



**Registered Charity Number
117184**



Newsletter No. 36 Autumn 2025

Working Party 10th May 2025

On a beautiful day in this amazing Spring we arrived to find just Liz at 10 o'clock. However, we were rapidly joined by John and Anne and then by Stuart and Julie, who had planned to just come for the walk but was so enjoying the wood she stayed to help which was wonderful.

The main job this time was pulling out as many of the thousands of young sycamore seedlings as we could and we certainly pulled out thousands!



Over the last few years the dry Summers and windy Winters have meant we have lost several mature trees, mainly from the top of the old wood where the ground is driest. This means that more light is getting to the forest floor and is allowing the sycamore seeds to germinate. They need at least 6 hours per day of bright light in order to germinate. However, we do not want more sycamore in the forest as these are not native and although they do provide a habitat for birds and can be used by birds such as blackbirds, robins and blue tits for nesting and the seeds can be eaten by birds such as greenfinches and goldfinches they do not provide anything like the rich biodiversity of an oak tree in this country. An oak

tree supports more life than any other UK tree, about 2,300 species supported and a further 326 species which depend upon oak trees for survival.

In pulling up the sycamore seedlings we found several small oaks, wild cherry trees, horse chestnut and ash trees which now have more room to grow and develop hopefully to fill the spaces in the forest canopy once more. We have planted several oak trees throughout the old wood, and do find that unless they are fairly small, they do usually die in the dry conditions. So, it appears we will have to be patient as the smaller trees are growing slowly and less are dying; so, this seems to be the way forward.



Once our backs were aching Liz, John and Anne went home and Stuart, Katherine and Stephen stayed behind to saw up and stack a holly tree that had fallen over in the winter as an oak branch fell on it; the whole making a rather unstable pile of branches. I would ask people not to climb on our fallen trees and wood piles as they can be unsafe as they move unpredictably and potentially trap legs etc. We cannot always get to recently fallen branches immediately although we do try to clear all paths as soon as possible.

Katherine Hutchinson

A Walk in the Woods. Part 1; Spring

What a pleasure to visit Sadlers Wells Wood for the first time ever. The Gods were looking down on us as the sun was shining strongly and the springtime light was magical. There is a balance to be struck when visiting a wood as a keen bird watcher, too many leaves and the birds are difficult to see and too early in the season and the Winter migrants have left and the Summer visitors have not yet arrived.

Our visit just about hit the sweet spot with all year woodland crew of Robins, Blackbirds, Chaffinches, Tits and Wrens both visible and singing to stake their claim on a breeding territory. If we had been in the wood during the winter or early spring, the lone song would have been that of the robins, whose soulful song is heard all year round. Other birds in the winter months restrict themselves to contact calls only as they flit through the trees, the smaller birds in multi species flocks in an attempt to avoid the Sparrow Hawk's gaze.

The tall Oaks in the wood are both a joy to behold and a challenge when looking up into the canopy for our feathered friends. A couple of canopy species were very audible; the Great Tit with its "teacher, teacher" call and the Chiffchaff with its onomatopoeic call. The latter is the first warbler to call each spring and many of those calling will have braved our warming winters rather than migrate with most of the other warblers to Africa. They are a pointy blue tit sized bird that is always in motion, flitting from branch to branch looking for insects and, surprising for a bird that spends its life high up in trees, they nest on or close to the ground in nettle or bramble patches.

As we walked on through the old wood, larger birds were visible and audible: the ubiquitous Wood Pigeon and two members of the Corvid Family, the Rook and the Jackdaw. The Rooks were "cawing" non-stop as they flew to and from their nests which are always high up in a group called a Rookery and made of large twigs. They are the first bird to nest most years and feed out in the fields on ground insects, worms and larvae in the soil. The Jackdaws are garrulous, nest in tree holes when living in the wood and make a sudden "chak" sound once or more as they fly. In towns they have a habit of nesting on or in chimneys which is why they occasionally can be found looking bemused and sooty in fireplaces! In the background there was a Song Thrush calling from a lofty perch. Their stamina is amazing, they are often the first bird to start with the dawn chorus and can keep up a stream of tuneful, strident notes and repetitions for many hours.

Lovely as the day was, there were no star species until a thicket produced not one but two Blackcaps competing with vigorous song. These are another warbler species that cannot make up its mind if it is a migrant and the likely cause of the energy being used in the singing is that the thicket was unclaimed as a territory. The male is a six inch long thin, predominantly grey bird with a black cap. The silent females are the same with a russet cap and the male's song is acknowledged to be second only to the incredibly rare Nightingale. Difficult to see but a few minutes standing still by the thicket they have chosen to sing from should yield a fleeting glimpse.

