



Weir Wood News

The Newsletter of the Friends of Weir Wood Society no 111

Winter 2025/6



Chairman's Notes

Welcome to our winter newsletter and on behalf of the Friends' Committee, I wish you all a happy new year.

As well as the usual items, this edition includes high-level summaries of our survey work carried out during 2025. We hope that you find this information of interest.

Work Parties

The Tuesday work party has been busy as usual. At this time of the year, it is mostly "general housekeeping" (and there is always plenty of this!) rather than big jobs. One task completed this autumn is the opening up of a small area of woodland near the island in Whillets pool. In recent years many young alder trees and the like have taken over, resulting in a dark and mostly impenetrable area which has little benefit for nature. This area faces south and is a sun trap and our work there will increase the variety and amount of ground flora. It all looks a bit bare at the moment but we hope that our efforts will bring results next spring and beyond.

Website

In the past month we have been upgrading our website including moving it to a new platform. This meant that the website was unavailable for a few days over the Christmas / New Year period and we apologise for any inconvenience caused. The new website is now up and running and we have improved the layout to make it more user friendly and to make it easier to view on mobile devices. We will continue to make incremental improvements in the coming months. If there is anything else you would like to see on the website, please let us know and we will try and implement in the coming year.

Legsheath Lane Hide

Some time during the day on 18th December we had some very unwelcome visitors to the bird hide at the west end of the reservoir. A person or persons unknown saw fit to vandalise the inside of the hide. The damage included ripping off the shutters from the windows, damaging the framed birdlife charts and wrenching the large noticeboard from the wall (which must have involved the use of considerable force).

Thankfully a small team of volunteers was able to visit the next day and make good nearly all of the damage and to make the hide safe for visitors pending further minor repair works early in the new year.

Whilst we frequently encounter evidence of low scale anti-social behaviour having taken place in the hide, this is the first time for a while that we have experienced serious damage. The hide's remote location means that sadly it will always attract ne'er-do-wells, but we remain determined to keep the hide open for the enjoyment of the majority who just want to come along and enjoy watching the birdlife.



Damage inside the hide – Dec 25

Pipeline to Ardingly Reservoir

Water levels at Weir Wood remain stubbornly high. The wet autumn has meant that the reservoir is super full and water is backing up with the result that Whillets meadows were waterlogged earlier than ever this year.

The contrast with other reservoirs in the area such as Ardingly, Bough Beech and Arlington (which are slowly filling up), is quite marked. Unlike Arlington and Bough Beech where water is pumped from nearby rivers, Weir Wood is fed directly by the Medway and the numerous streams that flow down into the valley, particularly on the south side. Consequently Weir Wood fills up pretty rapidly in wet weather. It remains an unused resource and we have reported previously that this is likely to be the case until 2032 when the new water treatment works come into service. In the meantime we still have a hosepipe ban!

We have been alerted by local residents that South East Water as part of its drought planning, is considering the possibility of pumping water from Weir Wood (owned by Southern Water) to Ardingly Reservoir (owned by South East Water) approx. 7 miles away. The plan is to lay a large bore overground pipe for 13km between the two reservoirs. The pipe will have the capacity to move over 20m gallons of water per day. We know very little about the plans at the moment and the impact it will have on the reserve especially if the pipeline passes through it. This is a temporary solution apparently until the water treatment works at Weir Wood are operational. The topography between the two reservoirs is challenging to say the least, so we will be interested to see if this plan is feasible.

On the one hand it is good that Weir Wood's water will be used and water levels will go down, but the proposal may well have a huge impact on local businesses (especially the leisure activities at the dam end), local landowners and the valuable habitats through which the pipeline may pass. We understand that as this is critical infrastructure, normal planning considerations may not apply. The matter has been picked up by national and local press and local MPs and councillors are involved. We will continue to monitor the situation.

