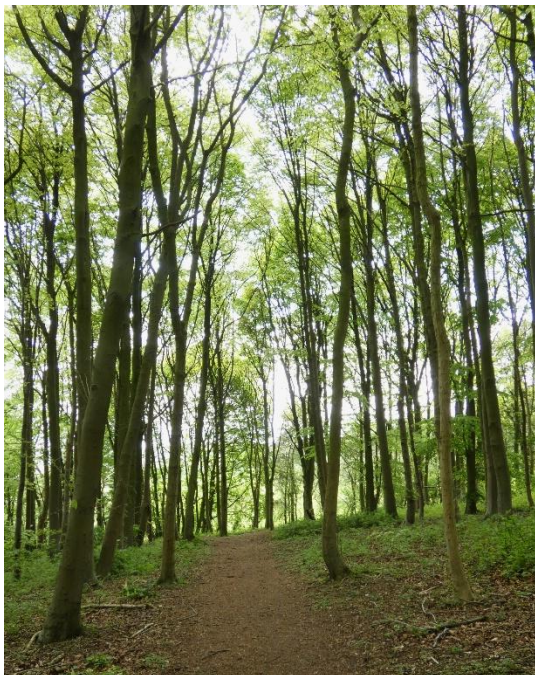


Welton Tops Wild Things trip May 2026

It's the scent of the air I remember best, which stayed with us for the whole walk, shifting lightly as one note took over from another. Hawthorn blossom, sickly sweet, mixing with the sweet pea scent of oilseed rape from the adjacent field and an occasional faint top note of English bluebell. This was a walk of beauty, early purple orchids at their best shading from pink through to deep purple, bluebells, red campion and the lovely fresh green of late spring. We didn't see many birds but there was plenty of song: blackcaps and a very innovative song thrush were the loveliest for me. We finished this short walk at the benches placed by a sloping field with a superb view of the Humber.



All this beauty was tinged with sadness however, when you looked up. Most of the trees of this narrow plantation, clearly on a base of ancient woodland soil, are ash and are dying. One wonders what will happen when they're gone and what will replace them.



Bird list (seen and heard) from Phil Davis:

Chiffchaff	Nuthatch	Great Tit
Willow Warbler	Wren	Blue Tit
Blackcap	Duncock	Coal Tit
Song Thrush	Blackbird	Long Tailed Tit
Mistle Thrush	Magpie	Woodpigeon
Chaffinch	Buzzard	Carrion Crow
Goldfinch	Robin	Common Pheasant
Green Woodpecker	Goldcrest	

Photos from David and Helen

Report by Helen.



Above: the Humber from the southern boundary of Welton Tops





Inside the Cuckoo Pint (*Arum maculatum*) beneath the prominent spadix protected by the leaf-like spathe, is a ring of hairs and beneath that the hidden flowers, a ring of male pollen-carriers above, then female ovaries below. The faecal smell and heat of the spadix (up to several degrees warmer than the surrounding air) attracts small flies,

mainly of the midge family, which get trapped overnight by the ring of hairs, thus pollinating the ovaries. In the morning the hairs wilt as the male flowers open and the flies escape upwards, picking up pollen to fertilise another flower. An extraordinary multi-sensory strategy of attraction and precision timing. The flowerheads only last a day but the bright orange berries will be a delight through the winter months.

Below: inside a developing Cuckoo Pint flower in the wood.





These tiny Raspberry Beetles (*Byturus* sp.) were everywhere, and particularly on the Red Campion and Garlic Mustard. Their profusion might be bad news for raspberry growers. The adult beetles will soon disappear but their larvae will hide in the fruit and consume it.



The Early Purple Orchids were a variety of colours from pale mauve through to deep purple. It's thought this might be part of their strategy to attract early queen bumblebees

which attempt to take nectar from them. They are deceivers like many in the orchid family and produce no nectar.



White Deadnettle is definitely not a deceiver, and is one of the best plants for pollinators like this Common Carder bumblebee (overleaf).



Sanicle (left) is an indicator plant of old woodland, as are bluebells, wild garlic and three-veined sandwort (over).

Although Welton tops is clearly a plantation and fairly recent, it must have been a woodland for a long time. What's important in the definition of old and ancient woodland is not the current trees but the fact that the soil has not been seriously disturbed such as by

ploughing, leaving a deep layer of soil with indicator plants, microbial populations, humus, invertebrates and fungi.



In the picture below, English bluebells mix with early purple orchids. There is also a white bluebell, a rare albino mutant (one in 10,000?). However, with the arrival of Spanish bluebells, where white is commoner, there has been much hybridisation and the offspring are fertile so this might well have taken place here, near settlements. As the UK is home to 50% of the world's English Bluebells, conservation is a priority.





These pictures are of a mining bee on Oilseed Rape in the adjoining field (above) , and a Nomad bee, a kleptoparasite of mining bees, which invade the nesting holes to lay their eggs. The larvae then consume the pollen store and then the

larvae themselves. The nomad bees look very wasp-like and are difficult to ID, as are many of the mining bees.



Above: Green Shield Bug, tiny 14-spot Ladybird. Below, Nurseryweb Spider

