



February 2023



Tune in to the natural world on your doorstep!

Biodiversity and the importance of preserving our natural environment are very much in the news today, and here in Chislehurst the commons offer 180 acres of varied greenspace.

The photo above shows the familiar face of the commons at the centre of our daily lives.



We also have woodland, ponds and wetlands, heathland and grassland; a haven for wildlife, where everyone can walk, relax, and find their own special space.

Read on to find out how we are working to develop the biodiversity of the area by maintaining and improving habitats and creating new ones.

The Team

The Chislehurst Commons Team of Keepers, Trustees and Volunteers undertake many varied tasks – from attending our regular working party, to litter-picking, managing our social media, helping with social events, liaising with other environmental groups, providing expert advice, surveying wildlife, installing and monitoring bird boxes, fundraising – all part of the team that works to ensure the commons remain free and open to all 24/7, now and into the future.

A big thank you to them all!



One group of volunteers has been concentrating on maintaining the heathland on St. Paul's Cray Common.

In times past, the commons were open heathland, covered mainly by heather, gorse, grass, brambles and bracken.

They were used by local people for grazing sheep, cattle, horses, pigs and poultry, and any young saplings were eaten by the animals. It is since grazing stopped that the woodland has developed.

To preserve the heathland, the working party regularly removes saplings, to prevent the area becoming wooded.

This open heathland provides a valuable habitat for the common lizard, slow worms, a range of butterflies and invertebrates, toads, frogs, voles, mice, and birds.



Holly clearance has continued, opening up the woodland floor to sunlight, which we hope will encourage the development of wildlife-friendly undergrowth.



We have been lucky enough to secure tree planter packs containing 100 saplings as part of the Mayor's Trees for London Programme to plant thousands of trees across the capital. Tree planting is part of the Mayor's mission to make London a

greener, more livable city, where everyone has access to healthy outdoor space. The saplings are species native to our area, such as hawthorn, blackthorn, hazel and guelder rose, and will help to create areas along the woodland margins like the one in the photo above, that will attract butterflies, bees, birds and other wildlife.

Many thanks to the Mayor and the organisers of the programme!



Meanwhile, there are also routine maintenance tasks to be done. After the snow, ice and rain of December and early January, the volunteers set to and cleared mud from the main footpath from the High Street to Royal Parade. It was a job well done and kept the well-used route open and passable.

Will you help us to preserve the 180 acres of common land in Chislehurst and develop its biodiversity?



The 180 acres are protected by an Act of Parliament.

However, the Act made no provision for funding, and we rely on the generosity of the local community to maintain the 180 acres of natural countryside within our urban setting.

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!



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.

An Update on our New Truck



It's coming! It's on its way! The new truck has arrived in the UK from South Africa.

It still needs some work, and the company which is fitting the tipper has advised the dealer to expect it from them sometime in April.

So, watch out for more news in the next few newsletters.

The Overflow Pond



The Overflow Pond, an old gravel working, is an important, but temporary, pond that contains water in a wet winter and provides a breeding site for amphibians. However, it is weatherdependent, and the three accompanying photos show it with differing water levels.

The photo above was taken this month.



The picture on the left is a postcard from the early part of last century, with a view across the pond to St. Nicholas' Church, and the one on the right was taken a year ago in January 2022.

Life at the Ponds



Tufted ducks come and go at our ponds. They are easy to recognize, the males with their black and white feathers and the females in black and brown. They dive under the water to find food so it is quite difficult to count them. When this photo was taken recently there were 8 males and 3 females at Rush Pond.



We have occasional visits from mandarin ducks, but it is a few years since one stayed for any length of time. This one was first reported at Rush Pond on 11th January and was still there three weeks later.

Mandarin ducks were introduced from China into private collections but have escaped into the wild and are now widespread. They prefer woodland ponds where they can perch on low branches and nest in hollow trees.

Welcome Visitors



In our last newsletter we featured the redwings that visit in winter from Scandinavia. The redwing on the right, alongside a male chaffinch, was photographed in a tree by Rush Pond in January.

Signs of Spring



These are hazel catkins, catching the sun on St. Paul's Cray Common on a sunny January day.



The snowdrops on the bank at Prickend Pond give a promise of longer and warmer days.

And Finally



Winter gives us the chance to enjoy the sight of frost, sparkling on grass and leaves – nature's jewels!

If you tune in to nature on our wonderful commons there are amazing sights and sounds waiting for you.

We will continue to do our best to maintain and enhance the 180 acres for present and future generations.

Thanks for this month's photos to – Don Drage, Peter Edwards, Sarah Harris, Kevin Jennings, John Stiles, Ross Wearn and Mary Wheeler.

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

