

WEATHER

The month has seen very little rain which has resulted in the drop in water level and no run-off via the dam. More and more banks are now exposed – useful for fishermen and water fowl – especially the Moorhen. During the sunny days there was a delightful aroma of Pine resin and Honeysuckle in the forested areas of the reserve.

USE & CONDITION OF THE WALK

The walk has been heavily used and several large groups of walkers were encountered during Walking Week. At least two school parties were seen in the reserve. There have been the usual dog walkers and joggers with a good number of fishermen and a bridal couple on a photo shoot (*right*)! As expected, there are many visitors' cars and the leaflets have proved popular – having to be 'topped up' quite frequently. One visiting couple made themselves comfortable and picnicked in the west car park. Photographs of the brass rubbing plates have been taken due to interest from an off-island wildlife trust.

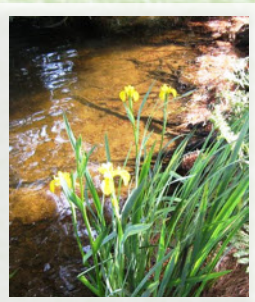


This caused additional interest from a couple of mothers with young children who had never noticed them before and did not realize their use. They were going to come equipped with paper and pencils on their next visit. The state of the path has been dry and dusty, and the warm conditions have brought a growth spurt and it has been necessary to snip Brambles, Nettles, Bracken and Hogweed which encroached the path. The fat white spent Aspen catkins and Elder Flowers have carpeted the path.

OBSERVATIONS

Several pairs of breeding Coots have been seen again this year. Mallards and young have also been seen this month, one female guarding her six young. Little Grebes were in evidence with their young, at least two breeding pairs this year. A pair of Grey Herons noisily circled the reservoir one morning. On a couple of sunny days mid-month large fish, probably Carp were noisily jumping among the Bistort, causing quite a commotion.

It was a real treat to observe ten fledgling Long-tailed Tits on one occasion, these were pointed out by a photographer and a lovely photograph of them has appeared on the Guernsey Birds website. Goldfinches and a Blackcap were seen again and Chaffinches, Robins, Blackbirds and Song Thrushes have been in full voice. The call of Pheasants echoed in the reserve on a number of days. A Common Sandpiper flitted across the water and alighted fleetingly on the bank of the reservoir by the roadside. Buzzards circled the reservoir on a couple of mornings. Spring flowers declined towards the month end with most Bluebells in fruit and only a few blossoms and leaves of Lesser Celandine and Primroses left. Splashes of pink were presented by the Red Campion, Herb Robert, Little Robin, Doves Foot Cranesbill, Foxglove, Dog Rose and Common Mallow flowers. Earlier spikes of delicate pink Amphibious Bistort flowers graced the surface of the water in the reservoir arms and the yellow Flag Iris (*left*) stood proud – especially noticeable in the reedbed near Padins stream.



Another water-loving plant – Figwort (*below left*) – has small brown, velvety flowers which are such a delight when inspected at close range. The very pale pink/lilac flowers of an Oxalis, possibly Pale Pink-Sorrell, made a brief appearance mid-month at the Mont Varouf exit but vanished as quickly as they appeared.

The eastern car park looks neat, tidy and cheerful with the self-seeded Echium, Fuchsia, Scarlet Pimpernel and Greater Celandine in bloom. The roadside banks have been clad in Honeysuckle, Sheep's Bit Scabious, Common Vetch, Common Sorrel, Sheep's Sorrel, Smooth Sow Thistle, Prickly Sow Thistle, Hedge Bedstraw and Cleavers flowers. The lilac Ground Ivy flowers brighten the area below the Monterey Pines in the west and patches of the yellow Cat's Ear, Spotted Medic, Meadow Buttercup and Creeping Buttercup grace the edges of the path.



It is so pleasing to find Hawthorn, Elder, Holly and the Apple tree producing an abundance of blossom throughout the reserve and their falling petals appear as confetti on the path. The trees are in full leaf and many such as Lime, Hazel, Ash and Sycamore bear fruit which are fast developing and readily recognisable. The dry weather is not conducive to the growth of Fungi with only a few to be seen – a rather desiccated Sulphur tuft and stunted Blusher managed to make an appearance. In the last days of the month a crop of enormous brackets, probably Dryad's Saddle, were seen but not accessible enough to have a closer look.

Insect life is stirring and there were sightings of Speckled Wood, Large White, Red Admiral and a Blue (Common Blue or Holly Blue) Butterflies and a lone blue Dragonfly. A number of plants have been infested with 'Cuckoo spit' which conceals the larva of frog hopper insect. A group of Nettles were host to 12 Ladybirds which delighted a young observer.

The reserve has again taken on a more mysterious appearance as leaf canopy obscures the light from above and Bracken streak up to great heights and overtop the path in a number of spots.

Spring has gradually evolved into Summer with Montbretia lance-like leaves, the trailing stems of Traveller's Joy and the rapidly coloured fruits of Arum making an appearance. It has been a month with plenty to delight the eye and the promise of more to come during June.

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