

MOUNTAINHALL

COMMUNITY GREENSPACE

September update: happy Autumn equinox

The Earth spins on its axis, tilted at 23.5 degrees and as it orbits around the Sun it is tilted towards or away from it, which gives us our seasons.

On the day of the equinox the tilt of Earth's axis is at a right angle to the Sun, giving us nearly equal amounts of day and night all over the world. On this date the Sun is directly over the equator. The word "equinox" is derived from Latin and literally translates to "equal night".

Normally the autumn equinox falls on either 22 or 23 of September.

*Referenced BBC article

The Mountainhall Community Greenspace project is gently evolving. The stakeholder group will be reconvening soon after what has been a good, early Autumn rest. We have very positive news that the [DesignHOPES](#) research team have had their funding extended and will be continuing to help guide this project over the coming years.

Thank you to all the community members who have been sharing photos, recipe ideas and anecdotes about our Mountainhall Community Greenspace. It's been heartening to see the engagement for this project build steady momentum.

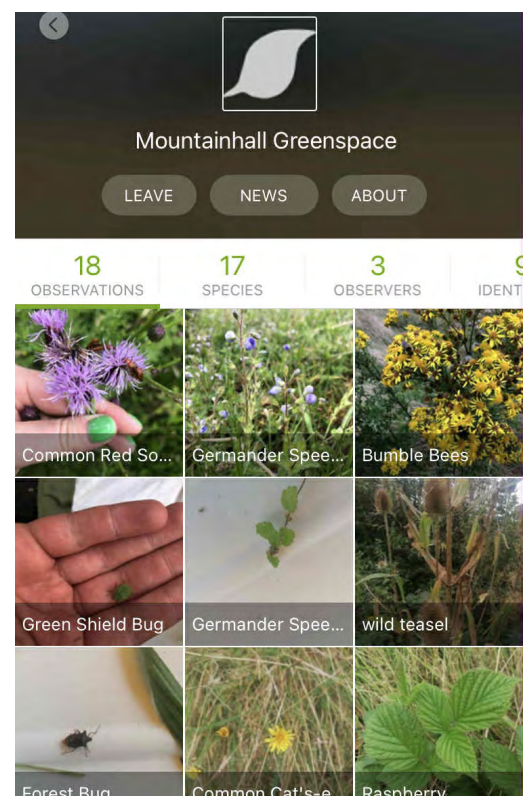
• Online Community

If you are on facebook, find our community page at [Mountainhall Greenspace Community](#). We love seeing the things people share, help us stay connected with each other and the greenspace by sharing your thoughts, photos, anecdotes, drawings, quotes or other related content.

We also have a [Mountainhall Greenspace](#) project on I-Naturalist to record the biodiversity found there. I-Naturalist is a community platform which ID's plants and insects whilst recording important data on biodiversity.

I-Naturalist can be downloaded as an app onto your phone, which makes it easy to upload photos, get identifications, and contribute to our understanding of the Mountainhall greenspace!

We also encourage you to send along content for these newsletters to: mountainhallgreenspace@gmail.com





Puffball - photo by Alan Sprung

• Foraging

Autumn brings lots of foraging potential and our greenspace, which has been mostly left to grow wild and free over the years, is a great location to harvest some of the naturally growing food nature offers us. It's currently a bountiful time for lots of mushrooms. Thank you to both Alan and Freya who sent in foraging suggestions and photos:

Alan Sprung (who deserves the title of resident photographer) has been out with his camera documenting some of the interesting fungi which has been emerging on the greenspace.

He also let us know the puffballs are really tasty: "I simply sliced them and pan-fried them with some butter. You do need to be able to tell them apart from 'Earth Balls' but that's not difficult. I did seek info on a YouTube channel beforehand".

Puffballs are a great family of mushrooms for novice foragers to pick from, for a number of reasons...

- All true Puffballs found in the UK are edible when young.
- They grow almost all year round and can often be found in large quantities.
- With a little care they are easy to identify.
- Some of them are very tasty!
- The safest of all UK mushrooms to identify, is also the best tasting in the Puffball family; the Giant Puffball, *Calvatia gigantea*. It has no look-a-likes when mature, and will provide a decent sized meal from just one mushroom.

*Referenced from [WildFoodUK](#)

Please be sensible when foraging for food. Always know what you are collecting either by doing your own research or by going with an experienced forager while you build confidence.

