



Registered Charity No. 1028121

January 2024



Meet Our Arctic Visitors



Every December we await with eager anticipation the first sighting of our Arctic visitors. Redwings make an amazing journey of over 1,000 miles, from Iceland and Scandinavia, each winter to visit our Commons here in Chislehurst. They are the UK's smallest thrush, and travel in flocks looking for berries which they strip from trees and bushes.

The one in the photo has perched above some ivy berries. The rest of the flock were nearby. Keep an eye out for them in the next few weeks, near holly, ivy, or hawthorn bushes.

The Team



Every Christmas, our Keepers and Volunteers meet for a festive lunch and the annual photo.

It celebrates the hard work and dedication involved in maintaining the Commons throughout the year, and in enhancing their biodiversity.

Our volunteers help in a variety of ways – attending the regular Wednesday working party, litter-picking, managing our social media presence, helping with social events, liaising with other environmental groups, providing expert advice, surveying wildlife, putting up and monitoring bird boxes, fundraising – all part of the team that works to ensure the Commons will remain free and open to all 24/7, now and into the future.

A big thank you to them all!



In December, the working party moved to the path from the Prince Imperial Monument to the Overflow Glade. Some birch trees have been coppiced and holly removed, creating an open space to the side of the path, and an opportunity for lower-growing plants to flourish. As the birch regenerates it will provide perching places for birds and cover for small mammals.



Some of the gorse in the Overflow Glade had grown tall and was becoming straggly, so a group of volunteers spent time cutting it back to encourage new growth. Gorse has grown on the Common for hundreds of years, and the bright yellow flowers are a welcome sight in winter and early spring.



One of our volunteers regularly puts up and monitors bird boxes across the Commons. These are used each year by blue tits and great tits. Recently the Chislehurst Society offered bird boxes for sale, and we were asked to help find suitable locations for some dedicated boxes on the Commons.

Egyptian Geese



As we have reported previously, a pair of Egyptian Geese at Prickend Pond produced a late brood of 9 goslings. The brood flourished and became a popular attraction for visitors to the pond, often to be seen grazing on the nearby grass or snuggled together on the bank.

However, at the beginning of December we received the distressing news that one of the adults had been injured, and one of the goslings was missing.

The advice from Greenwich Wildlife Network, which supported our own experience, was that wild birds can become very distressed if attempts are made to capture them, and, as this one had parental responsibilities, the best course of action was to monitor the situation.

The bird was able to fly and feed, and the photo above, taken on 4th December, shows that, although it was walking with great difficulty, it was still standing guard over the young.



This photo was taken on 23rd December, and by that time, the goose was able to put weight on the injured foot.



It has continued to improve, and the family has become more adventurous as the goslings have developed.

Here they are shown crossing Ashfield Lane on 30th December, and on Monday 1st January, they were on Rush Pond. There was no sign of the missing gosling, and unfortunately it now seems that another one has disappeared.

Scenes like the one above help to make Chislehurst a unique and pleasant place to live, and the waterfowl at the ponds enable us to experience nature at first hand.

We will continue to do our best to maintain and enhance all our natural habitats for the wildlife that makes its home here.

However, in the natural cycle of life, wild birds face dangers from predators such as foxes, and an urban environment creates other threats.

We are very grateful to the residents who contacted us about the problem with the geese, for their care and vigilance.

There is a link at the end of this newsletter to a list of voluntary organisations that can be contacted for help and advice about injured wildlife.



We are privileged here in Chislehurst to have such a precious resource as the Commons right on our doorstep.

The Act of Parliament that protects the 180 acres provides no funding, and we are dependent on the generosity of local people.

Can you help?

We have two full-time Keepers, whose knowledge and dedication are invaluable. Everyone else who works to preserve and maintain the area 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!

From the Archives - January 1870



In 2023, our Commons saw some wonderful community events – the Crowning of the May Queen, the Rotary Summer Fair, The Big Picnic and Chislehurst Creates – and 2024 promises to be just as busy.

Over the centuries they have hosted many different gatherings and festivities, and snippets from the newspapers give fascinating snapshots of life in the past.

This is a glimpse of Chislehurst 154 years ago, on January 12th 1870, on what must have been an exciting day for residents.

We can imagine the sight and sounds as the whole of the troops in garrison at Woolwich marched into the village, and onto the Common. They included the Royal Horse Artillery, the Royal Artillery, the Depot Brigade and the 94th Regiment of Foot, each preceded by its own band.

A mock battle took place before the troops returned to Woolwich.

The use we make of the common land in Chislehurst has changed over the years, but they are, and have always been, a valuable space for the community, free and open to all 24/7.

Celebrating Dogs and other Pets



Today, the common is a popular place for walking dogs, and each year a group of dog owners decorate a tree in the woods to celebrate their love of dogs and other pets. It is a tradition that began about 8 years ago when a lady out walking her dog found a bauble on the ground, picked it up, and hung it on a nearby tree.

It is a striking and colourful feature of the woodland over the Christmas period and a focal point for visitors.

In the photo, the decorations are being taken down for this year, but we look forward to the display next December.

And Finally *Pigeon Parade*





The pigeons at the pond provide a constantly changing natural kaleidoscope as they move about in search of food. The range of colours and patterns is amazing!

**Our beautiful Commons not only help to mitigate climate change, give us a space for rest and relaxation and provide a haven for wildlife, they also offer us entertainment, inspiration and a glimpse into the past.
We will continue to do our best to preserve and enhance them for current and future generations.**



Get your bird food at Champion Wines!

We are grateful to Champion Wines for stocking packets of seed on our behalf. This food is healthier for the birds than bread or products made from flour.

All proceeds go to Chislehurst Commons.

**When the birds stop eating, please stop feeding!
Food left on the ground or floating on the water will attract rats!**

Thanks for this month's photos to – Peter Edwards, Kevin Jennings, Charlie Wheeler and Mary Wheeler

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