



Epsom Common Association

Est. 1974 Patron:- The Worshipful The Mayor of Epsom & Ewell

www.epsomcommon.org.uk

AUTUMN NEWSLETTER 2015

Dear Member,

Although the weather this summer has been somewhat mixed the flora and fauna on the Common continues to thrive as can be seen from the Nature Report. The moth survey provided some spectacular results and no doubt this contributes to the abundant bat population. We also had a series of successful nature walks and thanks go to our walk leaders, Tony Quinn, Eileen Taylor, Alison Gilry and Steve Nevard. The new circular path has had its first serious test with the torrential rain in recent weeks and I'm pleased to report it has stood up very well. Many people have said how pleased they are with the new path, particularly parents with buggies and wheelchair users who can now enjoy the Common once again with such a good surface. Sadly it has not been all good news. There have been reports of some cyclists abusing the facility by cycling unreasonably fast. I had hoped that this would not be an issue. It is not known yet if this is due to any organised cycling or just down to individuals being irresponsible. Although cyclists do have rights to use this path as it is a bridleway, pedestrians do have precedence. The rangers have been asked to stop cyclists found speeding and consideration is being given to putting up notices asking cyclists to be considerate of other users of the path. I would like to ask members to report any incidents to the E&EBC contact centre and to ask cyclists politely if they could keep their speed down. Work has not yet been completed in the locations where important services go under the path. This requires laying of concrete as protection for the services. It is now hoped that the work can be completed in the next two months and the temporary protection will have to remain in place to ensure vehicles do not damage the services.

We have not yet been able to purchase a new vehicle to support the work of the Ecovols as we have a shortfall of £5,000 in our account. This is having a serious impact on the scope and location of the work we can do. Any ideas for fundraising will be very welcome. I would like to thank all those members for their generous donations towards our Ecovols tools replacement fund.

And as always I would welcome anyone who feels they could spare a little time as a committee member to help with the important tasks which support the good work of the Association which has built up over the last 40 years.

Thank you

Martin Gandy (Chairman)

Nature Report Autumn 2015 from the Countryside Team

Yet again the wildlife on Epsom Common has not disappointed us this year. We continued with surveying the ponds for Great Crested Newts throughout May to June. Thanks go to our helpful volunteers for assisting us in laying out the bottles in the evening and returning early in the morning to check what had been caught. The greatest success was at Blake's Pond where 29 Great Crested Newts were found proving that we have a good population on the site.

Our regular surveys for Butterflies, Reptiles and Dormice have continued, again with the great support of volunteers. Our thanks go to Alison Gilry and Bob Yeo who walk the butterfly transect route once a week from April to September. The most exciting sightings this year have to be the elusive Purple Emperor which is great news. The adder and grass snake population is doing well. Thank you to Surrey Amphibian and Reptile Group for helping us check the refugia. Together we aim to check them once a month.

The Dormice boxes have also been checked once a month, thank you to Gill Sanders for taking the lead with this survey. Unfortunately we have not found any dormice this year, but the boxes have proved very useful to birds, bumblebees and wood mice.

The volunteer help doesn't stop there. We have also been running a bat survey once a month since June and have tried to survey as wide an area as possible to determine the bat activity on the site. We are going to use these preliminary surveys to find where the activity hotspots are and then focus on these areas in due course to see if we can pin down their roosting sites. So far we have recorded Common and Soprano pipistrelles, Noctule and Brown Long-eared.

We were also lucky enough to be visited by Paul Wheeler and Robert Arnfield for an evening of moth trapping in the middle of July. They set up three traps in the grazing area and were amazed by what we found. We caught well above 100 different species in one night!

Countryside Officer Pete Howarth, our resident bryophyte expert has also discovered an interesting moss only recorded three times recently in Surrey, called *Platygyrium repens*.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY - DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Saturday 3rd October – 10:00am. start – Fungus Foray

Join local expert Andrew Smith in a search for interesting and unusual fungi on Epsom Common. This year we will meet in the Christ Church car park and not the Stew Pond car park, to cover some different areas. We recommend you wear stout shoes and trousers to cope with mud, nettles and brambles. Return to the car park around 12.

Priest Hill Nature Reserve

An illustrated talk about this exciting new nature reserve in Epsom by Surrey Wildlife Trust Reserve Manager Rachael Thornley

Tuesday November 10th 2015

Christ Church Hall, Christ Church Road, Epsom

Commencing at 8:00pm

Refreshments available after the talk – Doors open at 7:45pm

Cattle Grazing

The cattle grazing on the Common is now a regular feature from late spring to early autumn and helps to maintain the diversity of habitat which is so important for the Common's SSSI status. This year we have a herd of 27 steers and heifers, comprised of pure Galloways and Galloways and Dexters crossed with Irish Moiled; they look strikingly different from the Friesian breed that we have hosted for many years. The animals arrived in June and they are thriving well. If the ground conditions remain firm, it is likely that they will stay on in to October, which is somewhat later than usual.

The health and security of the animals is checked daily, and volunteers from the Association carry out the task on several days each week. However, we need to recruit new volunteers, particularly for Thursdays and Fridays. The task is not onerous and those already involved find it a rewarding exercise, so if you think you might be able to help, please contact Bruce Critchley to find out more. His email address is bruce_critchley@yahoo.co.uk and telephone 01372 742520.



We were due to be working on the ponds around the common but we have had to re-arrange our previously published autumn programme owing to the ongoing lack of transport since the theft of our all terrain vehicle last year. We shall instead relocate our autumn tasks to areas near to the container site so as to avoid having to move tools around too far by hand. The container site is a five minute walk from the Stew Pond car park. ***Our task dates remain unchanged and we meet at the container at 9.30am for each task.***

September – Sunday 20th and Monday 21st – Veteran Trees

There are a number of veteran trees on the common, which are under threat from competing trees and shrubs. Each tree is identified by a metal tag. We aim to cut back scrub and small saplings around these special trees so as to create a halo effect, allowing the veterans more space to grow and continue to thrive for many years to come.

October – Sunday 18th and Monday 19th – Grazing Meadows

We continue with scrub clearance on the slopes of the High Meadow facing the Great Pond. Clearing encroaching clumps of gorse and thorn will allow grasses to flourish whilst leaving islands of habitat areas for breeding birds. Some pathways through the scrub islands will be opened up to allow cattle easier access for shelter.

November – Sunday 15th and Monday 16th – Great Pond

Working on the north-eastern edge of the pond, we shall remove some birch saplings that have grown up close to the pond margins. Some of the willows will be thinned out to provide a mix of vegetation for breeding birds.

Epsom Common Association

Chairman – Martin Gandy, 2 Kingsdown Road, Epsom, KT17 3PU. t: 01372-723149; m: 07796-362923; email: chairperson@epsomcommon.org.uk

Vicechair - David King, 1 Lewins Road, Epsom, KT18 7TL. t: 01372-722457

EcoVols Leader – John Turner, 10 Hookfield, Epsom KT19 8JG. t: 01372-721876; m: 07729-235559; email: ecovols@epsomcommon.org.uk

Treasurer – Marilyn Day, 17 Blackthorn Road, Great Bookham, KT23 4BN. t: 01372-454477

Secretary - Cynthea Blunden, 6 Isabella Cottages, Epsom

Council Representative – Steve Bridger - email: SBridger@Epsom-Ewell.gov.uk

Committee members (in addition to the above named) – Bruce Critchley, Conor Morrow (LMCMP), Stewart Cocker (E&EBC), Roger Newman, and Eileen Taylor.