



Autumn/Winter Newsletter 2016

The autumn colours have been wonderful this year. With the weather being relatively dry and not too windy, the leaves have managed to stay on the trees for a little while longer providing a wonderful display. Hopefully you have had a chance to go out and enjoy!

The latest news from the Friends is that we had a very successful Orchard Volunteer Task on Sunday 30th October, cutting back scrub and overgrown vegetation from around the base of our lovely veteran apple and pear trees. **Many thanks to all those volunteers who joined in!!**

The plan is to continue this around all the remaining trees in Lambert's Orchard and then bring in mulch to spread around the base of the trees. Hopefully this will inject some much needed nutrients and give them a boost so we can enjoy their splendour for a few more years.

As you can see from the photos below, the trees were quite smothered. We will be having another task, probably one Sunday in February, to continue with this vital work. If you would like to join us please get in touch.



The Orchard Project is going to run some workshops during 2017 to teach us how to prune and manage our trees. If you would be interested in volunteering and learning this useful skill, please get in touch.

Traditional Orchards are a habitat of principal importance. They are very important for biodiversity in terms of the trees themselves providing shelter and food for many animals, the decaying wood is a vital resource for (usually rare) invertebrates, the grassland is unimproved and undisturbed so good for wildflowers and no pesticides are used. It is stated by the People's Trust for Endangered Species that the introduction of modern intensive farming practices to fruit growing has dramatically changed the character of orchards. Although production has steadily increased, the impact on wildlife and the environment has been severe. Whilst most fruit production was intensified, many smaller orchards escaped modernisation. In a similar way to our few remaining wildflower meadows, traditional style orchards are now recognised and celebrated as being ecologically benevolent and long-term sustainable.



The ponds and wetlands that have been restored and created last year are doing well and work is going on to survey the wildlife that gradually returns to them. The vegetation is being monitored and an interesting, relatively rare moss is colonising the edges of the wetland. A student has been volunteering with us, carrying out a baseline survey of freshwater invertebrates in the new wetland and balancing ponds. This survey can then be repeated over the years to see how the wildlife develops. Whilst we were there we saw an amazing display of an Emperor Dragonfly laying its eggs on the vegetation in the wetland.



Emperor Dragonfly laying eggs



Wetland - Nov 2016



View of the wetland from the path – Nov 2016



Balancing Pond Jan 2016



Balancing Pond - Nov 2016



Work to de-silt Lamberts Pond continued on from the original work carried out in 2013 by the Lower Mole Countryside Partnership volunteers (LMCP). The Friends of Horton Country Park donated £200 towards this.



Lambert's Pond - Oct 2015



Lambert's Pond – Oct 2016

These wonderful new and restored waterbodies need your help!

A plea to all dog walkers and friends of dog walkers; please spread this message....

Do not let your dog in the ponds and streams!

The constant disturbance prevents vegetation from developing and it prevents the invertebrates and pond-life from flourishing, which in turn would provide food and shelter for animals such as birds and amphibians. If the ponds are to develop and be good for wildlife, dogs must be kept out. This is true for all the ponds and streams throughout the park and in the countryside generally.

Dogs unfortunately will erode the banks and disturb wildlife.

The Countryside Team Volunteers have also been very active over the summer, managing our rotationally cut meadows and also managing the scrub in the orchard as well as managing the trees themselves. They have also been busy cutting back the vegetation around the path going around pond wood. Please see below for action shots and upcoming volunteer tasks.....



Cutting back encroaching scrub in Slip Meadow



Strimming back the bramble to reveal the stream running through Lambert's Orchard



Clearing back scrub from around the base of veteran apple trees in Lambert's Orchard

Upcoming tasks..

<u>Date</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Task</u>	<u>Meeting Place</u>
24/11/16	Keepers Shaw	Scrub Management	Information Centre
01/12/16	Nightingale Corner	Scrub management	Information Centre
08/12/16	Field Pond	Pond/Stream Management	Information Centre
15/12/16	Cabbage Field	Hedge Laying	Information Centre
22/12/16	Cabbage Field	Hedge Laying	Information Centre

For all tasks please meet at 10am. Equipment and training will be provided. Please wear suitable clothing and sturdy footwear. Under 16s must be accompanied by an adult. Tasks may be subject to change or cancellation in extreme weather, please call the Countryside Team to find out more on 01372 745224.



