



Wimbledon and Putney Commons

WILDLIFE AND ENVIRONMENT MONITORING REPORT 2022



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Wimbledon and Putney Commons' Wildlife and Environment Report 2022

Hello and welcome to the Commons' wildlife and environmental report 2022!

This report brings together all the wildlife and environmental information that volunteers collected last year. There is a lot to report:

- Nine new moth species were found, with a total of 432 being spotted! This included one of the UK's largest moths, the Emperor Moth, which is the only kind in the UK that spins a silk cocoon.
- 21 Stag Beetles were recorded by visitors to the Commons, This indicates a declining trend since 2014, although work is needed to understand if our Stag Beetles need more help.
- After seeing that our population of Cross-leaved heather may be in decline, we collected some seed and spread them in a new area to try to establish a second population. This was done by volunteers with the permission of Natural England.
- We recorded 88 bird species. There was some great news with two rare Dartford Warblers found on the Commons for the first time. We also saw the successful breeding of Little Grebe at Bluegate pond, and both Firecrests and Ravens seem to be increasing in number. Sadly, there were no records of Lesser Spotted Woodpecker – hopefully work to increase the amount of standing deadwood through the ringbarking of invasive Turkey Oak will provide important new habitat for this increasingly rare species. There was also a pair of Skylarks, but disturbance seems to have prevented their breeding. We shall need to re-think our approach to protecting the Skylarks on the Plain given that disturbance, primarily from dogs,
- 28 species of butterfly were recorded - a slight increase on 2021. However, the long drought may have caused problems for many butterflies as their food plants will have suffered. We have been concerned that several the commoner species have declined in abundance in recent years. We may be able to help these species by making some changes to our grassland management, and by creating new meadows where possible.
- 21 species of dragonfly were recorded, up from 9 in 2021, although this increase was probably due to there being more recorders visiting the Commons. One of these species, Banded Demoiselle, featured in David Attenborough's recent documentary series, 'Wild Isles'. Other notable species included a single Norfolk Hawker, which we think might have wandered over from the population that lives at the Wetland Centre, and a Keeled Skimmer which is a typical wet heathland species not seen on the Common since 2018. Improved protection of the ponds and wet heath could help these species to establish themselves.
- Common Lizards were spotted 16 times, so they seem to be doing well.
- While frogs, toads and newts continue to spawn in many of the ponds, we're concerned about their future given the unauthorised (and illegal) introduction of fish into several of the ponds, and the growing damage being caused by dogs entering them.
- We surveyed the wet heath. While on some measures the heath is doing well, we identified some serious issues that require urgent action, such as blocking the old drainage ditches and fixing the paths using a new 'floating' technique to prevent further damage to this rare habitat. This work will hopefully be addressed if resources can be found.

If you would like to help us protect nature on the Commons, you can do so in two ways:

1. When you visit the Commons, please record your sightings on the iRecord website (irecord.org.uk) so that we can access them easily. All the information we collect is fed into how the Commons are managed to ensure that they remain a place where nature thrives.
2. Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators (WPCC) will be consulting on a new land management plan in 2023. This will set out how the Commons will be improved for nature and will help to address the threats the Commons face. We'd like to hear your views, so keep a look out for it.
3. Please consider volunteering! If you have a major passion you might want to join the Wildlife and Conservation Forum, which prepares this report. Email oliver.bennett@wpcc.org.uk if you're interested. If you can only spare the odd hour here or there, please email peter@wpcc.org.uk and he'll let you know when the volunteer work groups take place.

A huge thanks to the Wildlife and Conservation Forum and all the other volunteers for contributing to this report and for their records.

Huge thanks in particular go to Simon Riley, Adrian Podmore, Les Evans-Hill, Jan Wilczur and Rupert Kaye for providing much of the text and analysis.

I hope you enjoy reading our report.

Oliver Bennett MBE

DEFRA-Appointed Conservator

Contents

Birds	4
General Bird Report.....	4
Firecrest survey	18
Butterflies	19
Dragonflies and Damselflies	22
Notable observations	22
Stag Beetles	24
Reptiles and Amphibians	25
Moths	33
New site records for 2022	33
Notable micro-moth records for 2022	34
Notable macro-moth records for 2022	34
Plants	36
Cross-leaved heath reintroduction	36
Wet Heath Survey	37

Please note - in previous years we've published separate reports on ecological and environmental monitoring and reports listing sightings of birds, butterflies, and dragonflies. We hope that bringing all this information together into a single report each year will make it easier for those who love the Commons and its wildlife to see what we've discovered.

Birds

The Birds section is in two parts. The first is a general report of bird recorded and the second is an in-depth study of Firecrests that was carried out in early 2023 in time to be included in this report.

General Bird Report

Report by Adrian Podmore

The total species count of 88 (95 - 2021) reflected an average year although once again, many species records were just for single observations.

A highlight of the year was two pairs of breeding Little Grebe at Bluegate, although only one pair may have been successful with just two youngsters seen in June.

The Swallows and Pied Wagtails at the stables also seemed to have a very good year, while Blackcaps maintained their dominance with Firecrests continuing their expansion.

Raptors such as Red Kite and Buzzard are now almost daily sightings.

Ravens seem to be on the increase as well.

It was a good autumn for passage migrants with several Stonechats moving through along with a supporting cast of Wheatear, Redstart and Winchat while the Commons hosted two Dartford Warblers for the first time.

On the downside, there were worryingly no records at all for summer migrants such as Cuckoo and Spotted Flycatcher while House Martins and Swifts numbers still seem to be declining.

It was good news that a pair of Skylark appeared during the spring but there was no evidence of any successful breeding, while Reed Bunting appeared to be entirely absent from its usual territory on the Plain. Hopefully they will return this year and not follow the way of the Meadow Pipit.

Additionally, there were no records for autumn and winter visitors such as Redpoll with scant records for Siskin too.

Waders such as Woodcock and Snipe also had poor showings although this may be in part due to climate change where warmer winters on the Continent mean birds do not have to travel so far to escape the harsher weather conditions.

Sadly, another year with no records for the Lesser Spotted Woodpecker.

Nevertheless, as usual, the year did provide its exciting surprises including Ring Ouzel, Pied Flycatcher, Little Ringed Plover, and Green Sandpiper – so there is always the chance of something unusual appearing on the Commons.

Many thanks to all contributors to this bird report: Bella Covill, Angela Evans-Hill (AEH), Peter Haldane (PH), Les Evans-Hill (LEH), Simon Riley, Simon Rocksborough-Smith (SRS), Tim Straw, Jan Wilczur (JW), Jon Reeves (JR), Derek Frampton, Alastair Brown (AB), Kath Brown, James Owen, Mike Caldwell, Thomas Purvis, Mike Waller, Martin Honey, Caroline Woodley, Julia Hardy, Andrew Harding (AH), Greg Aldridge, R.Kaye, Neil Grover, R.Thomas, and Norbert Jakab.

Thanks in particular to Les Evans-Hill, Andrew Harding and Alastair Brown who regularly monitor the four transects on the Commons and to Jon Reeves and Richard Thomas for the photographs.

Please do keep in touch with any sightings you may have as they not only help to maintain a picture of the Commons birdlife, but are valuable in assessing the ecological health of the Commons and to formulating management policies accordingly.

Bird species list:

- **Canada Goose** (*Branta canadensis*)
 - Status: locally breeding resident.
- **Greylag Goose** (*Anser anser*)
 - Status: bred at Kingsmere in each year from 2000 to 2005, but now an infrequent visitor. 12 were at Rushmere 22 Mar (AP).
- **Mute Swan** (*Cygnus olor*)
 - Status: prior to 2007, an irregular visitor to the Common's ponds, now a regular breeder at Queensmere in recent years.
- **Egyptian Goose** (*Alopochen aegyptiaca*)
 - Status: breeding resident –with goslings appearing very early in the year.
- **Mandarin Duck** (*Aix galericulata*)
 - Status: feral breeding resident.
 - A female with seven ducklings at Bluegate 18 May (AP) had reduced to the female with three youngsters by 2 Jun (JR) but was joined by a second adult female on 7 Jun (JR). Ten were at Kingsmere 26 Jul (AP). This duck seems to have abandoned its regular haunts amongst the alders at Queensmere and has now taken up residence along the Beverley Brook where 19 were seen on 27 Sep (AH), 15 there on the 29 Nov (AH) and 17 on 28 Dec (Tim Straw).



