



November 2023

What is a “Batman” hoverfly, and how high can a grasshopper jump?

Find out on our Bug Hunt through the woodland of Chislehurst Commons.



Brilliant Bugs of Chislehurst Commons

Invertebrates (animals without a backbone) are vital to a healthy ecosystem.

They help the process of decay, which returns nutrients to the soil, and, through pollination, play an important part in the production of our food. They are also part of the natural food chain, eaten by creatures such as birds or small mammals.

There is national concern over the reduction in numbers of invertebrates over recent years, and greenspaces such as Chislehurst Commons are taking steps to try to reverse this decline.

This is one of the reasons we leave dead wood on the ground, make log piles, and, where possible, leave felled trees as monoliths. When the grassland is mowed, areas are left uncut so that invertebrates which may be there in one of their life stages are not harmed.



To find out more about the invertebrates that live here, take part in our Bug Hunt!



You can find the trail booklet at www.chislehurstcommons.uk under the Activities tab.

We hope you enjoy the Hunt!

Autumnal Notes



The days may be getting shorter and colder, but the Commons here in Chislehurst are bright with autumn colours.



As we go into November, with its fireworks and preparations for the festive season, the natural world lights up with a display of its own. The leaves on the trees are finally changing to yellow, brown, red and orange, and berries sparkle in the woodland.



Red berries on a bush at the War Memorial.



Yellow berries – a variant of the more usual red.



Red and yellow berries entwined from adjacent trees along Prince Imperial Road.



Yew berries.



And, as the shops start to display mince pies and Christmas puddings, nature provides an abundant harvest for its wildlife.

Dates for your Diary



**Christmas Tree Festival
at
Chislehurst Methodist
Church**

**From Saturday 25th November
to Saturday 2nd December**

Don't miss this great event! There will be lots of amazing trees to see, and we will be there with a tree showing some of nature's treasures.



**Visit Chislehurst
Christmas Market
on Sunday 26th
November
11-5 pm
in
Chislehurst High
Street**

Another great annual event for Chislehurst. Our stall will be at Prickend Pond, with mounted photos, cards and Christmas novelties for sale. Come along and see us!

Our Wonderful Keepers and Volunteers

Our two wonderful Keepers are out and about every day, and their knowledge, skills and dedication are invaluable.

Our regular working party meets each week under their leadership to carry out a range of tasks on the Common, but there are other volunteers who help in a variety of ways – 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, fund-raising, administration – 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.

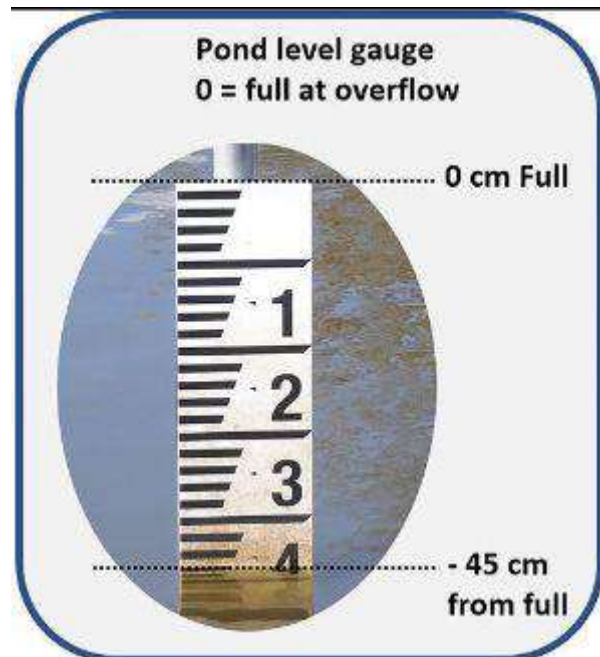


As reported in our last newsletter, some sycamore trees near the War Memorial had to be felled recently due to sooty bark disease. This left an open space, and the working party have spent two weeks clearing the site and preparing the ground for planting in the spring.



Just one of many tasks this month for Jonathan, our Head Keeper, was planting out the polyanthus plants kindly donated by Coolings Nurseries.

Water Levels in the Ponds



Kevin Jennings writes:

The ponds on the Commons are old gravel pits, fed only by rainwater and run-off from the roads and surrounding land.

With growing concerns about changing weather patterns, we have been keeping continuous records of local precipitation and water levels for Prickend Pond and Rush Pond. The pond level gauges are set to read levels below the overflow “full” level of the ponds.

Both ponds have survived another hot summer, helped by the wettest March, April and July since 2019 when our recording began. By 2nd October, Rush Pond was still low, but 2cm higher than the same date in 2022 (-55cm versus -57 cm).