Sand Martin Boxes

In this year's RSPB annual report, the Worcester and Malvern Local RSPB Group were commended for their efforts in encouraging Sand Martins to breed at a site next to the River Severn. They created a number of artificial "banks" which replicate the sand banks and nest holes where these small hirundines choose to breed. You can read about the project here: <https://group.rspb.org.uk/worcester/news-blogs/blog/a-sand-martin-project/>

This prompted the East Grinstead Local RSPB Group to contact us to see if there would be interest in repeating the project on a smaller scale at Weir Wood. During the summer months, Sand Martins in reasonable numbers are seen flying over the

reservoir along with House Martins, Barn Swallows and Swifts. However to our knowledge there have been no breeding attempts by Sand Martins at Weir Wood or indeed in the upper Medway generally.

Notwithstanding this information, we decided to “give it a go” on the basis that if we provided the right conditions, Sand Martins might decide to breed at Weir Wood. We have agreed to split the costs of construction and installation with the RSPB Group. Work is now underway (see photo below) and the new “bank” should be in place in early March. It will be located on the north bank of the reservoir opposite the hide car park and so should be easily visible using binoculars or a ‘scope.

RSPB Medmerry has recently installed something similar. Again there are no records of Sand Martins breeding there, but like us they are hoping that by providing the artificial banks, the birds will come.



Artificial Sand Martin Bank at RSPB Medmerry
Photo: Richard Allan

Our fingers are firmly crossed!



Our Sand Martin “bank” under construction
Photos: Martin Jeffree

Membership Renewal 2026

A reminder that membership fees for 2026 are now due. The cost of membership has again been held to just £3 per person. Donations in addition to the fee are always really appreciated and are an important source of income for the Society, contributing to the ongoing conservation and maintenance work carried out on the reserve.

The e-mail from the Membership Secretary which accompanied this newsletter sets out the ways to pay if you have **not** already renewed for this year. Many thanks in advance for your continued support, it is much appreciated.

Dates for your Diary:

13 March 2026 – Annual General Meeting and Talk

Our **AGM** will be held on **13th March 2026**. We will be in the Forest Row Community Centre, RH18 5DZ as usual. Doors will open at 7.00pm and the AGM will start at **7.15pm**.

The AGM will conduct the standard formal business and there are no additional items this year. AGM papers will be e-mailed to members nearer the time.

After the AGM there will be a short break for refreshments and then as advised in the autumn newsletter, we will receive a presentation from Mark Mallalieu CBE on Honey Buzzards and Goshawks in Sussex.

Members Spring Walk 2026

This is scheduled for the morning of **Sunday 26th April 2026** – starting from the Legsheath Lane / Hide car park as usual. Hopefully the bluebells will be at their best then. Further details will follow in the spring newsletter.

Members Autumn Walk 2025 – Report

The annual autumn walk went ahead as planned on Saturday 1st November 2025. Those who attended judged it to be an interesting and informative afternoon. The report of the afternoon is attached separately and it will be available on our website in due course.

Large Nest Boxes Survey Report – 2025

[Background information for new members: For many years now, the Friends have maintained and monitored around 35 (this year: 34) large nest boxes dotted around the reserve. The boxes are positioned at least 3m off the ground and on a variety of trees or posts. There are three types of box: large triangular (for Barn Owls), large oblong (typically used by Stock Doves, Tawny Owls, Jackdaws and Mandarin Ducks) and two boxes specially designed to attract Kestrels. Boxes not used by the birds are often used by Grey Squirrels and Hornets.

The experienced nest box team checks the boxes regularly from early spring through to the autumn, though the frequency decreases as the year progresses. Stock Doves will breed quite late into the season and may have up to four broods a year. By contrast Tawny Owls will breed early in the season and only once. All nesting records are submitted to the British Trust for Ornithology.]

What follows is a very brief summary of the results for 2025 (2024 results in brackets):

	Stock Dove	Mandarin	Jackdaw	Tawny Owl	Barn Owl
Failed attempts	24 (25)	7 (3)	0 (1)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Successful attempts *	7 (21)	2 (4)	0 (0)	1 (1)	0 (1)
Eggs recorded	#	95 (92)	0 (4)	3 (3)	0 (4)
Young left nest *	8 (27)	15 (42)	0 (0)	2 (2)	0 (2)

* Mandarin young leave as newly hatched ducklings so that is defined as success. The very small number of juvenile mandarins ever seen later in the year suggests that about 90% of these ducklings die before fledging. For other species the young have flown.

