

Ardleigh Cemetery Nature Conservation Area.

Over recent years, Carolyn Mason and I have carried out several informal site visits to the Cemetery in Ardleigh, which is currently managed in part as a 'wilder' area. During these visits we recorded all medium sized insects we were able to, by sight and photographs. The app iRecord was used to offer AI identification suggestions, however all of these were corroborated through appropriate field guides before inclusion.

September 2025.

Below is a list of species from our visit on the afternoon of 22nd September, 2025. Many of these species were identified while feeding in Ivy (*Hedera helix*) an ecologically vital plant for a range of late season pollinators. Among the highlights were the specialist Ivy Bee (*Colletes hederæ*) which nectars selectively on Ivy flowers. The European Hornet (*Vespa crabro*), a spectacular pollinator, was also in evidence, as was the migratory butterfly the Red Admiral. Dipteran pollinators including the impressive endoparasitoid of other insects *Tachina fera*, and several common Hoverflies.

Invertebrate predators were also well evidenced with no fewer than four species of Ladybird (Coccinellidae) recorded, including conifer specialist the Pine Ladybird.

Taxon	Species	Ecological Role	Notes
<i>Colletes hederæ</i>	Ivy Bee	Pollinator	Very numerous solitary bee
<i>Andrena scotica</i>	Chocolate Mining Bee	Pollinator	One late-flying individual, Solitary bee
<i>Apis mellifera</i>	Domestic Honey Bee	Pollinator	Very numerous
<i>Bombus terrestris</i> s/l	Buff-tailed Bumblebee	Pollinator	Terrestrial social bee
<i>Syrphus</i> spp.	Common Field Syrph	Pollinator	
<i>Myathropa florea</i>	Batman Hoverfly	Pollinator	
<i>Tachina fera</i>	A Tachinid fly	Pollinator	Parasitoid and pollinator
<i>Vespa crabro</i>	European Hornet	Pollinator	Pollinator and predator
<i>Vespula</i> spp	A Social Wasp	Pollinator	Pollinator and predator
<i>Vanessa atalanta</i>	Red Admiral	Pollinator	Migratory butterfly
<i>Pieris rapae</i>	Small White	Pollinator	Late brooded individual
<i>Exochomis quadripustulatus</i>	Pine Ladybird	Predator	Aphid eater
<i>Propylea quatuordecimpunctata</i>	14 Spot Ladybird	Predator	Aphid eater
<i>Harmonia axyridis</i>	Harlequin Ladybird	Predator	Aphid eater
<i>Coccinella septempunctata</i>	7 Spot Ladybird	Predator	Aphid eater
<i>Sympetrum striolatum</i>	Common Darter Dragonfly	Predator	Aerial predator
<i>Dolycoris baccarum</i>	Hairy Shieldbug	Herbivore	Plant eating hemipteran

Parasol mushrooms were also in evidence, and while few bird species were present, badger faeces were discovered, suggesting this iconic and beautiful mammal is also using the Churchyard.

Macrolepiota procera	Parasol Mushroom	Decomposer	
Columba palumbus	Woodpigeon	Probable breeding	Observed
Parus major	Great Tit	Probable breeding	Observed
Cyanistes caeruleus	Blue Tit	Probable breeding	Observed
Turdus merula	Blackbird	Possible breeding	Heard Only
Erithacus rubecula	Robin	Probable breeding	Observed
Chroicocephalus ridibundus	Black Headed Gull	Flying Over	Observed
Meles meles	Badger	Probable resident.	Faeces found

May 2026

On 27th May 2026, following the Manningtree Earth Festival event at Skylark Social, where we revealed moths captured at Prettyfields Vinyard, Carolyn and I again explored the Cemetery and explored some of the Spring invertebrates using the site.

We swung sweep nets, and also used our ears and the Cornell Laboratory's App Merlin to explore the sounds of breeding birds present. No Merlin records are included unless confirmed by our own eyes and ears!