We have also had a very successful year surveying and monitoring wildlife in Horton Country Park. Two butterfly transect routes were walked and it has been a good year for finding some rare and elusive butterflies. We have had sightings of the Brown Hairstreak and White Letter Hairstreak, which is great news.



Brown Hairstreak



Silver Washed Fritillary



Purple Hairstreak



White Letter Hairstreak

We walk a set route from April to September and species we have recorded this year are; Large and Small White, Green-veined white, Brimstone, Small, Essex and Large Skipper, Marbled White, White Admiral, Silver Washed Fritillary, Painted Lady, Holly and Common Blue, Small Copper, Meadow Brown, Gatekeeper, Speckled Wood, Orange Tip, Purple Hairstreak, Red Admiral, Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock, Comma, and Ringlet. A Clouded Yellow was also spotted near the car park which is an unpredictable migrant and last seen frequently in Surrey in 2009. A total of 27 species which is great news! If anyone would like to assist us next year then they can get in touch with me, all training provided.

Great Crested Newts were surveyed from April to June and are still present in Field Pond. The vegetation in Field Pond is developing nicely since we have installed the fencing and dogs are no longer going in and out day after day.





As mentioned in the last newsletter we really want to hear from you with any interesting bird records. It would be great to improve our knowledge on which birds are breeding within the park and also which ones are our winter visitors. Please get your binoculars out and keep in touch!



Whitethroat (Species that likes scrubby vegetation)



Blackcap (Species that likes scrubby vegetation)



Fieldfare (Winter visitor)



Redwing (Winter visitor)

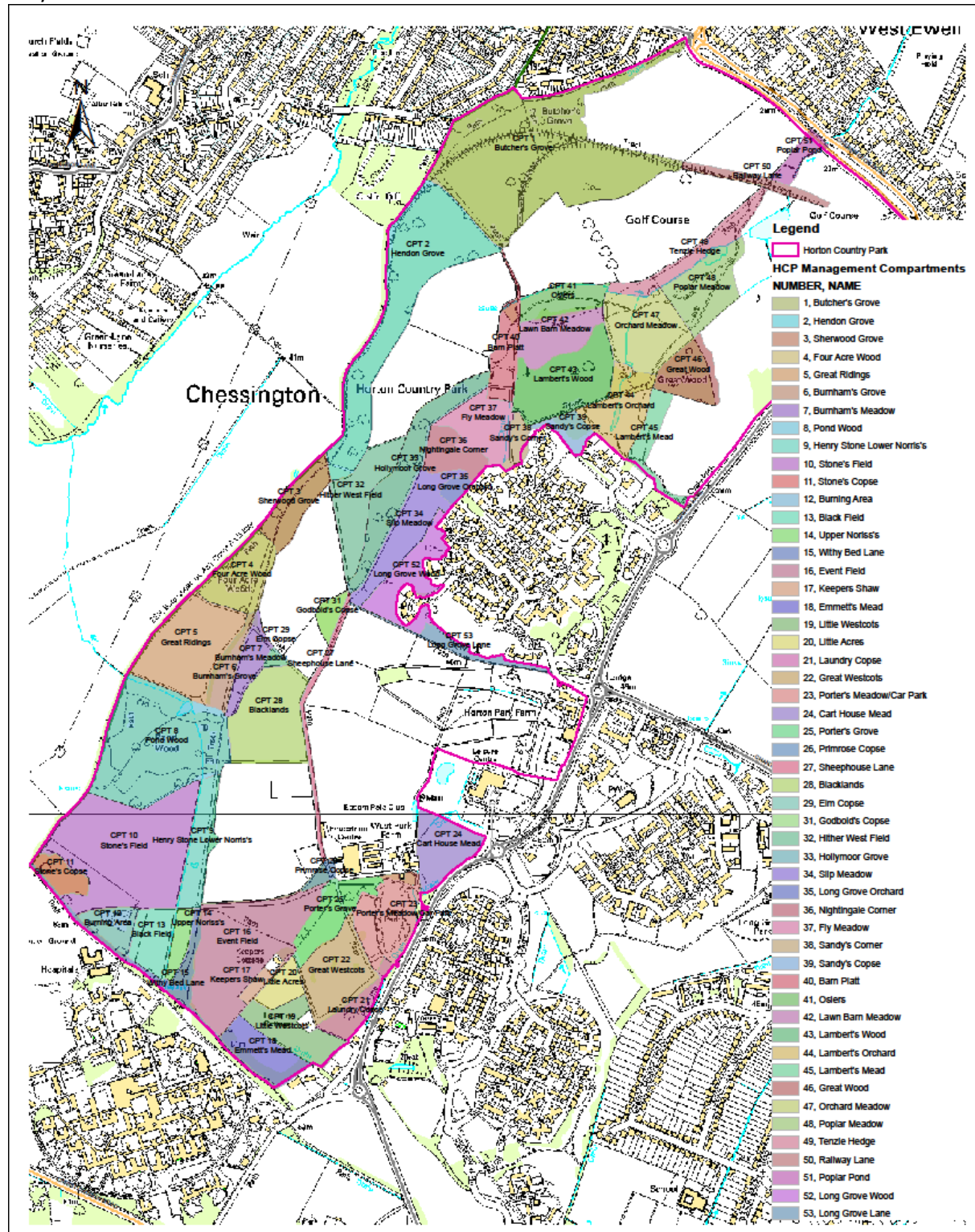
We would also like to encourage you to join us at our meetings to help discuss the issues happening in the park and take part in helping Epsom and Ewell Borough Council manage the site for wildlife and people. We meet every other month on the first Tuesday at 7:30 pm. Our next meeting will be on Tuesday 6th December.