Most nests have 2 eggs.

Commentary: 25 of the 34 nest boxes had nests this year which provided the records for the table above. Last year 32 boxes were used. This year the success rate was the lowest ever. A 50% failure rate is expected, this year's 75% failure rate is extremely poor.

Stock Doves: Six of the nine unused boxes were close to Plawhatch Stream which is usually a productive area. We had a camera in one box in that area and noted the death of one chick and the slow growth of the other. The prolonged very dry spell of weather in the spring and summer may have had an impact on breeding success.

Mandarin Ducks: We deployed a camera in one of the boxes with a nesting Mandarin. We recorded three different females laying eggs in the box Five weeks later we recorded nine ducklings hatching overnight on 19th – 20th May.

Owls: The Tawny Owl bred successfully in a newly installed box in Whillets Meadows. A dead Barn Owl was found in an emaciated condition in Whillets in March. It had been ringed as an adult at Gravetye nearby in 2024. The Sussex Barn Owl Group have reported that 2025 has not been a good year for owls generally.

Still no signs of success with our two Kestrel boxes. Kestrels were seen in the vicinity of the boxes this year, so we live in hope. We may move one of the boxes to a quieter location on the reserve. Jackdaws appear to have stopped breeding in our boxes.

Butterfly Survey - 2025

[Background information for new members: each year the team carry out a butterfly survey from 1st March to 31st October following a transect through Whillets meadows established in 2011. 32 butterfly species have been recorded here since 2011. Any moths seen during the survey are also recorded. Visitors to Whillets will know that we maintain a variety of flora in order to encourage a range of butterflies and day flying moths.]

Here are the brief highlights for 2025:

The first butterflies recorded were on 8th March (Comma and Small Tortoiseshell) and the last on 9th October (Speckled Wood). 26 butterfly species were recorded this year, two more than 2024. Overall numbers for 2025 showed signs of recovery after the poor year in 2024, a trend that was repeated across Sussex and nationally. The highest peak counts were (**2025/2024**): Meadow Brown (**94/62**), Gatekeeper (**74/49**) and Ringlet (**61/31**). Small Tortoiseshell sightings are a concern. After the sighting on 8th March, there was one other sighting on 18th April and that was it for the year. No caterpillars were noted on their nettle food plant and no later brood. Nationally this species is in serious decline and is now getting close to disappearing from our site. Our early flight dates are no longer in line with the main growing period of their food plant.

Marbled White (13) had a good year with the peak count increasing year on year. It is now established as a regular breeding species on the reserve. Green-veined White enjoyed the warm summer with a highest peak count (27) for many years. Comma had a surprisingly good year (14) as did Small Copper (13) with both having a long flight period. Skippers both Large (22) and Small (28) had a good year too. Sadly Dingy Skipper was again absent this year. This species has not been seen since 2020 and is probably now lost as a breeding species on the reserve. This butterfly likes dry earth and probably has been affected by the high water levels at the reserve which persist into the summer.

Of the day flying moths recorded, Burnet Companion had a reasonable year as did Six Spot Burnet. No Narrow Bordered Five Spot Burnets were recorded in Whillets but they are thriving at the dam end of the reservoir with 31 seen in June. You may recall we mentioned this species in our summer newsletter. Only one Cinnabar moth was recorded but there were plenty of caterpillars on the ragwort in Whillets so hopefully there will be more on the wing in 2026. Mother Shipton was absent this year. With just two seen in 2023 and 2024 respectively the signs are not looking good for this species on the reserve.

Some non day flying moths were recorded and these included Blood Vein, Straw Dot and Vapourer. Micro moths were generally not recorded but Brown China Mark was again seen regularly on the vegetation around Meadow Pond.

