



# Epsom Common Association

Est. 1974 Patron:- The Worshipful The Mayor of Epsom & Ewell  
[www.epsomcommon.org.uk](http://www.epsomcommon.org.uk)

## AUTUMN NEWSLETTER 2017

Dear Member,

Overall it has been a successful summer for the ECA with evidence that our management is having a good effect on the wildlife of the Common. The cattle grazing has gone well despite the worst vandalism to the fencing we have seen. Thanks again to all our wonderful volunteers for supporting the monitoring of the wildlife and the grazing project. Without your efforts Epsom Common wouldn't be such a lovely place. However very sadly our former chairman, Vic Hayden, passed away just before our last newsletter went to press; an appreciation follows.

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### Victor George Hayden, March 1932 - June 2017

Vic was a stalwart of the Association for over forty years. He was one of the founder members in the mid 1970s and developed a passionate interest in nature conservation. He was an enthusiastic member of the EcoVols team, with one of his favourite roles as leader of the cattle checking team, and eventually became Chairman in 2005. This role enabled him to get involved with local campaigns and conservation issues which he tackled with great enthusiasm. He was particularly thrilled to be invited to a House of Commons reception by our local MP Chris Grayling because of his voluntary work. Vic strongly believed that it is up to local residents not only to monitor but also to actively assist in the preservation and improvement of our environment.

Vic was born in Brentford, with Kew Gardens and Syon House within walking distance of his home, and he soon developed a love for natural history. After a period working as an electrical engineer in Scotland, Vic met his wife Ina and also became a keen hillwalker. Vic and Ina moved to a house on The Wells in 1961 and he soon developed a passion for the Common. During the 1960s Vic and Ina adopted two children, Neil and Sheena. Also during this period Vic took an active role in the community and became a Cub and Scout Leader.

Vic had many other interests including singing with the Epsom Male Voice Choir, badminton and working as a volunteer for the Born Free Foundation. He gave a great deal to the community through his voluntary work and was very well respected and liked by all who knew him.

Thank you *Martin Gandy (Membership Secretary)*



### A Review of the Butterfly Year

Our annual Autumn Get Together features an illustrated talk about the trends found in butterfly surveys by Bill Downey from Butterfly Conservation, including their work on the Small Blue Project, Wood White Project and surveying for rare species.

**Wednesday November 29<sup>th</sup> 2017**

Christ Church Hall, Christ Church Road, Epsom

Commencing at 8:00pm

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



### Dates for your Diary

Our Early Bird Walk, Butterfly Walk, Wildflower Wander, Bush Cricket Hop and fungus Foray were all very well attended this year after our change to Sundays and with better publicity. We therefore plan to hold the same series of walks next year. Please check the notice boards and our website for any additions to the programme made since this newsletter has been distributed.



### Cattle Grazing

The grazing season has been broadly successful, though as reported in the last newsletter, part of the electric fencing in the Rye Meadow grazing area was vandalized repeatedly. This led us to move the cattle from there to join those on Great Pasture. By mid-June major vandalism ceased and we were able to return six animals to Rye Meadow. We expect some cattle to remain until late September or early October.

When the animals are with us, their health and security is checked daily. This is a pleasant task - more like a walk with a purpose. Volunteers from the Association assist with the checking and we need a few more; if you are interested in joining us, please contact Bruce Critchley to find out more, email: [cattle@epsomcommon.org.uk](mailto:cattle@epsomcommon.org.uk), telephone 01372 742520.

Although the episodes of criminal damage appear to have ceased, we remain concerned; if you find damaged fences, gates, troughs or cattle in distress, or have information please contact the Council on 01372 732000 (24hrs). If you witness damage taking place call the Police on 999 and inform the Council.

## Managing Epsom Common Local Nature Reserve

The surveying season is coming to an end but we have lots of exciting sightings to report. The year started with a visit to the reptile tins in late March, along with volunteers from Ashted Common, to show them how we have laid out our tins and talk about the trials and tribulations of maintaining and checking them! We managed to find all the tins and under them found 1 female adder and 2 juvenile males, 2 adult grass snakes and one juvenile. On our walk we also came across 2 adult female adders basking in the sunshine.