Photo by
R. Thomas

- **Shoveler** (*Spatula clypeata*)
 - Status: autumn / winter visitor and passage migrant.
 - An average showing with birds present at Kingsmere from 22 Jan with a max of five on 15 Feb (3m 2f) (JR). Four pairs were at Kingsmere 25 Dec (JR) with a pair at Queensmere 29 Dec (AH) and 31Dec (Mike Caldwell).
- **Gadwall** (*Mareca strepera*)
 - Status: once a regular autumn / winter visitor to Queensmere, only occasionally seen now.

- A pair was at Queensmere 15 Nov (AP) and 16 Nov (JR).
- **Mallard** (*Anas platyrhynchos*)
 - Status: breeding resident with numbers increasing during the autumn and winter.
- **Tufted Duck** (*Aythya fuligula*)
 - Status: breeding resident (since 2000), winter visitor and passage migrant.
 - A pair was at Scio Pond 26 Mar (JW).
- **Common Pheasant** (*Phasianus colchicus*)
 - Status: occasional visitor
 - A female was nr Gravel Pit Cottage 20 Apr (LEH).
- **Common Swift** (*Apus apus*)
 - Status: regular but decreasing summer visitor, breeding outside of the Common's perimeter.
 - Two at Rushmere and one over the Plain on 4 May (AP) were the first birds of the year followed by 30 N over the Windmill and 20 over the Mounds 12 May (JR). There was a good count of 100 E over the Plain 24 May (JR), with 50 on the Plain 29 May & 1 Jun (JR).
 - In later summer, there were 20 at Rushmere 20 Jul (AP), 20 over the Mounds 26 Jul (AP), with two at Gravel Pit Cottage (LEH) and four over the Mounds 18 Aug (AP) being the last sightings of the year for this charismatic species.
- **Feral Pigeon** (*Columbia livia*)
 - Status: fairly common feral resident.
- **Stock Dove** (*Columba oenas*)
 - Status: breeding resident
- **Woodpigeon** (*Columba palumbus*)
 - Status: common breeding resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.
- **Collared Dove** (*Streptopelia decaocto*)
 - Status: occasional visitor, generally flying over
 - Singles flew over Putney Heath 3 Apr (Norbert Jakab) and over the Plain 25 Apr (JW).
- **Moorhen** (*Gallinule chloropus*)
 - Status: breeding resident.
 - Good counts of 14 at Queensmere 27 Sep (AH) and ten at Kingsmere 25 Oct (AP).
- **Coot** (*Fulica atra*)
 - Status: breeding resident.
- **Little Grebe** (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*)
 - Status: breeds on Bluegate when water levels are suitable
 - an excellent year for this species beginning with two birds calling at Bluegate on 19 & 20 Mar (JR) and again on 18 Apr (AB). Two pairs were present on 29 Apr (AP) with seemingly a pair on each half of Bluegate. Five adults and two chicks were at Bluegate on 19 & 24 May (six on north pond and one adult on south pond) (JR). By the 22 Jun, only the two youngsters appeared to have remained, still located on north pond (JR). The last time these birds bred successfully was in 2014 and in 2013 and 2001 before that, so long overdue. Clearly maintaining suitable water levels through to June is critical to their success.



Photo by J. Reeves

- **Little Ringed Plover** (*Charadrius dubius*)
 - Status: rare visitor
 - A bird was reported at Rushmere 2 Jul (James Owen - Surrey Bird Club)
- **Woodcock** (*Scolopax rusticola*)
 - Status: a once common autumn / winter visitor, seemingly now in decline
 - Just three records for this once, regular winter visitor with two at Farm Bog 16 Jan (Oliver Bennett), followed by singles nr Hookhamslade 22 Jan (Mike Caldwell) and at Ladies Mile that flew up and headed west 11 Mar (JR). Restoration work on the bogs should benefit this species with the provision of soft ground for them to forage in.
- **Jack Snipe** (*Lymnocyptes minimus*)
 - Status: passage migrant and winter visitor, particularly following spells of wet weather on the Plain
 - One flew up from the Triangle and landed back down again 29 Sep (JR).
- **Common Snipe** (*Gallinago gallinago*)
 - Status: passage migrant and winter visitor, particularly following spells of wet weather.
 - A very poor year indeed with just one bird at the pools on Ladies Mile 28 Jan (JR).
- **Green Sandpiper** (*Tringa ochropus*)
 - Status: occasional visitor / migrant, usually to Bluegate
 - One bird, probably a juvenile, was at Bluegate on the morning of 25 Jul first on the north pond then the south (JR). The last record for this species was in June 2013, also at Bluegate and 2003 before that. Interestingly, JR notes the car park was shut at the Windmill that day with a noticeable decrease in disturbance.



Photo by J. Reeves

- **Black-headed Gull** (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*)
 - Status: common winter visitor and passage migrant.
- **Common Gull** (*Larus canus*)
 - Status: fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant.
 - A good record of 210 on the playing fields 14 Feb (JW) with 70 there 29 Nov (AH).
- **Herring Gull** (*Larus argentatus argenteus*)
 - Status: uncommon winter visitor and passage migrant, mostly seen flying over.
- **Lesser Black-backed Gull** (*Larus fuscus*)
 - Status: scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.
- **Common Tern** (*Sterna hirundo*)
 - Status: non-breeding summer visitor and passage migrant.
 - Only one sighting this summer, with a bird on 20 Jul (Thomas Purvis) that flew east across the Plain until it went out of sight, before looping back a few minutes later, heading west in the direction of Queensmere.
- **Cormorant** (*Phalacrocorax carbo*)
 - Status: a regular visitor to our larger ponds, primarily in the winter months.
- **Grey Heron** (*Ardea cinerea*)
 - Status: regular non-breeding visitor.
- **Little Egret** (*Egretta garzetta*)
 - Status: increasingly observed in recent years, particularly at Kingsmere.
 - Five were at Kingsmere 2 Oct (Tim Straw) with six there on the 3rd (JR).
- **Sparrowhawk** (*Accipiter nisus*)
 - Status: breeding resident.



Photo by J. Reeves

- **Red Kite** (*Milvus milvus*)
 - Status: increasingly observed flying over the Common in recent years and breeding nearby.
 - Regularly seen throughout the year, the spread of this species has been remarkable with a maximum of three 14 Apr (JW).
- **Common Buzzard** (*Buteo buteo*)
 - Status: resident and breeding on the Commons– passage migrants also occur.
 - A bird was seen displaying near the Mounds 23 Mar (JR) with two displaying over Putney Heath 24 Mar (M. Honey). High counts, including six at the Mounds 26 Mar (JW) and eight there 14 Apr (JW) were likely to be migrants. Pairs were near the golf course 10 May (Neil Grover), in the woods near Farm Bog 27 Jul (R. Thomas) and regularly following the contractors near Stag Bog as they cut the holly (PH). At least two breeding pairs with one located near Farm Bog / Warren Farm and another somewhere on the golf course.



