



December 2022



to all our friends and supporters

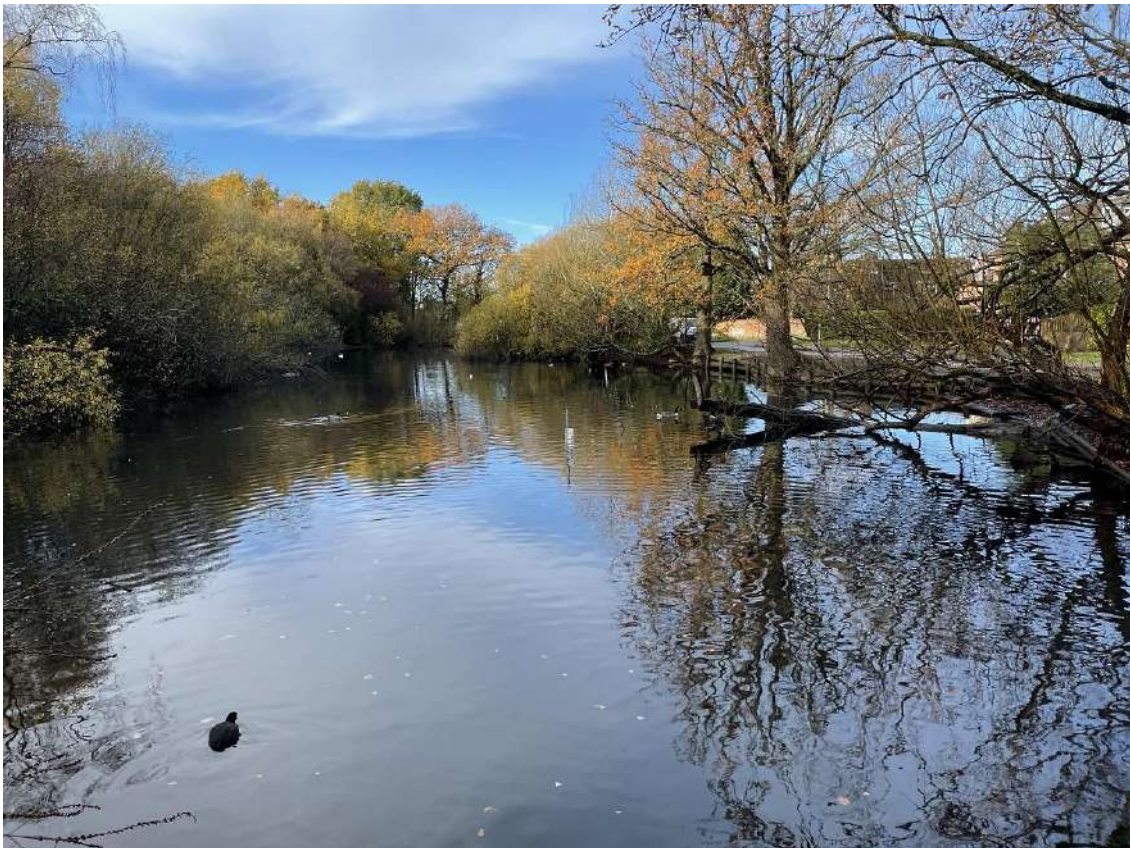
Whenever you spend time on our beautiful Commons this winter, you are sure to see something that lifts your spirits and brings you joy.

It is thanks to the farsighted Chislehurst and St. Paul's Cray Commons Preservation Society that we have 180 acres of greenspace on our doorstep, free and open to all at all times. They petitioned Parliament over 100 years ago

for the Act of Parliament that has protected the area ever since.

The Commons really are a gift to us all!

Although we are in the last month of the year and the evenings are long and dark, the natural world is still bright with autumn colours, and there are wildflowers in the grasslands and verges.



In our monthly newsletters we aim to show you some of the amazing biodiversity of the wildlife that makes its home here, and also some of the work that goes into managing and maintaining the 180 acres.

Biodiversity and Climate Change – and the Work

of our Wonderful Keepers and Volunteers

One of the UN's web pages on climate action is headed "Biodiversity – our best defence against climate change",

and in November, at COP 27, it was acknowledged that biodiversity and climate change are not separate issues, and that protecting and restoring natural spaces is essential to combating climate change.

We are fortunate in Chislehurst that our common land contains some rare and valuable habitats, and our Keepers and volunteers regularly carry out tasks designed to preserve them and encourage greater biodiversity.