- **Autumnal Foraging in Mountainhall.**

Written by Freya Skinner. A local, knowledgeable forager.

You can follow her on instagram -*Ferlie @the_mushroom_diarys*

‘Ferlie’. My chance to take you on a wander and share some of these magic experiences and places with you. Through Ferlie, I’ll be offering guided walks with a focus on foraging and creativity and seasonal gatherings that celebrate our connection to the land, the changing seasons, and the beauty in slowness.



Crabapples

There are a selection of beautiful red crab apples on the Mountainhall site. Crabapples can be too tart to eat, but are great for making jellies or jams. You can also add them to rich meat stews or sauerkraut.

Pestle Puff Balls (Lycoperdon Excipuliforme)

These distinctive puffballs were found on the site this week. The pestle puffball is an edible mushroom, whilst it doesn't have a distinct flavour, they are great fried up with eggs, flour and garlic. Great care must be taken when foraging for mushrooms, so these are not something I would recommend to someone just starting on their foraging journey.



Hawthorn Berries

Hawthorn Berries can be found in multiple spots across the greenspace. They are particularly abundant this year, following a good summer. These berries are deep red and hang in clusters. Each berry has a dark brown 5-point star on the bottom and a large seed inside. Hawthorn berries can be used to make jams, ketchups and jellies.



Blackberries

The last of the blackberries is clinging on. Blackberries are a great first plant to introduce children to foraging. Wonderful to add to breakfast bowls, make jam, freeze for smoothies or flavour spirits.

Common Sorrel

Common Sorrel is a tasty wild green that is available throughout the year. You can find it across the Mountainhall site. In a season when the options for wild greens start to decline, it is a good plant to become confident in identifying. You can use the young leaves for salads and add the older leaves to soups or stews.



Conkers

Not one for eating, but Horse Chesnuts, otherwise commonly known as conkers, are great for making your own clothes washing liquid. They contain saponins, which are a chemical compound that creates a soap like foam. You can chop up fresh conkers and soak them in boiling water for a couple of hours at a ratio of 1 of conkers to 5 of water. You can then strain and store this liquid and use over a few weeks.

The information provided in this article is for educational purposes only. Care and attention must be taken when foraging. Never eat any plant unless you are 100% sure of your identification. The author and publisher disclaim any liability for injury, illness, or damages that may result from the use or misuse of the information presented here.

• A Morning of Bird Song

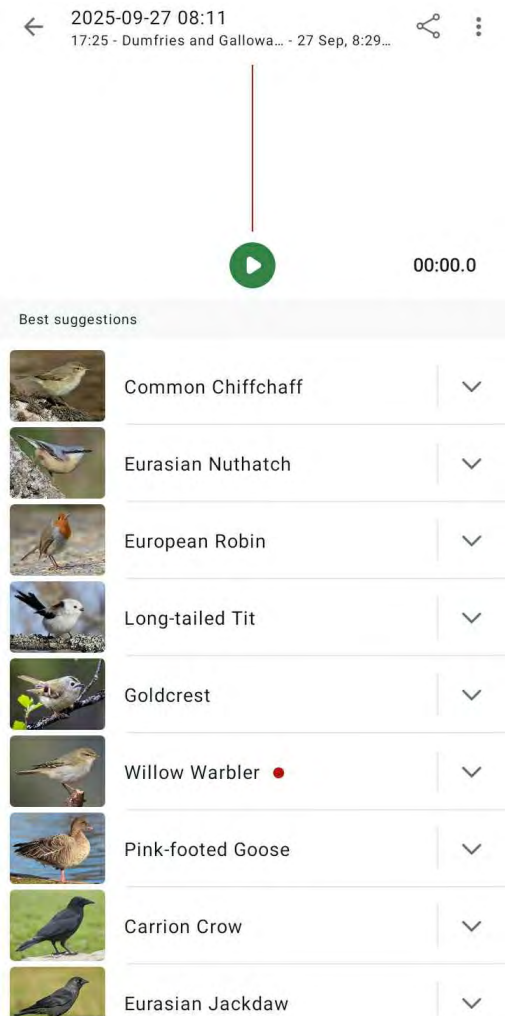
'The sun beat us to it, rising just before we did. The grey, white cloud cover, which so usually can settle over our land for weeks, eased the day in. Still, it is not cold. 14 degrees and cloudy, Martin's favourite. We hastily assembled ourselves into the car for the short drive to Mountainhall.