Photo by R. Thomas

- **Little Owl** (*Athene noctua*)
 - Status: increasing visitor and probable breeding resident.
 - A pair was heard near the golf course 14 Mar (Greg Aldridge).
- **Tawny Owl** (*Strix aluco*)
 - Status: breeding resident.
- **Kingfisher** (*Alcedo atthis*)
 - Status: a regular visitor to the Beverley Brook and occasionally the Commons ponds
 - One at the Brook near REMPH playing fields 31 Mar (Julia Hardy) with single birds seen on 31 Jul, 1 Aug and 13 Aug along the Beverley Brook (John Dean).
- **Great Spotted Woodpecker** (*Dendrocopos major*)
 - Status: common and increasing breeding resident.
- **Green Woodpecker** (*Picus viridis*)
 - Status: breeding resident.
- **Kestrel** (*Falco tinnunculus*)
 - Status: breeding resident.
 - Highest counts were for three birds on 18 Mar and 20 Apr at Putney Heath (LEH).
- **Hobby** (*Falco subbuteo*)
 - Status: elusive breeding summer visitor and passage migrant.
 - Unusually, there was only one sighting in the spring with a bird flying N over the Plain 4 May (AP). Single birds were seen at the REM playing fields 27 Jul (AB), over the Plain 3 Aug (AP), hawking for dragonflies at Gravel Pit Cottage 13 & 14 Aug (LEH), Hookhamslade Pond 15 Aug (JR), over the Mounds and at Ladies Mile 23 Aug (JR) and over Green Ride 28 Aug (JR). One low over the Triangle 12 Sep (JR) and hunting there again 14 Sep (JR) was the last record for the year.
- **Peregrine Falcon** (*Falco peregrinus*)

- Status: occasional visitor, usually flying over
- One chasing Parakeets near Clockhouse 28 Feb (JR) adds to evidence that this is now a favoured prey species. There were several spring sightings with two at the Plain 19 Mar (LEH), singles over on 2 Apr (LEH), low over Clockhouse 5 Apr (JR), low over the Plain 8 Apr (JR) and 17 Apr (M. Honey) and one flying SW over the Plain 4 May (AP). There were then no more records for the year except for a bird seen flying with a caught Wood pigeon nr Kingsmere 24 Nov (JR).
- **Ring-necked Parakeet** (*Psittacula krameri*)
 - Status: naturalized breeding resident.
- **Jay** (*Garrulus glandarius*)
 - Status: breeding resident.
- **Magpie** (*Pica pica*)
 - Status: breeding resident.
- **Jackdaw** (*Coloeus monedula*)
 - Status: common resident and occasional breeder.
- **Carrion Crow** (*Corvus corone*)
 - Status: breeding resident.
- **Raven** (*Corvus corax*)
 - Status: increasing flyovers and potentially breeding locally
 - Clearly a species on the increase, sightings included one over Ravine Bog 9 Feb (AH), two over Putney Heath 14 Feb (JW), two over the western woods 12 Apr (AP) with one in woodland, SE of the curling pond 14 Apr (JR) with the same or another heard over Farm Bog 14 Apr (AH). One was being mobbed by a Kestrel over the Mounds 25 Oct (AP).
- **Coal Tit** (*Pariparus ater*)
 - Status: breeding resident.
- **Blue Tit** (*Cyanistes caeruleus*)
 - Status: common breeding resident.
- **Great Tit** (*Parus major*)
 - Status: common breeding resident.
- **Skylark** (*Alauda arvensis*)
 - Status: increasingly scarce spring visitor with occasional breeding attempts / declining autumn migrant.
 - An early spring record was received for two flying round each other near Springwell cottage 18 Mar (Julia Hardy) followed by a single over the Plain Apr 20 (LEH). Two were then seen on the Plain 22 May (LEH) with one singing on the Plain 24 & 29 May (JR/AP), seen 30 May (AB), heard over the Plain 16 Jun (LEH) and then unusually, one was on one of the paths on the Mounds 17 Jun (JR). This year for the first time, Pete Haldane was able to rope an area off where the birds were suspected to have located although the arrival of the air ambulance helicopter in early June may not have helped matters. There were no further records after 17 Jun so one can only assume any nesting attempts were unsuccessful. One on the Plain 25 Oct (AP) was the only autumn passage sighting.
- **Barn Swallow** (*Hirundo rustica*)
 - Status: passage migrant but has started to breed again in recent years around the Windmill complex.
 - One at the Windmill on 12 Apr (AP) appeared to be the first returnee of the regular breeding birds at the stables with two there 14 Apr (JW). Two pairs

nested at the stables with at least ten fledged birds lined up on the telegraph wires 19 Jun (AP et al). Two adults feeding a juvenile near the Windmill 3 Aug (AP) were presumably one of the earlier pairs with just one youngster from a second brood. Passage birds included two flying west over the Mounds 18 Aug (AP), with twos at the Plain 30 Sep (JR), 3 Oct (JR) and 5 Oct (AP).

- **House Martin** (*Delichon urbicum*)
 - Status: increasingly scarce passage migrant, much declined in recent years - last bred in 2004.
 - The only spring sighting was for one over the Mounds 12 May (JR). 20 over the Triangle 14 Sep (JR) and 70 over the Plain 5 Oct (JR/AP) meant a marginally better year than 2021 for this rapidly declining and much missed species.
- **Long-tailed Tit** (*Aegithalos caudatus*)
 - Status: common breeding resident.
- **Willow Warbler** (*Phylloscopus trochilus*)
 - Status: formerly a common breeding summer visitor (100 pairs) and passage migrant - greatly declined over the last three decades.
 - Just three spring records beginning with a bird singing near Kingsmere 12 Apr (AP), one at Gravel Pit Cottage 23 Apr (LEH) and two singing on 30 Apr (LEH) were much the norm for this species. Autumn passage began with two at Hookhamslade Pond 10 Aug (JR), followed by one at the Mounds 18 Aug (AP), a juvenile at Kingsmere 26 Aug (JR), one there on 28 Aug (JR) and one at the island at Hookhamslade pond 12 Sep (JR).
- **Chiffchaff** (*Phylloscopus collybita*)
 - Status: common breeding summer visitor and passage migrant, with the occasional bird over-wintering.
 - The first singing bird of the year was heard was at Inner Park Ride 10 Mar (LEH) with 12 counted on 12 Apr (AP).
- **Blackcap** (*Sylvia atricapilla*)
 - Status: common breeding summer visitor and passage migrant, with the occasional bird over-wintering.
 - Two on 24 Mar were first records of the year (Martin Honey) with 15 counted on 12 Apr (AP). This species continues to flourish on the Commons with birds singing from almost every corner. A female at the Mounds 16 Oct (LEH) was the last record of the year.
- **Garden Warbler** (*Sylvia borin*)
 - Status: breeding summer visitor and passage migrant.
 - The first arrivals of the year were heard singing at Ladies Mile and at the Mounds 30 Apr (JR) with single birds at Ladies Mile 5 May (JR), Windmill Ride North 12 May (JR), Ladies Mile 16 May (LEH), two at Ladies Mile 18 May (AP) and then singles at the Mounds 9 Jun (JR), Ladies Mile 17 Jun & 22 Jun (JR) and on the Mounds 10 Jul (JR).
- **Common Whitethroat** (*Curruca communis*)
 - Status: decreasing breeding summer visitor and passage migrant.
 - Single birds at the Mounds, the Windmill and at the Plain on 24 Apr were the first new arrivals (AP). A dozen were at the Mounds including several juveniles on 10 Jul (JR). Two at the Triangle 14 Sep (JR) were clearly on autumn passage.



Photo by J. Reeves

- **Dartford Warbler** (*Curruca undata*)
 - Status: increasing autumn / winter visitor
 - One in gorse east of Ladies Mile 22 Jan (JR) was in a different location to the usual areas frequented and may have been a different bird to the one that had been in residence from autumn 2021. The 2022 autumn return began with a male seen calling from a birch tree at Ladies Mile 3 Oct and present again 13 Oct (JR). A second bird which appeared to be a female or juvenile was seen at the heather patch on the Plain 11 Oct (AP), associating with the Stonechats and was still there on 31 Oct, 2 & 10 Nov (JR) with the male bird present at Ladies Mile also on 10 Nov (JR). Both birds were seen again on 16 Nov (JR) and then the f / juv again on the Plain 22 Nov (JR) with the male at Ladies Mile 7, 12 & 13 Dec (LEH / AP). There was clearly a widespread influx of Dartford Warblers across London during this period but certainly the first time since recent records started from the seventies that two Dartfords have been present.
- **Firecrest** (*Regulus ignicapilla*)
 - Status: once a winter visitor and passage migrant, now an increasing breeding resident.
 - Single birds were reported near Gravel Pit Cottage 1 Feb (JR), at Clockhouse Wood 2 Feb (JR), Robin Hood Drive 11 Feb (AH), again at Clockhouse Wood 22 & 28 Feb, 11 & 15 Mar (JR), two at Scio Pond 25 Mar (R. Kaye), Clockhouse 30 Mar (JR), near the Green Man pub 27 Mar (Caroline Woodley), at Crossroads Cottage 29 Mar (JW) and again at Clockhouse 5 Apr (JR). Two males were at Scio Pond 7 Apr (R. Kaye) with further singles at Crossroads Cottage 13 Apr and Green Man 16 Apr (JW). One, possibly two males, were in wood NE of cricket pitch, Putney Heath 29 Apr (JW).
 - As usual, birds seemed to disappear for the summer with the next record being one SW of Bluegate in holly tree 24 Oct (JR) followed by sightings of one in garden at Gravel Pit cottage 3 Nov with two there 8 & 9 Nov (LEH) and a final sighting of the year on Jubilee Ride 15 Dec (LEH).

