



Friends of The Withey Beds

Spring 2024



Local Nature Reserve (LNR) Update

I am hoping that this newsletter finds you all well. Following our 2023 AGM the FoWB are pleased to announce **Fearghal Hayes** as the new Chair of The FoWB's. Fearghal brings to the role excellent knowledge of the Withey Beds having been part of the Committee and a friend since 2004. The Committee is looking forward to working with him in the coming years. Alongside this we would all like to extend our thanks to **John Champion**, our departing Chair, for all his hard work. Over the past 20 years John led the group through its creation and development.

As we informed members in our autumn newsletter the boardwalk remains out of order. TRDC have let us know that they that they have now assessed the damage and identified a repair plan. We are awaiting details on when the work will be done. Updates will be made via website: <http://www.thewitheybeds.org.uk>. In the meantime, access to the Withey Beds is via the field.

When it rains it pours, in further bad news, we have been informed that this year's Rickmansworth Canal Festival has had to be cancelled due to an issue with [asbestos](#) that could be released by the construction of the infrastructure, stages and marquees, needed to host the festival. The cancelation will impact our annual membership activities and our ability to reach out to the community.

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

Please let us know of anything which needs doing in the Reserve, or if you have ideas for the area. Most members now receive the newsletter by email. If you receive a

paper copy and can go digital, please contact us at friendsofwitheybeds@gmail.com.

Membership subscriptions - If you have not renewed, please contact the Membership Secretary by [email](#) or 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](#).

Nature Notes – by Anna Marett

Water levels remained high for most months last Autumn and Spring 2024. This attracted numbers of wildfowl: Teal, Wigeon (8 Feb), Mandarin (27 Jan, 17 Feb, 10 March), Mallard, Egyptian Goose, Gadwall and Shoveler. Little Egrets showed up on the few green patches. Four Herons continue to visit the site. Coots and Moorhens were regularly heard and seen.

Water Rail calls were heard fairly frequently. Kestrel, Buzzard, Red Kite and Sparrowhawk observed. Two Kestrels were observed mobbing a Buzzard (22 Oct). Lapwings were seen in January, February and March. The flight call of a Bittern was heard (24 Feb) not the booming call. Both Mistle and Song Thrush were present.

Treecreepers were observed in March. Redwing and Fieldfare, our winter visitors appeared in the taller trees, the 'tsee' call of the Redwing often heard. A rare treat of a Waxwing was found (28 Jan) perched by a large bunch of Mistletoe on one of the Willows. These charismatic birds will eat Mistletoe berries. One Chiffchaff was heard singing (9 March), Cetti's warbler (22 Jan), 13 Starling on the field (25 Nov). Other wildlife recorded: Grass snake, Slow worm, Newt species (Sept) Muntjac, Fox, Common Darter, Red Admiral (28 Jan). Field vole (21 Nov), Bank vole and Common shrew.

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.





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Discover the Enchanting World of Damselflies

The Withey Beds Nature Reserve is a sanctuary of biodiversity nestled in serene wetlands. Within this tranquil haven we find a diverse array of fascinating creatures find their home, including the enchanting damselflies.

Damselflies, close relatives of dragonflies, are ancient insects characterized by their slender bodies, delicate wings, and distinctive flight patterns. These remarkable creatures have inhabited the Earth for millions of years, evolving alongside their watery habitats.

Within the reserve, you can encounter several species of damselflies, each with its own unique characteristics and behaviours. Among them, the Emerald Damselfly (*Lestes sponsa*) is a common sight from late spring to early autumn. Look for these shimmering insects darting among the reeds and grasses, their metallic-green bodies catching the sunlight.

Another frequent visitor is the Common Blue Damselfly (*Enallagma cyathigerum*), easily identified by its vibrant blue coloration and black markings. These agile fliers can be observed from late spring to early autumn, gracefully flitting above the water's surface in search of prey and mates.

The Willow Emerald Damselfly (*Chalcolestes viridis*) is yet another species you may encounter. Named for its association with willow trees, these damselflies boast hues of dark metallic green and bronze, blending seamlessly with their surroundings. Keep an eye out for them during the warmer months as they engage in courtship displays and territorial behaviours.

Damselflies undergo a remarkable life cycle, beginning as aquatic nymphs before emerging as winged adults. They play a vital role in wetland ecosystems, serving as both predators and prey. As voracious hunters, damselflies help control populations of small insects, contributing to the balance of their habitats.

While exploring take the time to observe these fascinating creatures in their natural environment. Whether they are basking in the sunlight, mating in mid-air, or laying eggs in the water, damselflies offer a glimpse into the intricate web of life that thrives within our wetlands.

Join us in celebrating the beauty and diversity of damselflies at The Withey Beds Nature Reserve. As stewards of this precious ecosystem, we invite you to immerse yourself in the wonders of nature and discover the enchanting world of these ancient insects.

Willow emerald damselfly



Common blue damselfly



Emerald damselfly



Banded Demoiselle



Blue tailed damselfly



Photos by:
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The Withey
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