Prestwood Nature
SPRING NEWS 2026

Conservation group for Prestwood Region including Great Missenden, the Hampdens, the Kingshills, North Dean and Speen

The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service

Working together with nature

Issue 74 4 May 2026



Prestwood Nature's Secretary writes…

Spring is such a great time of year for people interested in nature. This weekend brought the wonderful **PN Dawn Chorus walk** on Saturday and the joy of seeing our first Painted Lady butterfly in the garden.

In preparation for ***No Mow May*** I took a look at the front garden to see which wild flowers were already in bloom in the lawn – with help from the 'Flora Incognita' app I identified 17 different species! No Mow May is an initiative by Plantlife to encourage people to make space for nature in their gardens. There is lots of information available on their website. Please consider taking part, and get your neighbours involved too. Prestwood Nature will be handing out certificates to those participating: let us know via the email address admin@prestwoodnature.org if you are doing so. Do share photographs of the flowers or insects that appear on your patch via the Prestwood Nature Facebook page – you could try using one of the apps described in this newsletter (p3) to identify them, but if you are stuck post a picture anyway and we'll see if we can help.

Finally, have you watched the **latest episode** of the BBC's Countryfile programme about conservation in the Chilterns? It was broadcast on Sunday 3rd May and is of great local interest, including interviews with several familiar faces, including Marieke Bosman, who was a PN trustee until 2024.

Frances Rawle

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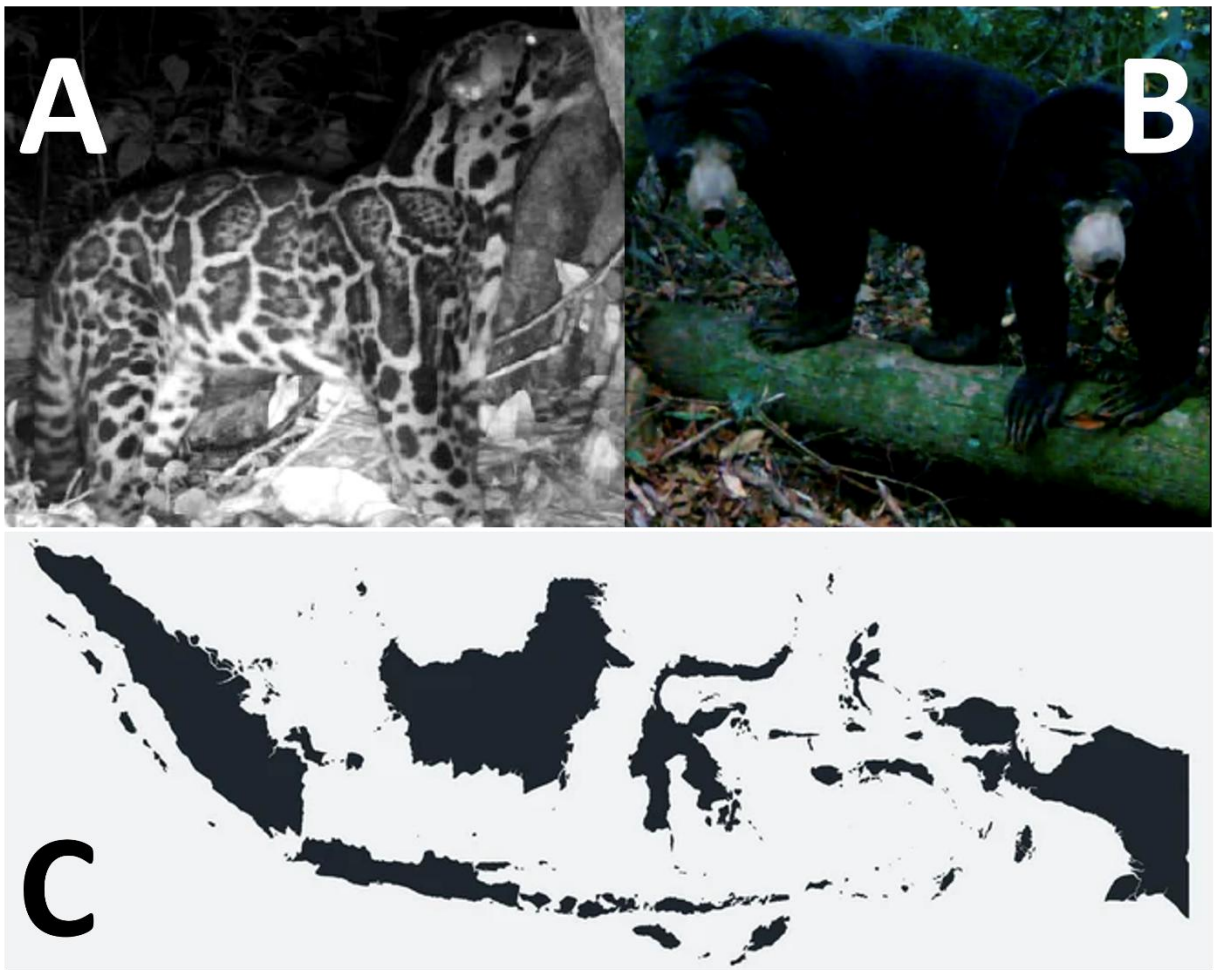
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Spring Quick Quiz

1. Do you know the name of wild animal ‘A’ and wild animals ‘B’?
   Hint: both take their names from the weather.
2. Both of these images were taken by camera traps on the island of Sumatra, Indonesia. Where is Sumatra on map ‘C’?
3. What’s the link to Prestwood? *(More info on page 16.)*

Spring Botany

The terms ‘conifer’ and ‘evergreen’ are sometimes thought to be synonymous, but this is not the case. Not all conifers are evergreens; and indeed, neither are all evergreens conifers!

