



Have you renewed your FSW Membership for 2025 - Our Membership year runs from January 1st to December 31st, and it would be very helpful to us if you could pay your 2025 subs as soon as possible. Many thanks to those of you who have already done so and to those of you who have standing orders - we really value this as it certainly makes our life much easier. Please pay by SO or bank transfer to: Friends of Selsdon Wood at Barclays Bank, Croydon Branch, Account No. 80883832, Sort Code 20-24-61.

Winter Walks – A couple of years ago the paths were so bad that we decided to abandon guided walks in the winter months as the paths were too muddy and slippery. However, there are information sheets about the Red and Green Walking Routes on the website and a version of the guides may be accessed on your smartphone using the QR codes attached to the numbered wooden posts.

First Sightings – As last year, the mild winter has produced many early signs of spring. Bluebell shoots were seen peeping through the leaf litter on the 1st of January and on the 3rd Primrose flowers were showing colour in David's Crook.

19 species of bird and 12 species of fungi have already been photographed – see the Sightings page of the website <https://www.friendsofselsdonwood.co.uk/sightings.php>. The pages also have check sheets for each category so if you manage to capture photos of any species not seen yet, do please send them in to us or post them on the FB page.

Wood Carving Project - 2025

As many of you will have seen, we now have 3 splendid wood Carvings dotted around our woods. These were carved last year by Alasdair Craig, from Essex Chainsaw Carving and have attracted much interest. There is also a small 4th carving which we had carved as a gift for long term member of FSW, Ted Forsyth. Ted was 90 last year so we had a seat carved for him. He has had a lifelong interest in fungi, so the seat is in the form of a mushroom!!

We have plans to commission another carving in 2025 – so keep a lookout for it.

Work Sessions in January 2025

On 7th January we had one of the regular visits from the Grow Wild team. This organisation provides “meaningful opportunities for people with additional needs to connect with nature and wildlife, promoting health, wellbeing, and personal growth”. This month, their work involved helping on of our team to clear Laurel Bushes in Avis Grove. Laurel is an invasive species and readily re-roots from cut branches, so these were piled on nearby logs to prevent contact with the ground.

On 26th January the Work Team cleared more Laurel in Stevens Larch, Langford's Way and Avis Grove. In Avis Grove a very large multi-stemmed Laurel was cut down. Where possible cuttings were hung up to prevent re-rooting. For more information about this shrub see overleaf.

Valerie tended the butterfly bank. She had to clear quite a lot of dog poo because someone had opened up the fence entrance and let their dog in! Please do not enter this protected area and tell people not to allow their dogs in there.



Laurel - *prunus laurocerasus*

Laurel is dispersed throughout Selsdon Wood being most common in the northern section. However, it is less widespread than it was as the Friends of Selsdon Wood are working to control or eradicate it. Laurel is a Mediterranean species, probably introduced into Court Wood to give cover for game birds. It is spreading steadily by suckering, layering and seeding and it is inhibiting the growth of other plants, poisoning the ground beneath it (see photo to the right, taken 14/5/12).



Laurel is an evergreen shrub or small tree having large, dark green, leathery leaves with a finely toothed edge. The bark, leaves and the stones in the fruit are poisonous as they contain cyanolipids that are capable of releasing cyanide and benzaldehyde. Hence the leaves when crushed have the characteristic almond smell of cyanide. Entomologists seal specimens in a jar with crushed Laurel leaves as a way of killing them without causing physical damage and the use of the leaves in cooking by mistaking them for Bay Laurel - the culinary Bay - has been known to result in poisoning.



The tiny creamy white flowers have 5 petals and are borne in spikes called racemes in late spring or early summer (right 13/5/12). The fruit is a small black cherry (photo 30/8/14 shows ripening fruit at yellow and purple stages) containing a single stone which is disseminated by birds in the droppings. The flesh of the fruit is not poisonous to birds.

The best time to spot Laurel is in the winter when its evergreen leaves stand out against the bare branches around them. So take a winter walk and look out for the Laurel.

