

# Friends of Weir Wood Newsletter

Newsletter No.94

Autumn 2021



## Welcome!

### Open Day Report

There was some concern after setting the 9<sup>th</sup> July date and advertising it, whether our Open Day would be legally allowed, but luckily by mid-June covid rules had been relaxed enough for us to be sure we could go ahead as planned. We were particularly pleased that our members would be able to visit the Whillet's meadow reserve again.

On the day the weather was a worry with heavy rain the night before and it was still raining when we arrived in the morning. At this point we had worries that maybe none of our expected visitors would turn up. I say our visitors because on our early arrival we were met with a car park that was full, with cars also parked down the sides of the road and many people were milling about.

After some panicky discussion it was found that someone had arranged for the Duke of Edinburgh Award walks to meet and start from our car park that morning. Luckily, they advised they would be gone by 8:30 and they duly were. We then put up the gazebo in the rain and looked anxiously at the sky hoping for an improvement. The first person who arrived joined the Friends, bought a book and made a donation - an encouraging start. The sporadic showers died out and it turned into a nice day.

We had a steady flow of visitors from then on throughout the day. Numbers were down a little on previous years but were encouraging considering the early conditions. All the usual events took place and despite wet meadows, we had good feedback that people were enjoying their visits. The bird ringing was as usual very popular and pleasingly the meadow pond was still productive as it was still recovering from last year's clearance work.

The refreshments were more limited this year as we were unable to offer hot drinks, and perversely many people wanted hot drinks rather than cold, so takings were down, also donations were less. There was interest in our 25th anniversary book and we sold another 8 copies; we now have only 70 copies left.

Our expenditure for the event was £89-80 but included purchasing new FOWW signage boards that cost approx. £65. These will last many years and can be used at any of our members and public events. Overall we made a £30 loss, but the main object of the exercise was to allow our members to be able to visit the site, so the fact our monetary takings from the day were down was not an issue.

The success of the event was due in the main to those of our regular volunteers who gave up their time and worked very hard at manning the activities. A big thank you to them all. Special thanks also to some additional help from Joy, Sue and Judy for running the refreshment stall throughout the day and to Marie, Sue and Judy for the lovely cakes.

Also thanks to Gough's Pet Store in East Grinstead who kindly loaned us their gazebo and supported our event and to Paul, a local moth enthusiast, who kindly helped with the moth display. A more detailed report with pictures & sightings is on our website.

### Autumn Walk & Whillet's roosting birds Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> November.

Because we had to cancel the Spring walk due to covid, we have decided to offer members an Autumn walk instead.

The intention is to give you a chance to have a quick look at the study area and possibly see some fungi, before taking you over to Whillet's meadows for about 3pm. By that time we would hope to start to see a few Reed Buntings and Redwings coming in to roost. (Sunset should be at 16:25). Our bird ringers intend to put a net or two out in the afternoon to hopefully catch a few birds for you to see in the hand.

Ringing will be weather permitting, so please check our website the night before where we will confirm if weather looks suitable for ringing. The walk will go ahead even if the ringing cannot.

Please meet at the hide car park at 2pm for the study area part of the walk. We expect paths in all areas to be muddy so bring stout footwear/wellingtons. No need to book just turn up.

### Wildlife Projects – further update

In the last newsletter I spoke about an invasive plant we have at the reservoir which needs controlling - "Crassula helmsii" aka New Zealand Pygmyweed or Stonecrop.

It was planned to introduce a small mite to the Crassula at Whillet's Pool during April/May which would stunt the plants growth. At that time CABI, who are managing the project for Southern Water, were unable to carry out the plan, but I can now advise that the mite has since been introduced into several areas within the pool. CABI will now monitor the mites and their effect on plant growth. If all goes well with this test site, then the mites may then be introduced to other areas of the reservoir.

