

Friends of Weir Wood Newsletter

Newsletter No. 98

Autumn 2022



Welcome!

Reservoir News by Bob Johnson

Many people have been asking about the recent low water levels at the west end of the reservoir that occurred from late April/May. The reasons were that a safety inspection of the dam wall found some damage that required a concrete repair. At that time the water levels were lowered to expose the wall enough to carry out the repair which was completed by the end of May.

The reservoir has not been in active service for some time, it needs a new filtration system which is currently being constructed. If you visit the dam end you can no longer park by the water works which is now a building site. There is still a public path that allows you to walk around the building site and join the Sussex County Border footpath on the north side of the reservoir, but you have to park further away.

Since May we have had very hot temperatures and little rain. Southern Water are required by law to maintain a feed of water into the downstream River Medway, so a combination of releasing water into the river and lack of rain are also causes of the current low water levels.

The reservoir relies solely on rain to keep it topped up and was created by damming the river which starts as a small brook at its most westerly point at Turners Hill. However, this brook meanders through the valleys collecting other small streams and increasing in size as it flows towards Weir Wood, so has a huge rainfall catchment area from the valleys west of the reservoir.

The reservoir is capable of re-filling surprisingly quickly with a few weeks of winter rain.

The effect of the low water levels at the west end in recent months has proved a real bonus for bird watchers. The list of waders seen out on the mud has been impressive, plus we had some rarities new to the reserve, with Purple Heron & Cattle Egret, and rarities such as Temminck's Stint, though their visits were only brief. Others such as Common & Green Sandpipers, Lapwings & Greenshank hung around for weeks. A pair of Little Ringed Plovers bred on Pintail Bank producing three young but a few days later the young went missing, probably predated.

The large numbers of birds attracted predators with Foxes being regularly seen, and a Kestrel was noted hunting and taking some of the many Pied Wagtails. Sparrowhawks were hunting, even a Goshawk trying to take a Stock Dove was seen. A Peregrine was also being seen, for dates and details see the bird sightings section.

Wildflowers were also evident with a mass of flowering Purple Loosestrife giving colour to the reservoir, the rich mud also showing a large bloom of red algae during the hot weather.

Open Day Report by Tom Howard-Jones

We were keeping an eye on the weather forecasts for our open day but most unusually we were concerned

that it might be too hot. It was a lovely sunny day and the start of a record-breaking hot spell.

We welcomed a steady stream of visitors and were pleased to see so many youngsters. The first thing that most people noticed was the very low water level in the reservoir. Many were concerned that the drought must be worse than they thought but were reassured when we explained.

Our activities included: bird spotting; a moth display; bee keeping; pond dipping; meadow walks; bird ringing and refreshments. Many visitors only realised how big and varied the reserve is when they explored the meadows.

We were busy from before opening time until after closing time. People seemed to enjoy themselves. We had a lot of encouraging and positive feedback. We sold some of our "The Nature of Weir Wood" books, welcomed a number of new members and renewed some old memberships.

A big thank you to the many people who worked so hard to put on the event and to make it a success.

A full report with photos and lists of the wildlife seen is available on our website.

Website Update by Tom Howard-Jones

Our website has been updated. It was overdue an upgrade and the new version was released in February 2022. You will notice a new appearance. But the structure and content are still the same. We hope you like the new look and feel. Thank you to Peter Johnson for his hard work in making the transition. It is worth noting that individual posts, such as "sightings" and "news" are now initially shown in shortened, headline, form. If you click on the title line or the "read more" item you will see the full version of the post including any pictures and links to other documents. We have yet to move the photo archive over to the new platform and hope to achieve that in due course.

Autumn Walk – Saturday 12th November

We have decided to offer an Autumn Walk again for members as the last one was well received. We will show you the study area and look for some woodland birds and fungi before then taking you over to Whillet's meadows circa. 2:45pm. By that time, we would hope to start to see a few Reed Buntings and Redwings coming in to roost. (Sunset is at 16:18). We hope the bird ringers may also put a net out in the later afternoon to try and catch a bird or two for you to see in the hand, but this is weather permitting and only a possibility, in no way guaranteed.

