

Conservation and Wildlife Report for Year to May 2026 for

Burrow Hill Nature Reserve

CONSERVATION

For reference this report is stored at [Home | Keaver Drive Management Company](#)

During this year, the KDFMCL board have been working on a new plan for woodland recovery and regeneration. **The new 10-year plan for this is called the Burrow Hill Woodlands Regeneration Project.** It's clear to us, our woodlands are suffering from tree and major branch losses due to climate related events such as stronger winds and the hot weather this year. It's also clear that our woodland trees do not have the ability to regenerate themselves due to limited open areas for new trees to grow. This is primarily due to the dense holly sub canopy. So, this eventually means the majority of our trees will be lost with no replacements. As trees take at least 30 years to get to maturity, we urgently need to think differently about how we help these woodlands survive for wildlife and future generations.

The likely costs of woodlands recovery and regeneration is very high and we know that road maintenance charges will not get anywhere near covering it. So, we have to look elsewhere for funding as there are a number of direct benefits with the regeneration of our woodlands.

- We need the additional income to cover the extremely high costs of woodlands regeneration. Removing pernicious species (like laurel, rhododendron, holly) creating open glades where seeds can grow and planting with new tree species is all very expensive.
- Developing woodlands ready for the challenges climate change will bring by introducing more hardy and non-native tree species approved by the Woodland Trust to make our woodlands fitter for the future.
- Our maintenance charges are maintained at a sensible level to be used for the road, fencing, lighting, gardening and all the other associated costs.
- The 3-year tree safety review and resulting tree works will also continue to be funded from the maintenance charges and provisions for a small reserve for the 10-year project will also be provided from within our charge.
- Last but definitely not least and most importantly, wildlife will continue to have a place to live and future generations of residents in Keaver Drive will have a woodland to enjoy too.

Initially we looked at working with infrastructure and housing developers who need to gain consent from the Local Planning Authority (LPA) for their future development and infrastructure planning applications. If a developer cannot guarantee a 10% gain in biodiversity (the number of flora and fauna species) on the land they are developing after the development is finished and within the following 30 years, then they are allowed to look elsewhere and pay landowners (like ourselves) to achieve that gain on their behalf. This is known as Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) offsetting and we investigated this for 6 months engaging with our LPA, Ecology Consultants, Arboriculturists, Environmental contract lawyers and other 3rd parties. However, this possible funding avenue is currently held due to perceived risks of getting into long-term contracts with developers. As this is the most beneficial way to finance the 10-year project and as it becomes more mainstream we may revisit this sometime in the future.

Following the shelving of BNG offsetting, a deeper investigation into our woodlands status was conducted with the help of The Woodlands Trust (TWT). They are a charity who assists landowners with decision making on good forestry practices with ancient woodland. TWT visited our woodlands in May 2026 and conducted a full survey of both North and South woodlands. Their report made for alarming reading describing the woodlands status as **Critical**. The report is available for viewing if you would like to read it. Their recommendations provided verification of the concerns we already held for the woodlands.

Following TWTs visit, we applied for a felling licence with the Forestry Commission (FC). This is over and above the planning applications we need from our LPA as we will need to remove 100s of pernicious trees to achieve our objectives. Following extensive application work and rework of the tree numbers, types of tree species, felling areas and site plans, restocking methods and replacement tree species, we have recently been informed that the Forestry Commission have consented to grant us a felling licence for 5 years. At the time of writing, we have yet to receive the licence. We have also received consent from our application to SHBC LPA that the FC licence satisfies their own planning requirements within the protected ancient woodlands. This means we have all the legal approvals to undertake holly clearance work in our woodlands for the next 5 years. As the Burrow Hill Woodlands Regeneration Project is a 10-year project, we will need to renew our licence mid-term. We will still need to apply to the LPA for permission for any tree work that comes from the 3-yearly tree safety review.

We have also engaged with Surrey Wildlife Trust (SWT) and in particular their Nature Based Solutions team, based in Pirbright. Following a letter asking SWT to partner with us on this project and a meeting at Pirbright to discuss our ambitions and objectives, SWT agreed to work as our partner for the first year (2026/2027) of the Burrow Hill Woodlands Regeneration Project. Following further discussions with SWT we asked about help funding the first year's work, with a Nature Restoration Funding opportunity. Eventually after several emails and telephone calls, SWT sent us a Landowners Grant Application form, which has led to them agreeing a Landowners Funding contract. This contract was signed by KDFMCL and SWT in June.

Having The Woodlands Trust, Surrey Wildlife Trust and the Forestry Commission working with us, to save these precious ancient woodlands is a major step forward. The grant awarded from SWT is small compared to our needs, but it's a start. More about this project in the future, we start the real work this winter.

