

# FRIENDS OF ABBEY FIELDS

PROTECT, EDUCATE, CELEBRATE

Dear Member

## St Benedict's & St Mary's School Visit

Abbey Fields had some very special visitors recently with the children of St Benedict's and St Mary's on a tree identification trail. It was a really joyous occasion allowing us to share our local oasis with our friends from Coventry.

The children identified lots of trees from the clues we provided and thoroughly enjoyed the whole experience. One of the children was overheard saying "This is the best day of my life". To be honest she was actually on the swings at the time!



The Nature Trail is a precursor of the plans we have for the future. We want to be able to offer school children the opportunity to experience nature on their doorstep. We aim to create a range of trails compatible with the school curriculum, enabling children to become more familiar with the wildlife, flora and insects within Abbey Fields.



At the heart of this vision is the desire to convert the existing Pavilion into an Educational Hub. We are working closely on this with Warwick District Council (WDC). Kenilworth Town Council (KTC) has also expressed their support and interest, but we have a long way to go yet and will need considerable support and funds if we are to progress.

## News in Brief

**Lake Update:** For those who haven't seen the announcement on Facebook, following meetings with the Environment Agency, WDC are evaluating the potential of improving the water levels by increasing the height of the exit or overflow pipe. They have also netted the lake twice. Nothing happens quickly!

**Cycling Consultation:** By the time you read this we may already be preparing our response to WDC's public consultation on cycling in Abbey Fields. We believe a dedicated track has already been dismissed so the focus will be on a shared route from Forrest Road through to Bridge Street.

**Bench Replacement:** This program had been shelved by WDC because of resource issues but we now believe a full review of all 'furniture' in Abbey Fields will take place as part of the 10-year plan.

**Abbey Fields 10-Year Plan:** It seems as though it's taken 3 to 4 years to complete this, but we do believe an Exec Summary of the plan will soon be published by WDC. As soon as we receive it we will let you know.

**New FOAF Committee Members:** I am very happy to let you know the Committee is in good health! Judith Wildig has joined us as a replacement for Sue Martin who will retire at our next AGM. Antony Corbett has agreed to take on the Webmaster role, although this will be outside of the committee for the time being. A huge welcome to Judith and Antony!

Enjoy the rest of this newsletter and the rest of your summer! **FOAF**

## Interesting Plants in Abbey Fields, *D. Liu*

### Artemisia Argyi

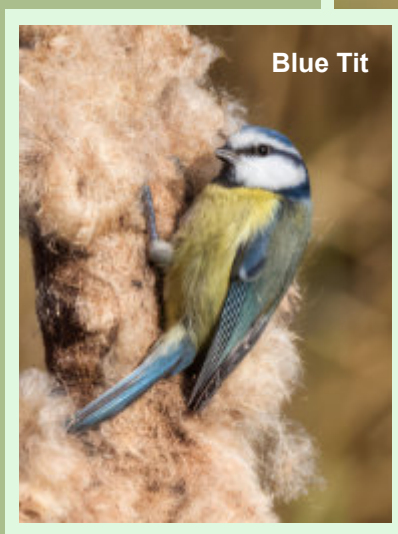


*Artemisia argyi* is commonly known as *Silvery wormwood* or *Chinese mugwort*. According to Wikipedia, it is a herbaceous perennial plant with a creeping rhizome. Native to China, Korea, Mongolia, Japan, and the Russian Far East, it has been used in Chinese herbal medicine for nearly two thousand years. In many parts of China, people also collect the tender leaves in early spring and use them to make different kinds of Chinese food which were believed to boost the immune system.

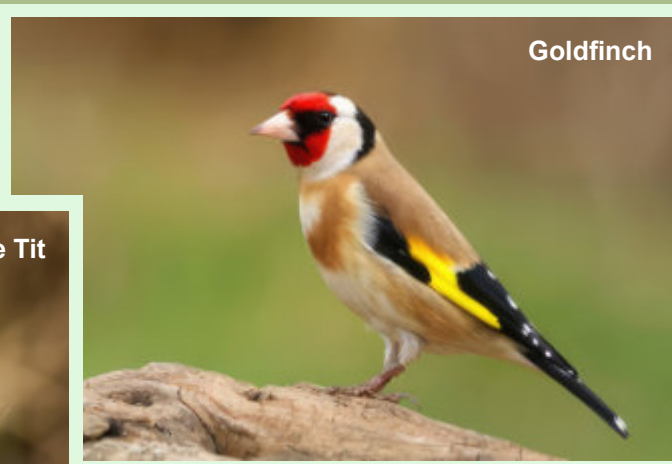
There are many different varieties of wormwood based on the size of the leaves, and the ones with bigger leaves taste quite bitter. Apart from being used in food and herbal remedies, traditionally, the leaves of those wormwood were also collected and stored for at least three years before they can be processed to make moxa sticks. These are then burned and the heat will be applied to different acupuncture points in Chinese herbal remedies. This has been

regarded as the number one Yang energy booster (as against Yin energy) and is widely used by Chinese people to heal various illnesses. Unfortunately, many people cannot bear the smell of the smoke while burning the moxa sticks.

