

The Moreton Hall Wildlife Group
WOODLAND WAYS NEWS
May 2025

Happy New Year! Your trustees are looking forward to a year in the woods and where our wildlife benefits from our work parties.

Woodland Condition

How good are our woods? Are they in good condition or is the combination of public use, deer grazing and historic management reducing their value? During our May work party we'll work that out. Meeting at the Community Centre, we'll learn the technique of assessing the condition of woodlands, based on the 'Condition Assessment' technique initiated by Natural England and now provided by Defra. It looks at numerous aspects of woodland species and structure, resulting in an assessment of 'good', 'moderate' or 'poor'. After the learning, we'll visit Pond Covert, as the nearest wood, and assess its condition. The results indicate what improvements can be made, by us or by the Council.

Mistletoe

In February, we tried to propagate mistletoe in our traditional orchard at Pond Covert. We collected over 100 mistletoe berries from a large estate just outside Bury St Edmunds, squeezed the seed from each berry and wiped the seeds off our fingers onto branches 3cm – 5cm diameter, on the underside so rain runs down onto them to keep them hydrated. We're now going to monitor early success in germination and seedling survival, in our June work party.

Each group of four seeds inoculated onto the apple tree branches was marked with a coloured tag, so we know where and how many we set out. At the work party we'll try and re-find the seed locations, to see how many seedlings we can find. We'll map out the seedlings, to follow change over time. Many seedlings are expected to die from drought, failure to penetrate bark or eaten by invertebrates, which is why we planted so many. We hope that even a few will survive.

Germination has non-parasitic and parasitic phases. In the first non-parasitic phase the seed extends one or more green 'hypocotyls' which bend towards the host bark, forming a disc-shaped holdfast when they reach the bark surface. After this the parasitic phase begins as the seedling begins to penetrate the host tissue, connecting to the host's cells just below the bark and stimulating the growth of a connecting haustorium. This haustorium, which will appear as a swelling where the mistletoe is attached, is a mix of both host and mistletoe woody tissue. For the next year, through 2025 and into 2026, all growth will be beneath the bark's surface so we won't see any changes. After that, external growth will start but it might not be until 2029 or 2030 before we will see a decent-sized mistletoe plant.

News from the woods

Home Covert

Did you notice the little greeny-yellow flowers of dog's mercury earlier this spring? By now you will be able to find the paired fruits on little stalks above the leaves. It was named after the Roman god Mercury, well before the planet was named or the runny metal was discovered. 'Dog's' mean that it is inferior, suitable only for dogs and not people.

Woodland Ways Pond

If the water in Woodland Ways Pond persists for a few more weeks, the smooth newts which breed there will produce efts (tadpoles) which should survive to adulthood. Frogs breed there too. Together with the toads which breed in the nearby pub's pond, this is a little amphibian hotspot in the area. If you did a garden pond you may well get one or more amphibians breeding in it. For most of the year, amphibians are land animals and they do find new ponds fairly quickly

Work parties are usually on the 2nd Sunday of the month except in November

All welcome, and no experience necessary. We'll show you what to do, and we will be friendly and supportive throughout. Do as much or as little as you wish!

There is usually a drinks break part way through each work party. Hot drinks are usually provided.

Date in 2025	Activity	Meeting Point
Sunday 11th May 10.00 – 12.00	Woodland Condition Assessment How good are our woods?	Moreton Hall Community Centre meeting room
Sunday 8th June 10.00 – 12.00	Mistletoe monitoring	Pond Covert Orchard, entrance near Sebert Wood School gate
Sunday 13th July 10.00 - 12.00	AGM and hay rake at Woodland Ways Pond / Pond Covert orchard	Moreton Hall Pub Find us in the garden if the weather is dry
Sunday 10th August 10.00 - 12.00	Natterer's Wood The great hay rake	Natterer's Wood Kingsworth Road entrance
Sunday 14th September	Natterer's Wood Tree rescue	Natterer's Wood Kingsworth Road entrance
Sunday 12th October 10.00 – 12.00	Natterer's Wood Tree rescue	Natterer's Wood Kingsworth Road entrance
Sunday 16th November 10.00 – 12.00	Pond Covert Path maintenance	Woodland Ways storage unit Pond Covert, Sebert Road
Sunday 8th December 10.00 - 12.00	Home Covert Path maintenance	Woodland Ways storage unit Pond Covert, Sebert Road

Weather, new needs etc sometimes means we change plans at short notice. Check our website or Facebook for the most up to date information.

Trustees' meetings in 2025 are on Monday evenings, on 16th June, 15th September and 8th December. Please come to find out what the trustees do, and contribute anything you might have to tell us.

For more information please contact us.

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