In the case of the European Larch (*Larix decidua*), the clue is in the Latin name – this is one of the deciduous conifers. Being a conifer, it is a member of the group of land plants known as the Gymnosperms. These plants came before the flowering plants (the Angiosperms) and get their name from the fact that their seed (‘sperm’) are naked (‘gymno’). In contrast, the seeds of the Angiosperms are held within a chamber (‘angio’) known as an ovary. Gymnosperms lack this ovary, and so their seeds are exposed, held simply in between the scales of the cone.



Female larch cones (KvO)



Male larch cone (KvO)

The European Larch is an introduction, brought to our shores in the early 17th Century. It found itself rather comfortable here and has been known in the wild since the end of the 19th Century. It is also commonly planted in parks, plantations and shelter belts, and there are plenty around to see in our area. Early in spring the cones are particularly attractive. The male cones, committed to pollen production, are light brown in colour, only about 1cm or so long, and a brighter yellow when the pollen is being released. The female cones, committed to seed production, are an eye-catching magenta in spring, and might easily be mistaken for flowers. But according to the rules of botany they are not, as they lack the all-important ovary.

Karen van Oostrum

Nature Identification Apps: A New Era for Amateur Naturalists



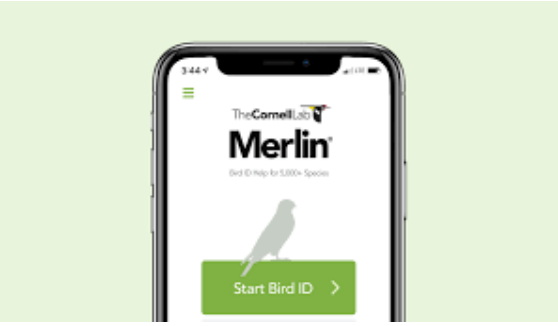
Agaricus campestris*, field mushroom*



... not to be confused with Amanita Phalloides*, the Death cap mushroom (images via Wikimedia CC0)*

Before the 21st century, identifying a species of animal or plant meant leafing through field guides, working through botanical keys, or – if you were trying to recognise a bird song – listening to recordings on vinyl or cassette. Over the past two decades, however, there has been an explosion in digital tools designed to help us recognise the wildlife around us. Although not 100% accurate (relying upon them to identify edible mushrooms is definitely not advisable!) they have transformed nature identification for the enthusiastic amateur.

Birdsong identification



One of the most popular tools for identifying birds by sound is *Merlin Bird ID*. Merlin 'listens' through your phone's microphone and suggests likely species in real time. You can download regional 'bird packs', so the app focuses on species relevant to your location.

The Merlin app is invaluable for birdsong id

A quirk worth noting, given how common red kites are here in the Chilterns, is that Merlin fails to identify them! Merlin includes descriptions, photos and recordings, allowing you to browse and learn about almost any bird worldwide.



Turdus viscivorus, *mistle thrush, whose song is tricky to distinguish from...*



Turdus merula, *blackbird (both images via Wikimedia, CC BY 2.0)*

Plant identification

There are several apps that allow you to identify plants simply by taking a photograph. *LeafSnap* can identify plants using images of flowers, leaves or bark, and it also identifies fungi and diagnoses plant diseases, nutrient deficiencies and pest damage. *PictureThis* offers plant identification along with care advice and disease diagnosis (though many of its features sit behind a subscription).



From left: LeafSnap, PictureThis, PlantNet and Flora Incognita are logos to look for in your online app store

PlantNet is free and focuses on wild plants. It improves continually through a citizen-science model: users upload photos, but only images reviewed and verified by botanists or trained volunteers are added to the reference dataset. *Flora Incognita*, developed by the Technical University of Ilmenau and the Max Planck Institute for Biogeochemistry, is also free and ad-free. It focuses on wild plants - including trees, shrubs and herbaceous species - but does not identify fungi. Its training data are scientifically curated, and the app forms part of an ongoing ecological research programme.

