

### WEATHER

This month has been dry and sunny in the main with a few days which were overcast and foggy and a couple of really cold days as the easterly wind blew in.

### USE & CONDITION OF THE WALK

The walk was heavily used and the leaflets had to be replenished on several occasions. Families were frequently seen out enjoying the dry sunny spells and there were fishermen seen in a number of locations. Some were chatty whilst others quietly got on with their business of enticing the fish. There were several days when there were so many visitors that the eastern car park had to overflow into the road.

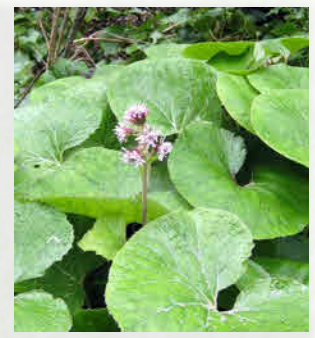
The path has dried and is sound under foot. There is a welcome replacement of a broken bench at the west end where the view of the reservoir is splendid throughout the seasons. Although new, it fits in beautifully and will be much appreciated by visitors this year.

### OBSERVATIONS

As many as three Great Crested Grebe were reported as seen one day and Tufted Ducks have been seen for the best part of the month. Little Grebes were observed on most visits and the Grey Heron, which appears shy and elusive, appeared again. Gulls, including the Lesser Black-backed Gulls bathed and shared the shelter of one reed bed which is a favourite with the Cormorants. A pair of Mallards and three ducklings were spotted at the bottom of the dam overflow one morning mid month. A number of empty Mallard egg shells have been spotted near the edge of the path suggesting that there could be more families about.

Greenfinches, Chaffinches, Chiffchaffs, Goldfinches, Blackbirds, Wrens, Dunnocks and Robins are in good numbers and frequently found. The Tit family – Blue Tit, Great Tit and Long-tailed Tit - have plenty of food especially as the Willow catkins are abundant and were seen in good numbers throughout the month. The chattering of the groups of Blue Tits and Long-tailed Tits were a sheer delight. A couple of birdwatchers reported sighting four Short-toed Treecreepers on one occasion which must have been a rare treat.

The reservoir was a blaze of yellow as Daffodils, Primroses, Lesser Celandines and Gorse flourished. Sweet Violets and Dog Violets are increasing in number and were joined by another lilac blossom – Ground Ivy which has proliferated over the years. The Winter Heliotrope, located by the ruins, produced only a couple of flowers this year. The walk was a riot of colour by the final week with Hairy Bittercress, Hogweed, Alexanders, Groundsel, Dog's Mercury, Shepherd's Purse, Herb Robert, Ramping Fumitory, Boreau's Fumitory, Red Campion, Field Speedwell, Ivy-leaved Speedwell, Three-cornered Leek, Grape Hyacinth and Musk Storks-bill in flower. Towards the month end closed blossoms of Bluebells were beginning to appear. Spikes of the Arum Lily flowers have appeared and as the water level receded a little, Amphibious Bistort (*above right*) came into view above the surface.



On a field bank adjacent to the road a clump of flowers of the wood-rush Good Friday Grass again delighted the eye. The spent fat catkins of Aspen began to fall whilst the rotund Goat Willow catkins suddenly made an appearance. The delicate, white blossom of Blackthorn and Bird Cherry made a wonderful sight throughout the reserve and slowly, the small vibrant red flowers of the Elm appeared.



Hawthorn, Silver Birch, Beech and Rowan buds are breaking into leaf to join the White Poplar and Hazel which have now well established foliage. Clouds of yellow pollen produced by the male cones of Monterey Pine (*left*) fell onto the water surface and produced a bright yellow film clearly visible where the water was still. Insects are awakening with the warm weather with large numbers of Bumble Bees and Solitary Wasps busying themselves and a beautiful specimen of a Comma Butterfly was spied basking on the path one very warm sunny afternoon at the end of the month.

The reservoir area has come to life after its winter slumber and soon the view of the water from the path will be obscured and bird will be more difficult to view as the bracken unfurls and tree foliage develops fully.

**Rhiannon Cook and Val Bloese**