

Woodland biodiversity blog – April

Spring seems close now, particularly as the woodland floor is starting to become a green carpet as wild garlic and bluebells colonise and compete for space under hazel coppice.



Edges of hazel coppice areas provide ideal light conditions for ground flora in early Spring

The margins of rides and woodland edges are slowly developing colour – the yellow of lesser celandine (member of the buttercup family), clusters of white wood anemone and water avens in bud showing their dark red sepals which will eventually develop orange cup petals and distinct yellow stamens. As its name suggests, water avens prefers damp, but sunny edges of the woodland, particularly growing in amongst dense ride vegetation. It is a member of the Rosaceae family along with barren strawberry and meadowsweet all with similar leaf patterns.

These plants provide an early pollen source for hoverflies, solitary bees and other emerging pollinators.

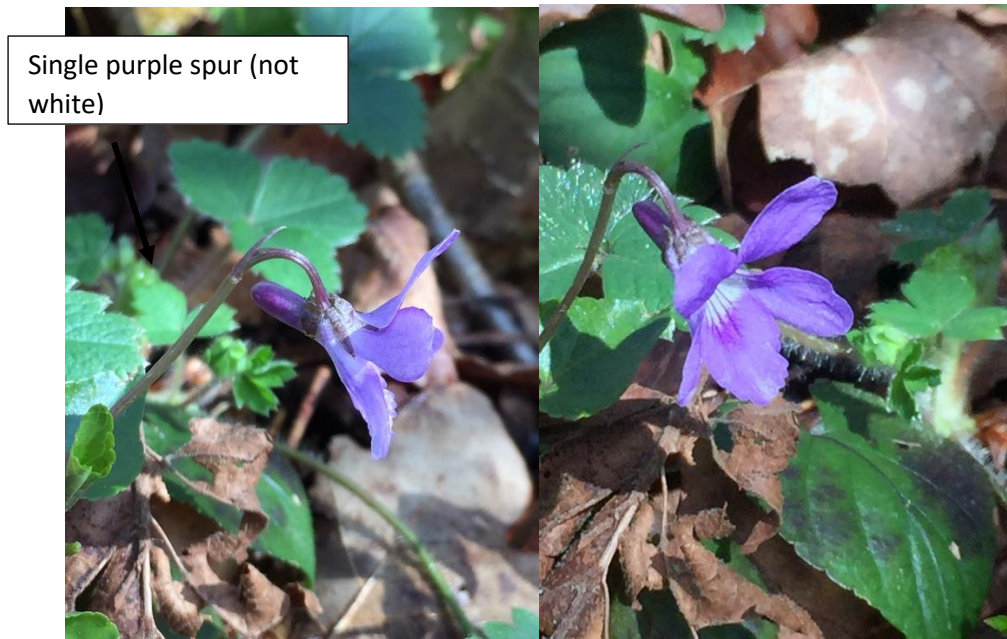


Wood avens

Lesser celandine

Wood anemone

The early dog-violet actually flowers at a similar time to the common and sweet violets, but there is a difference in their appearance. Early dog violets are more pale in colouring with a single smooth purple spur at the rear of the flower head. In contrast, common dog violets are more intense in colour and have a pale spur, sometimes almost white. It prefers woodbanks and coppiced areas.



Early dog violet – lighter purple with purple spur

Oxlips are an ancient woodland indicator species and now flowering within woodlands particularly across the east of England on favour chalky clay. They are now flowers and found along coppiced edges of rides and are nationally scarce and listed as near threatened. Their flowers are larger and lighter than cowslips with flatter, lighter green, silver hairy leaves. The flowers generally flower in one direction (as with native bluebells).



Oxlips – lighter yellow flowers, no dark orange spot base of petals and distinctly hairy leaves

The wild garlic is rapidly covering the coppice woodland floor, preferring damp locations with shady areas. They should be flowering in a few weeks, creating a powerful aroma of garlic scent.



Wild garlic dominating woodland areas