General wildlife identification

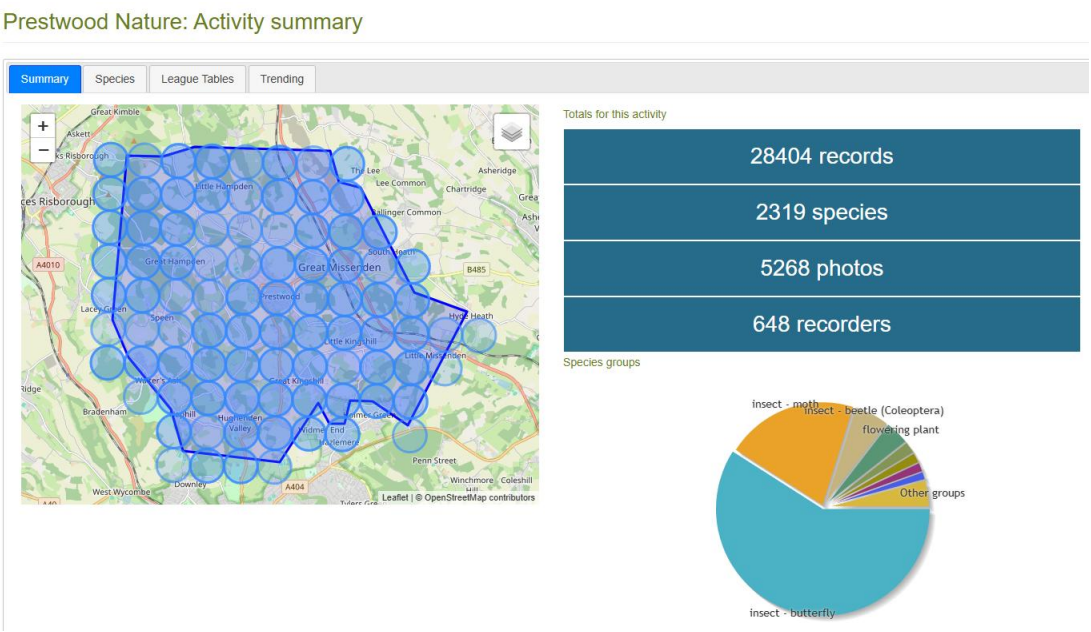
If you want a single app that can identify almost anything from a photo - plants, fungi, insects, birds, reptiles, amphibians and mammals - *ObsIdentify* is an excellent free option. *Seek* by iNaturalist offers similar capability and is also free. It includes achievement badges and challenges perhaps making it particularly appealing for families.



From left: ObsIdentify, Seek by iNaturalist, iRecord and eBird apps – all great additions to your phone!

Contributing to Wildlife Records

If you want to go beyond identification and contribute to understanding of local biodiversity, several apps allow you to submit sightings that are then verified by experts. These feed into national and international databases used by researchers, conservation organisations and local record centres - regional hubs that collate and manage wildlife data for conservation and planning. This is a screengrab of Prestwood Nature's local *iRecord* project online.



In the UK, iRecord is the main platform for submitting wildlife sightings. If you join the Prestwood Nature Activity within the iRecord app, your sightings are automatically added to our local database.

For birds, *eBird* is the global standard and is used by hundreds of thousands of birders worldwide. While it does not identify birds from photos, it is excellent for logging sightings, exploring local hotspots and contributing to global bird science.

Digital tools have made nature identification and recording more accessible for non-experts – no need to struggle with a heavy bag of field guides and notebooks – just pop your phone in your pocket and away you go!

Caroline Greenwood

Prestwood Nature Dates for Your Diary

Sunday 10 May: 10:00-13:00 Boug's Meadow volunteer work party, Link Road car park, Great Missenden

Sunday 24 May: 10-12:30 Pollinator-Friendly Garden work party, Kiln Common, Greenlands Lane, Prestwood

Sunday 14 June: 10:00-13:00 Boug's Meadow volunteer work party, Link Road car park, Great Missenden

Saturday 20th June: 11:0-17:00 Prestwood Nature stall at Prestfest on Prestwood Common

Sunday 28 June: 10-12:30 Pollinator-Friendly Garden work party, Kiln Common, Greenlands Lane, Prestwood

Sunday 28 June: 14:00-16:00 Summer Botany walk led by Karen van Oostrum. Famillies welcome. Free but do register in advance once the walk is released via PN's EventBrite.

Sunday 5 July: 11:00-15:30 'Midsummer in the Meadow' open day at Boug's Meadow. Families welcome. An opportunity to learn more about conservation in our local area. Accessed via Link Road car park, Great Missenden – just turn up!

Sunday 26 July: 10-12:30 Pollinator-Friendly Garden work party, Kiln Common, Greenlands Lane, Prestwood

Sunday 9 August: 10-13:00 Boug's Meadow volunteer work party, Link Road car park, Great Missenden

Sunday 23 August: 10-12:30 Pollinator-Friendly Garden work party, Kiln Common, Greenlands Lane, Prestwood

Wild Garlic Season



Wild Garlic growing in abundance, April 2026 (Nick Hardy)

Wild garlic (*Allium ursinum*) is common in the Chilterns and thrives in beech woodlands, particularly in damp, shady spots with chalky soil. It's a native species, and spends most of the year as a bulb, with the leaves and flowers appearing from late March onwards.

At Prestwood Nature we are more generally involved with observing and supporting nature, rather than eating it! However, at this time of year there is such an abundance of wild garlic in certain areas that some selective foraging is harmless. There are large patches of it in local woodlands and even beside roads and footpaths. All parts of the plant are edible although only the leaves and flowers should be picked when foraging. The leaves make an excellent pesto or addition to soups and salads; the flowers appear a little later and make for rather a pretty garnish scattered on soups, salads and so on.

Do ensure it is definitely wild garlic – if in doubt, or if it doesn't smell of garlic, then don't eat it (Lily-of-the-valley may look similar, but is toxic). Apparently, it is also popular with animals including cows (although it can make the milk taste of garlic) and brown bears – hence the *ursinum* part of the Latin name.

