

Spring cleaning comes early for the birds

FOTEB has put up about 40 nest boxes of various types along the Emm, and each autumn these are checked to see which have been used, and the boxes are cleaned. Old nest material is full of parasites, and if this is not removed the boxes are less likely to be used again.

This year it is planned to check the boxes on **Monday 11th January, Riverside Walk at 2pm.** and **Tuesday 12th January, Emmbrook Walk at 2pm.** It's an interesting exercise seeing the different sorts of nests and you'd be amazed at the wealth of material, natural and man-made, that the birds use to make their nests! If anyone is interested in helping out with either **The nest box cleaning and/or The Nesting Bird Survey** please ring Mike Saynor on **0118 9781804**

Veteran Trees along the Emm Brook

Surveyors from the Wokingham District Veteran Tree Association (WDVTA) have almost completed their records of veteran trees along the Emm Brook. The table below shows that the majority are English oaks. Two of these have girths over 5m, making them probably over 300 years old. There are also many willows, some of which would have been pollarded for agricultural use in the past. Most of the trees can be seen along Riverside Walk, but a few grow along the farther reaches of the Emm in Chapel Green and Winnersh. The Oak tree pictured below is growing East of Riverside walk. Its girth is 5 metres

Name	2-3m	3-4m	4-5m	5-6m	TOTAL
English Oak Quercus robur	4	33	10	2	49
Willows Salix sp.		10	15	1	26
Weeping willows Salix x chrysocoma	1	4	2		7
Common Ash Fraxinus excelsior	1	3			4
Common Alder Alnus glutinosa			2		2
TOTAL	6	50	29	3	88



To see details of these trees, and in most cases photographs, log on to the web pages on www.wdvta.org.uk. WDVTA is beginning to verify the records and would be very glad if you would check them and let us know if any need to be corrected, or if any important trees have been omitted. Please email datamanager@wdvta.org.uk

AGM 2010

**The 2010 AGM will take place at Woosehill Centre
on Tuesday May 25 at 7.30. Do come along and join us.
There will ALSO be a Public Meeting in September, Watch this space!**

Learning more about Dragonflies and Damselflies

In September over 40 FOTEB members and friends gathered at the Woosehill Community Centre to enjoy a fascinating illustrated talk by Des Sussex, Ecological Adviser for Natural England, on Dragonflies and Damselflies. Des described the differences between these spectacular, colourful insects some of which can be seen flying on warm days in the summer months along the Emm Brook and around other watery places in the area.

Damselflies are 'small, delicate-looking insects which often stay close to the surface of the water. When at rest they hold their wings closed along their abdomen'. (see picture on right below)

Dragonflies are 'usually larger, stronger-flying insects that can often be found well away from the water. When at rest they hold their wings open, keeping them out rather like an aeroplane'. (See left below)

The insects have a fascinating life history from eggs, which are usually laid underwater, to the larva, free-moving, water-dwelling nymphs from which the flying adult insect emerges. For more information see the excellent English Nature booklet 'Dragonflies and Damselflies in your Garden' www.naturalengland.org.uk or contact Mike Saynor on 0118 978 1804 or mike.saynor@btinternet.com to borrow some booklets FOTEB has on the topic.

There have been no surveys of dragonflies along the Emm Brook so if you would like to help with this, or anywhere else, contact Mike Turton, the county dragonfly recorder for the British Dragonfly Society, on 0118 969 4197 or berksdragonflies@tiscali.co.uk

Dragon



Damsel



Easy things to recognise around the Emm and in your garden The Dock Bug aka *Coreus marginatus*

The Dock Bug is a very common plant bug found from April to October. The early peak numbers in May and June are mostly found on various types of dock and related plants, but the peak in August to October is often on bramble - especially sucking juice from blackberries - their mouthparts form a stiff tube capable of piercing soft fruit and other plant tissue. You could regard them as having their own built in straw which they store under their body when not in use. At 12-14mm long, brown and shield-shaped it is an easy bug to recognise.

www.britishbugs.org.uk/heteroptera/Coreidae/coreus_marginatus.html



Stop Press .FOTEB members will take part in the National Tree Planting Hour at 1100-1200 on Saturday 5th December.

**FOTEB always
welcomes new
members. If you think
you could help with the
surveys or committee
tasks do get in touch
with any of the
committee members or
just come along to the
AGM or activities
www.emmbrook.org**