

Spring 2020

# wren

Wildlife & Conservation Group

*Adonis Blue - pic by Tim Harris*

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# a word from the chair .....

All of our worlds have got a little smaller recently. For those of us who love the outdoors and wildlife, being restricted on how much and often we can go out will have been hard. Given the scale and nature of the human impact of this global pandemic, these sacrifices are a small price to pay to try and limit the burden on the NHS and protect our families, friends, and local communities.

But, getting out less doesn't mean we have to stop observing and enjoying the natural world. It just gives us a closer and more focused perspective, perhaps.

The East London Birders have been joining bird watchers around the country in building their house and garden lists, using the social media tag, #lockdownlisting. One of our very local birders in Wanstead has been taking this challenge particularly seriously [and shares his experience later in this newsletter] and has had some astonishing records, particularly of birds on nocturnal migration (with the sea-duck Common Scoter and wader, Whimbrel as particular highlights and absolute gold-dust for a birder's house list). The great thing about birding is that you don't even need a garden - you just watch and count the species of bird you see out of your window. I don't believe there is anyone in London who couldn't get to double figures at least if they tried.

In my front porch I get moths attracted to the motion-sensor light, and there are false-widow and Missing-sector Orb Weaver spiders in there as well. I

have had several species of tiny jumping spiders on my house walls and a whole array of hoverflies, bees, wasps, sawflies and midges in the garden, as well as shield bugs, leaf-hoppers and ladybirds. If it wasn't for this period of enforced lockdown, there is no way I would have spent such time qualitatively improving my understanding, as well as recording, the wildlife that can be found in a small East London garden.

The Wren Group had to cancel our programme of events, our AGM and our practical work sessions. But, whilst this was sad, new opportunities have arisen. Just recently we started a new programme of virtual meetings using the online video conferencing application, Zoom. It has been a great success already and opens a new era of online presence for our small organisation. We have also posted videos, suggested family-friendly lock-down activities, and short digestible blog posts on local wildlife. We hope you will continue to find ways to engage with us even while we can't meet in person.

James Heal

Chair Wren Committee



Nature is like air, water, health and well being .....  
it belongs to everyone and is not anyone's to sell  
to be a custodian of nature is a privilege not a business



# wild project expands 2020

In March, volunteers helped the Vision Nature Conservation Rangers and Wild Wanstead plant wildflowers along the Wanstead Place side of Christ Church Green. It is hoped that if we can help wildflowers to grow in the long grass it will add a splash of extra floral colour and diversity - making these areas even better for wildlife and people.





Meadows can support eight times more biodiversity than regularly mown grass. That's why Wild Wanstead, Vision RCL and Redbridge Council have been working together to create a network of Grow Zones across urban Wanstead, where the grass will be left to grow long over summer to naturalise with wildflowers.

Last year there were a number of sites in the project, which highlighted the fantastic array of plants that will grow when grassy areas are left to get a bit wilder. You might have noticed the back part of George Green looking shaggier and more beautiful than usual. A survey by local botanists revealed more than 80 plant species at the site, as well as insects that thrive in long grass habitats like the Essex Skipper Butterfly.



In 2020, the Grow Zones initiative has been expanded with the addition of a number of new areas in parks and on road verges. This year, the project is also experimenting with wildflower planting to explore different ways of making these areas even more floral and beneficial to wildlife.

On Christ Church Green and adjacent verge on Wanstead Place, three different planting approaches have been trialled. In one area, 500 plug plants have been added



to the turf, with species including tufted vetch, wild primrose, birdsfoot trefoil, meadow cranesbill and hyssop. In a couple of other areas, strips of turf have been lifted and a seed mix of annuals and bee-friendly perennials

planted to see if these will establish and extend. And after weeks of rainy weather, we made also the most of muddy patches under the trees to try out a seed mix including more shade tolerant plants. The planting session was organised by Vision and Wild Wanstead, and had a great turnout from residents who came along to dig, plant and install signage.



Like so many other parts of life, the coronavirus pandemic has meant a bit of a downsizing of the Grow Zones project. A number of schools and other organisations had been planning Grow Zones, and the planting of a second wildflower area on a road verge on Herman Hill has also been postponed.

97% of the UK's wildflower meadows have been lost since World War 2 – it's one of the country's greatest conservation tragedies. Establishing floral meadows is a lot more tricky than destroying them. However, the planting undertaken on Christ Church Green should provide much needed information on the best options for improving floral diversity in urban Wanstead's new wild areas.