The water levels in the reservoir remain high and this has unfortunately had an adverse effect on the new phragmites reed-bed Southern Water had planted along the South Bank opposite the picnic site. Nearly all the reeds planted have failed to establish. The enclosures remain, so if water levels fall enough during next summer, we may be able to slowly start transplanting some reeds from Whillet's Pool into this area. Whillet's reed-bed is growing and spreading well, so we should have some reeds to spare.

**Little Grebe** – 1 on 28/6.

**Great Crested Grebe** – (counts over 10), 33 on 13/6, 56 on 26/6, 49 on 27/6, 46 on 28/6, 22 on 16/7, 38 on 28/7, 30 on 1/8, (Breeding update – some nests but no young seen), 11 on 10/8 & 17/8, 34 on 22/8, 26 on 25/8, 24 on 12/9.

**Cormorant** – Regular – (counts over 20), 51 on 13/6, 24 on 27/6, (Breeding update – eventual 17 active nests produced an estimated 34 young), 24 on 28/7, 21 on 10/8, 29 on 22/8, 24 on 12/9.

**Little Egret** – 2 on 17/6 & 23/6, 1 regularly from 27/6 to 23/7 with 2 on 18/7, 2 on 1/8, 1 on 10/8, 11/8, 15/9 & 21/9.

**Great White Egret** – 1 on 18/7.

**Grey Heron** – Regular – (counts over 3), 11 on 13/6, 6 on 28/6, 13 on 28/7, 5 on 1/8, 10/8 & 15/8, 10 on 22/8, 15 on 12/9.

**Mute Swan** – 1 on 13/6, 9/7 & 11/7, 3 regularly from 13/7 to 29/8), 2 on 6/9, 3 on 9/9 & 12/9, 4 on 18/9, 3 on 20/9.

**Greylag Goose** – Regular – (counts over 10), 34 on 13/6, 42 on 28/6, 30 on 11/7, 14 on 27/7, 27 on 22/8, 23 on 25/8, 248 on 29/8, 323 on 6/9, 156 on 12/9.

**Greylag/White feral hybrid Geese** - 7 on 12/9.

**All White Farmyard Geese** – These may have been dumped on the site with a flock of 20 seen on 27/7 the 20 have stayed throughout period close to the reservoir as there almost too heavy to fly, their numbers have slowly dropped with probable losses to foxes etc, with a count of 14 noted on 22/8.

**Canada Goose** – 10 on 13/6, 19 on 28/6, 18 on 11/7, 27 on 27/7, 32 on 28/7, 2 on 22/8, 9 on 29/8, 3 on 6/9, 118 on 12/9.

**Egyptian Goose** – 2+8 young from 13/6 to 8/8, 8 on 17/8, 9 on 22/8, 29/8 & 5/9, 7 on 12/9, 4 on 20/9, 14 on 22/9.

**Mandarin** – Regularly up to 2 (counts over), 13 on 13/6, 5 from 28/6 to 11/7, 6 on 13/7 & 16/7, 14 on 28/7, 8 on 1/8, 3 on 6/8, 7 on 22/8, 19 on 25/8, 3 on 12/9.

**Mallard** - Resident - (counts over 6), 30 on 13/6, 28 on 28/6, 13 on 11/7, 22 on 28/7, 7 on 10/8, 35 on 22/8, 27 on 25/8, 10 on 29/8, 7 on 6/9, 14 on 12/9, 27 on 20/9.

