

Spring 2017

Wren

Wildlife & Conservation Group

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a word from the chair

First the good news. A new pump for the Heronry Lake borehole should be installed within the next month. With any luck this will happen after the exposed mud attracts some waders. A Knot in summer plumage would do nicely! Back to the real world, it is also possible that a siphon system will be installed to get water from Perch Pond to the Ornamental Water without spreading the infestation of Floating Pennywort. The Ornamentals are desperate for water, so this won't come soon enough.

Also heartening, the Redbridge Nature Conservation team has been working with the Wild Trout Trust on a number of projects, including the construction of a berm, or raised part of the riverbed, on the River Roding adjacent to Wanstead Park. This will help create new habitats for small fish and aquatic invertebrates. In May, reclaimed wood will be used to build a holt for Otters on the river. While the headline in the local paper ("Otters to be reintroduced to River Roding") is misleading - the Otters have to find their own way there – if they do it will be fantastic news.

While the main focus of the Wren Group is surveying, conserving, and publicising our natural environment, we do have to take a balanced approach to the use of

our open spaces. We appreciate that people want to walk through the bluebell wood, walk their dog or go for a bike ride through the park and play football on Wanstead Flats. Local people have done these things for decades and their ability to do these things adds to the quality of life in our area. Provided they do so responsibly – not letting their dogs run riot on Wanstead Flats' grassland or in the lakes; clearing up their mess; treating the natural environment with respect – that's great. And that's why we help clear paths, work to make the bluebell wood an attractive place to visit in spring and why we want people to feel safe as they walk around. We know that most people find the semi-wild nature of the Park attractive, so this doesn't mean we'd support concrete paths illuminated by street lights running through the Park! But it does mean that a certain amount of management work needs to take place, and we do need to be sensitive to the wishes of other Park users.

The Wren Group has supported the Friends of Wanstead Parklands in their encouraging the City of London to apply for Heritage Lottery Funding, and so it's extremely disappointing that the bid application has been put back to next year. The Superintendent favours it, however, and if the money is secured there will be discussions on how it's going to be spent. Maintaining water in the lakes is the number 1 priority for me. Proposals to restore islands close to the south shore of Heronry Lake, with reedbeds between them and the shore are excellent, and I think other not-too-expensive environmental enhancement measures should be taken to get the best for wildlife. How about some more bank modification in places along the Roding to encourage fish and invertebrates? Help to extend the reeds at Shoulder of Mutton would also be welcome.

Wanstead Flats won't benefit from any HLF funding, however. Although the problems there aren't so obvious, the pressures on the site are even greater. Football, BBQs, model aircraft, dog-walking... The Flats

are used by hundreds of thousands of people and yet they represent an invaluable natural resource. The Flats are home to scarce (in London terms, rare) breeding birds, rare moths and spiders, scarce butterflies. How is it possible to get nature and leisure to work together. The Wren Group has proposed some changes that we think would give better protection to the natural aspect of the Flats without reducing the site's amenity value. Giving over the west end of the Brickfield to a wild flower meadow, channelling water off the Aldersbrook estate to revive the spring there, and employing staff to care for the area and engage with the public, for example. I'd like to take those discussions further.

There is only so much the goodwill of volunteers can achieve, however. The two open spaces I've written about are superb in their own right. The fact that they are on the doorstep of hundreds of thousands of people makes them even more important. I'm aware that the Epping Forest staff work with a budget too small to achieve what they'd like to – and what's clearly needed. And that they are further burdened by entirely unnecessary pressures, such as antisocial and costly flytipping. And I'm also aware that the items I've written about here don't come free. That's why I think *it's time the powers that be in The Guildhall realised the importance of the East End's 'green lungs' that they are responsible for* - and provided additional funds to make them work better. Is this singling out our area as a special case? Well, actually, yes it is! Adjacent to the Flats, Forest Gate, Manor Park, and Leytonstone, are densely built-up and include some of the most deprived parts of London. Many people don't have their own gardens to relax in. They need these open spaces to work better - for them and nature.

Tim Harris

Chair Wren Group



Wren annual general meeting

March saw The Wren Group's AGM. The past year has been another very good one for the Group. Membership has pushed over the 300 mark, and our level of activity has also been maintained at a high level. Our ever-improving newsletter and Facebook presence reflects much of what our members are doing to find out more about our natural environment, and to both publicise and protect it. Our programme of education and practical work has continued, with more sessions of the latter than for many years. About 40 people attended the AGM and the committee elected for 2016-17 is as follows: myself, Jackie Morrison, Gill James, Mark Gorman, Tony Morrison, Jane Cleall, David Giddings, Kathy Baker, Simon Raper, Peter Williams, James Heal, and Mirza Rashid. We said goodbye to two committee members: Norman Olley and Peter Aylmer. Norman, who has stepped down as Treasurer, first took the financial reins in 1995 and - with the exception of two years when the late David Salt filled the post - has been in control of the purse strings ever since. The evergreen Richard Oakman, who continues as President, presented Norman with a bottle of wine, and Norman also becomes an honorary member of the group. Peter Aylmer, who has been leading our midweek walks programme for the past three years, also stepped down as a committee member although he will still lead the walks. I was reelected Chair of the group, Jackie Morrison was again elected Secretary, and Simon Raper takes over as Treasurer. New members James Heal and Mirza Rahsid were welcomed to the committee.

I gave a presentation on the Wanstead 1000 exercise, which resulted in many more than 1,000 species being recorded in our area during 2016 - and gave a lot of people a lot of enjoyment.

Tim Harris
Chair, Wren Wildlife and Conservation Group



Tim Harris
Chair



Richard Oakman
President



Gill James
Committee Member



Mirza Rashid
Committee Member



Tony Morrison
Newsletter



Jackie Morrison
Secretary



Simon Raper
Treasurer



Jane Cleall
Committee Member



Mark Gorman
Membership



Peter Aylmer
Walks Coordinator



Kathy Baker
Committee Member



Peter Williams
Works Co-ordinator



David Giddings
Website



James Heal
Committee Member

bug life

Pictures and commentary by Rose Stephens

Wren member Rose Stephens is a self-taught naturalist and artist who was born in Newham and still lives there - in Forest Gate, close to Wanstead Flats.

Rose has built up a collection of artwork using various mediums. Through her love of all things to do with nature and her passion for art, she manages to produce work that is original and different from her contemporaries. Her love of nature shines through in her work.

In the past Rose has used photographs as a basis for her work - painting from pictures taken in the area. More recently, she has started to express her fondness of all things natural solely in the media of photography.

Rose has an extraordinary eye for seeing the detail in the nature around her. This she has recently used to her advantage by taking up 'macro' or close-up photography.

You can like Rose's work on her Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/TheNatureofWansteadFlats>



A jumping spider along the banks of the River Lea.



Mangora acalypha (Cricket Bat Spider) very patchy distribution in the UK. Wanstead Flats is lucky enough to have them but the unfortunate thing is they are mainly found in the broom which is one of the scrubs that has been mown down on a big scale this year.

This is *Helina evecta* Muscidae fly. Apparently they are one of the first Muscidae flies out in the year. This one I spotted in February on a welcome sunny day in Manor Park Cemetery.



There were one or two bees flying around the Gorse flowers mid February, Honey bee and Buff-tail Bumble Bee. Any wild flower and especially this Gorse is a lifesaver for any early invertebrates, don't forget to try and leave the "weeds" in the garden to help promote wildlife and conservation.

Ants have sparked a new area of interest. I ordered a copy of G J Skinner & G W Allen 'Ant' identification book. This one is *Myrmica sabuleti*, with ID help from Ian Beavis.



I was so surprised to see two hoverflies *Episyrphus balteatus* in Manor Park Cemetery in early February. Their common name is Marmalade Hoverfly. A very common species. It is interesting to note the early risers in the insect world, probably one of the most important gauge of what is happening with our present climate.

This precious little snail is the Thames Door Snail (*Balea biplicata*) a scarce snail that is only known in a handful of locations now. A great little local find from Manor Park Cemetery mid February.





winter bird report

Report and pics by Nick Croft



December

December not really as bad as it could have been and that's almost entirely down to the Yellow-browed Warbler that appeared in the willows on the south west corner of Alex on the 7th and behaved impeccably until the new year, by which time it had inspected every remaining leaf at least twice and then hid itself in the evergreens. Now of course it is a complete bugg..... , not calling and showing briefly if at all. It took me near enough 10 hours to see it briefly, moving between the islands, and much questioning of my sanity.