My mind was starting to think of birds that such a woodland should support and the friends showing us the wood confirmed Greater Spotted Woodpeckers were present. Perseverance looking in the crown of the oaks showed a Nuthatch zipping up and down vertical trunks looking for grubs and spiders. These are charismatic birds, similar to a woodpecker in habits but the size of a Sparrow. They eat acorns and nuts through the winter, hence their name, as they wedge the nuts into the fork of a tree and then "hatch" the nut with their bills. A close look at one is a privilege as they are slate grey/blue on top with a yellowy underside and a black mask around the eyes. I was surprised they were not singing as they have a variety of piercing "weeps and woops" which they use in the mating season.

Two species that I was surprised not to see were the Long Tailed Tit and the Willow Warbler. The former is a pinkish and black tiny bird with a lollipop stick for a tail which is always found in family groups whizzing through the trees with their "zee zee zee" contact calls keeping everyone together. The latter is almost indistinguishable from the aforementioned Chiffchaff (slightly lighter legs) but has a very different song and is a true migrant. The song is a lovely downward cascade of notes and for me is the true sign that Spring has arrived. A visit to the newly planted wood in early May should result in seeing Willow Warblers.

A useful phone app is Merlin. This will allow you to identify bird calls as you take the walk and the data collected is used by conservation science. We are looking forward to visiting the wood again over the years and seeing how the management of the habitat progresses.

John Rowley

Village Day 14th June 2025

As always, Sadlers Wells Wood was represented at Bunbury's annual Village Day this year, with Jess, Anne and John setting the stand up and being on hand to promote the trust and provide information.

Our annual quiz was on bird identification and this tied in with the Village Day theme this year which was 'Sounds of the Summer'. Quizzers were also asked to think of as many songs or nursery rhymes with birds in as possible; with varying degrees of success!

Keith Hill won the adults competition and he generously said that he would like to donate the value of his prize to the woodland.

Catrin Davis won the children's prize and she said that she would like a personal tour round the woodland demonstrating the "Merlin" app and chatting about the trees etc.

This was readily agreed to and would be done as soon as her mum can find a convenient day.

This year we welcomed two new 'Friends of the Wood'.

The weather stayed fine, (with the occasional gusts knocking over the information books!). So overall a very pleasant day was had.

Jess Hitchmough

Working Party 5th July 2025

On another lovely warm and dry morning Stephen and I met Steve Bell for a morning in the Woods.

Stephen and I cut down a couple of holly stems in the old wood which were growing at a steep angle and threatening to stop enough light getting to one of the young oak trees growing there, we then cut them up and moved them out of the way. Meanwhile Steve arrived and started pulling logs and branches out of the pond and raking all the reachable pond weed to the side, mounding it up. This turned out to be a muddy and physically demanding job, probably best done in small sections.



I then took the branches away from the pond onto a wood pile further away in the hope that this may discourage people from throwing them in again. Not only do they look unsightly but the excess organic matter is damaging to the pond water so do please ask anyone you see throwing branches in to desist.



After Steve had gone, I dug up and removed a large number of alder saplings that had started growing around the pond, similarly to allow sunlight to get to the pond and also so that it looks nicer from the path.

I have been told that ponds should have no more than about 50% weed cover so that enough sunlight gets down into the water to keep it sweet. Otherwise the pond can become less good for wildlife. Our pond fills naturally with water, which is mainly run-off from the field nearby and has rather too much fertilizer in it to make ideal pond water. Hence the rather exuberant growth of pond-weed and algae. However, while we were there Steve saw a newt hatchling and a developing baby frog and I saw a baby frog about 1cm in length so we are fairly sure that newts and frogs are using our pond, which is delightful, and as we hoped they might.

Ponds are actually a temporary feature in any landscape and are always in the process of gradually filling up with mainly organic debris which falls in, so in order to keep our pond as a body of water removing some weed and debris will help.

While Steve and I were working on the pond Stephen kindly strimmed about 1/3 of the way round the path in the new wood and we came back on 11 July to finish strimming the path round the new wood, so all the vegetation is now well cleared from the path in the new wood.

Katherine Hutchinson

Working Party 4th August 2025

On Monday 4th August, as storm Floris was battering the North West of England, five hardy souls set out to cut back any branches impeding the paths through the Wood. It had been raining hard earlier that morning but was not raining at 10am so Bob, Alison, Paul, Stephen and I started to see how we got on.

Two delightful hours later Paul and I had made it all along the top path, Alison and Bob had done well along the bottom path and Stephen had fished the remaining logs and some excess weed out of the pond, completing the job Steve Bell had started but was unable to finish as we did not have a long

enough rake. We have now purchased a rake attachment for our own extension pole (that we mainly use for sawing high branches) and it worked very well- making the job much easier (though still not easy!) Hopefully now there are fewer piles of branches close to the pond there will be less temptation to throw them in.

