

Out and About on Chislehurst Commons – birds of the ponds and wetlands.



Key

1. The Old Fire Station – offices of Chislehurst Commons.
2. The War Memorial.
3. The Cockpit.
4. Hangman's Corner/ Monument to the Prince Imperial
5. The May Queen site.
6. The Cricket Ground.
- 7.

- FOOTPATH (dotted line)
- BRIDLEPATH (dashed line)
- WOODLAND & SCRUB (dark green box)
- PONDS (blue box)
- GRASSLAND (light green box)
- WETLAND (green box with vertical stripes)
- HEATHLAND (purple box)

The ponds and wetland areas of the commons attract a variety of water-birds. Some are residents and can be seen all year, while others over-winter here or come as occasional visitors.



Mallards are ducks that dabble underwater, with their tails in the air, to search for plants and insects. Males are more brightly coloured than the brown females.



Ducks and geese have webbed feet that are good for paddling and dabbling. The coot uses its large, wide feet in the same way. It dives underwater to find vegetation, snails, and insect larvae. It builds a large nest of twigs on the water in spring, and may raise two families each year.



Greylag Geese have long, chunky, duck-like bills. They feed on grass, grain, and roots which they dig up. In recent years there have usually been a few of these on one or other of the ponds.



Canada Geese were introduced from North America. They are big birds and form large flocks, which can be a problem in small ponds. They feed on roots, leaves and grains.



Moorhens spend much of their time out of the water, and even climb trees. They are omnivorous and eat plants, grains, snails, insects and small fish.



Egyptian Geese were originally introduced to the UK as an ornamental species, but have escaped into the wild and are now widespread.



Tufted Ducks are diving ducks. They can swim quite a distance underwater in search of vegetation and invertebrates. The female is brown while the male has white patches and a distinctive tuft at the back of its head.



Black-headed Gulls arrive at the pond in late autumn and stay until spring. Their heads are white during the winter.



A Cormorant often comes to the ponds to fish. It spreads its wings out to dry because they are not waterproof.



The Grey Heron is another bird attracted by the fish in the ponds. It chooses a vantage point and watches the water intently.



Although not a water bird, the Grey Wagtail is often found near the ponds, where it catches flies and other insects.



Some of the ducks and geese at the ponds are hybrids. This is a Canada Goose/Greylag hybrid. It has a shorter neck than a Canada Goose, and there are variations in the markings. Similar hybrids can be seen among the ducks.

There is always plenty to see on a visit to the pond, and we hope you enjoy watching the water birds diving and dabbling.

Although there is plenty of natural food in the pond, it is tempting to bring food from home to give them.

They are very greedy, and will gobble up almost everything you offer, but please don't give them bread, pastry, biscuits and cakes. These aren't good for them and can harm their development.

Seeds and unrefined grains are better.



Thank you for helping to keep the birds healthy.

Chislehurst Commons is the organisation with responsibility for managing the 180 acres of local common land under an Act of Parliament.

We have two Keepers, Jonathan Harvie, our Head Keeper, and Peter Edwards, our Assistant Keeper, whose knowledge and dedication are invaluable. Everyone else involved in the administration, maintenance and development of the area does so on a voluntary basis.

The Act made no provision for funding, and we depend on donations and our wonderful Working Party to enable us to continue to preserve this precious natural resource.

Would you like to be a true friend to the Common?

You can donate via our website -

www.chislehurstcommons.uk

Thank you!