



## Goat Willow - *salix caprea* (also known as Pussy Willow or Great Sallow)



The best time to spot Goat Willow is in early spring (March) when the catkins are in flower but none of the trees are yet in leaf.

The most prominent specimen of Goat Willow in Selsdon Wood is to be found in Langford's Way near the Courtwood Lane entrance (see below - 23/3/12). The tree to the right of the path came down in a storm in 2014 so now only the one on the left remains. This clearly shows the characteristic bark pattern which is a key identifying feature in mature trees although the bark of young trees is quite different being green and smooth. The leaves (3-12 cm long) are not very distinctive in shape. They are however, hairy on both sides with a distinctive downy feel and borne on red stems which are also downy.



Goat Willow is dioecious - which means that male and female catkins (right 23/3/12) are borne on different plants. The trees in Langford's Way are male with showy yellow-green flowers. The greyish smaller female catkins are harder to spot especially when borne on high branches where they cannot be examined clearly. Female trees are easier to find when in fruit in May. The capsules with their tiny hairy seeds fall from the trees and can be found on the ground beneath (below left 13/5/12). There are female trees in The Wend and in the Gorses (below right 23/3/12) and another in the southerly corner of David's Crook between the field and Greenhill Way (behind the 3 oaks planted in 1986 to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Official Opening of the Wood).



Most of the Goat Willow is confined to the south-eastern corner of Selsdon Wood. However, there are others dotted throughout such as one in the wooded strip between Fields 1 and 2 (visible from the eastern side) a sapling in the Jubilee Plantation and others in the wooded part of Vale Border.

The scientific name 'caprea' means 'goat' and this (and the common name Goat Willow) probably derives from the fact that the plant was historically used for browsing goats. The first known illustration of the plant is in *Herbal* by Hieronymus Bock (1546) where the shrub is shown being browsed by a goat.



Explore The Wend and around the Gorses area. How many Goat Willows can you spot?