One group has been working in the Overflow Glade, cutting back the gorse to

encourage healthy new growth, and opening up some of the area behind it to enable more light to penetrate to the ground. This is a continuation of work started last year, and it has been exciting to watch the results. A variety of plants are beginning to grow in places previously dark and unproductive, and it has attracted birds and butterflies.



On another of our Working Party sessions, a group carried out maintenance tasks around Prickend Pond. The marginal plants at the High Street end have flourished, attracting dragonflies and other invertebrates, which in turn attract bats and birds. They look good too!

Work has also continued along Kemnal Road to clear the holly and open up the woodland floor to sunlight, which will encourage a greater diversity of plant life where little could grow before.



With the UN emphasizing the importance of greenspaces and biodiversity in combating climate change, Chislehurst has another reason to treasure the 180 acres that continue to flourish on its doorstep, as they have for hundreds of years.

Will you help us to maintain them?

The common land in Chislehurst is protected and managed under an Act of Parliament.

It provides 180 acres of natural countryside within our urban setting, free and open at all times, for the enjoyment of the community.

However, the Act made no provision for funding, and we rely on the generosity of local people to help us maintain the area.

We have two full-time Keepers, whose knowledge and dedication are invaluable. Everyone else who works to preserve and maintain our Commons does so voluntarily.

**If you would like to support our work,
you can donate via our website**

www.chislehurstcommons.uk

or via [PayPal Giving](#)

Thank you!

A Keeper's Work is Never Done!



Jonathan, our Head Keeper, and Toby, our new Assistant Keeper, carry out a variety of tasks each month from woodland management, mowing, path maintenance and clearing litter, to setting up and taking down our stall at the Christmas Market.

Here they are replacing the bench by Heathfield Lane on the Centre Common area, originally sited in 1968 in memory of Beatrix Batten. She was a prominent local resident who led the Red Cross in Chislehurst and served on the War Memorial Committee following both World Wars. She was one of three Trustees of the remaining funds that were given to Cray Valley Hospital when the War Memorial Fund was wound up in 1921. She was awarded the CBE. She was also a talented musician and played the double bass at Glyndebourne, and in the Bromley Symphony Orchestra.

We are grateful to the Chislehurst Society for funding the replacement bench.



This year, our Keepers have had the sad task of overseeing the felling of several ash trees infected with ash dieback, a fungal infection affecting many ash trees across the country. Unfortunately, we are likely to lose more trees in the coming months.

One of those taken down recently was on Centre Common at the junction of Heathfield Lane and Ashfield Lane, and we had been monitoring its condition for some time.

The work of reducing a tree of that size at a busy road junction is highly skilled and took most of a morning to complete. It was carried out by Chislehurst Tree Care.

The tree surgeon climbed the tree and methodically cut out branches, which were then taken away by our Keepers and placed in a log pile or chipped. They also helped with traffic control for short periods when branches were liable to fall onto the road.

It was decided to leave the tree as a monolith for the moment. It is still alive and may produce leaves next year, and it will continue to provide a habitat for a variety of invertebrates, and a perch for birds.



The largest trees taken down so far were in Old Hill and required a road closure.

We will continue to monitor our ash trees, and take action when necessary.

Chislehurst Commons – Biodiverse and Beautiful

Sighting of a Bird of Prey



In all seasons there are amazing sights to be seen.

This kestrel was seen flying over the footpath near Holbrook House on St. Paul's Cray Common. Although not a common sight in the area, a similar one had been seen in the summer in Gunn Glade.

They hunt in open grassland and along the edges of woodland for voles, shrews and mice.

Another Fabulous Fungus



different shapes and structures found in the fungi of the Commons are fantastic.

And finally – as it's Christmas – a Fairy Tale!



This is white dead nettle, so-called because it doesn't sting.

The story concerns a centipede and some fairies who played a trick on him by

Now, centipedes have many feet, and it took him a long time to put on all his shoes in the morning and take them off again at night, so he wasn't happy when he had to hunt all over his house and garden for them.

Then a friend gave him an idea.

“Put your shoes under a white dead nettle every night. The fairies won't know that they are harmless, and they'll leave your shoes alone.”

So that is what the centipede did, and from that day on his shoes were safe.

When we heard the story, we investigated and found to our surprise that it was true – well, the prints of the shoes are still there on the underside of dead nettle flower petals, as you can see from the photo!



enhance biodiversity, they also provide us with entertainment.

