



December 2023



The Commons don't close for Christmas, or at any other time of the year.

The Commons are always open, so take a walk this December and enjoy the gifts that nature brings – the sight of a squirrel whisking up into the branches of

a tree, birdsong, the strange and magical shapes of fungi, sunlight on leaves and berries, frosty spiders' webs, the splash as ducks dive for underwater plants, and the feeling that comes from time spent in the natural world.



Every season brings something new to enjoy on our beautiful Commons, and winter is no exception.

The days may be shorter and darker, but the trees still sparkle with autumn colours, nature's own seasonal decorations.



Whenever you spend time on our beautiful Commons this winter, you are sure

to see something that lifts your spirits and brings you joy.

The natural world is here on your doorstep.

Things to See and Do



Next time you are out and about with the family, why not try our Winter Bingo.

You can find all the items on the Commons, but you will need sharp eyes to spot the jay. They are quite common, but shy and elusive. They can be identified by the white rump as they fly away, and perhaps even more so by

their whingeing, hissing complaining sound.



Our Bug Hunt will be up on trees in the woods until January.

You can download copies of both these activities and others from our website: www.chislehurstcommons.uk/Activities

Biodiversity Matters

The alarming national and international decline in biodiversity is very much in the news at the moment, and much of our work is directed towards supporting and enhancing the biodiversity of our 180 acres.

This month our wonderful Keepers and volunteers have been working on several projects.



Recent hot, dry summers have demonstrated the importance of conserving as much water as possible on the Commons.

The ponds are fed only by rain and the runoff water from the surrounding land,

some of which makes its way to the ponds via ditches and drains.

Rain falling on the area between the War Memorial and Prince Imperial Road runs downhill to the ditch in the photo above, bringing with it earth and fallen leaves. These very quickly block the drain, so, to enable the water to flow freely, some volunteers have put in logs to form a silt trap.



As this photo shows, the logs slow down the water, and the silt settles out before it reaches the drain.



There are dips and depressions all across the Commons, formed by gravel extraction in Victorian times. Some of these become temporary ponds in wet weather. So, we are working on ways to retain the water for longer, to give amphibians such as frogs, toads and newts the opportunity to breed

successfully. In the photo above, a ditch is being re-established to direct water into one of these ponds.



In the past, local people grazed their animals on the Commons, and our woodland has developed over the 150 years since this practice died out. Most of the trees are similar in age.

A healthy woodland contains open spaces between the trees and a mixture of plants, so that there is an understorey of lower growing trees, bushes and flowers. These provide perching places for birds, shelter for small mammals and sites for butterflies and other invertebrates to feed and lay eggs.

In past years, we have reported on the excellent and much-needed work of our volunteers in removing the holly that was choking the woodland.

The success of that project has enabled us to start on further improvements. This month volunteers have been coppicing silver birch trees along the main path to the War Memorial.

Coppicing is a technique that has been used since the Stone Age. Trees are felled to their base to create a “stool” where new shoots will grow. It was used in the past to produce long straight poles, but today it is a way of improving the biodiversity of a woodland by opening it up to sunlight and encouraging a wider range of plants.



The cut wood has not gone to waste. Some has been used to make log piles, and volunteers have built a “dead hedge” using cut branches as stakes and the smaller branches, twigs and leaves to fill in.

Dead hedges provide cover and nesting sites for insects and small birds.

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!

Fascinating Fungi



Puff Ball



Fly Agaric

Fungi are neither plant nor animal, but they play an important role in the web of life on our Commons, and autumn is a good time to see them.

There are more than 15,000 species in the UK. Although we can venture to name the two above with some confidence, identification of the others is difficult.

If you have interest and knowledge in this area and would like to help us, we would love to hear from you at info@chislehurstcommons.uk

In the meantime, we can still marvel at the fascinating variety of colours, shapes and textures.











News from the Ponds



At the time of writing, the Egyptian goose family seem to be thriving. They are often out grazing together around the pond, while the parents keep a watchful eye.



Two pairs of Gadwalls have taken up residence recently on Rush Pond. Gadwalls are dabbling ducks, a little smaller than a mallard. They feed by upending so that they can reach plants at the bottom of the pond. You may also see their feet paddling hard to bring food up to the surface.

And Finally Let your Imagination Run Free!



An animal of the woodland, or whatever you want it to be!

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 and inspiration.

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

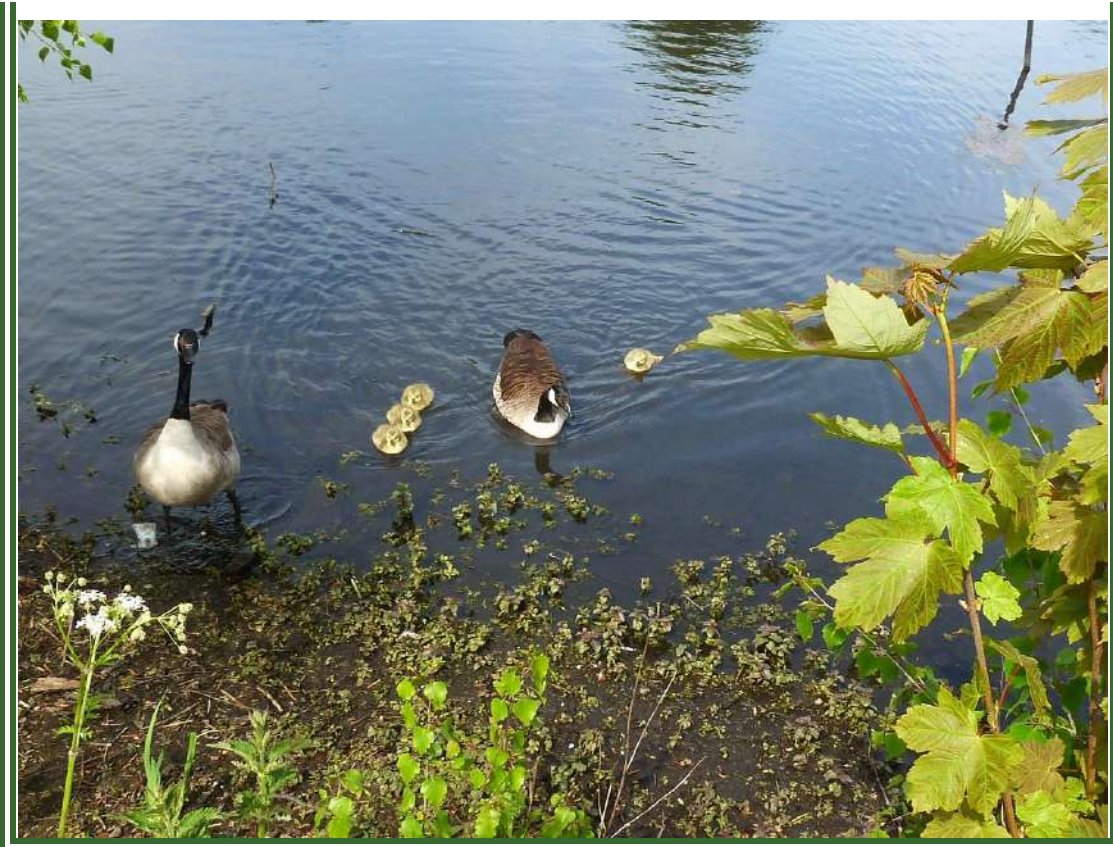
A Happy Christmas, everyone!

Get your bird seed 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!**



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Thanks for this month's photos to – Peter Edwards. Kevin Jennings, Brian Knights, Sheila Poole, Ross Wearn, Charlie Wheeler and Mary Wheeler

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



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