

WEATHER

September has generally been a dry sunny month with a few spells of heavy rain. The wind has been strong at times causing some fairly chunky pine branches to fall to the ground. The days are shortening and the temperatures are dropping - autumn has definitely arrived.

USE & CONDITION OF THE WALK

The walk has been heavily used by locals and visitors alike. September is always a popular month with visitors who like to walk and this year has been no exception. Take up of leaflets has been high, and the walking week programme in the middle of the month probably added to the demand.

The walk is generally clean and tidy, although snipping back of brambles, bracken etc. has been necessary all month. On the final days of the month, strimming was undertaken in order to make the path much more accessible.

OBSERVATIONS

The hedgerows are full of fruit which provide some colour to the walk, particularly the Rowan and Hawthorn berries. Elderberries provide a plentiful supply of food for birds and are a favourite with the Wood-pigeons. They are in every Elder tree and their heavy-winged flight is noticeable as they take to the air when disturbed by passers-by. Blackberries and Sloes have also been plentiful, but by the end of the month they were fast disappearing. Fallen Sweet Chestnuts and Acorns litter the path and one or two Hazelnuts have been seen.



A large patch of Water mint (*left*) has been flowering just over the end of the dam wall and has been particularly pretty, although unfortunately it is rather hidden from view. The Fuchsia bushes in the car park have been flowering profusely and also provide a good splash of colour. A plant of Purple Toadflax was seen for the first time in the bank beneath the house, a weed of cultivation and obviously a garden escapee.

The dainty yellow four-petalled potentilla, Tormentil, was another find which is not on the species list for the area. Convolvulus flowers are everywhere and Honeysuckle and Bramble are still flowering. Some flowering plants are having a second flush of flowers including Little Robin, Herb Robert, Musk Storksbill and Meadow Buttercup.

The warm weather brought out a number of Speckled Wood, Red Admiral, Holly Blue Butterflies and the Solitary Bees were in large numbers, busy going in and out of their burrows on the roadside of the Neuf Chemin entrance. Despite the dry month there have been some fungi along the path side, the most common being the Common Earthball, Blusher (*right*), Charcoal Burner and Boletus of varying varieties. Two large Parasols were almost hidden in the Ivy and at the end of the month a group of the very striking Sulphur Tuft appeared. The Giant Funnels have appeared in their usual spot but not in the same numbers as last year.





The 10th September provided quite a surprise. On arrival at the dam wall and looking across to the conifer trees opposite they appeared to have sprouted large exotic white flowers overnight. On closer inspection, 28 Little Egrets were seen resting in their branches (*left*) - a wonderful sight. Two Wheatears were noticed darting across from a low hedge into a recently ploughed field where they bobbed around for a while before taking off again.

On another occasion two small unidentified birds were seen mobbing and chasing off a Kestrel. On the water all has been much as usual, Mallards, Coots, Moorhens, Cormorants and Gulls are a common sight. Little Grebes are often heard and occasionally seen diving for fish. Grey Herons visit now and again.

By the end of the month the Millennium Walk had changed. Bracken and Bistort were dying back and leaves on the trees were yellowing and falling. The water level is at the lowest it has been all year but with October promising to be a wet month that will change as will the outlook over the reservoir from the paths, perhaps revealing more migratory birds.

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