



# Friends of The Withey Beds

## Autumn 2022



### Local Nature Reserve (LNR) Update

I am hoping that this newsletter finds you all well and over the summer had a chance to visit the Withey Beds.

The reptile mats remain in place, and I have had reports of both grass snakes and mice, or possibly shrews, being found under them. I always have great anticipation on what might be hiding there. Please remember to pick up the mats slowly and put them down carefully so as not to surprise any wildlife or yourself!

It was great to see the Rickmansworth Canal Festival back and well attended. As usual we had our stand on show in the Environment Tent, and we managed to hold our nature walk on the following Sunday with a dozen or more people participating.

**Our AGM will be held on 7th November at the Rickmansworth Golf Club; members are invited, and volunteers would be welcome.**

Please let us know of anything which needs doing in the Reserve, or if you have any ideas for the area. Most of our members now receive the newsletter by email. If you receive a paper copy and can go digital, please inform the membership secretary. [friendsofthewitheybeds@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofthewitheybeds@gmail.com).

Membership subscriptions - If you have not renewed for last year please contact the Membership Secretary by [email](#) or by post at 14 Sandy Lodge Road, Rickmansworth, WD3 1LJ with your £5.00 subscription or the completed SO (Standing Order) form. SO and membership applications forms are available via the [FoWB website](#).

### WHERE IS THE WITHEY BEDS LNR?

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.

### Nature News

We had high and low water levels during the summer and whirligig beetles clustered on the last area of water under the far bridge.

Thistles were abundant, also bulrushes by the first bridge. These are also known as Great Reedmace, the beige top being the male flowers above the dark brown female flower.

A pair of mute swans nested again, two cygnets were spotted on the river (26 July). Mallard and 3 young, coot and 2 young and mallard with 3 young were observed. Warblers noted over the summer were chiffchaff, blackcap, reed warbler, Cetti's, whitethroat and a singing sedge warbler (20 June).

Grass snake, slow worm, bank vole, meadow grasshopper were also found alongside mayfly, crane fly, snipe fly (which likes to rest on posts head downwards) and scorpion fly.

Cuckoo spit was found on nettles by the boardwalk, the frothy substance containing the nymph of a frog hopper. So called because they were discovered at the same time cuckoos returned from Africa.

Blue tits nested in one box, other species present included Green and Great spotted woodpecker, nuthatch, treecreeper, greenfinch, buzzard, kestrel and red kite. Hundreds of acorns crunched underfoot were maybe a sign of the very hot weather this summer.





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### Withey Coming and Goings – Angie Brew

Chiffchaffs are leaving now, flying south to Europe, southern Asia and north Africa. Through the spring and summer they sing from tops of trees. Their loud 'chiff- chaff' song on one note gives them their name. The chiffchaff is a migratory passerine, a small solitary leaf warbler, breeding in woodlands throughout northern Europe and the Palearctic, feeding mainly on flies.

The adult male arrives up to three weeks before the female in the spring, to choose and protect its territory.

Once she arrives and chooses a mate, the female builds a small dome-shaped grass nest, low down in dense thickets or blackberry brambles.

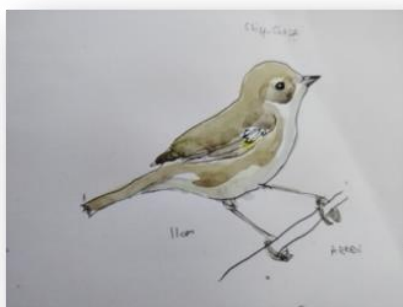
Fieldfares are arriving now from Scandinavia, Finland and Russia. We have over 600,000 birds overwintering in Britain but they very rarely stay to breed. The fieldfare is a large thrush, with a blue-grey head, yellow beak and a speckled breast. At first you will hear them and see them in trees and bushes looking for fruit, then later in winter they search for worms and insects in large flocks in fields, often joined by redwings. Hawthorn berries are a favourite, and they also like apples. Sometimes they come into our gardens in depth of winter to forage fallen apples lying under trees. We are leaving apples under our tree this year. Some birds return annually to the same local orchards.

For my bird drawings use ink I make myself by grinding down oak galls. Da Vinci made ink this way.

You are welcome to join me at the Withy Beds to draw birds. If you are interested please message me at [brewdrawing@gmail.com](mailto:brewdrawing@gmail.com), you can also see some of my work at [brewdraw.com](http://brewdraw.com).



Fieldfare



Chiffchaffs

