



April 2026



Spring is a wonderful time on the common land that lies at the heart of Chislehurst. Longer hours of daylight and generally warmer temperatures, together with spells of rain, have prompted the natural world to accelerate into the next stage of its annual cycle.

Blossom and birdsong, flowers on grassland and verges, and emerging butterflies, are daily signs that spring is well underway.



This newsletter is a celebration of the seasonal sights and sounds you may encounter if you are out and about on our wonderful, biodiverse 180 acres this month.

Heathland and Pond Awakenings

Kevin Jennings writes: As days grow longer and sun stronger, our heathland sees the re-emergence of common lizards and slow-worms from their winter torpor. Similarly, frogs, toads and newts, on and around the Commons, head to ponds to breed. At this point, some volunteers discard winter tools of habitat management for biological surveying, using standardised recording protocols.

To the end of March this year, 12 common lizards and three slow-worms have been recorded. Amphibian surveys across Chislehurst Common have so far

only seen results in Rush Pond with a frog and spawn, three toads and 73 smooth newts recorded.



Surveys, now in their eighth year, amass valuable information (numbers and distribution) referenced against climate and habitat quality over time. This

approach gives a “measure” of how species cope with environmental factors, and help guide our management strategies for conservation.

An example of our findings has been fewer slow-worm sightings in recent extreme dry summers, whereas lizards seem to be faring better, a trend possibly linked to differences in prey survival during dry conditions.



Also, rainfall-dependent ponds are not a good place to be for amphibians, as they may dry up before aquatic breeding cycles complete. Rush Pond has fared better, but has still deteriorated with loss of submerged and marginal plants used for cover and egg laying support.

Plans are in hand to improve the vegetation situation and surveying will monitor this.



Smooth newt male
Photo: Mary Wheeler



Smooth newt female
Photo: Mary Wheeler

Nature Springs into Life!

Everywhere you look, birds, butterflies, and insects of all kinds emerge after the dark winter days.



A male hairy-footed flower bee searches for nectar.

This bee is an important pollinator for early spring flowers, and its long tongue enables it to reach inside tubular flowers like this comfrey, growing on the bank at Prickend Pond.



A nuthatch inspects a possible nesting site.

Nuthatches are the only British birds that are able to come down trees headfirst, a unique ability as they scuttle about searching for food in the bark.





These two butterflies hibernate in cold weather and come out as the days begin to warm up.

The brimstone (top) can be seen flitting along woodland paths.

The scalloped wings of the comma enable it to bask in the sunlight unnoticed

among dead leaves.



This is a 7-spot ladybird, just one of the 26 types in the UK.



A red-eared terrapin basks in the sun at Rush Pond.

These were imported from the US in the 1980s and 1990s when “Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles” became popular and were often bought as pets. Although it is illegal to release them into the wild, many ended up in ponds and

rivers.

We monitor the terrapins that live in the ponds in Chislehurst, and have taken advice from experts, but, at the moment, they are not causing problems.

A Date for your Diary



The Crowning of the May Queen takes place on Saturday 2nd May from 2.30 pm on Centre Common at the top of the High Street.

This is an annual event, a community celebration of May Day, and it is always wonderful to watch as the dancers whirl round the maypole.

The Hedge at the Cricket Ground

In the last newsletter, we reported on the work carried out by our volunteers on the various elements of the hedge at the Cricket Ground.

During March, the hedge has responded to the changing season.



There are new shoots on the section laid by two volunteers.



The blackthorn in the area where Thames Water carried out some major improvements last year, is now covered in blossom.



As always, the gorse is a bright splash of yellow.

Our Wonderful Keepers and Volunteers

The two commons of Chislehurst and St. Paul's Cray are a great asset to life here, and a valuable resource for the community.

It is due to the hard work of our Head Keeper, Jonathan, Assistant Keeper, Toby, and all the volunteers who come so regularly to the working party, that the 180 acres are so well-maintained, and so attractive to all the wildlife that lives here.

Many thanks to them all!



Our winter work on St. Paul's Cray Common finished with some cutting back of holly along the bridle path.



A path from the Cockpit to Royal Parade was laid by the London Borough of Bromley in 2004 as part of the Mayor of London's "Walk to School" initiative. The material used was yellow, so it soon became known as the "The Yellow Brick Road".

Over the autumn and winter period it was covered with an accumulation of

fallen leaves and mud, and the working party spent two sessions scraping it.





The path had become wider as people tried to avoid the mud.
It is temporarily fenced to encourage the undergrowth to recover, and some hawthorn saplings have been planted.

