



Can you believe that issue no 9 has come around again in August. The year goes so fast and the season changes so quickly. This is the season for the birds to start thinking about moving south again. Young and old birds now need to cash in on any food surplus around to be able to make the migration south. Swifts will have gone by the end of July, whitethroats and other warblers will be moving south at the end of July and August, whitethroats and Blackcaps will be fattening up on blackberries and other fruits, Reed and Sedge warblers looking for insects to give them the fuel reserves to cross Europe and north Africa.



The main pond is very clear at the moment and the weed can be seen growing on the bottom of the pond. This submerged weed is very important for the general health of the pond. It provides oxygen for the water which is generally low due to the stagnant low flow conditions of the pond. The weed is also an important food source for the Coots and provides shelter for the many small fish found in the pond. The species of submerged plants which can be seen from the edge are Curly pond weed, fennel like pond weed. The other plant which looks like a plant but is actually an algae is stonewort. Several shoals of fish can be seen feeding on the bottom and moving through the weed. I have seen Eels, a Brown trout and a large shoal of

around 300 Roach. The large Carp previously reported are still present and can occasionally be seen feeding on the floating surface weed. There are some very large shoals of sticklebacks which will be the staple diet of the Little grebes.



The floating weed which is a mixture of broken strands of the pond weed, and duck weed. The surface weed sometimes looks messy because it traps the hundreds of feathers which have been shed by the swans as they go through their annual cycle of renewing their feathers.



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This cycle of renewing feathers is called Moulting and is undertaken by all the birds. The feathers are replaced because the wear and tear on the feathers during the breeding season makes the feathers weak and the sun bleaches them during the long days.



Once the birds have finished breeding they will start to drop out old feathers in a set sequence, the old feather falls out, and when the new one growing to replace the old one is part grown then a second feather falls out and so on. Some of the small birds which migrate to Africa need to replace their feathers at both ends of the journey after crossing the Sahara desert.

The other evidence of the moulting taking place are the mallards on the pond, males and females look almost the same at this time of year, males are said to be in 'eclipse' plumage until they moult into their breeding finery in October ready for the breeding season next spring. The only way to tell the sexes apart at this time is look at the colour of the bill or beak which is yellowish in the males and orange brown in the females. The swans have just completed their moult and they have the strategy of losing all their flight feathers at once and render themselves flightless for several weeks until they have regrown them. They do this because their young take so long to reach the age when they can fly the adults have to stay with the young so the whole family are flightless.

Reedmace, often incorrectly called bull rush. The tall brown swollen spikes make it very distinct. The brown sausage is the seed head, the flowers were produced earlier in the season with the female flower below the male flowers on the spike.



These seed heads remain on the plant throughout the winter and don't really start to burst open until the spring time, many of last years heads can be seen still. When they do start to break up they produce thousands of tiny seeds which drift in the air or are carried on the water surface to new locations on the edge of the ponds. They do not like deep water and cannot grow in more than 2 feet deep. The soft seed heads are used by many birds for lining their nest and in winter many birds can be seen pulling them apart for food.

There is also a smaller species called narrow leaved reedmace which is a lot more delicate than the big one. The large reedmace is not suitable for garden ponds as the roots can penetrate the pond liner. The plants also spreads by strong root shoots called rhizomes, which spread horizontally along the mud. To control the spread of these plants and the Common reed, the water on the edge needs to be deeper than two feet as they will not grow in deep water.

Holyland woods project

The project is going well at the moment, the car park area has been cleared and the access slope for the boardwalk has been cut down through the infill. The old bridge walls can now be seen again although some of the trees will need to be cut back to prevent the walls being badly damaged.

The recycled plastic materials for the boardwalk will be delivered soon so that construction can get started to provide access through the wet section of the wood and small reed beds. The pathway has been cut and the membrane and edging and chippings put down. The gate has been installed with a kissing gate to provide access at all times for pedestrians.

The 29 nestboxes put up this year were checked and a total of 41 young Blue tits were ringed in the nine nestboxes used this year.



Baby Blue tit from a nestbox.

Three events were held on the pond and in the woods as part of the Pembroke festival this year. Pond dipping, bugs and a woodland walk.



The bugs and bushes event in the woodland gave young and old people a glimpse of some of the bugs and insects which can be found in the woods. Exercises in aging and estimating the height of trees proved very interesting. A pond dipping session gave people an opportunity to see how much life is in the mill pond within easy reach of the edge. Viewing the creatures under a microscope shows how diverse the species are, we had damselfly larvae, water boatman, water louse, water mites, freshwater shrimp, caddis fly larvae, leeches, ramshorn snail, great pond snail, amber snail and lots of three-spined sticklebacks.

Please take care when entering the woodland as work may be in progress on the paths. Please remove dog mess from the paths.

Recent Species list (number)

Kingfisher (2)	20 th July
Little Grebe (2)	19 th July
Sedge warbler (breeder)	
Reed warbler (breeder)	
Reed bunting (breeder)	
Blacktailed godwit (8)	14 th Jul
Greenshank (8)	19 th July
Redshank (45)	14 th July
Green Sandpiper (2)	20 th July
Teal (8)	5 th July
Egret (2)	13 th July
Cormorant (4)	19 th July
Heron (2)	19 th July
Water Rail	still present

Events

Next walk **Sunday 24th September**
Boxing day 26th December
 Meet on the mill bridge at **1400hs**