You can find them either near the Abbey Fields lake or the bridge on Bridge Street. **FOAF**



Blue Tit



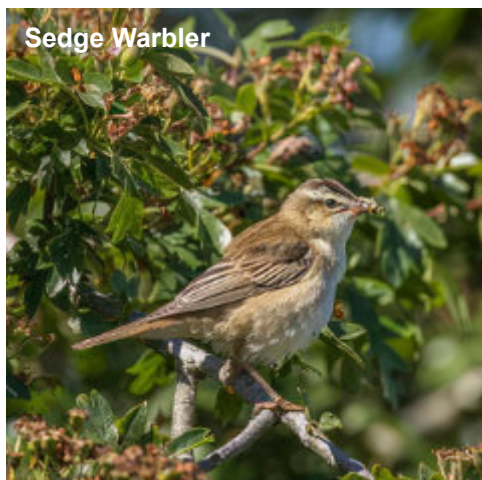
Goldfinch

**Find out more about these birds in the reed beds on the next page!**

**How can you help birds?**

- Support bird charities
- Put out food, water and bird boxes

## Abbey Fields Reed Beds, *Valerie Whiteman*

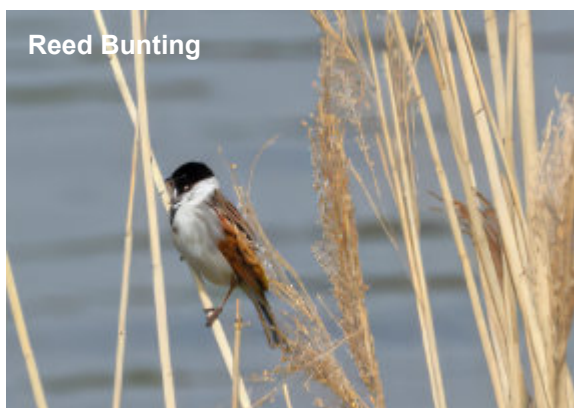


This year I have found a new toy: the Merlin App on my phone which records birdsong. The app is not infallible, but it does identify birds reasonably well. It helps to re-familiarise you with the songs of migrant birds, like the Warblers.

Reed beds are a really important habitat. In Abbey Fields they are a relatively recent one, but a variety of birds already call them home or use them as a food source. In late spring the Warblers - Reed and Sedge - return to the reed bed nearest the swimming pool after overwintering in Sub-Saharan Africa. They use the earth's magnetic field as a direction finder! They can be tricky to identify, especially if you only see one at a time because they are both brown and about the same size as a Greenfinch. The Sedge Warbler has a more prominent eye stripe while the Reed Warbler is a plainer warm brown.

The following short video from British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) helps to distinguish the Warblers:

[Identifying Reed Warbler and Sedge Warbler | BTO - British Trust for Ornithology.](#)



The Sedge Warbler is an excellent mimic, and guess what it sometimes mimics? If you watch the video you will hear that Sedge Warbler song is more hurried so it sounds like a fast-paced Reed Warbler. Another identifying video likens the Sedge Warbler to a jazz version of the Reed Warbler! While both birds use the reed beds, Sedge Warblers don't nest there. They like scrubby vegetation nearby, which is why it is sad that the little copse near the swimming pool has been cleared of shrubs used by the Sedge Warbler. Reed Warblers on the other hand nest more exclusively in the reed beds. Both are curious so they may come to look at you if you walk along by the edge of the reed bed.

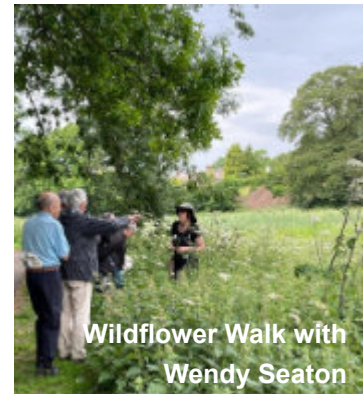
Reed buntings also use the reed bed. One was singing by the ford recently. They look more like very colourful sparrows, but they have a distinctive song. Before the warblers arrive, you will hear Wrens singing from the safety of the reed beds. Blue and Great Tits forage there for nest material and food. In autumn the Goldfinches perch on the bulrushes, to eat the ripe seed. Coots and occasionally Mallards nest there, and, sadly, the heron stalks near the margins, ready to take any chick within reach. It is a very precious habitat, and worth preserving. **FOAF**



## Events for 2023

We held two Nature Walks for KTC Nature Watch Week during the May holiday half term. FOAF held a special tree walk and an evening bat walk especially for children and families.

As part of our regular Events Programme, we scheduled a bird walk, tree walk, bat walk, and meadow walk, all of which were well attended and supported. This year our working parties have already sown over 3000 snowdrops and numerous wildflowers across several areas in Abbey Fields. Richard also led a church working party to clear the intrusive plants from the historic abbey walls in the churchyard.



### Important Dates:

- **Moth Evening:** Friday 18<sup>th</sup> August, 9:00 pm. Meet at St Nicholas Car Park.
- **Meet and Greet:** Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> September, 10:30 am - 12:30 pm. Members-only gathering near the church to meet the FOAF committee and enjoy refreshments from the Forrest pop-up coffee shop.
- **Annual General Meeting:** Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> October, 7:30 pm. Senior Citizens' Club.

## Regular Activities

**Litter Picks:** Don't forget our Litter Picks on the first Saturday of the month (from April to October), meet at 9:30 am by the St Nicholas Church and Forrest Café (pop-up café truck next to the car park). Afterwards, enjoy a free coffee, and remember that Forrest are happy to support reusable cups.

**Working Parties:** Look out for emails about bulb planting, Balsam removal etc. We are hoping to do more regular working parties – please join us. As well as helping with the biodiversity in the Fields, they are enjoyable social occasions.



## Membership & Contact

Become a member and join our regular activities in supporting Abbey Fields!  
Contact Clare: [membership@friendsofabbeyfields.org.uk](mailto:membership@friendsofabbeyfields.org.uk) or visit our website:

[www.friendsofabbeyfields.org.uk](http://www.friendsofabbeyfields.org.uk)

For other enquiries, please contact Sue: [info@friendsofabbeyfields.org.uk](mailto:info@friendsofabbeyfields.org.uk)