Concerns for Prickend Pond were higher. During last year's drought it benefited from a fortuitous mains water leak emptying into the pond for 50 days, raising levels above its 2022 lowest point of -67cm. This year, despite earlier wetter months, by 2nd October the level was 15 cm lower than last year (- 66cm versus - 51cm) after reaching its lowest point of -73 cm on 15th September. Thankfully, the drop rate slowed as the level fell past - 65 cm, despite one of the hottest Septembers on record.

You can see all the records and charts from 2020 on our website under the Surveys tab www.chislehurstcommons.uk/surveys/

The Commons here in Chislehurst are a precious resource for us all, providing a place for recreation, a haven for wildlife, the green and pleasant backdrop to our daily lives, and endless

pleasure and inspiration.

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?



In our newsletters we aim to show you some of the work involved in managing and maintaining the area, and the steps we are taking to conserve and enhance its habitats.

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!

The Family at Prickend Pond



Last month we reported that a pair of Egyptian Geese had produced a late family of 9 goslings. We are pleased to report the good news that, at the time of writing, all 9 are thriving.

And Finally Let your Imagination Run Free!



What do you see? Is this an Alsatian hiding amongst the undergrowth.....



..... or a wily fox?

Our beautiful Commons with all their rich variety are inspiring.

They not only provide us with a green space for rest and relaxation, but also feed our senses and our imagination.

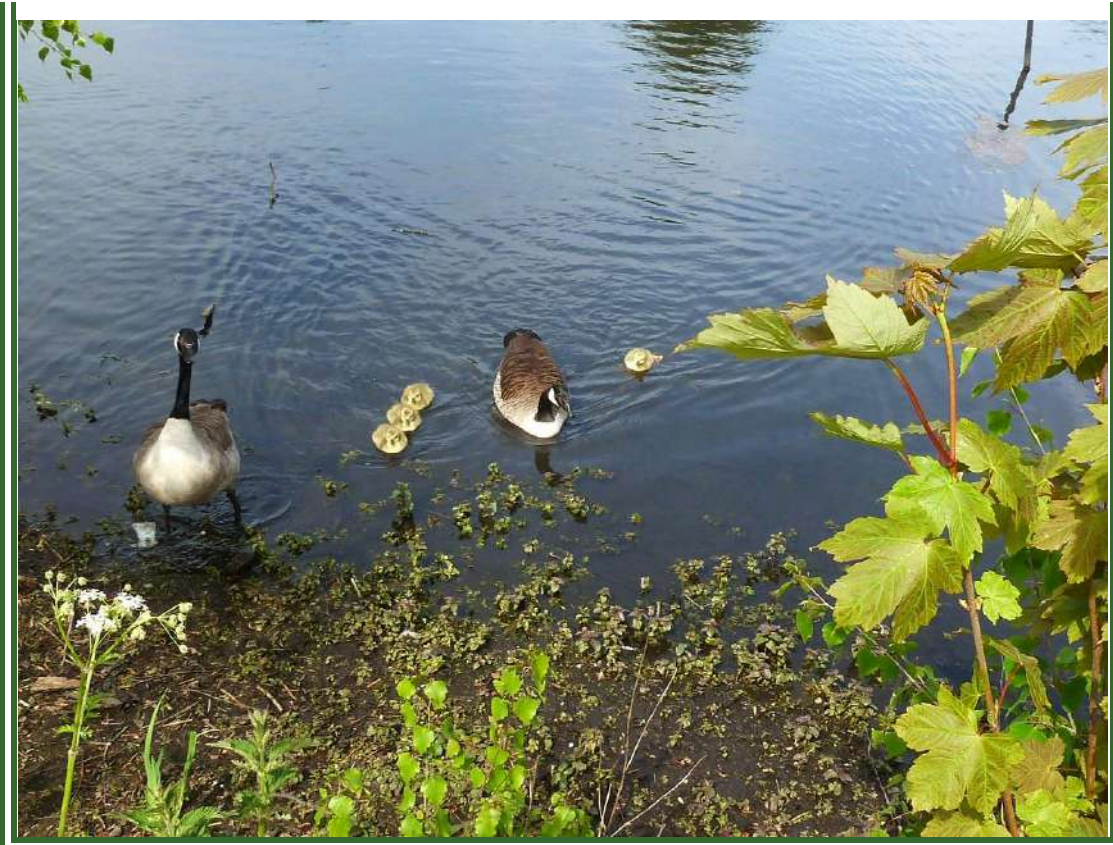
We will continue to do our best to maintain and enhance them for present and future generations.

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 – Jonathan Harvie, Kevin Jennings, Ross Wearn, Charlie Wheeler and Mary Wheeler.

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



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

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