

## **Conservation and Wildlife Report for Year to May 2025 for**

### **Burrow Hill Nature Reserve**

#### **General.**

For future reference this report will be stored at [Home | Keaver Drive Management Company](#)

As owners and guardians of Ancient Woodlands, we are working with Natural England and the Forestry Commission on a 10-year management plan which is an important step forward and raises awareness of our woodlands and its importance. A short summary of the plan is available if anyone wants to see it. There is also an important move towards looking at the next 30-50 years as climate change and other natural and human impacts mean that our woods and many like it across the UK will disappear in that timeframe if we do not act now. We really need to act now to ensure mature trees are still here in 30 years time and they need to be able to stand up to our warming climate. We are working with climate consultants from the University of Surrey on tree species from the Mediterranean area which will become naturalised in the UK in this time period.

The wildlife watering hole/pond in the HA area at the bottom of the estate was carefully cleared of silt and leaves by Dan (#24) and myself in early February. Some further work was done later in spring by Margaret and Richard (#40). The bramble and other invasive plants were cut back and where possible dug out, with retained plants cut back. Pond watercress and hornwort have been planted into the pond to help future oxygenation. New netting will be placed over the top of the surrounding fence in late summer/autumn, which will be kept in place at all times.

Although we have lost several trees during the year, tree planting has been non-existing as we have no useable open space for them that's not regularly cut down. This is part of the wider review and we'll get back to making space in the woodlands and seeing what species we need to consider after the consultant review in May and the results of the 30-year planning project.

The SANGS is recovering after the pipeline work, we'll see what the spring and summer brings us in the way of wild flowers on the area where they had the works hub. The very small tree saplings they planted have had a 60% failure rate according to SHBC, who now have the responsibility to replace them with new trees. Work on the paths, fencing and installation of nest and bat boxes has been completed. They have installed a Tawny Owl box on the North side on one of the scots pines. We were asked to contribute to new sign boards concentrating on flora and fauna species which can be seen in the SANGS. These were installed in January.

#### **Birds.**

The male Tawny Owl calling from our woodlands almost every day during the winter and early part of this year did in fact mean there were breeding owls in our woods, this has now been confirmed. Paul received an email from a neighbour in Stonleigh Court who had taken a photo of an owlet in his garden in March 2024. Unfortunately the owlet had fallen from a tree and was dead. However this did prove for the first time that owls are breeding here. This spring and early summer we've had young owlets calling from their branches for food both day and more noisily at night. They are not using the owl box we installed in the upper woods area as the nest and owl branching area is behind #30/32/34 Keaver Drive.

Firecrest numbers are very good this year with 4 breeding territories. This is significant in the UK population of firecrests so something to be proud of. The number of young reared is unknown and of course we have many predators waiting for fledglings to leave their nest. A fledgling flew into Dan's garden office from the nest nearby behind #28. It was safely released.



Figure 1 - Fledgling firecrest released safely (Dan #24)



Figure 2 - Tawny owlet branching (stock image)

Other than tawny owls and firecrests we have many breeding birds here that rely on woodlands like ours to raise their young. From the end of July onwards we will start to see them flocking together for protection and coming back to our garden feeders. Keep an eye or ear out (using Merlin if needed) and if you have any unusual ones please let me know.

## **Mammals**

Our badger clan continues to survive even though the pressures to move away and desert the sett are always there. It is estimated we are still at a population of 6 individual animals. Again 4 have been seen together including a cub, so again breeding has been successful in our reserve.

The latest sett survey had 9 active entrances near the main sett on the South side of the woodland so that's a good sign. We managed to get some good trail camera photos of badgers and through their markings we can count the 6 identified animals. A near neighbour also caught 4 badgers on camera in his garden but their behaviour suggested that 2 of them were from another clan.



Figure 3 - Badger sow and her cub (Paul #32)



Figure 4 - Badger sow and boar

Whilst talking to a neighbour in Stoneleigh Court I was informed of 2 further badger fatalities, which means we have lost 4 in the past few years that I know of. Badgers do not have a long life so this is not surprising, but if the clan are not reproducing enough cubs and given that only a small



percentage of cubs survive to adulthood and given the 'closed in' nature of this reserve, it is expected that the woodlands will be badgerless in a short period of time. As Field Officer for WSBG I'm in discussion with the chairman and with Wildlife Hospitals at Harper Asprey and Hart to make our woodlands a release site for recovered animals and orphans if such an event occurs.

