

Site Manager's Report Keston Common, Ravensbourne Open Space & Padmall Wood

July 2015

Dear Friends,

I hope you have been enjoying the warm summer weather. It has been a particularly good year for orchids, and even our little patches at Keston have been better than usual this year. We've seen good numbers of pyramidal orchids in the meadows and helleborines near Fishponds Road.

The bell heather is currently in flower on the heathland (particularly along the bank on the SAM), and keep watching the heather develop through mid-late summer as the ling comes up and the cross-leaved heath in the bog comes into flower. Buzzards were also seen flying over Keston and Hayes Common last week, so keep your eyes on the skies!

Fire damage to the heather on Keston Common

Unfortunately we have also had some bad news on the heathland, as most of you are aware there was a large fire that spread through the established heather area and has done a great deal of damage. This fire was started by someone lighting a camping candle on the ground next to the heather and gorse. It has been reported to the police, who have recorded it as arson. Ward Security have been asked to increase their patrols, as there have also been the usual bbq fires on the acid grassland above the ponds, and obviously there is potential for further damage.

The good news is that there is evidence of regrowth on many of the burnt heather stalks. Heather can recover from burning, and it is in fact a traditional management technique on larger heathland areas, so with time, we are hopeful the habitat will recover.

Peaty finders: discovering London's peat bogs

The London Wildlife Trust recently put together a publication about bogs in Greater London, and Keston bog features quite prominently due to its links with Darwin and the fact that it is one of the largest remaining bogs and the only one to have bog asphodel. LWT are hoping to find funding for further research into these rare London habitats. If you'd like find out more about the project or see the leaflet, take a look at:

<http://www.wildlondon.org.uk/peaty-finders>

Parks & Greenspace transfer to The Landscape Group

As most of you will already know, the majority of staff from Bromley's Parks and Greenspace team have transferred to the employ of The Landscape Group. In the process of merging the existing grounds maintenance staff with the former Bromley staff, the team is currently undergoing a large restructure. Support for the Friends of Keston should not change, but the staff you deal with may do, depending on who is appointed for which jobs in the new structure. By the end of the summer, it should be clearer what is going to happen, and we'll obviously let you know of any changes when they happen.

Keston's Higher Level Stewardship Agreement

Bromley has a Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) agreement with Natural England. This is a grant scheme that awards funding for land management of habitats such as the heathland, acid grassland and the bog. Our restoration work is funded via this scheme. This year we are now at the half-way point (it runs from 2010 - 2020). Looking ahead to the next few winters, we need to be doing more of the same; continuing the clearance of gorse and birch from the heathland and thinning the trees between the heath and the acid grassland. Continuing to clear scrub in the bog and remove larger trees where possible. And of course the annual maintenance of the meadows, with the cut and take off of the grass, which will be happening again this September/October.

Filming at Keston

The BBC recently filmed an advert at Keston ponds. The advert will form part of a new BBC campaign for its interactive services.

An update from Richard on the ponds:

Dead fish in the ponds

Several dead fish have been removed from the ponds recently. Those removed were suffering from gill moss. This is caused through shock, which could be precipitated by a lack of oxygen in the water, or from other causes. For example it is typical during spawning to lose around 3% of the adult fish (which was when the dead fish appeared).

Thames 21 work day

We are still speaking to Thames 21 (the river charity) to help us organise some clearance work in and around the ponds. We will keep you up to date if we get any further with this.

Thank you for all your hard work as always,

Jenny

If you have any questions or queries for me when I'm not on site, contact me at the High Elms Office, tel 01689 862815

or email jprice@thelandscapegroup.co.uk, rfoster@thelandscapegroup.co.uk

Jenny Price
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