Article by Susannah Knox



For more information about the project visit:  
[www.wildwanstead.org/grow-zones](http://www.wildwanstead.org/grow-zones)

# winners and losers ...

A combination of cold, rain, and wind meant it was a waste of time putting my garden light-trap out until 8 March. A few very warm days in the second week of April hastened spring and did wonders for local butterfly sightings, but for moths this was countered by cold nights and a near-full Moon, which limited the trap's attractive power.

At the time of writing (13 April), just 26 species have been recorded on our 'patch' this year.

Tim Harris reports on the year's early flying moths



TH Red-green Carpet Moth - pic by Tim Harris



One of my favourite early spring moths is Nut-tree Tussock (*Colocasia coryli*), a furry, thickset species, which has two generations every year in the south of England. In our area, I record first-generation adults between late March and early May, with a second flight season in late July. The individual I found on my garden patio on 11 April is likely to have been a male- females are generally sedentary.



Nut-tree Tussock (*Colocasia coryli*) - pic by Tim Harris

This is a species whose numbers and range seem to have expanded since the 1970s, with the first spring emergence earlier as well. The caterpillars feed on Silver Birch, oaks, Beech, and Hornbeam.

Another star is Oak Beauty (*Biston strataria*), a gorgeous mid-size member of the family Geometridae, of which there are about 20,000 species. In our area, it is one of the first moths to fly each year, and males are sometimes attracted to bright lights. Typically, my garden light-trap attracts three or four each year in a short flight period extending from 23 February to 17 March. It has an interesting life cycle, overwintering underground as a pupa, emerging late in the winter, then looking for a mate. Newly emerged adults can sometimes be seen near the base of trees, apparently, but I've never seen this. The

female lays her eggs on or near broadleaved trees, especially oaks, and the caterpillars feed from May to July before going into the pupal phase of their life story. Unfortunately, Oak Beauty has suffered a major decline in numbers since 1970.



Oak Beauty (*Biston strataria*) - pic by Tim Harris

In our area, one of the most common moths of March and April is the Common Quaker (*Orthosia cerasi*). OK, it may not be the greatest 'looker' but there is still something subtly beautiful about this moth, which is one of the staples of early spring. It spends the winter in an underground cocoon, with the adult fully formed inside, and emerges in February and March. Nationally, it has become more common since the 1970s, and it is now emerging two weeks earlier in the spring.

Interestingly, in 2019 it was recorded at the Belgrave Rd light-trap in two waves: there were 31 between 12-27 February (including 19 on 25<sup>th</sup>) and another 41 between 17 March and 23 April (the latest local record). However, this year the early moths didn't appear at all, the first of the year was on 16 March and this 'second wave' was more like a ripple. The adults feed at Blackthorn flowers, of which we are well endowed, and sallow catkins. The caterpillars munch their way through the leaves of oaks, hawthorns, birches, and Sweet Chestnut, which are all

plentiful in our area. So why have numbers crashed this year? I checked with friends in East Anglia, who have also noted a big decline in numbers. Clearly, the problem isn't the larval foodplants, so maybe parasitism has dented its population.



