

Highgate Common Newsletter

Autumn/Winter 2016

Update from the Highgate ranger team



The team now look after a new addition to Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, Gentleshaw Common. which is on a 99 year lease from Lichfield District Council. The reserve is the largest expanse of lowland heathland in Staffordshire and is part of the Cannock Chase AONB, with an area of wet wet heath. The habitat is similar to that of Highgate Common but has vast quantities of purple moor grass which means if left unmanaged, the wet heath would soon disappear under a blanket of grass.

Whilst the team have been settling down into the new structure and finding their feet, Highgate Common has certainly given them plenty of things to sink their teeth into. Our volunteer work party who join us every Tuesday have been busy tackling the bracken which starts to show itself from June onwards. Hitting or cutting it will stunt its growth and reduce its vigour the following year, it will not get rid of it completely. The summer months unfortunately gave way to an increase of fly tipping on the common. We are monitoring this issue, and hope that increased visibility of the ranger team and volunteers at weekends will reduce this ongoing problem. If you are visiting Highgate Common and see fly tipping then please give the team a ring and let them know. We are also looking for 'roving rangers'. These are volunteers who's role is to engage with the public, carry out basic tasks like cutting back brambles that grow in the blink of an eye, across Highgate's footpaths and bridleways and share their knowledge of the common with its visitors. It's hoped that a weekend presence by the roving rangers, will also help the fly tipping problem. If you are interested in this role, then please contact the rangers office on 01384 221798.

The 10 year coppicing rotation has started in Hazel Alley. This involves coppicing (cutting) hazel back to a low stump. It will then, over time, grow back. In the meantime, it will create a sunny glade within the woodland, perfect for butterflies like the white admiral, other insects and birds as well as improving the ground flora species.

The Ranger team look forward to seeing you enjoying the common, so please say hello to them if you see them. Pictured is Hayley Dorrington and Pete Mcnee.



The mysterious insect, the Glow Worm...

Highgate's glow worms appear from the end of June and are about till the end of July. They can be found on the north side of the common, particularly on Goldie Heath and Brants Hill and they certainly are an interesting insect to read up about.

The glow worm isn't a worm at all, it is a beetle and the female is the only one that glows. Each individual female lives only a few weeks, until she mates, then dies. The females do not feed during this time.

Our glow worm survey results this year, seemed to be slightly down on the previous year. This is nothing to worry about as after a few weeks the eggs hatch into larvae, and they remain as larvae for one or two further summers, feeding on small snails which they apparently paralyse before sucking them empty. The two or maybe even three-year gap between a mating and the subsequent appearance of an adult helps to explain why you may find plenty on a site one year, yet few or none at all the next. Pictured is a glow worm found on the common.



*I wish I were a Glow Worm, A glow worm's never glum.
' Cause how can you be grumpy, when the sun shines out your bum!"*

Dates for your diary

Spooky Wildplay at Highgate - 27th October

10am-3pm - £10 per child

A day of child led discovery and play in the great outdoors. Activities vary according to children's interest. For ages 8-13 yrs.

Booking is essential. Call: 01889 880100

Settling in...

I can't quite believe how quick four months have gone already. Glow worms have been counted, butterfly surveys for the year have been completed, Bracken has been bashed and the purple and pink colours that appear when the heather is in flower, have turned to brown, ready for the winter months.

I have thoroughly enjoyed my time so far, looking after Highgate Common. It has been quite a whirlwind of getting to know people and not getting lost on site, but I think I have just about cracked it now. I have come from a National Trust background, working down on the Jurassic Coast, where I completed my three year apprenticeship. I then moved to Somerset, where Cheddar and Cider were a plenty. I looked after the Mendip and Polden Hills; places like Cheddar Gorge and Glastonbury Tor and Collard Hill which is home to the Large Blue Butterfly. If you see me wandering around the common, then please don't hesitate to stop and say hello.

Hayley - South Heathlands Warden

Join our Volunteer Task Force

We meet every Tuesday at 10am to 3pm (ish) and we carry out all sorts of practical conservation jobs on the common.

If you would like some more information or to come

