



Friends of The Withey Beds

Autumn 2025



Local Nature Reserve (LNR) Update

We hope that this newsletter finds you all well.

Unfortunately, as communicated in previous newsletters, the boardwalk remains closed. On a positive note, due to the issue, there has been considerable interest by councillors with several of them making visits to The Withey Beds to both see for themselves the damage and to experience the beauty and tranquillity of the site. During this time the FoWB's have continued to undertake maintenance of the boardwalk to try and ensure no further damage is caused and have, along with our supporters, been pressing TRDC to identify possible solutions so that the boardwalk can be reopened. Updates will be made on the website: <http://www.thewitheybeds.org.uk>. **In the meantime, access remains via the field. NOTE: as we now have the Dexter cattle back grazing in the field, please keep dogs on leads.**

The reptile mats remain in place, although some are now in need of replacement, and visitors continue to find grass snakes, mice and voles/shrews, being seen. Visitors lifting them always have great anticipation on what might be hiding beneath. 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 email friendsofwitheybeds@gmail.com.

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

Nature Notes – by Anna Marett

The Reserve has been both very wet or dry so far this year therefore allowing some exploration of the field.

Some birds that have been observed include the Great Spotted and Green Woodpecker, Ring-necked Parakeet by tree hole in fallen willow. 5 Little Egret (21 May), Cuckoo (21 May), Chiffchaff, Blackcap, Cetti's Warbler, Garden Warbler, Sedge Warbler and Whitethroat.

Treecreeper and Nuthatch were very vocal in the spring and summer months. A Little Owl was calling (29 April) from the fallen willow, also Snipe (April), Kingfisher, Water Rail, Song Thrush, Greenfinch, Teal and Wigeon.

Moving on to insects there has equally been a real variety including Ruddy Darter, Emperor, Willow Emerald, Migrant Hawker, Common Darter, Broad-bodied Chaser, Blue-tailed Damselfly, Common Damselfly, Banded Demoiselle, Hairy Dragonfly (21 May), Peacock, Orange-tip, Brimstone, Red Admiral, Small Tortoiseshell, Green-veined White, Gatekeeper, Ringlet, Large White and Small White.

Also seen were Fox, Muntjac, Roe deer, Pygmy Shrew, Common Shrew, Bank Vole, Grass Snake and Slow Worm.

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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The Mighty Oak (Part 2)

Following on from our Spring newsletter we continue to explore the mighty oak. There are many species of plants and animals that make use of our native oak trees. I think it is difficult to come up with an exact number but estimates range between 2,300 and 3000 species. So here we visit a few random species which make use of different parts of the oak tree and no doubt there will be a return visit with some more in later newsletters.

Acorn Weevil *Curculio glandium*. This is a beetle of the Curculionidae family of beetles: the true weevils or snout beetles. Both male and female of this species have a long snout or rostrum although that of the female is longer than that of the male and the rostrum measures about 1cm in length. At the end of the rostrum are saw like teeth that the female uses to cut a hole into an acorn where she lays 1 or 2 eggs in each. The larvae feed on the inside of the acorn. When the acorn drops to the ground the larvae then eat their way out and bury themselves in the ground. Here they survive for up to 3 winters before emerging as adults in the spring. The adult beetle is a mottled brown colour with long antennae and snout and large flat eyes.

Oak Leaf Roller *Attelabus nitens* This is a red beetle which has a black head. The female constructs leaf containers for her young preferring oak leaves although other species of tree can be used. The female cuts and rolls up the leaf to make tube like structures in which 1-3 eggs are laid in autumn. The leaves fall to the ground, and the larvae pupate and overwinter in the tubes emerging the following spring.

Cased Caddis/ Sedge flies Caddis fly eggs and the larvae are aquatic, and adults emerge from the water to swarm and mate. There are around 200 species in Britain and Ireland. Caddis fly larvae can be cased or caseless. Cases can be made from a variety of materials such as sand grains, small pieces of stone, shell fragments, dead grass, twigs, wood or seeds. The cases can be tubular in shape, curved, straight, and flattened laterally or box shaped. Identification can be made partially from the cases made but larval features are also necessary. The caddis flies have sharp jaws and can remodel pieces of vegetation and stick them together with silk threads. The photo below shows a cased caddis which has made its case using oak leaves. The lobes of the leaf lend themselves well to the flattened shape required. Oak leaves also maintain their structural integrity in wet environments unlike other leaves which decay quickly or become rather slimy.

I would also remind to report sightings of **Oak Processionary Moth**. Further information can be found of the GOV.UK website (enter OPM) or report the sighting to TreeAlert or opm@forestrycommision.gov.uk. You will need a 10 digit grid reference or use what3words, the full address, your contact details, a photo and details of the land owner if know.



Figure 1: cased caddis