

Bealeswood Common Wildlife

September 29th 2023

As seen by the Bealeswood Wildlife Recording Group (BWRG)

Copies of this and previous notices can be found at

www.dockenfieldpc.org.uk/wildlife

Wild Dockenfield; A celebration of Biodiversity in a Changing Climate

Dockenfield Parish Council have invited BWRG to present a series of talks about the diversity of wildlife on this wonderful Common. The talks will focus on different aspects of our recording work that show long- and short-term changes, wildlife hotspots and biodiversity. In addition, there will be a photographic display with images taken on the Common of some of our spectacular plants, animals and their activities.

The talks will take place at The Church of the Good Shepherd, Dockenfield on Friday 27th October from 7.30pm:

- Colin Hall- trees and wood-pasture commons
- Dan Bosence- Wildflowers of Bealeswood; long-term changes in biodiversity
- Philippa Hall- Butterfly habitats on Bealeswood Common
- Alex Potts- Solitary, wild bees and wasps of Bealeswood Common
- Alan Cox- Birds; Losses, Declines and Arrivals
- Amanda Adolph- Fungal habitats on Bealeswood Common

Entrance will be free but a collection will be made in support of the maintenance of the church. The talks will be followed by tea, coffee and cakes.











Final Wildlife Walk of the year:-

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

Flowers (Dan Bosence)

Since July when the maximum number of flowers out was 90 species, the number of flowers out has dropped to a total of 65 in September. The annual cutting of the Common took place this week which reduces the number of flowers but is needed to restrict the growth of vigorous grasses and the ever-encroaching bramble and blackthorn scrub. Surprisingly, the mid-summer cutting of the verges to the lane results in an increase in flowering, as flowers then regrow and have a second flowering in the late summer-autumn. Off Bealeswood Lane we are seeing a second flowering of White Deadnettle, Forget-me-not, Marjoram and Water Mint. Gardeners call this the "Chelsea Chop" to prolong the flowering in their borders. Some of the last flowers to appear in the grassland areas of the Common are members of the Carrot family (Apiaceae, formerly the Umbelliferaceae). These are not always the easiest flowers to identify, and 10 of those found on the Common are illustrated on the next sheet with notes as to where they are found and when they flower.

Members of the Carrot family (Apiaceae) found in different habitats on Bealeswood Common, arranged from earliest flowering in April (Cow Parsley- top left) to latest flowering in September (Pepper Saxifrage-bottom right).

<p>Cow Parsley <i>Anthriscus silvestris</i> Native. Woodland edges and ditches. Flowers mid April to late June.</p>	 <p>from: plantlife.org.uk</p>	<p>Ground Elder <i>Aegopodium podagraria</i> Introduced by the Romans. Hedgerows near gardens. Flowers May to July</p>	 <p>from: naturespot.org.uk</p>
<p>Pignut <i>Conopodium majus</i> Native. Grasslands. Flowers mid March to end August.</p>	 <p>from: wildflowerfinder.org.uk</p>	<p>Hemlock Water-dropwort <i>Oenanthe crocata</i> Native. Ditches & streams. Flowers early June to early July. Poisonous</p>	 <p>from: naturespot.org.uk</p>
<p>Hogweed/Cow Parsnip <i>Heracleum sphondylium</i> Native. Grasslands, ditches. Flowers late June to mid September.</p>	 <p>from: istock.com</p>	<p>Wild Angelica <i>Angelica sylvestris</i> Native. Ditches, woodland edges. Flowers mid June to end September.</p>	 <p>from: naturespot.org.uk</p>
<p>Rough Chervill <i>Chaerophyllum temulum</i> Native. Ditches, verges. Flowers late May-early July.</p>	 <p>from: naturespot.org.uk</p>	<p>Upright Hedge Parsley <i>Torilis japonica</i> Native. Ditches, verges. Flowers mid June to early September.</p>	 <p>from: inaturalist.org</p>
<p>Burnet saxifrage <i>Pimpinella saxifraga</i> Native. Grasslands. Flowers mid July to mid August.</p>	 <p>from: ukwildflowers.com</p>	<p>Pepper saxifrage <i>Silaum silaus</i> Native. Grasslands. Flowers late July to mid September.</p>	 <p>from: naturespot.org.uk</p>

Butterflies and other Insects (photos by Alex Potts)

Last year was highlighted by the discovery of colonies of Purple Hairstreak butterflies on oak and ash trees fringing the Common grasslands. This success has been exceeded with discovery of Brown Hairstreaks on Blackthorn woodland and scrub. This is the largest of the hairstreaks but has become very scarce in the UK due to habitat loss. The nearest colonies we believe are at Noar Hill and possibly Farnham Park.



Brown Hairstreak showing underside of wing



Female showing upper side of wings

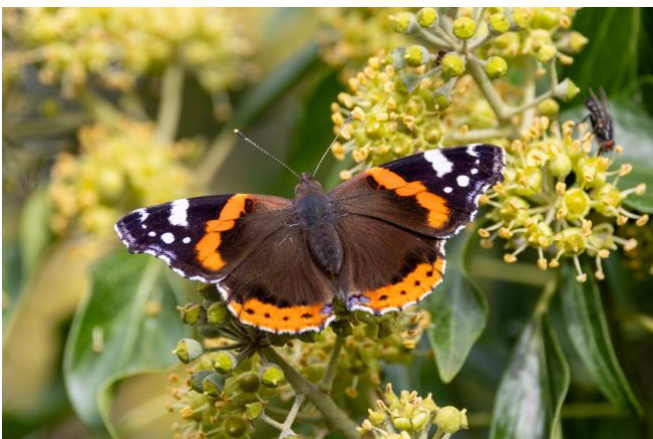
Sunny periods in September enabled extended feeding for nectar-hungry butterflies and bumblebees on our late flowering plants:



Meadow Brown on Devil's Bit Scabius



Small Coppers on Michelmas daisies



Red Admiral on Ivy flowers



Carder bees on blue and white Scabius flowers

Small Mammals of Bealeswood Common (Alison Bosence)

Led by Roger Trout, our professional small mammal expert, this walk was a hugely enjoyable family event for a group of all ages. Roger had set out 20 overnight humane traps containing food to tempt in our local tiny creatures: these were well hidden, and luckily not attractive to dogs and so undisturbed overnight. By morning, nine of these traps were successful, allowing us to examine the animals in great detail while they were held carefully in containers for studying before being set free.

We found **2 Common Shrews**, who feed on insects and earthworms, and have a long pointed whiskered snout and small eyes,

1 Pygmy Shrew, who also feeds on insects (but not earthworms),

3 Wood Mice who have large eyes, big ears and a long tail, and eat a range of foods including seeds and insects (pictured below),

3 Bank Voles. These have a blunter head than the mice, smaller eyes and ears, and a shorter tail. They also have a mixed diet but have teeth suitable for cutting and eating leaves, often leaving tunnels as they travel through the grass.

If you notice small piles of seeds amongst the grass and flowers on the Common at the end of summer, these may well have been collected by wood mice as part of their autumn store.



Left- interest from all the family in shrews, mice and voles in woodland areas of Common (photo Alison Bosence).
Below- Wood Mouse with some of its snacking for overnight accommodation in humane trap (photo Amanda Adolph).



Photo Gallery- Red Kites and Red Mushrooms



Overflying juvenile Red Kite identified by streaky body, cream head and shorter tail and wings than adult provides evidence of local breeding (photo Alan Cox).



Scarlet Brittlegill (*Russula pseudointegra*)
A relatively rare fungus found in oak woods on clayey soils (photo Amanda Adolph).