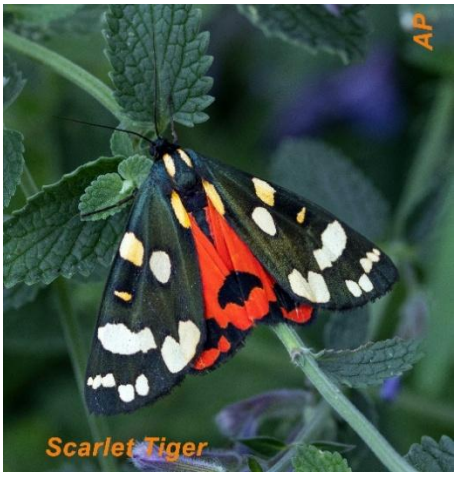
The Wildlife Recording Group was formed in 2020 with the aim of studying the biodiversity of the ancient woodland pasture of Bealeswood Common (BWRG). Landscape management and wildlife conservation is led by Waverley countryside ranger Vicky Keller. Working with BWRG, Vicky has recently achieved the award of Local Nature Reserve status for the Common by the Borough Council.

This year 129 new species have been added to the checklist to give a revised total of 976. Many of these are used by government as indicator species to be monitored for the preservation of habitats rich in biodiversity including those recognised as under threat by red data lists (RDLs) by conservation bodies.

Of the 1,720 wildflower species in Britain, a report this year concludes that 26% (574) are under threat including 12 species present on Bealeswood and monitored as having mixed fortunes by Dan through weekly recording over the last 17 years: increasing in abundance are Betony and Rigid Hawkweed; there are stable but localised populations of Wood Melick, Devil's-bit Scabious, Corn Mint (possibly introduced) and Sheep's Sorrel (fewer this year); more scattered and sporadic are Bitter-vetch, Burnet-saxifrage and Pepper-saxifrage; whereas Harebell is decreasing in abundance and flowering for shorter periods this year; Stinking Chamomile is rare and there has been just one occurrence of Hare's Foot Clover.

Overall, the diverse flora, over 200 species, appear to have been affected by the unusual weather conditions of 2025. A number of species that are frequently recorded flowering were not seen. They may still be there, but they did not flower and possibly they will flower again next year. These include Grass Vetchling, Bulbous Buttercup, Greater Celandine, Lesser Trefoil, Rose Bay Willowherb (3rd year running), and Creeping Jenny.

Latest science links plants to fungi as the creators of the planet's soil. The hyphae (filaments) of fungi can penetrate rock to extract the minerals that plant life needs and plants sustain fungi with a supply of water as their roots imbed the hyphae into a massive, connected network, each cubic centimetre of soil can have up to 100m of hyphae enmeshed with it. Of 142 species of fungi recorded by Amanda *et al.* 43 were new, mainly in autumn including a late November flourish, amongst five species of waxcap Persistent Waxcap was the 12th recorded here. Indicators of ancient grasslands, waxcap numbers were subdued compared to 2023 but at least present, unlike 2024. A start has been made on recording lichens, a fungal association with algae, which cover many shrubs and trees on the Common. Four species are found to dominate here providing sustenance to insect larvae which are sought in turn in winter as a food source by birds.



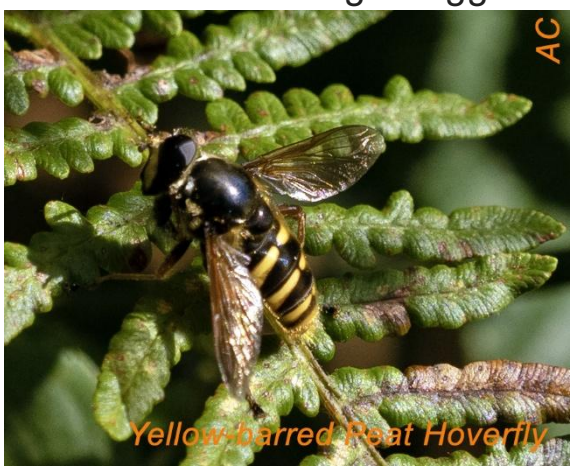
There were some spectacular moth sightings including 40 species new to the Common mostly recorded by Philippa using light traps at night such as the Poplar Hawkmoth heading this review. It has a wingspan up to 90mm and hence as large as a Swallowtail butterfly but also matched by the rare Goat Moth which Alex spotted in August 2024 as a goatish smelling caterpillar (hence its name) entering a tree stump crevice in a garden adjacent to the Common. It would have been resident, in the stump, for several years, because in

late May a pupa was found squeezing out from the crevice. The adult moth emerged from the pupa in early June for the final short phase of its life. Like many moths they have no mouth, or digestive system, to feed, their only function is to procreate the next generation.

Small Heath and Brown Argus (two generations) were a welcome returning feature of summer; a Purple Emperor graced the pond, a BWRG first, increasing the butterfly species total recorded to 30 - more than half the British list (58). The butterfly highlight, involving superb fieldwork by Alex, was the tracking down of two egg laying female Brown Hairstreaks - one of Britain's rarest butterflies. Expert advice has been sought to manage the Blackthorn shrubs to try to introduce a viable population.

Britain's largest dragonfly the Emperor made a brief first appearance at the pond as did a Large Red Damselfly, likely to be predated by the larger dragonflies such as the Emperor and numerous Southern Hawkers.

Bumblebee transects were again undertaken by Erica and Juliet Evans noting six species including more Red-tailed than in 2024, again Buff-tailed queens were first on the wing in March. A new addition was Britain's largest solitary bee, the Coast Leaf-Cutter Bee, as its name implies more regularly found on the coast but also on heath and chalk grasslands. Similarly, the recording of a Yellow-barred Peat Hoverfly required careful checking as it is scarce in Surrey and previously thought to be confined to heathlands. Both findings suggest a wildlife corridor in action as none of the habitats described for each species match Bealeswood.



One of the highlights of the late summer was evening gatherings into three figures of Swallow families, hunting insects just over the tree canopy with aerial antics to take your breath away. Joined on occasion by small numbers of House and Sand Martins.