

You are the eyes and ears looking out for our wood - Selsdon Wood is owned by the National Trust but managed by the London Borough of Croydon. Neither organisation is able in the current economic climate to employ wardens to watch over the wood so it is up to those of us who use it to act as eyes and ears and to identify and report any problems or antisocial behaviour that we witness.

One fairly regular problem in the summer months is overflowing rubbish bins and/or dog poo bins. These are emptied regularly by Council contractors, Quadron, but when demand is high or a scheduled visit is missed they can get overfull and spill causing an unsightly mess around the car park. They are also occasionally subject to dumping of domestic waste and other materials such as tyres or paint tins. If you see any problems with fly-tipping, litter or overfull bins please report these to Croydon Council Parks department parks@croydon.gov.uk or telephone 0208 726 6900 and select the option offered for Parks & Leisure Services. We understand that the Council are awaiting an order for new bins that will combine dog and litter waste and will consist of a double unit with larger capacity. Hopefully, when these are installed, overfull bins will become a thing of the past.

Another serious problem this year has been the increasing incidences of motorcycling in Selsdon Wood. Many regular walkers in the woods have seen riders - both adults and youngsters. Their behaviour is often very reckless, speeding along the woodland paths and along the field edges where dogs and people could easily step out into the path. Several of us have spoke to individual riders to explain to them how dangerous this is but we have no idea if they have taken any notice. If you see motorcycles or quad bikes in the woods these should be reported to the police. If you are able to calm them immediately you can use the 999 number if the behaviour seems dangerous or the 101 number for non-emergencies. The Selsdon & Ballards Safer Neighbourhood Team would also be interested in receiving photographs of the miscreants and their bikes. Pictures are important as few of these vehicles have licence plates with registration numbers and so the photographs can be the best way to help identify those responsible. You can contact John Rosemeyer of the Selsdon & Ballards SNT at 079 202 33895 or by e-mail (with photographs if possible) to Selsdon.Ballards.snt@met.police.uk.

Please also report incidents to Croydon Council (see contact details above) as soon as possible after witnessing them. They do not have officers able to attend immediately but if a number of incidents are reported it might be possible to establish a pattern which would then allow the Area Enforcement Officers to be in the woods at an optimal time to try to apprehend the offenders. It would be helpful if people reporting motorbikes could let the Council know where in the woods and at what time the bikes were seen and how many bikes/riders there were. A description of the riders and bikes, with photographs if possible, would also be valuable. We would be grateful if you could also let the FSW know of these or any other problems that you observe. It may be that fewer problems occur in the winter months but all of the above is something to bear in mind throughout the coming year.

In early November a motorbike was set alight in the Great Field. The fire brigade attended to put out the fire and the burnt-out bike was removed by Council contractors. It would be good to think that it might have been one of the troublemakers' bikes but it did have a number-plate so may have been a stolen one.



FSW 2015 Calendar is now available - for the usual donation of £5. The calendar contains beautiful seasonal photographs of our woods and makes an ideal present for friends and relatives now living away. Also this year we have some FSW Christmas Cards featuring this lovely robin photographed in our wood last month. These are available for a donation of 75p per card. To order calendars or cards get in touch through phone, email or website.

We also still have some seasoned logs available for a donation of £4 per bag. Please contact Neale Fox for information or to arrange collection – phone 020-8657 0384 or e-mail logs.selsdonwood@btinternet.com.



This month's gallery (overleaf) is a guide to the evergreen trees and bushes to be found in our wood. Spot them now when the deciduous trees are bare.

<p style="text-align: center;">Evergreens to find in Selsdon Wood in Winter</p> <p>We have 7 varieties of evergreen trees and bushes in the wood and winter is the time to spot them when the deciduous trees are bare.</p> <p>All photographs taken in Selsdon Wood.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Holly</p>  <p>Throughout the wood. Large one in Farleigh Border at the junction with west Gorse</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Facts about Holly</p> <p>Holly is our most common native evergreen tree. It is dioecious which means that there are separate male and female plants with only the females producing berries. This photograph of the berries is of the female Holly in Linden Glade The berries are toxic to humans but are eaten by birds in late winter after frost has made them more palatable.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Yew</p>  <p>Widely distributed throughout the wood. Two large ones are in Beech Grove. & Courtwood Grove</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Facts about Yew</p> <p>The Yew has evergreen leaves in the form of short flattened needles and red, characteristic berries with a hole in the centre. Both leaves and fruit are toxic to humans but the berries are eaten by birds. Like Holly, Yew is dioecious which means that there are separate male and female plants with only the females producing berries.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Pine</p>  <p>Most in Steven's Larch. Those shown above are in the northern corner of David's Crook.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Facts about Pine</p> <p>Pine has distinctive, scaly bark and long thin needles, borne in pairs. The Scots Pine has the rounded top shown in the photograph and orange coloured bark. In Linden Glade there are some Corsican Pines with grey bark and a profile more like the classic Christmas Tree. The cones are traditional weather indicators, opening when dry and closing when wet.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Norway Spruce</p>  <p>Most in Greenhill Shaw. The one shown above is at the south end of Avis Grove.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Facts about Spruce</p> <p>Spruce is an evergreen with distinctive scaly bark and short thick needles. The cones are more elongated than those of the Pine and much beloved of squirrels. The Norway Spruce is the classic Christmas Tree, a tradition brought to Britain in 1841 when Prince Albert, Queen Victoria's husband, introduced a German custom of decorating a spruce tree with lights.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Laurel</p>  <p>Throughout the wood. FSW are working to control or eradicate this non-native species.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Facts about Laurel</p> <p>Laurel is an evergreen shrub or small tree with large, dark green, leathery leaves with a finely toothed edge. It was introduced into Court Wood 200 years ago to give cover for game birds. It is invasive, spreading steadily by suckering, layering and seeding and it is inhibiting the growth of other plants, poisoning the ground beneath it. The bark, leaves and the stones in the fruit are poisonous.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Gorse</p>  <p>Found in just one part of Selsdon Wood, known as The Gorses. The trees behind in this photo are Larch.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Facts about Gorse</p> <p>Gorse is a thorny evergreen shrub with yellow flowers. The plant has a long flowering season from late autumn, all through winter and on into late spring or early summer. Gorse is related to the Pea family and the fruit are pods that burst explosively to spread the seed. The Gorse in Selsdon Wood recovered after the felling, in 2009, of Larch trees which had dominated the area.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Privet</p>  <p>In the south facing boundaries of F1 and F2 where it forms the bottom part of the hedgerow.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Facts about Privet</p> <p>Privet is a thornless, unassuming, low-growing shrub with erect smooth stems and small, oval leaves. Some of these may remain on the plant over winter and it is thus described as a semi-evergreen. Although much used in gardens for hedges the wild Privet is native to the UK. The berries are mildly poisonous to humans but eaten safely by birds that spread the seeds in their droppings.</p>