Please meet at the hide car park for a 1:30pm start. Paths may be muddy so bring suitable footwear. No need to book just turn up.

Little Grebe – 1 on 7/8, up to 5 on 8/8, 1 on 11/9.

Great Crested Grebe – Up to 62 on 20/6, then consistently over 30 until 17/7 with highs of 48 on 1/7 & 52 on 17/7, then counts of under 30 until 38 on 7/8, 48 on 8/8, 41 on 14/8, 54 on 22/8 & 28/8, 60 on 30/8, 40 on 4/9, 46 on 11/9, 40 on 12/9.

Little Egret – Regular (counts over 5), 7 on 5/7, 8 on 6/7, 15 on 7/7, 16 on 8/7, 18 from 9/7 to 13/7, up to 21 from 14/7 to 22/7 then up to 10 until 3/8, then regularly under 5 until end of period.

White Stork – 1 on 18/8.

Cormorant – Regular – (counts over 20), 26 on 20/6, 46 on 11/7, 22 on 13/7, 27 on 17/7, 26 on 7/8 & 14/8, 22 on 12/9, (Breeding – 22 nests with 19 successfully producing 46 young).

Cattle Egret – 3 on 20/8.

Grey Heron – Up to 15 regularly counts over, 19 on 20/6 & 23/6, 22 on 29/6, 16 on 8/7 & 9/7, 24 on 10/7, 26 on 14/7, 34 on 17/7 & 18/7, 30 on 23/7, 23 on 27/7, up to 18 from 7/8 to 29/8 with 24 on 27/8, 19 on 28/8, 15 on 12/9. (Breeding – 32 successful nests produced 51 young).

Purple Heron – 1 on 28/8

Mute Swan – 1 on 31/8, 4 on 1/9, 2 on 8/9, 1 on 15/9.

Black Swan – 1 on 11/9.

Greylag Goose – Regular, 23 on 20/6 then up to 42 from 1/7 to 8/7, 45 on 11/7, (counts over 30) 40 on 31/7, 80 on 4/8, 159 on 7/8, 125+ from 8/8 to 16/8 with 187 max, 80 on 20/8, 127 on 21/8, 104 on 23/8, 146 on 25/8, then up to 52 until 29/8 when most left and counts were under 15.

Canada Goose – Regular until 29/8 (counts over 30), up to 36 from 20/6 to 8/7, 40 on 17/7 & 21/7, 61 on 23/7, 33 on 27/7, 180 on 4/8, 215 on 6/8, 280 on 7/8, 258 on 14/8, 250 on 15/8, 48 on 21/8, 74 on 23/8, 90 on 25/8.

Egyptian Goose – Regular, 14 on 20/6, 2+8 young from 20/6 to 26/7, (counts over 7) 9 on 31/7, 10 on 7/8, 9 on 8/8, 8 on 11/8 & 20/8, 12 on 22/8, 8 on 25/8 & 26/8, 11 on 12/9.

Mandarin – Up to 35 regularly (counts over), 39 on 24/6, 56 on 29/6, 36 on 30/6, 46 on 3/7 & 4/7, 36 on 5/7, 37 on 11/7, 36 on 12/7, 40 on 14/7, 46 on 17/7, 35 on 19/7 then up to 22 until end of period.

Mallard - Resident (counts over 40), 56 on 20/6 & 11/7, 72 on 17/7, 54 on 21/7, up to 75 by 31/7, 91 on 1/8, 95 on 3/8, 111 on 9/8, (counts over 100), 125 on 10/8, up to 160 from 17/8 to 22/8, 185 on 26/8 then down to 146 by 30/8, down to 89 by 5/9 then up to 49 till end of period. Also 1 White Feral Duck occasionally.