After Bob, Alison and Paul had left Stephen and I cut the side branches off a holly left by the top path last year and made them into a large habitat pile in order to encourage the leaves and twigs to rot down better and hopefully be a little less obtrusive. Just as we were finishing that it started to rain heavily and we could tell it was time to stop for the day.

So, we were lucky with the weather again despite all the rather gloomy forecasting of the weather reports.

Katherine Hutchinson

Family Working Party 7th September

We were a small band of folk continuing the plan to clear away the holly next to the stream this year. Stephen, Jess, Molly and I met and cut down some holly shrubs and also cut down some twigs which have re-grown from shrubs cut down over the last two years. I also cleared away some bramble which was taking advantage of the additional sunlight to try to gain a hold. We are not aiming for a tidy or fully bramble-free area, more of a mixed woodland wild-flower area, which hopefully will not need very much removal of bramble to keep it free for woodland flowers however we will mainly have to just watch and see as it develops.



On two occasions a small frog jumped out when we were clearing up, which is an excellent sign of good biodiversity, and may suggest that our pond, which has now had two seasons is helping the local amphibians.

This photo shows that it is quite hard to see the frog when it isn't moving, illustrating how impressive their camouflage is in the wood.



A Walk in the Woods. Part 2; Autumn

How time flies, if you forgive the pun. Summer is not "Peak Bird Season" as they are all too busy breeding and feeding young. Territories have been established, so not much singing and keeping out of sight of predators is key. You could be forgiven for feeling the Wood is empty but they are there, somewhere. Summer has now left the woodland, the trees standing tall and bare of leaves, apart from the glossy holly, ivy and yew. The woodland has its autumn carpet rolled out, reds, brown and gold lay in a patchwork on the ground keeping the earth warm, nurturing the bulbs below and eventually feeding the ground that feeds the trees. Its lovely being in the woodland in the winter, looking at the bare bones of branches and hoping to catch a glimmer of the wintering birds passing through. The autumnal weather heralds a whole new bird crew. These are birds that are on their holiday from the cold and snow of Scandinavia and Northern Europe. The big numbers belong to the Thrush family: Blackbirds, Song and Mistle Thrush, Redwings and Fieldfares. The first three species are with us all year but many of our summer breeders head South to France and even Spain for the winter leaving their woodland free for their continental cousins. The two species that stand out are the Fieldfares and Redwings as they are only here in winter and they reliably stay in flocks from tens to thousands in number. The Fieldfares are big bold thrushes with grey heads, rufous shoulders and grey rumps. Often, they have a creamy chest with large spots. They either ravenously strip any berry bearing bush or feed in the fields close to the woods. As they fly above they have a diagnostic Chack, Chack, Chack call. The Redwings look like a small Song Thrush but with a white eyebrow and a red patch in their armpit which can only be easily seen when they are in flight. They often flock with the Fieldfares but less frequently feed in fields. I once was on the East coast in an Easterly gale and watched exhausted Thrushes landing and immediately start feeding, having made the exhausting flight from Scandinavia. It is common for oil and gas rigs and boats in the North Sea to have these migrants stop off for a rest!

Other migrants are Robins, Starlings and the rarer Bramblings. The first two will need no introduction and, other than asking for passports, it is impossible to ascertain their nationality. The Bramblings come with numbers in direct proportion to the predicted severity of the winter and make hay in the Beech woodlands, feeding on the beech mast. It has been a good year for mast so they will appear in Sadlers Wells Wood at some point this winter. No-one knows how they predict a bad winter in advance, maybe they call Michael Fish! An attractive bird, similar to a Chaffinch (with whom they feed on the ground) but with an orange chest and black head.)

For some species, Winter is a time for flocking together, either to watch out for predators or to find food together. Jackdaws and Rooks (members of the Corvids or crow family) can flock at dusk in thousands later in the Winter. It will be interesting to see if the nesting sites for these two species become roosting sites in Sadlers Wells Wood. If this is the case it is the mature dominant birds that get to roost higher up in the trees. Theories abound but avoiding the droppings from their friends overnight is one good reason to be at the top!