Please report any badger sightings or concerns to me directly, or through the WSBG office number on 07726 929681.

The red fox is our primary predator species in our woodlands, keeping grey squirrel, brown rat and mice numbers down. They do not need our help to find food, but in times of hot weather water is really important. So whilst feeding the foxes with scraps and dog biscuits is okay, allowing them to get a drink when water holes and ponds are drying up is essential.

The largest litter we have this year is 4 cubs, with smaller litters of 1 and 2 also present in the woods. It is estimated that we have 7 cubs dotted around the woods from 3 breeding pairs. The trail cameras in the woodlands have captured some great stills and videos.



Figure 5 - 5 members of a Red Fox family (Paul #32)



Figure 6 - Inquisitive red fox cub



Figure 7 - Proud dog red fox

Bat records have been few and far between this year. We seem to have lost our local breeding groups of bats and only sporadic individual common and soprano pipistrelles have been recorded.

The populations of rodents (brown rat, grey squirrel, wood mouse) in our environment have not increased due to predation. This is a good balance in our ecosystem and we should try to keep it this way.

#### Other Animal and Flora News

Our current species list stands at 1139. Our total species for all flora and fauna is broken down as follows;

<b>Total species recorded</b>	<b>1139</b>
Flora (including fungi)	308
Fauna	831

This is an increase of 48 over this time last year and is a great total of life within our environment. Most of that is insects and the great news is a lot of new bee species have been found, mostly rare solitary ground burrowing bees using the sandy soil of our reserve for nesting and overwintering...photos of some of them and moths to follow.



Figure 8 - Long lipped mining bee on orange blossom (Paul #32)



Figure 9 - Red mason be on orange blossom





Figure 10 - Flavous nomad bee on orange blossom



Figure 11 - Green eyed flower bee on lavender (look at the size of that eye!!)



Figure 12 - Buff tip moth (dan #24)



Figure 13 - Privet hawk moth (Dan #24)



Figure 14 - Brimstone moth (Paul #32)





Figure 15 - Peppered moth on garden snapdragon



Figure 16 - Green silver-lines on marigold

### Nature Reserve Update

As reported last year the nature reserve continues to suffer from naturally caused stresses. Weather extremes is a key concern, particularly storm and heatwaves and it is very likely we will get more heat and for longer periods as time goes on. Drought causes a lot of stress on our trees, especially native oaks, sweet chestnuts and ash trees. The large oak branch that fell near the HA houses on the lower common was caused by wet rot within the limb. This was caused by too much water in the rotten part of the limb collected over the years making the limb very heavy, so when the weather all dried up and the roots of the tree were unable to feed water through to the area of the tree which was holding it up there, it fell.

This combination of too wet and too dry, the extremes we now face every year, will cause further tree failures so the research into what species we plant for these woodlands and how we fund it for the next 30 years is very important to address.

Generally our animal life is okay, with breeding season well under way and many species successfully rearing their young here around us.

We have conducted a number of litter clear ups around the woods. Thank you to those who help. One of our neighbours decided that when renewing their fence it was good idea to dump all the old fencing and concrete into our woods. After a quiet chat, they got a firm to remove all the rubbish and take it away, that's the 4<sup>th</sup> time I've had to get someone to clear their rubbish from our woodlands.

If anyone has interesting information of flora or fauna across the estate, or any concerns with conditions of trees, please let Paul know.

### **SANGS**

The SANGS is in its second year of recovery. As mentioned before 60% of the new trees planted failed and need to be replaced by SHBC. How much of that they did who knows. The small areas of copse do seem to be growing okay where the saplings took hold so fingers crossed we will get some of the 200 trees back they cut down just in that small SANGS area. The lost mature ones will take 15 years to grow to anything like what we had.

The wildflowers seem to have re-established themselves but some species we had did not get replaced by Esso so they are lost.

The new signage is good and we were pleased to be asked by SHBC Greenspace team to add our information about flora and fauna to the board.

### **Useful Information**

As for this report, all future nature reports will be placed onto the KDFMCL website for all residents to access at [Home | Keaver Drive Management Company](#). Also if you have any photos of the local environment or wildlife and would like them on the website, please send them to Paul to upload. If you do not access the website or know of residents who don't access the internet, then a paper copy can be provided. Any help required on our environment, the woodlands as well as wildlife in your gardens, please contact Paul at [thecolletts@btinternet.com](mailto:thecolletts@btinternet.com) or on 07979 708207.