Common Quaker (*Orthosia cerasi*) - pic by Tim Harris

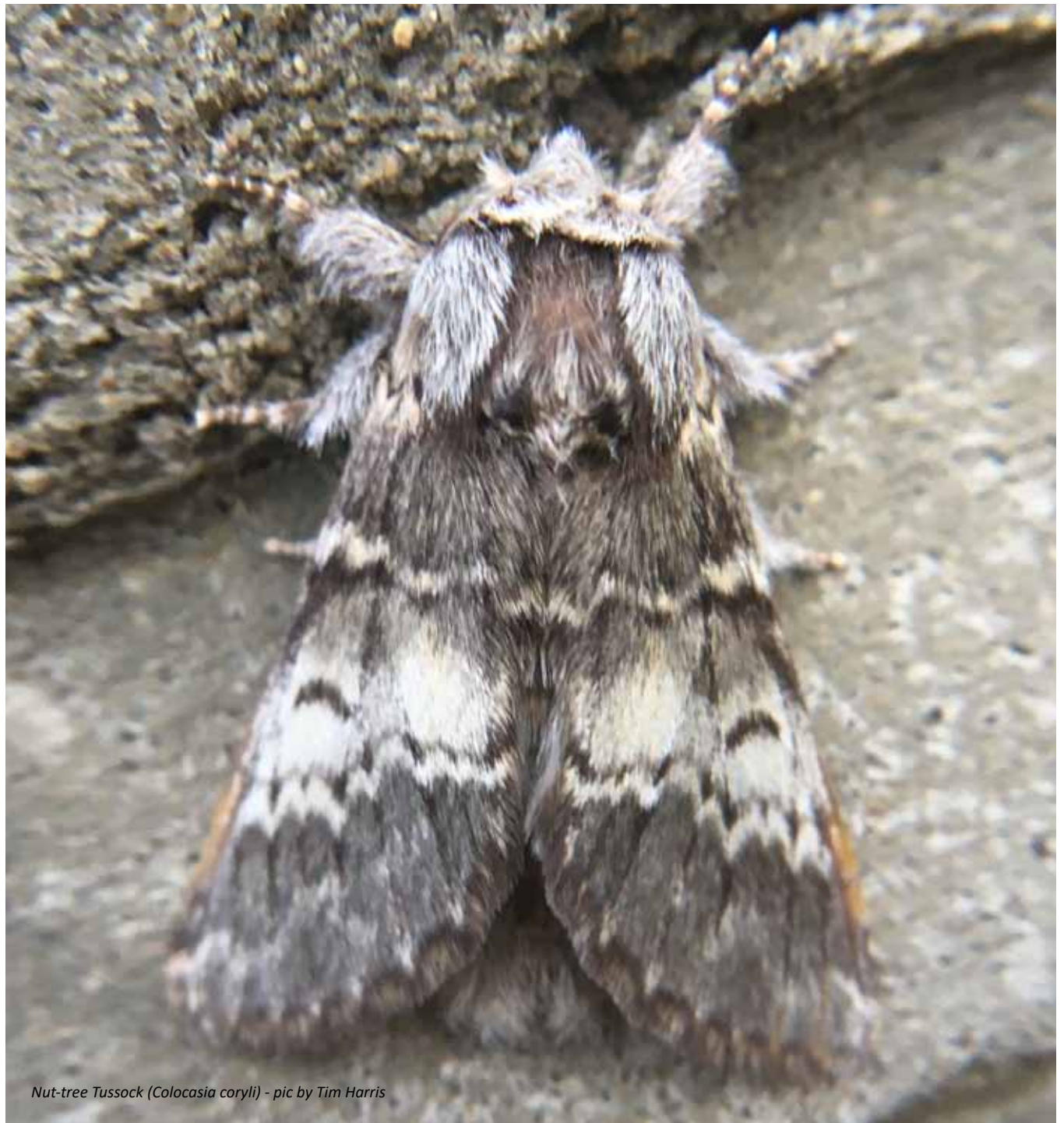


Red-green Carpet (*Chloroclysta siterata*) has yet another life-cycle model: it is an autumn-spring moth. Adults fly late into the autumn, with the females going into hibernation in November and then emerging again in March. This year, my first and (so far) only record was on 16 March. Adults feed at Ivy and Sallow catkins, while the caterpillars feed on oaks, apples, Silver Birch, limes, and Blackthorn. Numbers have increased in the UK since the 1970s.



*Red-green Carpet (Chloroclysta siterata)* - pic by Tim Harris

The new-moon shaped mark on the forewing of the Lunar Marbled Brown (*Drymonia ruficornis*) gives this oak-loving moth its name. Since 2015, the first spring visitation to my garden has been between 30 March and 21 April; this year it was bang in the middle on 10 April. It seems to have a very short flight season (the latest at my light-trap was 23 April 2019). Flying a good fortnight earlier now than it was in the 1970s, this is a species whose range has spread north in recent decades. Back then, the peak flight period was early May, but I've never seen one that late in the year. These changes are a product of global climate change, which clearly has its winners as well as losers.



*Nut-tree Tussock (Colocasia coryli)* - pic by Tim Harris

# a birder under lockdown...

During lockdown and self-isolation time can be a slippery thing and we are having to spend more hours in one place than we ever have before.

Our activities are currently limited, our meeting with others is limited, our normal is limited - but outside our windows a constant in all this is that life goes on and there is so much life, colour and beauty.