**Teal** – 1 on 22/8, 2 on 25/8, 1 on 5/9, 2 on 6/9 & 9/9, 1 on 20/9.

**Gadwall** – 8 on 1/8, 2 on 24/8 & 25/8.

**Garganey** – 1 on 23/7.

**Shoveler** – 4 on 29/8, 3 on 5/9.

**Tufted Duck** – 2 on 13/7, 1 on 22/8, 29/8 & 6/9, 3 on 12/9.

**Wigeon** – 1 on 5/9, 20/9 & 21/9.

**Common Scoter** – 2 on 18/7.

**Red Kite** – 1 on 13/6 & 23/7, 2 on 28/7, 1 on 2/8, 6/8 & 8/8, 2 on 7/9, 1 on 22/9.

**Marsh Harrier** – 1 on 21/9.

**Sparrowhawk** – 1 on 20/7, 1/8, 8/8 & 10/8, 2 on 23/8, 1 on 29/8 & 12/9.

**Goshawk** – 1 on 14/7, 2 on 2/8, 1 on 4/8 & 24/8, 1 on 12/9.

**Common Buzzard** – 1 regularly throughout the period (counts over), 5 on 13/6 & 23/6, 4 on 28/7, 2 on 22/8 & 23/8, 3 on 29/8, 4 on 5/9, 2 on 12/9, 3 on 18/9.

**Honey Buzzard** – 1 on 29/7 & 1/8, 2 on 2/8.

**Osprey** – 1 on 26/6, 1 on 10/8, 11/8, 17/8, 22/8 & 23/8, 1 on 13/9, 15/9 & 20/9.

**Kestrel** – 1 on 22/8, 29/8 & 1/9, 3 on 5/9, 1 on 6/9, 2 on 20/9.

**Hobby** - 1 on 16/6 & 11/7, 1 on 2/8, 6/8 & 12/8, 1 on 5/9.

**Moorhen** – 1 on 13/6, 2 regularly from 28/6 to 11/7, 1 on 16/7, 1 on 19/8, 3 on 22/8, 1 on 25/8, 3 on 29/8, 5 on 6/9, 7 on 12/9, 2 on 20/9, 1 on 21/9.

**Red legged Partridge** -1 on 22/9.

**Coot** – 1 on 27/6 & 28/6, 1 on 24/8, 2 on 29/8, 1 on 9/9, 4 on 20/9.

**Water Rail** – 2 on 29/8 & 5/9, 1 on 24/9.

**Oystercatcher** – 1 on 1/8.

**Little Ringed Plover** – 1 on 14/9.

**Dunlin** – 1 on 4/8.

**Lapwing** – 10 on 12/9.

**Greenshank** – 1 on 17/6 & 22/6, 1 on 4/8 & 25/8.

**Redshank** – 1 on 4/8 & 24/8, 1 on 14/9 & 15/9, 2 on 21/9.

**Curlew** – 2 on 5/9.

**Whimbrel** – 1 on 24/9.

**Snipe** – 5 on 20/9.

**Common Sandpiper** – 1 on 6/7, 2 on 11/7, 1 on 14/7, 3 on 18/7 then up to 2 regularly until 23/8, 4 on 24/8, 1 on 25/8 & 29/8, 2 on 30/8, 3 on 5/9, 5 on 6/9, 3 on 7/9, 2 on 8/9, 6 on 9/9, 3 on 12/9 to 19/9, 14 on 20/9, 2 on 21/9, 4 on 24/9.

**Green Sandpiper** – 1 on 22/6 & 23/6, 1 on 20/7, 23/7, 6/8 & 10/8, 1 on 20/8, 23/8, 5/9 & 9/9, 2 on 22/9, 1 on 24/9.

**Wood Sandpiper** - 1 on 26/6 & 9/9.

**Black Headed Gull** – (counts over 5), 24 on 28/6, 30 on 11/7, 83 on 14/7, 100 on 18/7, 80 on 27/7, 140 on 28/7, 15 on 9/8, 32 on 10/8, 160 on 15/8, 1113 on 17/8, 124 on 22/8 & 5/9, 294 on 6/9, 214 on 12/9.

**Mediterranean Gull** – 2 on 2/8.

**Little Gull** – 1 on 20/8.

**Common Gull** – 2 on 4/8.

**LBB Gull** – 1 on 13/6, 3 on 28/6, 1 regularly from 11/7 to 15/8, 2 on 19/8 & 22/8, 6 on 23/8, 1 on 29/8, 9/9, 12/9 & 20/9.

**GBB Gull** – 1 on 13/6 & 27/7, 2 from 28/7 to 7/8, 1 on 8/8 & 15/8, 5 on 17/8, 3 on 19/8 & 20/8, 1 on 22/8, 2 on 23/8, 24/8 & 9/9.

