

Bealeswood Local Nature Reserve

February 2026

As reported by Bealeswood Wildlife Recording Group (BWRG)

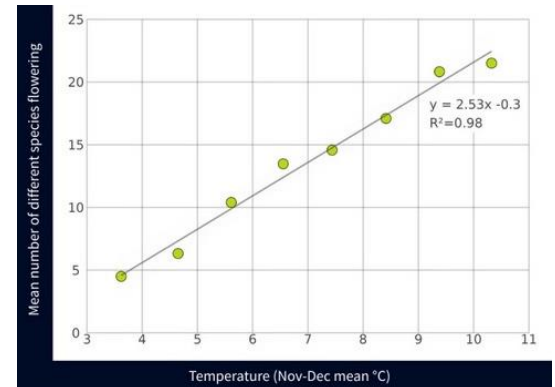
Amanda Adolph, Dan & Alison Bosence, Alan & Pauline Cox, Philippa & Colin Hall,
Alex Potts, Roger & Jill Trout, and Anne Tutt

Spring flowers are 2 months earlier than normal (DB, AP)

The national press has been commenting on how early spring is this year and our village gardeners are wondering if there will be any daffodils left in flower for the Spring Show in the Marindin Hall on the 28th of March. This early flowering is confirmed by our weekly recording of flowering times on the Common.

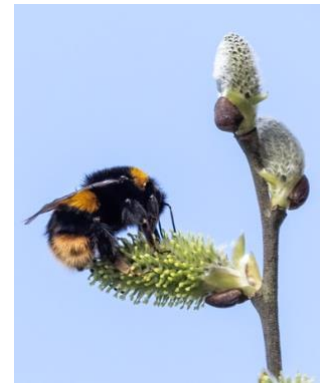
The difference between this year's First Flowering Date (FFD) and the average of the previous 17 years FFDs ranges from earlier by 1 week to 15 weeks earlier. The average FFD of 11 species of our January and February spring flowers is 8 weeks earlier than their average from the previous year's records.

This is tied to climate change and is reflected in the national botanical data showing a close correlation between warmer winter temperatures and the numbers of flowers in bloom on New Year's Day.

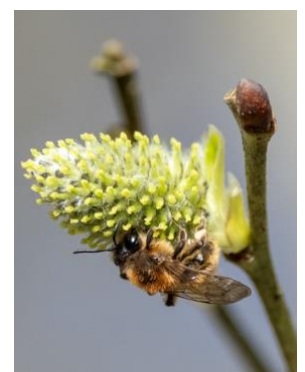


Direct link between winter temperatures and number of species flowering on New Year's Day over last eight years in Britain and Ireland

This early flowering has not been unnoticed by our Bumblebees who have been caught on camera feeding on the few sunny February days by Alex Potts:



Clockwise from top left: Male Hairy-footed Flower Bee (*Anthophora plumipes*) on Primrose, Buff-tailed Bumblebee (*Bombus terrestris*) on Red Deadnettle, Buff-tailed Bumblebee on Willow, Small Sallow Mining Bee (*Andrena praecox*) on Willow flower, Early Bumblebee (*Bombus pratorum*) on Primrose (*Primula vulgaris*).



Lichens (AB) Two more lichens from our occasional series on these perennial algal/fungal consortia. Lichens have been prominent on the Common in this otherwise dark and wet winter month.

Whitewash lichen, *Phlyctis argena*- This aptly named lichen is a species of crustose lichen, widespread both on the Common and throughout Europe and the northern hemisphere. It grows on deciduous trees, often willow (*Salix*), and occasionally on stone, such as buildings and gravestones.



Common Orange (or sunburst) lichen, *Xanthoria parietina*- Another common lichen, but in fact not common to Bealeswood, where most lichens are grey! Usually orange to yellow, but depending on the light, it can be greenish-grey in shade. This one grows on nutrient-enriched surfaces; here on a piece of dead wood, it also grows on rocks, roofs and walls. The small orange cup-shaped structures, called *apothecia*, are for growing and releasing the spores that allow lichens to colonise new areas. Accompanied here by Oak Moss lichen, which is perhaps the most abundant lichen on our Common.

Birds (AC, PC)- We have repeated sightings and Merlin recordings of Blackcaps on the Common and neighbouring gardens throughout February, usually at last light. There are similar records of Marsh Tits (photo below by A Potts). Redwings have been seen in small numbers at the tops of the tallest trees. Alan's "best observation of the month" though, was of two female Greater Spotted Woodpeckers feeding close together at the top of a tree, with 1-2 males paying them close attention. Goldcrests and Firecrests are recorded regularly as are the predatory Sparrow Hawks.



Marsh Tit feeding amongst Oak Moss lichen