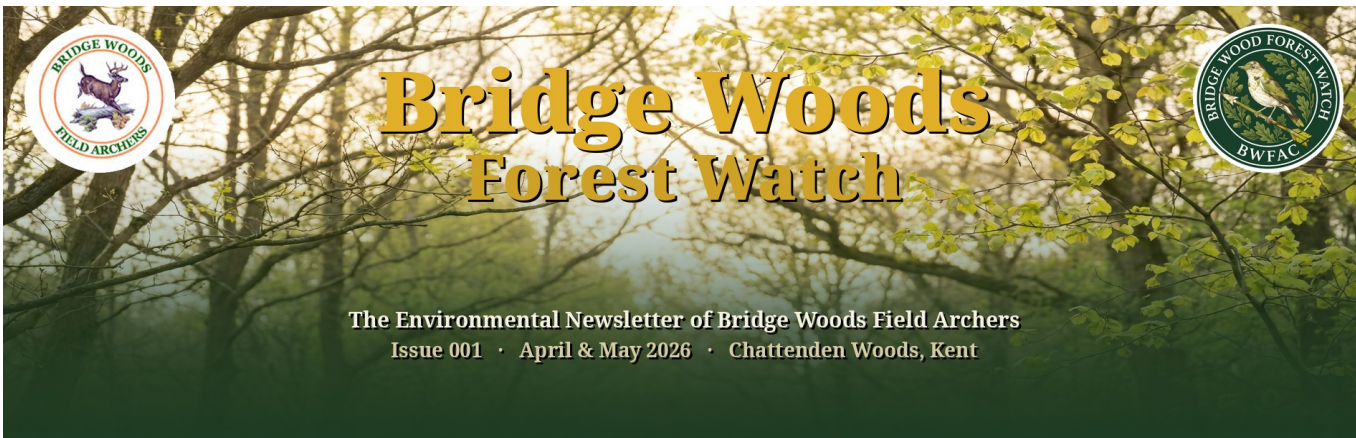




Welcome to Bridge Woods Forest Watch!

Welcome to the very first issue of **Bridge Woods Forest Watch** — the bi-monthly environmental newsletter for all members of Bridge Woods Field Archers. As archers, we are incredibly privileged to practise our sport in such a magnificent woodland setting. Chattenden Woods is not just our club ground; it is a designated **Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)**, home to a rich tapestry of wildlife, including one of the UK's most important populations of the endangered nightingale.

With around 159 members walking these woods regularly, we are the eyes and ears of the forest. This newsletter is designed to keep you updated on our woodland management efforts, highlight the incredible wildlife sharing our space, and share ways we can all help protect this unique environment. We want this to be a collaborative effort — please do send in your sightings, photos, and articles. Enjoy the read!



Chairman's Message — Kevin Kitchener



*Kevin Kitchener
Club Chairman*

Dear Fellow Members,

It gives me great pleasure to introduce the first edition of Bridge Woods Forest Watch.

We have been lucky to have been able to shoot in some remarkable woodland, and the fact that our grounds carry SSSI status is a mark of national importance. The nightingales that nest here each spring are a living reminder of what we are privileged to be looking after.

I am pleased that Kevin Hunt has taken on the role of Environmental Officer; he is taking forward and continuing the brilliant work carried out by Andy Phillips. Andy has stepped back from the role, but he continues to offer his help. With Kevin's enthusiasm and expertise, I encourage every member to engage with the work he is doing.

Please read this newsletter, get involved in our conservation working parties, and above all — keep your eyes and ears open when you are out on the courses. You never know what you may see or hear.

Happy arrows,

Kevin Kitchener

Club Chairman, Bridge Woods Field Archers



Environmental Officer's Message — Kevin Hunt

Hello everyone,

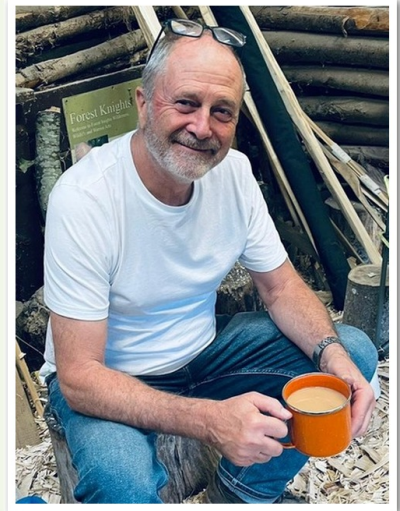
Welcome to Forest Watch! My goal as your Environmental Officer is to bridge the gap between our archery activities and the conservation of Chattenden Woods. We have a unique responsibility here, especially given our SSSI status and the nesting nightingales.

This newsletter will be sent to you as a bi-monthly edition, and over the coming months you will see more updates on how we are managing the scrub, protecting nesting areas, and encouraging biodiversity. In the meantime, look out for information posters displayed on the club hut. But I can't do it alone — I need your eyes on the ground. If you spot something interesting, take a photo and send it to me; don't worry, we can identify it for you!