**Herring Gull** – 1 on 13/6, 3 on 28/6, 2 on 9/7 & 28/7, 8 on 22/8, 2 on 12/9.

**Kittiwake** - 1 on 6/8.

**Arctic Tern** – 1 on 7/8, 24/8 & 25/8.

**Common Tern** - 16 on 13/6, 12 on 27/6, 16 on 28/6, 10 on 9/7, 13 on 11/7, 9 on 13/7, 4 on 14/7, 6 on 16/7, 2 on 19/7, 11 on 27/7, (Breeding – Only 1 late chick on Tern rafts and unsure whether it fledged as no young seen flying), 13 on 28/7 & 1/8, 6 on 6/8, 20 on 7/8, 4 on 8/8 & 9/8, 6 on 10/8, 2 from 15/8 to 20/8, 3 on 22/8 & 23/8, 2 on 25/8.

**Black Tern** – 1 on 6/8.

**Stock Dove** – 2 on 27/6, 1 on 27/7, 28/7 & 1/8, 2 on 6/8 & 8/8, 3 on 22/8, 2 on 12/9, 3 on 20/9.

**Collared Dove** - 1 on 18/9.

**Turtle Dove** – 1 on 3/8.

**Wood Pigeon** – Ubiquitous, (No counts over 20).

**Swift** – 6 on 13/6, 2 on 28/6, 11/7 & 19/7, 1 on 27/7, 17 on 28/7, 4 on 1/8, 3 from 6/8 to 10/8, 1 on 17/8, 3 on 22/8, 1 on 29/8.

**Kingfisher** – 2 on 13/6 & 28/6 then 1 regularly (counts over), 3 on 11/7 & 13/7, 2 on 28/7 & 4/8, 6 on 6/8, 3 on 12/8 & 22/8, 5 on 24/8, 2 on 25/8 & 5/9, 4 on 9/9, 2 on 12/9, 5 on 24/9.

