

Bealeswood Local Nature Reserve

March 2026

As reported by Bealeswood Wildlife Recording Group (BWRG)

Also on our website www.dockenfieldpc.org.uk/wildlife

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Wildlife Walks on the Common

Each year we organise walks over the Common to explore the amazing diversity of wildlife. This year we have four walks which will all start at the information and notice boards. They are found at the lane leading downhill past the garden of the Bluebell pub GU10 EX. Please contact the leader (listed below) if you wish to join the walk, so that we can keep a track of numbers and contact you in case of bad weather etc.

Searching for Spiders- May 21st (Thursday) 10 am, led by Darren Hill,
contact: darren.hill@waverley.gov.uk

Butterflies and Bees- July 5th (Sunday) 11 am, led by Philippa Hall and
butterfly team, contact: phall3422@aol.com

Small Mammals (wood mice, voles etc)- September 26th
(Saturday) 10 am, led by Roger Trout, contact:
rabbitwise@hotmail.co.uk

Mushrooms- October 17th (Saturday) 10.30 am, led by
Manda Adolph, contact: amandaadolph@gmail.com



Spring Flowering Trees (DB)

The most obvious flowering trees at this time of year are the Blackthorn or Sloe, particularly around the southern wooded fringe of the Common. Here they provide habitats for the Hairstreak butterfly eggs and larvae.

The flowers of the Ash are just appearing and long, yellow, female flowers can be seen on the Ash tree above the bench and just behind the notice board. The Oaks (our other most abundant large tree) are yet to flower this year, but are seen to be leafing up. Our Yew trees began flowering in the second week of February with the male flowers (on the male trees) generating plumes of pollen in gusts of wind. The wind-dispersed pollen finds its way to female trees where these flowers are even smaller and on the undersides of the twigs.



Twigs of Yew with their distinctive flattened evergreen needles topped with a small spike. The yellow male flowers are open and releasing pollen in this photo by Alan Cox.

Spring Butterflies (AB)

Our butterfly records for the Common are sent to the UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme (UKBMS) which organises transects all over the UK to study our butterfly population. Each transect is walked by volunteer recorders once a week from the beginning of April to the end of September; noting the numbers and types of butterfly seen. The uniformity of this system means the UKBMS get a picture of any changes in butterfly numbers per area, over the whole country, and over the years (see <https://ukbms.org>).

With the early start of spring this year, UKBMS invited us to begin our survey in March, a month earlier than usual, if the weather was calm and dry and the temperature above 15° C. A lucky day appeared, and the butterflies were out and about! The Brimstone was out in force; nine appeared in different parts of the common, mostly the striking yellow males (the females are much paler, almost white). We also saw a Comma, and an unusually early Holly Blue.



Brimstone butterfly on Primrose flower



Comma butterfly on flowering plum

On July 5th we invite you to join us for a Butterfly and Bee walk, showing how the recording and identifying is carried out. Extra pairs of eyes are useful to spot these quick-flying creatures and we look forward to seeing what we can find!

Spring Moths (PH)

The moth trap was deployed in March to see what new species might appear at this time of year. A cold, clear night produced more than was expected; 15 species in total and 5 new for Bealeswood. These included a suitably named March Moth (a male as the females are wingless) and two Oak Beauties. The surprise of the night however was the large number of Small Quakers of which there were at least 128, and probably more. Full list of species found is below



Left to right: March Moth (photo P. Hall), two well camouflaged Oak Beauties, and a Small Quaker (photos A. Cox)

**Moth catch, March 18th 2026 at Keeper's Cottage,
Bealeswood Common (Philippa Hall)**

Drepanidae

Frosted Green *Polyploca ridens*

Geometridae

Brindled Pug *Eupithecia abbreviata*

Early Tooth-striped *Trichopteryx carpinata*

March Moth *Alsophila aescularia* (new)

Brindled Beauty *Lycia hirtaria*

Oak Beauty *Biston strataria*

Noctuidae

Early Grey *Xylocampa areola*

Dotted Chestnut *Conistra rubiginea* (new)

Tawny Pinion *Lithophane semibrunnea* (new)

Clouded Drab *Orthosia incerta*

Blossum Underwing *Orthosia miniosa* (new)

Common Quaker *Orthosia cerasi*

Small Quaker *Orthosia cruda*

Hebrew Character *Orthosia gothica*

Twin-spotted Quaker *Anorthoa munda* (new)

(new- indicates a new species record for Bealeswood Common)

Additional photographs (by Alan Cox)

Frosted Green



Early Grey



Blossum Underwing

