



Crack-willow
(Withy)

Friends of The Withey Beds

Spring 2018

Local Nature Reserve (LNR) Update

During 2017 a member of the Hertfordshire Moth Group surveyed The Withey Beds. He only visited the site on five occasions but managed to record over 200 species; which is really quite impressive. There are around 2500 species of moth in the UK and they have some amazing names – from the snout and the double lobed to the rosy rustic and the coronet, all of which were found at The Withey Beds. As you would expect many of the species noted are at The Withey Beds due to its wetland status. For example the pale water-veneer likes to be near reed beds and one of its food plants is reed sweet grass, of which there is plenty at the LNR. Other species that were noted that like wetland areas and the plants that grow on them include the small seraphim, southern wainscot, the coronet and the blackneck.



The coronet moth: Widely distributed, but not common. The habitat preferences are woodlands, commons, downland and marshy places. Flight period June and July.

The Council offices in Rickmansworth will be hosting the Friends of The Withey Beds AGM at 7:30pm on 16 April. Please do come along to meet the committee and hear what we actually talk about!

The cattle will soon be making a welcome return so they can continue to munch through the vegetation.

At 2pm on Sunday 13 May the Friends of The Withey Beds will be leading a guided walk to the Local Nature Reserve. The walk will start at the Batchworth Lock Centre (where there will be a short presentation on the history of the canal) before walking along the Ebury Way for a tour of the fishing lakes of the Watford Piscators and then on to The Withey Beds where you can learn more about how the site is managed and why it is special.

During the following weekend, 19 and 20 May, the Friends of The Withey Beds will be at the

Rickmansworth Festival, in the Aquadrome. The Festival opens from 10:30am each day and the committee will be on hand to answer any of your burning questions about The Withey Beds. There will also be a great variety of bands performing on the main stage as well as a range of stalls selling everything from cheese and sweets to toys and clothes. Please do come along and show your support.

Nature News by Anna Maret

The water level has been up and down over the winter and the cows were taken off the Reserve during December. They ate the grass but left the teasels and thistles!

Slow worms, grass snakes and field voles were among the more unusual sightings and cranefly, spider species and hornets were recorded in the autumn.

Buzzard, sparrowhawk, kestrel and red kite are regular visitors and the delightful winter migrants redwings and fieldfares were very visible in December and January.

A pair of pied wagtails hunted for insects even when the scrape was frozen and 50 plus mallard with one shoveller were present in December. A snipe flew up from one of the smaller ponds.

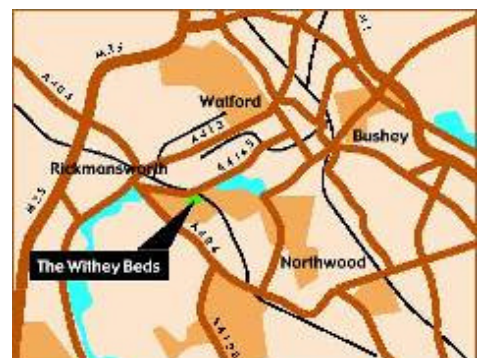
Spring-like behaviour is starting with nuthatches calling, great tits singing and drumming great spotted woodpecker.

Membership subscriptions are overdue. If you have not yet renewed for last year please contact the Membership Secretary at 14 Sandy Lodge Road, Rickmansworth, WD3 1LJ with your £5.00 or the completed Standing Order form. The Friends would be grateful if you could pay by Standing Order as it makes administration easier. You can contact the Membership Secretary at friendsofthewitheybeds@gmail.com

WHERE IS THE WITHEY BEDS LOCAL NATURE RESERVE?

As you travel along Moor Lane, from Rickmansworth, the entrance to The Withey Beds is on your right - about 150m after the entrance to the Moor Park estate (where the security guards sit in a small building).

The LNR entrance has a green vehicle barrier and kissing gate. If you go over the River Colne on to Tolpits Lane, then you have gone too far.



Friends of Stocker's Lake

The Friends of The Withey Beds joined the Friends of Stocker's Lake (FoSL) some years ago and thought Members might be interested in what they, as another local nature group, are doing and to see how it complements our work. Further details are available on the Friends' website at www.fosl.org.uk and the Membership Secretary can be contacted directly at rhbeeden@gmail.com

Stocker's Lake, a former gravel pit, is the Colne Valley's premier nature reserve. It is owned by Affinity Water Ltd and managed by the Hertfordshire and Middlesex Wildlife Trust supported by local people who are the Friends of Stocker's Lake.

It is one of the best places in the county for wintering duck with over 10 species recorded including shoveler, smew, goosander and goldeneye. It has the largest heronry in Hertfordshire with grey heron and now little egret. About sixty species, including kingfisher, seven species of warbler and great crested grebe breed on the reserve. Common terns breed on specially constructed rafts and hobbies, swifts and sand martins can be seen in spring and autumn. Altogether over two hundred species have been recorded including rarities like bittern, cetti's warbler and osprey.

Around the lake margins are a variety of habitats including reed and sedge marsh, alder carr, hedgerows and meadows. There are over 250 species of wild flowers including common meadow rue, moschatel, ragged robin, meadowsweet, hedgerow cranesbill and the rare large bittercress.

The ground cover, mature trees and bushes at the fringes of the reserve provide good habitat for small mammals including muntjac, hedgehog, mole, common and pygmy shrews, squirrel, field and water voles, wood and harvest mice, fox, badger and weasel. Bats can be observed flying above the causeway between Stocker's and Bury Lakes on warm evenings.

Grass snakes and common frogs also inhabit the area. Many butterflies can be seen around the lake including brimstone, painted lady, gatekeeper, red admiral, peacock, comma, orange tip and speckled wood. FoSL members conduct a butterfly survey each year between April and September. There are also ten species of dragonfly and damselfly, not to mention many other insects such as the bee fly.

FoSL was established in 1990 and has about 700 members. Any money raised by the Friends is used in management work on the reserve to improve the conservation value of the lake and also to increase the enjoyment of visitors. All the bird hides were built and paid for by FoSL who has spent over £65,000 on the reserve so far.

FoSL run several guided walks around the lake each year focusing on birds, wild flowers butterflies and dragonflies and is currently engaged in a number of projects to enhance the environment. In particular by 2019 FoSL hope to have cattle grazing on the meadows between the lake and the river and are currently erecting wildlife cameras in the heronry. John Little will talk at the AGM on 11 April about Making Wildlife Gardens. You may have seen him on Gardeners' World last August and I am sure if you are interested you would be welcome if you get in touch. Again more details on the website.



Heron nest on Stocker's Lake, taken from one of the new wildlife cameras



Heron



View across Stocker's Lake