



June, the beginning of summer, when the precious grasslands of the common are a beautiful sight, bright with wildflowers, and buzzing with insects. Right now they could do with some rain.

We have heard from so many of you about how valuable the commons have been to you during these difficult times. We know that the natural world can lift our spirits, and the current situation has highlighted the vital importance, to our health and well-being, of the 180 acres of common land here in Chislehurst.

Our grassland is precious because it is Lowland Acid Grassland. Lowland Acid Grassland is listed as a Priority Habitat in the Government's UK Biodiversity Action Plan and the Mayor of London's Plan, and is becoming increasingly rare. It grows on nutrient-poor soil and supports a distinctive community of plants and insects. It needs careful management to conserve it and the wildlife that lives on it.

Chislehurst Commons has responsibility for managing the 180 acres of local common land under an Act of Parliament. However, the Act made no provision for funding, and we depend on donations and our wonderful Working Party Volunteers to enable us to continue to maintain and develop this precious natural resource.



Our Volunteer Working Party raking the grass in the Overflow Glade.

Until the end of the 19th Century, animals such as pigs, sheep, cows, horses and poultry were let out to graze on the common land in Chislehurst. They kept the grass short, ensuring that none of the nutrients in the plants was returned to the soil. We manage it by mowing it only at the end of the growing season in August or September, after the plants have flowered and dropped their seeds. The hay is raked up and removed from the site.

The annual haymaking is several full days' work for our volunteers.



The grasslands on each side of Watts Lane are never mown. This is because they have ant-hills which are important features of some acid grasslands. Each mound is the result of generations of labour by a colony of the Yellow Meadow Ant. Each colony may number 8,000 to 14,000 individuals.



The grasslands with their wildflowers are a glorious sight, and the weather last year produced particularly luxuriant growth.

You can access a map of the common, showing all the grassland areas, by clicking on a link at the end of this Newsletter.



You have to be out early to catch this flower, known as “Jack-go-to-bed-at-noon”, because it closes its petals by lunch time. Its other name, Goat’s Beard, refers to its seeds.



Red clover. It attracts pollinators with the sweet nectar that can be sucked from the flowers, and is known as Bee-bread in some parts of the country.



You may have noticed that, when the long grass is cut, some patches are left standing. This is not an oversight - they are wildlife refuges, where spiders and beetles can hibernate, and the eggs of insects will be safe until the spring. By leaving these refuges, we hope to enhance the biodiversity of the area.

This large Skipper butterfly relies on grasses to make a protective tube for its caterpillar to over winter.



The colouring of this meadow grasshopper makes it difficult to spot in the grass. Young ears may hear their chirps but to get a glimpse of their presence, walk slowly through the grass and they'll jump in all directions out of your way.



Another butterfly found around our grasslands. This small heath butterfly has just landed, With wings closed it keeps the eye spot on its forewing visible to distract any predators. Once settled the spot is lowered and it “disappears” amongst the grass and leaves.



A Magpie, a familiar sight on the common. Their main diet in summer is grassland invertebrates, such as beetles, flies, caterpillars, spiders, worms and leatherjackets.

And finally



Our Head Keeper, Jonathan Harvie and Assistant Keeper, Peter Edwards, begin the task of cutting the grass at the Ramblers Rest. Thirsty work!

[Click here to access a map of the common.](#)

Thanks for this week's photos to Don Drage, Kevin Jennings, Ross Wearn and Mary Wheeler.

During this difficult time, we will do our best to continue our work of maintaining the Commons and developing their biodiversity, so that they continue to be a valuable asset for us all.

If you know someone who would like to receive this Newsletter, please ask them to email us at contactus@chislehurstcommons.uk. Please note. Due to data protection laws we cannot accept their email address from you.



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

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