Nick Hardy

Spring in Boug's Meadow

Spring has sprung in Boug's Meadow with the flowering of a bumper crop of Cowslips, scattered more widely across the Meadow than in previous years. The River Misbourne has flowed through the site for some weeks, with an extremely wet January finally percolating into the chalk aquifer and raising the water table to fill Mobwell Pond.



Maintaining the meadow is teamwork



Cowslips are more abundant this year
(Both images AG)

PN's volunteers worked together to rake the arisings from the early meadow cut in super-quick time in an additional work party to the usual schedule, with Peter putting in additional hours and meriting a special mention in *despatches*. Weeks later a fallen cherry tree on the Wagon Road was 'laid', in the hope that it will spring back not unlike the fallen tree in Northumbria's Sycamore Gap. The reason why the young cherry fell is still unclear but there is some evidence of vandalism on site meaning dead hedging has had to be reinforced and reinstated this spring. Colin has worked hard to rehabilitate Prestwood Nature's information board for Boug's Meadow which has deteriorated over time; and we look forward to it being back in place. At the start of March our volunteers were joined by helping hands from Piper's Corner School to plant a new mixed native hedge along the edge of the site parallel with the Link Road. As the ground had been dug and successfully rotavated (and the weather was mild), this was pretty easy work. It is hoped the new whips will take root quickly and produce an area of enhanced habitat for wildlife visiting the site – a big thank you to Piper's HOPE group (Helping Others Protect the Environment) for raising the funds to buy the hedge plants.

I am also really grateful to the 'stalwarts' of Boug's Meadow (you know who you are) who turn out regularly, rain or shine, to help support biodiversity on site and maintain this amenity for the community. There will be lots more to do to ready the Meadow for our annual 'inspection' and conservation jamboree on the 5 July to celebrate Midsummer in the Meadow day. If you would like to volunteer at one of our work parties, you would be very welcome. Contact me via admin@prestwoodnature.org to be added to the friendly WhatsApp group. *Alice Griffiths*

Update on the Pollinator-Friendly Garden



A tidied Pollinator-Friendly Garden, spring 2026 (Karen van Oostrum)

Our Pollinator-Friendly Garden, tucked away in the corner of Kiln Common, off Greenlands Lane, is looking very well established now. At our last work party we focused on tidying up the entrance by de-tangling the ornamental grasses from the rather vigorous 'un-ornamental' grass! We cleared the pathways and removed hogweed and other weeds from the beds. There has been a lovely display of primroses, the geraniums are coming into full foliage now, and it won't be long until their flowers are out. Beyond the garden is a hedgerow, and at the foot of this the bracken is currently flushed with the indigo of our native Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) and studded with the white of the Greater Stitchwort flowers (*Stellaria holostea*). If you would like to help to take care of this lovely garden, you will find the details of the work parties on Prestwood Nature's website.

Community Orchard Spring update

The first tree to blossom this year in the Community Orchard was the Goblin Cherry, which was out on St Patrick's Day. It was followed by the other cherries, plums and apples, and as of mid-April most of the Orchard is in full-bloom.



Goblin Cherry blossom (James Appleby)

In February we organised a pruning party at the Community Orchard on Kiln Common, focusing on the apples and pears. Many of these trees are on significantly dwarfing rootstock and so required very little maintenance. The opposite was the case for some other trees, which were in need of significant reduction. The stakes and protective netting of all trees were checked and replaced where required, and many of the trees were

given a mulch feed from the on-site compost area. The prunings were all piled neatly in the corner along the hedge, creating a wonderful habitat for wildlife.

Karen van Oostrum

Mending the Misbourne

The Mend the Misbourne project is afloat and buoyant! It's a plan to improve the condition of the river. As part of this, we 've set ourselves the goal of removing the Himalayan Balsam from the River Misbourne. Why, you might ask? – it's a pretty plant, and bees love the flowers. BUT (there's always a but!) it damages the ecosystem. It out-competes all the native plants, even nettles and cow parsley, so reduces biodiversity. As it's an annual plant, the river banks are left bare and destabilised when it dies back in winter. The soil washes into the river, reducing oxygen, and covering the gravels needed for fish to breed.



Volunteer party for Himalayan Balsalm pulling (T Mallett)

Last year, some valiant volunteers from Prestwood Nature pulled up huge stands of Balsam from the garden of the Crown pub in Little Missenden.



Himalayan Balsam: the challenge last year in Little Missenden (T Mallett)

This year, we're adopting a new approach to tackle the Himalayan Balsam at the Crown. Pulling up the 6-inch seedlings is a lot easier than tackling 6-foot-high plants. And, of course, this early action makes disposing of it (which must be done on site) a lot easier.

Misbourne River Action volunteers reckon we pulled several thousand seedlings so far…. Identifying them has been easier than we thought. The cotyledons (seed leaves) are distinctive – rounded with an indentation – unlike the elongated true leaves. And the watery, round stems are easy to spot.