**Green Woodpecker** – 2 on 11/7, 1 on 28/7, 1/8 & 22/8, 1 on 5/9, 12/9 & 20/9.

**Gt Spotted Woodpecker** – 1 on 13/6 & 22/8, 2 on 12/9 & 20/9.  
**Sand Martin** – 9 on 19/7, 2 on 27/7, 3 on 28/7, 5 on 6/8, 1 on 8/8, 3 on 19/8, 1 on 22/8 & 29/8, 40 on 30/8, 1 on 5/9, 10 on 22/9.  
**Barn Swallow** – 2 on 13/6, 3 on 11/7, 3 on 27/7, 1 on 28/7, 3 on 17/8, 2 on 19/8, 8 on 22/8, 100 on 23/8, 25 on 24/8, 250 on 30/8, 32 on 5/9, 6 on 6/9 & 7/9, 4 on 12/9, 12 on 18/9, 6 on 20/9.  
**House Martin** – 4 on 13/6, 6 on 28/6, 4 on 11/7, 20 on 19/7, 2 on 27/7, 7 on 28/7, up to 5 from 6/8 to 10/8, 1 on 15/8, 6 on 17/8, 10 on 19/8, 65 on 22/8, 1 on 24/8, 60 on 29/8, 20 on 5/9, 10 on 6/9, 6 on 7/9, 40 on 9/9, 1 on 12/9.  
**Grey Wagtail** – 6 on 13/6, 2 on 4/7, 1 on 11/7, 5 on 28/7 & 1/8, 2 on 17/8, 6 on 22/8, 4 on 29/8, 2 on 5/9, 3 on 12/9, 2 on 20/9, 1 on 21/9.  
**Pied Wagtail** – 5 on 13/6, 1 on 27/6, 2 on 28/6, 1 on 11/7 & 20/7, 2 on 27/7, 3 on 28/7, 5 on 1/8, 2 on 17/8, 8 on 22/8, 4 on 12/9, 1 on 20/9.  
**Yellow Wagtail** – 2 on 25/8, 1 on 5/9 & 12/9.  
**Wren, Robin, Dunnock, Blackbird** – Regular and resident reported in low numbers. (No count over 4).  
**Wheatear** – 1 on 25/8 & 12/9.  
**Whinchat** - 1 on 25/8 & 6/9.  
**Stonechat** - 2 on 13/6, 1 on 20/6, 23/6 & 26/6, 1 on 5/9, 12/9 & 18/9.  
**Common Redstart** - 1 on 13/9.  
**Meadow Pipit** - 2 on 12/9, 17 on 18/9, 20 on 21/9.  
**Song Thrush** – 3 on 13/6, 1 on 27/6, 1/8 & 12/8.  
**Mistle Thrush** – 3 on 13/6, 19 flyover on 23/8.  
**Reed Warbler** - 4 on 143/6, 1 on 15/6, 2 on 27/6 & 1/7, 1 on 9/7, 4 on 11/7, 2 on 13/7, 3 on 19/7, 2 on 28/7 & 9/8, 1 on 10/8, 2 on 12/8 & 22/8, 1 on 23/8, 25/8, 29/8 & 5/9, 2 on 12/9, 1 on 21/9 & 22/9.  
**Grasshopper Warbler** - 1 on 23/7 & 14/9.  
**Sedge Warbler** – 1 on 10/8 & 29/8.  
**Common Whitethroat** – Up to 2 regularly throughout period (counts over), 8 on 13/6, 4 on 20/6, 3 on 18/7, 8 on 19/7, 3 on 28/7 & 4/8, 6 on 8/8, 4 on 10/8 & 12/8, 5 on 15/8, 3 on 22/8, 4 on 25/8.  
**Lesser Whitethroat** – 1 on 1/9, 21/9 & 22/9.  
**Garden Warbler** – 3 on 13/6, 1 on 23/6, 2 on 26/6, 1 on 27/6, 28/6 & 13/7, 4 on 19/7.  
**Blackcap** – 2 on 13/6, then 1 regularly from 27/6 (counts over), 3 on 19/7, 2 on 1/8, 8/8, 12/8 & 15/8, 6 on 25/8, 3 on 6/9, 5 on 18/9, 2 on 20/9.  
**Chiffchaff** – Up to 2 regularly (counts over), 3 on 13/6 & 19/7, 6 on 1/8, 4 on 6/8, 10 on 12/8 & 15/8, 3 on 19/8, 6 on 22/8, 3 on 23/8, 4 on 29/8, 12 on 5/9, 11 on 6/9, 3 on 8/9, 7 on 12/9, 3 on 14/9, 18 on 18/9, 12 on 20/9, 3 on 21/9.  
**Willow Warbler** – 1 on 22/8 & 23/8, 3 on 25/8, 2 on 29/8, 3 on 30/8, 1 on 1/9, 3 on 8/9, 1 on 9/9 & 12/9, 3 on 14/9, 1 on 21/9.  
**Goldcrest** – 1 on 13/6, 1 on 19/8, 22/8 & 29/8.  
**Spotted Flycatcher** – 2 on 25/8, 1 on 31/8, 1 on 8/9, 12/9 & 15/9.  
**L.T. Tit** – 2 on 27/7, 3 on 15/8, 9 on 23/8, 18 on 25/8, 6 on 18/9.  
**Marsh Tit** – 1 on 4/7, 19/7 & 23/8, 2 on 28/8, 3 on 9/9 & 20/9, 1 on 21/9 & 22/9. .  
**Blue Tit** – (counts over 2), 6 on 28/7 & 22/8, 8 on 23/8, 4 on 12/9.  
**Great Tit** – (counts over 2), 4 on 23/8, 3 on 12/9.  
**Coal Tit** – 1 on 15/8 & 29/8, 2 on 12/9.  
**Nuthatch** – 3 on 13/6, 1 on 28/7 & 12/9.  
**Tree Creeper** – 2 on 4/7, 1 on 12/9.  
**Jay** – 3 on 13/6 & 28/7, 6 on 23/8, 1 on 29/8, 2 on 12/9, 18/9 & 20/9.  
**Magpie** – Resident & regular – (counts over 4), 9 on 12/9.  
**Jackdaw** – 2 on 13/6, 30 on 6/9, 8 on 12/9.  
**Rook** – 2 on 29/8, 1 on 12/9, 35 on 20/9.  
**Carrion Crow** – Resident in low numbers (counts over 2), 7 on 12/9.  
**Raven** - 1 on 13/6, 2 on 22/6, 4 on 28/7, 1 on 3/8 & 22/8, 2 on 15/9, 3 on 22/9.  
**Starling** – 1 on 13/6, 3 on 28/6 & 28/7, 1 on 8/8 & 29/8, 30 on 12/9, 7 on 20/9.  
**Chaffinch** – 1 on 13/6 & 22/8. **Siskin** – 1 on 15/8 & 20/9. **Greenfinch** – 2 on 8/8, 1 on 12/8 & 22/8, 3 on 29/8, 1 on 18/9 & 20/9.  
**Goldfinch** – 2 on 13/6 & 28/7, (counts over 3), 25 on 1/8, 4 on 8/8 & 12/8, 30 on 29/8, 62 on 5/9, 65 on 12/9.  
**Bullfinch** – 1 on 13/6 & 27/6, 2 28/6, 28/7 & 4/8, 4 on 15/8, 219/8 & 22/8, 1 on 23/8 & 25/8, 4 on 6/9, 2 on 12/9, 18/9 & 20/9.  
**Yellowhammer** – 1 on 13/6 & 20/6, 1 on 13/7. **Reed Bunting** – 1 on 28/6, 1 regularly from 9/7 to 19/7, 1 on 28/7, 1/8 & 3/8, 3 on 8/8, 2 on 12/8, 1 on 15/8 & 29/8, 2 on 1/9, 1 on 5/9 & 12/9, 2 on 18/9.

