

## Keston Common, Ravensbourne Open Space & Padmall Wood

### Site Report - October 2023

Jonathan Lynch, RSPB/idverde Biodiversity Adviser

Dear Friends of Keston Common,

Firstly, I would like to thank you all for the warm welcome. It has been a pleasure to meet you all as Keston Common's new Site Manager (taking over from Steven Lofting, who has moved on to join Butterfly Conservation); I look forward to working together on improving this wonderful, ecologically rich slice of Bromley. By way of introduction, I am a Bromley native (born and raised in Chelsfield) and began my conservation journey aged 15 when I joined the Friends of High Elms (and, in 2016, BCV). My primary area of expertise is UK birds, but I take an interest in all wildlife.

Before looking to the future, I would like to commend all of you for your recent work raking away moor grass thatch in the bog, hacking at holly and the various invasive and non-native species that have a foothold in the site, dead hedging, bracken pulling, scalloping and widening the rides in Padmall and litter picking, as well as being the eyes and ears of the common, reporting fly tips and antisocial behaviour. All of this makes an indelible impression on the community and makes my job as a council officer considerably easier.

Recent surveying work has included a bat survey in mid-September which showed that the bat boxes on the common are well-occupied (albeit only with soprano pipistrelles, but common pipistrelle and Daubenton's continue to show up on bat detectors). Butterfly surveying this summer with Bob Harrop and Diane Muir turned up some interesting records: silver-washed fritillary and purple hairstreak, to name a few. Thanks also to Grant Hazlehurst for ongoing insect surveys. My own recent bird observations include goldcrest and large (10+ individual) long-tailed tit flocks moving through the woodlands. I intend to begin monthly bird surveys in 2024. If anybody would like to join me on these, please just ask.

Works planned on the common in the near future include more gorse control on the heaths, targeted heather management and scrub control on the bog and the construction of a leaky dam



Bog asphodel (l), *Sphagnum* moss (r) at Keston Common

on the bog (a pet project of Steven's which I have inherited). With the advice of Nigel Symes, RSPB heathland expert and a colleague of mine, I intend to work with Ian Wright (Site Manager of Hayes Common) to improve the overall connectivity of the heaths on both sites by carefully completing some tree felling and habitat improvements. Conversations are ongoing with the Forestry Commission and Natural England to ensure this is all done in a way that accounts for the sensitivities of the SSSI sites and work is likely to commence next year (winter of 2024-25).

Also please note that BCV are working on the common on the 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> of October, conducting some scrub management works and targeted tree felling in preparation for our leaky dam project. They will be meeting at 10:00 on Fishponds Road.

Most importantly, the annual Christmas cookup is planned for the 8<sup>th</sup> of December. A new work programme will shortly be published with full details of upcoming tasks.

Once again, thank you all for your hard work and commitment to the common.

Take care,

Jonathan Lynch



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