

Wildlife in Selsdon Wood in 2014 - We have an amazing diversity of wildlife in our wood, which we record, where possible with photographs on our website. As we start the New Year we thought you might be interested to hear about some of the most interesting and novel species that were spotted in 2014.

We have a rich archive of photographs of wildlife on our website but birds are under-represented as they are very difficult to photograph. During the autumn migration one of our regular visitors, Sheila Woolcock photographed a Honey Buzzard (left photo) and a Common Buzzard (right photo) flying over David's Crook just a few minutes apart. Sheila spotted that the two had different profiles and Ted Forsyth identified the Honey Buzzard from the profile and the projection of the head in the knowledge that this bird had been spotted in our area by others. The Common Buzzard might have been a local breeding bird (although we have not observed them breeding in Selsdon Wood) but the Honey Buzzard was definitely a migrant. Other bird species noted in 2014 included Tree Creepers - frequently seen and heard at the top of Langford's Way where they were presumably breeding and a few pairs of Marsh Tits along with the usual Blue, Great, Coal and Long-tailed Tits. Lots of Great Spotted Woodpeckers were observed but the Lesser Spotted seems to have vanished this year. Tawny Owls were occasionally seen, usually at a roost, and there are thought to be at least six pairs in the wood. There are no other owl species in the wood but suitable nest boxes might encourage Little Owl which breeds nearby and possibly Kestrel also. There are two or three pairs of resident Green Woodpeckers that can often be heard yaffling in David' Crook.



Although a dead frog was once found in the wood we have had no clear evidence of amphibians until this year when there was copious frogspawn in the pond in the Jubilee Plantation. Sadly however, none of it ever hatched in situ. By the time the little tadpoles were ready to emerge the spawn had collapsed and we assumed the stagnant water in the pond had killed it. We had removed a batch of spawn earlier to rear at home and although some of this did hatch into tadpoles the high attrition rate was troubling and as deaths continued it appeared that the problem was virtually certain to be the ranavirus disease that has been killing frogs worldwide since about 1980. The disease also lethally infects all other amphibians and reptiles - which may explain why we have no other sightings. See the Fauna page of the website for details of this story with photographs.

We have several native mammals in our wood and there were many sightings of Roe Deer, Grey Squirrels and Foxes with occasional sightings of Rabbits and also of our albino Grey Squirrels that live around the junction of Langford's Way and Beech Grove. The diggings provide evidence of Badgers although these nocturnal animals are rarely seen. Our only bats seem to be Common Pipistrelles and several were seen on our Bat Walk in August. This was followed by a short moth-trapping event which gave us sightings of a Jersey Tiger Moth, a Cyprus Pug and an Orange Swift amongst others. See the account on our website Walks page.

Amongst other insects, there were only a few sightings of White Admiral butterflies this year but Silver-washed Fritillaries were more regular - being seen in The Wend, between Jubilee Plantation and David's Crook, where there are some Buddleia bushes - and in the plantation itself where there is a clump of Hemp Agrimony. In David's Crook a single small clump of Marjoram proved very attractive to butterflies and it was not unusual to find it covered in Meadow Browns, Gatekeepers, Small Coppers, Common Blues, Brown Argus and lots of 6-spot Burnet Moths. A few Marbled Whites were also seen in the field areas and on our Minibeast Hunt in August the children found Bush Crickets, Meadow Grasshoppers and several species of shield bugs. A full report of that event can be seen on the Walks page of the website.



Flower species newly spotted in Selsdon Wood included Bee Orchid, Sanfoin (see photo) and Grass Vetchling on our summer flower walks and, as usual we found Early Purple Orchids in the springtime. In the autumn we did much hunting for fungi and there are now photographs of 249 different species on the website. David's Crook seems to be a hot spot for waxcaps with 9 species identified - Meadow-, Golden-, Fibrous-, Pink-, Parrot-, Slimy-, Snowy-, Orange-, and Honey-waxcaps. Several species also appeared at one point along the edge of Great Field near our coppice area. On our fungus walk in October we spotted over 50 species including Yellow Stagshorn, Small Stagshorn, Beefsteak, Purple Jellydisc, Southern Bracket, Artists' Bracket, Dead Moll's Fingers, Dead Man's Fingers, Leafy Brain, Waxy Crust and Amethyst Deceiver.

We wish all the Friends a Happy and Healthy New Year! Do visit the wood regularly in 2015 and let us know of any interesting wildlife that you see in our beautiful 200 acres. Photographs too are very welcome both for display on our website and as entries to our annual Photo Competition©

Identifying Trees in Winter

Join us for our walk at 1pm on Saturday 10th January 2015 when we shall be looking at ways of identifying trees in winter. A key feature of the deciduous species is the bark and this picture guide shows the bark of 14 trees to be found in Selsdon Wood.

Take a look, too, at the gallery in last month's newsletter, which showed all our evergreen species.

Ash



Shallowly ridged, grey and hard and cold to the touch. Will not flake off. Widespread throughout the wood.

Oak



Grey and deeply ridged often with lichen growth. Softer than Ash - corky flakes can be broken off. The most common tree in the wood.

Silver Birch



Easiest bark to recognise. Silvery white with black growths. Mainly in the southern wood adjacent to The Gorses.

Beech



Grey and smooth. Distributed throughout the wood. Small nuts (cobnuts) or their shells on the ground give a further clue.

Elm



Pale and irregularly pitted. There are very few Elms in the wood with one notable specimen by the Jubilee gate.

White Poplar



Distinctive diamond shaped markings called rhomboid lenticels. Just one tree on the south side of David's Crook near Pool Grove.

Elder



Pale grey with vertical ridges and nobly lumps. Distributed throughout the wood with one in Vincent Avenue by the Jubilee.

Goat Willow



Brown with deep vertical 'scars' Dotted throughout the wood with notable examples in Langford's Way and between F1 and F2.

Sweet Chestnut



Grey. Ridges often appearing twisted around the trunk. Most in Broad Walk & Avis Grove. Spiky fruit cases and nuts beneath.

Scots Pine



Grey to tan in colour. Deep ridges form vertical plates. Most in Steven's Larch. Cones beneath. Evergreen.

Larch



Dark brown and deeply ridged. In southern wood and Steven's Larch. May be cones beneath. Needles shed in autumn.

Spruce



Grey with distinctive, reptilian looking scales. Notable specimens at the field end of Avis Grove others in Greenhill Shaw.

Cherry



Another easy one to spot. The bark is bronze and shiny with horizontal lines. Widely distributed throughout the wood.

Rowan



Shiny with horizontal markings. More green in colour than the Cherry. Dotted throughout esp southern woods.