- **Goldcrest** (*Regulus regulus*)
 - Status: breeding resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.
- **Wren** (*Troglodytes troglodytes*)
 - Status: abundant breeding resident.
- **Nuthatch** (*Sitta europaea*)
 - Status: breeding resident.
- **Eurasian Treecreeper** (*Certhia familiaris*)
 - Status: breeding resident.
- **Common Starling** (*Sturnus vulgaris*)
 - Status: an increasingly scarce breeding resident.
 - The highest counts for this struggling species were for 45, including many juveniles at Tibbets Ride Wood 20 Jul (Thomas Purvis) and 30 at the REMPH playing fields 30 Aug (AH).
- **Song Thrush** (*Turdus philomelos*)
 - Status: common breeding resident.
- **Mistle Thrush** (*Turdus viscivorus*)
 - Status: breeding resident.
- **Redwing** (*Turdus iliacus*)
 - Status: regular autumn /winter visitor and passage migrant.
 - In the first winter period, counts included c120 in the treetops east of Ladies Mile 22 Jan (JR), 80 at Gravel Pit Cottage 3 Mar (JR), 100 at the Mounds 11 Mar (JR) while the final sighting before these birds' departure north was for c30 in treetops in Church Wood 29 Mar (JW). The first of the autumn was a single bird flying over the Windmill 27 Sep (AP), followed by a dozen over the Mounds 23 Oct (AP/LEH). Generally, in very low numbers for the second winter period, there were ten near Bluegate 28 and 31 Oct and 16 Nov (JR).
- **Blackbird** (*Turdus merula*)
 - Status: common breeding resident.
- **Fieldfare** (*Turdus pilaris*)
 - Status: occasional passage migrant and winter visitor particularly in harsh weather.
 - 20 flew W over the Mounds 15 Nov (AP) with six flying SW over the Plain 23 Nov (AP).
- **Ring Ouzel** (*Turdus torquatos*)
 - Status: an increasingly irregular spring and autumn migrant
 - Always an exciting species to see, a female was at Ladies Mile 18 Apr (JR).
- **Robin** (*Erithacus rubecula*)
 - Status: abundant breeding resident.
- **Pied Flycatcher** (*Ficedula hypoleuca*)
 - Status: rare spring and autumn migrant
 - A bird seen on the 16 Aug (S. Shimwell) was reported on Surrey Bird Club with no further details.
- **Common Redstart** (*Phoenicurus phoenicurus*)
 - Status: rare spring and autumn migrant
 - A female was in the scrub next to SE corner of the Plain 26 Aug (JR). Considering there is always a reasonable passage of Redstarts through London, this is only the second record for the Commons in recent years after a bird in Apr 2018 (JR), while the last breeding records date back to 1967 and 1968.
- **Whinchat** (*Saxicola rubetra*)

- Status: increasingly irregular passage migrant.
- No spring records but a good autumn with a bird in the scrub next to SE corner of the Plain 31 Aug (JR), a pair at the Triangle 5 Sep (JR), one on the Plain 6 Sep (JR, LEH, AP), one very unusually at Kingsmere on 7 Sep (JR), two on 9 Sep with singles at the Plain and Triangle (JR).
- **Eurasian Stonechat** (*Saxicola rubicola*)
 - Status: regular passage migrant and scarce winter visitor.
 - Unusually there were no spring records although this was compensated for by a good autumn passage, beginning with a juvenile on the Plain 13 Sep (AP/JR), three on Plain 18 Sep (AP), two there and one female at Ladies Mile 19 Sep (JR), two on 25 Sep (AB), four on 27 Sep (AP) with a max of six on the Plain 26 Sep (JR). There were several sightings of up to three birds on the Plain or at the Triangle during October finishing with four on the 4 Nov (LEH). Clearly, there was a significant influx of this species across London during this period. As far as I know, it's still a mystery as to their movements and whether they have just moved out of Richmond Park for a change of scenery or are indeed migrants from further afield.



Photo by J. Reeves

- **Northern Wheatear** (*Oenanthe oenanthe*)
 - Status: declining spring and autumn passage migrant.
 - A reasonable spring passage albeit continuing the trend for sightings of just single birds as opposed to the spring 'falls' that used to occur. There was a male on the Plain 14 Apr (JW), a female there 18 Apr (Kath Brown), a male there 24 Apr (AP), one in flight over the Plain 25 Apr (JW) and a male on the dried-out area near the benches 3 May (AP). Autumn passage was very poor with just a male on the Plain 9 Sep (JR) and a female there 30 Sep (JR) both favouring the areas with shorter grass.
- **House Sparrow** (*Passer domesticus*)
 - Status: breeding resident usually on the edge of the Commons– last pair at Windmill 2011.

- Around 20 were in the willow trees on the corner of Rushmere 25 May (AP), flying backwards and forwards to the Green where presumably they were feeding youngsters.
- **Dunnoek** (*Prunella modularis*)
 - Status: common breeding resident.
- **Grey Wagtail** (*Motacilla cinerea*)
 - Status: breeding resident and passage migrant.
 - A female was at Bluegate 18 May (AP) with three youngsters there on 2 & 7 Jun (JR). Two on Bluegate 25 Jul (JR) with three youngsters there 26 Jul (AP). Single juveniles were at Kingsmere and the Curling Pond 9 Sep (JR) with a single on Beverley Brook 27 Sep (AH).
- **Pied Wagtail** (*Motacilla alba yarrellii*)
 - Status: breeding resident and winter visitor.
 - Three juveniles were on the Plain 25 May (AP), presumably offspring from the pair that frequent the stables complex. Seven were on the Plain 3 Aug (AP) including three juveniles, with 12 on the Plain 13 Sep (AP) suggesting a successful breeding year with at least two broods.
- **Meadow Pipit** (*Anthus pratensis*)
 - Status: passage migrant / decreasing winter visitor, formerly bred - 13 pairs in 1983 with last pair in 2003. This is a ground nesting bird.
 - A single on the Plain 9 Jan (LEH) with two there 22 Feb and 3 Mar (JR) were the only records in the first winter period for a species that used to frequent the Commons in good numbers each winter. Autumn, however, was somewhat better with c40 in small flocks heading SW 13 Sep (JR), eight on the Plain 26 Sep (JR), five there with 20 flying over 30 Sep (JR), seven there 2 Oct (Tim Straw), ten over Triangle 3 Oct (JR), 12 on Plain 18 Oct, two there 24, 25 and 28 Oct (JR/AP) and nine 14 Nov (JR) although none appeared to stay through to the year end.
- **Chaffinch** (*Fringilla coelebs*)
 - Status: breeding resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.
 - 25 feeding on the Plain nr Windmill 14 Nov (JR) was the only record of note.
- **Greenfinch** (*Chloris chloris*)
 - Status: breeding resident – possibly recovering
 - There were encouraging signs for this much declined species with several spring records beginning with one singing at the Mounds 28 Feb (JR), two at Rushmere 12 Apr (AP), two at the windmill 24 Apr (AP), a pair at the Mounds 18 May (AP) with one singing there on the 9 Jun & 17 Jun (JR), one at Ladies Mile 17 Jun and again 22 Jun (JR).
 - In the later summer period, three were at the Mounds with one at Ladies Mile 10 Jul (JR), four flew over the Mounds 3 Aug (AP) with three there 14 Aug (JR) and a good count of six flying near the Windmill 13 Oct (AP) with four again at the Mounds 25 Oct (AP).
- **Linnet** (*Linaria cannabina*)
 - Status: occasional visitor, usually flying over
 - One flew E over the Plain 5 Oct (AP).
- **Goldfinch** (*Carduelis carduelis*)
 - Status: breeding resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.
 - Reasonable flocks of c30 were at the Mounds 27 Sep (AP), 2 Oct (Tim Straw) and 25 Oct (AP).
- **Siskin** (*Spinus spinus*)

