



## Bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*



Native bluebells are usually associated with some of our most ancient habitats. Native to western Europe and found in deciduous woodlands. Their rich nectar provides food for many butterflies and other insects. Bees can steal the nectar from the flowers by biting a hole in the bottom of the bell and reaching the nectar without pollinating the flower!

In the UK the bluebell is protected by the Wildlife & Countryside Act (1981) which prohibits landowners from removing bluebells for sale and prohibits anyone from digging up bulbs from the countryside.

The easiest way to tell the difference between native and non-native bluebells is to look at the colour of the pollen - if it is creamy-white then the bluebell is native, if it is any other colour such as pale green or blue then it is definitely not native. The flowers also have a strong sweet fragrance.

All parts of the plant contain glycosides and are poisonous, the sap can cause dermatitis. The bulb is reported to have diuretic and styptic properties, and was used to stiffen the elaborate ruffs worn by gentlefolk in Elizabethan times. A glue obtained from bluebells was traditionally used in book-binding and as a means of sticking flight arrow shafts. The flower lends its name to the famous 'Bluebell Railway' in East Sussex.

## The Orchard - Kendal Gardens

In December 2007 some whips approx 12-18ins high (Hawthorn, Hazel, Elder, Mountain Ash and Blackthorn) were planted by local youngsters. These have now grown tall enough to incorporate in the dead hedge that the KCG group have started to develop within the Orchard in Kendal Gardens. Hedge laying is a traditional method of rejuvenating an untidy and straggling hedge. It is hoped that the young whips will grow through the dead hedge which will be added to with coppiced hazel from Oakley later this year to eventually become a live hedge.



## Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*

Cuckoo male



More often heard than seen the male Cuckoo announces its return from over-wintering in Africa with its onomatopoeic 'cuckoo' call. (The given name of the bird sounds like the call it makes). A brood parasite - it lays its eggs in the nests of other birds, particularly those of the Dunnock, Reed Warbler and Meadow Pipit. Laying eggs that match in colouration and pattern those of the host species, the female removes one egg from the nest and lays one of her own.

When the egg hatches the Cuckoo chick will methodically



Reed Warbler feeding Cuckoo chick

eject all the remaining eggs. At 14 days old the Cuckoo chick is about 3 times the size of a Reed Warbler. If the female Cuckoo is out of phase with a clutch of Reed Warbler eggs, she will eat them all so that the hosts are forced to start another brood. Cuckoos are able to internally incubate their eggs for 24 hours, giving them a head-start over the rest of the nest.

Because the Cuckoo has a protective stomach lining which can be shed and renewed; this enables them to eat the hairy caterpillars avoided by many other birds. Cuckoos are easily mistaken for a Sparrowhawk or Kestrel with their swept-back wings and long tail.

Length 32-36 cm    Wing Span 54-60cm    Weight 105-130g

### Flying this month

Waved Umber  
*Menophra abruptaria*



Nut-tree Tussock  
*Colocasia coryli*



Taken in the Orchard recently - unfortunately not of the intended inhabitant!