The new 'rubbish dropping point' seems to have caught on, and members have been depositing their finds on returning from the courses — well done! I would also like to draw everyone's attention to the new "Beware of Bees" signs that have been placed along routes where nests have been identified. If you have a few hours to spare, join me for a walk around, or sign up for the next working party. Together, we can ensure the woods thrive for generations of archers to come.

Kevin Hunt

Environmental Officer, Bridge Woods Field Archers



Kevin Hunt
Environmental Officer



"Bee Warned" sign on the course



The Big Clean-Up rubbish drop-off point



Guest Contributor — Glenn Bolton, Course Officer



Glenn Bolton
Course Officer

A word from the Course Officer...

It is great to stroll around our woodland courses now that the leaves and buds are coming through. This will of course change the look of many of the shots — where a target is easily seen today, the growing foliage may make it a little more challenging.

Please refrain from trimming any vegetation, as Kevin, Andy, and I walk the courses several times a week and will monitor things carefully.

Unfortunately, extra barriers have had to be erected in a few spots to discourage those who persist in not using the designated 'collect arrows this way' signs and paths. Please do follow the marked routes — they are there for good reason.

You will see a few changes to target positions and animals on both courses over the coming months.

As usual, if you have any comments you would like me to consider, please do let me know.

Stay safe,

Glenn Bolton

Course Officer, Bridge Woods Field Archers



Woodland Management Update

A Message from Andy Phillips

BWFAC Course and Field Assistant

I was very happy to hand over the role of Environmental Officer to Kevin Hunt, who is responsible for this newsletter. I think it is a great way to keep those with an interest in our woods informed about what is going on.

I shall continue to assist the club officials in a non-committee role — whether that be our Chair, Field Officer, Safety Officer, or of course Kevin — with any works around the club, and in particular out on our courses.

The importance of members sticking to the paths between targets and when collecting arrows is paramount. By keeping to the paths, we are minimising any negative footfall on the ground. This is why, when a tree or other obstruction appears across a path, it is important to remove it, as doing so causes less disturbance than cutting a new path around it.

There is a chance that some new woodland may become available to add to our existing Course 1. This will allow the Field Officer the ground to change and possibly expand what we have now. If this happens, please observe any taped-off areas and areas under course construction.

Regards, Andy Phillips



Andy Phillips shooting in the early morning mist at Chattenden Woods.

Important: Please Stay on Marked Paths During Nesting Season

From March through July, please remain strictly on marked paths when retrieving arrows in Chattenden Woods. Ground-nesting birds including nightingales are highly sensitive to disturbance. If you hear a nightingale singing nearby, move quietly and do not linger.



Featured Species: The Common Nightingale



A Common Nightingale (Luscinia megarhynchos) in typical habitat — dense scrub and bramble thicket. You are far more likely to hear one than see one!

Chattenden Woods is incredibly proud to be a stronghold for the **Common Nightingale** (*Luscinia megarhynchos*). This unassuming, robin-sized brown bird is famous for its powerful, complex, and extraordinarily beautiful song — a rich cascade of whistles, trills, and deep gurgles that has inspired poets and composers for centuries. It is typically heard from March onwards, often singing through the night as well as during the day.

Sadly, the nightingale is one of the most severely threatened birds in the UK, with populations declining by over **90%** in the last 50 years. Fewer than 5,500 pairs now remain across the country, and their range has contracted dramatically to the south and east of England. **Kent is now the national stronghold**, holding an estimated 1,450 to 1,550 singing males — making our SSSI designation, and the management work we carry out here in Chattenden Woods, of genuine national importance. If you hear that extraordinary song while on the course, take a moment to pause and appreciate how truly lucky we are.



Wildlife Watch: What to Look For in April & May

Spring is a time of rapid transformation in Chattenden Woods. As the days lengthen and warm, the woodland bursts into life. Here is your identification guide to the species you are most likely to encounter between targets over the next two months.

Spring Flora



Wood Anemone (*Anemone nemorosa*) April–May. Delicate white flowers in dappled shade — a sure sign of ancient woodland.



Native Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) Late April–May. Spectacular violet-blue carpets. Please stay on paths to protect the bulbs.



Wild Garlic / Ramsons (*Allium ursinum*) April–May. Broad glossy leaves with a garlic scent; clusters of white star-shaped flowers.



Hawthorn Blossom (*Crataegus monogyna*) Late April–May. Creamy-white clusters along woodland edges — vital for pollinators.

Spring Fauna



Brimstone Butterfly (*Gonepteryx rhamni*) April onwards. Bright sulphur-yellow males are among the first butterflies on the wing each spring.



Queen Buff-tailed Bumblebee (*Bombus terrestris*) April–May. Large furry queens emerge from hibernation seeking early nectar sources.