**Reserve News** by Bob Johnson

A couple of months ago one of the older tern rafts broke its moorings and drifted down the reservoir. Luckily it drifted near Pintail Bank and ran aground. We put a rope on it and tied it to a tree to stop it drifting any further. It had lost both anchors and these were replaced, and some necessary repairs carried out to the structure. Although it was in poor condition, we felt it should last another year or two longer. We also fitted anti-mink wire mesh to the sides of the raft whilst it was in dock. This raft is now back in position, it's the left most raft as viewed from the hide.

As far as we are aware nothing has changed regarding the sale of the leisure rights at Weir Wood. We have also heard no more regarding the sale of the vineyards at the behind Whillet's meadows. We have been told that Southern Water will be renewing the fencing at the dam end, but again we still have no idea when this will actually happen.

We have been busy working around the reserve - we organised contractors to cut some of the Whillet's meadows, the cuttings being picked up and stacked at meadow edges to keep the soil fertility low which benefits wild flowers. Rides and paths, hedges etc. have all been cut, including areas of bracken around the reserve. We cut down willows at the layby near Martins Island to improve the views and also cleared sycamore and maple saplings that were blocking views towards the heronry.

We have replaced an old Barn Owl box on Pintail bank. We are also looking into relocating some of those boxes that have been continuously predated by mink every year, despite our best efforts at mink control. At Whillet's, UK Power Networks came in and cut down some trees growing under the power lines. We used a chipper machine to turn some of those cuttings into chippings to improve paths in the wettest areas and some were made into a log path. The picnic area on the North Bank footpath also had its hedges cut, we also cut back some vegetation along the main footpath and repaired some fencing.