Doing nothing means that within the next 30 years the woodlands will be lost. If anyone requires further information on this, please contact Paul.

WILDLIFE

Birds.

Like all of our wildlife across Britain, birds have suffered in the weather conditions we've had this year. Fledging broods have been smaller, many whole nests have not survived and so there are fewer young birds around this autumn than for as long as I remember (and I've been birding for over 40 years). This is across Britain, but it's quite noticeable in our small patch. On its own this year will not see reductions in species populations, but if this continues for a few years the impacts could be high.

We have had a few unusual species this year, one new to our nature reserve list. The new bird was a Red Legged Partridge. Unusual to see this bird here in the gardens as they are normally out feeding on arable fields. This one was actually feeding on garden bird tables, so again unusual activity. However, as partridge are released in their millions in August each year so people can have a bit of sport shooting them down, it isn't that surprising that 1 or 2 don't know exactly where they should be. In fact, this bird was a lot safer where we saw it than out on its normal habitat.



Figure 1 - Red Legged Partridge on our garden fence (Paul, #32)

Another unusual bird has been a pair of Ravens which have been flying over our woods on a daily commute from Frith Hill woods to the Hatches, sometimes landing in our woods, much to the annoyance of the crows, magpies and jays. These birds are normally in coastal areas near cliffs where they nest, but this pair have decided nesting in the woods is their choice of home. They are large corvids (the size of a buzzard) with a wedge-shaped tail and have a distinct call in flight, known as "cronking". You'll hear them if they are nearby.



Figure 2 - Raven in flight (stock image)

Also, it was surprising to see a bird of streams and rivers, which nests along river banks and under bridges, in Dan's garden at the side of his garden pond. The grey wagtail, often confused with the yellow wagtail, is normally seen flying along rivers and streams in country locations so this was unusual. It's not new to our list as they've been seen flying over, but this is the first record of one on the ground in the reserve. Brilliant.



Figure 3 - Grey wagtail (Dan #24)

Woodpeckers

This year I've included a short feature on woodpeckers which use our woodlands as their home. There are 3 species native to the UK and another tree boring species the nuthatch. We have 2 species of woodpecker and the nuthatch breeding in our woods.

The Lesser Spotted Woodpecker is now a very rare breeding bird in the UK and we have no records of this species on our nature reserve. The nearest known nesting site (when a pair was discovered a few years ago) was near Pine Ridge Golf Course, but due to its rarity the exact location is kept secret. It's not much bigger than a sparrow, much quieter when drumming and is a secretive bird, so anyone thinking they've seen a bird like this, please let Paul know.



Figure 4 - Lesser spotted woodpecker (stock image)

The Great Spotted Woodpecker is the one we all hear when drumming on dead wood to attract mates or warn off intruders on their patch and sometimes we see them on our bird feeders. We have a number of pairs breeding in our woods and nearby so it is quite common to hear and see these birds. They are striking birds with their black/white and red feathers. The males have a red patch at the back of their heads. Juveniles have a red top to their heads but that'll go as they grow up.



Figure 5 - Great spotted woodpecker - male (stock image)

The Green Woodpecker is a more recent addition to our breeding birds list. We have at least 2 pairs breeding here, a pair in the high sweet chestnuts in the small copse behind the HA houses and one in the top woods behind #30 - #36. These birds will visit gardens, but unlike their cousins they feed on the ground, eating almost 100% on ants, so if you see a large green/yellow bird (for the male some red on his head) on your lawn, then it's likely to be a Green Woodpecker. You are more likely to hear this bird, their call is known as a yaffle and it's a loud screeching sound a bit like laughter and is repeated several times, particularly during the breeding season.



Figure 6 - Green woodpecker (stock image)

Finally, the nuthatch, not a woodpecker species but has nesting behaviour in tree holes similar to their larger cousins. This is our most common tree hole nesting species, with at least 6 pairs. They will regularly visit garden feeders during the winter and store food for future hard times. They'll take several seeds or nuts at one time and fly to the nearest trees, walking up (and down) stuffing their cache into the bark of the trees. They are the only UK species that can walk down a tree. No other bird (including the woodpeckers or treecreeper) can walk down a tree. It's blue/grey and orange feathers gives it a unique look and the band of black around the eye is quite distinctive.



Figure 7 - Nuthatch (stock image)

Other Bird News - The male Tawny Owl calling from our woodlands almost every day during the winter and early part of this year means we may have had breeding owls in our woods again. However, unlike last year we have not heard the young owlets calling for food, so either the nest was unsuccessful or they didn't breed this year. A sighting of a female Tawny near the nest box we put up several years ago was also encouraging.

