

# Bealeswood Common Wildlife

as reported by the Bealeswood Wildlife Recording Group (BWRG), May 2024.

See also at [www.dockenfieldpc.org.uk/wildlife](http://www.dockenfieldpc.org.uk/wildlife)

## International Dawn Chorus Day



View to the east of Bealeswood just before sunrise at 5 minutes past 5 am, on the 5<sup>th</sup> day of the 5<sup>th</sup> month for International Dawn Chorus Day, celebrated and recorded by BWRG on Bealeswood Common.

This year with the spread in popularity of the free bird song identification App “Merlin” records were made as seen, heard, or picked up by Merlin and heard. Last year, on the same route we recorded 33 birds and we were close this year with 31 birds recorded. In no particular order these were:

Bealeswood Common:

Blackbird, Robin, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Coal Tit, Blackcap, Chiffchaff, Jackdaw, Pheasant, Wood Pigeon, Song Thrush, Firecrest, Goldcrest, Chaffinch, Goldfinch, Wren, Cuckoo, Canada Goose. Stock Dove, Carrion Crow, Magpie, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Tawny Owl, Dunnock, Willow Warbler, Sparrow, Raven, Long-tailed Tit.

Hatch Field (Adjacent to the Rec. off The Street):  
Collared Dove, Carrion Crow, Whitethroat.



## Butterflies (PH)

One of the first butterflies to emerge in spring, the Orange-tip butterfly is seen in April, May and early June patrolling the hedges and edges of woodland looking for mates. The eggs, laid on wild crucifers (family Brassicaceae) such as Garlic Mustard or Lady’s Smock, are bright orange and hatch after one week. Although the eggs are laid singly, inevitably other females choose the same plant. This is unfortunate as the caterpillars are

cannibalistic so those hatching later have little chance of survival. The caterpillars go through 5 changes (known as instars) as they grow, shedding their skins and often changing colour or shape as they do so. After around 25 days the caterpillar pupates remaining in this form until the following spring.



Orange-tip butterfly caterpillars (about 1 cm long) in three different stages of development or instars. Left to right; instars 1st, 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> (photos Alex Potts)

### Plants (DB) - Red Campion (*Silene dioica*)

This distinctive pink-red flower is seen in May and throughout the summer. Like several other flowers on the Common it is an indicator of ancient woodland.



Red Campion exists as separate male and female plants and the different sexes are easily seen in their flowers. Most of our flowers appear to be male.



*Left:* Male plant and flowers with central yellow stamens rising above petals.  
*Right:* Female plant and flower with five white, curled stigmas

Species with male or female plants are known as dioecious. This characteristic in Red Campion gives the origin of its specific botanical name *Silene dioica*. Other plants have male and female sexual organs (the flowers) on the same plant and are known as monoecious (e.g. the Hazel).

## Bees (AP)

The Long-horned bee is a colonial ground nester and has massively decreased across Britain, leading to its classification as a **priority species** for conservation. A small colony of the bee was discovered last year on Bealeswood Common and continues to flourish this May. Several males and females have emerged and can be seen foraging across the common on the early Vetches, Clovers and Red Campion.



*Left:* Long-horned bee on Red Clover flower  
*Right:* Long-horned bee on flower of Common Vetch which is abundant in grassy areas this year.

## More Bealeswood bees (AP)



*Left:* Cuckoo bee on Dandelion  
*Right:* Early Mining bee on Greater Stichwort

Alex Potts has an exhibition of her stunning photographs running from 15<sup>th</sup> May to 23<sup>rd</sup> June at the Allen Gallery, Alton ( [www.hampshireculture.org.uk/allen-gallery](http://www.hampshireculture.org.uk/allen-gallery) ).

## Birds (from our “overseas correspondant” AC)

Our bird specialist Alan Cox is currently abroad in central France where he sees some birds that would be familiar in Surrey, and others unfamiliar. “Redstarts are found around Frensham Common’s scattered trees arriving in mid-April but you certainly wouldn’t find them on a wire fence in a village street peering at my camera. Not far off on a roof is what I call a TV finch. Well, that is my name for them, forty years ago as I drove through France with the window down so I could hear a Serin singing and in every village it was *always* perched on a TV aerial.”



*Left:*  
Redstart

*Right:*  
Serin or  
"TV  
finch"

## 2024 Nature Walks Programme

Informal, family-friendly events for which there is no charge. If you are interested let the leaders know so they have numbers and can contact you in case of cancellation. For all events meet at this notice board on Bealeswood Common.

**Friday 7<sup>th</sup> June; 20.45 – 22.30.** Nightjar & Woodcock walk to Abbots Wood Inclosure. Contact Alan Cox: [alanfjcox@gmail.com](mailto:alanfjcox@gmail.com)

**Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> June; 10:00 – 12:00.** Wildflowers of Bealeswood. Contact Dan Bosence [dwjbosence@btinternet.com](mailto:dwjbosence@btinternet.com)

**Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> June;** Butterfly Walk- Purple Emperor and others. **09:30** at Noticeboard, or, **10.00** at Abbots Wood Inclosure carpark – GU10 4AH. Contact Philippa Hall [phall3422@aol.com](mailto:phall3422@aol.com)

**Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> September; 09:30-11:00.** Small mammals of Bealeswood Common. Contact Roger or Jill Trout [troutdpc@gmail.com](mailto:troutdpc@gmail.com)

**Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> October; 11:00-12:30.** Fungi of Bealeswood Common, and then adjourn to the Bluebell. Contact Manda Adolph [amandaadolph@gmail.com](mailto:amandaadolph@gmail.com)

*BWRG: Amanda Adolph, Dan & Alison Bosence, Alan & Pauline Cox, Philippa & Colin Hall, Alex Potts, Roger & Jill Trout, and Anne Tutt. 29<sup>th</sup> May, 2024*