A well camouflaged Yellow-browed Warbler nearby Alexandra Pond

Just the 77 species for the month, but that means we managed an average of just over 82 species per month for the year, which sounds better than it probably was as 5 months failed to reach 80. Golden Plover, Lapwing, Ringed Plover were noted making it the best month for plovers this year! The Little Owl is still with us and reports of its demise premature, no one could be bothered to stay out late for Tawny Owl or Woodcock which are probably present so the month could have been marginally better.



The cold weather did bring out a few good days of Redwing sightings

Duck numbers struggled back after November's freeze, and fell away again when the ponds froze again in December, though 3 Red-crested Pochard were noted on the Hollow Ponds on the 20th, but the cold weather did bring in a few good days of Redwing and Fieldfare.



Red-crested Pochard - pic by Jonathan Lethbridge

We do have a wintering Stonechat again by Cat & Dog, which may be last year's bird, but that would require me

looking at old posts to check. It has been joined by Meadow Pipits and a few Reed Bunting—which may not be surprising as it is the quietest part of the patch elsewhere overrun by dogs! Skylarks haven't sussed this yet, and are increasingly hard to find down by Alex.



Meadow Pipit

Little Egret numbers are building up again on Heronry, though way down on last year, with a high of 7 counted,



Stonechat

whereas all the Little Grebe have moved off the lakes on to the Roding. And that was December, so just about 80 days until the Wheatear get here...

Missing: Any news in January and a large part of Wanstead Flats

So with no news being posted on London Bird Club site by my colleagues, this looks like it will be the last time I have to do a monthly round up - just follow Twitter. Luckily I am not doing the Bird Report next year. Which is just as well as the CoL try their damndest to make the flats an ecological-free zone.

The big news this month was the City of London Corporation's revenge on the flats which had had the audacity to evolve nicely over the last 40 years. They consulted with the environment's greatest ally - The Countryside Alliance Buzzard Killing Natural England to come up with a plan to trash all that was good in the name of amenity.

They also had a new toy they'd been itching to give a run out, which rips as it shreds as it bulldozes, which has left gaping wounds all over some of the (formerly) best birding sites in London. Ah well only took us ten years to get the patch on the birding radar!



11 Skylark noted in February - rough grass at Alexandra Pond

Formerly the best spot for migrant birds in London, and of course a dog toilet. Now just a dog toilet. I am still fuming.

February - officially the most hated month on the planet. With few reports, this shouldn't take long.

On a brighter note four new species were added to the year list, which makes this one of the less awful Februaries and a fair to middling start to the year.

- Short-staying Pheasant sets up stampede to the Old Sewage Works
- Another Lapwing
- Flock of geese defy identification
- Adult Mediterranean Gull, though not Valentino

- First adult Yellow-legged Gull for over a year
- Bread eating monster duck (Red-crested Pochard) moves in on Jub
- First returning Stonechat, and our wintering bird takes its leave

Where the hell have all our Gadwall gone to, we should have hundreds but some days its hard enough to get into double figures. Shoveler are on the up, Teal holding steady and there is even a male Wigeon pottering around Shoulder of Mutton, but Gadwall AWOL.



Bad month for Siskin with only singles sighted in February

A good month for Meadow Pipit with a high of 21 recorded at the end of the month and even 11 Skylark noted near the Alex one day. Bad though for Redpoll and Siskin with only singles seen, and even the Linnet have appeared to move on. Well thankfully its Wheatear time and everything else becomes irrelevant. Apart from the fact I can no longer look at the disaster here as it depresses me too much.

Note: Views held by the author of this article are not necessarily shared by the Wren Group

biodiversity in the Wanstead area

Article by Tricia Moxey

Last June a team of Wren Group members and other local naturalists worked hard to record every bird, tree, grass, butterfly and bee they could in our study area. This was seen as a way of raising the profile of nature in our area, giving local people an opportunity to learn and find out more about survey techniques – and, of course – to add to our knowledge of Wanstead Flats and Wanstead Park. The Group recorded a fine score of 1506.

Here, our favourite naturalist Tricia Moxey talks about the importance of seeing what's there as a way of encouraging the development of havens for wildlife.



World Biodiversity Day is due to be held on May 22 and the theme for 2017 is **Let it Grow - The return of the natives**, with a number of events being hosted in various communities to look at ways of encouraging the development of havens for native wildlife.

Discovering the base line of what lives in any particular area is important to give us an understanding of its species richness. The plants and animals within our surroundings provide us with many benefits and contribute to the quality of life. Research continues to demonstrate that watching birds is good for us and walking in pleasant green surroundings does wonders for our health and wellbeing.



Wren members and friends young and old occasionally assisted by experts in their field carried out a 'Bio-Blitz' over the year counting a total of 1506 different species

The year-long Bioblitz carried out last year by the members of the Wren Conservation Group, assisted on several occasions by experts in their fields, recorded a fine score of 1506. A diversity of animal life depends on



Anyone who has visited the Old Sewage Works recently will have seen how Cow Parsley - another umbelliferae - has almost taken over large sections of the grassland

the range of suitable edible plants, a score of 413 for higher plants and a score of 47 for mosses and liverworts sets a high standard for a largely urbanised area. Thus there is a range of food plants for food selection by Lepidoptera (moths and butterflies) which scored 296, with Hymenoptera (bees and wasps) at 116, some of which are important pollinators. Hoverflies and flies at 105 occupy several different niches, some feeding on dung or rotting carcasses, others on plant material. 95 Coleoptera (beetles) were recorded and Hemiptera (true bugs) came in at 74. Arachnids (spiders, mites and ticks): 62. Gastropods (snails and slugs) at 33 is a good score for these usually under recorded animals.



The author, Tricia Moxey, taking people on a field trip in WansteadPark explains the huge variety of different species on our own doorstep

The 133 different species of birds seen are a tribute to the keen ornithologists who spotted them but also reflect the many varied habitats with the area which include woodland, scrub and open grassland, and lakes and other water bodies.

These water bodies only yielded five species of fish but since they do require some specialised equipment, there are likely to be other species present waiting to be noted. The three species of amphibians and the 15 species of Odonata (dragonflies and damselflies) show that the water quality is good.



Sadly, fungi coming in at only 63 reveals the seasonal nature of fungi and it is hoped to increase this number during the year.

Mammals, at 15 species, include Hedgehogs and several species of bat, while three species of reptiles is good for the local area. A miscellaneous assortment of 28 species make up the numbers.

But how many other species could there be in the Wanstead area? Realistically we do not know. The compilation of the list takes a considerable amount of time and expertise and the willingness of a range of people with skills and dedication to contribute. In any case, this is just one measure of the wildlife diversity. Other studies complement such a list, providing much more data on the numbers and the interaction of species



There's no age limit to being a good naturalist - over 200 people young and old(er) took part in the various activities during the Bio-Blitz.

and how they change through time. Of considerable value are the regular wildfowl counts, the breeding bird census, regular butterfly transects, photographic records of insects and the Grass Snake studies, all of which add so much more to our understanding of the immense



Wanstead and Leyton Flats showing patches of Gorse and Broom - a scarce habitat in the London area

wildlife value of the Wanstead area.

In addition we need to consider the impact of human activity over many centuries and the current challenges facing all of the wildlife found within the area. Many of the major habitats are undergoing considerable changes and all are having to cope with modifications to temperature and rainfall as well as the impact of atmospheric pollution. There is much concern about those plants such as Heather which are sensitive to increasing levels of nitrogen deposition.



We are fortunate that this area has past records for certain species especially flowers so that it possible to compare lists and see what has disappeared and speculate as to why this has happened.

Here in the UK there is a limit on the potential number of native species which can be recorded in specific habitats, but there is always the challenge of discovering a species previously unrecorded within the area or new to the UK or even one new to science! Size does matter when it comes to supporting lots of wildlife and a mini pond

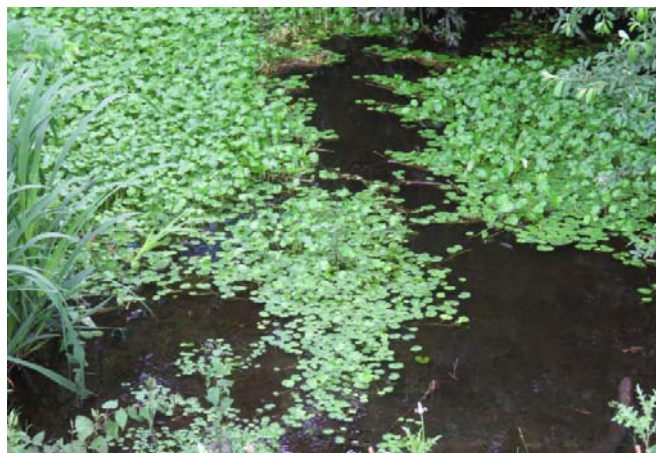
created in a plastic bowl can only support a fraction of the aquatic invertebrates and flowering plants which can be found in larger bodies of water where fish, amphibians and waterfowl will be present.



