

## I-Spy on Hocombe Mead in October 2017



### Oak - Acorns

*Quercus robur*

These are the fruit of the oak tree. They are valuable as food for some small mammals and some birds.

Humans can roast acorns and then grind them up to make a drink; see if you can find out what the drink is meant to taste like.



### Geulder Rose

*Viburnum opulus*

The red berries are very attractive and are a source of food for birds in the autumn, particularly bullfinches and mistle thrushes. Later in the autumn the leaves turn to attractive yellow, orange and red colours.

The shrub is sometimes grown in gardens: why do you think people might like to grow this in their garden?



### Yew Berries

*Taxus baccata*

Yew is a conifer and the red 'berry' is not a berry at all but a modified cone. The leaves and the single seed inside the berry-like structure are very poisonous so should not be eaten humans but Thrushes, Blackbirds, Greenfinches and Great Tits enjoy them. They are unable to digest the seed inside so are not affected by the poison in the seed.

What do you think happens to the seed if it is not digested by the bird?

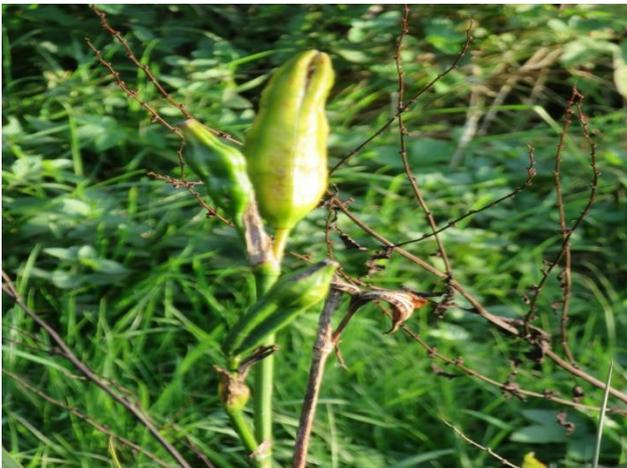


### Sweet Chestnut

*Castanea sativa*

The Sweet Chestnut is a member of the same family as Oak and Beech; it is thought to have been introduced to the British Isles by the Romans. The nuts of the Chestnut are very nutritious and are rich in vitamins and minerals. Roman soldiers were given a chestnut porridge before fighting a battle.

Why do you think Roman soldiers were given chestnut porridge before a battle?



## Seed pod of Yellow Flag or Iris

*Iris pseudacorus*

The pod is the fruit of the yellow iris and contains many small brown seeds. The seeds may germinate (begin to grow) and produce new plants but most new plants come from underground stems called rhizomes. If the seeds are to germinate they need to have spent quite a time in very cold and wet conditions.

Do you think seeds could germinate in Hocombe Mead?

## Rose hips

*Rosa species*

When there are no flowers to help identify the particular species of rose it is difficult to say which one it is but in this case it is probably *Rosa canina*, the dog rose. Birds and squirrels enjoy eating the outer fleshy part of the fruit.

During World War 2 children were encouraged to collect rose hips from the hedge rows so that they could be used to make rose hip syrup. See if you can find out why this was important.



## Bracken

*Pteridium aquilinum*

Bracken is the UK's most common fern. It likes growing in dry, acid soil. Unlike many of the other ferns it dies back in the winter leaving behind the dry fronds. In some parts of the country Bracken is disliked because it shades out other plants causing them to die.

Have a look at Bracken in the Mead and see where it is growing; do you think it is stopping other plants from growing?



## Pheasant

*Phasianus colchicus*

This is perhaps more of I-Hear than an I-Spy. You may be lucky enough to see a pheasant in the shrubby edges of the North Meadow or the Hazel coupes near Ashdown Road. They are birds that are shy of people so they try to keep away from them. If you cannot see one you can quite often hear one, particularly if it is startled. In the photo one pheasant is male and the other female; do you know which is which?