The balsalm's seed leaves are very different to their true leaves. (TM)



Himalayan Balsalm seedlings, Spring 2026 (TM)

If you'd like to join us in helping clear the River Misbourne from Himalayan Balsam, we have work parties in May and June. For more information contact: Trish_mallett@outlook.com

Trish Mallett

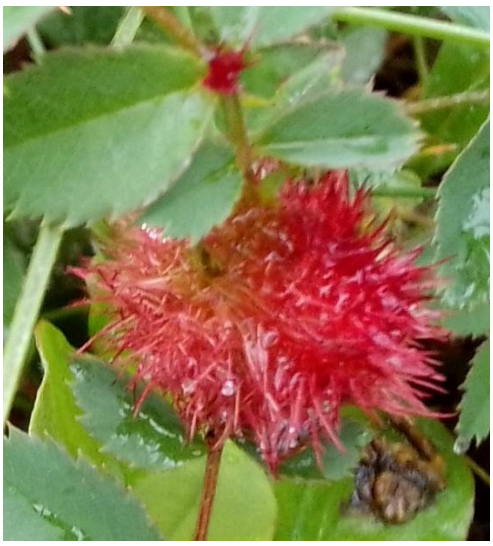
A Patchwork of Habitats: Prestwood Local Nature Reserve



Prestwood Local Nature Reserve from the air (Google Maps, satellite view)

Although only four acres or so in extent, Prestwood Local Nature Reserve has a variety of habitats within its boundaries. There is a band of mixed species and mixed aged trees forming a dense and tangled area on the northern perimeter. Some small clearings amongst the trees provide habitat for plants and animals that prefer neither dense woodland nor open grassland. Within the grassland, there is an area where the chalk bedrock is only just below the surface, where some of the less robust plants grow, such as Gentians, Milkworts, Orchids and Quaking-grass, and where the Mining Bees mine; creating small mounds of soil. Elsewhere, where the soil is deeper and damper, we have the more vigorous grasses and other herbaceous plants, such as Oxeye daisy, Knapweed, Scabious and Wild Carrot. Then there are the shrubs that provide nectar, pollen, berries, shelter and leaves to eat – Blackthorn, Hawthorn, Buckthorn, Spindle, Privet, Roses, Dogwood, Guelder-rose and Wayfaring-tree. Scrambling around are Brambles, Ivy, Honeysuckle, Black Bryony, and the unrelated White Bryony. Even the car park has mosses on the tarmac and lichens on the posts.

We try and maintain some sort of balance between the shrubs on the one hand, and the grasses and herbaceous plants on the other. If we did not do this, then shrubs and eventually trees would cover the whole site. We hope that suitable conditions will develop for a variety of birds, mammals, and invertebrates. It is often said that the 'edges' where different habitats meet are important, so we try and avoid straight lines, preferring curves and scallops. If the scallops can face in different directions, facing the morning, midday or evening sun, or into or away from the prevailing wind, then so much the better.



Robin's pincushion gall on rose (P Pratt)



Oak apple gall (P Pratt)

Prestwood Nature's butterfly transect will cover more of the reserve from this year, giving a better idea of the numbers of species and individual butterflies to be found on the reserve. For some species we rely on 'evidence of presence' as the creatures themselves are very unlikely to be seen. This includes galls and leaf mines. Galls are produced by plants in response to insects laying eggs on the plant. The larvae of the insect feed inside the gall. Sometimes, other insects are present within the gall, either as harmless co-occupants taking advantage of

the feeding opportunity, or as parasites on the original insect. Some of the more noticeable galls are Robin's Pincushion on roses, Oak Apple and Oak Marble. There is also a gall that looks like a nail driven through a leaf of Dogwood.

Leaf mines are formed by insect larvae eating out a passageway or blotch within the thickness of a leaf. These can be seen on Hogweed, Oak and Bramble, among others. The presence of the fungus that weakens and often kills Ash trees is all too evident. Infected Ash trees can become brittle, so that branches are shed. Where possible, we leave dead trees standing, as they form habitat for beetles and other invertebrates. Only if the tree poses a safety hazard will it be felled, when the logs will be stacked to create a habitat for mammals and invertebrates.



Hogweed leaf mine (P Pratt)

Please contact me if you would like to know more about Prestwood Local Nature Reserve. I am forever grateful to those visitors and local residents who help clear up litter left by others. *Philip Pratt* highbeeches1@yahoo.co.uk

Wild Names for Wildflowers!

My favourite day of the year came around on 22nd March when I joined Karen Van Oostrum on the first of her 2026 tri-annual series of wildflower walks. Not only does this regular date on the calendar herald the official start of spring for me (even if the weather is doing its best to deny it), but it is also an opportunity to try and absorb a tiny amount of Karen's encyclopaedic knowledge of plant life. As an extremely novice botanist, as wonderful as the event was, I was nevertheless reminded that the natural world can sometimes be a disappointing place.



Town Hall Clock (Jeff Delonge via Wiki CC BY)

It was quite a crowd that, blinking in the unfamiliar but extremely welcome sunshine, ambled enthusiastically behind Karen as she led us around the circular route she had planned from Kiln Common. Before long, I heard Karen talk of the mighty construction that was about to

rear into view. Look out for the Town Hall Clock in the next field, she advised. Town Hall Clock? In Prestwood? It must be 20 feet tall. How had I missed that? Instead, we found Karen on her knees pointing out the most exquisite flower …. no more than 10mm across. More officially known as *moschatel,* and undoubtedly rather smaller than the usual public timepieces, its charming common name is nevertheless rather apt describing as it does four individual flowers (and an extra one on top) each facing a different direction and yes, just like the clock on the town hall.



