



Signs of Spring 2014 in Selsdon Wood ☺ Spring has sprung in our lovely wood - about a month earlier than last year. The Wood Anemones are putting on a splendid show in the northern part of the wood and in the east the Gorse is looking lovely. The first Bluebells are peeping through already whereas in 2013 it was 24th April before we spotted any. Keep an eye on the website home page for our "Bluebell Watch" feature to keep you up to date with developments. Further down the Home page we have a "Springwatch Gallery" and a table showing the first sightings of seasonal flowers, deciduous tree leaves, insects etc. Do please let us know of any that you spot. So far we have only the 2014 sightings but the table will be updated year on year to show variations in the arrival of spring.



Bryophytes - Amongst the most humble inhabitants of our wood are the mosses and liverworts, scientifically known as Bryophytes. Most of us just know moss as a troublesome invader of our lawn but in the right place it can be very beautiful, splashing vibrant patches of green in dark woodland. The wet weather in the first part of this year created ideal conditions for moss and it grew in lush profusion over stumps and the bases of tree trunks. Although there are hundreds of different species of moss they can be very tricky for an amateur to distinguish and the Non Flowering Plants section of our website (near the bottom of the Flora page) had only a couple of photos with tentative identifications. However, I am delighted to report that this winter's rich flourishing of moss coincided with a visit to our woods by a Danish biologist, Mogens Holmen, who has relatives in the Selsdon area. In late February he contacted me via the website to send us a list of 27 species of mosses and liverworts that he had identified on his two walks and a set of photographs of most of them.



All of these are now on the website forming a superb catalogue of one of the smallest and least noticed group of organisms in our wood. Mogens works as professional biologist at the Danish national nature agency and his work focuses mainly on monitoring and site-planning connected with the implementation of the EU nature directives. Studying mosses is his hobby and we have been so pleased to benefit from his expertise. Take a look at all the photos on the website and enjoy looking for the subtle differences between them. The one shown in detail here is *Thamnobryum alopecurum* which Mogens photographed on 17th February 2014.

Bombs in Selsdon Wood No need for alarm - there are no bombs there now - but bombs did fall in our wood in WWII. In response to the last issue of the newsletter, Mik Myring contacted me to draw my attention to the fact that all the bombs that fell in London "between 7/10/1940 and 06/06/1941" have now been mapped and this map includes our wood see <http://bombsight.org/?#14/51.3299/-0.0428>. Many thanks to Mik for this link ☺ We have a number of craters throughout the wood that we have always assumed to be bomb craters but I was puzzled by the map as it does not show many of the largest hollows, such as the one in Steven's Larch which is so big that I have even seen skateboarders using it. This may be explained by the fact that the bombs that caused these craters fell outside the period that is mapped. We do know that bombs were jettisoned into the wood on 15th August 1940 which is before the mapped period (assuming that British convention is being used for the dates) so perhaps these were the ones that caused the more central craters. There is an eye witness account of this event by Andrew Harris at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/57/a4678257.shtml>.

Guided Walks We have arranged an extra **Spring Walk at 2pm on Sunday 13th April** to catch the early blooms with the original, planned **Bluebell Walk still on Saturday 3rd May**. Our walks are always gentle strolls rather than strenuous hikes and I am pleased to report that your welly boots will no longer be needed as the mud is, at last, drying out. We hope that you will be able to join us this spring but if you can't make those dates and wish to walk unaccompanied you can download a map of the woods and our guides to the red and green walking routes from the Walks page of the website where you will also find reports and photographs of past walks.

Nature Notes from Ted Forsyth

In the warm weather in mid-March many butterflies were on the wing with Brimstones, Peacocks, Commas and Small Tortoiseshells being seen in the field areas (the Peacock shown to the right was photographed on 15th March). Incoming migrant birds were represented by a flurry of Chiffchaffs and the next month will see more Chiffchaffs, Blackcaps and perhaps a Garden Warbler or even a passing Wood Warbler or Cuckoo. It is not always easy to spot the birds (although it is easier now before the trees are in full leaf) so you can enjoy the birds in the wood more fully if you are able to identify their calls. Chiffchaff, Cuckoo & Hoopoe helpfully call their names but others are more tricky: Great Tits call *'teacher, teacher, teacher'*, Blackcaps have a short warble, Great Spotted Woodpeckers call *'chick, chick, chick'*, Green Woodpeckers sound like a laugh and Nuthatches have a quite loud piping call.



Insects also migrate but may be more dependent on suitable weather conditions. If there is a sustained wind from the south look for possible Painted Lady butterflies (remember the millions which appeared a few years ago), Clouded Yellows (more likely later in the year but last year there was an early influx) and Hummingbird Hawkmoths which fly fast but hover in front of suitable flowers to sip nectar. More local species will be emerging from whatever state they were in throughout the winter – egg, caterpillar, pupa or hibernating adult. Each week that passes will produce new species including male Orange-tip butterflies with white wings and very obvious orange tips which give the species its name. The females, usually in flight later than the males, have greenish tips rather than orange.

Everything is early this year after the mild Winter and warm spell in March. The blossom on trees is more obvious on some species than others. Look for the smallish white flowers in elongated spikes (called racemes) on Bird Cherry and compare them with the bigger pink bunches on the Wild Cherry – both occur next to the junction of Langford's Way and Beech Grove. Blackthorn, particularly along the edges of David's Crook, produces a spectacular show with a mass of bushes close together. The blossom is borne on the black twigs before the leaves open - hence the name. With the Hawthorn the leaves come first but the blossom coming a little later is also very showy and beautifully scented. For more information about these and all our other trees download the individual Tree Spotters Guides from the Flora page of the website, which include maps showing where each species of tree may be found.

Although the Anemones and Bluebells are the most showy, our woods are rich in other wild flowers and you should be able to spot Celandine, Primroses, Herb Robert (shown) and Periwinkles, all of which are in flower now. Look out in the coming month for the first orchids of the year, the Early Purples, to be found off Beech Grove just north of where it crosses Broad Walk (near the badger sett) and just to the east of the bend in Court Wood Grove. There are no signs of flower shoots yet but some of the clumps of leaves are quite large. These leaves are similar to those of the Bluebells but with black blotches.



FSW Annual Photographic Competition

When the bluebells are out many of us are inspired to get snapping with our cameras and we would love to have your photos as entries for our annual competition. However, we like to include photographs from all seasons so please look back over any you may have taken over the autumn and winter months. Entries for our 2014 competition must have been taken in Selsdon Woods between 1st September 2013 and 20th August 2014. Details of how to submit your photographs can be found on the website.

Open Day 2014

We are already planning the 2014 Open Day to be held on Sunday September 7th. If you know of any hobbyists or craftspeople who might wish to display their wares do please get in touch with us and we are always open to offers of items for prizes or for our white elephant stall.

Do we have your email address?

If you have received this Newsletter by hand delivery of a printed version that is because we do not have a current email address for you. If you do have email we would prefer to send the newsletter electronically so do please get in touch with us (address below) and let us know.

We wish you joy of the woods this spring and would love to see you on our workdays or walks☺