Wildlife Recorded 27th May 2026

Lepidoptera		
Painted Lady	Vanessa cardui	Nymphalidae
Holly Blue	Celastrina argiolus	Lycaenidae
Common Wainscott	Mythimna pallens	Noctuidae
Willow Beauty	Peribatoides rhomboidaria	Geometridae
Treble-lines	Charanyca trigrammica	Noctuidae
Cinnabar Moth	Tyria jacobaea	Erebidae/Arctinae
Lesser gold-barred longhorn moth	Adela croesella	Adelidae
Coleoptera		
A flower beetle	Cordylephrus viridis	
Black Soldier Beetle	Cantharis rustica	Cantharidae
Thick-thighed flower beetle	Oedemira nobilis	
Harlequin Ladybird	Harmonia axyridis	Coccinellidae
Seven Spot Ladybird	Coccinella septumpunctata	Coccinellidae
Orthoptera		
Speckled Bush Cricket	Leptophytes punctatissima	

Roesel's Bush Cricket	<i>Metrioptera roeselii</i>	
Diptera		
ACrane fly	<i>Tipula vernalis</i>	Tipulidae
Marmalade Hoverfly	<i>Episyrphus balteatus</i>	Syrphidae
ADrone fly	<i>Eristalis</i> spp.	Syrphidae
Hymenoptera		
Amining bee	<i>Andrena florea</i>	Formerly classified as locally rare
Amining bee	<i>Andrena</i> spp.	Possibly <i>A. scotica</i>
Domestic Honeybee	<i>Apis mellifera</i>	Apidae
Buff-Tailed Bumblebee	<i>Bombus terrestris</i>	Apidae
AMason Bee	<i>Osmia</i> spp	Apidae
Early bumblebee	<i>Bombus pratorum</i>	Apidae
Aves		
Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	Laridae
Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	Saxicolidae
Woodpigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	Columbidae
Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	
Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	Paridae
Coal Tit	<i>Hemiparus ater</i>	Paridae
Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>	Paridae
Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	Phylloscopidae
Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>	Corvidae
Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	Turdidae
Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	Lullulidae
Long Tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>	Aegithalidae

A number of interesting species were encountered including the Bryony Mining Bee *Andrena florea*, a distinctive species with a red band on the abdomen, which specializes in Bryony and is currently undergoing reported range expansion (Essex Field Club, pers comm). The migratory Painted Lady butterfly (*Vanessa cardui*) was present, a foretaste of what was to become a 'painted lady year.' Three pollinating beetle species were also encountered. We were recording late on a very sunny afternoon, so may have overlooked some pollinator species for these reasons.

Blue, Great and Coal tits were all recorded, species which may benefit from recent nest box provision, as these are specialist hole nesters. Robins, Chiffchaffs and Blackbirds were also recorded. Birds such as Herring Gull and Skylark do not live in the Churchyard and were seen flying over or heard singing from nearby farmland.

Breeding social bees are likely to benefit from the undisturbed vegetated ground in the wild area of the Churchyard, allowing them ample nesting opportunities. Two bumblebees were recorded on the day of our visit but it is likely more species are present.

Some plants were also recorded. While some species on this list may be perceived as garden weeds, species like Thistle, Sow Thistle, Hawkweeds and Bryony, are well loved by pollinators, as is Ivy, a vital resource for late season pollinators which is seldom the destroyer of trees it is often demonized to be. Holly provides cover for breeding birds and a place for wildlife to hide and nest among its thorny cover, features which are enabled by the wilder form of management employed here.