Veronica hederifolia *or ivy-leaved speedwell (Karen van Oostrum)*

Next, she advised, we were on the look-out for Speedwell. Now I was excited. This must have wheels. Would we be quick enough to catch it? In fact, we had no trouble as there it was, close to the ground and ready, so legend has it, to bestow safety, good luck and, if you believe our more northerly counterparts, protection against witches and all manner of other afflictions. This benefit is available to all travellers and not just the *Veronicas* in our party with whom the genus shares its Latin name. With its delicately serrated leaves and attractive purple petals, Prestwood travellers will be glad to see it in abundance when it reaches its peak through the summer.

Our next encounter was a little more 'does what it says on the tin'. I caught sight of my first flowering bluebell of the year. No confusion there. Blue – tick, bell-shaped – tick. Beautiful – tick.

Very soon, though, it's back to the confusions of earlier. Karen, please tell me the name of this lovely plant with its most delightfully delicate, white filigree flower head. It's as wispy as lace and must surely bear a name that is equally as wispy. "Pignut." What-nut? Never have I seen anything less pig-like or even nut-like.



Conopodium majus *or pignut (Karen van Oostrum)*

With her signature patience, Karen explains the origins. Commonly named for the tasty tuber lying beneath the ground once prized for its ability to "fatten hogs", the hazelnut flavour of the *Conopodium majus* appeals to humans too (though now illegal to dig up, so please resist).

Despite the promise of underground treats on our March walk, we were a little early to go "gathering nuts

in May", which is indeed where the nursery rhyme comes from.

A little discombobulated at the disparity between the grand names of the gentle flora I was seeing around me, I wondered what overly exciting description would greet us for our last stop. "Here we have the greater stitchwort". Hmm, that's an odd one, though perhaps not so bizarre once I discovered it was once used to relieve 'side stitches' brought on by exercise. Stitchwort, or *Stellaria holostea,* was traditionally woven into graceful garlands to celebrate the arrival of spring and often seen in buttonholes at weddings. But if you are a groom thinking of reviving the habit, beware. Some say you will incur the wrath of the fairies who will punish you with thunderstorms to ruin your day. Thankfully, no vexed fairies ruined our beautiful afternoon and, as we stood amongst the swathes of my favourite flower, I concluded if ever there is a name that delivers more than it promises, it is the greater stitchwort.



Greater Stitchwort (Rasbak vis Wiki CC-SA)

You can join Karen as she follows the same route at three different times of year, introducing the plants that arrive and depart through the seasons. The Summer Botany Walk will be on **28th June 2026**, at 2pm and I guarantee you will learn a great deal from our very expert local botanist. *(Register for this walk via Eventbrite.)*

Lynda Marlow



Bluebells and Stichwort (Karen van Oostrum)

Leather Lane Conservation Group: protecting an ancient lane, its wildlife, and its iconic oak

Prestwood Nature recently hosted the Leather Lane Conservation Group (LLCG) for a detailed and inspiring talk about their work to protect the historic Leather Lane and the rich ecology that surrounds it. LLCG is a registered charity dedicated to safeguarding this ancient holloway, monitoring the wildlife that depends on it, and raising awareness of the biodiversity found in this part of the Chilterns.



Western Barbastelle bats use Leather Lane's nature corridor (Jan Ebr via Wikimedia CC BY SA 4.0)

A central part of their story is *Ilona*, the 250-year-old lone oak that became a symbol of the campaign to protect Leather Lane. The tree was saved from felling after LLCG's ecological monitoring revealed that the lane is used by rare Barbastelle bats, alongside several other bat species commuting and foraging along the mature treeline. This evidence, combined with sustained advocacy, contributed to a significant redesign of HS2's planned crossing. Instead of a conventional structure, the project will now include a wide green bridge designed to maintain wildlife connectivity — a notable conservation achievement within the Chilterns National Landscape.

The talk also introduced attendees to the wider world of British bats, exploring the species found locally and the habitats they rely on. It was a reminder of how much extraordinary wildlife depends on the ancient lanes, hedgerows and woodlands that thread through our landscape.

During the meeting, Prestwood Nature shared information on tools and organisations that may support LLCG's ongoing ecological monitoring, including systems such as *iRecord* and initiatives like *Tracking the Impact*, which help community groups gather, store and interpret biodiversity data. These resources may prove valuable as LLCG continues to monitor the site and works towards its long-term ambition of creating a community space that protects both heritage and habitat.

As a small charity, LLCG relies on community support to continue this work. They welcome volunteers, practical help, and financial contributions — and for anyone feeling particularly adventurous, there was a request for volunteers willing to sit under trees at 3am to help locate potential bat roosts! Prestwood Nature is grateful to LLCG for sharing their expertise and for their ongoing commitment to protecting this remarkable landscape.

Caroline Greenwood

Conservation: Home and Away





Glimpses of the Sunda Clouded Leopard in the Isau Isau nature reserve, captured by remove camera trap © Eyes on the Wild

Co-founder of *Eyes on the Wild* Anthony Hearn gave a really interesting talk about eight years of supporting nature conservation in Sumatra, Indonesia, on Saturday 28th March at Holy Trinity Church, Prestwood. His account of founding and developing a conservation organisation that reaches across the world to fund camera traps in a remote, Indonesian nature reserve was inspiring.

