## **Bealeswood Common Wildlife**

March 2023 Bealeswood Wildlife Recording Group (BWRG) Copies of this and previous notices can be found at: www.dockenfieldpc.org.uk/wildlife

## Fungi (Amanda Adolph)

The following perennial fungi have been visible through the winter in the Lower Common (around Bealeswood Lane): Blushing Bracket (*Daedaleopsis confragosa*), Hoof Fungus (*Fomes fomentarius*), Rusty or Cinnamon Porecrust (*Phellinus ferruginosus*), Bleeding Broadleaf Crust (*Stereum rugosum*). In addition, two new perennial bracket species were recorded for the Common: the blue and cream Turkeytail (*Trametes versicolor*) and the brown-zoned Ochre Bracket (*Trametes ochracea*):



Turkeytail bracket fungus (Photo Amanda Adolph)



Brown Ochre bracket fungus (Photo Amanda Adolph)

# Flowers (Dan Bosence)

As we write there are some 13 flowers out on the Common. Many of these can be seen along the footpaths and lane verges: Barren Strawberry (*Potentilla sterilis*), Common Dog Violet (*Viola canina*), Daisy (*Bellis perennis*), Celandine, Lesser (*Ranunculus ficaria*), Daffodil, various cultivars\* (*Narcissus sp*), Hairy Bittercress (*Cardamine hirsuta*), Hellebore, purple cultivar\* (*Helleborus sp*.), Lungwort (*Pulmonaria officianalis*), Periwinkle\* (*Vinca mino*r), Primrose (*Primula vulgaris*), Primrose, pink cultivar\* (*Primula vulgaris*), Snowdrop various cultivars\*, (*Galanthus sp*), Wood Anemone (*Anemone nemorosa*).

The four marked with an\* are considered to have escaped from neighbouring gardens, either naturally or with some human assistance. Please refrain from disposing of garden waste as it alters and competes with the natural flora of the Common.

> Wood Anemone an indicator of ancient woodland (Photo by Alex Potts



### **Birds (Steve Luckett)**

March is the time when we first hear and then see our summer warblers having travelled from southern regions. This year the first Chiffchaff was heard on the 19<sup>th</sup> of March and the Blackcap on the 27<sup>th</sup> March. This is consistent with records over the past 5 years when the Chiffchaff has been first heard between the 9<sup>th</sup> and the 29<sup>th</sup> March and the Blackcap a few days to a week later, between the 24<sup>th</sup> March and the 3<sup>rd</sup> of April.

### **Bealeswood Birds and Beyond**

5 years living and working near Bealeswood Common by Steve Luckett

I was lucky enough to find a job working at Bealeswood House with Linda in 2018 almost by accident – another story but you could say Bealeswood Common chose me rather than the other way round.

Just about the first major event was "The Beast From The East" (remember that?) and being snowed off work meant an opportunity to explore, and it was exciting to find so many bird species within short walking distance of home. I wrote a letter to DNL about it and a few weeks later bumped into Dan on his flower count who introduced himself and asked me to write a few lines on birds for this noticeboard each month. Now we are quite a team of observers and recorders and adding to the butterfly folk we have fungus and tree experts and some very talented photographers. I have been amazed at the amount of rare wildlife on our doorstep – sand lizards, nightjars, natterjack toad, purple emperors, plus an abundance of not so rare but sadly declining species in our wider countryside – and have enjoyed sharing these on organised walks in the area.

In early 2019 I attended a talk at Marindin Hall *The Birds of Frensham Common.* The speaker was Alan Cox who I met outside our cottage that summer, not realising we had been Common neighbours for over a year. I have learnt a lot about birds in the area from Alan and was pleased to be able to direct him and his grandson to a wasp spider web outside our place for them to enjoy taking photographs of.

We all know what happened in 2020 and I felt very fortunate to be living and working somewhere where life could continue almost as normal whilst we saw desperate situations develop all over the world. One special memory was a pair of spotted flycatchers who I could watch through my lounge window, a real lockdown treat. Like many I built a small pond in my garden which is now home to newts, dragonflies and a favourite bathing spot for many birds.

As life returned to normal for most, working in Bealeswood House garden continued to turn up the odd surprise, a firecrest in the laurel and two yellowhammers clearing up spilt feeder seed. One day I found a tired and bedraggled butterfly, my first purple hairstreak. Feeling pleased with myself I shared a dodgy phone photo with the group , only to be outdone totally by Alex Potts who not only had found a little colony by this bench but taken some stunning photographs of actual egg laying.





Wasp Spider (phot0 Steve Luckett)

Yellowhammers in Bealeswood (photo Christina Rasmussen)

Last year as a group we took a walk to the new village field pond to check for amphibian action – no joy but we were rewarded by a beautiful barn owl hunting over the rough grassland. Magical

For me it's always been about the birds, and this year I'm a little sad to miss the return of the swallows to the stables (20+ fledged from 6 nests in 2019) and won't be adding to the DNL cuckoo clock count (earliest on April 12<sup>th</sup>- 2020, latest 23<sup>rd</sup> 2018). But it's been a wonderful 5 years watching and listening to them from "our" robin to the mighty kites and all in between. My list of birds seen or heard on the Common, Bealeswood House and Gardener's Cottage stands at 63 and are listed below.

Not a bad accidental list!

#### **Best Natural Wishes**

#### Steve L

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