



Wimbledon and Putney Commons

Media Release October 2023

WILDLIFE AND ENVIRONMENT MONITORING REPORT

The Conservators are pleased to announce the release of the Wimbledon and Putney Commons Wildlife and Environment Monitoring Report for 2022.

The Commons comprise 1,140 acres and are one of the UK's most important natural landscapes. Around 80% of the Commons were made a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in 1953, making it one of the finest and oldest protected areas in England. In 2004, large parts were also made a Special Area of Conservation (SAC), in recognition of its internationally important habitats and species.

The first annual monitoring report was produced in 2014 when the Conservators were keen to get a sense of how their management of the area known as "The Plain" (the open area adjacent to Windmill Road) was impacting its ability to provide an area for ground-nesting birds, particularly Skylarks, and other species important to a thriving area of acid grassland.

Since then, the monitoring has spread to the Commons as a whole and incorporates birds, butterflies, dragonflies, beetles, reptiles and amphibians, moths and plants.

Highlights from 2022 include:

- **Moths** - Nine new moth species were found, with a total of 432 species being recorded on the Commons. This includes one of the UK's largest moths, the Emperor Moth, which is the only kind in the UK that spins a silk cocoon.
- **Birds** - Two rare Dartford Warblers were found on the Commons for the first time; Little Grebe successfully bred on Bluegate Pond and Firecrest are increasing significantly in numbers – whilst not a species of concern, it is encouraging to see them expanding on the Commons.
- **Butterflies** - 28 species of butterfly were recorded - a slight increase on 2021
- **Dragonfly** - 21 species of dragonfly were recorded, up from 9 in 2021. Notable species included a single Norfolk Hawker and a Keeled Skimmer which is a typical wet heathland species not seen on the Common since 2018.
- **Common Lizards** – 16 Common Lizards were spotted, an increase on the previous year. While frogs, toads and newts continue to spawn in many of the ponds.

- **Stag Beetles** - 21 Stag Beetles were recorded by visitors on the Commons, This indicates a declining trend since 2014.

Defra-appointed Conservator, Oliver Bennett, commented: "The Commons are still home to a fabulous range of species from Dartford Warblers to Stag Beetles and Emperor Moths. However, our monitoring suggests that the abundance of many species has gone down in recent years, sadly following a general national trend. The heatwave and drought last year may have contributed further to this decline.

Our ongoing volunteer surveying programme will help us to monitor the situation and will inform our future conservation efforts. Initiatives such as the development of the Commons' first Land Management Plan and our proposals to raise more funds for nature conservation remain essential in helping us to reverse these negative trends."

Copies of the full report can be found at www.wpcc.org.uk/monitoringreport

ENDS

NOTES for Editors - Wimbledon and Putney Commons is a charity managed by the Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators (WPCC). It was established under the Wimbledon and Putney Commons Act of 1871. The Commons comprise some 1,140 acres across Wimbledon Common, Putney Heath and Putney Lower Common.

Contact: Oliver Bennett, Defra Appointed Conservator
Tel: 020 8788 7655, E-mail: rangersoffice@wpcc.org.uk website: www.wpcc.org.uk

Issued October 2023