Last years' bio-blitz found some very alien and strange species in our area. The picture shows an American Signal Crayfish Pacifastacus leniusculus found in Heronry Pond

However, lots of small individual habitats colonised by native species can and do make a difference and when linked by green corridors of natural

vegetation are important for overall biodiversity.



Floating pennywort has been present on Perch Pond, Wanstead Park since at least 2014 - this invasive plant can grow at 30cm a day !!! Despite expensive removal measures it's still there.

A number of additional species have appeared in recent years and keeping tabs on their spread is important too. Some are largely pests of garden species,

such as Lily Beetle, Rosemary Beetle, Box moth or Spanish slug, but others are more widespread in the countryside, such as the fungus causing Ash Die-back, Floating Pennywort, Giant Hogweed and Buddleia. Keeping records of their appearance in fresh locations is a good idea.

The achievements of those who added to the total species list compiled during 2016 were great and the enthusiasm for the coming months will ensure that the target of 2000 for 2017 is exceeded.

Article by Tricia Moxey

Pics by Tony Morrison



now & then

In each edition of the Wren newsletter we will be showing you a picture of a street in our area taken around 100 years ago and how it looks today. Just for fun have a guess where this picture was taken (answer back page). If you would like to see your area in this slot why not get in touch and we will see what we can do.



dipping in to nature

Picture - View from Parliament Hill by Tony Morrison

Article by Peter Aylmer

There's a new walk series for the Wren group to enjoy, now that the 'Lucky Dip' sequence has run its course. The new 'nature rambles' began in February, with the promise of a natural glory of London to be discovered along the way, writes walk leader and guidebook author Peter Aylmer.

And where better to start than Hampstead Heath. The Heath is a magnificent refuge for wildlife, with grassland, bog, wood and hedgerow as well as heath, celebrated in the verse of Keats and Coleridge and the art of Constable.

Constable might not have come out with the six of us on a disappointingly grey February day, however, even he might have had difficulty in conjuring magic from the leaden skies.



But the Heath never lets you down. Climbing up by the ponds on the Heath's eastern edge, a grey-headed Cormorant, Tufted Duck, Gadwall and Great Crested Grebe were among the waterfowl that took our eye, before we swept past the grand edifice of Kenwood House.

Below, we diverted to the sphagnum bog on West Heath. It's one of the few remaining true bogs in London, and all the more surprising as it's in the middle of, well, heathland. Hampstead Heath is a heath because of the well-drained sandy soils, but here there's a thin layer of clay through which waters cannot pass.



Camley Street Natural Park - Picture by Peter Aylmer

Finally we climbed to the famous viewpoint of Parliament Hill. Alas in the grey there was little definition in the cityscape, but it was atmospheric nonetheless. Perhaps Constable could have made something out of it after all.

Thankfully we enjoyed a much sunnier day in March, travelling along the Regent's Canal in almost continual spring sunshine. Nine of us started from Limehouse Basin, where the canal and Lea Navigation jointly meet the Thames. We'd barely turned on to the canal before Dunnock and Wren were calling.

The first stretch runs through the linear Mile End Park, where redundant buildings have been cleared to give the eastern bank a more open aspect.



Camley Street Natural Park - Picture by Peter Aylmer

The park has one drawback, its severing by the Mile End Road. Back in the 80s there was an outlandish idea to bridge the road, not with a parsimonious little footbridge, but by a weighty structure big enough for a dual carriageway but bearing solely a foot and cycle path and lots of green space. Amazingly it got built, and if you look in the right directions in the right season what you see is not inner-city Mile End but perhaps a market town out in the shires.

We stopped for coffee by the lake in Victoria Park. A pair of Coots had nested just feet away, but all was not well in the Coot community. The nest-owner squared up to a rival, and two more joined in – a four-way coot face-off. It was all over in seconds, a bit like footballers at a flashpoint, but you do wonder what simmering resentments (or maybe whatever Coot-testosterone does to Coots) might resurface later in the season.

There's barely an inch of the canal without something to see, from the variety of domestic architecture to the

range of wildflower, such as Groundsel and speedwell, by the towpath. After a while there's a tunnel, with Islington on top. Upper Street is quite disconcerting after the quiet of the canal, but we were soon back on the towpath, and not far from our final destination, the Camley Street Natural Park.



Nature ramble group in Mile End Park - Picture by Peter Aylmer

Managed by the London Wildlife Trust, the park was once a railway coal yard until, derelict, it was rescued by the GLC in the 1980s. Now, it's a unique urban nature reserve, with woodland, grassland and wetland habitats that provide a rich habitat for birds, butterflies, amphibians and plant life. It doesn't work for all however. At the pond, a heron was on guard. He'd just eaten a frog.

Nature Ramble dates

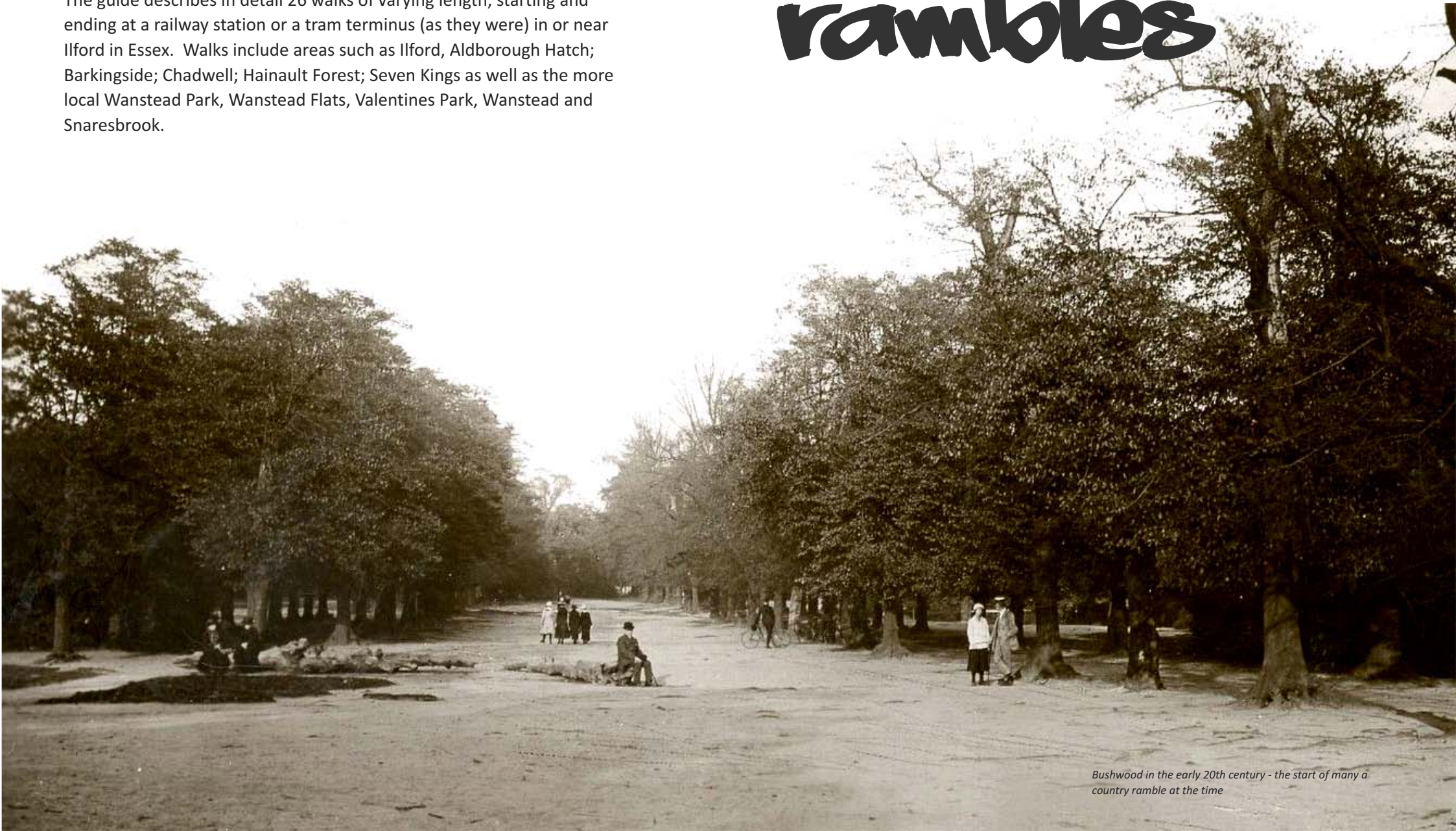
Tuesday 18 April, Wednesday 7 June, Thursday 6 July, Tuesday 15 August.

