

Wild about Warbleton verge survey 2023

As part of Wild About Warbleton group of amateur botanical surveyors we have monitored 5 routes in the parish from 2021, with some extra routes added from 2022.

Below are reports from some of the individual surveyors covering their own routes:

Route 2

Cowbeech Road from Kingsley Hill junction going south to parish boundary at Boundary House.

We have seen an increase in plant diversity where grass verges have been allowed to grow long in spring and summer and then set seed.

The uncut verges have been buzzing with insects like bees, hoverflies and butterflies, and insect friendly wildflowers like Oxeye Daisies, Bluebells, Cow Parsley, wild orchids like Early Purple and Common Spotted, Cuckoo flowers, Betony, Sneezewort, Knapweed, Wild Carrot and Fleabane have proliferated.

The ESCC designated Wildflower Verge in Rushlake Green has this year, June 2023, produced 157 spikes of Common Spotted Orchid flowers, up from less than 60 in June 2021.

Route 6

Flitterbrook Lane

It's the second year of monitoring the verges of Flitterbrook Lane, Warbleton Parish.

Some interesting plant species have been recorded here, and quite a few are Ancient Woodland Indicators or AWI, such as

Wood Speedwell

Yellow Pimpernel

Figwort

as well as good colonies of Bluebells, Cow Parsley, Red Campion, Meadow Buttercup and Knapweed, all loved by insects of all kinds, and at the end of the summer 2022 there were more Speckled Wood butterflies seen along these verges than in previous years. This is a butterfly which shows long term decline in the UK according to Butterfly Conservation.

There is also anecdotal evidence of glow worms in this area.

Route 7

Middle Lane

2023 is the second year of monitoring the verges here.

As well as some very good colonies of spring flowers like Wood Anemones and Primroses there are some interesting wet ditches where Brooklime, Water Mint, Yellow Flag Iris and Meadow Vetchling thrives.

Surveyors have observed a wide variety of bird life over the season.

At one of our seasonal walks the following were seen:

Snipe, Skylarks, Yellowhammers, Ravens, Woodlarks and Kestrels.

In addition individuals have seen Linnets, Stonechats, Red Kites, Chiffchaffs, Buzzards, Swallows and an abundance of House Martins.

Providing wildlife corridors by leaving verges uncut for plants to thrive will benefit overall biodiversity in the parish.

Route 1

I survey wildflower verges for the Wild about Warbleton group along Chapmans Town Road, which is one of the core 5 routes we do. Since 2022 I have also surveyed Gibsons Lane, White Birch and Church Hill.

Since 2021 I have noted many common wildflowers and a few rarer ones, including a proliferation of Knapweed, Willowherbs and Vetches increasing year on year. ArchAngel has appeared on Chapmans Town for the first time and Bitter Vetch while a colony of Town Hall Clock is doing very well. Also a colony of Early Purple Orchids opposite Summerhill Farm in their woodland remnant sanctuary. This year I was relieved to see a healthy insect concentration in the area (we no longer get insect splatter on our windscreens!) and in turn an explosion of Swallows and House Martins. I currently have in mid September our 5th brood of swallows on the go, having started with one brood in the early 2000's.

Route 3

'My survey route is White Horse Road, from Shrieks Lane to Iwood on the outskirts of Rushlake Green (RLG). It consists of mown verges of varying widths, backed by hedges, some with steep banks.

The highlight of the flora, for me, is the colony of Early Purple Orchids about half way along the route, plus a larger group of Common Spotted Orchids nearer RLG. Both colonies appear to be 'holding their own', despite the vagaries of the weather. They are also spared the inappropriate mowing of the verge by tidy-minded landowners. The remainder of the route is a good mix of pollinator-friendly wildflowers that provide a wide range of food for both larvae and insects as well as birds – from Sweet Violets and Coltsfoot early in the year to Stinging Nettles, Tree Ivy and Sow Thistle from Summer onwards'

Iwood Lane

A snapshot of some of the flora found along verges on Iwood Lane in June 2023.

Betony
Burdock
Goldilocks Buttercup
Campion
Goatsbeard
Musk Mallow
Dotted Loosestrife
Early Purple Orchids
Meadow Vetchling