Selection of survey photos (all courtesy of Bob Johnson, Richard Allan and Alastair Gray)

Butterflies:



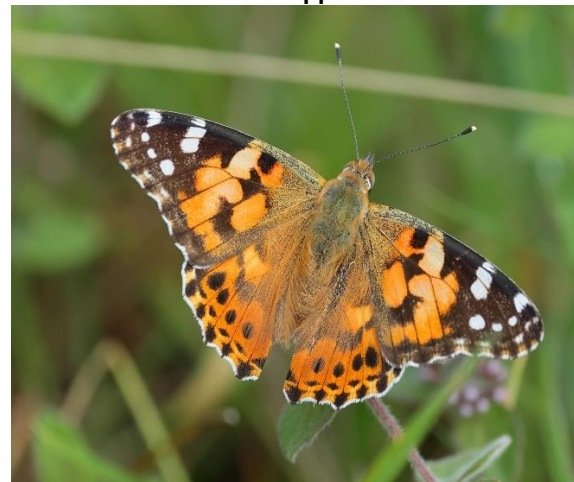
Orange Tip



Small Copper

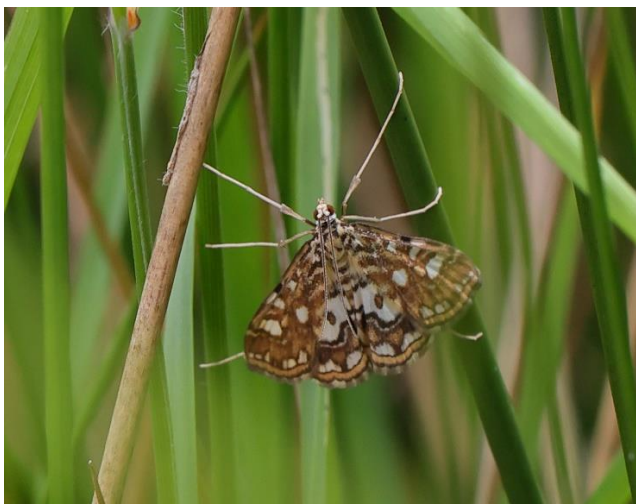


Ringlet



Painted Lady

Moths:



Brown China Mark



Burnet Companion



Vapourer



Six-spot Burnet

Dragonfly and Damselfly Survey - 2025

Regular surveying of dragonflies and damselflies (odonata) started in 2004 and to date 26 species have been recorded. Although there is no set structure, recording centres on Whillets, in particular Meadow Pond and also the reed bed. In 2024/5 we created a new open pool and small pond in Whillets which we call "The Glade" and which when fully established with vegetation should become a good area for odonata. We do not include the main reservoir in the results. It should be noted that some species such as the Common Blue Damselfly and Black-tailed Skimmer prefer the open water of the reservoir to breed.

In 2024 we had a cold wet spring which gave a slow start and provided some mixed results across the various species. This year by contrast we had a dry and warm spring followed by a dry hot summer. Again some species did well, particularly those on the wing later in the year, others not so well. The lack of rain in the spring and summer resulted in low water levels in the ponds and in the river which may have an impact on next year's breeding results.

As with recent years, Azure Damselfly, with over 100 pairs recorded, was our most abundant species and Willow Emerald continued its increase with its best count yet with 108 recorded this year. The onward march of the Willow Emerald is in direct contrast to the once more prevalent Emerald Damselfly which we saw just once this year. Beautiful Demoiselle and Large Red Damselflies both had good years and Common Darter and White-legged Damselfly numbers have stabilised. Sadly some of the rarer species were not seen at all this year or only in low numbers.

The first recorded sighting was again a Large Red Damselfly on the 22nd April. Perhaps not surprisingly, the last sightings were of Migrant Hawker, Southern Hawker, Common Darter and Willow Emerald on the 21st October. Common Darters can be seen on the wing until the first frosts occur.

A selection of photos courtesy of Richard Allan:



Azure Damselfly



Beautiful Demoiselle



Common Darter



Willow Emerald

The Flowers of Weir Wood – Moschatel

This edition's featured flower is Moschatel (*Adoxa moschatellina*). This is a woodland species which is found in just one location on the edge of the reserve on the north bank of the reservoir. This is a lovely delicate plant which flowers in the spring and which is easy to miss as it is low-growing.

This plant is also known as Townhall Clock as its tiny pale green flower head has four outward faces at right angles just like a town hall clock. You have to get down on your hands and knees to see this! In some parts of the UK it is known as the Good Friday plant as the result of its flowering period. Interestingly this plant is not closely related to other flowering plants so it is in a family of its own (Adoxaceae).

