



# Newsletter

## October 2025



The change of season has filled our slice of countryside with beautiful autumn hues. We may have been forgiven for thinking that autumn had arrived in mid-late August with leaves already falling from trees and berries having ripened even earlier. However, this was due to the hot summer

putting many of our trees into survival mode by shedding leaves to reduce water loss but now that temperatures have dropped and much needed rain is falling, autumn does feel that it has definitely arrived. In this edition of our newsletter, as well as our own updates, we will also have a column from our Countryside Warden, Ian Glover.

### Surprising sightings

It's not just our trees that change their behaviour in extreme temperatures. The lake has been the lowest we've seen it in many years due to the lack of rainfall this summer. Whilst not an ideal situation, we have seen more wading birds than normal feeding on invertebrates in the exposed mud. One such bird was the Green



Sandpiper pictured in our 2026 calendar by David Rouse. Soon after this was taken, up to three Common Sandpipers were in residence for nearly 3 weeks. Low water levels also concentrated fish in a much smaller area making hunting easier for the Little Egrets and Grey Herons seen in this picture by Sarah Woodcock. The most notable sighting, however,

may be the Great White Egret posted on our Facebook page by Priscilla Macpherson. This species is still very rare, just starting to breed in the Norfolk Broads and the Somerset Levels; very different to our small urban lake. Not rare, but not common either, a pair of Grey Wagtails found the almost dry culvert running parallel to the Elmers End Road much to their liking. Meanwhile, Howard Dingley, who leads our bird walks, was very excited to spot three Common Buzzards soaring over the Park just a couple of weeks ago.

Our butterfly transects have finished for the year, the data having been submitted to the UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme. During one of our conservation workdays in

August, one of our volunteers spotted an adult Brown Hairstreak Butterfly basking on a leaf near our laid hedge on the seasonal path. This was a very exciting discovery of this elusive butterfly after finding the eggs a couple of years ago on young blackthorn in that area. Since then, under Ian's guidance, volunteers have been cutting the blackthorn in sections on a rotational basis which improves the habitat for the Brown Hairstreak and allows it to complete its life cycle. As this species often flies high up in mature ash trees and is difficult to spot, finding it in the hedgerow was wonderful.



### Words from the Warden



As this is my first column in the Friends' quarterly newsletter, I will briefly introduce myself and the subjects I intend to cover in this and future missives. I am a Countryside Warden employed by Croydon Council to manage the habitats of South Norwood Country Park, which is a nature reserve – a haven for wildlife and people, situated within the bustling suburbia of Greater London. The role consists of practical habitat management work, in which I am ably assisted by various teams of volunteers, as well as developing a management plan for the site. In addition, I help FoSNCP put on a programme of nature walks throughout the year, including bird, bat, tree and butterfly walks and fungi forays, which hopefully educate and entertain the participants and celebrate this

special place.

This column is an opportunity for me to highlight the vital work that volunteers do on site, put it in the wider context of the ongoing management plan and share any news and upcoming events. SNCP is a mosaic of different habitats – it is this variety that makes it so valuable for wildlife, but it also means that the site requires a lot of management to maintain this diversity. Without the many and varied contributions of volunteers the habitats would decline, and this diversity would be lost.

This summer, the long neglected and partially collapsed wooden viewing platforms were repaired. Once this was done, FoSNCP did a lot of work opening up the footpaths leading to them and the sightlines over the lake.

A regular summer task is the removal of Himalayan Balsam, a strikingly beautiful plant introduced to the UK in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It lacks natural predators and spreads rapidly; a single plant can produce up to 2500 seeds that are dispersed explosively in a seven metre radius and can be carried long distances by water. It grows quickly and forms dense stands, outcompeting other species and reducing biodiversity. Owing to its shallow roots it can destabilise banks, which, if left unchecked in SNCP, could contribute to the silting up of the Chaffinch Brook. Finally, it produces abundant nectar, which can distract pollinators from native species. FoSNCP and TCV have helped to control



Himalayan Balsam on site for a number of years; this summer they were assisted by teams of corporate volunteers courtesy of Thames 21.

This autumn, FoSNCP coppiced the willow in the reedbed, an annual task that helps to maintain one of the most sensitive and valuable habitats in SNCP. This prevents the willow from overshadowing the reeds, preserving them for the enjoyment of bird species like the Reed and Cetti's Warbler and Water Rail.

A major project, which began last year and continued this autumn, is the clearance work along the Chaffinch Brook between Ryelands Field and the lake. Much of the stream was completely overgrown, full of soft and woody vegetation. Over time, this material breaks down, contributing to silt build-up and eventually blocking the stream. This stream is the lifeblood of the site, upon which the wetlands and lake depend. The clearance work has improved the flow of the stream and enabled me to assess which areas require further interventions, such as dredging and bank restoration. Now that the heavy clearance is largely complete, we will begin to establish a cyclical cutting regime for the bankside vegetation, which will be divided into sections with different ones cut each year on rotation to maintain a varied plant structure. As with the Himalayan Balsam removal, this project has progressed thanks to extensive contributions from FoSNCP, TCV and teams of corporate volunteers.

There are two upcoming nature walks in November: a fungi foray, led by mycologist Clifford Davy, and a hedgerow walk, led by me, both of which have already been advertised. In December, there will be a winter bird walk and a winter tree ID walk, with dates TBD.

I wish to conclude by extending my thanks to all the volunteers who give their time and energy to help manage SNCP. I began by calling this place a haven for wildlife and people – it continues to be such in large part due to their collective efforts.

## 2026 Calendar

The calendar is a wonderful celebration of our beautiful nature reserve throughout the year. All the photos are taken in SNCP by local photographers who donate them to us so that we can produce the calendar and raise funds for the conservation work we carry out on a regular basis. We will regularly update our selling dates via posters, email and social media but don't leave it until the last minute to get your copy – it's selling fast and once this year's stock is gone, that will be it!

If you would like to join in with one of our workdays and learn more about the importance of conservation, please email us on [friendsofsncp@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofsncp@gmail.com)

For more information about SNCP and detailed workday reports, please visit our website [www.friendsofsncp.org.uk](http://www.friendsofsncp.org.uk). Ian can be contacted on [Ian.Glover@croydon.gov.uk](mailto:Ian.Glover@croydon.gov.uk).



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