



Wimbledon Common

Putney Heath

Putney Lower Common

August 2015

Dramatic change to the Commons skyline



The pictures really say it all.

Following the dramatic event of 2nd August when one of the sails sheared off the Windmill, we have removed the remaining three sails...changing the landscape of the Commons quite dramatically.

The Museum has remained closed since but now repairs to the hole in the roof are complete, it will reopen in time for the Commons Open Day on 13th September.



A snake you say?

As part of this year's wildlife recording project, our Wildlife & Conservation Officer, Peter Haldane, is carrying out a reptile survey.

Common Lizard



Common Lizards have been quite plentiful but other species that we might expect to see, such as

Slow Worms, Grass Snakes, or even Adders, have not been spotted at all.

What Peter was not expecting to find on his survey was a very brightly coloured Corn snake - more at home in North America than Wimbledon Common!

Lucas Rudge, from Reptile Events, who came to rescue the snake, commented "We think he may have been there for a while because he was triangular in body shape, which in snakes indicates a loss of body mass. Given the warm weather and the fact a snake can survive up to a year without food he may well have been out for quite a time".

If you do spot any reptiles whilst out on the Commons, do please let Peter know. He would be delighted to hear from you.- peter@wpcc.org.uk



Corn Snake

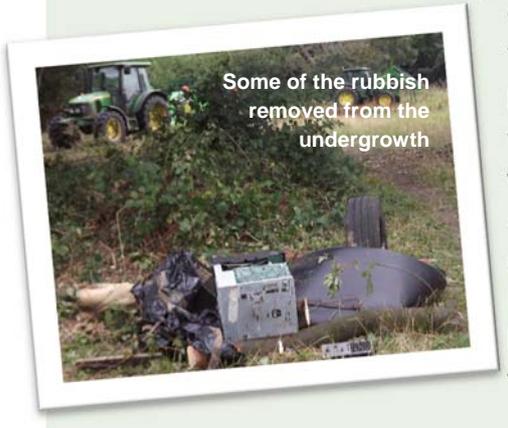
Clearance work at Putney Lower Common

The Maintenance team has been busy at Putney Lower Common over this last month, from placing log benches along the edge of Beverley Brook to the removal of the Oak Processionary Moth nests from the Oak trees.

The major work however has been the thinning of woodland on the edge of the

grassland between Queen's Ride and Lower Richmond Road.

Removing the many invasive suckers from nearby Poplar trees and lifting low branches will help improve the diversity of the woodland....and also prevent damage to the nearby telephone wire.



Incident Wednesday 12th August - Police seek help. Were you on the Commons?

Between 13:00hrs and 13:45hrs on 12 August, a lady walking her dog on the Heath near Kingsmere was robbed of her jewellery and phone. The suspect, who put a bag over her head so she could not identify him, then fled the scene. The lady was not injured but obviously traumatised by the incident.

Detective Inspector Gerard Frain, leading the investigation, said: *"We still need vital information to assist us in identifying the suspect. Were you at the Common at that time and did you see anyone acting suspiciously? Have you found any personal belongings? Did you take any photos or videos at the Common at that time? Please call Wandsworth Police on 101 or Crimestoppers on 0800 555 1111 if you have any information"*.

Fortunately, events of this nature are extremely rare, and the presence of our Mounted Keepers and maintenance staff are a crucial part of the safety of the Commons.

However, we always recommend visitors take care when using the Commons and remain observant and aware of their surroundings, particularly if alone.

If you have any concerns, or see anyone behaving suspiciously, please contact the Ranger's Office on 020 8788 7655 at any time.

20th Anniversary Wimbledon and Putney Commons Open Day *Come and join us!*

20th anniversary

Wimbledon & Putney Commons Open Day

10am-5pm
Sunday 13th September 2015
Ranger's Office, Windmill Road SW19 5NR

Family Fun Day Out
Come and meet the Keepers and their horses

Birds of prey
Farm animals
Arena events including the Wacky Dog Show
Free raffle
Tractor rides
Free entry & parking
Charity and local craft stalls

T: 020 8788 7655
W: www.wpcc.org.uk
Follow us on Twitter: @WimbledonCommon

Wimbledon and Putney Commons

What to look out for over the coming weeks

As the butterfly season starts to wane, September can be a good time to see some of our larger migratory species such as the Painted Lady and, less commonly, the Clouded Yellow. Also look out for the Small Copper in the grasslands.

Some of our large dragonflies are still very much in evidence and migrant Hawkers in particular can be quite common. They are unusual in that they will gather together to feed in suitable



Painted Lady



Wheatear

Migrant Birds

Despite the presence of Skylarks, Hobby, Kestrel, Common Buzzard, Red Kite and a Kingfisher, the past few weeks have been fairly quiet for bird sightings on the Commons.

Over the next month, Dave Wills, our local ornithologist, predicts we should start to see a few migrants passing through, including Whinchat, Wheatear, Stonechat, Spotted Flycatcher, House Martin, Tree & Meadow Pipits and possibly Ring Ouzel.

Meadow Pippit



Rowan

Fruits of the forest

Throughout August and September, the trees and bushes on the Commons turn their energies to producing their fruit. Berries and nuts are an important food source and provide rich pickings for birds and small mammals but they are, of course, primarily a means of reproduction for the plants and the foraging and eating habits of the wildlife that feed on them often dictates where their seeds spread and grow.

The Mountain Ash, or Rowan, is considered as one of the best trees for the wildlife as it provides prolific food sources at different times of the year for many birds and insects. Their bright red fruit attract the birds and provide much-needed vitamins

and energy for birds, who reciprocate by spreading the seeds in their droppings. Blackberries have been bountiful on the Common this year, and their seeds get spread in the same way. They also get eaten by foxes and other small mammals...and many dogs seem to like them too!



Blackberries

Jays, like squirrels, also bury acorns as a winter food supply. Those they forget about will germinate and start to grow.



Acorn



Conkers

Conkers are also an important food source for small mammals - but be aware that they are poisonous to humans and dogs.

Our Precious Heathland



Wimbledon Common and Putney Heath has the most extensive area of open heathland in the Greater London area. There is no better time to visit this very special and increasingly rare habitat than now when the Heather is in full bloom.

Farewell to Hedwig and Malakai

One of the “behind the scenes” tasks that we do here on the Commons is to aid the Riverside Animal Centre with the recovery and recuperation of birds of prey in a flight pen in the garden behind the Ranger’s Office.



Since the beginning of June, we

have had the pleasure of the company of two young Tawny Owls, named Hedwig and Malakai by local schoolchildren! Our staff keep a watch over the birds but try not to interact with them too much, other than to feed them a diet of dead chicks and mice.

The two were released in mid-August but they are still around the area, which is great for us as we are reassured we did our job and they are fending for themselves.

Volunteering Opportunities

One of the major problems we face in maintaining the heathland is keeping it clear of scrub which, if left to grow, will take over and starve the heather of the light it needs to survive.

Volunteer groups, such as the Putney Society are a huge help to us in clearing the Heath of scrub.

Following on from the success of the Tuesday Night Scrub Bashers Club, Peter has now set up the Saturday Morning Scrub Bashers Club and if you’d like to come and join us we’ll be working from 10.30am to 12.30pm on the following dates:

Saturday 3rd & 24th October

Saturday 7th & 21st November

Saturday 19th December

Meet outside the Windmill. Peter will provide tools and gloves, and a welcome tea and biscuits half way through!

Contact Peter on peter@wpcc.org.uk or 020 8788 7655 if you’d like to join.