

# Bealeswood Common Wildlife

February 2025 as reported by Bealeswood Wildlife Recording Group (BWRG), See also at [www.dockenfieldpc.org.uk/wildlife](http://www.dockenfieldpc.org.uk/wildlife)

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The last week of February saw some warmer, sunny days and wildlife on Bealeswood Common began to stir as spring beckoned. The birds were brushing up their vocal cords and pairing up, bumblebee queens were waking up and taking first flights, amphibians were on the move, beetles were busy on and in the pond, and Barn Owls joined our Tawny Owls calling in the early evening.

## **Birds (DB, AP)**

Early spring birdsong is all around us on the Common with the warmer, sunnier days. If you listen for just a short time you will hear Great Tit, Blue Tit, Longtailed Tit (and if your hearing is good and with the aid of the Merlin App; Marsh Tit and Goldcrest), Robin, Wren, Chaffinch, Woodpigeon, Stock Dove, Song Thrush, and, in recent days joined by the Mistle Thrush with its plaintive, repeated phrases usually delivered from a nearby treetop.



Song Thrush with an unusual perching style delivering its spring song from an Ash



Robins have been singing all winter but now the tunes seem stronger and are delivered for longer

**Flowers (DB).** With a cold and wet month there has been little to report in terms of spring flowers until the last week of the month when some sunny days with temperatures in double figures brought more spring flowers into bloom. Primroses and Lesser Celandines are now in full flower and are now joined by the Barren Strawberry, Lungwort, Dog Violet and two Hellebores on the Lower Common. The Stinking Hellebore (a slight musky aroma?) is nationally scarce in the wild but is a common garden plant that can escape and become naturalised. A tall, distinctive plant with cup-shaped, yellow-green flowers, with sepals edged with a fine wine-red line. Nearby is a fine, purple-flowered Hellebore, a cultivar, which is clearly a garden escape but doing well in the base of a hedge.

These early flowers provide valuable nectar for the emerging queen bumblebees which also use the large, downward hanging Hellebore flowers as shelters from the rain



*Helleborus foetidus* towering over clumps of variegated leaves of *Cyclamen* (Dan Bosence)



Purple cultivar of Hellebore growing in leaves of native, Nettle, Cleavers and a Dock.



Buff-tailed bumblebee feeding on a nearby garden Hellebore (A. Potts)

## Fungi

Possibly our most spectacular fungus at this time of year is the Scarlet Elf Cap *Sarcoscypha austriaca*. Described as “widespread but uncommon” in Britain it lives on dead sticks and branches in damp woodland areas. So it comes as no surprise that it likes our fringing woodland habitats on Bealeswood Common.

(photo Alex Potts)

