

Bealeswood Common Wildlife

June 2023

As seen or heard by the Bealeswood Wildlife Recording Group (BWRG)
Copies of this and previous notices can be found at
www.dockenfieldpc.org.uk/wildlife

Flowers (Dan Bosence)

As with last summer, the continued hot and dry weather has caused some of our summer flowers to have finished flowering and have set seed, such as the pignut (*Conopodium magus*) and the sorrels (*Rumex acetosa* and *R. acetosella*). The Common Spotted Orchid (*Dactylorhiza fuchsii*) appears to like these conditions as it is more widespread over the Common this year even though the flower spikes appear to be shorter than usual. Overall, some 75 different species were recorded flowering in the last week of June. One family of flowers; the peas, vetches and clovers (the Fabaceae) have also done well this year and we regularly record 12 species out of this large group of British flowers.

Members of this family can be identified by their distinctive flowers:
The two lower petals are fused together to form a prominent keel, the two side petals are called wings and the upper petal is more upright and called the flag, or banner. The sepals (leafy bits behind the flower) are fused into a calyx or tube.

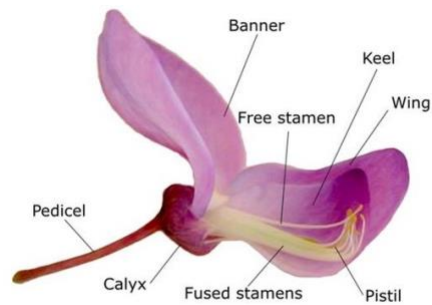


Diagram from Wikimedia, by David Richfield, based on work by Wikipedia User:Aelwyn

The Fabaceae we have recorded so far on the Common this year are: Grass Vetchling (*Lathyrus nissolia*), Meadow Vetchling (*Lathyrus pratensis*), Birdsfoot Trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*), Greater Birdsfoot Trefoil (*Lotus pedunculatus*), Red Clover (*Trifolium pratense*), White Clover (*Trifolium repens*), Haresfoot Clover (*Trifolium arvense*), Tufted Vetch (*Vicia cracca*) Hairy Tare (*Vicia hirsuta*), Common Vetch (*Vicia sativa*), and Bush Vetch (or, Crow Peas) (*Vicia sepium*).



Small Skipper on Common Spotted Orchid
with Birdsfoot Trefoil (photo Alan Cox)



Long Horned Bee on Birdsfoot Trefoil
(photo Alex Potts)

Butterflies (Alison Bosence, Anne Tutt and Graham Sharples)

The warm weather has, at last, brought the butterflies out and the following were recorded on our standard 7 transects across the Common in the last week of June: Meadow Brown (97), Marbled White (7), Comma (1), Small White (1) and both Large and Small Skippers, a Fritillary, Ringlets and Gatekeepers were noted.

In addition to the transects, particular oak trees are being monitored for the presence of our Purple Hairstreak butterflies. They have not been previously recorded because their habit of occupying the tops of oak trees on the Common. The new tree-top strategy of recording proved successful, and on the 28th of June a total of 13 of hairstreaks were seen flying in the crowns of 6 different oak trees.



Large Skipper on Marsh Thistle
(Photo Alex Potts)



Meadow Brown on Bramble flower
(Photo Alex Potts)

Report on Dawn Chorus walk, May 7th (Alison Bosence).

The beginning of May is suggested as the best time for maximum number of birds singing at dawn, and some of the Bealeswood Common recording group plus other keen bird-listeners gathered at 5 am for a walk over the common and the 'new' village field to listen. We were lucky to have Alex Potts and Colin Hall as our local guides. Through her photography and acute observation, Alex was able to lead us to places she knew birds to be nesting (and therefore singing out their territorial songs). Some of us used back-up information from the phone app 'Merlin': this is useful to record and play back the songs which are then listed by bird name, so it's a good learning device, although it proved to have a colourful imagination, telling us it could hear a nightingale somewhere. We wish! (The last nightingale we heard on Bealeswood Common was 1984).

The Common has varied habitats, with open grassland as well as shrubby areas and large trees, and we heard a good number of birds, as listed below. The village field is more open but has valuable habitats in the hedges and the clumps of bramble and willow, where the stonechat and whitethroat are to be found (and were heard). We finished the walk with coffee and croissants at Jeffreys Cottage.

Birds heard on Bealeswood Common:

Pheasant, Stock Dove, Woodpigeon, Collared Dove, Tawny Owl, Greater Spotted Woodpecker, Green Woodpecker, Jackdaw, Carrion Crow, Coal Tit, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Swallow, Long-tailed Tit, Chiffchaff, Blackcap, Garden Warbler, Firecrest, Goldcrest, Wren, Nuthatch, Song Thrush, Mistle Thrush, Blackbird, Robin, Dunnock, Chaffinch, Goldfinch.

Birds (Alan Cox)

Juvenile birds predominate our bird populations at present. Young Long-tailed Tits and Goldfinches are seen on the Main Common and coming into neighbouring gardens. A family of 5 juvenile Firecrests has also been followed and pictured (below). Juvenile Swallows (at least six on the 22nd of June) are thought to have bred in Bealeswood House stables. Stock Doves and Collared Doves are cooing away in several different territories. Young Jackdaws, some with nest in hollowed branches in our old oak trees, have, alarmingly been imitating Ring-necked Parakeets. Finally, Magpies have, unfortunately, had successfully breeding, and, together with Jays, have been predated on young birds.



Firecrest family line-up in Bealeswood Oak (mid-June) (photos Alex Potts)

Report on Evening Bird Walk, 9th June (Alan Cox)

On this balmy June evening a party of 10 reached the Abbots Wood Watchpoint at 9:15pm and there was an anxious few minutes to wait before the first Woodcock was spotted silhouetted against the darkening sky.

Thereafter there were several further sightings including a few close fly-bys when the sharp call was heard by most. The expected churring song of the Nightjar eluded us but instead a distant "oink!" flight call was heard. A little playback of churring calls from a tape teased a few passes directly over the heads of the appreciative group. It was good to register both species, but more needs to be done to provide suitable habitat for Nightjars there.

Revised Dates and List of Wildlife Walks- Unless otherwise stated the walks are free but you need to book a place and meet at this noticeboard on the Common.

Saturday July 8th. 9.30 Noticeboard or 10.00 at Abbots Wood Inclosure carpark GU10 4HA. Butterfly walk until 11.30. Purple Emperor and more. Leader: Claire Jackson, contact hello@claire-jackson.co.uk to book place.

Friday 11th August. 20.15 - 22.00. Bats at sunset on Bealeswood Common, walking to Frensham Mill and back, good paths. Leader Caroline Fillingham. Donations please to <https://www.justgiving.com/campaign/sussexbatappeal>. Contact Dan Bosence to book a place on dwbosence@btinternet.com

Saturday 2nd September. 09.30 -11.00. Small mammals of Bealeswood Common. Leader: Roger Trout. Contact troutdpc@gmail.com to book a place.

Friday 13th October. 11.00 -12.30. Fungi of Bealeswood Common, then adjourn to the Bluebell. Leader: Manda Adolph and book place on adolphdpc@gmail.com

Bealeswood Wildlife Recording Group

Amanda Adolph, Dan & Alison Bosence, Alan & Pauline Cox, Philippa & Colin Hall, Clare Jackson, Phil Nangle, Alex Potts, Graham Sharples, Anne Tutt, and Raf Wane. 29/6/2023.