We have had numerous other sightings of snakes and lizards across the common generally this year. A recent task cut an area of species-rich grassland called Railway Meadow which is looking very good floristically. Whilst carrying out the task, 12 common lizards were found.

Thanks to the efforts of Countryside Officer Peter Howarth, we were very privileged to welcome members from the Surrey Bat Group on to Epsom Common this summer who carried out two surveys within the woodland along bridleway 38. The surveys included trapping some bats so they could be accurately identified. The first survey on 24<sup>th</sup> May led to the identification of 22 bats of 5 different species: Common Pipistrelle, Soprano Pipistrelle, Noctule, Brown Long-Eared and Whiskered. The discovery of a Whiskered bat was very exciting as it is impossible to distinguish between Whiskered, Brandt's or Alcatheo bats just by analysing the echolocation frequency. Therefore direct identification is really important to establish their distributions. They are considered uncommon but widespread in England.

The butterfly transect has again been walked once a week from April to September, thanks to Alison Gilry and Bob Yeo. Interesting sightings include: Purple Hairstreak, White Admiral, Silver Washed Fritillary, and the Marbled White continues to do well on the site. Off transect Green Hairstreaks were spotted and also the impressive Purple Emperor. Surveying Blake's pond for newts was a great success again. A total of 22 Great Crested Newts were found along with the other two species: Smooth Newt and Palmate Newt.

Unfortunately we have had no signs of Dormice in the boxes but they continue to provide homes for blue tits, wood mice and insects. We are thinking of changing the location of some of the boxes to extend the survey and see if they are hiding elsewhere.

We have had a few sessions looking for Dragon and Damselflies and I am pleased to report further sightings of the Downy Emerald, not only along the dam of Great Pond, but also at West Heath. We also discovered the White-Legged Damselfly, along Rye Brook and around Great Pond. Other species seen include Ruddy Darter, Migrant Hawker, Brown Hawker, Common Blue Damselfly, Azure Damselfly, Blue Tailed Damselfly and Large Red Damselfly. As autumn arrives our thoughts turn towards organising the veteran tree work for the winter. Each veteran has its own management plan and a work schedule is put together from these and assessment of the trees' response to work carried out over previous years. The Countryside Team are also involved in mapping all veteran trees in the Borough. They are considered to be heritage assets. If you know of any magnificent trees, please get in contact on 01372 732000.

We continue to be vigilant for the Oak Processionary Moth caterpillar and nests. New nests continue to be found by the Forestry Commission surveyors who we liaise with closely. If you see any signs of OPM, please let us know by calling 01372 732000.



Our bracken pulling season has now finished, ending on Horton Heath with help from a local cub group and their parents. During the Autumn we turn our attention to the ponds on the Common where we will be clearing scrub and small trees from the margins. We meet at 9:30am on task days.

**October 15th and 16th** - Blake's Pond. Meet on the railway bridge at the end of Castle Road

**November 19th and 20th** - Great Pond. Meet at the Stew Pond notice board

Further details can be found on the ECA website. Information about the joint task in January will be published when the details are known. This annual event is very popular and brings together all the volunteer teams who carry out conservation tasks on the Common.

*We are always very pleased to see new volunteers at our tasks, please contact John Turner.*

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### Epsom Common Association

**Chair** David King **T:**01372-722457 **E:**Chairperson@epsomcommon.org.uk **ECoVols Leader** John Turner **M:**07729-235559 **E:**ECoVols@epsomcommon.org.uk **Treasurer** Marilyn Day **T:**01372-454477 **Secretary** Cynthia Blunden  
**Council Representative** Steve Bridger **E:**SBridger@Epsom-Ewell.gov.uk **Membership Secretary** Martin Gandy **M:**07796-362923 **E:**membership@epsomcommon.org.uk  
**Committee members** (in addition to above) Bruce Critchley, Conor Morrow (LMCMP), Stewart Cocker (E&EBC), Roger Newman, Steve Nevard and Eileen Taylor