Teal – Regular from 9/7, up to 7 from 14/7 to 11/8 then 11 by 16/8, 15 by 24/8, 21 by 27/8, 30 by 31/8, 44 by 1/9, 52 by 4/9, 60 by 9/9, 64 by 11/9, 73 by 13/9, 81 by 14/9 then 70+ until 85 on 23/9.

Garganey – 1 on 28/8. **Shoveler** – 1 on 12/7 & 20/7, 2 on 18/7.

Pochard – 3 on 10/7.

Tufted Duck – 2 on 20/6, 1 on 10/7, 6 on 12/7, 1 on 31/7 & 19/9.

Common Scoter – 3 on 7/7.

Wigeon – 1 on 5/9, 20/9 & 21/9.

Ruddy Shelduck – 1 on 11/7 & 12/7.

Red Kite – 1 on 20/6 & 3/7, 2 on 17/7, 1 on 19/7, 26/7, 12/8, 26/8, 30/8, 2/9 & 16/9.

Black Kite – 1 on 25/7.

Peregrine – 1 on 1/8, 4/8, 12/8, 15/8, 25/8 & 21/9.

Sparrowhawk – 1 on 10/7, 2 on 17/7, 1 on 16/8, 29/8, 1/9, 16/9 & 18/9.

Goshawk – 1 on 18/7, 21/8, 27/8, 31/8, 2/9, 4/9 & 14/9.

Common Buzzard – 1 regularly throughout the period (counts over), 2 on 20/6, 17/7, 23/7, 31/7, 7/8 & 14/8, 3 on 25/8, 4 on 26/8 & 29/8, 2 on 27/8, 28/8, 1/9 & 4/9, 6 on 11/9.

Honey Buzzard – 1 on 20/6, 2 on 27/6, 1 on 12/8 & 23/8.

Osprey – 1 regularly from 5/7 to 12/7, 1 on 5/8, 9/8 & 18/8, 1 from 21/8 to 23/8 & 27/8 to 4/9, 1 on 7/9.

Kestrel – 1 on 2/7, 3/7, 10/7, 17/7, 26/7 & 28/7, 4 on 31/7, 2 on 1/8 & 2/8, 1 on 4/8, 14/8, 15/8, 21/8 & 23/8, 2 on 27/8, 1 on 26/8 to 30/8 & 7/9, 2 on 11/9, 1 on 12/9 & 18/9.

Hobby - 1 on 27/6, 2 on 30/6, 1 on 11/7, 21/7 & 2/8, 2 on 1/8 & 22/8, 1 on 25 to 28/8, 2 on 29/8, 1 on 11/9 & 14/9.

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

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

Moorhen – Up to 4 regularly (counts over), 5 on 3/7, 6 on 4/7, 5 on 5/7 & 12/7, 7 on 14/7, 9 on 17/7, 5 on 23/7, 6 on 25/7 & 27/7, 7 on 31/7, 2/8, 4/8 & 24/8, up to 6 from 15/8 to 21/8, 7 on 12/9.

Coot – 1 on 14/8, 21/8 & 28/8, 2 on 12/9, 1 on 16/9.

Ringed Plover – 1 on 16/8 & 21/8 to 27/8, 4 on 14/9, 19/9 & 20/9, 3 on 22/9 & 23/9.

Little Ringed Plover – Up to 5 regularly (counts over), 6 on 29/6 & 5/7, 8 on 7/7, 10 on 8/7, 9 on 10/7 & 11/7, 6 on 14/7 & 17/7, 7 on 19/7 then up to 4 until 29/8. (Breeding – Pair had 3 young at West End).

Dunlin – 1 on 12/7, 4/8, 1 from 10/8 to 18/8, 2 on 21/8, 4 on 27/8, 1 on 28/8 to 5/9 with 2 on 31/8 & 17/9, 3 on 18/9 to 20/9.

Temmincks Stint – 1 on 14/9 & 15/9.

Oystercatcher – 1 on 4/7.

Lapwing – Up to 30 regularly (counts over), 31 on 30/6 & 14/7, up to 33 from 17/7 to 27/7, up to 40 from 28/7 to 17/8, up to 43 from 18/8 to 4/9, 45 on 5/9, 41 on 7/9, 36 on 8/9 then between 20 & 30 to end of period.