And Finally – the Art that Nature Makes



These tree roots pushing above the surface of the ground create a pattern reminiscent of the spirals seen in jewellery and other decorative art. There is inspiration all around in the natural world.

Celebrate the wonders of spring on Chislehurst's two commons!

In this newsletter we have shown a few of the sights to be seen at this time of year on Chislehurst and St. Paul's Cray Commons, and some of the work involved in maintaining and enhancing the 180 acres.

We will continue to do our best to ensure that they are here for the enjoyment of present and future generations.



Would you like to support our work of maintaining and improving this beautiful, biodiverse greenspace, the backdrop to our daily lives?

Chislehurst Commons is a statutory body, with responsibility under an Act of Parliament for managing the 180 acres of common land in Chislehurst.

However, the Act provides no funding, and we are dependent on our volunteers and the generosity of local people.

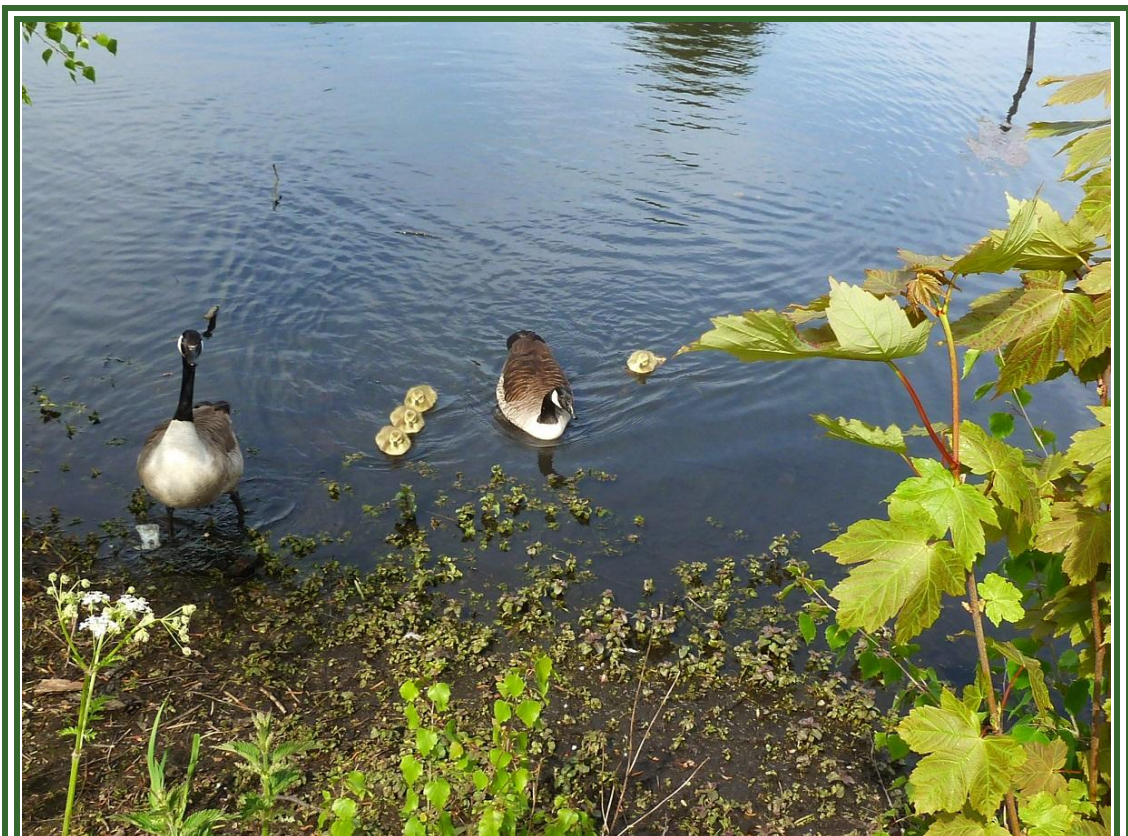
We have two Keepers whose knowledge and dedication are invaluable. Everyone else who works to manage and maintain the area does so voluntarily.

**If you use the commons and would like to support our work,
you can donate via our website**

www.chislehurstcommons.uk

or via [PayPal Giving](#)

Thank you!



Get your bird seed 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.

**When the birds stop eating, please stop feeding!
Food left on the ground or floating on the water will
attract rats!**

All proceeds go to Chislehurst Commons.

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Animal Rescue Advice Organisations

**Thanks for the photos to – Peter Edwards, Kevin Jennings,
and Mary Wheeler.**

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



**Chislehurst Commons are proud to display the Green
Flag Award logo.**

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