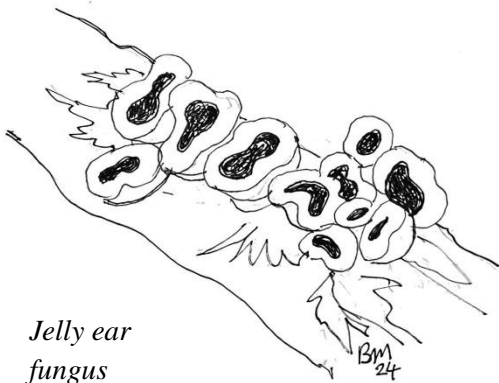


## Winter came at last, or did it?

With the first good frost being on the November volunteers' day I was very thankful to find that winter was finally going to happen this year. However, with the whole of December fluctuating around the 10°-12° mark the only sign that winter really is here, were the storms! The last of the leaves on the trees didn't fall until around the solstice.



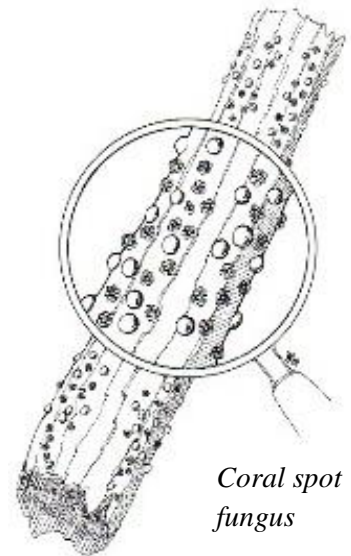
Jelly ear  
fungus

On the 6<sup>th</sup> December I found a whole row of jelly ear fungus (*Auricularia auricular-judae*) growing on a rotting willow branch. I also found several dead branches covered in coral spot fungus (*Nectria cinnabarina*) Coral spot is tiny, but very pretty, named for its colour rather than its form. It's fine on dead branches that have fallen to the ground, but sometimes it will infest dead branches that are still attached to the tree and then it can invade the tree's living tissue causing canker and fatal damage.

On the 15<sup>th</sup> I discovered a new Coral Fungus. It was a small white coral in the area we are coppicing and thought at first that it was another specimen of what was found last year. However, while last year's sample was on a log, this was growing in soil. As I said last time, most coral fungi seem to be ground dwelling not log dwelling so I had looked it up and found Crested Coral (*Clavulina coralloides*). Ooo, I thought, but the sample was not the same, crested coral seems to have lots of side branches along its length and several tips on each head while what I found was relatively un-branched above the base and only had three tips on each end. The sample was much smaller than last year's find, only being about 70-75 mm tall and 40 mm across, it was white and stood upright as opposed to being spread in a fan like Crested Coral.

I also found another example of the peculiar purple fungus which has a form like jelly ear but is much smaller. It remains unidentified so far.

Towards the solstice I found some very old Oak polypore fungus (*Fomitopsidaceae*) on a log where we are coppicing and I also found a bract of yellow brain fungus (*Tremellaceae*) on a dying willow.



Coral spot  
fungus

My third find which I have seen many times before was a log covered in small, bright yellow blobs. Much like the coral spot in form but each flower was about 5mm across. It also remains unidentified so far.

Steve Songhurst hasn't seen any dormice this year in any of the environments he monitors. With the cold spring until June and the wet since then, it has not been a friendly year for the dormouse and it may take a long time for the usual population to recover. We just have to put our heads down and keep at it and hope for the best in 2024.

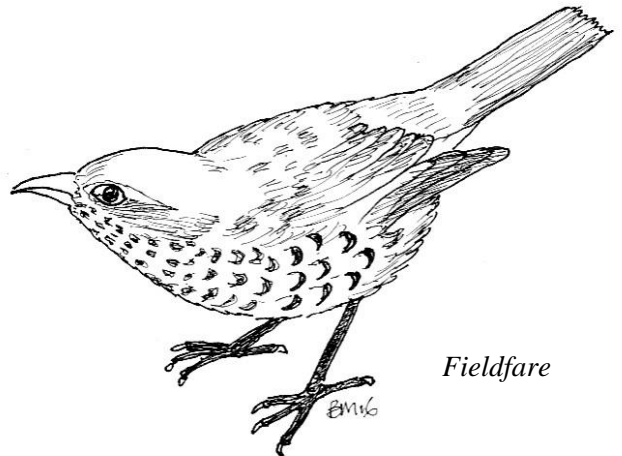
In respect to the wood, I've considered its diversity and therefore its suitability for dormice which need a good supply of flowers in spring time, insects in summer and hazelnuts in autumn and they also require honeysuckle for bedding. Over the years, I have tried to increase the variety of plants growing in the reserve. So far I have planted various nuts and seeds and either grown them on myself and transplanted or I have planted the un-germinated fruit direct into the reserve. It is a very hit and miss system as the plantings often don't take.

