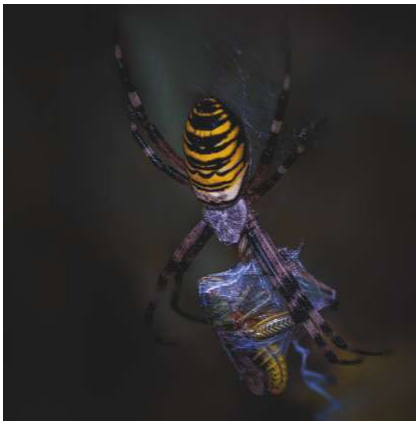
BEWARE THE BEASTS OF BEALESWOOD

Arachnophobes look away now! (AP, AC)



Clockwise from top left- Labyrinth Spider, Wasp Spider, Bark Sap Spider, and, Nursery Web Spider (Photos Alex Potts).

Photo: Alan Cox

The Lichen Running Spider is a rare, ghost-like master of disguise. It flattens its mottled white, gray, and greenish body against tree bark to vanish completely, hunting down insects with sudden, lightning-fast dashes instead of spinning a web.

Its 8 eyes track prey over the tree bark and use a mild venom to paralyse its victims.

Bealeswood has an isolated cluster (or, ghost town) of these spiders

Spooky Birds (PC)

Several birds like owls, ravens and crows are associated with Halloween because of either their dark plumage, their nocturnal habits and haunting, ghostly calls. Also for their roles in mythology and folklore as symbols of magic, death, and bad omens.

The Tawny Owl's mournful, echoing calls ("twit-twoo") often heard on Bealeswood Common, are associated with death and bad tidings in Shakespeare's plays, including Macbeth; "It was the owl that shrieked, the fatal bellman".

The Barn Owl, sometimes called a "ghost owl" or "death owl" glides silently like a phantom over moonlit fields. Medieval legends claimed that witches could transform into owls whilst some cultures perceived their spine-chilling calls as warnings of sickness, death and tragedy.

Tawny Owl.Photo: Alex Potts

Barn Owl.Photo: Alex Potts

Working Party- Sunday 15th November

Join us for a few hours from 10.00 am, meeting at this noticeboard. We shall be clearing some scrub to prevent it encroaching onto the flower-rich grassland. Bring appropriate clothing, footwear, and work gloves to protect against thorns.
Work tools, refreshments and good company provided!

And a selection of other Halloween delights from the Common

Devil's-bit Scabious (DB). One of the few plants still flowering in the grassland areas of the Common. This group of plants are named for their treatment of scabies and leprosy. The root of this strangely named species was used in ancient times as an antidote to pimples and freckles as well as various poisons. The taproot is strangely truncated, or atrophied, to leave a short stump. Folklore tells
that the devil was so concerned that it was so beneficial, and cured so many ailments, that he bit it off, in case it reached all the way to hell.

Truncated taproot of Devil's-bit Scabious

Mother Shipton's Moth (AC, DB). This day-time flying moth is recorded on the Common in May-July where it feeds on nectar of White Clover and Creeping Buttercup. The name comes from the patterning on the forewing resembling the head of a sixteenth century witch known as Mother Shipton. a celebrated soothsayer from Cambridge. Born Ursula Sontheil she is said to have sold her soul to the devil in exchange for the power of foretelling future events. She supposedly foretold the death of Cardinal Wolsey in 1530.

Beware for it is at Halloween when the veteran trees rise up and walk on the Common (CH)

"The Ent Tree", Cannock Chase Staffordshire

As reported by the Bealeswood Wildlife Recording Group: *Amanda Adolph, Dan & Alison Bosence, Alan & Pauline Cox, Philippa & Colin Hall, Alex Potts, Roger & Jill Trout, and Anne Tutt*