



UP On The Downs

The Newsletter of the Banstead Commons Conservators



Winter scene on Banstead Common

Welcome to the Winter edition of the Banstead Commons Conservators Newsletter, published for all users of our Heaths and Commons and the extended Community. We hope you find it useful.

How about getting some fresh air and having a go at some winter photography? Remember the settings are a bit different on your camera and take advantage of some fantastic lighting, icicles on trees and gates, frozen spiders webs, the list goes on – Enjoy!!

News and views of the Commons.

What are The Commons?

Around 1700 acres (that's about 5,000 Wembley size football pitches!) with free access across the very north of the Borough of Reigate and Banstead in four distinct areas: Banstead Heath, Banstead Commons, Burgh Heath and Park Downs. They are governed by an historic Act of Parliament, which makes them unique in this country and protected by law. We aim to maintain this protection from all the threats now and in future.

The history of the Commons.

The land that makes up the Banstead Commons Conservation area—hence the name of the group of 'Trustees' or 'Responsible Persons' (Conservators) referred to in the legislation—was originally Common Land with a large number of people (Commoners) making their living by grazing the animals on the land, and living similar agricultural lifestyles.

With the growth of population in the late 19th century 'Entrepreneurs' sought to buy out or force out the Commoners and a legal battle lasting years took place. The Commoners only succeeded with the help of a wealthy philanthropist from the City of London, who sponsored their legal bills.

Fortunately for us all, they eventually won and to prevent further loss of the Commons the Metropolitan Banstead Commons (Banstead) Supplemental Act 1893 was passed. It is unique to this area and has certain powers included to protect the Commons over and above other more recent legislation. This means that no part, however small, of the Heaths or Commons protected by this Act can ever be lost, without a comparable sized area being added elsewhere.

You can see some of the law on other sections of the noticeboards and if you would like more information please contact the Conservators Secretary via:

Tel No: 01737824383 or e mail: bansteadcommons@aol.com

What's happening on the Downs this Season?

Winter

What are we doing this season?

Although the weather may mean many other people don't get out onto the Heaths and Commons, our staff are still hard at work - in all weathers- making sure that the Heath and Commons are tidied up, fallen trees removed and generally catching up –especially where work needs to be done during the 'dormant' season, so as not to interfere with the wildlife later in springtime.

Clearance of old scrub is continuing on Banstead Downs. This habitat has low wildlife value and as well as opening up views and creating more chalk grassland some areas of scrub will be allowed to regrow providing more varied habitat especially for birdlife.

Machinery needs overhauling, servicing, and replacing when necessary. Staff can take the opportunity for training in latest techniques and on new equipment. They may even get a day or two off!!

What will you be able to see?

Deer - Remember that there are many animals not hibernating and Deer will be seen more clearly in the trees-so if your dog is excitable or likely to chase them, please keep him/her under control. Our Deer are precious and we wouldn't want anything to hurt or endanger them.

This is one of the most spectacular times of the year, with frosts, snow covered tracks, bushes and trees. By the way - take your camera and see what else there is to photograph. The lighting in Winter can be awe-inspiring.

Tip: Most cameras have 'snow' settings to avoid underexposure and poor pictures – and if you are about at sunset there are some spectacular views to capture!

You will still see small mammals searching for food, they aren't all asleep – have a look for the footprints in the frost and snow –more photo opportunities.

Soon enough, you will see the first signs of Spring as the temperature above and below ground rises. The days grow longer and the continuing cycle of the Heaths and commons begins again-Absolutely unique!!

Some important Information:

Dog control: common sense applies, please. If your dog is excitable, control it – especially near horses or other people who may not be quite so 'dog aware'.

Poo Bags – Despite what you may have seen -They don't grow on trees, so if you clean up after your dog **PLEASE TAKE THE BAG HOME** –don't leave it hanging in trees, or anywhere on the Common/Heath. (Bags take years and years to decompose and are dangerous to other wildlife). The Common is an excellent natural recycler for waste of this sort.

Litter-It's always a problem when people are careless or just lazy when it comes to picking up their litter. It doesn't just cost money to clean up, but to small animals litter can be positively dangerous and kill them. In any case it can take years to decompose or in some cases it never does. So help us to keep our Heaths and Commons clean and safe.

If you need to contact anyone the following are best numbers- but remember phones don't work in some places on the Heaths and Commons

Telephone numbers (remember not all mobiles work across all the Commons):

Warden: 07956 219504

Police: 101 or if urgent 999- try and be accurate as to your location

RSPCA: 0300 1234 999

BCC: 01737 842383

Memorial Benches and Noticeboards

If you have lost a loved one - two or four legged -You can keep those memories alive by purchasing a bench or dedicate a noticeboard at one of many available sites on the Downs or Heaths. Call the number above to discuss options. Prices are from £300 incl. VAT for a Bench or from £350 incl. VAT for a noticeboard.