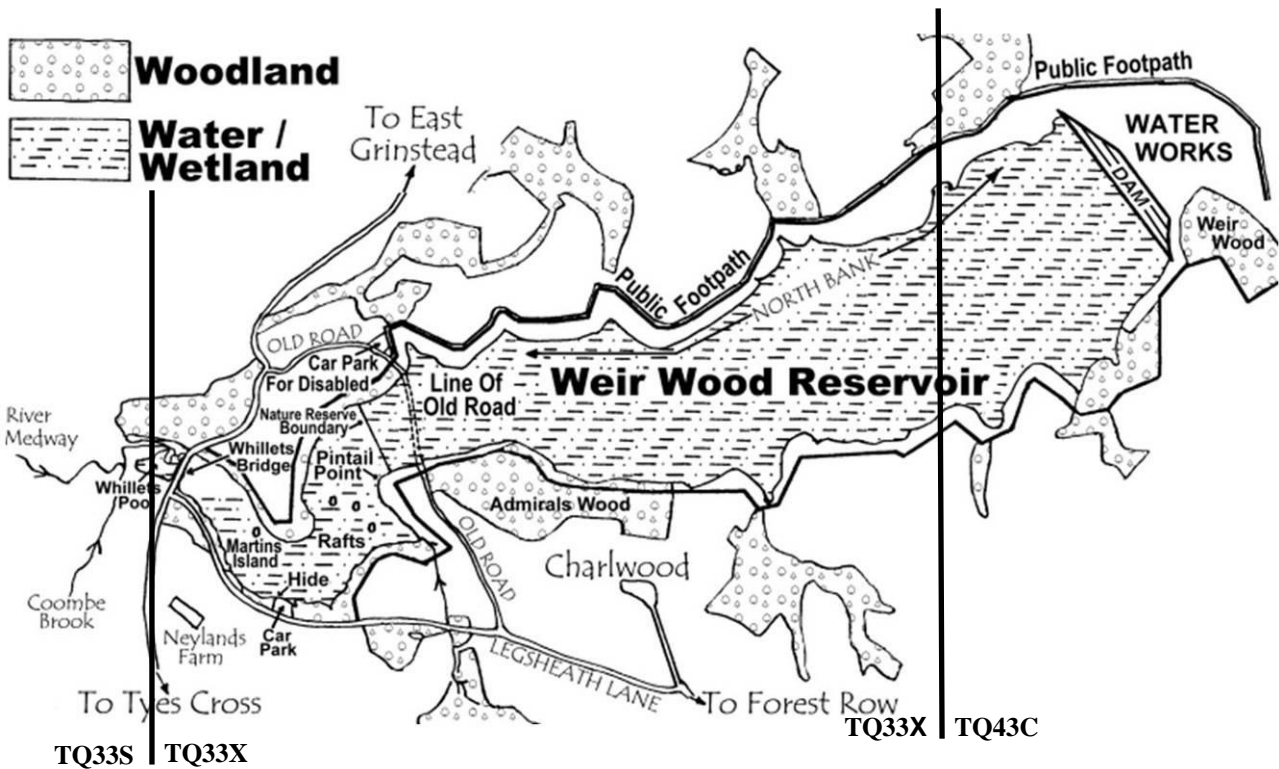
The Willow Emerald Damsselfly is a fairly recent colonist to Britain whose numbers have been increasing since 2009. We have had a few sightings in previous years at Whillet's, but this year 9 pairs were seen on meadow pond. They lay their eggs into the bark of overhanging trees, mainly willow. It was noted that a sapling willow at meadow pond now has branches covered in eggs. A new dragonfly for the reserve also seen at Whillet's on 22<sup>nd</sup> August was a Lesser Emperor, which is currently a migrant, but likely to become another new colonist.

**Silver Anniversary – “The Nature of Weir Wood” book**

“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.

The books are £6 each. Postage and packing for the UK is £2 for each copy. 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. The book has been selling well (75% of stock sold) and getting good reviews, so don’t miss out!!

You can order by email or post. Please include: your name; address; the number of books you want and how you wish to pay - 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)**  
**10 Woodlands, Pound Hill, Crawley. RH10 3DL Tel Mob: 07703-280238 - Email: [tomhoward1jones@gmail.com](mailto:tomhoward1jones@gmail.com)**



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