



**ColSoc**  
Coleopterists Society  
of Britain and Ireland

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## ColSoc field meeting report

Perivale Wood, Middlesex - 29th April 2023



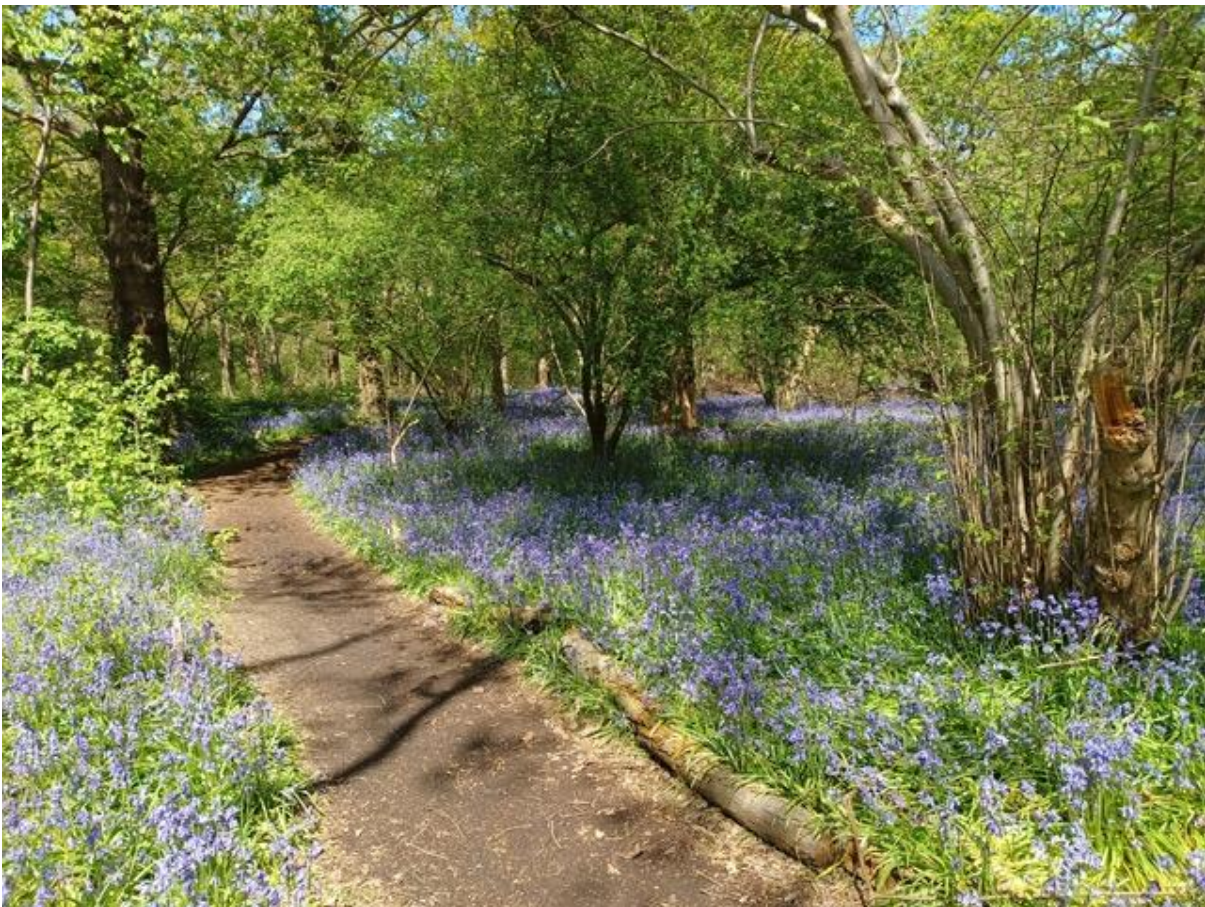
**Fig. 1:** Perivale Wood, view from the Paddock towards the Bluebell Centre and reserve entrance. Photo by Alison Thornhill.

