

Friends of The Withey Beds

Spring 2006

Local Nature Reserve Update

Since the last newsletter a number of projects have taken place at The Withey Beds LNR. One exciting development has been the construction of a **living willow nature hide**. More than 60 children and adults visited The Withey Beds over February half term, as part of the Council led *Nature Week 2006*. Everyone helped with tasks ranging from laying the ground sheet and making windows to actually forming the dome and tying the willow in place. The willow has already started to grow so you will soon be able to spot a few animals whilst hiding in the hide!

Willow Hide

You may have also noticed a new installation to one of the trees at The Withey Beds. A **barn owl box** has kindly been donated and installed by Three Valleys Water. Barn owls were once a common sight in the county but have declined by 90% since the 1930s. The box at The Withey Beds has a number, 1645, so if you see a barn owl nesting here then please let us know.

Barn Owl Box

Barn Owls

The other big change at The Withey Beds is the installation of **two bridges**. You will finally be able to complete a circular walk around the LNR, rather than having to turn back on yourself. The bridges cross the central ditch.

Easter also saw a group of children and their guardians make a variety of Easter related crafts. They all sat in the sun and made everything from bouncing bunnies and chirping chicks to Easter pictures and cards. To join the LNR activity mailing list email your name and address to kay.fitzgerald@threerivers.gov.uk

Future Events

The Friends of The Withey Beds have organised a **guided walk** around the LNR on Sunday 14 May, at 2:00pm. Meeting at the Batchworth Lock Centre the walk will follow the Ebury Way for about 1.5 miles at which point you will be given a private tour of the Watford Piscators lakes which are carefully managed for wildlife and fishing. From here we will make our way over to The Withey Beds for last part of the walk. Join us and learn a little more about this special LNR and the surrounding area.

Later in May, on 20th and 21st, the Friends of the The Withey Beds will have a stand within the Environmental Marquee at this years **Rickmansworth Festival**. Come along to show your support and see what else is going on within the district.

July 25 sees a special **moth night** at The Withey Beds. This is just one of the events being held in the districts LNRs as part of the **national LNR celebrations**. The night will start at 8:30pm and will finish around 10:30pm. For more information of to **book a place** contact Kay FitzGerald on 01923 727105 or at kay.fitzgerald@threerivers.gov.uk

Bird News by Anna Marett

The resident birds are now breeding on the reserve alongside returning migrants such as chiffchaff, blackcap and whitethroat. Swifts arrive in May from Africa but swallows and house martins have already made the return journey to this country.

The dawn chorus is a rich reward for anyone making an early morning visit especially in May. You may hear the first wren, blackbird or robin from about 4am!

Look out for a fast flying kingfisher along the river and also for pied and grey wagtails searching for food at the pond edge.

Green and Great Spotted Woodpeckers are regularly seen on the reserve - early spring is the best time to hear their 'drumming' on the trees. Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers are also occasional visitors here.

A list of birds seen on or flying over the reserve is now displayed in the noticeboard at the beginning of the LNR.

Membership

Everyone is welcome to join the Friends of The Withey Beds, whether you want to take part in volunteer days or not. For an application form contact the Treasurer at 4 Sandy Lodge Road, Moor Park, Rickmansworth, WD3 1LJ.