Firecrest numbers are again good this year with 3 breeding territories. This is significant in the UK population of breeding firecrests so something we should be proud of. Protecting this species nest sites, mainly in holly trees, whilst undertaking the woodlands regeneration project is one of the key challenges to making our woodlands robust against tree losses and climate change whilst protecting our existing biodiversity.

Mammals

Badgers - Our badger clan continues to survive even though the pressures to move away and desert the sett are always there. It is estimated we are still at a population of 6 to 8 individual animals. We have seen only 2 cubs this year although given their locations probably from 2 separate families. Several entrances show signs of use across the woodlands, up to 11 in one survey. A great video posted by Ian (#42) had a sow badger digging out the entrance just behind his garden fence. This recent video meant she was cleaning the home and outer areas for possible breeding as that starts in early autumn.



Figure 8 - Badger in garden (Matt #38)



Figure 9 - Badger cleaning sett entrance (Ian #42, snap from video)



Figure 10 - Badger in garden (Debbie #28)



Figure 11 -Badger and Fox together, often seen (Paul, #32 from woodlands motion camera)



Figure 12 – Badger drinking during heatwaves (Paul, From woodlands motion camera video)

Please report any badger sightings or concerns to me directly, or through the West Surrey Badger Group office number on 07726 929681 and they'll contact me as the local Field Officer.

Red Fox – Our foxes have had a mixed year with a strange death and a macabre find in a garden which would have been investigated by wildlife crime officers if they'd been reported. The first was a beautiful male fox which had very recently died when it was found during a normal woodland inspection. The dog fox had been seen and photographed shortly before, was in perfect condition (apart from being dead), no injuries, full coat (so no mange) and should have got up and run away as I got close. This, as has happened in the past, is quite suspicious and could have been related to secondary poisoning (eating a mammal directly poisoned with baited food), but as there is no way to prove it, it was not reported to the local wildlife crime officer. **To avoid all doubt in these cases, please do not put poisons out into our environment in any form.**

The macabre garden find was a severed fox head, with no body in sight. It is very unusual for this to happen as there are no known fox predators (other than persecution from humans). Since this find, other body parts have been located in the woods, and it seems that this is the dog fox from above that I buried in the woods way back in February. Another animal, probably another fox seems to have dug the body up.

Anyway, please be on your guard and if you see anything unusual happening with our foxes, please report it to Paul. Without foxes, we will have a proliferation of small mammals some people believe are pests as the foxes keep their populations in check.

On the brighter side, other foxes seem to be doing well with 7 known cubs this year in families of 3, 3 and 1.



Figure 13 - Dog and vixen foxes in garden (the top one is the fox found dead in suspicious circumstances)



Figure 14 - Fox cub being inquisitive (Dave, #16)



Figure 15 - Fox cub litter (Ian #42)

Hedgehogs - We have now had several sightings of hedgehogs on the estate. Mostly in front gardens or along Keaver Drive common areas. I've also received reports from property owners in the surrounding roads too and the first one was seen in Regents Way. Great news as it seems that hedgehog numbers are on the rise after years of population crashes. They are susceptible to road accidents and predation (dogs, cats and wild animals) if caught out in the open, but by and large they can survive if we allow them to. Placing hedgehog homes in gardens (particularly our front gardens) is a great idea as is keeping fallen leaves in deep piles behind your gardens. Creating hedgehog routes between our back gardens is also good, but as we are on a hill that's not so straight forward. One has been seen in the woodlands, so they do have routes in safer areas.



Figure 16 - Hedgehog caught on front garden camera (Paul)



Figure 17 - One close to vehicles along Keaver Drive (Dan #24)



Figure 18 - Great photo of hedgehog at dusk under bushes on the central common. (Dan)

Bats - Bat records have been few and far between again this year. Bats over wintering in our woods, probably in the bat boxes installed all around the estate are likely to be common or soprano pipistrelles. Hopefully they stick around to breed in spring, but as yet this is not proven and only 1s and 2s are seen at dusk during the spring and summer. Further research on our bat populations is needed.

Insects

There are too many unusual insects to mention them all in this report, I've included some photos later in this report, but could have added 100s. There is one outstanding star found this year which has only ever been recorded once before a lesser stag beetle the rarer of the 2 native British species. This is a male lesser stage beetle found on his drive by Dan. It was a female found back in 2019. The reason I mention this is that when discussing our partnership with Surrey Wildlife Trust, having records of both lesser and greater stag beetles was one of the reasons they showed interest in our ancient woodlands, so it's great to have recent evidence of this rare species.