Setting even a few minutes aside to sink into the view from our windows - or taking a few slower moments on our increasingly familiar daily walks - can lead to all sorts of tiny, precious discoveries that can help ground us at a time when we need it most.

As our cities, and even parts of the countryside, have fallen eerily silent, with traffic and aircraft a distant memory - many of us have started to notice a new sound: birdsong.

Local birder, photographer and wanderer Jonathan Lethbridge shares with us some of his tips on how to carry on regardless.





Like many birders I love a good list. I routinely record every bird I see or hear no matter where I am, and as time goes by so a list of birds from a defined place will gradually increase. I've lived in Wanstead for over 15 years, and over that time the various lists that I keep have gradually crept upwards. Were I to plot these on a graph over time there would be a clear laggard – my garden.



I think most birders keep a list of birds they have seen from their homes. However most birders also spent a great deal of time *away* from their homes – birdwatching is principally an outdoor activity, and unless you live somewhere exceptional then generally there is always more productive birding habitat somewhere nearby. In my case it is Wanstead Flats, and given the choice that is where you will find me.

Enter lockdown. I can still exercise on Wanstead Flats of course, but my first few forays I found uncomfortable – lots of people, perhaps more than normal, and not all of whom understood the concept of social distancing.



Where I can't catch this infernal virus is at home, and so that is where I have been spending the vast majority of my time.

It has been a revelation. My previous highest daily total of birds seen from my garden was 30 species, which came from a whole day spent in the garden looking skywards. Now that lockdown listing is a 'thing' and more or less my only outlet for birding I am taking it a lot more seriously, and I have discovered that I can get to 30 species well before breakfast. A whole day of effort including listening after dark produced an amazing total of 42 species about

a week ago. At this point you are probably thinking that you have only ever seen a handful of birds in your garden, but that is because you have not been looking properly. And more importantly, you have not been listening.

You don't even need a garden; all you need is a window. I have a second floor balcony which confers some advantages, but all you actually need is a room with a view, and ideally a window that can open. If there is some greenery so much the better, but it's not critical; you will still see and hear birds.



## Here is my typical lockdown listing day

Just after 6am I am out on the balcony with the first coffee of the day. The dawn chorus has mostly died down now, but the local Wren is still belting it out from the top of the neighbour's conifer. There is a Dunnock singing too, a rapid and seeming never-ending reel. The local Robin's tuneful twitters are coming from somewhere too, and the harsh scolding of a Blackbird filters through



from a few doors down. Blue Tits are visible in the trees, Parakeets squawk, Starlings chatter, Goldfinches twitter and zing overhead, and the resident Woodpigeons and Collared Doves are perched in their usual tree. A Jackdaw is on the Chimneypots, the rough call of the Magpies betrays their presence, and the caw of a Crow comes from behind the house as a Feral Pigeon flies past. I take my first sip of coffee. I've been outside for at less than a minute and the list is up to 14 already. Of those I've seen seven – knowing bird calls is important but not vital. If you spend any amount of time in a confined space with a population of resident birds you will get to know their songs and calls soon enough. In fact you won't be able to avoid learning them. Despite what you thought lockdown is actually good for you.



It begins to get harder of course. I know what birds to expect, it is just a question of them playing ball and early morning is the best time. Sure enough there are soon some Mallards scudding around – pretty much the only duck that takes to the skies in Wanstead at the moment

but do look for the curly rear end to be sure. I'm still looking at every duck just in case! The familiar honking of Canada Geese is next, on their way from a roost site to the local ponds. If you are observant it is likely you will also see both Greylag and Egyptian Goose as well, the latter with large white panels in the wing that are unmistakable. They also sound like donkeys....



A commotion! The Magpies and Crows go mad and it is soon apparent why. A Grey Heron is flopping through the gardens, dodging left and right to try and avoid the corvids who view it as a threat to their nestlings. It emits a fearsomely loud squawk as it disappears off over the rooftops.

A dribble of gulls appear. At this time of year many species are still possible, but the most likely suspects are the (adult) charcoal grey-winged Lesser Black-backed Gulls and the light grey Herring Gulls. I get both every single morning without fail as they commute from the reservoirs where they spend the nights to local parks,

ponds and rubbish tips.