Fox Cubs (*Vulpes vulpes*) April–May. Young cubs begin to emerge from dens at dusk. Observe from a distance and enjoy!



Common Frog Spawn (*Rana temporaria*) March–May. Look for jelly-like clumps in any standing water. Please leave undisturbed.



Member Sightings & Contributions

This is *your* newsletter, and we want to hear from you! Every issue we will feature wildlife sightings, photographs, and short articles submitted by our members. Whether you've spotted a sparrowhawk over the range, found an unusual fungus near Target 7, or managed to photograph a deer in the early morning mist — we want to know about it!

Sightings do not need to be rare or unusual. A fox trotting across the course, a woodpecker drumming in the distance, or the first bluebell of spring are all worth sharing. Your observations, taken together over time, build a genuinely valuable picture of the wildlife using Chattenden Woods throughout the year.

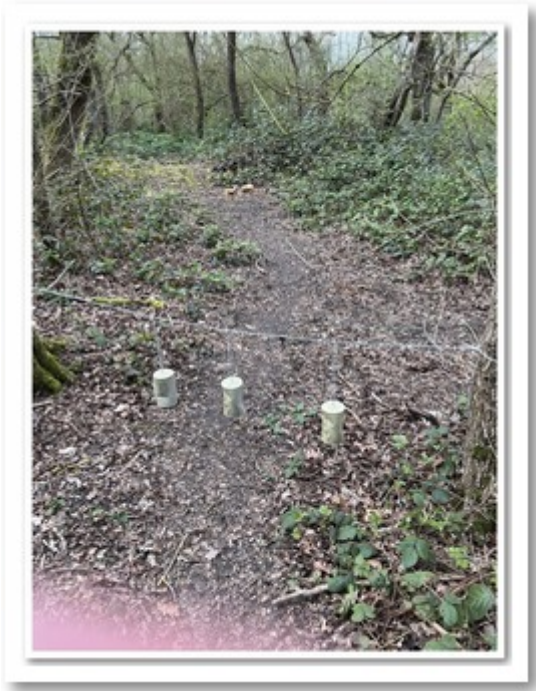
This Issue's Member Sightings



Pussy Willow Catkin (*Salix caprea*) — one of the first signs of spring, spotted in Chattenden Woods. **Photo: Kevin Hunt**



Peacock Butterfly (*Aglais io*) nectaring on Blackthorn blossom — a wonderful early spring sighting. **Photo: Kevin Hunt**



Glenn's new tin can targets — Course 2, Target 38. **Photo: Glenn Bolton**



Common Primrose (*Primula vulgaris*) — a cheerful splash of pale yellow on the woodland floor. **Photo: Nick Trevelyan**

Share Your Sightings for Issue 002!

Email your sightings, photos, or short articles to: envofficer.bwfac@gmail.com Please include: species name (or description if unsure), date, approximate location on the course, and any photo you have. All contributions will be credited in the newsletter. Photos should be JPG or PNG format.



Events & Conservation Working Parties

Getting involved in conservation work is one of the most rewarding things you can do as a member. No experience is necessary — just enthusiasm and suitable clothing. All tools and guidance are provided.

Club Archery Competition — 3rd May 2026

A Club Archery Competition has been arranged for 3rd May 2026, and both courses will be used. Hot food on the day has yet to be confirmed, so please make any necessary arrangements.

No dates for working parties are confirmed as yet, but full details will be published in the next issue. In the meantime, please refer to the club website and Facebook page for the latest announcements:

- **Website:** bridgewoodsfieldarchers.org/
- **Facebook:** facebook.com/bridgewoods/



Can you solve the Forest Enigma?

Email the correct answer to this issue's Forest Enigma to the Environmental Officer!

Email: envofficer.bwfac@gmail.com

Subject: **Forest Enigma 001**

The Enigma:

I arrive unseen on a warm April night,
My voice fills the darkness with liquid delight.
No flashy colours, no plumage to show —
Just a small brown traveller from Africa's glow.
I nest in the thicket, low, hidden, and deep,
Where bramble and hazel my family keep.
The poets have loved me for century on year,
Yet fewer and fewer now come to sing here.
In Chattenden Woods' scrub I am cherished and rare,
A jewel of Kent in the warm evening air.
What am I?



Did You Know?

The Nightingale's Song

A male nightingale has a repertoire of up to **250 distinct song phrases**, which it combines in an almost infinite variety of sequences. No two nightingales sing exactly alike — each bird develops its own unique musical signature. The song can reach **95 decibels**, making it one of the loudest songs of any European bird relative to its body size. If you hear one in Chattenden Woods this spring, you are listening to one of nature's true masterpieces.

Don't Forget

If you have something you would like to see printed in the newsletter, please forward it to The Editor along with any supporting photos at envoffice.bwfac@gmail.com

From 1st April 2026, the main gate and clubhouse entry codes have been updated for the 2026 membership year.

