

WEATHER

There have been many cold and windy days during February and some periods of heavy rain but at the very end of the month the sun came out and the weather was a bit milder.

USE & CONDITION OF THE WALK

Half term and weekends are always busy at the Millennium Walk; it appears to be a favourite place to take children when the weather isn't too wet. Playing "Pooh Sticks" at the bridge by Les Padin's Stream and stamping through the mud in wellies, many young children are to be seen accompanied by parents or grandparents all enjoying the facility. As always take up of leaflets has been up during half term. On several occasions fishermen have been in evidence although they did not appear to have much luck as they said that the conditions were too cold.

With all the wet weather and the number of people using the Walk the path has become very muddy but that is to be expected and it will soon dry up again after a period of dry weather.

OBSERVATIONS

Spring is in evidence all around the walk. Daffodils are out in increasing numbers as are Primroses, Lesser Celandines, Dead Nettle, Petty Spurge and Sweet Violets. The Snowdrops (*right*) on the bank by the side of the house (garden escapees) are increasing in number and have looked very pretty this year. They have been joined by one or two Crocus, again garden escapees but cheering to see nevertheless.



The leaves of Bluebell, Arum, Herb Robert, Flag Iris and Foxglove are appearing, promising more colour to the Walk in the months ahead. Aspen catkins are forming and the buds on the Elm are fattening rapidly. By the end of the month the Blackthorn flowers were almost out and the leaves of the Honeysuckle were very advanced.

Fungi are beginning to appear again, Ink Cap at the beginning of the month and Amanita Gemmata towards the end of the month. Jelly Ear was also spotted on several occasions.

A birdwatching group walking on a blustery day in early February counted over 20 different species of birds, including a Great Crested Grebe, Water Rail and a Grey Wagtail. Tufted Ducks have been frequent visitors this month, usually between 5 or 8 of them. The Wigeon have gradually decreased in numbers and by the end of the month no more were to be seen on the water. Mid-month 4 Teal were swimming near the wall but they quickly sensed the approach of people and took off to a safer area further away from the road. As usual the Little Grebe have been very vocal and are often seen diving for small fish. Cormorants have donned their breeding plumage and are looking very sleek, dark black from a distance with a very visible white spot on their flank. A Common Sandpiper was fleetingly seen mid-month flying low over the water. As well as the ever-present Herring Gull, Great Black-Backed Gulls, Lesser Black-Backed Gulls and Black-headed Gulls have been in evidence this month.

Song birds have been more vocal as the month progresses and Blue Tits have been showing an interest in one of the nesting boxes by Padin's Stream. Greenfinches, Chaffinches, Great Tits, Long tailed Tits, Blackbirds and Dunnocks are all around in numbers, especially near the house where there is a plentiful supply of food provided for them. Surprisingly 3 Robins were seen in the same tree but one of them was soon chased away, obviously an intruder into the territory of the other two, yet another indication that Spring is really on its way at last.

Rhiannon Cook and Val Bloese