I'm beginning to listen more carefully now for birds that are perhaps quieter and less obvious, or perhaps simply further away. After a little while a Blackcap sings – a repeated melodious sequence. Listen to a recording on the internet, learn its phrase, and see if you can pick it out. I think it's one of the most beautiful of our migrant songsters. Next up is a Chiffchaff. Chiff chaff chiff chaff chiff chiff chaff. Unmistakeable. I've only seen it in the garden once during this lockdown period, but I hear it singing on most mornings. Then comes the kik call of a Great Spotted Woodpecker and I quickly pick it up, it's undulating flight a real giveaway as this largely black and white bird bounds across the neighbourhood.



Teacher! Teacher! A Great Tit is calling, and is new for the morning. It's 6.30, I've been on the balcony for half an hour now and the list is up to 25. This lockdown listing is a walk in the park!

The non-stop period is now over in terms of additions,



and now the law of diminishing returns comes into play. How many more can I get before I need to start work? There are still a few certainties of course – flyover Cormorants, the local House Sparrows, a wheezing Greenfinch, but it is a lot harder to eke anything else out. Nonetheless I would still expect to hear Long-tailed Tit for example, and the local Mute Swans are flying around all over the place at the moment as the dominant males start to force the hangers on from their chosen ponds. I might get a Jay or a Green Woodpecker, and there are Goldcrests around if you really strain your ears. One of the benefits of lockdown is the reduced amount of background noise from cars and planes.



My time is up, I am on exactly 30 species for the day so far and I need to get dressed. Oh, did I not mention this? Yes, 30 species in my dressing gown.....

During the day I am mainly in meetings, but sometimes a conference call can take place by a window.... Sparrowhawks, Buzzards, Kestrels, Red Kites.... I've seen

multiples of all of these from home during lockdown simply by looking at the sky. I scan with the naked eye, and then zoom in on dots and specks. Some lucky London birders have even seen Ospreys this month. Hirundines are back too, Swallows and Martins steadily moving north, and soon the Swifts will arrive in numbers – I'll be seeing them every day and I cannot wait!



On some days my birding continues after dark. Ever wanted to try and get Coot or Moorhen on your garden list? During the day is next to impossible for most people. After dark however, indeed sometimes even before bedtime. Try an hour or so in the garden or listening from a window. They sound just like they do on the local pond, but out of context you may dismiss them just as noises of the night. If you have the stamina, or nothing to do the next day you can take this a stage further and stay up all night. All sorts of things fly over London in the dead of night. Sea ducks like Common Scoters that spend almost all their time on the open water migrate overland in April. So too do waders like Oystercatchers and Whimbrel. This

is a whole new birding experience to delve into and is known as nocmig (for nocturnal migration). You can do it with your own ears at the cost of sleep and sanity, or for a modest investment you can set up a recording device at an open window and review the results in the morning at your leisure.



My garden list of 16 years has increased by four species in a matter of weeks, having been more or less stagnant for ages. Out of a total in all those years of 83 species, a month of lockdown has seen me record 64, including a Short-eared Owl, a Raven, two Little Egret and seven Red Kites. My eyes have been opened to the joy of garden birding and to the possibilities of nocmigging. It can't replace being able to go out, but it is a fine substitute in these trying times.

Stay safe, stay in, and get lockdown listing!

Article and pictures by Jonathan Lethbridge







## A Corona Spring

When I woke up this morning  
The sun was shining bright  
The dawn chorus was beginning  
The sky was blue and bright

The daffodils are glowing  
The bluebells are a delight  
New leaves on trees appearing  
Green and fresh  
What a beautiful sight

The air feels fresh and new  
Just like the morning dew  
The evening light  
Makes us feel so bright

It's a lovely time of year  
A new bright beginning  
Pleasant summer days  
The months will soon be bringing

Whether in isolation or alone  
Make the most of your garden and home  
Appreciate the wildlife and beautiful things  
Look forward to a better future  
Togetherness and laughter and whatever it brings

Jan Briggs



# look out for ...

## Late 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. 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-flighting over Wanstead Flats. Listen out for a Cuckoo!

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. 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.



*Look out for the Green Hairstreak (Callophrys rubi) on Wanstead Flats early May. Although this is a widespread species, it often occurs in small colonies and has undergone local losses in several regions.*

## 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



A Ring-necked Parakeet is perched on a dark, snow-covered branch. The bird is bright green with a red beak and a black ring around its neck. Its long, yellow-tipped tail feathers are spread out. The background is a soft-focus view of other snow-laden branches.

