

Bealeswood Wildlife Recording Group

February 2023



*Hazel catkins illuminated at sunset, Bealeswood Common, February 17th 2023
[Catkins are male flowers; the tiny violet female flowers can be seen too.]*

Bealeswood Common Wildlife

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Bealeswood Wildlife Recording Group (BWRG)
Copies of this and previous notices can be found at:
www.dockenfieldpc.org.uk/wildlife

So, it's Spring, no? Well, just look and listen. Great Spotted Woodpeckers drum distantly on Bealeswood Lane and then move onto veteran oaks here. The first wild plants are in flower (Alder & Hazel catkins and Lesser Celandines). A flock of Redwing moves restlessly through the treetops bound for a North Sea crossing to Scandinavian breeding grounds.



Photo 1: Alan Cox

Bealeswood in February Lesser Celandine (left), Catkins aglow at sunset (centre), Redwing (right)

That “dit-dit-dit, filip-filip-filip, tererit-tererit-tererit” repeated over and over is a young male Song Thrush training his new-found voice to establish territory having survived the winter.



Photo 2: Song Thrush - Alex Potts

He will amuse you as he misses a note and jumbles the sequence. The older masters reply with a finesse the youngster will have to learn, too, if he is to secure a mate. One of us stood transfixed mid-month listening to a choral composition of such complexity and beauty. It was one song woven into another, a Dockenfield Song Thrush mimicking the lyrical falling cadence of the flight notes of a Woodlark pirouetting above Frensham Common. A harmonious order as if plucked from an avian Brahms Double Concerto. Studies have shown that such males can produce 60 different songs but what wonder when one small brain can learn and recall such perfect rhythms.

Along this footpath, you tread towards Frensham Mill, last year was the first in 25 that we failed to hear a Skylark's hovering song. In 2023 there may be no raspberry calls uttered from a Greenfinch over this Common. The bird is in catastrophic decline - it is all too evident here. Only one female has been seen by the group this year. So, we need to reset, to view this Common not *just* as a site of interest for nature conservation, but **a hub, a steppingstone, to preserve, halt decline and recover lost species here and further afield.** To that end we need to record our wildlife, report to you, then promote more widely what we find. Based on our data more of us then need to work towards **a conservation and recovery programme.**

In the first two years of recording 2020-21, we registered over 400 species of wildlife on this main Common, the grass triangle by the Bluebell Inn and the lower small Common. At the beginning of 2023 we are just a few short of 500 species: this total includes 28 of the 62 butterflies and five of the six amphibians of Great Britain. Amongst the new finds are: a small colony of Brown Long-eared Bats; Palmate Newt; Cricket Bat Spider; Azure Damselfly; migrant Painted Lady butterfly; a colony of Speckled Fanner micromoths symbiotic with just one species of rush; a host of new moths such as Cream Wave, Oak Beauty and Pine Hawk-Moth; Bitter Vetch – a prettier flower than it sounds; Giant Fescue grass and Hoof fungus - one of the possessions of Otzi the Iceman, preserved for 5,000 years in the Alps. He, possibly, used this hard fungus as tinder to create fire.

A full 2022 checklist will be made available on the Parish Website (address above).

Amanda Adolph, Dan & Alison Bosence, Alan & Pauline Cox, Philippa & Colin Hall, Claire Jackson, Steve Lockett, Phil Nangle, Alex Potts, Anne Tutt, and Raf & Karen Wane. 24/2/2023.



Can you help in supporting Dockenfield's wildlife?

The Bealeswood Wildlife Recording Group (BWRG) was formed in lockdown to observe, study and record the wildlife on Bealeswood Common. We always seek new members who have an interest or expertise to assist with recording animal or plant groups where we currently have little expertise (such as amphibians, reptiles, mosses or lichens). If you believe you can help then please get in touch Alison Bosence, contact below.

For those with a more general interest who wish to support our wildlife, but do not wish to become a recorder, please consider joining the "Friends of Bealeswood Common". As a friend you will receive copies of our monthly notices, invitations to join our "walks and talks" and our conservation working parties.

Enquiries about either of these groups please contact Alison at albosence@yahoo.com.



Diary Dates: 2023 Nature Walks Programme

Meet at Bealeswood Common noticeboard unless indicated otherwise.

Sunday 7 May. 05:00-06:30 Dawn Chorus. Guest leader

Saturday 27 May. 21.00-22.30. Nightjars and Woodcock, Abbots Wood Inclosure. Leader Alan Cox

Saturday July 8th. 9.30 Noticeboard or 10.00 at Abbots Wood Inclosure carpark GU10 4HA.

Butterfly walk until 11.30. Good paths. Target: Purple Emperor and certainly others along the way. Coffee stop at Alice Holt visitor centre after. Leader: Claire Jackson

Friday 11th August. 20.30 -22.00. Bat walk. Listening and watching bats at sunset, walking to Frensham Mill and back, good paths. Guest leader

Friday 9th September. 09.30 -11.00. Small mammals at Bealeswood Common. Leader: Roger Trout

Friday 13th October. 11.00 -12.30. Fungi at Bealeswood Common, adjourn to the Bluebell.

Leader: Manda Adolph