Sumatra is an island in the west of the Indonesian archipelago. Home to a wide range of plants and animal species it has lost almost 50% of its tropical rainforest due to deforestation in the last 35 years. Anthony has worked with local conservationist and environmental educator Pungky Nanda Pratama to establish and maintain an array of 'camera traps' in the Isau Isau reserve. Together they have reviewed the footage captured when motion sensors are triggered. These images have been shared online via social media, gaining an audience of thousands of wildlife enthusiasts.

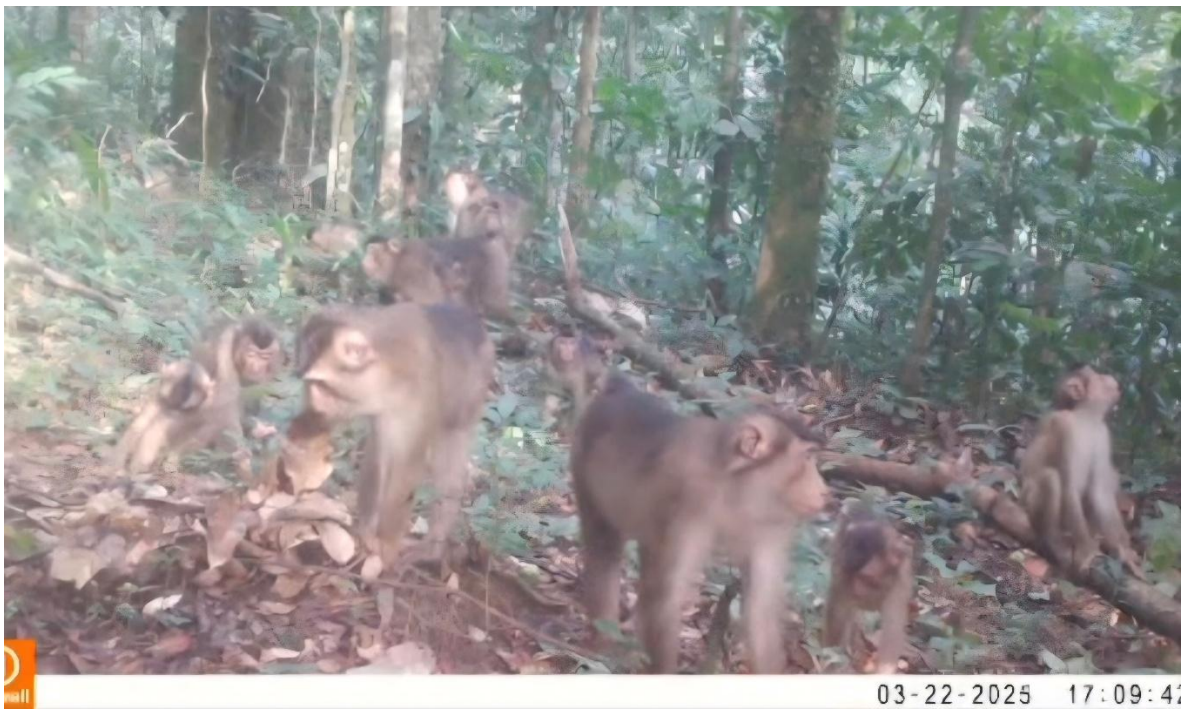
The 'Sumatran Camera Trap' initiative aimed to gather photographic evidence to inform the future protection of the Isau Isau reserve – and the results speak for themselves…

Over the last eight years, the organisation has gathered important images of Sun Bears and Clouded Leopards in the reserve, both target conservation species identified by the Indonesian conservation authority; both described by the IUCN as 'vulnerable'. Other fascinating and endangered creatures snapped include the Sumatran Surili (monkey), Banded Linsang (weasel-like carnivorous mammal) and a nest of Tomistomas (freshwater crocodiles).



Thought to be solitary creatures Eyes on the Wild's images of groups of Sun Bears generated interest online. © E on the W

With only an estimated 10,000 Sun Bears left in Asia and similar numbers of Sunda Clouded Leopards, the value of Hearn's work in partnership with Pungky and his wider team on the ground in southern Sumatra is clear. Of course, their camera traps have provided engaging glimpses of more common sights in Sumatra such as troops of Southern Pig-tailed Macaques, but also rarely photographed animals such as the Sumatran Striped Rabbit (listed as 'data deficient' by IUCN).



Pig-tailed Macaque troop © Eyes on the Wild

Eyes on the Wild is a small-scale non-governmental organisation with big ambitions, to gain UK charity status, undertake similar camera trap-based work in other countries and expand its work in Indonesia to the densely-populated island of Java, where fragmented rainforest

remains between the country's expanding palm oil plantations. Anthony's commitment to conservation was clear and so refreshing to hear about – thank you, Eyes on the Wild!

For further information about this joint UK-Indonesia conservation project follow Eyes on the Wild via Facebook. *Eyes on the Wild is currently looking for new team members: an assistant and a trustee. 'Both positions would be voluntary but could be a good way for people to get a foot in the door of the conservation industry.' (A.H.)*

Alice Griffiths

Other events in our area include:

SEAG's Nature and our Neighbourhood Day: Speen Environmental Action Group are holding a free event on 16 May 14:00-16:00 at Speen Village Hall, Studridge Lane, Speen, refreshments available. The speakers are all locals who have specific knowledge and experience to share with us about our Chiltern area. There will be short talks and an opportunity to ask questions as well. Sign up via Eventbrite or email jane.farley2@btinternet.com



Priestfield Arboretum's Spring Weekend: Saturday 16 and Sunday 17 May is when the friends of the Arboretum in Little Kingshill invite you to explore this site. Join a guided tour or download a self-guided tour leaflet. More details via the Friends website.

