



July 2024



We've been here before!

Midsummer on the commons of Chislehurst! Longer days and warmer weather! A lovely time of year when flowers are blooming, and trees are in full leaf. And, as in past years, the water levels in Prickend Pond have dropped dramatically.

The character of the pond changes throughout the seasons, but the falling water levels have long been a feature of summer.



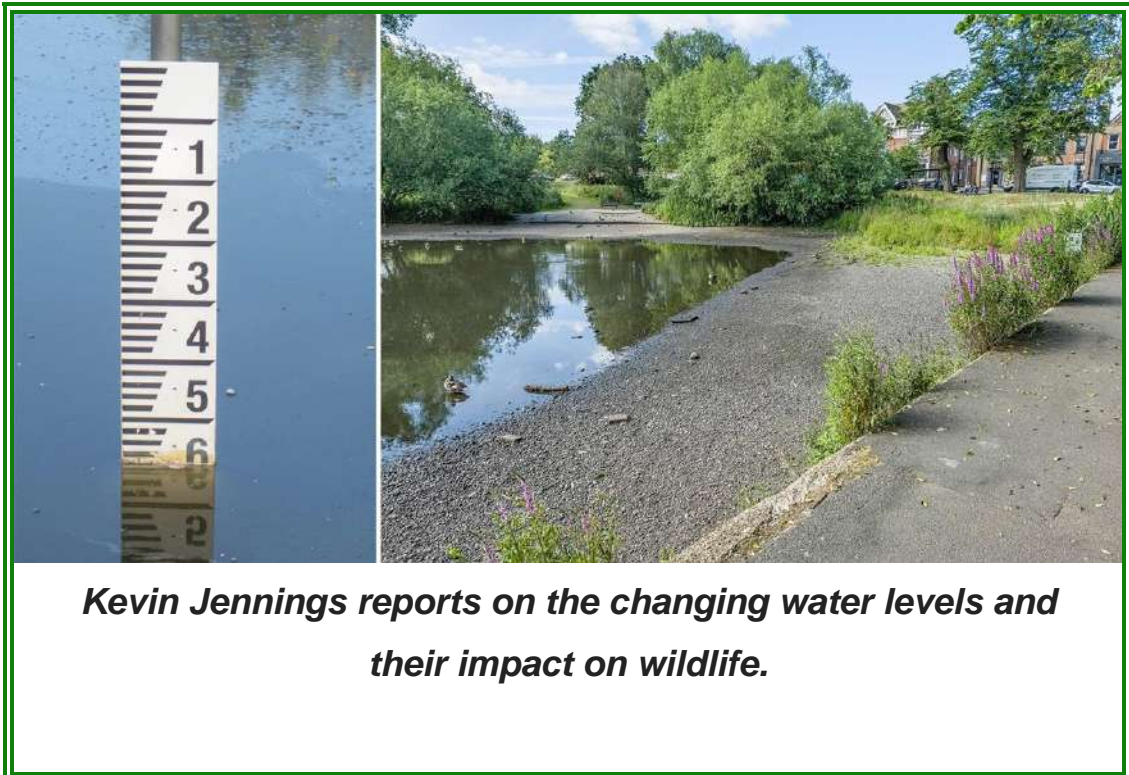
January 2024



March 2024



May 2024



Kevin Jennings reports on the changing water levels and their impact on wildlife.

On July 1st, Prickend Pond's water level was 67 cm below its maximum outflow height, coincidentally the same as last year on this date. Of our two permanent ponds, Prickend struggles the most in dry periods as seen in June, with twenty-three completely dry days and sparse rain across the others.

Rush Pond fared slightly better on the same date, at 24 cm down from full and 9 cm higher than last year, aided in part by its supplementary borehole feed. Though, even with this support, during droughts its levels will still recede exposing areas of the pond bed.

Concerns about the ponds drying up in particularly dry summers, given their reliance on rainfall, isn't a new phenomenon, with occasional low levels and drying up reported throughout the last century. In the 1950's, professional water engineers surveyed the ponds and "could find no reason why water should remain in the ponds at any time!" With climate change, these events are becoming more frequent.

