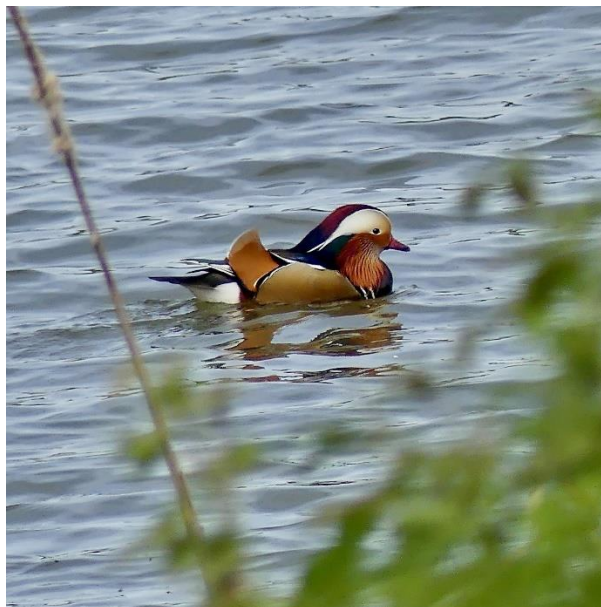




### Spring Walk – 26 April 2026

**Fifteen** members assembled at the Legsheath Lane car park on a glorious spring morning for the Friends' 2026 Spring Walk.

The walk followed the usual route through the "study area" and out on to Pintail Bank then back to the car park before heading to Whilleys meadows. Before setting off, Bob Johnson gave us an update on the latest position in the Heronry. Of the 41 herons' nests in total, 22 nests were holding 32 young so far, and of the 23 cormorants' nests in total, 6 nests were holding 13 young. We stopped briefly to look at the recently arrived Common Terns and Black-headed Gulls flying around the rafts. Two Little Egrets were seen flying eastwards and Mandarin Ducks were present on the water.

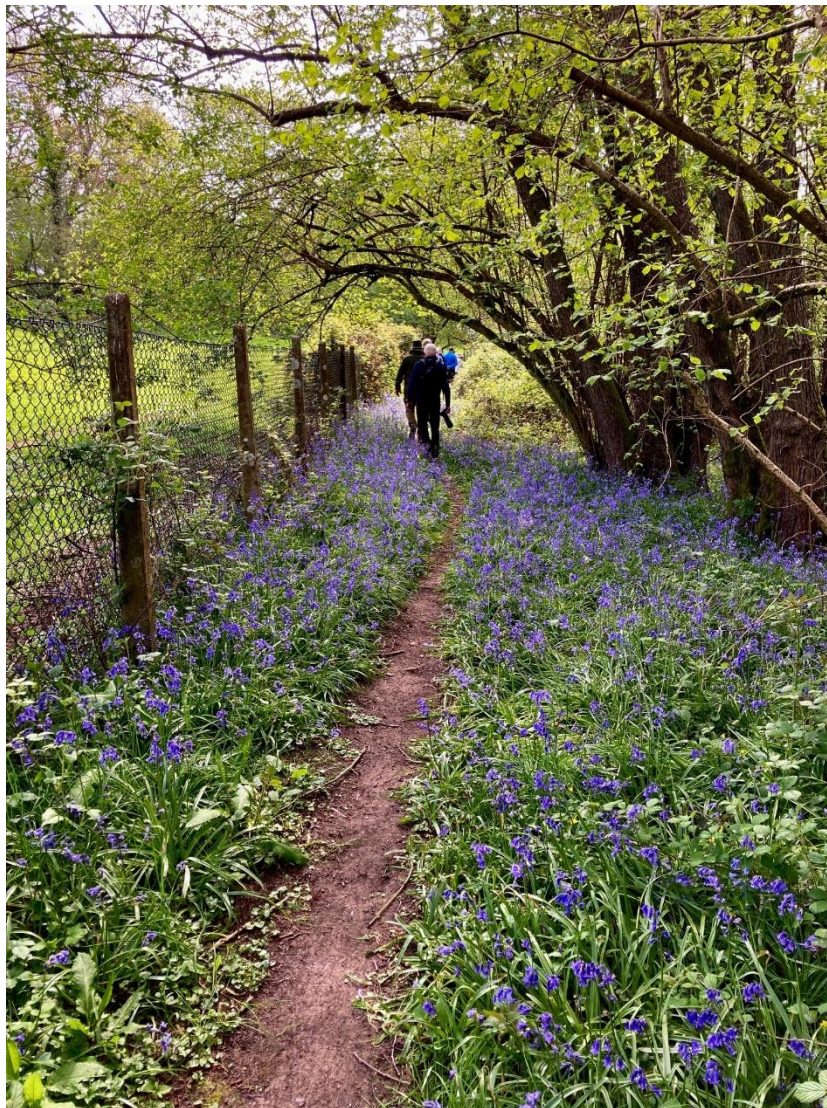


**Mandarin Duck**

We then walked through the woods past the "iron bog" and stopped to admire the small clump of Three-nerved Sandwort growing by the path. Although this is an unspectacular plant, it is an indicator species of ancient woodland. A little further on we stopped to look at the Adder's Tongue Ferns. These are doing well and starting to spread which is good news.