Apparently the plant has a faint musk like smell, moschatellina means musk scented plant. In America it is known as Muskroot. Although it is found throughout Great Britain, it is uncommon and the Tuesday work party always makes a point of searching for this plant each spring.



Moschatel flower head
Photo: Richard Allan



Moschatel
© Google Images

Bird Sightings Report

October

The weather continued the very mild theme from September and we were spared the worst of the autumn storms. This is typically the month when the last of our summer visitors leave and our winter visitors arrive.

Starting with ducks, we welcomed back **Gadwall**, **Shoveler**, **Wigeon**, **Teal**, **Pochard** and **Tufted**. They were mostly seen in ones and twos at the west end throughout the month. Teal were perhaps the most numerous with 11 seen on the 1st, 23 on the 2nd and 17 on the 11th and 14th. Of particular note was the first sighting of the season of a female **Goosander** at the west end on the 29th.

Canada, Greylag and **Egyptian Geese** were seen at the west end on most days. Greylags were often seen in large numbers with 200-250 counted on the 18th and 344 a day later. An oddity was the arrival of a **Bar-headed Goose** at the west end on the 21st. It hung around with the Greylags until the end of the month. This is not a native species and is probably an escapee from a collection.

Waders were less frequent especially as water levels in the reservoir rose during the month. A **Common Sandpiper** was seen at the dam end on the 1st and 9th and at the west end on the 4th. Six **Lapwings** were recorded at the west end on the 9th. **Common Snipe** returned with one seen at the west end on the 1st and 9th and 2 on Pintail bank on the 22nd.

Hirundines had left for warmer climes for the most part, but 50+ **House Martins** were seen flying west on the 5th.

It was a good month for raptor sightings. As well as the usual **Buzzards, Red Kites, Kestrels** and **Sparrowhawks**, a female **Goshawk** was seen at the west end on the 4th and 23rd. A **Peregrine Falcon** was seen at the west end on the 1st and 16th. A late **Hobby** was seen at the dam end on the 9th and a **Marsh Harrier** was seen flying over the west end on the 22nd. A **Tawny Owl** was seen near the reed bed on the 17th. The raptor sighting of the month had to be a **Merlin** seen flying low and fast over dam on the 20th.

Water Rails were heard frequently in the reed bed. It is possible that there were three lurking in the reeds. **Great Crested Grebe** numbers held up well with 30 seen at the west end on the 2nd, 24 on the 11th, and 51 on the 19th. Large numbers at the west end are often the result of leisure activities at the dam end. However 42 were counted at the dam end of the 17th and an all reservoir count as part of the WeBS on the 12th, produced a total of 61. **Little Grebes** were seen in one and twos throughout the month with three being seen on the 31st. **Little Egrets** are now a fairly common sight at the reserve. It is pleasing to note that **Great White Egrets** are now being spotted more regularly too with sightings on the 9th, 21st, 22nd, 23rd and 26th.

Gull numbers picked up as the month progressed with over 100 **Black-headed Gulls** seen at the dam end on the 22nd. Somewhat surprisingly, four female **Common Scoter** were seen at the dam end on the 2nd and a **Turnstone** was seen, also at the dam end, on the 22nd.

Passerines were plentiful with the cut maize field on Legsheath Lane and the set aside field on the north bank being especially productive. For example on the 17th the set aside field produced **Goldfinches, Linnets, Chaffinches** and 2 **Bramblings**. A Brambling was also seen in the cut maize field on the 31st along with good numbers of **Chaffinch, Greenfinch** and **Redpoll**. Redpolls were also seen at both ends of the reservoir with flocks of 30+ and 40+ seen at the dam end on the 19th and 20th respectively. There are a good number of mature alder trees there and these birds are attracted to the cones. Twelve **Common Crossbills** flew over the west end on the 1st. **Meadow Pipits** were seen in good numbers at both ends of the reservoir;

the maximum count at the west end was 26 on the 5th and at the dam end 22 on the 2nd.