Greenshank – 1 from 3/7 to 5/7, 1 on 10/7, 1 on 4/8 & 5/8 then up to 2 regularly throughout period but with 3 on 9/8, 5 on 23/8, 9 on 24/8, 3 on 25/8 & 28/8, 4 on 2/9, 3 on 4/9 & 8/9, 7 on 9/9.

Spotted Redshank – 1 on 9/9.

Black Tailed Godwit – 4 on 3/7, 7 on 22/7, 1 on 23/7 & 25/7, 6 on 1/8, 2 from 4/8 to 6/8, 3 on 10/8, 1 on 11/8 & 16/8, 2 on 17/8 & 18/8, up to 9 on 27/8.

Ruff – 1 on 3/7, 14/9 & 20/9.

Redshank – 2 on 20/6, 1 on 3/7 & 8/7, 3 on 7/7, up to 9 on 21/7, 1 on 9/8, 27/8 & 11/9.

Snipe – 1 from 4/8 to 12/8, 1 on 18/8, 2 on 22/8, 4 on 23/8, 6 from 27/8 to 29/8, up to 7 from 30/8 to 5/9, 8 on 7/9, 10 on 8/9 then up to 6 until 12 on 17/9, 4 on 18/9, 9 on 19/9, 4 on 20/9, 6 on 21/9, 12 on 23/9.

Common Sandpiper – 1 regularly from 3/7 (counts over), 2 from 10/7 to 17/7, 3 on 18/7 & 19/7, 4 on 20/7, 5 on 21/7, (counts over 4), 6 on 2/8 & 4/8, 5 on 5/8 & 7/8, 7 on 8/8, 6 on 15/8, 5 on 21/8, from 23/8 to 28/8 up to 3 then up to 2 until end of period.

Green Sandpiper – Regular - 1 on 28/6, 2 on 29/6 (counts over 2), 3 on 7/7 & 21/7, up to 4 on 22/7 & 26/7, 6 from 27/7 to 2/8, then up to 4 regularly until 8/8 then up to 2 until 28/8 the last sighting.

Curlew Sandpiper – 3 from 7/9 to 9/9.

Wood Sandpiper - 1 on 31/7, 1/8 & 2/8, 2 on 3/8 & 4/8.

Turnstone – 1 on 31/8 & 14/9.

Black Headed Gull – Regular, (counts over 25), 30 on 20/6, 34 on 2/7, 36 on 3/7, 65 on 5/7, (counts over 50) 65 on 10/7 & 11/7, 115 on 14/7, 174 on 17/7, (counts over 150) 175 on 22/7, over 200 from 25/7 to 4/8 with a high of 275, 250 on 8/8, 300 on 10/8, 175 on 11/8, 220 on 14/8, 254 on 15/8 & 20/8, 217 on 21/8, 180 on 7/9, 151 on 12/9.

Mediterranean Gull – 1 on 28/6, 11/7, 28/7, 2/8 & 3/8.

LBB Gull – 1 regularly (counts over), 3 on 17/7 & 31/7, 2 on 8/8, 3 on 14/8 & 15/8, 2 on 25/8, 3 on 29/8.

GBB Gull – 1 regularly (counts over), 2 on 23/7, 3 on 1/8, 2 on 11/8, 15/8 & 30/8, 2 on 13/9.

Herring Gull – 6 on 20/6 & 10/7, 10 on 5/7, 1 on 11/7, 18/7 & 19/7, 5 on 17/7, 3 on 8/8, 6 on 14/8 & 15/8, 1 on 26/8, 2 on 28/8 & 29/8, 3 on 30/8, 14 on 22/9.

Common Tern - 8 from 20/6 to 29/6, 9 on 30/6, 13 on 3/7, 15 on 5/7 & 6/7, up to 20 from 10/7 to 17/7, up to 16 from 19/7 to 27/7, 17 on 28/7, 18 on 31/7, up to 12 from 2/8 to 8/8, up to 14 from 11/8 to 15/8 was the last sighting.

