



# Epsom Common Association

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

[www.epsomcommon.org.uk](http://www.epsomcommon.org.uk)

## AUTUMN NEWSLETTER 2016

Dear Member,

I am pleased to report that the ECoVols now have a splendid new vehicle to help with our conservation work on the Common. It's a John Deere Gator, and has a small covered cab, a tipping cargo box and six wide wheels to minimise damage to the Common. Thanks to all our members for continuing to support the Association, and to Mary Hiles and Eileen Taylor for your generous donations for helping to make this possible. We are looking forward to putting it to full use with our first two days of conservation work at Barons Pond in September.

We also have a new charcoal kiln, which we have named the Norman Hiles Kiln in memory of Norman who made such a big contribution to our conservation work over many years.

Although we have improved the security at the kiln site we would be grateful if you could check for any signs of tampering with the container if your walks take you past this area. Please let John Turner or the Ranger Service know if you have any concerns. John's number is given below and the Ranger Service can be contacted via the normal E&EBC number, 01372-732000.

With thanks to members of the Epsom Camera Club we have started to build a photographic record of the Common. The Countryside Team have identified forty photopoint locations of particular interest on the Common and the plan is to take record photographs at these locations twice a year, in February and July. The storage location for the images is still under investigation but is likely to be either the ECA website or a separate website linked to the ECA website, enabling the development of the Common to be monitored over time.

The guided walks have been very successful again this year. Thanks to Tony Quinn, Zuza Featherstone, Peter Wakeham and Steve Nevard for leading the walks this year. We even managed to see some Purple Emperors in the tree canopy thanks to Zuza's eagle eyes. The only real disappointment has been no Yellow Hammers were found on the Common this year, although some are known to be nesting nearby so hopefully they will return.

Thank you

*Martin Gandy* (Membership Secretary)

---

### **The Hogsmill River**

An illustrated talk about the Work of the South East Rivers Trust on the Hogsmill River by  
Polly Bryant, Project Officer

**Tuesday November 8<sup>th</sup> 2016**

Christchurch Hall, Christchurch Road, Epsom

Commencing at 8:00pm

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

---

### **Cattle Grazing**

This Summer - the twentieth year of the cattle-grazing project - the Common has been home to 31 cattle of several breeds. Over the years the project has demonstrated clear benefits to the maintenance of a diversity of habitats and this led to the decision to extend the Great Pasture enclosure to include part of West Heath.

Evaluation of this change is somewhat confounded by the atypically heavy rains in Spring and early Summer this year. Although grass has been plentiful, the ground conditions were difficult until late July, but the cattle seemed to be little affected by this and are thriving. We are expecting them to remain on the Common until early October.

The health and security of the cattle are checked daily. Volunteers from the Association assist with this vital task, and we are grateful for their efforts especially while the ground conditions were so challenging. We are always ready to welcome new volunteers, but please do not be deterred by this year's unusually wet Spring; the task is usually much more like a pleasant walk with a purpose. If you are interested in joining us, please contact Bruce Critchley to find out more. His email address is [bruce\\_critchley@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:bruce_critchley@yahoo.co.uk) and telephone 01372 742520.

---

## **DATES FOR YOUR DIARY - DATES FOR YOUR DIARY**

---

*Currently there are no walks planned. Please check the notice boards and our website for any additions to the programme made since this newsletter has been distributed.*

---

## Managing Epsom Common Local Nature Reserve.

We have had a very enjoyable Spring and Summer keeping an eye on the wonderful wildlife of Epsom Common. Earlier on in the spring we surveyed Blake's Pond for Great Crested Newts with a high count of 28, proving that we have a good population on the site that has remained stable with 29 last year.

Our regular surveys for Butterflies, Reptiles and Dormice have carried on, again with the great support of our volunteers. Our thanks go to Alison Gilry and Bob Yeo who walk the butterfly transect route once a week from April to September. This year we have had numerous sightings of the spectacular Purple Emperor, White Admiral, Purple Hairstreak and Silver Washed Fritillary which is very encouraging.

The adder and grass snake population is doing well with first sightings of Adders in late February this year. Thank you to Surrey Amphibian and Reptile Group for helping us check the refugia. Together we aim to check them once a month. The vegetation has been a bit tricky to keep under control around the refugia but thanks to our Countryside Team Volunteers they have been kept open.

