

Bealeswood Common Wildlife

May 2023

Bealeswood Wildlife Recording Group (BWRG)
Copies of this and previous notices can be found at:
www.dockenfieldpc.org.uk/wildlife

Fungi (Amanda Adolph)

There have been a few new fungi species this May and a couple of old favourites. A lovely surprise was that the Yellow Fieldcap is back in a pile of end-of-year grass cuttings. Also on the west of the Common a Lilac Oysterling has popped up in the woodland between Lake Lane and the Main Common.



Yellow Fieldcap- *Bolbitius titubans*
with yellow spherical emerging caps



Lilac Oysterling- *Panus conchatus*

It has been a fantastic May for St. George's Mushroom across the south of England this year so it was good to find specimens just along the bridle path on the Lower Common.



St George's Mushroom
Calocybe gambosa

Flowers (Dan Bosence)

With the extremely hot weather of last summer, we might expect this to have some effect on the flowering, or survival of our wildflowers. For this we can compare the first flowering dates of our late winter and spring flowers (January to end May) with our records going back to 2009. For this exercise, 40 commonly occurring flowers were compared and all of these flowered again this year, which is good news! When this year's first flowering dates, for these 40 flowers, are compared with the previous 14 years they are remarkably similar. On average they are just half a week earlier this year than previous years. This can be taken as the same flowering date as flower counts are only made once a week. Whether this holds up for the summer flowering plants waits to be seen; watch this space for a late summer comparison.

A qualitative analysis (we don't count abundance of flowers) indicates that some flowers have fared every well this year, being more abundant and with longer flowering periods. These are the Red Deadnettle (*Lamium purpureum*), Common Vetch (*Vicia sativa*) and Star of Bethlehem (*Ornithogalum umbellatum*).



Red Deadnettle in
January frost



Common Vetch
(photo Naturespot)



Star of Bethlehem
(photo A. Adolph)

By way of contrast the Common Spotted Orchid (*Dactylorhiza fuchsii*) appears to be less abundant this year and the flower spikes are shorter.

Butterflies (Philippa Hall)

A cool and wet late spring has resulted in low counts on the butterfly transects across the Common. Looking only at transect numbers (compiled from a regular weekly walk on a set route) it seems that Brimstone, Orange-tip and Speckled Wood numbers are much lower than in April and May last year, possibly as a result of the cold spring weather.

However, observations outside the transect walk suggests that Orange-tips are actually holding their own and Speckled Woods are appearing in late May but later than last year. As Brimstones are not thought to breed on the Common, factors affecting their numbers are difficult to assess. Other butterflies seen so far, include Holly Blue, Red Admiral, Peacock and Comma.



Orange-tip on Lady's Smock



Comma on flowering plum (photos A. Potts)

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Amanda Adolph, Dan & Alison Bosence, Alan & Pauline Cox, Philippa & Colin Hall, Clare Jackson, Phil Nangle, Alex Potts, Anne Tutt, and Raf Wane. 2/6/2023.