- Status: winter visitor and passage migrant
- Around 20 at Inner Park Road 13 Feb (LEH) was the only early winter period sighting of this attractive finch with just one flying E over Ladies Mile Oct 25 (AP) making for a very poor autumn.
- **Reed Bunting** (*Emberiza schoeniclus*)
 - Status: passage migrant and winter visitor, occasionally breeds.
 - Present in small numbers at Ladies Mile with a good count of 12 on 13 Jan (JR), six there 22 Jan (JR) and on 24 Feb (2m 4f) (AP). An individual was at Bluegate 23 Jan (AB). In the spring, a male was on the Plain and a female at Ladies Mile 11 Mar (JR) with a male singing at Rushmere 12 Apr (AP). It would appear that no pair held a territory on the Plain this year with no further records until a male was seen in the skylark area on the Plain 20 Jul (AP) with a female on the Plain 27 Sep (AP) and two females at Ladies Mile 13 Oct (JR).



Photo by J. Reeves

Firecrest survey

In March 2023, Jan Wilczur and Rupert Kaye conducted a survey of Firecrests on Putney Heath.

They recorded a minimum of 43 birds, including at least 26 males, which according to Jan is “the highest number of Firecrests ever found at any locality within the Greater London recording area of the London Natural History Society”. The Firecrests were found in four main areas of Putney Heath, both to the north and south of the A3, and in particular alongside Roehampton Lane, north and east of the cricket pitch, alongside Parkside and at Jerry’s Hill and east of the Cemetery.

Jan noted that:

- it clearly demonstrates the importance of Putney Heath and probably the wider Common for Firecrests;
- this is the only species of songbird to have significantly colonised the Heath in the fifty years he has been birding there, while many other species have disappeared in that time;
- this appeared to be a population increase, which has also been observed nationally and elsewhere in Greater London (up from 8 birds found in a similar survey in 2019);
- the first breeding record for the Heath was discovered as recently as 2019 by Rupert Kaye, and it now seems possible that more breeding will be recorded given the numbers of birds now present.

Jan advised that Firecrests “seem to favour woodland, dominated by oaks, with extensive stands of mature holly along with heavily ivied trees. Yew is also usually found in these areas which may be significant.”

Jan therefore recommended that not too much holly is removed as part of the ongoing management of the woodland, noting that it is “clearly essential for Firecrests”, and suggested that “large dense clumps” of holly are retained. He also suggested that “there is a lot of Cherry Laurel and some Holm Oak” to be found in the woodland, and that the removal of these non-natives would help to create more space for regenerating native woodland so that potentially less Holly would need to be cleared.

In response, Peter Haldane, WPCC Wildlife and Conservation Officer said:

- Thank you for the information and advice about Firecrests, which we shall factor into our woodland management plans that are under development.
- As part of our woodland management work, we’ve been reducing the density of Holly to increase the age and species diversity of the woodland, in an agreement with and under the advice of the Forestry Commission. This agreement commits us to retaining at least 10% of the dense Holly stands that exist – so we will be retaining good Firecrest habitat as part of this work.
- we agree that removal of non-native species is key to making more space for Firecrests and other native species. We’ve started to ring bark Turkey Oak across Putney Heath to help with this.
- We will certainly look to take more action to remove the Cherry Laurel and Holm Oak, especially where this can be done instead of removing Holly, although resources will dictate our ability to do this in the short term.
- We also have a policy of not removing Ivy from trees – noting the important role this species plays for Firecrest and other species – and given that in most cases Ivy causes no harm to the tree.

Butterflies

Report by Simon Riley

There were sightings of 28 species of butterfly on Wimbledon Common and Putney Heath (collectively The Commons) in 2022. This is a slight increase on 2021 when 26 species were recorded. 23 species were seen on the formal butterfly transects with a further 5 species being ad hoc records.

iRecord is the recording database of choice for butterflies. Data entry can be via the iRecord website or alternatively through the i-Record butterflies app for smart phones. The app can be used in the field with location data pre-populated. I would encourage everyone to record via iRecord.

It will be interesting to see what effect the 2022 drought has on species in 2023.

The last comparable summer is probably 1976 and sadly this year is considered a watershed year for many UK butterflies with a reduction in both the abundance and distribution of many species from which most have never recovered. The drought will have impacted in several ways. Firstly, butterflies at the caterpillar stage (larva) rely on the availability of their larval food plant (LFP). Many species rely on a very limited range of LFP (many only one), if the LFP has struggled to grow at the time the eggs hatch then the caterpillars may not survive. Secondly drought will have impacted the availability of food (i.e., nectar) for the adult butterflies limiting their ability to mate and lay eggs.

There are two formal butterfly transects walked on The Commons between 1 April and 30 September. These have been walked for several years and give a more complete picture of the distribution and abundance of butterflies on The Commons. A summary of the results of these transects is presented below.

The 28 species seen in 2022 were:

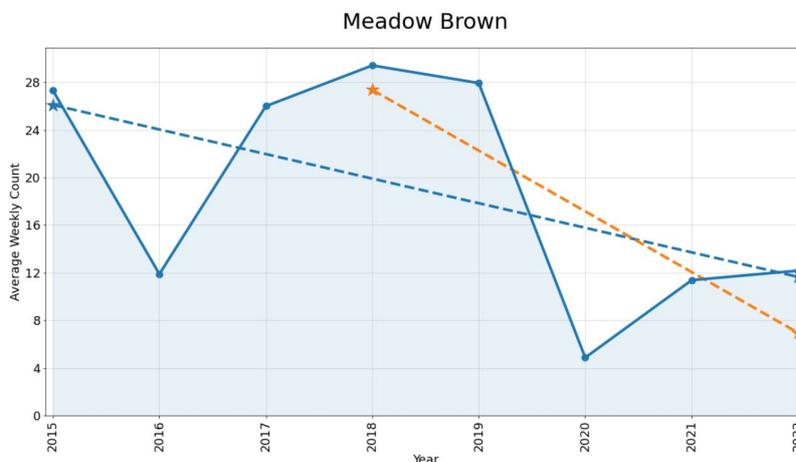
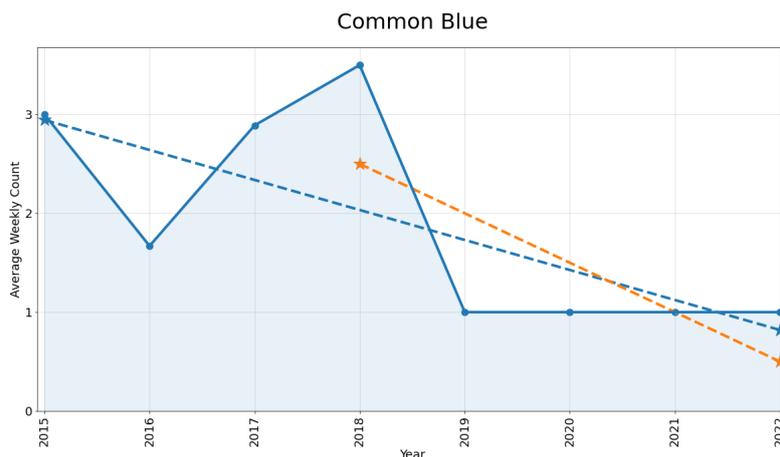
- Small Skipper
- Essex Skipper
- Large Skipper
- Brimstone
- Large White
- Small White
- Green-veined White
- Orange Tip
- Green Hairstreak
- Purple Hairstreak
- White-letter Hairstreak
- Small Copper
- Common Blue
- Holly Blue
- White Admiral
- Purple Emperor
- Red Admiral
- Painted Lady
- Small Tortoiseshell
- Peacock
- Comma

