

I-Spy on Hocombe Mead in March 2017



Frog spawn

Rana temporaria

A sign that Spring is here at last. This is definitely a case of look but please don't touch. Moving spawn from one place to another can spread non-native species and amphibian diseases. Ponds that do not contain spawn are probably not suitable for frogs. So watch and enjoy the development of the spawn to tadpoles in the Mead.



Opposite leaved golden saxifrage

Chrysosplenium oppositifolium

This plant is a loves moist, damp place beside streams. It lives up to its name as the small round green leaves can be found neatly paired in opposite formation. When the petal-less flowers appear later in the month they are surrounded by golden sepals and yellowish leaves. If you don't know what a sepal is see if you can find out.



Gorse

Ulex europeaeus

Gorse will grow on dry, sunny, sandy soil. It is normally thought of as a moor or heathland plant. There is only a very small amount in Hocombe Mead but it grows, alongside the heather, in the one small area of heath that exists in the Mead.

The flowers are meant to smell like coconut. Take care not to prick yourself on the thorns but smell them and see if they do.



Goat willow

Salix caprea sp.

Goat willow will grow in both wet and drier habitats, as is evident on this site. The leaves provide a food source for moths and butterflies. Pollen and nectar from the flowers provides food for bees, insects and nectar feeding birds such as blue tits. Goat willow spreads very easily on this site and is an invasive species as it competes with other species that are more beneficial to wildlife.

Do you know another name for this tree?



Common Feather-moss

Kindbergia praelonga

Mosses have no vascular system (the system that carries water and nutrients round the plant). This is the reason for them being small plants and living in moist places as the water and nutrients have to be taken up by the leaves directly. What do you think would happen to moss plants if the weather becomes very hot and dry?



Lichen

Cladonia polydactyla

Lichen are living things made up of algae and fungi and sometimes useful bacteria. Some of them are like plants but they are not plants. They come in many colours and forms: some are crusty, some look leafy, and some look like tiny branching plants. This lichen sometimes has red fruiting bodies at the tips of its branches. Many lichens grow on plants but they do not harm them. Do you know the name given to plants or animals that live on plants and do them harm?



Bluebell

Hyacinthiodes non-scripta

If you look over the dry hedge adjacent to the Hazel Coppice near Ashdown Road you will be able to see the dark green spikey leaves of Bluebells beginning to shoot up through the ground. Last year when the Coupe was full of many large, leafy Hazel trees there were no Bluebells. What do the Bluebell plants have this year that helps them to grow that they did not have in the Coupe last year?



Honeysuckle

Lonicera periclymenum

Honeysuckle is beginning to burst into leaf in wooded areas while the trees are still without leaves. This way they benefit from the light and get a head start on growth. Later in the year they will have to twine around the trees and grow upwards so that their leaves and flowers can reach the light. An old name for honeysuckle was woodbine, why do you think it was called that?