Black Tern - 1 on 12/9.

Stock Dove - Regular (counts over 3), 4 on 11/7 & 12/7, 5 on 25/7, 4 on 26/7, 12 on 11/8, 8 on 12/8, 10 on 14/8, 5 on 16/8, 13 on 21/8, 5 on 23/8 & 25/8, 7 on 29/8, 11 on 1/9, 6 on 4/9, 5 on 15/9.

Collared Dove - 1 on 20/6, 3/7, 11/7, 14/7 & 21/7, 2 on 25/7, 3 on 16/8, 1 on 16/9.

Wood Pigeon - Ubiquitous, (Counts over 30), 35 on 11/7. **Cuckoo** - 1 on 2/8.

Swift - 23 on 20/6, 3 on 29/6 & 17/7, 1 on 28/6, 3/7 & 10/7, 2 on 19/7, 8 on 31/7, 20 on 2/8, 4 on 7/8, 2 on 8/8, 1 on 14/8 & 21/8. **Kingfisher** - 4 on 20/6 then 2 regularly (counts over), 4 on 29/6 & 20/7, 3 on 12/7, 17/7, 1/8 & 18/9.

Green Woodpecker - 1 on 20/6, 2 on 10/7 & 11/7, 3 on 17/7 & 7/8, 1 on 14/8 & 26/8, 2 on 30/8 & 12/9.

Gt Spotted Woodpecker - 1 intermittently until 2 on 4/9, 1 on 12/9 & 13/9.

Sand Martin - 4 on 11/7, 10 on 7/8, 6 on 17/8, 3 on 21/8 & 26/8, 5 on 28/8, 1 on 29/8, 10 on 30/8, 7 on 31/8, 1 on 4/9, 20 on 7/9, 10 on 8/9, 5 on 9/9, 4 on 11/9, 20 on 15/9, 40 on 16/9, 2 on 18/9, 1 on 19/9.

Barn Swallow - Regular - 3 on 20/6 (counts over 4), 5 on 3/7, 7 on 6/7, 12 on 11/7, 8 on 13/7 & 17/7, 10 on 7/8 & 8/8, (counts over 7), 22 on 26/8, 10 on 28/8, 20 on 29/8, 150 on 30/8, 10 on 4/9 & 9/9, 20 on 8/9, 17 on 11/9, 10 on 15/9 to 17/9, 6 on 23/9.

House Martin - 4 on 20/6, (counts over 10), 15 on 17/7, 30 on 31/7 & 7/8, 70 on 14/8, 50 on 15/8, (counts over 25) 48 on 28/8, 60 on 29/8, 50 on 30/8, 200 on 4/9, 80 on 5/9, 40 on 7/9 & 9/9, 750 on 11/9, 300 on 15/9, 80 on 16/9, 400 on 17/9, 50 on 18/9.

Grey Wagtail - 1 regularly (counts over), 3 on 20/6, 2 on 8/8, 15/8, 22/8 & 26/8, 3 on 28/8, 5 on 30/8, 4 on 31/8, 2 on 4/9 & 11/9, 3 on 12/9, 1 on 23/9. **Yellow Wagtail** - 2 on 25/8, 1 on 5/9 & 12/9.

Pied Wagtail - Regular (counts over 15), 18 on 4/7, up to 24 from 5/7 to 21/7, 31 on 22/7, 41 on 25/7, up to 47 from 27/7 to 2/9 with 48 on 3/8, from 2/9 onwards up to 25 with 30 on 13/9, 43 on 23/9.

Wren, Robin, Dunnock, Great Tit, Pheasant - Regular & resident. (No counts over 4).

Blackbird - (counts over 4), 9 on 5/7, 12 on 11/7, 6 on 17/7.

Wheatear - 1 on 16/8. **Whinchat** - 1 on 12/9. **Stonechat** - 1 on 12/9.