# not such a pretty boy then

The Ring-necked Parakeet is the UK's only naturalised parrot - it is large, long-tailed and green with a red beak and a pink and black ring around its face and neck. In flight it has pointed wings, a long tail and very steady, direct flight. Often found in flocks, numbering hundreds at a roost site, it can be very noisy.

The picture to the left is a Ring-necked Parakeet in Wanstead Park, clearly showing snow on the tree branches. It has proved to be an adaptable species and its adaptations to cold winters where it originates in the Himalayan foothills allow it to easily withstand winter conditions over here.

Gregarious and living in large flocks, the birds are an agricultural pest in parts of continental Europe. This, say their detractors, is only part of the problem. Parakeets are crevice-nesting birds. They make their nests early in the year and choose holes in tree trunks favoured by native species, including Great and Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers, owls and Willow Tits. Some conservationists fear that with such rapid expansion they are out-competing and, possibly, eradicating rare native birds by nabbing their nesting sites as well as their food, rather like the grey squirrel has decimated populations of the native red in the last couple of centuries. It seems likely that any such population explosion would upset delicate ecosystems and there have been several instances in our own backyard of native birds being ousted by this cheeky newcomer.

View by Tony Morrison





# Whats up duck

According to local birder and Wren committee member Bob Vaughan there have been two recent events that have caused concern to bird watchers in Wanstead. The first stems from 2017 when The Basin on the golf course next to Wanstead Park had the weed cleared. The second was that food dye was added to the water to suppress weed and algal growth. There also seems to be a general downturn in the numbers in duck numbers in the Wanstead Park ponds. Here Bob discusses whether these observations could be connected.



## There have been two recent events that have caused concern to bird watchers in Wanstead.

The first stems from 2017 when The Basin on the golf course next to Wanstead Park had the weed cleared.

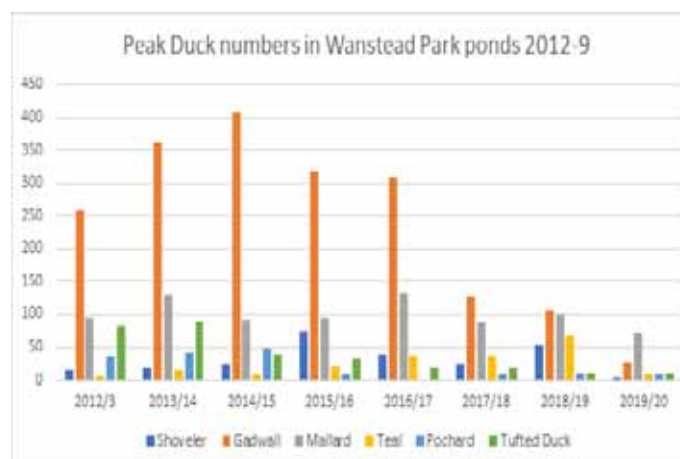


*A drake Mallard to tempt you to read despite some graphs, but I promise there are no statistics. Pic by Bob Vaughan.*

Up until that time the Basin was a good place for ducks, we often had Wigeon drop in and tens of Gadwall, Mallard and Tufted Duck fed there. The result of the weed clearance was that these ducks almost completely disappeared, and we thought this was due to the lack of vegetative cover and things would improve. They didn't, and then we noticed that the water looked a very dark blue. Enquiries made it clear that a food dye had been added to the water to suppress weed and algal growth. Although the literature indicates that food dyes are safe and don't affect numbers of fish and invertebrates while suppressing weed growth, our ducks do not seem

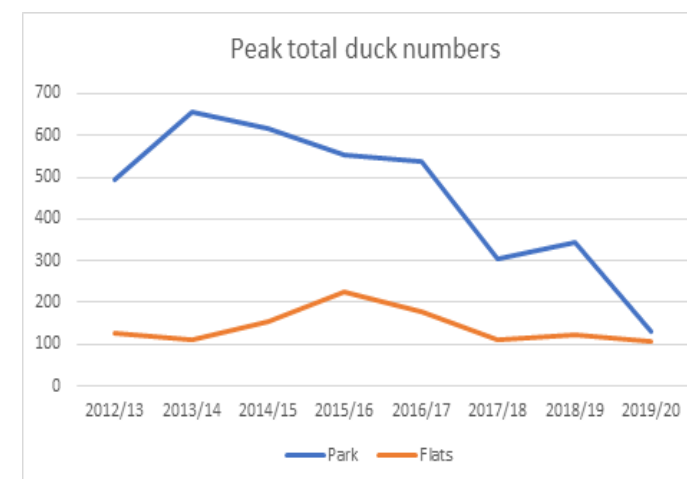
to like it. Casual observations have also seen a general downturn in duck numbers in the Wanstead Park ponds. The winter of 2019/20 seems to have been particularly poor. Are these observations connected?

