

## WALK AND TALK – ECOLOGY

In this section are some of the things we have seen on our walks in the category of “ecology”, which includes, flowers, birds, trees, shrubs and other living organisms. Some walks were in areas designated as “Sites of Special Scientific Interest” (SSSI).

**Moments caught in time .....** As we look back at our Walk and Talk visits and remember these beautiful images of God’s creation, perhaps glimpsed at the time with a casual eye, memories come flooding back. So, time to reflect and be thankful! *“Where’re we turn Thy glories shine and all things fair and bright are Thine” (Thomas Moore).* .....

**They will come back again!**



Cowslip Meadow

### FLOWERS

**Sheepheas – Cowslip Meadow** Also known as Coronation meadow it was chosen as one of the sites to commemorate the Queen’s 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of her coronation in 1952. The chalk grassland is ideal for cowslips, which flower in April and May and are biennial. We visited this conservation area in April 2017 and again in April 2019. Cowslip Meadow has a changing display of flora through the summer months and the whole area is a nature reserve with, for example, 12 species of Orchid and some notable ancient woodland.

**West End Common – Marsh Marigolds** This is a part of Esher Common, designated as an SSSI and owned by Elmbridge Borough Council. We walked from Garson’s Farm, along the river Mole by The Ledges, then back up



to the top of the escarpment using the steps shown in the picture. This was our very first walk in July 2013. We saw colourful yellow patches of Marsh Marigolds, often called Kingcups, which flower from April to August in boggy ground, which is here maintained by springs at the foot of the scarp face.



**Hampton Court – Daffodils and Great Vine** We have seen the wonderful display of daffodils and other Spring flowers in The Orchard at Hampton Court on five occasions between 2014 and 2018, mainly in March, often ending with lunch at the Tiltyard. On two of these occasions we walked around the formal gardens and saw the Great Vine, which was planted by Capability Brown in 1768, and is believed to be the oldest in the world.



The Orchard



The Great Vine

### BIRDS

**Bushy Park – Skylarks** These birds are ground-nesting, breeding from March to September. Numbers have declined rapidly in recent years in both Bushy Park and Richmond Park, due to interference from dogs. Therefore, dogs now have to be kept on a lead near the protected areas to stop skylarks from disappearing from the parks. The species are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act, so it is an offence to take a bird or damage its nest. We walked around the protected area in Bushy Park near Heron Pond in in April 2018.



**Bushy Park – Ducks** In Bushy Park we have seen Egyptian Geese, Mandarin Ducks, Herons and many other birds.

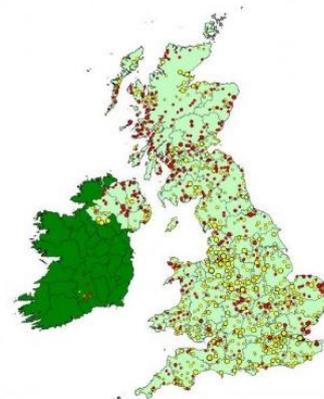


**Woodland Gardens**

**Egyptian**      **Mandarin**  
**Goose**        **Ducks**



**Bookham Commons – Heronry** We have seen herons on a number of our walks, especially in the Woodland Gardens in Bushy Park, along the river Thames, and in Bookham Commons. The number of heron nests have been counted every year in the UK since 1928. There are about 10,000 herons in the UK. The map shows where heronries are located. There is one in Bookham Commons, the only one in Surrey with public access. This heronry is not easy to see as it is high up in tall oak trees, but on one of our visits some of us saw a baby heron being fed.



Bird Hide ● Heronry ● .

Grey Heron Nest

Heronries in the UK

**TREES AND SHRUBS**

**Finchampstead – Giant Redwoods** In September 2014 we went to see the avenue of Giant Redwood trees planted in 1869 in memory of the Duke of Wellington. The road is called Wellingtonia Avenue (B 3348) and the trees were named Wellingtonia, after him but are usually called Giant Redwoods.



**Virginia Water – Giant Redwoods**



Near Virginia Water there is an avenue of Giant Redwoods which we have walked by on three occasions, in April 2015, November 2017 and May 2019. The oldest was planted in about 1860 and is now over 42 metres high. This is

measured regularly and is still growing. In the wild they grow on the west Coast of California, and are thought to be the oldest and largest living things on earth.



**Walking Group**

**Bushy Park** We have been to Bushy Park on several occasions, often to the Woodland Gardens which have special attractions throughout the year, but also to the Water Features, and the area around the ponds. The Diana Fountain, at one end of Chestnut Avenue, was created to give a grand approach to Hampton Court Palace. For many years prior to World War 2, Londoners went to Chestnut Avenue to celebrate the blossoms on “Chestnut Sunday”, on the Sunday nearest to May 11<sup>th</sup>. This custom has now been renewed.



**Chestnut Avenue**

**Richmond Park – Isabella Plantation** This 40 acre Victorian woodland plantation, started in the 1830s, was first opened to the public in 1953. It has a colourful collection of azaleas, rhododendrons, camellias and exotic trees which are best seen in late April to May. This includes the national collection of Japanese azaleas which are in a setting of woodland, ponds and streams. We have had beautiful walks there, in May 2014 and May 2018.



**Walking Group in Isabella Plantation**



**The Still Pond, Isabella Plantation**



**Saville Rose Garden**

**Windsor Great Park – Saville Gardens** Created in the 1930s, this garden is one of the foremost Ornamental Gardens in the UK and is grade 1 listed in the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens. There are 35 acres of interconnected gardens, in an enclosed part of Windsor Great Park, which we visited in February 2015, near the Totem Pole. When the space in Saville Gardens was used up, an overflow area was created by Virginia Water, called the **Valley Gardens**, which we have visited on several occasions.

**RHS Wisley** We went to the Open Day in March 2019 to view these magnificent gardens. It is one of four RHS gardens, Wisley being given to the Royal Horticultural Society in 1903. The 240 acres site includes decorative gardens, glasshouses, an arboretum, ponds, small gardens and a scientific laboratory founded in 1907.



**Crocuses**



**Rock Gardens**