat.

Reserve News - continued

Our ESCC Rangers Mathew & Michael have been excellent, hardworking, helpful and resourceful, we could not have completed the work without them. Matthew, who has been with us some years, has now left us to start a new life in Spain. Mathew was well liked, all the volunteers wished him all the best in his new life venture. We now have a replacement Ranger, another Michael, so our regular Rangers are now the Michael team.

In the last Newsletter I mentioned that the Reservoir Leisure Rights and the Kingscote Vineyards adjacent to Whillet's meadows were both up for sale. I have heard nothing more regarding either of these matters, we therefore assume the position remains unchanged on them both at the present time.

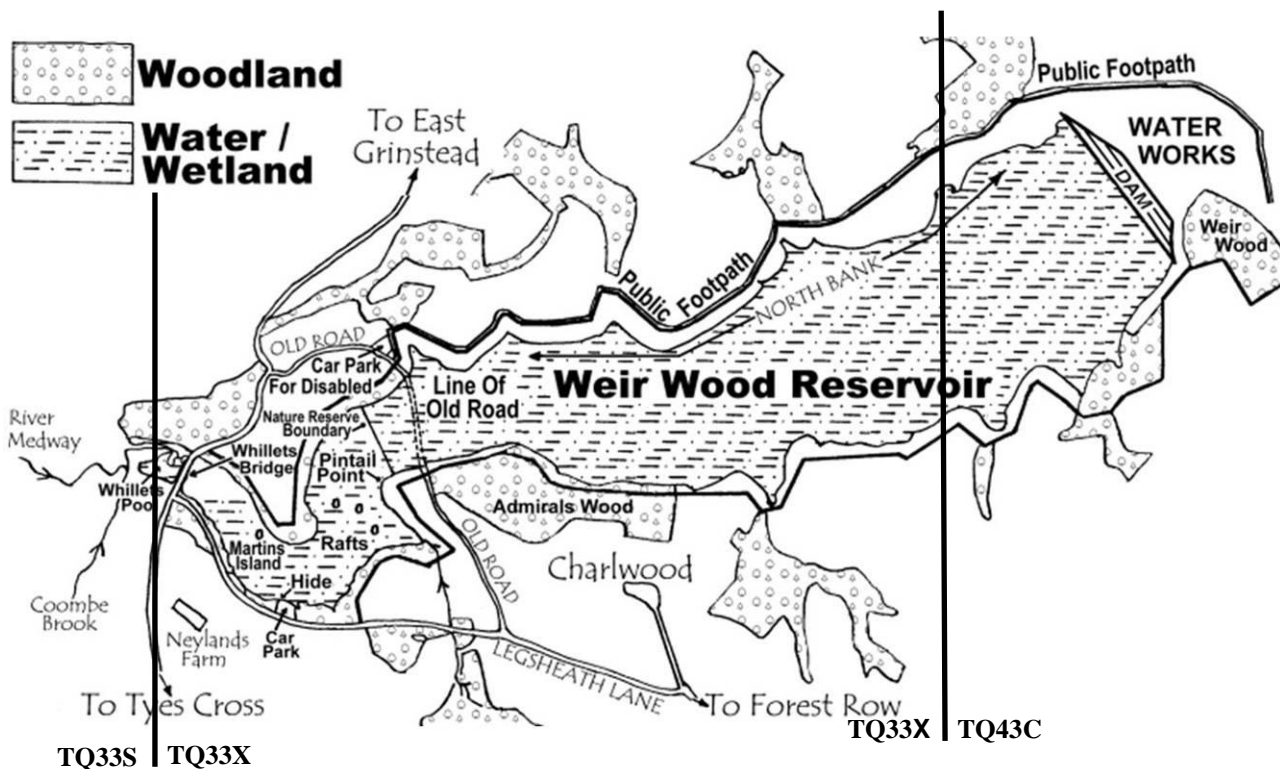
We have been monitoring the mammal movement at Whillet's meadows, noting at least 6 Fallow Deer, 3 Roe Deer and a couple of Muntjac, plus a pair of Foxes and an occasional Badger. Fallow Deer are also occasionally seen by day on the cleared area opposite the West End viewing area.

The butterfly monitoring season at Whillet's is now over with 26 species seen during 2020. A Silver Spotted Skipper was seen in August, the latest new species, making an overall total of 32 species recorded since 2011.

Of interest in 2020 was the increase in the numbers of Brown Argus. This was a new species itself in 2019. In 2020 we had records of up to 5 recorded over 11 days, this indicated possible breeding rather than passing vagrants.

Further investigation found that it's food plant, Cranesbill, grows within the meadows but is found more abundantly in the nearby vineyard. Interesting to see if we can confirm their breeding next year.

Generally, it was not a good year for our wetland loving butterflies with Ringlet and Gatekeeper numbers well down, but the dry summer weather kept the sward low which more suited the dry loving butterflies such as Small Heath, Common Blue & Small Copper which all did well.



Friends of Weir Wood Society General Information

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