Meadow Pipit - 3 on 11/9 & 15/9, 2 on 14/9, 6 on 16/9, 75 on 18/9, 3 on 20/9.

Song Thrush - 1 on 8/7 & 11/7, 2 on 17/7, 1 on 21/7, 2 on 7/8. **Spotted Flycatcher** - 1 on 26/8, 11/9 & 13/9.

Mistle Thrush - 1 on 30/6, 2 on 4/7, 8 on 29/8, 48 over on 30/8, 3 on 4/9, 1 on 11/9 & 15/9, 2 on 20/9.

Reed Warbler - 8 on 20/6, 1 on 27/6, 9/7, 10/7, 1/8 & 7/8, 3 on 6/8. **Sedge Warbler** - 1 on 1/8

Common Whitethroat - 2 on 20/6 then 1 regularly (counts over), 4 on 17/7, 8 on 19/7, 2 on 1/8, 4 on 7/8, 3 on 14/8, 4 on 21/8, 3 on 22/8 & 26/8, 1 on 4/9 was last sighting. **Garden Warbler** - 1 on 20/6 & 27/6, 1 on 1/8 & 11/8.

Blackcap - 1 regularly (counts over), 3 on 17/7, 4 on 21/8, 3 on 22/8, 7 on 26/8 & 29/8, 4 on 28/8, 3 on 4/9, 5 on 11/9, 4 on 12/9, 2 on 18/9. **Willow Warbler** - 1 on 22/8, 23/8 & 28/8, 2 on 12/9.

Chiffchaff - Up to 2 regularly (counts over), 4 on 20/6, 7 on 18/7, 5 on 14/8, 6 on 15/8, 11 on 21/8, 6 on 22/8, 10 on 26/8, 20 on 28/8, 5 on 29/8, 6 on 4/9, 5 on 11/9, 3 on 12/9, 7 on 15/9, 3 on 16/9, 6 on 18/9.

Goldcrest - 1 on 20/6 & 3/7, 2 on 22/8, 1 on 1/9, 2 on 12/9, 1 on 13/9.

L.T. Tit - 3 on 1/7, 2 on 2/7, 1 on 13/7 & 21/7, 5 on 2/8 & 20/8, 1 on 21/8, 8 on 4/9, 3 on 15/9.

Marsh Tit - 1 from 13/7 to 23/7 but 3 on 20/7, 2 on 2/8 & 6/8, 1 on 4/8, 7/8 & 20/8, up to 2 from 21/8 to 4/9, 1 on 13/9 & 22/9.

Coal Tit - 1 on 17/7, 2 on 21/8, 1 on 22/8, 2 on 26/8, 1 on 28/8, 1/9, 4/9, 12/9, 22/9 & 23/9.

Blue Tit - Regular (counts over 5), 10 on 17/7, 6 on 4/9, 9 on 12/9.

Nuthatch - 1 occasionally throughout period (counts over), 2 on 17/7 & 29/8, 3 on 12/9.

Tree Creeper - 1 on 3/7, 10/7 & 13/7 to 17/7, 1 on 4/9 & 13/9.

Jay - 2 on 20/6, 1 regularly on 3/7 to 17/7 with 3 on 12/7 & 18/7, 1 on 4/8, 2 on 14/8, 1 on 16/8, 3 on 21/8 & 30/8, 1 on 31/8, 4/9 & 5/9, 5 on 12/9, 1 on 18/9. **Magpie** - Resident & regular - (counts over 6), 8 on 17/7, 9 on 31/7, 10 on 1/8, 12 on 2/8.

Jackdaw - (counts over 30) 35 on 1/7, 150 on 3/7, 60 on 14/7, 250 on 9/8, 100 on 14/8, 48 on 15/8, 32 on 16/8, 100 on 18/8, 400 on 20/8, 100 on 27/8 to 29/8, 40 on 1/9, 200 on 7/9, 150 on 12/9.

Carrion Crow - Resident (counts over 4), 7 on 8/7, 5 on 11/7, 6 on 14/7, 50 on 19/8, 10 on 15/8.