Meet 10am at Stratford station, outside Jubilee line platforms 13-15. Just turn up, no need to book. Bring a snack, drink and Oyster or Freedom Pass. Back about 4.

Now well out of print, the *South Essex Recorder's Country Rambles around Ilford* was published in 1910. Its author Geo. E. Tasker recounts more rambles in our local area.

The guide describes in detail 26 walks of varying length, starting and ending at a railway station or a tram terminus (as they were) in or near Ilford in Essex. Walks include areas such as Ilford, Aldborough Hatch; Barkingside; Chadwell; Hainault Forest; Seven Kings as well as the more local Wanstead Park, Wanstead Flats, Valentines Park, Wanstead and Snaresbrook.

country rambles



Bushwood in the early 20th century - the start of many a country ramble at the time

Route 9

From Ilford Station, The Drive, Wanstead Park, Bushwood, "Green Man," Leytonstone, High Stone, Woodford Road, "Eagle," Snaresbrook, Wanstead High Street and Green, Redbridge Lane, Castle, The Drive, The Wash. (About 6 ½ miles).

Follow the direction in Route 8 as far as Bushwood, viz., Cranbrook Road, The Drive, Highlands Gardens, Wanstead Park rustic bridge, keep along fence on left, past the Perch, Boating, and Shoulder of Mutton Ponds, to exit by Bushwood (35 minutes from The Wash). If it is desired to go through the wood, strike off to the right at an angle of 45 degrees past the top of the Avenues to the Friends' Meeting House, which fronts on Bush Road; or, follow the Blake Hall Road to the right to the keepers' cottages, and turn down Bush Road, at the end of which



Bushwood, Keepers' Cottages around 1906

is the "Green Man," Leytonstone (12 minutes from the park gate).

Turn to the right (but not along the tram lines, which



Boys fishing in the Green Man Pond 1905

lead to Whipps Cross and Walthamstow), down High Stone to the stone obelisk at the corner of two roads, from which the name is possibly derived. The stone has four faces. That towards Leytonstone states that "To Stones End, Whitechapel, is 6 miles 2 poles, To Standard, Cornhill, 6m. 5f. 2p. To Hyde Park Corner 10m. 0f. 13p."; on the side facing Woodford Road (i.e., the left) are the words "To Epping XI. m. through Woodford and Laughton"; while the side facing New Wanstead (the road which leads to Wanstead High Street) states that "To Ongar is. XVm. through Woodford Bridge, Chigwell, and Abridge." It is not known exactly how long this obelisk has been standing or by whom it was erected, but it is marked on a map as far back as 1774. It is thought that it may perhaps indicate the site of a Roman stone - hence Leyton-stone - but there is no authentic record of this. On the large square block which forms the base an arrow head, or bench mark, has been cut,

indicating that the stone was used for measuring purposes by the Ordnance Survey; the line along the top or the arrow head is 109.2 feet above sea level. /1" There is a similar bench mark cut in the boundary stone by Claybury stile (sec Route 2). *

*Arrow heads without the top bar are to be seen on the pavement in many parts of Ilford. In the Belgrave Road (Eastern side) between the Station and Seymour Gardens there are several cut into the kerbstones; there is another in the pavement at the beginning of Thorold Road (South side). They all indicate places where the Ordnance Survey have taken measurements.

From the obelisk the road on the left Woodford Road - can now be followed. It leads past a bit of forest land after crossing the railway, and then by the fine grounds and buildings of the Infant Orphan Asylum, which extend from "Amen Corner" to the Eagle Pond. This fine 10 ½ acres of water is well worth a visit, and is a favourite resort of anglers. Opposite the N. E. corner of the lake is the well-known "Eagle" Hotel (in the Woodford Road), Snaresbrook (16 minutes from the "Green Man "). A



Snaresbrook - The drinking fountain with ramp leading up to railway station c1905

considerable number of years ago a coloured print of the “Eagle” was published, a copy of which was recently marked for sale in a London print shop at £15. 15s. Turning back to the drinking fountain, up the slope is Snaresbrook Station, almost hidden by the trees.

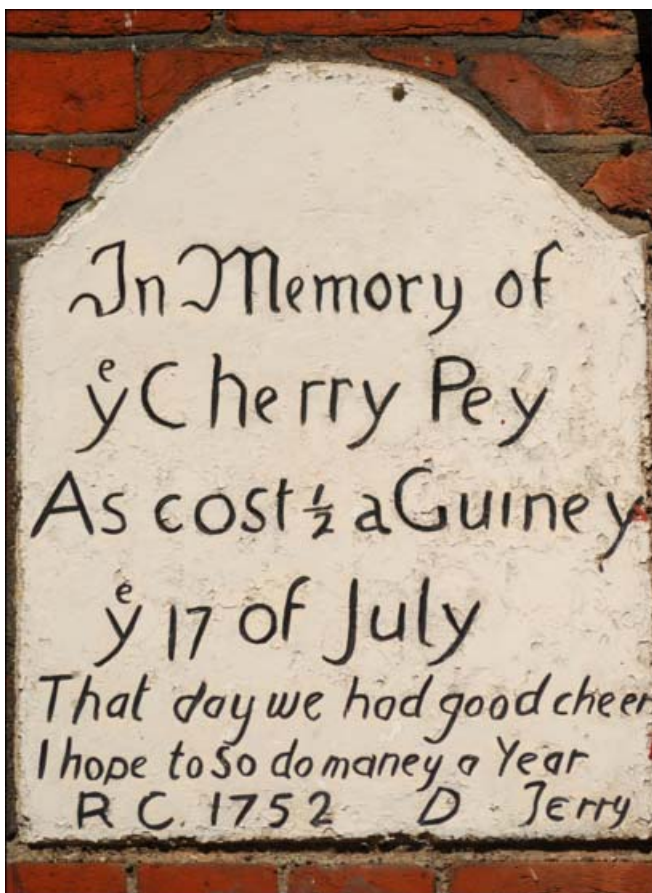


Another drinking fountain on Wanstead Village Green proper c1903

On the fountain is a tablet, which records that it was the gift of Samuel Ellis, of Snaresbrook, that it was opened 12th August, 1872, and was “accepted by the Wanstead Local Board of Health.” Here also is the commencement of Wanstead High Street, which, after passing under the railway, is lined for some distance on one side by shops, and on the other by a bit of forest land and Spratt Hall Green. By the side of the latter is Christ Church with its tall spire. At the far end of the High Street is the village green proper and another fountain erected in 1897 near the site of the old village pond, as a memorial of the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria. Close by is the George Hotel, rebuilt a few years ago; on its wall is a tablet from the old inn bearing the following quaint inscription, which is still easily read except the last line and the name:-

In Memorv of Ye Cherry Pey
as Cost ½ a Guiney
ye 17 of July.
That day we had good cheer.
hope to so do a maney a year.
RC 1752.

D. JERSEY.



The history of this tablet is not quite clear, but the local tradition is, and has been for many years, that it was the custom of the then Rector to send his pies to be baked at the bakery close by the inn, that in the year stated the latter was either being built or altered, and that as the pieman turned into George Lane with till’ baked cherry pie on his head the workmen on the wall “lifted” it, and promptly ate it. The matter was treated as an offence, and the magistrate inflicted a fine, or imprisonment. The money was paid, and the tablet was thereupon erected on the wall in George Lane to commemorate the event.



The George, Wanstead, showing a Georgian house where the underground station now stands.

This account, however, does not appear to quite agree with the last line of the couplet, which seems to indicate an annual dinner at the “George” rather than a desire to appear each year before the magistrate. At the top corner of the green is Redbridge Lane, which is a long and pleasant descent to the Roding; almost at the bottom of the hill on the right is the Rectory. Crossing over the bridge, it is a gradual ascent up Wanstead Lane to the Castle and The Drive. Time from the “Eagle” to the Wash, 50 minutes. This is a most enjoyable walk.

Route 10

From Ilford Station, Wanstead Park, Blake Hall Road, Wanstead Flats, to (a) Forest Gate, (b) Manor Park.