### **Field Meeting Leader: Andrew Duff**

On 29th April 2023, eight supporters of ColSoc joined Selborne Society members to record beetles in Perivale Wood in west London. After some introductions and use of facilities in the Bluebell Centre we set off to see what beetles we could find.

The day was sunny and warm, promising lots of insect activity, but everywhere was very wet underfoot due to recent rain. Stout footwear was essential and it was quite treacherous in places, particularly where the cattle had 'poached' the ground where Willow Mead joins Little Elms Meadow. Using a variety of collecting equipment - sweep nets, pond nets, beating trays and sieves - we concentrated our attention on the more floristically rich areas which would be expected to hold a greater diversity of insects.

Flowering plants support a wide range of plant-feeding beetles. Nineteen species of true weevils were found, including the common Small Nettle Weevil *Nedyus quadrimaculatus*, which seems to be found in every nettle patch throughout the land, as well as the Acorn Weevil *Curculio glandium* on oaks. We also found the weevil *Ceutorhynchus cochleariae* which lives on Cuckooflower *Cardamine pratensis* (Brassicaceae) in the damp meadows. A good selection of apionid weevils (Apionidae) turned up with twelve species, including the attractive little *Taeniapion urticarium* on nettles, and four species of *Protapion* which are all found on Fabaceae (vetches and clovers). Only seventeen species of leaf beetles could be found, but one of these was the attractive little tortoise beetle *Cassida vibex*, a rediscovery of a species known only from old records in Perivale Wood; this species is associated with various species of composite flower (Asteraceae), especially knapweeds *Centaurea*. One of the first beetles to turn up was the Umbellifer Longhorn Beetle *Phytoecia cylindrica*, a species whose larvae bore into the stems of various umbellifers (Apiaceae), often Cow Parsley *Anthriscus sylvestris*. Surprisingly for such a comparatively large insect this was a new beetle for the Perivale Wood list.



**Fig. 2:** Perivale Wood, view of bluebells from the Main Path. Photo by Alison Thornhill.

Some families of beetles are associated with dead wood or are not exclusively plant-feeders, for example being predacious as larvae but feeding on nectar or pollen as adults. Sweeping meadows in the spring usually turns up a good variety of click beetles (Elateridae) but, perhaps because the spring was just getting going, all we could find was four common species of *Agriotes*. Only one soldier beetle (Cantharidae) was found, *Cantharis decipiens*, but there are sure to be other soldier beetles later in the summer. Also in meadow areas, the Malachite Beetle *Malachius bipustulatus* (family Melyridae), highly distinctive with its red-tipped green elytra, was easily recognised in the sweep net.



Fig. 3: Perivale Wood, sieving litter. Photo by Deborah Worsley.

Several beetle families are mostly predacious as both larvae and adults. Ladybirds were well represented and we found ten species, including 7-, 10-, 14-, 16-, 22- and 24-spot Ladybirds, plus four species of the small plain-looking ladybirds. Other predators are species of ground beetle (Carabidae) and rove beetle (Staphylinidae) which seemed to be well represented, and between us we found 21 species of ground beetle and 30 species of rove beetle. Found by sieving litter in the Paddock, close to an area of recent hedge clearance, a single female specimen of the rove beetle *Aloconota coulsoni* was detected, an exceptionally rare beetle in Britain and Ireland with only a handful of records. This is most likely a new beetle for Middlesex and perhaps only the third for the LNHS recording area.

In total we recorded 135 species of beetle, of which 81 species were new for the Perivale Wood list, a very gratifying result. Our interest wasn't exclusively beetles of course, and thanks to David Howdon's eagle eyes some of us were able to see the rare White-shouldered Shieldbug *Dyrodere umbraculatus*, which was found new to Britain at Perivale Wood in 2013.

Thanks to Deborah Worsley, Nic Ferriday and David Howdon of the Selborne Society for organising this event and for showing us round the reserve.

Andrew Duff  
ColSoc Field Meetings Officer