What rarities could Sadlers Wells Wood harbour in Winter? The jackpot would be a Winter roost of Long Eared Owls. Smaller than the Tawny and much more owl like. They are nocturnal all the year round so, if they are there, you will have to be very vigilant by looking into any dense evergreen trees. They have orange eyes and false ear tufts made of feathers. They are, surprisingly, another species whose numbers swell in the winter as they too make the arduous trip from Europe. The presence of a Tawny versus a Long Eared Owl can be given away by other birds mobbing them. Winter is not a noisy time in the wood, so a number of birds calling aggressively is worth tracking down. It may be a roosting owl or a stoat or cat. Woodcocks probably breed in Sadlers Wells Wood or nearby, favouring dense undercover. They are a long-legged, very long beaked bird, about the size of a thin pigeon with what is termed cryptic plumage. They sit tight until you are upon them and then burst into life, you would never be able to spot one on the ground. In winter their number swell from Europe and a walk through to wood in early morning or late afternoon could flush a pair. They fly in fast, low, erratic directions which is spectacular to see but sadly makes them a prize for sportsmen with guns. It used to be a literal badge of honour to have taken a pair of Woodcock with both barrels. Thankfully many of my shooting friends now feel viewing a pair of Woodcocks rushing away from the beaters on a shoot to be a privilege and not an opportunity. One endearing fable about the Woodcock is that the migrating birds used to allow Europe's smallest birds, the Goldcrest and Firecrest, to ride on their backs across the North Sea. I for one can see no reason for doubting this story.

This is the great joy of a wood, every season, every week, offers new opportunities and new insight into what its inhabitants are doing. There are a few resident regulars; the tits, finches and woodpeckers, but many of those you thought were resident are an immigrant population in Winter. That is the dynamic and fastmoving world of our feathered friends!

John Rowley

Thanks very much John for these two interesting and informative articles about the bird life we can expect to see in the Woods.

We hope that as they walk through the Woods it will encourage visitors to look for and identify the birds.

Dave Clapperton

Working Party 15th November 2025

Our last working party for 2025 was rather different than our usual thinning and tidying up of trees. On Friday it rained all day and we were not at all sure if the working party would be able to go ahead. In the event the morning was cloudy with no rain and the Wood had dried out nicely so it was another lovely day in the Woods. Six of us gathered to take down the cycle track and jumps that had been built in the old Wood.

This is an area of ancient semi-natural woodland and the trust was set up to preserve this. Sadly the cycle jumps and downhill cycling really do not fit into this quite small woodland, and making the cycling area has been damaging the understorey of the forest, which is important for it to function as an ecosystem.

The Woods have always been a place where cycling is not allowed, hence the "Cyclists dismount here" notices at both entrances. The Trustees have had complaints from footpath users of boys cycling so fast down the hill that they would have been unable to stop, which is very unnerving for a casual walker using the Woodland for the amenity it is designed for.

We shovelled the earth back into the holes which had been made and removed the logs which made the structure more hard-wearing to cycle over and put them back into log piles in the forest. Then we planted two large hazel bushes to try to help the area re-naturalise while leaving a view from the bench, which was the original idea of siting the bench there.



Going back a week later we noticed a group of boys attacking the hazel bushes with a shovel and digging it up, which is vandalism and I do hope anyone who knows any of the boys involved can explain why this cycle track has been dismantled and that damaging private property, even when it is held in trust to be a community woodland is not appropriate behaviour.



I do think that cycling is a great activity for teenagers. It's a relatively safe, cooperative venture, unsupervised by adults, which I do believe is important for our children once they are growing out of the playground area. It would be good if another area could be found somewhere where they could continue cycling together.

Katherine Hutchinson

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Website; Latest News

Our website has been incorporated into the Bunbury Village Website.

Everything that was contained in the old website has been transferred across and you can view all relevant pages by going to

www.bunburyvillage.info

and then choosing Village Facilities and then Sadlers Wells Wood.

Dave Clapperton

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Full details of our Privacy and Data Protection Policy appear on our website.

The only information which we hold is contact details (name, address, telephone and e-mail) and details of donations and subscriptions paid. We will not sell or share this information with any third party and it will be used only for sending out copies of our Newsletters, subscription reminders and occasional notices of functions and requests for assistance such as work parties. If you wish your name to be removed from our contact list, please let us know in writing – details as below

Friends of the Wood

The annual subscription remains a minimum of £5.00 per person and the 2025/2026 subscription became due on 1st April.

The annual subscription for 2025/2026 subscription became due on 1st April. The Wood produces no income itself and we therefore have to raise all the money needed to pay for insurance, maintenance, etc. Your subscriptions are therefore very valuable to us, not only in themselves but also because they show a commitment from the local community.

If you are paying by cash or cheque then please return the form and subscription to Dave Clapperton, Bob Harris or any of the other Contacts whose details are given above.

Cheques should be made payable to

Sadlers Wells Community Woodland CIO

If you wish to pay by direct debit or electronic transfer (BACS) then please set this up using

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