(About 4 miles)

After passing through Wanstead Park and emerging on the Blake Hall Road opposite Bushwood (as in Route 8), turn to the left to the edge of Wanstead Flats. Here the road divides (a) to Forest Gate, (b) to Manor Park.



Wanstead Park, Ornamental Waters early 1900s

(a) The road to Forest Gate, called Woodford Road, runs right across the centre of the Flats, and is a most invigorating walk on a breezy day. About the middle of last century this road was merely a cart track with deep ruts. The whole of the Flats (with the exception of the strip at the Forest Gate end from Cann Hall Road on the right to Rabbits Bridge on the left which is in West Ham and East Ham) is in Wanstead parish. Since the planting of the clumps of trees, the erection of band stands and



Blake Hall Road 1913 looking towards Wanstead Flats with Bushwood to the right

the making of ponds, the Flats has lost its wild charm, as it has lost much of its grass, coarse though it may have been; but the wind is still as boisterous as ever, often making progress against it difficult and at times almost impossible - especially when it comes from the east and flavoured with brine. It will take 15 minutes to cross the Flats to Forest Gate, whence it is a straight road to the G.E.R. station. After passing under the bridge of the Midland line, is a Fire Station, opposite which is the



Wanstead Flats early 1900s - view from Blake Hall Road with Woodford Road (Centre Road) leading to Forest Gate and Aldersbrook to the left leading to Manor Park

“Eagle and Child.” (This inn is given on a map dated 1774). Across the road between these two stood the old forest gate which has given its name to the place. The fire station was formerly the church schools.

(b) The road to Manor Park turns off to the left from the corner of the Flats and follows its north-eastern edge past Lake’s Farmhouse and an entrance to Wanstead Park. The farm land has now become the Wanstead Park Estate, which extends as far as the City of London Cemetery, and is partly in Wanstead parish and partly in East Ham parish.



Three Rabbits, Manor Park

The road goes past the Cemetery either to Manor Park Station or to Rabbits Bridge over the railway, and so to the East Ham trams to Ilford Broadway. At the corner of the Flats, by Rabbits Bridge, is one end of the path which was made in 1901 in place of the old Bridle Path through the Cemetery (see Route 11). At this same corner was held at the end of the 18th century a periodical cattle market, on which occasions the “Three Rabbits “ Inn was a very busy hostelry.

trees in the landscape

A large, leafy tree stands in a field under a bright sky. The tree is the central focus, with its branches spreading out. The background is a soft, hazy landscape with a green field in the foreground and a bright sky above.

Second Wren Photographic Exhibition at the Temple

The Wren Group 'Wanstead 1,000' photo exhibition has been very popular. The entries were first class and it was very hard to choose 21 photos that show the wonderful range of flora and fauna in our area. The exhibition will be on at the Temple until at least April 22nd and some of the images are to be selected for cards, which we can sell at a reasonable cost.

We are going to do it again!

This time the exhibition theme will be **TREES**. Not just stand-alone mature trees in all their beauty, but trees as part of the ecosystem: trees exhibiting the birds, insects and fungi that depend on them, trees in their different seasons, details of tree structure such as bark and leaves, trees and how people interact or use them, and trees as one part of the whole landscape.

All photographs should be taken in Wanstead or Epping Forest.

To give our photographers enough time to get out there snapping during the spring, summer and autumn, the exhibition will be in the late autumn. Date and further details of when and where to submit entries will be in the summer newsletter.

Unfortunately pictures taken on a phone cannot be accepted as they do not enlarge well, so please use a camera and provide images as high-resolution as possible.

In future, all images submitted will be the property of the Wren Group so that we can use them for publicity and reproduction.

help needed

House Sparrow Survey

Surveying bird numbers is never an exact science. Any Wren member who has joined Tim on the Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) will know that birds' pesky habit of 'flying', aside from swimming and walking, means that they can quickly move in and out of areas being counted.

With the passerines (perching and singing birds that include many of our garden visitors and everything really from a Wren to a Raven) it can be even trickier.

Wren committee member and local naturalist James Heal is asking for a little help for these sometimes overlooked neighbours.



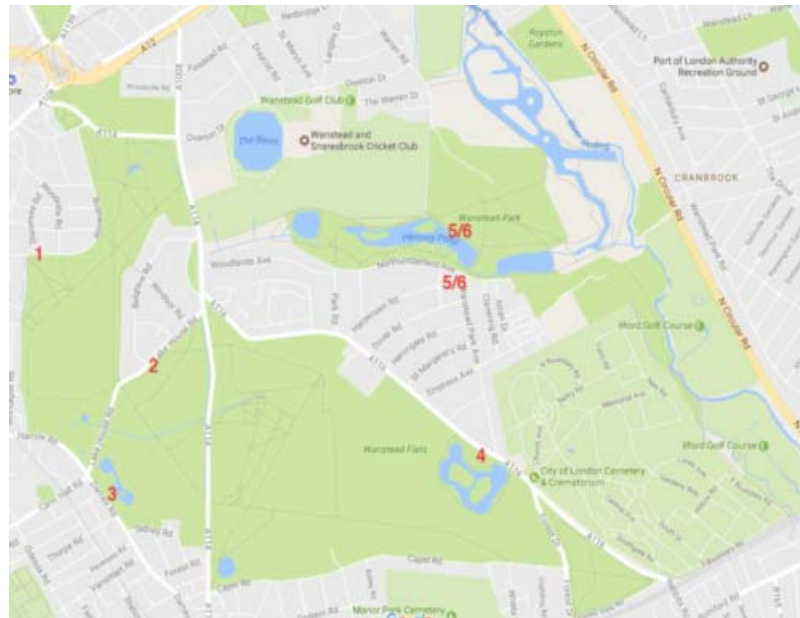
Luckily, we have some techniques that make the estimates more accurate. Most significantly, the best way to count song birds is to count the singers. This gives a pretty good indication as to the breeding territories that are present in any particular area.

Nearly all of the famous avian songsters are highly territorial birds; males singing to encourage females and discourage potential rivals and usurpers. Indeed, because of this, we have a pretty good idea of the rough numbers of local territories of resident breeders like Song Thrush, Skylark, and Wren through to the migrant breeders like Chiffchaff and Common Whitethroat.

But some birds have more complex social structures and breeding patterns which can make surveying work particularly challenging. Long-tailed Tits are a good example: they are almost always on the move in familial flocks across quite broad areas. Another challenging bird to survey is the humble House Sparrow. Like the Long-tailed Tit, this particular sparrow flocks together in highly social colonies, although it doesn't move around anywhere near as much. They are semi-monogamous (although that may not make much sense, I won't go into the complexity involved in sparrow sexual activity, partly because it is still subject to considerable study), but they also form complex hierarchical colony relationships for much of the year.

Whilst they may be difficult to survey, counting House Sparrows is quite an important exercise. One of the most numerous and widespread birds in the world, the

sparrows also have one of the longest known relationships with humans, having adapted nicely to the plentiful food given or discarded by us. However, as most of us know, House Sparrow numbers in the UK have fallen by shocking levels in the last twenty or thirty years in particular. It is still not entirely clear why this has happened, although changes in agriculture are deemed to have played a role.



Across Wanstead Park and Flats, the House Sparrow is not a particularly common sight. But, it is clear to me that there are quite well established colonies to be regularly found at several locations across the patch. Unlike Long-tailed Tits, House Sparrows seem relatively consistent in the areas they are found in. On the map I have attempted to label the locations where there are relatively established colonies that can be found quite easily.

There are two points you will likely notice looking at the map. One is the fact I have only listed five or six colonies across the whole area; I shall return to this shortly. The other noticeable factor is what I shall label as the 'edge effect'. With the exception of truly residential area birds, all the colonies I can think of are on the fringes of the patch with a territory covering both residential areas and the scrubby edges of the patch itself.

If you look at number '1' on the map as a case study, it highlights neatly how House Sparrows utilise the habitats on the edges of the patch, in this instance on the Wanstead Flats. This is the very extreme western end of the flats where the 'School Scrub' (as the local birders like to call it) meets the intersection between Bushwood and Stanmore Road. Indeed it is the gable end of the last terraced house on Stanmore Road that forms the nesting site for most of the birds in this colony. I often see the sparrows gripping onto the wall and pecking at the cement between the bricks; this could be for the purpose of lining their stomachs and gizzards with grit to help break down food and/or to ingest the calcium carbonate in the cement which helps the females form strong eggshells.