There was birdsong all around us from typical woodland birds and we were able to hear the lovely song of a couple of Garden Warblers – the first of the year for some of us. The various types of nest boxes were pointed out as we made our way through the woodland.

After the prolonged spell of dry, warm and sunny weather the Bluebells were perhaps slightly past their best but they were lovely to see nonetheless. If the climate continues to warm it won't be long before we need to hold our Bluebell walk in March! Wild Garlic was also prolific and in flower together with Dog's Mercury, Wood Sorrel, Lesser Celandine, Herb Robert, Cuckoo Flower (Milk Maids) and Red Campion.



**Bluebells**



**Wild Garlic**

We moved to the boggy Alder Carr where we noted the bright yellow splash of colour from the numerous Marsh Marigolds. Bob J drew everyone's attention to the delicate flowers of the Marsh Valerian growing nearby. This is a plant on the decline nationally and very rare locally with only seven known sites in Sussex, so we are very pleased to have a number of healthy specimens. We were pleased to spot a Giant Crane fly in this area. The Alder Carr is a precious and increasingly scarce habitat.



**Giant Crane fly**  
© Google Images

At Pintail Bank members were able to look back across the reservoir to the hide. There was plenty of Cuckoo Flower in the meadow here, so it was no surprise to see Orange Tip butterflies flitting from plant to plant. Bob J advised that we had recently had a visit from a botanist employed by Southern Water who had confirmed that with careful management, the grass meadow on Pintail Bank could become a successful wildflower meadow in a few years' time.

We made our way back to the car park for a well-earned refreshment break. We then walked along Legsheath Lane to Whillets Meadows listening to the Willow Warbler which incorporates Chiffchaff song into its repertoire.

On arrival at Whillets we made our way to the reed bed where we could hear the scratchy song of at least two Reed Warblers which had arrived relatively recently.



**Reed Bed Viewing Platform**

On into the second meadow and we stopped to look at the Cowslips and a False Oxlip which is a cross between a Cowslip and a Primrose. We also pointed out the wire cage where we were protecting the recently planted Snake's-head Fritillaries from deer grazing. The birdsong was particularly noticeable here, especially Garden Warbler, Blackcap and Common Whitethroat.

We had a look around Meadow Pond and although it was perhaps a little early in the year for dragonflies, there were a couple of recently emerged Large Red Damselflies on the wing.

We then walked through to the third meadow to look at the new wetland glade we created in 2024. This is starting to take shape nicely and will be an asset to the reserve. There were Orange Tip and Green-veined White butterflies in the third meadow together with singles of Peacock and Red Admiral. We were very pleased to see a very fresh Small Copper butterfly here too.

We then returned along Legsheath Lane to the car park. The walk was enjoyed by all present and hopefully people had found something of interest during the morning. We saw or heard 41 species of bird and although a Grass Snake had been seen earlier in the week under one of the refugia tins, we were not lucky today. We did see a few toads and some Field Voles under the tins we lifted.

There was no doubt that the walk had been enhanced by the lovely weather and the reserve was looking splendid in the warm spring sunshine. Many thanks to all who came along and shared the morning with us.



Looking from the Reed Bed to the new Glade

All photos: Ian Hodgson and Linsey Gooding.

John Edwards  
02.05.26

**Birds Seen or Heard:**

1	Blackbird	22	Kingfisher
2	Blackcap	23	Lesser Black-backed Gull
3	Black-headed Gull	24	Little Egret
4	Blue Tit	25	Long-tailed Tit
5	Buzzard	26	Mallard
6	Canada Goose	27	Magpie
7	Carrion Crow	28	Mandarin Duck
8	Chiffchaff	29	Mistle Thrush
9	Common Tern	30	Nuthatch
10	Cormorant	31	Pheasant
11	Dunnock	32	Reed Warbler
12	Garden Warbler	33	Robin
13	Goldcrest	34	Skylark
14	Goldfinch	35	Song Thrush
15	Great Crested Grebe	36	Stock Dove
16	Great Spotted Woodpecker	37	Swallow
17	Great Tit	38	Whitethroat
18	Green Woodpecker	39	Willow Warbler
19	Greylag Goose	40	Woodpigeon
20	Grey Heron	41	Wren
21	Egyptian Goose		