



Newsletter

January 2026



The beauty of our local nature reserve is constantly changing with the unpredictable British weather. The low winter sun and blue skies have created some lovely mirror images of the bare trees onto the lake. Our first workday of 2026 started off with a beautiful, sunny, frosty morning and finished with snow showers! Since then, we've seen milder temperatures and rain but whatever the weather, being able to get out in nature a short distance from home brings so much benefit to our physical and mental health.

Beautiful scenery and a wealth of wildlife bring plenty of photo opportunities and we have seen many wonderful images on our Facebook page and in our calendar. Thank you to everyone who purchased our 2026 calendar which proved as popular as ever. All profits go towards our upcoming projects in SNCP and our regular conservation work. Please keep taking those photographs because we'll be asking for entries to our 2027 calendar in June.

Biodiversity in SNCP



Raising awareness of the different wildlife species, plants, fungi and mosaic of habitats in our nature reserve is important for us as a Friends group. Our website has details of our conservation work and data that has been gathered over many years for bird numbers and species as well as plants and wildflowers. Over the last couple of years, we have paid for a mycologist (fungi expert) to conduct surveys of fungi found in SNCP. Following the last survey in November, we are now up to 146 different fungi including this one called *Baeospora myosura* or the aptly named Conifercone Cap. Gathering and submitting data is crucial for biodiversity monitoring so the fungi data is submitted to



Greenspace Information for Greater London (GiGL), the capital's environmental records centre. Once we start our butterfly transects again in April, that data will be submitted to UK Butterfly Monitoring. However, monitoring does not stop in winter because our Warden, Ian, has been busy counting the eggs of the Brown Hairstreak on the young blackthorn which was 284 at the last count.

The adult Brown Hairstreak is not so easy to spot during transects so this is a rewarding way of getting an indication of how many adults we can expect in SNCP in the summer. If you follow us on Facebook, you may have also spotted Jonathan Tolhurst's link to his biodiversity project 'Every Living Thing in SNCP' which has a grand total, so far, of over 800 species! <https://jonathantolhurst.com/apps/every-living-thing-sncp.php>

Our Feathered Friends



Colder weather on the Continent has at last pushed up the numbers of some of our usual mid-winter birds, notably the Shoveller and Tufted duck along with Black-headed Gulls and the occasional Common Gull, so named because it, more than other gull species, often fed on land (Commons). Earlier winter arrivals included the generally shy Water Rail, which has been spotted in many wet areas, and up to 7 of our smallest native duck, the Teal, which took advantage of the shallow margins of the lake. More recently, 5 Chaffinch have been mingling with mixed flocks of Tits and Goldfinches on the Rylands field.

Words from the Warden, Ian Glover - Why not South Norwood Country Park?

September, 2025: the air is warm and still; a small group crouches on a muddy bank, looking expectantly over a large pond, its surface covered with duckweed that looks grey green in the twilight. Anticipation stretches out the minutes as we wait.



Suddenly, in a hushed voice, one of our guides breaks the silence: 'Beaver! Beaver!' A dark shape, wet and sleek, appears above the surface of the water, parting the duckweed as it swims across our field of view and into the cover of the bankside vegetation; then another, followed by the sounds of them busily munching. This encounter with a wild animal, a beaver, in its natural habitat, did not require me to travel to the Highlands of Scotland; I did not need to leave London. It occurred in Ealing, on a site called Paradise Fields, which in 2023 was transformed by the introduction of a family of five beavers. And it made me think: 'if it can be done here, why not South Norwood Country Park?'

Some of you may have seen the press release published by Croydon Council on January 14th about the possibility of introducing a family of beavers to South Norwood Country Park. Citizen Zoo approached my colleagues and I with this intriguing proposal last Summer, and since then we have been working alongside them to assess the suitability of the site. If this happens, it has the potential to



www.friendsofsncp.org.uk



facebook.com/groups/friendsofsncp



friendsofsncp@gmail.com



Instagram.com/friendsofsncp

hugely enhance SNCP both in terms of biodiversity and as a space for education and access to nature in an urban setting.

Who are Citizen Zoo?

Citizen Zoo is an urban rewilding organisation that empowers communities to unlock the potential of their local green spaces and reconnect with the nature on their doorstep. They were behind the successful introduction of a family of five beavers at the Ealing Beaver Project site. This project was featured in David Attenborough's *Wild London* documentary which aired on New Years Day.

Why beavers?



Beavers are native to Britain. Hunted to extinction centuries ago, they are 'ecosystem engineers'; they build dams that create networks of ponds, streams and wetlands. These richly varied habitats provide shelter, breeding sites and forage that supports a wide range of species of birds, bats, fish, amphibians and invertebrates. The wetlands capture and store carbon and improve

water quality by acting as a filter, trapping pollutants and sediment. Their dams slow the flow of water through a site, which mitigates downstream flooding and helps retain water levels during drier months. This is why beavers are considered a keystone species: just as the keystone supports an entire bridge, beavers have an impact on their environment disproportionate to their numbers, supporting an entire ecosystem. Much of the work currently undertaken in SNCP by dedicated teams of volunteers is making up for the absence of species like beavers and the roles they play in managing their habitats.

SNCP is already a beautiful nature reserve brimming with biodiversity. What could it look like with beavers playing a role?

What happens next?

This proposal is still in the early stages, and no decision has been taken. A community consultation will launch early in February, which will include an online questionnaire, an in person and a virtual talk and a guided walk around SNCP. The consultation is an opportunity for Croydon Council and Citizen Zoo to present this proposal, alongside their evidence and experience, and to hear what residents think about introducing beavers into SNCP. In addition to the questionnaire, the other events will all allow time for questions and discussion. There is also an ongoing feasibility study which includes an independent expert assessment of the site and habitats suitability, as well as design and fundraising. Depending on the outcomes of the consultation and the feasibility study, we can then apply for a license from Natural England.



www.friendsofsncp.org.uk



facebook.com/groups/friendsofsncp



friendsofsncp@gmail.com



Instagram.com/friendsofsncp

Rewilding principles have huge potential for aiding urban nature recovery. I'm excited about the possibility of applying these methods to SNCP and look forward to presenting our ideas and hearing your thoughts over the coming weeks.

[Beavers could soon be making themselves at home in a Croydon park - Newsroom](#)

[Our Mission - Citizen Zoo© Official Site - Rewilding Our Future](#)

[Wild London - BBC iPlayer](#)

Beaver photos courtesy of Caroline Farrow, Ealing Wildlife Group.

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

For more information about SNCP and detailed workday reports, please visit our website www.friendsofsncp.org.uk. Ian can be contacted on Ian.Glover@croydon.gov.uk.



www.friendsofsncp.org.uk



facebook.com/groups/friendsofsncp



friendsofsncp@gmail.com



Instagram.com/friendsofsncp