

### WEATHER

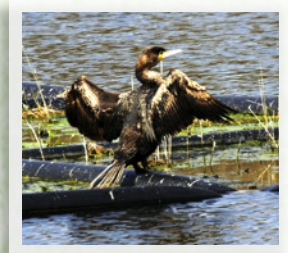
September has been very dry, windy and sunny and the days are rapidly shortening. The water level continued to fall throughout the month to reveal more flat dry areas near the water's edge which have been appreciated by water fowl.

### USE & CONDITION OF THE WALK

It has been heavily used throughout the month with off-island visitors as well as locals as supported by the uptake of the leaflets and the number of walkers seen around the reservoir. In addition to hire cars and non-island registered cars a group of hire cycles were chained together at the entrance of the walk one day. There is evidence of children having visits prior to the school term starting with den-building and debris of picnicking. It is generally very clean and tidy and looks particularly spruce – having had its final trim for this year. Most areas have been free of litter and only a little clipping of brambles has been necessary. The path is dry and in places carpeted with pine needles, fallen broadleaves and acorns- giving it a typical autumnal feel.

### OBSERVATIONS

There has been plenty of bird life of interest – Grey Herons and Little Egrets on the shore line as well as roosting in the trees, Little Grebes, Cormorants (*right*), Greylag Geese and Gulls alongside Coots, Moorhens and very large numbers (up to 50 seen one day in one spot) of Mallards. A Common Sandpiper and possibly, on another day, a Green Sandpiper were seen. We have not seen any sign of the Tufted Ducks this year – no matter how hard we look! Blue Tits, Great Tits, Long-tailed Tits, Blackcaps, Chiffchaffs, Wrens, Robins, Blackbirds, Song Thrushes and significant numbers of Woodpigeons and Magpies have been seen throughout the month too. Kestrels and Buzzards have been observed flying high above the reservoir. On the last day of the month several Wheatears and Wagtails were seen in a newly sown field nearby, both species appeared to be bobbing their tails excitedly. The Wheatears seem to be creatures of habit as they have been seen at that field at this time of year for a few years now.



Red Admiral, Large White and Speckled Wood Butterflies took advantage of the bright, warm weather. The Solitary Wasps emerged from their burrows on the road bank to capitalise on the plentiful supply of food. One large orange/brown insect, probably a Hornet Mimic Hoverfly, ambled by one morning. Insect life above the water has encouraged fish to leap and feed. One day there were at least twelve trout open-mouthed, skimming the water in an organised, almost choreographed manner.



The dry weather has not been helpful to fungal growth but still we found a good variety and many of them were of a significant size – most especially the Giant Funnels and large specimen of Blushers and Suede Boletes (*left*). Smaller samples of Sulphur Tuft and Wrinkled Peach were found in their usual locations. Lumpy Bracket was found in one area on a sickly-looking Monterey Pine.

A smaller number of Parasols have been spotted and there has been no sign of a large colony seen in previous years. Earth balls seem to be on the increase and it was a delight to see the early arrival of Fly Agarics again this year. Roll rims, False Chanterelles, Charcoal Burners, Penny Buns, Field Mushrooms and Candle-snuff were all seen during the month.

September is a month when fruits are in abundance. This was truly the case this year with plenty of examples of winged, fleshy and hairy varieties to be found. Sweet Chestnuts were numerous and showy. The red fruits of Holly, Butcher's Broom and Hawthorn added a welcome dash of colour. Brambles are still in flower and there are plenty of Blackberries about. There appears to be a good harvest of apples this year and numerous windfalls about. Hazelnuts have not been seen in great number but there has been a bumper crop of acorns.

Ivy flowers provided a rich source of food for insects which swarmed on the pleasantly aromatic bushes. Red Campion, Gorse, Fennel, Herb Robert, Cat's Ear, Hogweed, Bistort, Sheep's Bit Scabious, Viburnum, Laurel, Hemp Agrimony, Hedge Woundwort, Lesser Catmint and Yarrow were seen in flower but not in any great numbers by the final week. Again, the Oak and Lime trees have been pestered with galls and the Lime leaves were laden with nail galls turning from their buff colour to red on ripening.

By the end of the month, tree leaves and Bracken were rapidly bronzing and falling to provide a more open feel to the walk but it is interesting to find that there are already fresh green leaves of Alexanders cropping up all around as an indication of what is to come in the spring.

**Rhiannon Cook and Val Bloese**