

# Bealeswood Common, Wildlife Records

## March 2022

### Flowers

The spring flowers have become more prominent in the last two weeks in March. Many can be seen on the sides of the path and in ditches down the hill below this noticeboard, on the path leading up from Lake Lane and on the verges of the Lower Common off Bealeswood Lane. Two species are looking particularly good as we write this notice:

The first Wood Anemones appeared this week to the sides of the newly surfaced path above Lake Lane. Apart from being a beautiful spring flower this species is one of Britain's best indicators of past and previous ancient woodlands. The reason given is that they spread with underground rhizomes rather than distributing fertile seeds. This means that the clumps of plants spread very slowly "no more than 6 feet in a hundred years" says Richard Mabey, one of our best wild-flower writers.



Wood anemone (*Anemone nemorosa*) in dappled shade on Main Common. The flowers are 15-20 mm across white, sometimes pink. The flowers have 6-7 sepals rather than petals (sepals normally occur as ring of green leaf-like blades around the back of the petals). This year they are in flower two weeks earlier than last year.

(Photo; Alex Potts, 24/3/2022)

Moschatel takes more hunting for, but is present in shady woodland areas on the Lower Common. This early spring plant has small, ground hugging clusters with light green stems and leaves. It is unique to Britain as it is the only species of *Adoxa* that lives here and because of its unusual arrangement of flowers. Also known as the Town Hall Clock flower, the stem is topped by a cube of four outwardly facing flowers as in the eponymous clock. In addition, a fifth flower faces up to the sky "so that the Spitfire pilots could tell the time" ; as the wartime saying went.



Moschatel (*Adoxa moschatellina*) flowering clump with distinctive light green leaves and flower. Also, detail of flower head with four outward-facing, and one upward-facing, flowers with light green petals. (Photos; Alex Potts, 24/3/2022)

## Birds



One of our characteristic spring warblers, the Chiffchaff, was seen and heard on 15<sup>th</sup> of March, one week later than last year which was a week later than the previous year. The other common warbler, the Blackcap, was first heard on the Lower Common on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of March.

The oak trees on the Common provide many nesting sites for our birds. Below, photographs show two that are using hollowed out branches for nests.



Stock Dove (left) and Nuthatch (right) (photos Alex Potts)

## Butterflies

The butterfly survey transects have not yet started for 2022 but the following have been seen in the last two weeks of warm sunny days in mid-late March on these dates: Peacock (19<sup>th</sup>), Brimstone (18<sup>th</sup>), Speckled Wood (18<sup>th</sup>) and Comma (21<sup>st</sup>).



Peacock sunning itself on grass on the Common. Adults hibernate over the winter to emerge in March when they commonly feed on willow flowers.  
Photo; Alan Cox 19/3/2022