

Shamley Green Environment Group

Invertebrates – often overlooked but so important

We all know that how and when we mow our common land has an enormous impact on the wild flowers and grasses growing there, and it will be exciting to see how our greens look this summer with their new mowing regime and wildflower planting.

However, with all the focus on the plants the resident animals can be forgotten, and one enormously important group in particular often gets overlooked- the invertebrates. These are the insects, snails, bees, worms, spiders, centipedes and many many others. Crucial in functioning ecosystems, they are part of nearly every food chain and part of the vital recycling of soil nutrients. They not only help microbes decompose 99 percent of human and



animal waste, but they are also needed for pollination of many human food crops and a vast number of wild plants. In short we can't do without them!

To see exactly which invertebrates we have and to get recommendations of how we can best look after them, in 2021 we and the Wonersh Environment Advisory Group commissioned a professional survey of our insects and other invertebrates. A total of 516 species were identified! Of these, 29 are scarce in Great Britain, and two are on a list of 'priority species' which local authorities must take into account regarding any proposals which would affect their habitat. They are the White Admiral butterfly, which uses bramble flowers for nectar and lays its eggs on honeysuckle, and the Cinnabar Moth whose yellow and black caterpillars feed on ragwort.

We are grateful to Scotty Dodd MSc, MCIEEM, MRES, a very experienced entomologist and specialist invertebrate ecologist, for his detailed survey and his recommendations for management of our commons and trees. You will find links to his report on our website.

