

Where have all the flowers gone?

Wolvercote
Commoners'
NEWSLETTER
August 2021

Suddenly the Commons take on a new look as both the tall grass and meadow flowers are mown. At first glance this appears to be an extremely destructive annual event. Going from an ocean of wild flowers to a cropped lawn, and removing large areas of habitat used by ground-nesting birds and a range of invertebrates, may seem the wrong thing to do.

So why is it done?

There are two reasons. It helps control the thistles and makes sure the finer plants have the chance to set seed and flourish (some areas of thistles will be left to provide seed for birds). It is done in segments so that the high diversity areas are cut last, which will help with improving the rich diversity of the Common. Secondly, if the meadow isn't cut annually a process called eutrophication, or nutrient enrichment takes place. Nutrient enrichment, is one of several enemies of a wildflower meadow. Perhaps counter-intuitively, the more nutrients present in the soil means fewer species of flower, due to the ability of some of the bigger and coarser species to use those nutrients to bully out the more delicate species.

So when is the best time to cut?

Not only is the cutting important, it is also important that the timing is right. Too soon, and we lose the nectar source and the flowers won't set seed. Too late, and the nutrients return to the base of the plant, returning the nutrient levels to the soil which is not ideal. By cutting when the grass is at its richest, and then grazing the subsequent regrowth with cows or horses, lots of the nutrients are removed which promotes floral and faunal biodiversity. If the cutting wasn't undertaken and the Common left to its own devices, it would undergo 'succession', transforming from flower-rich, to scrub-rich, and eventually to secondary woodland, meaning an eventual loss of the habitat completely. So remember, next time you walk out there and marvel, as we did this year, at the amazing display and variety of wild flowers, that what looks like drastic mowing has its rewards.



Photo: Eleanor Woods

Better times, John tending one of the residents



It is with sadness that we have to announce the recent death of John Tohill (known to some as Irish John).

John was the Commoners' Horse Warden and would often be seen on the Commons tending the horses. He was there to oversee the health and welfare of the horses on the Commons come rain or shine. Because the grazing of

livestock is a very important part of the life cycle of the Commons, it is essential that there is always someone with the time and knowledge to ensure the animals' welfare. John fulfilled this role for many years with Julian Cooper, the Oxford Park Warden, and will be sorely missed.



Photo: Eleanor Woods



WOLVERCOTE
NEIGHBOURHOOD
FORUM

Community Projects

Do you have any projects you think might benefit our community? If so, the application process is now open for the first round of funding for community projects in the Wolvercote Neighbourhood Forum area, funded by the Neighbourhood Portion of the Community Infrastructure Levy ("CIL": funding large local developments such as the Mill Site and Oxford North). The deadline for the first round of applications is September 30th 2021.

In this first round, the maximum funding per project will be £10k, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

For more details of the application process, see www.wolvercotenf.org.uk/cil-funded-projects and follow the links to

the Project application guidance notes, and the Project application form

If you would like this Newsletter emailed to you please email wolvercote.commoners@yahoo.co.uk

Work Mornings restart on Saturday 14th August – & we've got a lot to catch up on!!

Meet outside the Village Hall at 10am (Bring gloves, wellies, shears, secateurs, and any garden tools you have)



www.wolvercotecommoners.co.uk – wolvercote.commoners@yahoo.co.uk

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