The Dormice boxes continue to be checked once a month, thank you to Gill Sanders for taking the lead with this survey. Unfortunately we have had no signs of Dormice but many of the boxes are providing nesting locations for Blue Tit, Wood Mice and Bees.

The volunteer help doesn't stop there. We have been running a bat survey once a month (First one rained off in May!) to help 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.

There are areas of species-rich grassland around the common, one such area is called Railway meadow. These areas are cut and cleared on an annual basis to encourage the wildflowers and the scrub is kept under control. We have only been working in on Railway Meadow for a few years but already the area is looking amazing. It's floral diversity is improving all the time and the orchids have also returned which is great to see.

Sadly it seems that this year we have no Yellow Hammers again, a migrant bird that is becoming more scarce across the country. We can only hope it will make a return in future years. On a more positive note we have had many sightings of Buzzard, Sparrow Hawk and Kestrel and the usual noisy nests of the Great Spotted Woodpecker have been heard. An exciting discovery was made at Great Pond in late May/early June when a pair of Downy Emerald Dragonflies was spotted making the first record for the species since 1986! Hopefully a sign that the work of the ECoVols around Great Pond is paying dividends! We have also been out monitoring the various types of habitat we have on Epsom Common in relation to the criteria set out in the Higher Level Stewardship Funding Agreement with Natural England. These include woodland, grassland, species-rich grassland, wood pasture and parkland, successional areas and scrub, lowland heath and ponds. Our agreement runs until 2020 and being half way through the agreement we felt it was necessary to ensure we are hitting the management criteria. I am happy to report that we are on track and are maintaining the standard expected of us.

If you would like to find out more about how we monitor the Common's wildlife or if you would like to assist please do contact the EEBC Countryside Team on 01372 732000.



---

*As we now have the benefit of our new vehicle to ferry our tools and equipment across the common, we will be able to reinstate our autumn pond task schedule.*

### **SEPTEMBER - Sunday 18th & Monday 19th - BARON'S POND**

We'll be clearing around the pond margins to prevent trees from falling in the pond and opening up the small meadow adjacent to the western side of the pond.

*Meet 9.30am daily on the Loop Road at the junction of Woodcote Side and Woodcote Green Road (parking is very limited)*

### **OCTOBER - Sunday 16th and Monday 17th - BLAKE'S POND**

For a number of years we've been working around the pond to pollard some of the older willows and we'll continue with this work, as well as clearing the grassy areas around the pond to enhance the habitat for orchids. *Meet 9.30am daily on the railway bridge at the end of Castle Road.*

### **NOVEMBER - Sunday 20th and Monday 21st - GREAT POND**

We'll be working towards the southern side of the pond, pollarding willows and clearing birch saplings close to the pond edge creating wading bird habitat whilst leaving some cover for breeding birds.

*Meet 9.30am daily at the Stew Pond car park notice board.*

### **CHARCOAL**

We now have two kilns back in action and a stack of timber was delivered over the summer courtesy of Ashted Common - thanks to the City of London Corporation estate team. Our lumpwood charcoal is still stocked by The Old Moat Garden Centre or available direct from The Lower Mole Trust in Horton Country Park. Don't forget our Charcoal Fines, much favoured by the likes of Monty Don on Gardeners' World. Fines have good water retention qualities, so why not add some into your compost mix for containers?; they're also the key ingredient for BioChar - all you need to add is horse poo, et voila! Lumpwood Charcoal is £5.00 a bag and Charcoal Fines £3.00 a bag (prices may vary at The Old Moat).

---

## **Epsom Common Association**

**Chairman** – Vacant; **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** - Cynthia Blunden, 6 Isabella Cottages, Epsom  
**Council Representative** – Steve Bridger - email: SBridger@Epsom-Ewell.gov.uk **Membership Secretary** - Martin Gandy, 2 Kingsdown Road, Epsom, KT17 3PU. email: chairperson@epsomcommon.org.uk: 01372-723149; m: 07796-362923; **Committee members** (in addition to the above named) – Bruce Critchley, Conor Morrow (LMCMP), Stewart Cocker (E&EBC), Roger Newman, Steve Nevard and Eileen Taylor