

WEATHER

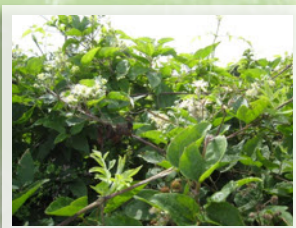
The weather this month has been predominantly dry and sunny with some precipitation mid-month. The water level dropped a little to expose more banks and walls around the water.

USE & CONDITION OF THE WALK

There are many visitors finding their way to the Millennium Walk. There have been plenty of hire cars and cars with registration plates from the UK, France, Holland and Germany. Locals still use it with dog walkers and joggers early morning followed by mothers and toddlers and older children. The leaflets ran out but we were fortunate to be provided with extras which have been gratefully received – especially by parents with children at the start of the summer holidays. The Walk is dry and dusty underfoot with a thin carpet of fallen fruit and leaves. Brambles have needed snipping on most visits.

OBSERVATIONS

Although there has been considerable leaf drop, the tree canopy remains dense and the reservoir area verdant. Bracken and Brambles are still producing new growth and have to be snipped to keep the path clear. The Lammas branches of Oaks have suddenly shot to evidence. There are fewer blossom about but the colour pink was well represented by Foxgloves, which appear to have had another flush of flowering, together with Red Campion, Common Mallow, Creeping Thistle, Great Willowherb, Amphibious Bistort, Herb Robert, and the rather strong smelling Hedge Woundwort. Also found on the dam near a drain was a tiny specimen of Sand Spurrey – delightful but readily missed as its pink petals only opened to reveal themselves in the afternoon sunshine.



There have been scant spikes of Purple Loosestrife this year compared with the wonderful show last year. The road sections which have more direct sunlight have an increased number and variety of flowers. The fragrant Small-flowered Calamint and Black Knapweed seem to be on the increase year on year. Yarrow, Galingale, Ox-eye Daisy, Hedge Bedstraw, Sheep's Bit Scabious, Self-Heal, Rest Harrow, Little Robin, Traveller's Joy (*left*), Common Cudweed, Wild Carrot, Great Bindweed, Yorkshire Fog (grass), Wall Barley and Clustered Dock are all to be found on road hedgebanks or in the gutters.

The east car park is home to the Lesser Burdock, which has stunning purple flowers and they, together with the Fuchsia make a successful border. Honeysuckle blossom still abound together with their red berries. Elder bushes are now mostly bearing fruit which are ripening, as are the Hawthorn berries and Sloes. The heavy scented Privet and Buddleia flowers have provided ample nectar for insects, including some delightful butterflies. Bramble flowers are plentiful and the fruit is beginning to set. Lime and Ash fruit are developing and, again, early in the month red Cherries littered the ground.

The occasional red berry of Butcher's Broom can be seen. The Arum fruit is rapidly changing from green to bright red. Flowering spikes and spiny fruits of Sweet Chestnut, acorns developing on the Oaks and Hazel nuts have been spotted throughout the reserve.

Despite the dry weather, there has been a profusion of fungi. Some handsome Blushers did not last long – having been fed upon by slugs and snails. Charcoal Burners, Boletes, Ink Caps, Sulphur Tufts (*right*), Candle Snuff, Root Rot, Bonnets, Deceivers, False Chanterelles and Oyster fungi revealed themselves.



There is a sense of déjà vu as, looking at last July's report, the same insect life was listed as in this July. The sunshine brought out the Gatekeeper butterflies in large numbers accompanied by the Whites – Small, Large and Green-veined, Speckled Wood, Red Admiral and Comma. A couple of Magpie Moths were spied – one looking rather ragged. Dragonflies, Damselflies and Solitary Bees busied themselves too.



Sadly, no there has been signs of any Kestrels fledging this year – in fact, there seems to be no activity around the two boxes where they bred in previous years. Also, disappointingly, the distinctive purring call of the Turtle Dove has not been heard this year. Families of Long-tailed Tits, Blue Tits, Great Tits, Sparrows, Dunnock, Goldfinch, Greenfinch, Chaffinch, Blackbird, and Robins were all seen. A lone Common Sandpiper was seen in flight and Wrens are often seen scurrying in the Brambles.

Grey Herons (*above*) are seen quite frequently and it was pleasing to observe between 8 and 10 Little Egrets on a couple of occasions. Little Grebes are seen and heard on most visits. Greylag Geese were found on the banks as were Coots (still accompanied by noisy offspring), Moorhens with two young and large numbers of Mallards. Cormorants still favour the one reed bed but are found in several locations nowadays – even on the exposed banks near the road. With the increase in insect life, House Martins have been seen feeding on a number of times.

Fish have been quite visible – Trout of a good size together with Rudd with their red fins and distinctive line on the body frequently spotted.

Rhiannon Cook and Val Bloese