Bealeswood Local Nature Reserve
January 2026

As reported by Bealeswood Wildlife Recording Group (BWRG)

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New Bird Record for Bealeswood Common (AP, AC, PC)

This male Crossbill was photographed by Alex in a garden adjacent to the Common. There were three males in the party and as well as perching on this conifer were nibbling buds on an ash tree, a practice Alan has never previously seen. They are known to habituate pines, spruce, larch and extract seeds from the cones. The literature says they may nibble at deciduous tree buds in extremis, as these were doing, suggesting either lots of Crossbills (an irruption) or poor cone crops. Elsewhere, 8 were recorded by Alan at nearby Lodge Pond, Alice Holt Forest; the first records for him in 5 years. Further afield a flock of 16 have been visiting Frensham Common since October, and 67 were recorded in Woolmer Forest.

Other winter bird records include a flock of about a dozen Lesser Redpolls (PC) and an overwintering Blackcap in gardens adjacent to the Common.

Bealeswood Common LNR designation celebrated at The Bluebell (DB)

This January, Dockenfield Parish Council hosted a gathering to celebrate the award of Local Nature Reserve (LNR) for our Common. About 20 people gathered to thank the Waverley Borough councillors and Countryside Warden (Vicky Keller) for their support of our request for LNR status. jill Trout (DPC) welcomed the councillors, warden and wildlife recorders (Bealeswood Wildlife Recording Group and Hive Helpers) and outlined the history of the site and how it was bequeathed to the village and council. Dan Bosence (BWRG) outlined the importance of biodiversity (you have to know what lives in a habitat before you can manage it) and sustainability (wildlife records have to be made over many years in order to understand the value of management plans) in order to look after this rich wildlife habitat.

New Year's Day Plant Hunt (NYPH) (DB)

Each year the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland encourage people to get out on New Year's Day to record how many wildflowers they can find in bloom. This piece of citizen science has been carried out for 14 years and the data gathered adds to our understanding of how wild and naturalised plants are responding to climate change. On a cold morning our intrepid plant spotters hunted for flowering plants on a transect from the Bluebell Pub, down over the Common, along the bridle path (Innum's Way) to the verges around Pitt Farm, Frensham.

So what did we find? Well, we were surprised to record 25 species in flower, which is the highest number counted along this transect in 3 years and I know you are dying to find out what we found: Annual Meadow-grass, Dog's Mercury, Gorse, Barren Strawberry, Common Hazel, Shepherd's-purse, Wavy Bittercress, Common Wintercress, Common Chickweed, Holly, Yarrow, Daisy, Marigold, Groundsel, Canadian Fleabane, Perennial Sow-thistle, Dandelion, Pepper Saxifrage, Common Field-speedwell, White Deadnettle, Red Deadnettle, Lesser Periwinkle, and these three:

Smooth Hawksbeard (x1)

Sweet Violet (x1)

Stinking Hellebore (x1/10)

Moths in Winter (PH)

The Winter Moth (*Operophtera brumata*) which flies between October and January, is one of the few species of moth that can survive in freezing temperatures. Some were observed in December on the Lower Common.

The eggs are laid in bark crevices in a wide variety of deciduous trees, hatching in the spring to feed on leaf buds. Around June the fully grown caterpillars drop to the ground to pupate and emerge as adults in the winter. Nectar sources are limited in the winter, so this moth has evolved not to feed in the adult stage – they fatten up as caterpillars and their sole aim as adults is to mate and secure the next generation.

All the moths seen flying are male as the females have only vestigial wings and cannot fly. Having emerged, they crawl up the nearest suitable tree where they waft pheromones to attract the males.