Winter thrushes were perhaps slower to arrive this year. Nine **Fieldfares** were counted in Whillets by the work party on the 14th. Notable sightings thereafter were 33 at the west end on the 18th and 28 at the dam end on the 20th. 25 **Redwings** were seen at the west end on the 16th and 30 on the 17th. **Stonechats** in very small numbers were seen periodically in Whillets. **Reed Bunting** numbers continue to be a cause for concern with infrequent single figure sightings recorded during the month. Anecdotal evidence suggests that this bird is also being seen less frequently on the Ashdown Forest too where typically it would feed on the seed heads of the purple moor grass. A late **Lesser Whitethroat** was an unusual sighting on the 15th. Passerine sighting of the month was probably a **Yellow-browed Warbler** seen by the road near Whillets. There have been a number of sightings of this species in Sussex this month.

All the usual corvids were seen during the month, including the now frequent **Ravens**. **Jackdaws** started to be seen in good numbers with over 100 counted at the west end on the 28th.

One offs included a **Ring-necked Parakeet** on the 18th and a **Red-legged Partridge** on the 29th.

As always, **Kingfishers** were ever present throughout the month and seen regularly.

November

The weather for the month continued in a mild vein with increasing amounts of welcome rain. There was a brief cold snap in the middle of the month with a northerly airstream and the first significant frosts. The month closed with unseasonably mild weather again.

The geese species seen in October continued to be present. The **Bar-headed Goose** was seen most days at the beginning of the month but was last seen on 16th. **Greylag Geese** were remarkable for their numbers with 197 counted at the west end on the 6th, 249 on the 9th and 237 on the 11th. 20+ Dark-bellied **Brent Geese** were seen flying over the west end on the 16th.

The ducks seen in October were ever present throughout the month although **Pochard** numbers increased towards the end of the month with 25 seen on the 29th and 52 on the 30th, both sightings at the west end. A nice sighting was that of a drake **Goldeneye** off Pintail point on the 21st.

A feature of the month across Sussex was the number of **Woodpigeons** on the move and Weir Wood was no exception. 150+ were seen on the 6th, 660 on the 16th and amazingly nearly 4000 on the 9th.

With so many Pigeons (and Jackdaws) about, it was no surprise that **Goshawk** was seen regularly at the west end during the month. We have found what we believe to be a Goshawk "plucking post" on the reserve given the evidence of plenty of pigeon

feathers nearby. All our regular raptors were present together with a **Peregrine Falcon** on the 30th. The Isle of Wight **White-tailed Eagles** were seen across Sussex during the month and two were seen flying over the reservoir on the 5th. We too were appalled by the news of the “disappearance” in Sussex of one of the juveniles of this magnificent bird. **Tawny Owls** were heard during the reed bed counts and one was seen on a fence at the west end in the early morning of the 26th.

November is the month that the feeders are re-established at the west end. All the regular small birds (tits, finches etc) returned with **Marsh Tit** seen regularly. The north bank set aside field continued to produce the goods. On the 17th well over 100 small passerines were seen including up to 100 **Chaffinches**, one **Brambling** and two **Yellowhammers**. 21 **Linnets** were seen at the pumping station at the dam end on the 9th. Two Bramblings were also seen at the west end on the 1st.

Great Crested and **Little Grebes** were ever present. Great Crested were seen in good numbers with 51 seen at the dam end on the 8th and 78 recorded across the reservoir during the WeBS on the 9th.

Little Egret was seen sporadically and there was just one sighting of a **Great White Egret**, on the 28th.

Redwing and **Fieldfare** numbers increased gradually with 30 Redwings seen on the 12th.

Common Snipe featured more regularly during the month. Four were seen at Pintail bank on the 1st, two at the west end on the 17th and seven seen in Whillets on the 22nd.

Black-headed Gulls were regulars and they were joined by 14 **Common Gulls** on the 18th and one **Little Gull** on the 18th.

There were three reed bed counts during the month. On the 16th 24 **Reed Buntings** and 94 **Starlings** were counted. On the 22nd 22 Reed Buntings and 327 Starlings were counted and a **Woodcock** was seen flying over. On the 30th, 25 Reed Buntings and 2300+ Starlings counted and 2 Woodcocks were seen. **Water Rail** were heard squealing in the reed bed on all three occasions. Separately three Water Rails were recorded on the 18th.