Plantae	
White Bryony	<i>Bryonia dioica</i>
Cat's Ear	<i>Hypochaeris radicata</i>
Sycamore	<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>
Lords and Ladies	<i>Arum maculatum</i>
Wild Strawberry	<i>Fragaria vesca</i>
Yarrow	<i>Achillea millefolia</i>
Smooth sow-thistle	<i>Sonchus oleraceus</i>
Elder	<i>Sambucus nigra</i>
Yew	<i>Taxus baccata</i>
Buttercup	<i>Ranunculus repens</i>
Mallow	<i>Malva sylvestris</i>
Ivy	<i>Hedera helix</i>
Holly	<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>
Bramble	<i>Rubus fruticosus</i> agg
Germander Speedwell	<i>Veronica chamaedryas</i>
Mouse-eared Hawkweed	<i>Pilosella officinarum</i>

17th August, 2026

Another informal visit took place following the APACE working party in the Cemetery, covering the late summer invertebrates at the Cemetery. Spider records are far from comprehensive, some UK spiders being notoriously hard to identify to species. Nevertheless, Sun-jumpers were present: perhaps the closest thing we have wild in the UK to rival the pet jumping spiders of Instagram, with their vividly coloured pedipalps and fangs and jumping habits.

Coal and Blue Tits were once very much in evidence with fledged juveniles of both species recording suggesting local breeding, possibly in the nest boxes provided over the last two years.

<i>Opilio caelestrini</i>	A Harvestman	Arachnida
<i>Heliophanus</i> spp.	Sun-Jumping Spider	Arachnida
<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>	Long Tailed Tit	Bird
<i>Cyanistis caeruleus</i>	Blue Tit	Bird
<i>Periparus ater</i>	Coal Tit	Bird

<i>Regulus regulus</i>	Goldcrest	Bird
<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	Robin	Bird
<i>Turdus merula</i>	Blackbird	Bird
<i>Columba palumbus</i>	Woodpigeon	Bird
<i>Rhyzobius forestieri</i>	An inconspicuous ladybird	Coleoptera
<i>Exochomus quadripustulatus</i>	Pine Ladybird	Coleoptera
<i>Myathropa florea</i>	Batman Hoverfly	Diptera
<i>Eristalis tenax</i>	Drone Fly	Diptera
<i>Sphaerophoria</i> spp.	Long Hoverfly	Diptera
Sarcophaginae	Flesh-fly	Diptera
<i>Coruzus hyoscamii</i>	A Plant Bug	Hemiptera
<i>Aelia acuminata</i>	Bishop's Mitre	Hemiptera
<i>Palomena prasina</i>	Green Shield Bug	Hemiptera
<i>Colletes hederæ</i>	Ivy Bee	Hymenoptera
<i>Bombus lapidarius</i>	Red Tailed Bumblebee	Hymenoptera
<i>Bombus terrestris</i>	Buff Tailed Bumblebee	Hymenoptera
<i>Bombus pascuorum</i>	Common Carder Bumblebee	Hymenoptera
<i>Vespa vulgaris</i>	Common Wasp	Hymenoptera
<i>Celastrina argiolus</i>	Holly Blue	Lepidoptera
<i>Lycaena phleas</i>	Small Copper	Lepidoptera
<i>Pyrausta aurata</i>	Small Purple and Gold	Lepidoptera
<i>Sciurus carolinensis</i>	Grey Squirrel	Mammal
Chrysopidae	Green Lacewing	Neuroptera
<i>Chorthippus brunneus</i>	Field Grasshopper	Orthoptera
<i>Pseudochorthippus parallelus</i>	Meadow Grasshopper	Orthoptera

Pine ladybirds were again recorded, as was the inconspicuous ladybird, a rather nondescript hairy beetle with a red posterior, and the beautiful small copper butterfly, stunning in metallic orange was also seen. Small Coppers feed on plants in the dock genus (*Rumex*) and are likely to rely on plants growing in the wild area to breed, but this adult was nectaring, alongside three species of social bee and a couple of hoverflies, on cultivated species growing as a memorial in the more closely managed part of the Cemetery, suggesting a synergy between the two styles of management, the cultivated and wild areas both contributing to the life cycle of these glorious pollinators.

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