Rook - Up to 5 from 1/7 to 4/8, up to 55 from 9/8 to 18/8 with 68 on 14/8, (counts over 50), 75 on 20/8, 60 on 27/8, 100 on 29/8 the under 20 until end of period. **Starling** - 5 on 28/8, 7 on 31/8, 3 on 4/9, 1 on 9/9.

Raven - 3 on 20/6, 2 on 12/7, 17/7, 21/7 & 31/7, 1 on 4/8 & 20/8, 2 on 26/8, 1 on 27/8 & 29/8, 4 on 28/8, 3 on 4/9, 2 on 12/9.

Linnet - 1 on 16/8, 3 on 4/9, 300 on 8/9, 15 on 9/9, 3 on 11/9, 6 on 13/9. **House Sparrow** - 1 on 17/7.

Chaffinch - 1 on 20/6, 18/7, 27/8, 28/8 & 13/9. **Greenfinch** - 1 on 21/8, 6 on 26/8, 1 on 4/9, 3 on 12/9, 1 on 15/9 & 18/9.

Goldfinch - 2 occasionally until 17/7, (counts over 5), 30 on 31/7, 21 on 1/8, 40+ from 7/8 to 15/8, 30 on 21/8, 12 on 26/8, 30 on 29/8. **Yellowhammer** - 1 on 13/6 & 20/6, 1 on 13/7.

Bullfinch - 1 on 24/6, 2 on 17/7, 4 on 6/8, 2 on 14/8 & 26/8, 1 on 21/8 & 4/9, 2 on 12/9, 8 on 18/9.

Reed Bunting - 2 on 20/6, 1 on 3/7, 2 on 10/7, 1 on 1/8, 14/8 & 22/8, 2 on 21/8, 2 on 26/8 & 12/9.

Reserve News by Bob Johnson

The lowered water levels at the west end have allowed us access to areas normally under water. You should notice improvements to the roadside views towards the heronry and from the lay-bys with clearance of some Maple & Willow and removal of some obstructing falling & fallen trees.

Reservoir viewing from the hide car park areas has also been improved with some Willow at the water's edge being lowered/cleared to maintain the open habitat. In the car park we have replaced the picnic table bench supports that had sunk and the seats are now a sensible height again. Another improvement has been the complete repainting of the interior of the hide. It also received an anti-graffiti top coating which should make any graffiti easier to remove if it re-occurs in the future.

The wader scrapes on Pintail Bank have received attention, with vegetation within the scrape areas and on the spits cut back, this should now be ready for birds to use when water levels rise during the winter rains.

Reserve News continued....

We were able to carry out further clearance of Willow within the "Iron Bog" area to keep an open flight path from the reservoir into the bog. We hope this will help attract dragonflies etc and also give more light to encourage marsh plants.