On a more positive note, much of the life in ponds has evolved to survive bouts of drying up and will bounce back when the levels rise again – which may be dramatic given the potential for deluges as our climate swings between extremes. Marginal plants have also benefited from lower water levels and have expanded around Prickend Pond in areas that used to be too deep for them to survive.

More challenges remain though, especially if a heatwave accompanies receding levels, with risks of algal blooms developing and low dissolved oxygen levels occurring. We continue to monitor the situation and review options for preserving the ponds for future generations to enjoy... and at times worry about, given the vagaries of our climate.



We are fortunate that, despite its difficulties, Prickend Pond remains a central feature of Chislehurst.

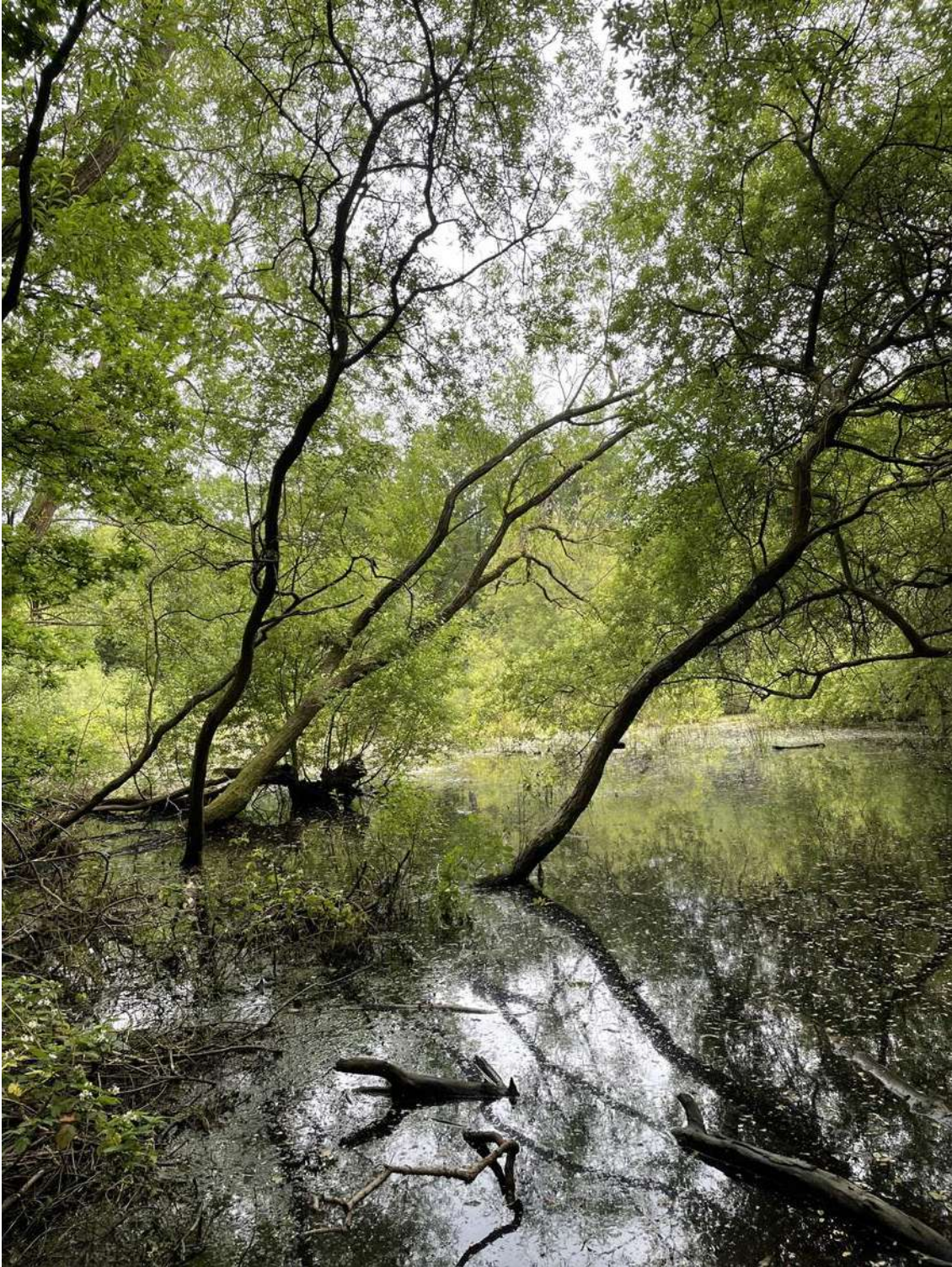
In the early part of last century, when carts of different kinds were driven into the pond to wash their wheels and water the horses, and traction engine drivers took water for their engines, there were serious discussions about filling it in and creating a playground.