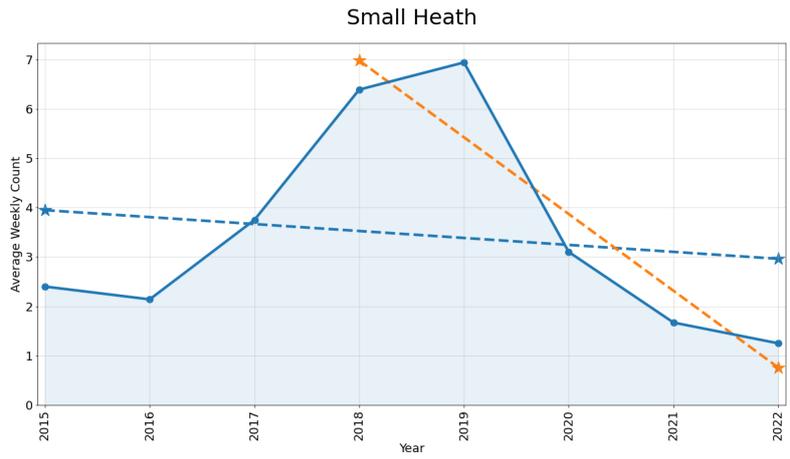
- Silver-washed Fritillary
- Speckled Wood
- Marbled White
- Gatekeeper
- Meadow Brown
- Small Heath
- Ringlet

We have been concerned for a few years that several the commoner species have declined in abundance.

In particular Meadow Brown, Small Heath and Common Blue are showing significant declines over the past 5 years. We have speculated that the unusual weather conditions particularly in the Spring maybe to blame. We have also wondered whether additional recreational pressure on the Commons is responsible. Grassland management has been largely the same, so it is thought this is unlikely to be the reason.

Below are some graphs showing recent trends for the three species mentioned above. The yellow line is the 5-year trend for Surrey; the blue line is the trend for The Commons. The graphs would appear to confirm that the declines we are seeing are not unique to The Commons. This is comforting to some extent, as it would suggest that site management is not to blame, so other wider factors are most likely responsible.





Dragonflies and Damselflies

Report by Simon Riley

There were sightings of 21 species of dragonfly on Wimbledon Common and Putney Heath in 2022. This is a significant increase from 2021 when only 9 species were recorded. This increase was probably driven by there being more active recorders rather than any other factors.

My thanks to Philip Shorrock, Richard Thomas, and Caroline Woodley, in particular, for their records. I-record is the recording database of choice for dragonflies, and I would encourage everyone to post their records there.

It will be interesting to see what, if any, effect the 2022 drought has on species in 2023. A number of the ponds on The Commons dried-up in 2022, and although drying out is not always catastrophic we await to see what impacts there have been.

The species seen in 2022 were:

- Damselflies
 - Willow Emerald
 - Emerald Damselfly
 - Banded Demoiselle
 - Azure Damselfly
 - Common Blue Damselfly
 - Red-eyed Damselfly
 - Small Red-eyed Damselfly
 - Blue-tailed Damselfly
 - Large Red Damselfly
- Dragonflies
 - Southern Hawker
 - Brown Hawker
 - Migrant Hawker
 - Norfolk Hawker
 - Emperor
 - Hairy Dragonfly
 - Broad-bodied Chaser
 - Four-spotted Chaser
 - Black-tailed Skimmer
 - Keeled Skimmer
 - Ruddy Darter
 - Common Darter

Notable observations

Norfolk Hawker

Up until recently this species was confined to the Norfolk Broads. It has recently begun to expand its range and it is now being seen regularly well away from Norfolk. This is one of the reasons this species is starting to be referred to as Green-eyed Hawker. It has been seen annually at the London Wetland Centre over the past few years and is suspected to breed there. The one record of a male for the Commons on 5 July (see photo) was rather unexpected as it was well away from water and in any case none of the ponds on the Commons are very suitable for it. We can only assume it was a wandering individual from the Wetland Centre.



Keeled Skimmer

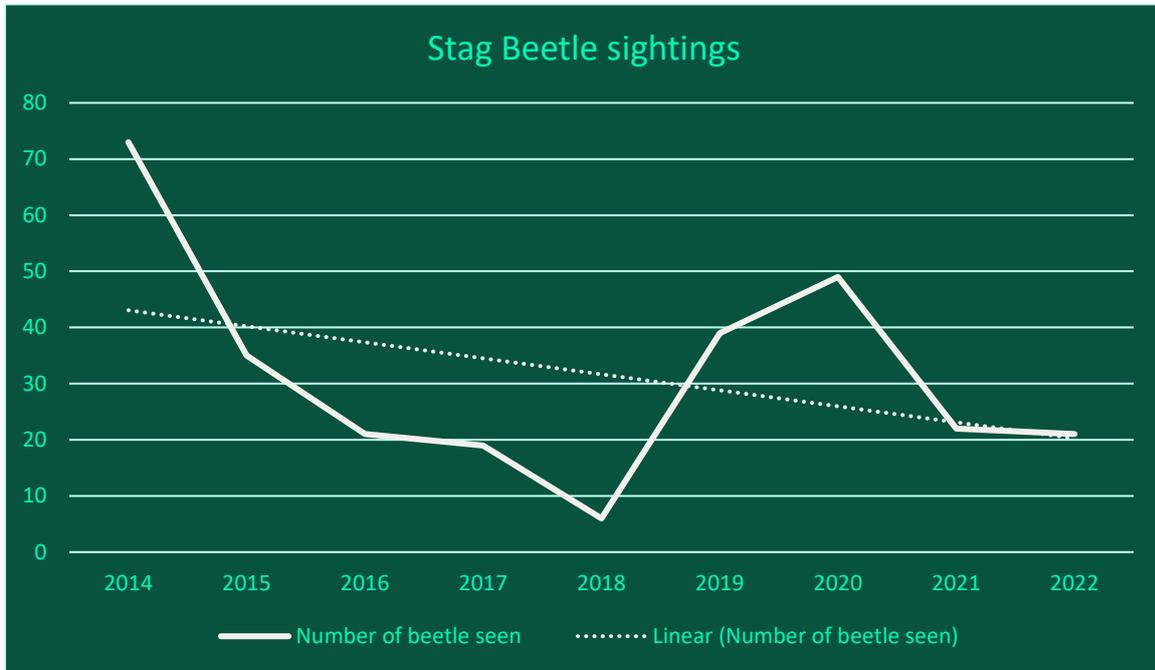
A single male individual was seen on 22 June in suitable habitat. This is the first record of the species since 2018 when a male was seen at the same location. This is a wet heath species however the nearest known colonies are the large heathlands of south-west and west Surrey, so it is unclear where this individual came from.

Emerald Damselfly

This species is regularly recorded from Bluegate Pond. It is a species that, I am led to believe, has been slowly disappearing from the London area and The Commons may be one of its few strongholds in London. It is a species that can benefit from the temporary drying out of ponds as this generally results in an absence of fish that eat the larvae. The longer period of desiccation we experienced in 2022 was exceptional however, so this is a species we need to keep a close eye on.

Stag Beetles

21 Stag Beetles were recorded by visitors to the Commons, across all areas of the Commons. There have been declining numbers recorded since 2014, although more work is needed to understand if this means that our Stag Beetle population is also in decline. It would be helpful to receive more specific location data for these records to inform habitat management work.