Standing on this edge of the patch at almost any time of year the House Sparrows can be heard; their incessant chirping contains a whole range of almost indecipherable noises for varied complex communication purposes, but is often believed to be a range of contact calls that are common with sociable flocking birds.

This particular colony seems to spend most of its time during daylight hours in the relatively large thicket of



brambles, and lone young oak, next to the path entrances to the patch from Bushwood (the road, not its namesake, the woodland area, Bush Wood, a few minutes walk further north-east). And that is largely it, this sociable colony of around 15 birds seems to move between their nest site and the bushes and back again, and rarely much further. This small area does flex somewhat when chicks fledge. House Sparrows are, of course, famously sexually potent and successful breeders; often managing three (sometimes even four) broods in a year. When the fledglings reach independence they flock together and most will move away from their parent colony. In spring you can often see quite large flocks in the copse on the western edge of 'School Scrub', presumably before they move away and find breeding areas of their own. On a grander scale, of course, think about the very large flocks of sparrows that be seen in fields in agricultural areas; often heavily populated by young birds stocking up on easing pickings before finding somewhere to 'settle'.

There are other colonies close by to the 'Bushwood

family': in the gardens of the Mornington Road houses, next to Davies Lane school (which lends its name to 'School Scrub' over which the gardens look); and also on Barclay and Leybourne Road, but none of these really qualify as 'patch' colonies like the Bushwood birds.

So this brings me neatly back to the second point you may have noticed looking at my map, and a final request for Wren members. Given how horrendously population numbers of House Sparrows have dropped over the last human generation, we should have a better grip of the health of our breeding populations locally. The five or six 'fringe' colonies I have marked on the map are all colonies I have spent a reasonable amount of time personally observing, but I am not too sure how many others exist. With the exception of the front-garden colony at the north end of Wanstead Park Avenue that may overlap with the birds often seen in the brambles on the northern shore of Heronry pond, I have no grip on the number of colonies breeding in the gardens of the Aldersbrook estate (that sits within the boundaries of the Wanstead birders' 'patch') or how about the tree-lined boundaries of the Wanstead Flats where it borders Capel Road? I rarely explore that area well, so I just don't know. This year, I would like to get a better handle on the colonies on the patch, particularly those that actually use the 'edges' or 'fringes' of the Flats or Wanstead Park, or even, at the risk of biting off more than I can chew, the local cemeteries. And that, dear readers, is where I would like your help. If you are aware of a breeding colony locally that is not marked on my map, I would be very grateful if you could draw my attention to it (please email me at jwfheal@gmail.com). Hopefully then we can build much better map of the local populations and actually track numbers far more accurately.

Having requested your help, I will leave you with a piece

of bird trivia in return. It is believed that the size (especially width) of the black bib (sometimes called a 'badge') on male House Sparrows' chests/throats is indicative of its social status; literally, the bigger the badge the more important the bird.



Hopefully this article will encourage us all to look somewhat more closely at these fascinating, socially complex, birds. Due to their evolution being so closely intertwined with the development of human civilisation, they are often overlooked, but these common birds are seriously vulnerable and declining in our country, and so by understanding them better, we can, perhaps, hope to find ways to stop their steep declines.

Article by James Heal
Pics by Tony Morrison



Wanstead nature club

2016 was the Nature Club's fifth year, with an average of 8 children per session plus lots of helpful parents. We have had loyal support from Jane Cleall, Haydn Powell and Charlotte Thompson. As usual we concentrated on learning about our local wildlife.

We started off the year with a winter treasure hunt. Over the year we learnt about squirrels and pigeons and earthworms and soil and birdsong and woodlice and autumn leaves. Barry Chapman gave us a lovely talk about Hedgehogs. We took part in the Clean Water for Wildlife survey and Opal Water Survey and tested our two ponds to see how clean the water was and we did two pond dips. We finished off the year with an art session with Anita McCullough and did gorgeous paintings of winter fruits and berries.

We the organisers and helpers have decided to give up running the Nature Club as we are suffering from volunteer fatigue. We hope that someone else can take it on and that we may be able to move it to Wanstead Park. Some of the children have been coming for a long time and they miss Nature Club. I miss it too! It has been a great five years.

We are indebted to the City of London for allowing us to use the Community Room in Harrow Road Changing Rooms free of charge.

Gill James
Wanstead Nature Club Coordinator



fascinating flowers

Article by Tricia Moxey



As green leaves unfurl they start to actively photosynthesise using the green pigment chlorophyll to trap the energy from the sun and produce sugars and oxygen thus fuelling growth. The chlorophyll is found within plastids, small green discs within the cells of the aerial portions of the whole plant, including the flowers.

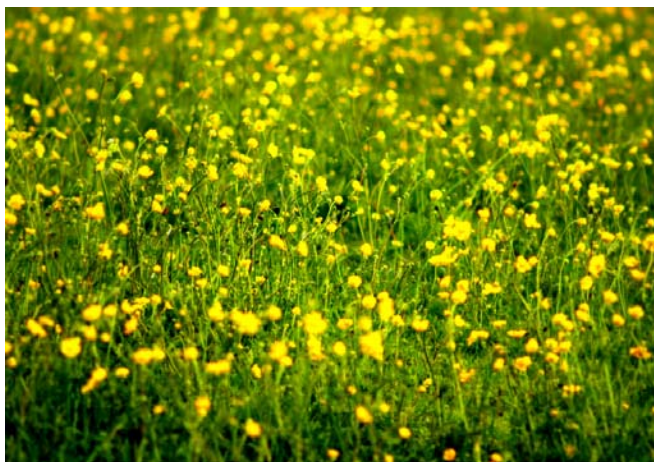
Warmer days encourages the opening of flowers and we rejoice at seeing Dandelions and Coltsfoot, or finding the glistening golden flowers of Lesser Celandines. The golden haze of the male Pussy Willow catkins means food for hungry bees as they are a rich source of sugary nectar and protein rich pollen, critically vital foods at this stage in their life cycle. Queen bumblebees fly when the ambient temperature is about 10°C, but they cannot take to the wing unless their flight muscles are above 30°C. If they are cold, they create heat by shivering, a process which requires a lots of energy. It can take up to 15 minutes for a bumble bee to warm up at 6°C but only



The golden haze of the male Pussy Willow catkins means food for hungry bees

5 minutes at 13°C and just a few seconds at 24°C.

Insect pollinated plants start to release nectar and any volatile perfumes as soon as the surrounding temperature reaches this threshold so attracting the attention of passing insects. Nectar is a sugary solution produced in specialist glands at the base of flowers and is replenished during the hours of darkness. Pollen is more freely available throughout the life of the flower, being shed from the ripe anthers so it is ready for collection by the passing insects. Some flowers open up when the sun shines and close them when it starts to rain or darkness falls.



Many spring flowers are yellow to attract pollinating insects - such as the Buttercup

Many spring flowers are yellow, a colour that attracts a range of pollinating insects. Yellow, orange and some red pigments are various carotenoids and a number of early flowering species have shiny petals where the outer layer of cells, the epidermis has a highly reflective surface. Thus flowers of the Creeping Buttercup form a bowl focusing the warming rays of the sun on the centre of the flower so the temperature there is slightly higher than the surrounding air! Tubular flowers like those of honeysuckle, which release a sweet scent after dark are

attractive to moths which usually hover to collect the nectar.

A study of some 201 species of flower petals from 60 different families found that 79% had cone shaped cells on their epidermal or outer surfaces. This appears to make the petals more attractive to insects giving them a velvety or sparkly appearance. Although minute, they may give the insects more traction when they land on the flower. In a number of species, fine surface folds in the epidermal cells can also produce an iridescent sheen on petals, highly visible to certain insects such as bees.

Many members of the daisy family have flower heads which are heliotropic and track the path of the sun. Thermogenic species generate extra heat themselves such as the enclosed spathe of the Wild Arum which lures its pollinating flies and beetles within its warm environment full of unpleasant odours.



Many members of the daisy family track the path of the sun

Shades of purple and pink in petals and other tissues are due to various anthocyanins, purple pigments found within the cell sap. Beetroots have this pigment in large quantities and when cut this readily oozes out! The hooded flowers of the Red Dead Nettle have attractive

darker patches of more concentrated colour which help to guide the insects into the centre of the flowers.

Anthoxanthins are other pigments found in cell sap. Some appear ivory white to our eyes but appear blue-green those insects which are more sensitive to ultra violet light. The distribution of the various pigments within the petals creates many different patterns and streaks may be found which act as honey guides to a visiting insect. The dainty blue flowers of speedwells show this clearly in close up. Do check out the details with a hand lens.