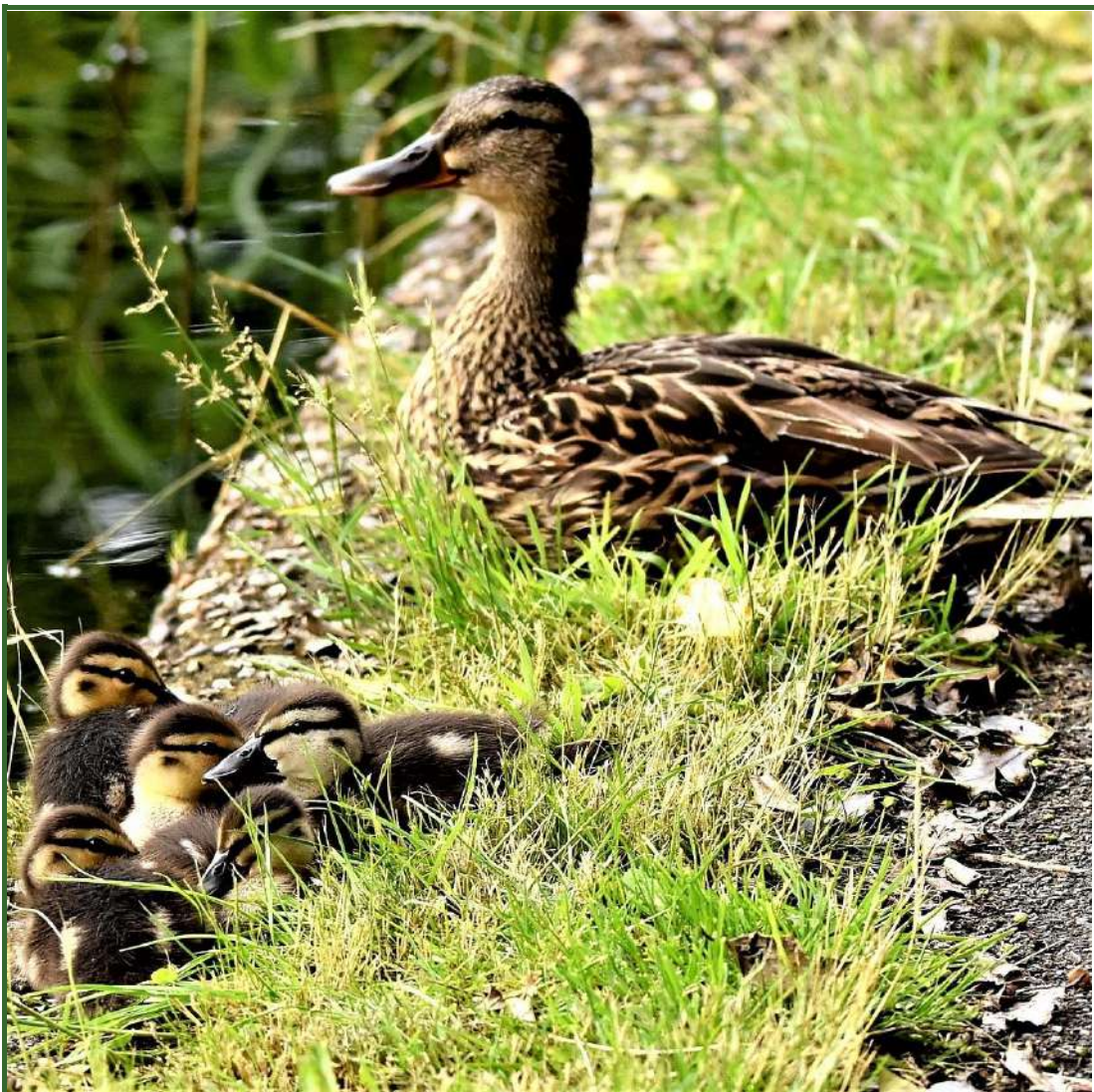
We will continue to do our best to preserve and enhance them for current and future generations.

A Happy Christmas, everyone!

[Click here to access a map of the Commons](#)

Thanks for this month's photos to – Don Drage, Peter Edwards, Jonathan Harvie, Kevin Jennings, Ross Wearn and Mary Wheeler.

Thanks also to the Editorial Team – Christine Wearn, Ross Wearn and Mary Wheeler.



Get your bird seed at Champion Wines!

Visitors to the ponds often like to feed the waterfowl, although there is plenty of their natural food around.

We are grateful to Champion Wines for stocking packets of seed on

products made from flour.

All donations go towards the upkeep of Chislehurst Commons.



**Chislehurst Commons are proud to display the Green
Flag Award logo.**

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