



We hope you like the new format for our newsletter - landscape layout so that you can see each page without scrolling.



Signs of Spring 😊 There are signs of spring at last in Selsdon Wood with the first sighting of a woodland flower - a Periwinkle in Linden Glade spotted on 28/2/14. The Gorses too are now bursting into flower after a rather barren few months - this photo was taken on 24/2/14. Gorse is reputed to flower in all seasons throughout the year hence the old saying 'when Gorse is not in bloom, kissing is out of fashion'. However, that does not appear to hold good for our Gorse which seems to have long periods without any flowers.

We can expect the Anemones and Celandine to come into flower sometime in the next couple of weeks and the leaves of the Bluebells are clearly showing. My earliest ever sighting of Bluebells was on March 18th in 2008 and unless we get a late cold snap I would not be surprised to see them before the end of March this year. Keep an eye on the website home page for our "Bluebell Watch" feature to keep you up to date with developments.



Walks We have arranged an extra **Spring Walk on Sunday 13th April** to catch the early blooms with the original, planned **Bluebell Walk still on Saturday 3rd May**. Details of these walks are on the Walks page of the website where you will also find reports and photographs of past walks. Over the winter Meike Weiser led two family adventure sessions which were well attended and much enjoyed by all. On both occasions the weather was kind and they even managed to get a fire started! The more uncertain weather may have been the reason for the poor attendance for our January tree walk but those of us who went enjoyed ourselves and identified lots of trees.

Fallen Trees Throughout the gale ridden winter the Friends have been working to clear up fallen trees that have blocked paths or intruded into fields. However there have been some large trunks beyond our capabilities and these have had to wait for the attention of Council contractors. They have had other priorities over the last couple of months with falls in streets and on buildings but at last have got round to working in our woods. The huge Willow by the Courtwood Lane gate and the falls in Farleigh Border have been cleared and on 28/2/14 I watched the tree fellers (actually only 2 of them as far as I could see) working on the trees in the long leg of the Great Field and Steven's Walk. They were using a massive quad bike to help them pull down and move the branches - see below. Large timber from the winter work will eventually be taken away when the ground is a bit firmer.



Most of our home-grown tree clearance has been done on the FSW Workdays which are held in the winter on the first and last Sunday of each month. Many thanks to all of those who put their shoulders to the wheel on these occasions. The Friends have also found time to work in our coppicing area at the top of Langford's Way where they may now be seen twice monthly sporting our hi-viz FSW jackets and new safety equipment including hard-hats and eye protection. These were obtained for us by our new safety officer Neale Fox and are modelled in this photograph by our secretary Linda Morris.

There is one more workday this month - on 30th March. Thereafter, for the summer season, FSW Workdays are held less frequently (on just the first Sunday of the month) to avoid bird disturbance and because we cannot coppice after the sap has started rising. But whatever the season we can always use more volunteers! If you fancy a bit of community work in the open air we would love you to join us. Full details of all workdays are published on our website.



Noisy Bangs If you walk in the wood you may have heard what appears to be shooting in the fields beyond Farleigh Border. Have no fear - this is not someone rampaging with a gun but a bird-scarer set up to go off at intervals to protect the crops. If you have a nervous dog you may like to know that the schedule seems to be half-hourly with the bangs at around 10 past and 20 to the hour. If you plan your walks to keep away from that side at those times you should be able to avoid your dog being spooked.

Nature Notes from Ted Forsyth Before the bluebells flower there will be a carpet of white wood anemones in many parts of the wood, with occasional clumps of yellow lesser celandine and the delicate whitish flowers of the wood sorrel. Wood sorrel looks a bit like wood anemone but its leaves are clover like. There are small clumps of it along a number of paths. Look out too for the leaves of the early purple orchid now bursting through the soil. These look like spotted bluebell leaves - see photograph. Early purple orchids can be found in two places in the wood – where Beech Grove crosses Broad Walk and off the sharp bend in Court Wood Grove – and they will start flowering in April.

With mild weather and a warm day it is possible to see some butterflies even at this time of the year. There are species which hibernate as adults through the winter – brimstone, peacock (see photograph), red admiral – and towards the end of March there might even be the first of the orange-tip butterflies.

Many of the commoner birds are now singing and it is a good time to learn or brush up on songs and calls. From March onwards bird migration increases, beginning with species like ring ouzel, sand martin, chiffchaff and blackcap. Then the floodgates open to all the other summer migrants. Species which do not breed in the wood may appear but remain for only a few hours, with bigger species not stopping but simply flying over.



On good days in March it is worth looking out for displaying sparrowhawks and a green woodpecker is frequently heard "yaffling" near the golf course. As food supplies for birds dwindle in the woods, lesser redpolls and siskins will make visits to bird feeders in gardens before returning to their breeding places. The first siskin arrived in a Brookscroft garden in late January for the RSPB Garden Watch and up to seven turn up there every day. If you are particularly lucky you might see that relative of the chaffinch, the brambling. A male brambling in breeding plumage is a magnificent sight with a black head, bright orange chest and shoulders, white belly and white rump. Another bird with a white rump is the bullfinch – a useful characteristic to help identify a bird flying away. On a recent walk I spotted six lesser redpolls feeding and as I was approaching the exit on my way home a calling buzzard flew north along Courtwood Lane.

Over the next three months the fruiting bodies of some fungi start to make an appearance. The white St George's mushroom will be visible near St George's Day (April 23rd). Later chicken of the woods, starting as a small yellow blob on a branch or tree trunk, will expand to form several layers of a large bracket fungus. In recent years a number of these spectacular fungi have been found on trees in the wood, particularly near Broad Walk. Another large fungus on tree stumps around mid-year is the dryad's saddle, again yellowish but with brownish marks on the surfaces. Stevens Walk has been the most usual place to find it. Both of these fungi disappear over the winter but they reappear in roughly the same position year after year until there is no food value left in the tree or log.

FSW Annual Photographic Competition Submissions for the 2014 Competition are now invited. Each entrant may submit up to 6 photographs taken in Selsdon Woods between 1st September 2013 and 20th August 2014. As before the winners will be chosen by a secret ballot of the visitors to the FSW Open Day on September 7th 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.

We wish you joy of the woods in the coming season and would love to see you on our workdays or walks☺