Some plant species are visited by several different pollinators and others more selectively, are visited and pollinated by just one.

The interaction between bright coloured flowers and their insect pollinators has evolved over millions of years and is finely balanced, with some species visited and pollinated by several different pollinators and others being much more selective, perhaps confined to just one species. The humans and insects view colours differently. Humans have cone cells within the retina at the back of the eye and the brain interprets the rainbow colours seen by the eye. In contrast insects have compound eyes with different types of colour receptors. Bees, beetles and flies will perceive colours differently across a greater spectral range than humans and many can see ultra violet.

However, it is important that flowers are ready to receive the transference of pollen from the anthers to the stigmas so that seeds can be produced under the most ideal environmental and physiological conditions. Each plant has to be sufficiently well established to make sufficient surplus food via photosynthesis to pack its seeds with the nourishment required for successful germination. Annual plants with a short life span grow quickly producing flowers and then many seeds in a matter of weeks. Woody perennials such as trees may not flower until they are sufficiently mature. Walnuts and some fruit trees flower and set fruit after about 10 years of growth. Birch as an early coloniser of bare ground produces many seeds from its teens until old age at 65.

Flower buds develop from actively growing tissue at points on stems and their initiation is controlled by a mixture of chemical responses to changes in day length and temperature. The length of the overnight dark period seems to be critical in a number of species and many house plants are now grown in artificially controlled conditions so they flower out of their natural season!

The exact mechanism which controls the initiation of flowering is complex and research is being carried out in many laboratories where scientists are examining the processes at the molecular level. For many scientists, the plant of choice is a rather insignificant plant, Thale Cress *Arabidopsis thaliana*, which is a small white flowered member of the Cabbage family. It is widespread has been intensively studied. In 2000 its whole genetic sequence was published. It has been grown on the International Space Station and can complete its lifecycle in 6 – 8 weeks often in hostile environments. In the local area, Paul Ferris has recorded it in several places growing on exposed bare ground beside roads.

This species will only flower once it has produced a

rosette of basal leaves and is more likely to flower when there nights are getting shorter. So far 80 specific genes have been identified and some are linked to the production of specific chemicals which play a role in the flowering process indicating the complexity of the biochemical mechanisms which control the wide range of activities within plants.

Luckily, we do not need to know all about the biochemical steps involved in producing flowers to appreciate the wonderful varied colours and forms and notice their insect visitors. We are surrounded by so many native wildflowers throughout the different seasons, each species with its own unique growth pattern, leaf shape and flower structure. In addition, there are many more introduced species from different parts of the world some of which have become naturalised to add to the variety of our local area. Do please send in your records of what you observe!

Article by Tricia Moxey



The classic textbook on pollination is the *Pollination of Flowers* by Michael Procter and Peter Yeo, published in 1973 in the Collins New Naturalist series.

More recent publications include:

The Bee Garden: How to Create or Adapt a Garden to Attract and Nurture Bees by Maureen Little and published by How to Books in 2011.

For a photographic masterpiece why not treat yourself to the lavishly illustrated *Pollination Power* by the well-known wildlife photographer, Heather Angel published in 2015 by Kew Publishing

look out for

Early April

Birds: Blackcaps and Chiffchaffs are early summer visitors whose voices join those of resident Wrens, Robins and Blackbirds. If weather conditions are poor, look for Sand Martins feeding over Heronry Lake. The first Swallows pass through our area, but they won't stop. Listen for Meadow Pipits in song on Wanstead Flats.

Butterflies: On sunny days, look for Small Tortoiseshells, Commas, and Peacocks pretty much anywhere. Brimstones can be seen in Wanstead Park, while Holly Blues will visit gardens around the area.

Damselflies and dragonflies: On a warm day look for Large Red Damselfly, the first of our 'damsels' to appear in spring.

Late April

Birds: The big arrivals of summer migrants take place. Common Whitethroats will be back on territory in the SSSI and the old sewage works. House Martins reappear, and Skylarks should be song-fighting over Wanstead Flats. Listen out for a Cuckoo!

Butterflies: The first Small Coppers should emerge on The Plain and in the old sewage works; Orange tips may be seen in Wanstead Park.

Damselflies and dragonflies: Early Common Blue and Azure Damselflies emerge to add a bit of colour to lake margins.

Early May

Birds: The late arrivals of spring finally turn up: Hobbies and Swifts. Listen for the descending lilt of a Willow Warbler or the tuneless rattle of a Lesser Whitethroat in the Old Sewage Works or on Wanstead Flats; they may attempt to find a mate for a few days but will probably move on.

Butterflies: Green-veined Whites and Small Whites can be seen in gardens and in Wanstead Park. Look for Green Hairstreaks on Wanstead Flats: a colony was discovered there last year. If we are lucky a Brown Argus or two may be in the Old Sewage Works, but this species is notoriously fickle, appearing one year and disappearing the next. Small Heath should appear in areas of rough grassland on The Plain and on Wanstead Flats.

Damselflies and dragonflies: Large Red

Damselflies should be visible around the lakes in Wanstead Park. Hairy Dragonfly is one of the first of the 'dragons' to appear in spring; it may be on the wing in April, but early May is a good time to look for it.

Late May

Birds: With 50 species of birds breeding in our area, the dawn chorus now in early June is worth getting up for. Mind you, they're not all great songsters. Egyptian Goose anyone?

Butterflies: Large Whites in Wanstead Park and in gardens. Hopefully, the first Common Blues should be flying near Long Wood and in the Old Sewage Works. Small Heaths still on the wing.

Damselflies and dragonflies: Large Red Damselflies will still be visible around the lakes in Wanstead Park. Common Blue and Azure Damselflies and Blue-tailed Damselflies can be seen with them. Look on

lily pads for Red-eyed Damselflies; later in the year these can be confused with Small Red-eyed Damselflies, which emerge later.

Early June

Birds: The dawn chorus is starting to peter out as birds get down to the business of raising chicks.

Butterflies: Many of our regular species will peak around now but for some it is still too early.

Damselflies and dragonflies: Banded Demoiselles should be flitting around aquatic vegetation along the banks of the River Roding. The sluice by the old sewage works is a good place to watch them. A few Emperor dragonflies will probably put in an appearance. Broad-bodied Chaser and Black-tailed Skimmer dragonflies may be seen around Heronry Lake; the latter often bask on the concrete rim of the lake.

Late June

Birds: Bird song seems like a distant memory, but plenty of young birds will be begging for food or making their first flights.

Butterflies: Large Skippers appear on Wanstead Flats. Several species of whites will still be on the wing. Early Purple Hairstreaks breed in oaks; now is the time to look for the first of the summer, especially flying around the canopy in Bush Wood.

Damselflies and dragonflies: Emperor dragonflies patrol powerfully over the lakes in Wanstead Park; good luck if you try to photograph this species – it rarely stays still!

by Tricia Moxey



Who Killed the Swan

by Gillian Clarke

'She is mine,' said the river
holding the swan on its palm like a lily.

Said the sky, 'She is mine to have and to hold,
my small white cloud of cold.'

'She is mine,' sighed the wind, wounding the air,
winnowing water, lifting a wing.

'Mine,' said the sun, noosing the swan
with a cold gold ring.

The cob swims in silence, its neck a question,
head downcast over water's mirror.



events diary

April

Sat April 15th - 08:30am-12 noon. Joint walk with RSPB. Meet at the Jubilee Pond car park.

Tues 18th April - Nature Ramble. Walk leader and guidebook author Peter Aylmer will take you to one of London's great natural glories - a nature reserve, woodland, heath, site of special scientific interest or similar. Like the Lucky Dip walks, expect around six miles of easy walking and at least one cafe along the way. Meet: 10am at Stratford station, outside Jubilee line platforms 13-15. Just turn up, no need to book. Bring a snack, drink and Oyster or Freedom Pass. Back about 4. Contact: Peter Aylmer 07884 235784 or email peteraylmer@hotmail

Sun April 23rd - 11am-1pm: History Walk in Wanstead Park led by local historian Richard Arnopp of Friends of Wanstead Parklands. Meet Warren Road Car Park.

Sun April 23rd - Art in the Park: Bluebell Art Day, run by CoL. Watch the website for further details.

May

Sun May 14th - 11am-1pm. Spring Walk on Wanstead Flats. Meet Centre Road Car Park, Wanstead Flats. Amble across Wanstead Flats & if we are lucky see and hear our skylarks. Optional refreshments at the end at the City of London

Cemetery cafe or the Tea Hut in Wanstead Park.
Contact: Gill: 020 8989 4898 Jackie: 07766 174 466

Sun May 21st - 2pm-7pm Music and Picnic time in the Temple Garden. Come and listen to local live music. Bar. Entry £2 on the gate.

