



**February 2024**



**Fancy a dip in the woodland? The Japanese practice of forest bathing, *shinrin yoku*, is a relaxation technique that uses the sights, sounds and scents of woodlands to promote a sense of well-being.**

**It is increasingly recognised that time spent in open spaces, and in contact with the natural world, can make us happier and healthier.**

**We have the woodland on our doorstep here in Chislehurst, so follow one of the pathways and see where it leads you, and what you can see and hear. They are free and open to all.**



## Bird Life

**A special thank you to two of our photographers, Peter Edwards and Kevin Jennings, whose brilliant photos show in detail some of the amazing and uplifting sights you might see on a walk across the commons. Both photos below were taken this January.**



**Kevin took this photo of a goldcrest which is the UK's smallest bird, just 9 cm long and weighing 6g. There is a resident population, but large numbers of migrants arrive in autumn from Scandinavia. They can be seen across the woodland of the Commons, often hanging upside down to take food from the underside of a branch.**



**This action shot of a long-tailed tit was taken by Peter.**

**Long-tailed tits are dainty birds with a tail longer than their body. They are often seen in noisy flocks flitting through trees and bushes. They are rarely still for long. Look for them on the Commons at Rush Pond or the Overflow Glade.**

**As they are so small, they are at risk in cold weather and will huddle together at night for warmth.**

## **Our First Butterfly Sighting of 2024**



**Red admirals migrate north from Africa and Europe in spring, but, with a warmer climate, some now overwinter in the south of England. They can be seen flying on sunny days, and this photo was taken on 26<sup>th</sup> January.**

## **Our Wonderful Keepers and Volunteers**

**We have a wonderful team of volunteers who support us in varied roles, many of them behind the scenes.**

***We thank them all!***

**Our working party volunteers have been busy in January with tasks to develop and enhance habitats. We hope that these will attract more wildlife, like the birds and butterfly above.**



**The heathland on St. Paul's Cray Common has been a focus for one group. The heathland is a rare and valuable habitat which is always at risk of being overtaken by saplings, brambles and bracken. Managing their growth needs to be carried out at this time of year before lizards and slow worms become active.**



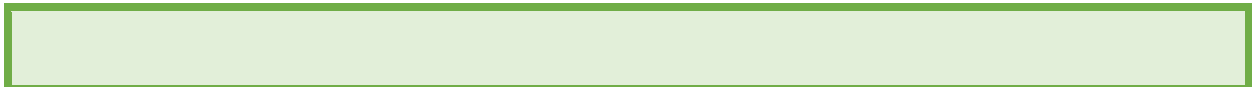
**The group have also been clearing an open area on St. Paul's Cray Common, to restore a habitat for reptiles, amphibians and invertebrates. It is sunny and warm in the summer and is adjacent to the National Trust heathland, which already attracts a variety of wildlife. We will monitor the site throughout the year.**



**Earlier in the year, some sycamore trees near the War Memorial were found to have sooty bark disease and they were felled in September, leaving an open space.**

**This week, our volunteers returned and planted out a variety of whips and saplings – hazel, hawthorn, blackthorn, rowan and silver birch.**

**Special thanks go to “I Dig Trees” who provided the whips.**



## Litter from the Past



**Litter is an ongoing problem, and we are very grateful to all the volunteers who go out litter-picking on the Commons.**

**However, litter from the past can raise questions and hint at interesting stories. Two bottles were found recently during ditch clearing.**

**The one above has the words “Hopgood and Co, 47, East Street, Brighton”, moulded on the side. A look at the 1911 Census identified this as a hairdresser’s, and the rather elegant bottle could perhaps have contained macassar oil, used to keep hair in place.**



The second is from the Chislehurst Mineral Water Company which was based in Park Road.

In 1901 the Sevenoaks Chronicle carried a review of the Christmas products offered by the Chislehurst Mineral Water Company.

*“Every year, there is an increasing number of those who prefer non-intoxicating liquors, and these we would specially recommend to try the renowned preparations of The Chislehurst Mineral Water Company. This enterprising firm have several most seasonable drinks and their huge 4-horse vans are continually delivering goods in Sevenoaks. All their drinks are absolutely pure and are most pleasing to taste. For children they are indispensable.”*

The bottle has the maker’s name – Rylands, Barnsley – moulded on the base. Further research revealed that this manufacturer was originally Rylands and Codd and patented the “marble-stoppered” bottle in 1872.

It was hard hit by the recession of the 1920s, and closed its doors in 1926, which gives an idea of the age of the bottle.

Our Commons truly are a never-ending source of interest!

**Egyptian Geese**



**The family of Egyptian geese that have aroused so much interest and affection in recent months are now fully fledged and becoming more independent and adventurous. In fact, the mother has been seen positively encouraging her offspring to move on.**

**These two were spotted exploring the black poplar tree at the pond.**



**When this photo was taken, six of the young were on the bank with the parents, but the seventh was at a distance by the beach area, as shown in the photo below.**





**Egyptian geese usually breed early in the year so we may soon see another brood making their way to the pond.**



**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](http://www.chislehurstcommons.uk)  
or via [PayPal Giving](#)

Thank you!

And Finally – Nature's Art Gallery



This is yellowing curtain crust, a fungus found on fallen branches, particularly beech.



**The fallen leaves of autumn gradually rot away and nourish the soil, but, on the way, they become beautiful, tissue-like outlines.**



**And, to end with, the welcome sight of snowdrops – the sign that spring is coming.**

**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, Ross Wearn, Charlie Wheeler and Mary Wheeler**

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