

Visit 18th March

A grey day, but at least it wasn't raining or windy. Although only 3 weeks on from my February visit I was keen to see whether there were any real signs of Spring, I also wanted to see the extra provision for wild-life in the Community Orchard area of the Village Green recently provided by volunteers.

Starting in the car park I took a photograph for the record of the remains of the Ash tree which I had first recorded as looking a 'bit sad' in 2013.



August 2013



January 2017



March 2020

I am still not certain whether this was the result of Ash Die-back or simply 'old age'

In amongst the gravel of the car park itself I noticed a few Spring flowers



Common Speedwell



Common Daisy

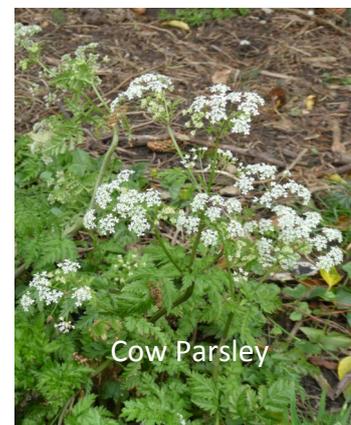


Red Deadnettle

The ground was still very wet and the footpath to the bridge was still flooded. Further along the path as it entered the Community Orchard there were a few small plants of Cow Parsley in flower.

A number of nest boxes, hopefully attractive to Tits, have been fixed onto trees just off the Village Green in the woodland strip owned by David and Hilary Harrison. They should be safe here and I look forward to seeing if any are occupied later this year.

A certain amount of pruning of fruit trees and cutting back of shrubs alongside the southern boundary has been carried out and the cut material neatly stacked to provide cover for small mammals, birds and insects.



Cow Parsley



Nest box and brushwood stacks at edge of communal orchard



Lesser Celandines were in flower throughout the orchard where early fruit trees (pear ?) were beginning to blossom. I noticed that 3 soft fruit bushes had been planted near the bridge at the west end of the orchard.

This was my first visit since the Coronavirus pandemic had been confirmed in Cumbria, and I was conscious of the need to be careful how I handled the gate latch, albeit with gloved hand. I do hope that the wildlife area will remain open during the coming weeks — it is after all possible to visit sensibly avoiding close proximity to anyone else in the area. Watching and looking forward to the new life and changes throughout the year is something that can contribute to wellbeing and peace of mind.

It was only 3 weeks since my last visit and as I entered the Wildlife Area it was clear that not a lot had changed. The flowering daffodils along the entrance track had increased, but perhaps the most noticeable differences were the stunning clumps of Marsh Marigold (*Caltha palustris*) which had burst into flower and were visible from a distance.



The level of the pond was almost back to its original extent and depth and the boulder at the northwest corner (where the otter used to spraint) was showing again. Most of the huge deposit of frog spawn which I saw and photographed last month had disappeared—presumably the eggs have hatched and the pond is now home to many hundreds of tadpoles. It was still a little early to look for Great Crested Newt eggs but it would be nice to confirm their presence again



The 'garden escape' Snowdrops against the south facing wall of the houses had gone over and seed pods were beginning to form. 'Pussy Willow (catkins) were beginning to flower on the small willow to the east of the reed bed.

On my January (2020) visit I commented on three lichens that I'd noticed, one on the dipping platform and two on fence rails. Lichens are an interesting and fascinating group, unfortunately very few have common names, their scientific names are barbaric and they are often difficult to identify with certainty. Nevertheless some of the more common and quicker growing species are recognisable. I (tentatively) identified another four species to add to my list for the Wildlife Area.



Xanthoria parietina



Physcia adscendens



Cladonia coniocraea



Cladonia fimbriata