Today we manage it as an amenity for the community while also enhancing its biodiversity. In recent years, under the guidance of Sheila Poole, the working party volunteers have put in flowering plants and bushes along the banks and at the pond edges.

It is home to a variety of ducks and geese, bats, birds, dragonflies and other invertebrates, and offers the opportunity to experience the natural world at first hand.

Overflow Pond and Wetland

The Overflow Pond and wetland areas on the Common near Bromley Road also go through seasonal transformations which make them a rare and valuable habitat.



They have retained water for longer than usual this year after the wet spring.

This photo was taken on 3rd June 2024.



This was the scene a month later on 4th July 2024. As the pond dries out, magenta spikes of purple loosestrife gradually appear above the grasses, a magnet for butterflies and a good source of nectar for long-tongued insects.

Chislehurst Creates is back for its Second Year!

CHISLEHURST Creates

... a journey through time

**Saturday
14th Sept
1-5pm**

Creative Fun on the
Commons
(Watts Lane/School Rd)

Art and Craft Activities • Entertainment
Tea Tent • Face Painting and more!

For ticket information see **Chislehurst Creates**
on social media or scan the code:
www.chislehurstcreates.org

Ticket info:

chislehurstcreates.org

All proceeds go towards the upkeep
of our beautiful commons

CHISLEHURST COMMONS
Registered Charity No. 1028221

With huge thanks to our fabulous local sponsors

(more sponsor details to follow)

THE LOTUS
AT FROGPOOL

Booking is now open for this exciting event!

It takes place at the Cockpit on Saturday 14th September.

Come along and join in the amazing variety of art and crafts on offer, or come along to watch and enjoy a coffee and a cake.

We look forward to seeing you.

All proceeds will go towards maintaining and developing our wonderful commons.

Click on this link to Ticketsource <https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/chiscommons> to purchase tickets in advance.



The two commons of Chislehurst, Chislehurst Common and St. Paul's Cray Common, are managed by a Board of Trustees, established under an Act of Parliament.

The Act protects the 180 acres but provides no funding, and the

generosity of local people and the time given by volunteers are vital.

The knowledge and dedication of the two full-time Keepers are invaluable. Everyone else who works to preserve and maintain the area does so voluntarily.

If you would like to support the work of maintaining and enhancing the commons.

you can donate via our website

www.chislehurstcommons.uk

or via PayPal Giving

Thank you!

Glorious Summer Grasslands

The grasslands have benefited from this year's wet spring, and they are an uplifting sight at the moment, bright with flowers such as wild carrot, cat's ear, yarrow, knapweed, hawksbeard, sheep's sorrel, and, if you look carefully, a few harebells.



Lady's bedstraw



Wild carrot



Knapweed



This photo shows the progress of the experimental mowing at the Ramblers Rest, designed to improve the quality of the grassland by depriving the soil of nutrients.

The experiment began in 2022 and the area has since been mowed three times each year, in March, July and September, and the cuttings removed.

Invertebrates use grass to feed, breed and hide, so a refuge area is left uncut for them each time.

The area to the left of centre in the photo was not mown last September and March, and has fewer flowers and more coarse grasses than the area to the right.



The refuge areas are rotated and the area to the left was cut this week, while the area to the right will not be cut again until next July.

We are surveying the area regularly and already we are seeing a better ratio of flowering plants to grass, and more of the lower-growing finer grasses.

We are also gaining a greater knowledge of the different sections of this area which will inform our future management.



A better ratio of flowering plants to grass encourages more butterflies like this large skipper, pictured on red clover.



The Overflow Glade is another of our acid grassland areas, and a good place to observe grasshoppers, dragonflies, butterflies and other invertebrates.