Under guidance from our management plan and commitments through our Higher Level Stewardship funding agreement with Natural England, our focus is on managing the key habitats and features within Horton Country Park for the benefit of wildlife and for our visitors to enjoy. These include woodland - ancient and plantation, veteran trees, orchards, hedgerows, rough grassland, hay meadows, ponds and streams. We also strive to maintain good public access so everyone can enjoy this wonderful place.

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This map contains all the names for the fields and woodlands within Horton Country Park which you may find useful....



Created by: Stewart Cocker

Map 6 Management Compartments

Reference:

Revision No:

0 125 250 375 500 Meters

1:7,500



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How can you get involved?

Practical conservation tasks from Coppicing, to water vole habitat management , to tree planting, to fruit tree pruning to name a few. To see the task programme for the Countryside Team Volunteers, please go to the Epsom and Ewell Borough Council website or follow this link <http://www.epsom-ewell.gov.uk/EEBC/Leisure+and+Culture/Parks+and+countryside/Countryside/Nature+Conservation+Volunteering.htm>

Surveying wildlife in Horton Country Park - Whether you are interested in birds, insects, spiders, plants, fungi, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, we'd love to hear from you. There is such a rich biodiversity within Horton Country Park; there is plenty to keep you busy!

Patrol Horton Country Park and be our eyes and ears...

Whilst you are out walking in the park, if you notice anything broken, fallen, or unusual, please let us know e.g.

- Site furniture might need repair
- A tree might have fallen across a path
- Minor paths may be getting overgrown
- Help us with our fixed point photography

Come to meetings...

We meet on the **first Tuesday** of February, April, June, August, October and December. The meetings are held at 7.30 pm in the meeting room of 2, West Park, Farmhouse in Horton Country Park.

We meet to **discuss the latest issues** in the park and feedback to the Countryside Team, a member of which comes along to all the meetings.

We are **currently looking for a chairperson and a secretary** to take minutes of the meetings, so if this is something you would be interested in, please get in touch.

Publishing and advertising...

The **website** for the group is up and running but it would be great to have more **regular updates** for the site. If you are keen on **writing articles/blogs** about Horton Country Park we would love to hear from you.

It would be great to be able to publicise the group, its activities and events more widely. We are looking for someone who could help **create posters** e.t.c to help us in this area.