

Welton Top Wild Things trip May 2024

This was a woodland walk in search of Early Purple Orchids, which we found in multitudes along with many other spring flowers: Bluebells, Cowslips, Campions, Speedwells and more.



Clockwise from top: Early Purples, a white Bluebell, Early Purple flowers in close-up. They are cheats: attracting naïve early-flying bees to the purple flowers without offering any nectar. This is likely to explain the colour variation from pale pink

to dark (to fool the bees into perseverance). As for the white bluebells, an estimated 1% of flowers have this 'albino' colouring.



We went in search of drooping *Arum maculatum* (Cuckoo Pint) for evidence of their extraordinary reproductive methods. Over 24 hours, the plant raises its temperature causing the spiky spadix to smell, attracting tiny midges which become trapped by the bristles above the flowers. The insects gorge on the female flowers' nectar at the base, pollinating them if they've visited other flowers. The next day, the male parts release pollen which showers the midges, the bristles droop, the spathes (hoods) wilt and the midges escape to carry on their unwitting pollinating mission. You can see this in the picture on the left. All that's left as evidence of the insects is their frass (poo), but you can see where the female ovaries will start to swell and change colour in the autumn into stunning orange fruits.

Looking at the photos below and overleaf, it's amazing what you can find when you probe the contents of a dead log, like the one Phil brought us. It was full of snails, millipedes,

beetles and other creatures including tiny cup fungi (*Mollisia cinereal*), below, and evidence of the turquoise colouration of the Elf Cup fungus (*Chlorociboria aeruginascens*), though sadly not the curiously shaped fruiting bodies themselves.





Clockwise from top: Elf-cup staining; Polydesmus sp. Millipede; Blunt-tailed Snake Millipede - *Cylindroiulus punctatus*; Two-Toothed Door Snail - *Clausilia bidentate* (probable); Pill Millipede - *Glomeris marginata*



John recorded an impressive list of birds: Blackbird, Blackcap, Chaffinch, Chiffchaff, Stock Dove, Dunnock, Goldfinch, Pheasant, Robin, Skylark, Swallow, Song thrush, Tits (blue, coal, great, marsh), Wagtail (pied), Whitethroat (common), Woodpecker (green), Wood pigeon and Wren, and we finally caught a glimpse of the Green Woodpecker sitting on a fence by a worm-rich paddock.

The weather changed from unpromising to sunny as we emerged from the wood to sunbathe before a stunning view over the Humber.



More pictures overleaf are of *Pluteus cervinus* Deer Shield mushroom; Cowslip; (clockwise) 14 Spot Ladybird; Click Beetle *Athous haemorrhoidalis*; Wolf Spider *Pardosa* sp.; Nursery Web Spider *Pisaura mirabilis*; Long-jawed Orbweaver Tetragnathidae; Birch Shield Bug



Photos from Mervin and Helen, report by Helen