Other local groups involved in nature conservation:

- *Berkshire Buckinghamshire & Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust (BBOWT) www.bbowt.org.uk*
- *Bucks Owl and Raptor Group (BORG) https://www.giveahoot.org.uk/*
- *Chilterns Conservation Board www.chilterns.org.uk*
- *Field Studies Council Amersham at Mop End www.field-studies-council.org/locations/amersham/*
- *Friends of Priestfield Arboretum https://priestfieldarboretum.org.uk/*
- *Leather Lane Conservation Group – Preserving and Protecting Leather Lane https://saveleatherlane-wp.org.uk/*
- Speen Environmental Action Group https://www.speenbucks.org.uk/seag/
- Wild Amersham https://sustainableamersham.org/nature-and-biodiversity/

Phasia hemiptera: a specialist parasite of shieldbugs

Keep a look out for *Phasia hemiptera* (also known as the Shieldbug Fly or Bat-winged Phasia) this summer. It is a stunning looking fly in the tachinid family. The male and female are very different in appearance. The males are particularly striking with broad, curved wings with variable dark or iridescent blue-black patterns and flattened bodies (see photo). The female has more transparent wings. Both have bright golden hairs on the sides of the thorax.



Phasia hemiptera or the Shieldbug Fly





Phasia hemiptera can be found in a range of habitats such as wooded areas, hedgerows, flower-rich meadows as well as gardens. It visits many flowering plants, especially the composites (e.g. thistles, hemp agrimony) and umbellifers (e.g. hogweed).

The species is bivoltine, producing two generations per year, the first with a flight period from April to June and the second from July to September. It has a parasitic lifecycle with the females laying eggs on living host insects. The larvae develop internally, eventually killing the host. Well documented hosts in the UK are *Pentatoma rufipes* (Forest Shieldbug) and *Palomena prasina* (Green Shieldbug). By parasitising shieldbugs, it helps to keep their populations in balance, making it an important part of natural ecosystems.

Top left: Pentaoma rufipes *(Forest Shieldbug)*

Bottom left: Palomena prasina *(Green Shieldbug)*

Words and images by Anne Evans

Down Green Lane



Down Green Lane in Prestwood (TM)

It's reassuring at times to find signs around the village of people caring for nature. Down Green Lane there is an old cherry tree, probably past a century in years, but still in fine condition, even though other cherries of that age often look somewhat decrepit. It's a fine monument to Prestwood's past, when a hundred years ago it was in its prime as a fruit-growing region, including its own local varieties like Prestwood Black.

Picking the cherries provided seasonal employment and they were speedily packed and sent off by the new trains from Great Missenden to urban markets like Aylesbury and London. This particular tree, stately-looking and a relic of the orchards that covered this part of Prestwood, is favoured by a wide, green road-verge and is obviously valued by residents. Years ago they began planting bulbs and corms around its base. Over the years I have witnessed an ever-spreading exhibition of purple and white crocuses, bright yellow daffodils, delicate yellow primroses, blue and white anemones and dark blue grape-hyacinth. This year the display was at its best, when, after long dreary weeks of rain, the sun shone from a clear sky in March to provide a vision of spring-to-come, of hope for the future, and of time to relax and appreciate natural beauty. Long may the tree (and its attendant flowers) survive.



An exhibition of crocuses (TM)

It's also worth going a little further along the lane, to where the track to old Andlow's Farm comes off. Across the road is a hedge atop which, for as long as I can remember, a neat snail has been sculpted by artful shearing.



Artful shearing on Green Lane, loved by all (TM)

It's a wonder that it has been maintained over so many decades, so that it has become as much a monument to our natural environment as the old cherry. A group of members of the national Conchological Society once passed here (it was late October in 2005) on their way to look for rare molluscs in Angling Spring Wood, and they could not resist getting out their cameras to record such an unusual giant green species. (And, yes, they did find their rarities in the wood too – the Yellow Slug and Ash-black Slug, both signs of ancient woodland, where they process rotting leaves and fungi – and would never deign to be seen anywhere as common as a garden.)

Words and images by Tony Marshall

Spring quick quiz answers:

1. A is a Sunda Clouded Leopard and image B shows two Sun Bears. *© Eyes on the Wild*
2. Arrow locates Sumatra on the map of Indonesia below. It is the sixth largest island in the world and located in western Indonesia. It is on the Equator.



3. Cofounder of Eyes on the Wild's Sumatran camera trap project Anthony Hearn lives in Prestwood.

Prestwood Nature's *Summer News 2026…*

…will be published in August 2026. If you would like to write an article or share an image to be included in this newsletter, the deadline is 20th August 2026. Email the Editor, Alice Griffiths, using the email address admin@prestwoodnature.org

Ps. Don't forget to join our Prestwood Nature Facebook Group to stay in touch and share your own nature finds in our local area in 2026.

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