Sun May 21st - 10am-12 noon. Free guided tour on Walthamstow Wetlands.

Visit Europe's soon-to-be largest urban wetland reserve to learn the heritage and history of the site as well as the wildlife and the wildlife conservation work of London Wildlife Trust. Bring snacks, water, camera, binoculars & possibly sun block. Unfortunately, no children under the age of 8 are currently allowed.

Meet outside main entrance at 2 Forest Rd. N17 9NH. How to get there:

Train - Take the overground train towards Gospel Oak to Blackhorse Road. Exit station, turn left and walk along the road until you arrive (5 minute walk).

Bus - 123 and 230 stop outside, at the Ferry Inn bus stop. There is currently no car parking available.

If interested, please send name, email & phone number.
Contact: Mirza: 07535887341 or email mrashid506@yahoo.co.uk. Spaces limited so book quickly.

June

Wed June 7th - Nature Ramble. Walk leader and guidebook author Peter Aylmer will take you to one of London's great natural glories - a nature reserve, woodland, heath, site of special scientific interest or similar. Like the Lucky Dip walks, expect around six miles of easy walking and at least one cafe

along the way. Meet: 10am at Stratford station, outside Jubilee line platforms 13-15. Just turn up, no need to book. Bring a snack, drink and Oyster or Freedom Pass. Back about 4. Contact: Peter Aylmer 07884 235784 or email peteraylmer@hotmail

Wed June 14th - History and greenery walk at Hampstead and Golders Hill. Meet Leytonstone Station by ticket barrier at 9.40-45 or Waterstones on Hampstead High Street (left out of station, a little way down across the road) upstairs cafe at 10.45-11 for toilets/take out coffee. Walk to Golders Hill cafe for lunchtime break (bring sandwiches in case u don't like what's on offer). Then across Sandy Heath and down east side of Hampstead to finish. About 5 miles but you can opt out for buses earlier if u need. Please contact Jackie Morrison if you plan on going Text to my mobile 07766174466

Fri June 16th - Evening bat walk in Wanstead Park. Meet at the tea hut. Look out for more details on our website and Facebook page!

Sat June 17th - Bio-blitz activities in Wanstead Park and Wanstead Flats. Activities will include guided walks looking for butterflies and dragonflies, pond-dipping, moth-trapping, and an evening bat walk. Look out for more details on our website and Facebook page!

Sun June 18th - Bio-blitz activities in Wanstead Park and Wanstead Flats. Activities will include a dawn chorus walk, guided walks looking at wildflowers and dragonflies, and pond-dipping at Alexandra Lake and Shoulder of Mutton Pond. Look out for more details on our website and Facebook page!

Sun June 18th - 11am-1pm: History Walk in Wanstead Park led by local historian Richard Arnopp of Friends of Wanstead Parklands. Meet Warren Road Car Park.

Sun June 25th - 2pm-7pm: Music and Picnic time in the Temple Garden. Come and listen to local live music. Bar. Entry £2 on the gate.



links

Links

Got any links to go on this page? Get in touch
wreeditor@talktalk.net

Wren links page <http://www.wrengroup.org.uk/links/>

Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/WrenOrg>

Twitter <https://twitter.com/wrenwildlife>

Local

Wanstead Wildlife

<http://www.wansteadwildlife.org.uk/>

Friends of Wanstead Parklands

<http://www.wansteadpark.org.uk/>

RSPB North East London Members Group

<http://www.rspb.org.uk/groups/northeastlondon>

Wanstead Birding Blog

<http://wansteadbirding.blogspot.co.uk/>

Epping Forest

<http://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/things-to-do/green-spaces/epping-forest/Pages/default.aspx>

British Naturalists' Association

<http://www.bna-naturalists.org/>

Bushwood Area Residents' Association

<http://www.bara-leytonstone.org.uk/>

East London Nature

<http://www.eln.yorkshirefog.co.uk/>

East London Birders <http://www.elbf.co.uk/>

Friends of Epping Forest

<http://www.friendsofeppingforest.org.uk/index.htm>

East London Nature

<http://www.eastlondonnature.co.uk/>

Plenty of info here about walking in Essex - including the forest <http://trailman.co.uk/>

and finally

A management decision by Nick Croft

The greatness of a nation can be judged by the way its (environment) is treated.

Mahatma Gandhi

Peter Williams asked me to write a few words on organised practical work carried out in the park and flats - he knows I am not a big fan - but after the Wren squad had given me a couple of hours of their time extending the reedbed in the south-east corner of the Shoulder of Mutton pond he may have felt my position would have been mollified.

By and large I am indifferent to the practical works carried out by the Wren Group, not the commitment and energy the volunteers put into the projects, just the projects themselves. Armed with low tech equipment there is very little destructive capability brought to bear on any particular circumstance. True I don't like the removal of undergrowth in Chalet Wood just for the purposes of highlighting the Bluebells – this is not how a woodland should be (a depleted understory is indicative of overgrazing by deer), yet we have become accustomed to it as for it to be the “norm”. Regardless of what impact this has on the other creatures of the wood this aesthetic wins out.

Now of course my directed work in the south-east corner of the Shoulder of Mutton is classic habitat extension/creation - call it what you like it is a win-win situation. Not only has the habitat been improved, nothing was killed, and natural barriers were put in place to stop disturbance. This is an ongoing idea and will be tweaked in response to what is observed. So land management can be good.

Then we come to the CoL. After 40 years of sitting on their hands they go and destroy the best area in their charge. Their explanation was pathetic, but that might be due to the fact it had to be cobbled together quickly after a Twitter storm of vitriol.



CoL clearance of scrub on Wanstead Flats - conservation or vandalism ?

There are two aspects I hate of this, but I am sure this will encompass everything that is planned for the future.

North of Long Wood in what we call the Brick Pit Copse: the complete removal of all scrub bar a few trees. This is not and never was acid grassland, so let's get that

fallacy out of the way. There seems no reason behind this destruction, bar amenity (creating enmity) or that other ill-used word Landscape Values.

Landscape values: heard this before to justify some of the pig-headed destruction in the park. This should have no part in management of such an important area. It is clear what most people feel about Landscape Values is not what they take away from their visit more through what they leave behind.

The destruction of the Enclosure to the east of Long Wood. Without doubt the best place in London for passerine migrants – it still maybe is. However, the cost to breeding birds will need to be assessed. Common and Lesser Whitethroat have been at the receiving end of the CoLC's ill-thought out management over the last few years. Whoever allowed this to happen should be ashamed of themselves.

The brooms: this will run and run. Acid grassland blah, blah, important, rare habitat, blah, blah

Acid grassland is important as so little of it remains, it is so important that a little tweaking is going to mean bummer all. If it is so important then get rid of the plantations that someone from the CoL allowed in the first place, get rid of the football pitches, the car parks, the model airfield, the fairground. Get serious about the disturbance caused by users of the flats (yes dog walkers!).

That aint going to happen: So not that important then. The thing is, we have created the acid grassland, *the area should be lowland heath*. Skylark nest in this kind

of habitat. This though is the major problem: we just can't allow nature to do her work – all the best sites in London for bio-diversity are where nature has taken back control of our messes. To exact our revenge on upstart nature we call them brownfield and offer them no protection whatsoever and ear-mark them for development. Leaving us with just our managed landscapes for the most part utterly useless except for a growing population of dog ownership.

Consultation was undertaken but since less than 1% of the footfall is passive or neutral, it would be easy to miss these “activists” in any consultation. If you are not interested, how can you have an interest in what is being done? For those who love the ecology of the flats in all its habitats this is a very sad, and avoidable, denouement. That members of the Wren Group feel that “it's not so bad” implies a complicity in the

action. I cannot be part of an organisation like that, and so will not be renewing my subscription

Article by Nick Croft



Nick Croft has been a part of the Wren Group and making a contribution to this newsletter longer than I've been editor, and that's around 5 years now. During that time i have watched as his skills as both a birder and a photographer have grown more and more - I have learned a great deal from him. I know that readers of this newsletter

feel the same and know that he will be sadly missed. I only hope that Nick re-considers his position and remains a member of the Wren Group and keeps championing for the our local nature in his own unique way.

Note: Views held by the author of this article are not necessarily shared by the Wren Group. Ed

now & then

Were you right ?

Wanstead High Street as it is today together with how it looked at the turn of the last century

