

Bealeswood Common, Wildlife Records

May 2022

Flowers-D.B.

The most striking flowers out on the Common this month have been the buttercups. We have 4 out of the 8 British terrestrial (i.e. non-aquatic) buttercups in flower on the Common and one other in nearby woodland. They all look fairly similar, but the detail of the leaves and flowers enable the species to be identified. The two most abundant on Bealeswood are the Meadow (*Ranunculus acris*) and the Creeping (*R. repens*) buttercups. The Meadow is the tallest plant with distinctive finely divided leaves. The Creeping has runners that grow through the grass and send down roots and has broad, 3-lobed leaves. Gardeners hate this one. When seen together the Meadow is a lighter yellow flower and the Creeping a more golden yellow.

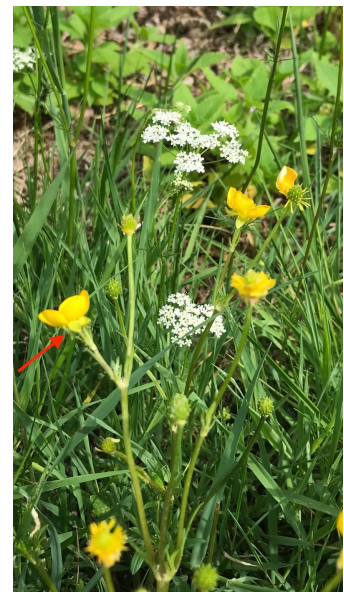
The third species, the Bulbous Buttercup (*R. bulbosus*), is not so widespread, and is a more golden colour than the Meadow. It is distinguished by not having runners, leaves like flat-leaved parsley, and sepals that point downwards (arrowed flower in picture below). The base of the stem expands into a tuber. The sepals are the green part of the bud at the top of the flower stem that lie behind the petals when the flower is open. In other buttercups the sepals lie against the back of the petals, so you just need to turn the flower over to see if the sepals point downwards or lie against the petals (as in *R. acris* picture below-uppermost 2 flowers).



Meadow Buttercup
Ranunculus acris- thin leaves.



Creeping Buttercup (*R. repens*)
3 lobed leaves. Ground elder & dock leaves lower right.



Bulbous Buttercup
(*R. bulbosus*).
Arrow points to sepals.

In addition, another *Ranunculus* (*R. flammula*) or Lessor Spearwort grows in the marshy western area of the Common amongst the Bog Grass or *Juncus*. This is distinguished by its creeping habit with long stems bearing thin elongate leaves. The flowers are smaller than the three grass-dwelling buttercups described above but still with the distinctive yellow petals.

In nearby woods our fifth buttercup occurs in a more shady area; the Goldilocks Buttercup (*R. auricomus*). The plant has short, slightly hairy stems and deeply lobed leaves. The distinctive feature are the flowers that

commonly have fewer than the standard 5 petals and they may be deformed or even missing. It is taken as an indicator of ancient woodlands.



Lesser Spearwort
Ranunculus flammula- Creeping stem and thin leaves



Green Crab Spider caught “bathing” in a buttercup (Photo Alex Potts)

Birds -S.L.

Swallows returned to the common on the 7th May- a month later than 2021. At the time of writing swifts have still to be seen.



Firecrests are nesting on the Common and can be heard singing high in the canopy. This small bird can be difficult to spot but if you have good hearing listen out for a rapid *tsee-tsee-tse-tse-se-se-se* (Photo Alex Potts)

Butterflies-P.H.

Our transects are being recorded in earnest now and there was plenty to see in the warm sunny days in May. These are the total numbers seen for the 4 weeks of recording: Speckled Wood (20), Small White (19, but probably other whites included here), Orange-tip (15), Brimstone (6) Large White (3), Green Veined White (1), Holly Blue (1), Small Tortoiseshell (1) and Comma (1).

Dan & Alison Bosence, Alan & Pauline Cox, Philippa & Colin Hall, Clare Jackson, Steve Lockett, Phil Nangle, Alex Potts, Christina Rasmussen, Anne Tutt, Raf and Karen Wane. 26th May, 2022.