

I-Spy on Hocombe Mead in December 2017



Holly

Ilex aquifolium

Holly trees are either male or female. Both have flowers but only the female produces berries. Nectar from the flowers is used as a food source for bees and other insects and the berries are eaten by birds and rodents. The leaves have 3 – 5 spines on them. Some of the hollies in the Mead have tiny white flowers on them see if you can spot them. (Hint – look along the path between Hiltingbury road and the wood carving)



Ivy

Hedera helix

Ivy is an evergreen plant that grows along the ground or climbs up trees or walls. When the plant is mature it produces flowers and then purple-black berries in the winter. The berries are a good source of food for birds but they are very poisonous to humans. Young ivy leaves have 3 or 5 triangular lobes but older leaves are oval or elliptical in shape.

Do you think the plant you found was young or old?

Take care: do not touch the plant as it can cause a skin rash in some people.



Hair Cap Moss

Polytrichum sp.

Mosses have no vascular system (a system of tubes to carry water and nutrients) so they do not grow very large like many other plants. To keep themselves from drying out they need to live near water or in damp shady places.

Where, in Hocombe Mead, would be a good place to look for this moss?



Wood pigeon

Columba palumbus

The wood pigeon lives in broadleaved woods. It eats seeds, leaves, fruit (especially of Ivy), buds and root crops. They are one of the most common UK birds. It is estimated that there are 2.5 million breeding pairs in Britain. They are often thought of as pests because they raid crops.

What sort of crops do you think pigeons like raiding?

Photo: Ian Rose



Mole hill

Mole *Talpa europaea*

Mole hills are the waste material that moles leave above the ground when they are making or repairing their burrows. They often occur along the line of the burrow but sometimes are at the end of short side – tunnels.

See if you can work out where the mole's tunnel might be under the ground.



Robin

Erithacus rubecula

The robin is an insectivorous bird. Males and females have very similar colouration so they are difficult to tell apart. It is relatively unafraid of humans and enjoys swooping down to hunt for insects and other invertebrates that humans disturb during activities such as gardening.

Do you know of another name for the robin that tells us something about its colour?



Hard Fern

Blechnum sp.

This fern is called the hard fern because unlike most ferns it has tough leathery leaves. Its older leaves grow in a rosette formation around the central leaves that are more upright. It likes moist shady places to grow and remains green throughout the winter.

Where, in Hocombe Mead would you look for this fern?



Aspen bark

Populus tremula

The tree belongs to the poplar family as its Latin name suggests. Pores (small holes) that develop on the trunk of the tree to allow air into the plant form an interesting pattern in its bark.

What would you call the shape of the individual patterns made by the pores?