

Newsletter Spring 2002

Subscriptions

Permits are due for renewal on 1st April. Regrettably, it has proved necessary to increase the single permit to £6 and the family permit to £12. This is largely due to a three-fold rise in WECG's public liability insurance premium. Apparently, this is another effect of September 11th, which has led to a general nervousness in the insurance industry, as well as increased claims. Without this modest increase in subscriptions the WECG's finances would be severely stretched. We can assure you that we will endeavour to maintain the new rates for as long as possible. The price of the Annual Report will remain unchanged at £4.

Fencing on No. 2 Bed

It is now clear from contact with the Manchester Ship Canal Company that the fencing has been erected to comply with environmental regulations regarding the depositing of silt and public safety. The Company tells us that when it obtains its waste license for dumping into the oxbow around No.3 bed there will be strictly no access on to No.2 bed and beyond for anyone. In the meantime, it is important that no vehicles are taken through the gates in the fencing at any time.

Channel 5 film

We have just been informed by the production company that the programme, with some excellent footage of Woolston's Black-necked Grebes, will be transmitted on Tuesday 19th March at 7 p.m. Having received an advance video from Channel 5 we can assure you that it is worth seeing!

Padlocks

A reminder that the barriers along the Ship Canal track, as well, of course, as the gate on to No.3 Bed, must be locked at all times. Several padlocks have disappeared in recent months and while some of this is probably due to outside contractors. Padlocks have also gone at weekends. On just one day two instances of fly tipping occurred when a barrier was left open.

Dogs on No. 3 Bed

The WECG has decided after careful consideration that dogs are not to be allowed on No.3 Bed unless they are on a lead. It has become apparent that increasing numbers of dogs are being taken on No.3 Bed, with attendant problems. It has always been our policy to keep No.3 Bed as free from disturbance as possible and we hope that permit holders will understand and co-operate.

Loop of No. 4 Bed

Early in the New Year a sluice was installed on the water tower at the north end of the new wetland. The sluice includes four valves which will help us to control the water level more effectively. Already the level has risen by six inches and is approaching the depth that the designer, Kevin Peberdy, envisaged. Further work on the Loop this year will include the introduction of many aquatic plants to increase the food supply for wildfowl and the provision of at least one viewing facility when time - and funds - allow.

Recent Reports

It has been an excellent winter for wildfowl with Reserve record numbers of Tufted Duck (over 700), during the big freeze and as many as 4000 Teal, which made a spectacular sight. A rare Ferruginous

Duck was seen on several dates in late January and early February. Many species of birds of prey have been seen, including Peregrine, Merlin, Buzzard and Goshawk, while a Hen Harrier on No.3 Bed was a great find for one lucky observer and the first at Woolston for some time. Those of you who have been on to No.3 Bed recently may well have seen members of the ringing team operating there. From the total number of birds trapped up to January they believe that the feeders on No.3 Bed may well have been supporting up to 3,000 birds this winter. A few Chiffchaffs, two overflying Hawfinch, a Lesser Spotted Woodpecker and at least one Firecrest have been some of the highlights. Large numbers of finches have been on No.3 Bed, including up to 60 Siskins.