Reptiles and Amphibians

Report by Peter Haldane

Common lizard

Reports:

- 14.03.22 – Common Lizard found in the living room of Manor Cottage by Stephen Bound
- 20.03.22 – Common lizard reported by John Dean on Putney Heath near Roehampton Ride.
- 03.22 – Common lizard reported by Oliver Bennett on Farm Bog.
- 15.04.22 – TQ22987296 – Triangle of heathland near Roehampton Ride.
- 16.04.22 – TQ23037293 – Heathland adjacent to Roehampton Ride (north section).
- 17.04.22 – TQ23247267 – Heathland east of Ladies Mile opposite Jubilee Path.
- 18.04.22 – Common lizard reported by John Dean on Putney Heath near Roehampton Ride.
- 24.05.22 – Lizard (assumed Common Lizard) seen near Inner Park Ride (PH)
- 07.06.22 – Lizard (assumed Common Lizard) seen along heathland path near Jubilee Path, reported by Peter Haldane
- 07.06.22 – Lizard (assumed Common Lizard) seen in heathland patch near top of Gravelly Ride
- 14.06.22 - Lizard (assumed Common Lizard) spotted near the edge of the northern end of Inner Windmill Ride
- 17.06.22 – Bright green lizard (assumed Common Lizard) spotted by Laura Aston along Robin Hood Ride (upper section)
- 17.06.22 – Common lizard seen by Maintenance staff in the Maintenance Centre
- 17.06.22 – Common lizard seen by Steve Bound in the garden of Manor Cottage.
- 19.06.22 – Common lizard seen on heathland near Green Ride during Bioblitz.
- 29.07.22 – Common lizard seen by a lady (name unknown) at Hookhamslade pond



(above) Common photographed by John Dean on 20.03.22



2 photographs above show John Dean's Common lizard report made on 18.04.22



(above) a very quick lizard photograph by Caroline Woodland during the scrub bashing session on 24.04.22 in the area of heathland adjacent to the southern end of Roehampton Ride.

Slow Worm

No slow worms were reported on the Commons during 2022

Snakes

No snakes were reported on the Commons during 2022

Terrapins

20.06.22 – Florida softshell turtle filmed by David Element at 7 Post Pond.

Common Newt

Sonja Ooms took some beautiful photographs of Common Newt towards the end of May 2022 – near Curling Pond.

Common Frog

Frog spawn spotted at the following ponds on 08.03.22:

- **Scio Pond** – large amount of frog spawn found amongst vegetation located around the northern edge of the pond. This is the only marginal vegetation that is currently established in this pond, possibly because dogs are causing damage to the banks. A dead hedge was installed to help protect the pond. Additional wildlife spotted at Scio Pond included Grey Heron, 3 mallards, 1 mandarin and 1 tufted duck. This pond is known to support large numbers of invasive carp, which can be very damaging to vegetation and amphibians.



- **7 Post Pond** – A large amount of frog spawn was spotted amongst the marginal vegetation located at the northern edge of the pond. Apart from an abundance of New Zealand pigmyweed, aquatic vegetation is limited to the northern section of the pond and along the walled section. Additional wildlife spotted at Scio Pond included 1 heron and 8 mallards. No fish present in this pond.





- **Rushmere** – Frog spawn was spotted in large numbers amongst the rush which has gradually become established along the north and north-east sections of the pond. Fortunately, the spawn appears to be in the shallows and therefore largely away from the predation of fish. Additional wildlife spotted at Rushmere during the visit included 7 Mute swans, 8 Greylag geese and 8 mallards. Crassula (an invasive plant) is present in this pond and may become an issue in the future.



- **Bluegate Gravel Pit** – Frog spawn spotted along the northern edge of the pond. There is a great deal of marginal vegetation located in this pond and there are no fish, making it ideal for amphibians.
- **Ravine Pond** – A large amount of frog spawn was spotted amongst the semi-emerged grass at this pond. There are a small number of fish in this pond, but the frog spawn was in the shallows and therefore away from any predation, although tadpoles may still be at risk.



- **Kingsmere** - one clump of frog spawn found inside the small fenced in area which is close to the outlet section of the pond. This area was fenced in some years ago in the attempt to establish a reed bed. While this was ultimately unsuccessful, the fenced in area is full of vegetation and prevents access to fish predation.



- **Ephemeral ponds:**
 - There are two ephemeral ponds (or depressions) on the heathland. One is located near the area known as the 'Wet Heath' and the other is located on an area which is located adjacent to the western section of Inner Park Ride. Both ponds had water levels which reached the top of a size 10 welly boot and both areas contained a great deal of frog spawn. Unfortunately, both areas are liable to dry out before the spawn can fully develop and both areas had herons.

- Nevertheless, on 20.06.22, 4 common frogs were seen by school volunteers on heathland near the wet heath, so it is possible that in some years frogs can make it to adulthood in this location.
- There are several small ephemeral ponds at Stag Bog, two of which contained tadpoles (observed by Oliver Bennett) around April 2022.



- **Other ponds not containing spawn**
 - Queensmere – very little marginal vegetation and fish are present in this pond.
 - Kingsmere – As above.
 - Curling Pond – high water level but very little emergent vegetation present. No fish present.
 - Hookhamslade Pond – This pond is usually a very good area to locate frog spawn. On visiting the pond on 08.03.22 the water level was very high and much of the vegetation was underwater.

Common Toad

Toads were reported in Queensmere and Scio Pond towards the end of March 2022.

Moths

Report by Les Evans-Hill

During 2022, a total of 432 species of moths were recorded on Wimbledon and Putney Commons, with 9 species (6 micro-moths; 3 macro-moths) recorded new to the Commons (subject to confirmation by the Surrey County Moth Recorder). All records are by the author unless specified; many thanks again to Martin Honey (MRH) for additional, notable observations on Putney Heath during 2022.

New site records for 2022

Micro-moths: **Winter Poplar Midget** (*Phyllonorycter comparella*), bred ex mines on fallen *Populus alba* on edge of acid grassland adjacent to A3 at N end of Putney Heath, emerged 18 June (MRH); **Kent Tubic** (*Promalactis procerella*) on 13 July; **Sallow Marble** (*Apotomis capreana*) on 14 June, 17 and 14 August; **Pea Moth** (*Cydia nigracana*) on 3 June (MRH); **Black-bordered Piercer** (*Pammene argyrana*) on 27 March, 9 April (MRH) and between 12 and 17 April and **Diamond-spot Pearl** (*Loxostege sticticalis*), migrant, on 31 August.



Kent Tubic (*Promalactis procerella*)



Sallow Marble (*Apotomis capreana*)

Macro-moths: **Sallow Clearwing** (*S. flaviventris*) on 24 June and 5 July; **Grey Birch** (*Aethalura punctulata*) on 13 April and **Olive Crescent** (*Trisateles emortualis*) on 18 July – rare in London and Surrey.



Sallow Clearwing (*Synanthedon flaviventris*)



Olive Crescent (*Trisateles emortualis*)

Notable micro-moth records for 2022

Early Long-horn (*Adela cuprella*) on 26 March; **Pale Feathered Leaf-cutter** (*Incurvaria pectinea*) on 16 and 20 April; **Brown Bagworm** (*Taleporia tubulosa*), larval cases between 9 April and 24 June; **Round-winged Bagworm** (*Epichnopterix plumella*) on 17 April (moth group outing) and 22 May – Putney Heath specialist, rare in London and Surrey; **Small Timber Clothes Moth** (*Triaxomasia caprimulgella*), on 22 June to a pheromone trap; **Italian Tubic** (*Metalampra italica*), also on 13 July; **Square-spot Sober** (*Hypatima rhomboidella*) on 28 July; **Cotoneaster Webworm** (*Athrips rancidella*) on 16 June; **Notch-wing Button** (*Acleris emargana*) between 17 July and 7 August; **Early Oak Piercer** (*Pammene giganteana*) between 11 and 19 March; **Little Oak Piercer** (*Strophedra nitidana*) on 2 July and 16 August, **European Corn-borer** (*Ostrinia nubilalis*) migrant on 7 July; **Rusty-dot Pearl** (*Udea ferrugalis*) migrant on 15 May; **Rush Veneer** (*Nomophila noctuella*) migrant, on 15 and 20 August, and **Golden-brown Fern Moth** (*Musotima nitidalis*) on 13 April (MRH); and 18 July and 6 October.