This spring I would like to try planting some established trees but this requires much more work maintaining them through the first year. They will need guards to protect them from both rabbits and deer, and they will require much more watering through the first summer.

If there is anyone out there who would like to donate, plant and care for a tree through the next twelve months please contact me via the council office on 837373. We also need to improve the ground cover diversity so planting native wild flowers may be a good alternative to planting a tree. The flowers will still need watering particularly if we have a hot summer, so it won't be easy.

Quite early on in December the fieldfares flew in. A flock of about twelve flew over almost every day when I was in the wood. It is nice to see they still come round in spite of the local orchards being decimated.

By the time of the solstice the coppice area was looking well cleared, except there were lots of really big trees still, all of which are very tall and are going to hang up when we attempt to bring them down. Otherwise we have had a good season so far.



*Fieldfare*

# FHW NEWS letter

On the 31<sup>st</sup> December we had an extra work day for those who couldn't attend on the 7<sup>th</sup> January. I had felled several trees over the previous two weeks leaving lots of detritus to be cleared up. With cloudy weather and showers, five people managed to clear just about everything I had left for them. I was quite amazed at what a handful of folk can manage in just two and a half hours. Thank you all and I hope you had enough energy left to see in the New Year.

That day I noticed many Lords and Ladies or Cuckoo pint (*Arum maculatum*) were shooting, no sign of the bluebells yet.

The rest of the volunteers (8 in number) came on January 7<sup>th</sup> as planned, for which I had to prepare a whole new set of work. The weather was cold but bright and everyone set to, managing to clear almost everything again. We had a very nice tea break with a lot of jovial chatter. We all packed up at about 12.30 and went home very satisfied and ready for a restful afternoon. So there we have it, most of the trees we can manage are down and we have to wait and see if the estates team can fell the remaining large trees before we move on to other things. Thank you everyone for working so hard.

The next volunteers' day will be Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> January when we will either be finishing the coppice or we will start trimming hedges.

Peter Prince

## FHW Crossword No 177



**Clues Across** 1, 2 down, 15 across. Growing on a rotten willow branch, (5,3,6). 4. See 3 down. 6. Biblical boat, (3). 7. Sections of timber, (4). 8.13. Lords & Ladies. (6,4). 10. See 22.11. Armed conflict, (3). 13. See 8. 15. Primitive organism, e.g. Mushroom, (6). 18. Subterranean plant part, (4). 19. Small insect, (3). 21. Covering of ice (5). 22. On several dead branches, (5,4,6).

**Clues Down** 2. See 1 across. 3,4 & 15 across. Found on a dying willow, (6,5,6). 4. Order of *Hemiptera*, (4). 5. Snow house, (5). 9. Clumsy person. (3). 12. Unsophisticated, (6). 14. Colder, (5). 16, Atmosphere, (3). 17. *Capra hircus*, (4). 20. Meadow, (3).

### Solutions to FHW Crossword No 176

**Across** 1. White. 4. Fungi. 6. Lair. 7. Cobweb.  
10. Cot. 11. Owls. 12 Sky. 13. Bus. 15. Sap. 16. Anon.  
17. Gus. 18. Trunks. 19. Chic. 21. Crust. 22. Coral.

**Down** 1. Willowtit. 2. Icicle. 3. E.g. 4. Flocks. 5. Newt.  
8. Boy. 9. Botanical. 12. Sup. 13. Basket. 14. Anther.  
15. Sun. 20. KC.

### Any News?

Items for the next Issue by 4<sup>th</sup> February please to:-

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email b.mace452@btinternet.com