



Spinney Wood

A report of activity April to June 2022

Nature notes

In review of last year's report, a follow-up orchid survey took place in May and early June to look for the rare lady orchid *Orchid purpurea* in Spinney woods. Our main focus was in areas where this species has been located in the past, but, unfortunately, once again it was not detected during our surveys.

Other orchid species of interest that were recorded on the survey included, the white helleborine *Cephalanthera damasonium* these were in large numbers along the north-west end of Spinney Wood (Adisham Road) with over 100 spikes counted.



Volunteers searching for white helleborine



Other commoner species found, included the early-purple orchid *Orchis mascula* and common twayblade *Neottia ovata*.

Moschatel *Adoxa moschatellina* and Goldilocks buttercup *Ranunculus auricomus* were also recorded during the survey. These are both species associated with ancient woodland and indicate a richness of biodiversity.



Early-purple orchid



Common twayblade



Goldilocks buttercup



Moschatel

Two breeding bird surveys were undertaken over Spinney this year. One survey was carried out at the beginning of April and the other in mid-May.

Highlight species from the survey that showed signs of definitive and probable breeding, were:

Great-spotted woodpecker

Nuthatch

Treecreeper

Marsh tit

Song thrush

Mistle thrush

Chiffchaff

Blackcap



Marsh Tit *Poecile palustris*

RSPB stock image

Hearing a marsh tit singing/holding territory was a significant record for the site as they are now a Red Listed species, which means it is in danger of extinction in UK. This is because of the rapid decline in the breeding population since the 1960s. The main cause of this is from neglect in the traditional, coppice management of broadleaved woodland, as coppicing creates scrubby understory, which birds such as marsh tit and nightingale (a bird that once bred in the woods) need, to create adequate nesting and foraging habitat.

The coppice rotation that has been reinstated again at Spinney Wood will promote ideal nesting habitat for both of these species, as well as better habitat for many invertebrates and small mammals like bats and the rare dormouse.



Last year's coppice plot, with fresh Hazel growth pushing up from the cut stools.



Volunteer tasks & Ranger work

In addition to regular site visits and checks, here's a look back at what we've been up to...

10/04/22 – Breeding bird survey.

Our first breeding bird survey of the year was carried out, this was done by stationing ourselves at various points throughout the woods for a limited time at each location, these are called point counts, where you record as many birds from each point for 5 minutes, then returning for a later visit in the season, we hope to record the same species again singing, to provide proof of birds holding territory, or providing more significant evidence like carrying food to a nest site.

20/04/22 – Dangerous trees were reported close to paths following stormy weather. A meeting was held with contractors to get the trees felled in the near future.

25/04/22 – Volunteer task

3 volunteers

Dead hedging and trimming up cut materials

Litter pick

7 bags of litter



29/04/22 – Litter pick and orchid survey

2 bags of litter

3 species of orchid recorded. White Helleborine (emerging), early-purple orchid and common twayblade.

9/05/22 - Continuation of trimming up cut materials and site litter pick

2 bags of litter collected.

19/05/22 - Dead hedging around part of perimeter of coppice plot area

25/05/22 - Work carried out by Leaf Tree Services, a hung-up horse chestnut limb hanging over pathway was removed and an ash tree that was heavily leaning towards a footpath was taken down.

30/05/22 – Volunteers task/ orchid survey

3 Volunteers

Dead hedging and litter pick

2 bags of litter

Over 100 white helleborine orchid spikes found.

13/06/22 – Site litter pick. Site checks.

1 bags of litter

27/06/22 – Volunteer task

2 volunteers

Clearing footpath entrances of vegetation, dead hedging and litter picking.

1 bag of litter

Many butterflies were enjoying the sunlit glades in the woodland: red admiral; speckled wood; small tortoiseshell and large whites

08/07/22 – Site litter pick

2 bags of litter

Summary:

The total number of bags of litter that were collected between April and June was **17**

The total number of volunteer days contributed was **11**

Community Engagement

As well as engaging with visitors to Spinney Wood and volunteers, our focus for this quarter was Aylesham Cubs and Scouts Group.

After an initial meeting with the group leaders, a programme of activities was agreed upon that would fulfil criteria towards a number of Cub and Scout badges.

13/06/22 – WCCP gave a presentation about Spinney Wood, the plants and animals that live there and how the woodland management technique of coppicing was used to care for the ancient woodland and the benefit to biodiversity.

27/06/22 – the first visit to Spinney Wood! Walking through the woodland and learning to ID tree species. Group into pairs and they chose a tree and did a bark rubbing and a leaf rubbing using paper and wax crayons. The six trees identified were: oak; ash; beech, sycamore; hazel and wild cherry.

11/07/22 – the Second visit to the woods: a bug hunt to learn how to identify insects and other invertebrates.



The third and final visit needed for the cubs and scouts to fulfil the criteria for their badges will take place in September.

We are considering a visit during the school summer holidays where they will do more plant and animal ID, footpath clearing, a litter sweep and, more importantly (!), campfire cooking and temporary den building using tarpaulins.

Looking ahead

Things coming up on the horizon at Spinney Wood include (planned and proposed):

- Introduction to Woodland Birds (Green Gang) on Wednesday 27 July for the WCCP Big Summer Festival.
- Tree seeds & nut gathering and growing – in the autumn we plan to get the local community involved to help grow tree saplings to plant up native hedgerows along open areas of the woodland edge.
- A big litter sweep - working with locals and volunteers to clear all litter from the woods.
- Community groups tree planting event.
- Continue to promote Spinney Wood to get more people involved volunteering and enjoying this wonderful place.