Round-winged Bagworm (*Epichnopterix plumella*)



Early Oak Piercer (*Pammene giganteana*)

Notable macro-moth records for 2022

Hornet Moth (*Sesia apiformis*) on 22 June; **Lunar Hornet Moth** (*Sesia bembeciformis*) on 8 July; **Red-tipped Clearwing** (*Synanthedon formicaeformis*) on 14 June; **Orange-tailed Clearwing** (*S. andrenaeformis*) between 13 and 17 June; **Red-belted Clearwing** (*Synanthedon myopaeformis*) on 17 June; **Yellow-legged Clearwing** (*Synanthedon vespiformis*) on 14 June; **Festoon** (*Apoda limacodes*) on 3 July; **Six-spot Burnet** (*Zygaena filipendulae*) on 8 July; **Emperor Moth** (*Saturnia pavonia*) between 25 March and 19 June; **Humming-bird Hawk-moth** (*Macroglossum stellatarum*), migrant, on 25 June; **Plain Wave** (*Idaea straminata*) between 2 and 21 July; **Jersey Mocha** (*Cyclophora ruficiliaria*), migrant and possible resident, 1st generation adults between 23 April and 16 June; 2nd generation adults between 17 July and 9 September; **Clay Triple-lines** (*Cyclophora linearia*) between 3 June and 1 September; **Vestal** (*Rhodometra sacraria*), migrant, on 30 August; **Shaded Broad-bar** (*Scotopteryx chenopodiata*) on 21 July; **Streamer** (*Anticlea derivata*) on 30 March; **Cypress Carpet** (*Thera cypressata*) on 30 April; **Blue-bordered Carpet** (*Plemyria rubiginata*), on 15 January (eggs) and 6 July; **Chevron** (*Eulithis testata*) between 14 July and 7 August; **Orange Underwing** (*Archiearis parthenias*) between 10 and 26 March; **Light Orange Underwing** (*Archiearis notha*) on 9, 10 and 30 April and 4 May; **Scarce Umber** (*Agriopis aurantiaria*) on 17 November; **Great Oak Beauty** (*Hypomecis roboraria*) between

13 and 24 June; **Common Heath** (*Ematurga atomaria*) between 16 April and 22 May; **Hoary Footman** (*Eilema caniola*) between 14 and 31 August; **Pinion-streaked Snout** (*Schrankia costaestrigalis*) between 6 and 9 September; **Clifden Nonpareil** (*Catocala fraxini*) on 4 and 9 August; **Red Underwing** (*Catocala nupta*) on 14 August; **Dark Crimson Underwing** (*Catocala sponsa*) between 15 July and 14 August; **Silver Y** (*Autographa gamma*) on 15 and 21 May, and 5 and 16 June; **Sprawler** *Asteroscopus sphinx* on 30 November; **Blossom Underwing** (*Orthosia miniosa*) between 15 and 27 March; **Lead-coloured Drab** (*Orthosia populeti*) between 22 and 28 March, and 4 April; **Beautiful Yellow Underwing** (*Anarta myrtilli*) on 8 July; **Obscure Wainscot** (*Leucania obsoleta*) on 22 June; **Dark Sword-grass** (*Agrotis ipsilon*), migrant, on 2 and 6 June, and 14 August, and **Heath Rustic** (*Xestia agathina*) on 9 September.



Emperor Moth (*Saturnia pavonia*)



Six-spot Burnet (*Zygaena filipendulae*)



Plain Wave (*Idaea straminata*)



Obscure Wainscot (*Leucania obsoleta*)

Plants

Report by Oliver Bennett

In 2022, our plant work was mainly focused on the wet heath area of the Commons.

Cross-leaved heath reintroduction

Cross-leaved heath has declined in extent across the SSSI in recent decades and has been entirely lost from a former site at Farm bog, which is part of the SSSI. With habitat management work over recent years (scrub and bracken control), Farm Bog became suitable for a reintroduction of the species from another part of the SSSI (the Putney Heath area).

Our objective is to establish a self-sustaining genetically suitable population of the species at Farm Bog. Doing this will re-establish a second population on the Commons, which will improve the resilience of the species on the SSSI. This is unlikely to happen through natural recolonisation as the distance between the two locations is too great.

Permission for this was required from Natural England under legislation protecting the Commons.

Seeds were taken from ~50 plants at Putney Heath by a group of 8 volunteers (including three Conservators), to gather the greatest genetic diversity. Donor plants were selected randomly from across the site, with the seeds spread on areas of recently exposed bare peat at Farm Bog.

The process will be repeated in 2023 to increase the chances of a successful reintroduction.



Marbled White butterfly, drinking nectar from a Cross-leaved Heath plant, Putney Common, by Oliver Bennett

Wet Heath Survey

Around 75% of lowland heath has been lost in the UK since 1800. Wet heaths form a small component of heathland and is an important habitat for several nationally and locally rare species. It is a key reason for the site's designation as a SSSI.

Natural England had previously assessed the wet heath as in unfavourable recovering condition. However, a professional survey commissioned by WPCC in 2016 indicated that its condition could be worsening, that some species have become extinct, and that the habitat was being damaged by ditches.

To address this Oliver Bennett conducted a survey of the site to help feed into the development of the land management plan. The wet heath on the Common is predominantly found on Putney Heath, although we had no clear map of the habitat, so drawing one was a key objective.

Map of wet heath ([map online](#))



Key:

- Blue areas display characteristics of wet heath (presence of Cross-leaved Heath, rushes, boggy ground, standing water).
- Purple areas are dense Purple Moor Grass where scrapes, sod cutting, grazing, or mowing could enhance the heath.
- Yellow lines are ditches.
- The approximate extent of all the wet heath is within the orange area = 4.9 hectares.

Survey results

A survey was conducted in September 2022 and March 2023 to assess the quality of the habitat against JNCC [Common Standards Monitoring Guidance for Lowland Heathland \(jncc.gov.uk\)](https://www.jncc.gov.uk). An additional survey will be required in May-August for variables specified below.

Criteria objective	Survey result	Criteria met?
Extent – no change in area	<p>Total area of wet heath mosaic (orange area) = 4.9 hectares.</p> <p>Not possible to assess change as this is the first assessment conducted. Wet heath should be maintained to this extent or expanded if possible.</p> <p>It is possible the extent of this habitat has reduced since the site was designated in 1953, based on old ariel photos. It is possible that other wet heath is present on the Commons, yet to be identified.</p>	Not applicable
Bare ground or standing water: 1-10% of area	<p>Two areas of deeper standing water. 0.084ha total. This equates to 1.7% of total.</p> 	<p>Yes, but criteria at a low level. Might be worth seeking to slightly increase the level of standing water/bare ground through Molinia removal.</p> <p>The standing water is highly vulnerable to dog damage given the proximity to paths and high usage in this area.</p>
Cover of dwarf shrubs 25-90%	<p>Good cover of dwarf shrubs across 40-45% of the area. Areas of low cover are indicated on the map (2.18 ha / ~44%).</p>	Yes

		
A mix of growth phases of heather	Stands are mainly in the building or mature phase. Little or no pioneer phase in area.	No. Sod cutting of Molinia and seeding with Cross-leaved Heath would help. Grazing would provide a long-term solution.
At least two forms of dwarf shrub present	Ling and Cross-leaved heath present.	Yes, but Cross-leaved heath infrequent, perhaps declining.
Molinia no more than 66% total cover	Molinia dominates on 2.18 ha / ~44%. The thatch is very dense and largely excludes all other species.	Yes, but requires management to reduce its vigour through pollution control (from dog defecation) and sod cutting/grazing.
Desirable forbs	Not assessable. Survey to be repeated during summer	-
Lichens	Not assessable. Survey to be repeated during summer when a transect is established	-
<p>Negative indicators such as drainage.</p> <p>Paths should cover less than 1% of total area.</p>	Ditches present next to paths. Paths cover approximately 0.39ha (~8% of the total).	<p>No. Ditching is present - all need blocking.</p> <p>Informal paths should be blocked and diverted to the edge of the heathland where possible. Gorse could be encouraged next to paths to discourage dogs from running onto the heath.</p>

		<p>The main paths need to be restored with a raised aggregate using a floating foundation (so they are raised above the surrounding heath). See guidelines here.</p>
<p>Negative species. Trees and scrub should be under 10%, gorse under 10%.</p>	<p>Area of trees and scrub is 1.31ha – 28% of area. Gorse under 10%.</p>	<p>No. There is more than double the amount of tree cover that is acceptable. A good proportion of these are invasive Turkey Oak, which should be prioritised for ring barking.</p>