A **Ring-necked Parakeet** was seen again on the 6th. We have to wonder if this is the start of this species becoming a regular at the reserve. A **Crossbill** was seen on the 24th. Finally, a **Firecrest** was seen at the dam end on the 1st.

December

The month started very wet and then continued mild, cloudy and generally damp throughout punctuated by the odd cold day and frosty morning. Towards the end of the month the winds swung round from the north and east and temperatures plummeted accordingly. Generally temperatures for the month were above average for the time of year. This is in keeping with the rest of the year which was recently announced by the Met Office as the warmest on record.

The majority of bird species seen in November were seen in December also.

For example, ducks and geese around during the month were pretty much “as you were” from November. A notable exception was a “Russian” **White-fronted Goose** flying over the dam wall on Christmas Eve. The Arctic winds blew a good number of these geese into various locations across Sussex towards the end of the month. After an absence in November, three **Goosanders** were seen at the west end on the 2nd and again on the 3rd. There were no more sightings until the 28th and 30th when one was seen again at the west end. **Pochards** were still present in large numbers for the first half of the month with 63 counted at the west end on the 3rd and 71 on the 7th, numbers dipped slightly and then picked up again at the end of the month with 34 seen on the 31st. Weir Wood is an excellent spot to see **Mandarin Ducks** and 40 were counted across the reservoir during the WeBS on the 8th.

The sighting of the month was probably two **Avocets** on the water near the aerator at the dam end on the 24th. Having said that, two **Shelduck** flyovers at the dam end on the 30th was a nice sighting.

Woodpigeons and Stock Doves are regulars on the reserve but it was nice to record two **Collared Doves** at the west end on the 2nd.

Goshawks were seen throughout the month at both ends of the reservoir and the work party were pleased to see two flying over Whillets on the 16th. They were also pleased to see a **Peregrine Falcon** that day too. Otherwise the usual raptors were present and correct with **Sparrowhawks** seen very frequently, no doubt the result of small bird activity around the feeders and the reed bed.

There were infrequent sightings of **Little Egret**, although two were seen coming in to roost on the 28th. A **Great White Egret** was seen at the beginning of the month from the 1st through to the 5th.

Water Rails were ever present in the reed bed throughout the month. Four were heard on the 14th and three on the 28th.

On the gull front, **Black-headed Gulls** were ever present with 300 counted on the 5th. They were joined that day by four **Common Gulls** and unusually a **Mediterranean Gull**. A **Little Gull** was seen at the dam end on the 19th.

All the usual small birds were around the feeders. During the WeBS on the 8th, a number of small birds were recorded in the nearby cut maize field and this included 52 **Chaffinches**, one **Brambling**, and one **Yellowhammer**.

Winter thrushes were seen regularly although **Fieldfares** were markedly less numerous than **Redwings**. 16 Fieldfare were seen on the 21st whereas 50+ and 87 Redwings were seen on the 21st and 28th respectively.

Great Crested Grebe numbers remained fairly constant during the month, usually in the 20-30 range. 42 were counted during the WeBS on the 8th. **Little Grebes** in ones and twos were around most days too.

A reed bed roost count took place on the 13th with 31 **Reed Buntings** recorded and unusually only five **Starlings**. Things returned to near normal with the roost count on the 28th recording 26 Reed Buntings and 87 Starlings.

A **Woodcock** was seen flying over the west end in the early hours of the 14th. The work party flushed 11 **Common Snipe** from Pintail bank on the 16th. Finally, four **Crossbills** were seen flying over at the dam end on the 5th.

As members will know, **Marsh Tits** are seen regularly on the feeders including this one which was recently photographed by Patrick Sullivan, one of our members.



Marsh Tit – Weir Wood Dec 25
Photo: Patrick Sullivan

A close inspection shows that the bird is ringed and we have established that the bird was ringed on the reserve as a juvenile in October 2019. This means he bird is at least six years old which is a good age considering the average lifespan for this species is two years.

The Report above just provides some of the highlights and a detailed list of sightings can be found on our website at: www.weirwood.me.uk – click on the “Recent Sightings” link. Remember to check our Facebook page too for regular sightings and photos.

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