Figure 19 - Lesser Stag Beetle (Dan)

Burrow Hill Nature Reserve Species List

This record is now in its 10th year. When it first started back in 2017, we were lucky to have a couple of local nature enthusiasts (Dan #24 and Richard, Buckingham Way), who held lists of species, mostly moths and birds which they had recorded in and around our nature reserve. So that gave us a start.

At that time we had 618 species recorded. Today we now have 1212 recorded, nearly double the number back in 2017. That's a near 100% increase in species biodiversity in just under 10 years. Incredible.

Our current species list stands at 1212. Our total species for all flora and fauna is broken down as follows;

Flora (including Fungii) - 328 species

Fauna (including insects) – 884 species

This is an increase of 73 over this time last year and is a great total of biodiversity within our environment. Most of that increase is again insects, with flying species like butterflies, moths, bees, wasps, flies following the heatwaves and migrating to Britain in much larger numbers.

Photos of some of the great species captured on camera this year



Figure 20 - Ruby moth (Dan)



Figure 21 - Green eyed flower bee (Paul)



Figure 22 - European Hornet (Dan)



Figure 23 - Lesser crimson underwing moth (Paul)



Figure 24 - Grayling butterfly using our path sign (Paul)



Figure 25 - Elephant hawk moth (Paul)



Figure 26 - Dark green fritillary (Paul)



Figure 27 - Eyed Ladybird a new and rare species (Paul)



Figure 28 - Jersey Tiger Moth (Paul)



Figure 29 - Poplar Hawk Moth (Dan)



Figure 30 - Lords and Ladies plant

Lords and Ladies is a great indicator of ancient woodlands. Found along path near St C. Road and throughout our woods.



Figure 31 - Rowan (mountain ash) tree.

The Rowan is the only tree in our woods doing well in these extreme conditions



Figure 32 - Wild snowdrops in early spring.

Nature Reserve Update

Wildlife Watching Hide

During the spring we had the intention of converting a shed (kindly donated by Keith and Sandra, #14 KD) into a small wildlife watching hide in the top woods for residents and local organisations to use, especially for badger and bird watching. We have not yet done this, but we are looking to complete it sometime soon. It will accommodate 4-5 people (particularly if there are children) wanting to know more about what life surrounds us. There'll be seats for 4 and several look out portals for watching and photography. Let me know if you are interested in using this facility.

General Status of Nature Reserve

As mentioned before the most important activity now is to begin the woodlands restoration project, the woodlands have been degrading for far too long and we are in danger of losing it altogether. Time and effort will be needed in the coming years so if anyone is interested in where they live, their surroundings and nature, please let me know and we can see how you could help with this important work.

It's been an extremely difficult year for nature; we can just turn on a fan and get a drink from the tap...nature cannot and it has suffered. The trees we planted last Autumn, 2x whitebeams, do not seem to have survived. We will check them next spring to see if they have. Many trees have already shut down and are losing their leaves, grass and many wildflowers had no chance this year and so insects, birds, mammals and animals right across the food chain have suffered badly, let alone the wildfires destroying nature in its path. So please continue to put water out in your gardens, listen to the warnings about fire and if you smell smoke or see anything you are not happy with in our woods or nearby, then please call 999 and also inform the KDFMCL board. Also put a warning notice out on the road Whatsapp group. Even if it turns out to be a false alarm.

During our regular woodland inspections, we've noticed a lot of garden rubbish being thrown into the woods and badger run. This is not permitted, so any grass cuttings or branches of trees and bushes caused by work in your own garden must not be thrown over your rear fences. Please use your own brown bins or take it to the recycling centre. Dead leaves blown into your garden from the surrounding trees can be put over your back fences as it creates good places for small mammals to take cover from the winter weather and they break down during winter.

SANGS

The SANGS is in its third year of recovery following the ESSO pipeline work. As 3 in 5 of the new trees failed to grow, its SHBC responsibility to replace them with new trees for 5 years following the work under a financial covenant given to them by ESSO at the end of the works. We have written to the SHBC Greenspace team to ask them if new planting will be happening any time soon. We have not heard back from them at the time of writing so we will chase them.

Useful Information

As for this report, all future nature reports will be placed onto the KDFMCL website for all residents to access at [Home | Keaver Drive Management Company](#). Also, if you have any photos of the local environment or wildlife and would like them on the website, please send them to Paul to upload. If you do not access the website or know of residents who don't access the internet, then a paper copy can be provided. Any help required on our environment, the woodlands as well as wildlife in your gardens, please contact Paul at thecolletts@btinternet.com or on 07979 708207.