We head over the top of the field from the corner of the carpark, heading towards a circle of trees. Underneath a large lime tree, we sit on coats and plastic shopping bags amongst the cool wet leaves, we pour the coffee from our flask and turn on the bird ID app. Invisible in the leafy branches which swayed over us, we let our ears become our primary sense tuning into the chirping, cooing, calling cacophony around us. Occasional peering at the lit phone screen as it recognises each bird call.

Always the first, the Robins and Wrens make themselves known. A Chiffchaff joins nearby and the image of one pops up on the phone amongst the growing list of other nearby birds.

After being stationary for a while, and his breakfast of oatcakes and boiled eggs finished, Martin goes looking to confirm the presence of a Nuthatch. Despite sounding very close with a loud call nearby he fails to spot it.'

Co-wirtten by Emily and Martin



Martin - photo by Emily

We were using an app called *Merlin*, which has become a popular way to identify the birds song which surrounds you. It's free, easy to use and catalogues each recording. We loved spending time on the greenspace listening to the birds and using the app to help us learn more about who we were hearing. Disclaimer, we can't guarantee the app is 100% correct.



The Nuthatch is a plump bird about the size of a Great Tit that resembles a small Woodpecker. It's blue-grey on top and whitish below, with chestnut on its sides and under its tail. It has a black stripe on its head, a long black pointed bill and short legs. It breeds throughout England and Wales and has recently begun to breed in southern Scotland. It is a resident, with birds rarely travelling far from the woods where they hatch.

Willow Warblers are small birds with grey-green backs and pale under parts. They have a yellow tinged chest and throat and pale supercilium (the stripe above the eye). They are separated from the very similar Chiffchaff by their song. Their population, especially in southern Britain, has undergone a moderate decline over the past 25 years making them an Amber List species.

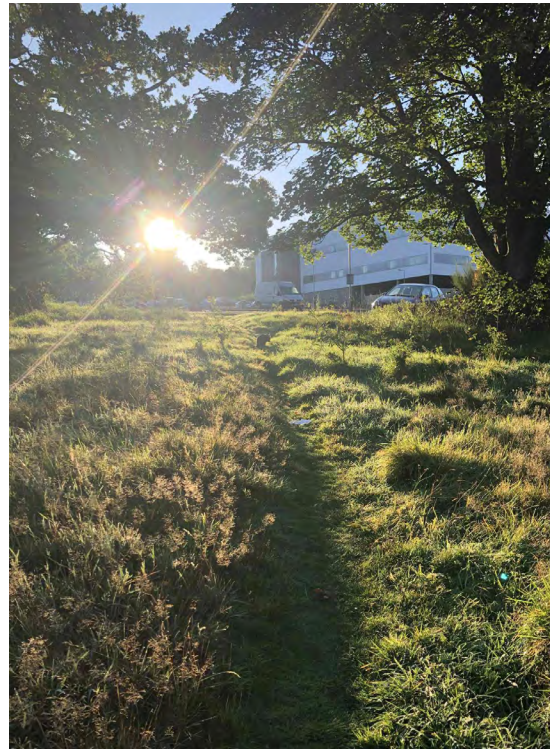


The Long-tailed Tit is easily recognisable with its distinctive bluish, black and white colouring. It also has a tail which is bigger than its body, and a bouncing flight. Sociable and noisy residents, Long-tailed Tits are most usually noticed in small, excitable flocks of about 20 birds. Like most tits, they rove the woods and hedgerows, but are also seen on heaths and commons with suitable bushes.

*Referenced from <https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife>
Photos from Google searches



Rosebay Willowherb sunset - photo by Aparna



Sunrise by the treatment centre - photo by Emily



Conker - photo by Alan Sprung

With kind wishes,
Emily
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<https://www.propagate.org.uk>

Propagate are a regenerative food collective specialising in local, community and sustainable food projects.

Mountainhall Greenspace Community is a community project being developed from the NHS grounds of the Mountainhall treatment centre. The project aims to create a resilient community, with access to nature and creative wellbeing.

Propagate and DesignHOPES are partnered with the NHS to develop this project.

