

MATTINGLEY PARISH COUNCIL

RSPB Hazeley Heath Wardens report

Most local people will be aware of the fire on the heath on the afternoon and evening of 23rd May. At its height there were 50 firefighters in attendance from across Hampshire, Royal Berkshire and Surrey Fire and Rescue Services.



Ten pumps, 20 litres of CAFS (Compressed Air Foam Solution), two Land Rovers, six jets, multiple knapsack pumps and beaters were used to tackle the blaze, with two fire appliances remaining on watch overnight.

Altogether, the fire service estimated that 12 hectares (c 29 acres) was burnt. Only a very small part was on the RSPB owned land, with almost all the area concerned being owned by Hart District Council. Of course, wildlife neither understand nor respects such artificial boundaries. Mercifully it seemed to have done relatively little damage, but several nests were lost. A visit a few days later showed that the grass was already showing green shoots. Therein lies a possible problem – sometimes fires can promote less desirable vegetation, such as purple moor grass, which then chokes out the young heather re-growth. We will have to wait and see what happens here.

On a more positive note, one of the key species on the site, the Dartford Warbler, appears to be doing well on our reserve. Nine pairs have been reported, which is an increase on last year. The Dartford Warbler is strongly associated with dense gorse. It really doesn't benefit from tall, 'leggy' growth, so our volunteers spend much of the autumn and winter cutting the older gorse, to encourage it to send up new shoots, to ensure plenty of good habitat for Dartford Warblers. It seems to be paying off.

If you are visiting the Heath in late June or July, look out for Silver Studded Blue butterflies. This is the flight period for this heathland specialist – look out for small blue butterflies flitting around the heather, feeding on the flowers of bell and cross leaved heather plants. 'Silver Studs' are another of the species we manage parts of the site for, so hopefully we will have a bumper year. Nationally this beautiful little butterfly has declined by 40% over recent decades, and elsewhere in the Thames Basin Heaths area numbers have declined, but it is doing very well at Hazeley, with numbers increasing. Hopefully we can continue to buck the trend here!

WANTED – PARISH COUNCILLORS

MATTINGLEY PARISH COUNCIL HAS VACANCIES FOR TWO PARISH COUNCILLORS

All eligible applications are most welcome, but the Parish Council is particularly seeking new members to represent Hazeley Bottom, Hazeley Lea and Hazeley Heath, and ideally at least one person with an interest in environmental issues to represent the Parish Council on the Hazeley Heath Consultative Group (HHCG).

(The HHCG also includes representatives from RSPB, Hart DC, Commoners, Easement Holders, Naturalists and Natural England.)

The role of Parish Councillor is voluntary and open to those 18-and-over who are registered electors of the Parish, or have lived within or three miles from the Parish boundary for at least the last 12 months, or whose main place of occupation for the last 12 months has been within the Parish.

If you are interested or wish to apply, please discuss with any Parish Councillor, or email the Parish Clerk at clerk.mattingley@parish.hants.gov.uk

K6 PHONE BOX



Mattingley's red phone box is presently in storage being renovated by volunteers. The intent is to relocate it near the Hound Green Close entrance to the Green.

PLEASE SEND PRACTICAL SUGGESTION FOR ITS USE TO clerk.mattingley@parish.hants.gov.uk or contact any member of the Parish Council.