And Finally – New Arrivals at the Ponds

We have recently had some visitors at the ponds.



This shoveler visited both Prickend Pond and Rush Pond. It is named for its large flat bill which it sweeps backwards and forwards through the water, filtering out small invertebrates, plant seeds and other plant material.



In our last newsletter, we reported on the family of wood ducks that had appeared at the Overflow Pond. They made their way to Rush Pond where this one was soon exploring.



Meanwhile, a female mallard keeps watch over her brood nestling among the water mint at the edge of Prickend Pond.

The beautiful commons of Chislehurst have been an amenity for the local community for centuries, providing shelter and shade, and glorious summer views of the natural world for us to enjoy as we go about our daily lives.

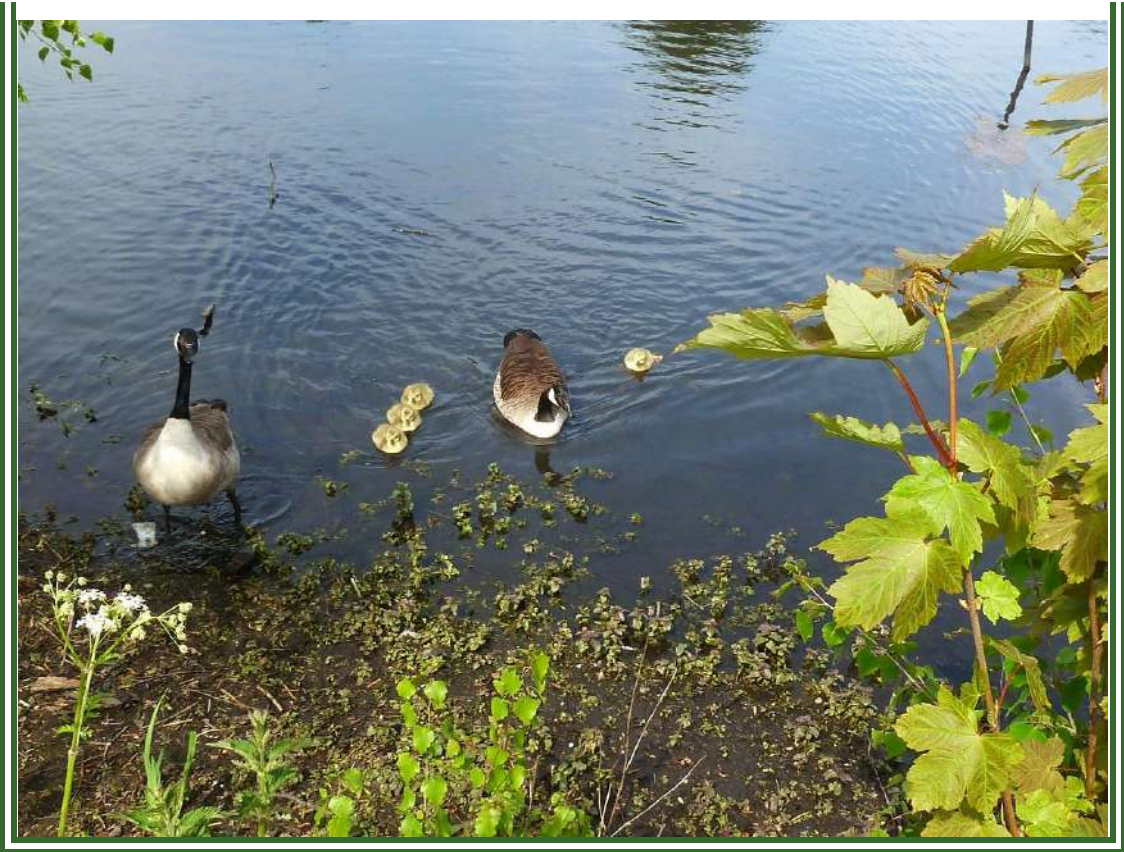
The team at Chislehurst Commons will continue to do their best to preserve and enhance them for both current and future generations.

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.

All proceeds go to Chislehurst Commons.

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



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Animal Rescue Advice Organisations

Thanks for this month's photos to – Peter Edwards, Kevin Jennings, Charlie Wheeler 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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