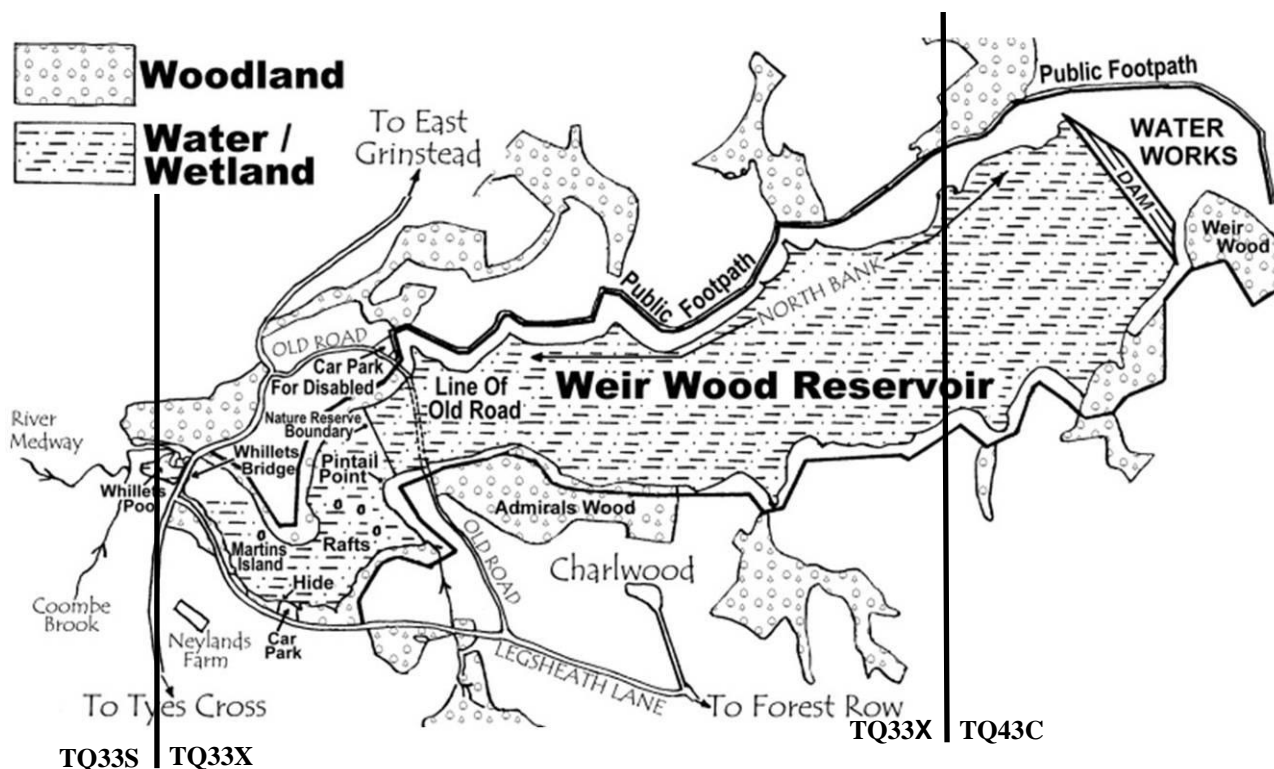
We have carried out work at Whillet's reed bed. With lower water levels we have been able to reach the island and clear the bramble and sapling trees and generally make it suitable again for nesting birds. Fallen Willow trees were cleared and the views towards the reed bed from the road improved. We have also cut a new wide ride through the reed bed that's viewable from the road.

We intend installing a small viewing platform at the back of the reed bed which will assist us with counting winter roosting birds and also dragonfly monitoring over the reed bed.

It has been a good year for some of our large box nesting birds with several successful nests of Mandarin in the study area, On 29/6 a very high count of 56 Mandarin were noted, an exceptional number. Stock Doves have also done well, on 26/7 10 boxes were in use, 5 nests had eggs and 5 had chicks. The Stock Doves are now having late broods with more young chicks being ringed only recently. 4 pairs of Common Terns nested on the rafts; 3 pairs were successful producing 7 young which just managed to fledge before low water levels receded past the rafts. At the dam end another pair of terns nested on the aerator and successfully fledged 1 young. We are aware the Kingfishers managed to have two broods at the west end, with birds being seen taking food to a nest well after the Open Day in July when we had already seen fledged young.

The hot dry summer weather influenced Whillet's meadows, the wetland flora suffered but generally survived, however many plants were smaller than usual and some, such as Angelica, were severely stunted, only flowering on short stems. The late flowering Water Mint did much better. Generally, the number of dragonflies & butterflies were down in numbers this summer. Meadow Pond water levels were low for a time but it never dried out, the pond is now looking good again. Whillet's Pool dried up except for part of the moat and this notably affected the Orange Foxtail & Burr-marigold plants. They both require damp mud, and hardly showed.

It has been quite a good year for Grass Snakes with a high count of 15 noted in mid-June, but regular sightings including young snakes have been seen right through to mid-September. 2 Slow Worms were also noted.



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Website Photos: photos@weirwood.me.uk

Wildlife Sightings: sightings@weirwood.me.uk

Friends General E-Mail address: info@weirwood.me.uk

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