

WEATHER

October was a very dry month with occasional days of rain. The level of the water in the reservoir fell and was as low as had been seen this summer, although by the end of the month the streams and outlets were increasing in flow. The waders took advantage of the exposed banks and large numbers of Moorhens, Coots and Mallards were often seen basking in the sun and preening themselves.

USE & CONDITION OF THE WALK

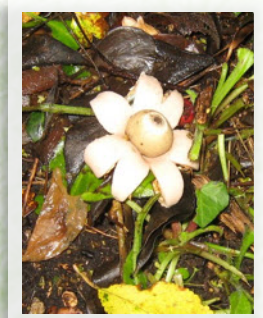
It was used by runners, joggers, fishermen, walkers and dog walkers and a pleasing number of visitors. Clearly, children visited and played there over the half term as witnessed by a number of newly-constructed 'dens' and a rope swing. The path had an autumnal appearance with its carpet of multi-coloured leaves and it has been in a generally clean condition.

OBSERVATIONS

There has been plenty of animal life with rabbits along the path in the mornings – they seem almost tame. The cooler weather resulted in a reduction of insects but a damselfly was spotted and Red Admiral and Speckled Wood butterflies were on the wing on warm days. The solitary bees have remained industrious – burrowing their tunnels in the roadside banks. Gulls are frequent visitors and well over a hundred were seen bathing in the reservoir. Common Sandpipers were recorded on a couple of occasions.

Little Grebes were found in all corners of the reservoir and have been active, almost aggressive in their behaviour, this month. Grey Herons are frequent and up to eight Cormorants regularly occupy their favourite haunt - the reedbed near Le Neuf Chemin. A Curlew was heard again this month but could not be found. Carrion crows have gathered in numbers and at one time, flew high to challenge a group of Buzzards. Goldcrests were recorded in addition to a party of Long-tailed Tits and numerous Great Tits busy feeding. Robins, Blackbirds and Song Thrushes became more conspicuous during the month. A newly tilled field adjacent to the roadside was of great interest to insect feeders. Wheatears, White Wagtails and a flock of Meadow Pipits, all enjoyed the feeding opportunity.

Autumn flowers are few and far between but the vibrant yellow Gorse blossoms are beginning to reveal themselves and there is the promise of a showy display as the bushes are heavy with buds. Red Campion remains in blossom and there is plenty of Wood Sage on the roadside but they could readily be overlooked as they are small and a little dull. Stray flowers of Cat's Ear, Dandelion, Ox-eye Daisy, Prickly Ox-tongue and Bramble were about but this is the time of the year for fruit. There has been a stunning show of Hawthorn berries along the path and fluffy heads of Traveller's Joy brighten up the hedgerows.



The lack of flowers has been more than compensated for by the wonderful array of Fungi around the reservoir and the sheer variety is breath-taking. A second location for the Earthstar (*above*) was found earlier this month.



The gorgeous lilac Field Blewits (*left, top*) were found in two new stations and in pleasingly large numbers. However, like the Earthstar, they have a short life and may be missed. Honey Fungus, which does not cause much of a problem in the wild, is a generic group and we have observed what we believe to be three different kinds – *Armellaria bulbosa* or *gallica* (which grows out of the ground and is a solitary fruiting body), *Armellaria cepistipes* (with its distinctive ring with a sulphurous yellow concentric ring) as well as *Armellaria mellea*. Earthballs, Ink Caps, Blushers, Root Rot, Deceivers and Bonnets were common. It was a delight to see again, for the second year, the colourful and readily recognisable Fly Agaric (*left, bottom*).

A wonderfully coloured colony of Sulphur Tuft appeared on a rotting trunk. There appears to be less Coral fungus this year but the Parasols made a return in large numbers together with another tall mushroom – The Prince. Two large Cauliflower fungi were spotted in their previous home. The Bolete family appear to be able to tolerate dry weather and a variety of them were found dotted around the reservoir.

Other specimens which were identified were the Common White *Inocybe*, Greasy Cap (aptly named), False Chanterelle and a *Lactaria* sp. which produces a milk exudate when broken.

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