The situation for The Basin is clear, apart from a few resident Mallard and breeding Little Grebe, duck have almost disappeared since 2017. Have we got good data to support the loss of duck in the Park ponds? To check I collected Webs data which is available on-line. Webs stands for the **Wetland Bird Survey** organised by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) and involves a survey of wetland bird numbers on as many sites as possible nationally during the winter. This involves volunteers counting wetland birds every month. The areas of Wanstead Park and Wanstead Flats feature separately thanks to local birders. What does this tell us? Let's look at the peak counts each winter for our regular ducks in a graph:



This certainly suggests that overall duck numbers in the park have decreased recently. We held nationally

important numbers of Gadwall between 2013 and 2016 but these numbers have dwindled rapidly since the winter of 2016/17. Our resident Mallard numbers have remained reasonably constant though, so it maybe our ability to sustain ducks migrating in for the winter has decreased. We can do a similar graph for the waters on Wanstead Flats, but the simplest graphic is to take the total peak numbers of duck each year and compare the Park and Flats.



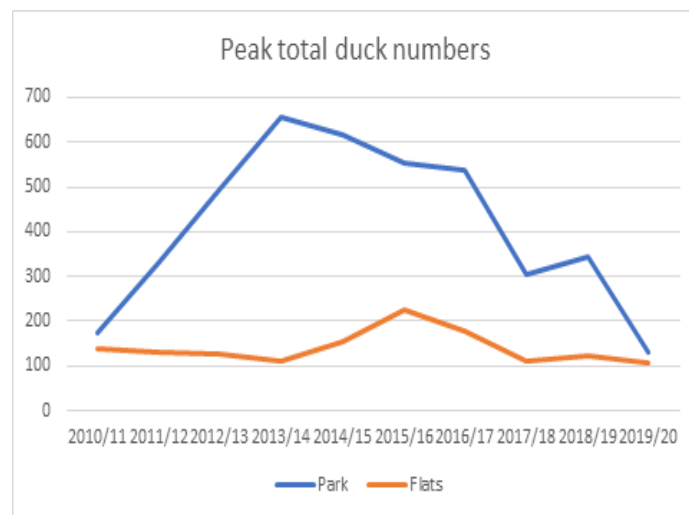
This looks quite dramatic and indicates a serious drop in the total number of Park ducks, while those on the Flats have remained relatively constant. An immediate suspicion might be that the food dye in The Basin is draining through to the Park ponds and having an adverse effect, but are there other factors? We know that the hydrology or flow of water through the Park ponds has changed recently with the draining of Heronry and the prevention of water flow from Perch to try to curb Floating Pennywort. This led to the Ornamental Waters



and Heronry drying up almost completely in 2018. This disruption in water flow can be seen if you look closely at the first graph which shows record numbers of Teal in 2018/19, a normally shy duck perhaps attracted from elsewhere by the easy feeding on mud.

We usually see one or two Little Egret each year, but 2018/9 saw a peak of 45, mostly on Heronry and the Ornamental Waters as the water levels dropped allowing easy access to their food.

To try and take account of the variation in water levels in the Park we can look back, but our Webs counts only go as far as 2010/11.



This tells us that our common dabbling and diving duck did very well in the Park from 2012/13 to 2016/17 but



*A dried out Heronry Pond. Water levels clearly have an impact on duck numbers with food more easily accessible. Pic by Tony Morrison*

were lower before then. Water levels in Heronry and the Park pond hydrology was also interrupted before 2011. My interpretation is that common duck numbers are high while the ponds show good water and trophic levels. The flow of water through the ponds probably helps. It is interesting however that the duck numbers on the Flats have remained constant even through the hot summers



*A Teal on the dried-out Ornamental Waters Pic by Bob Vaughan.*

of 2018 and 2019 and the drainage work on Alexandra Lake which might have been thought to have been detrimental. The work on improving Jubilee may have been beneficial here.

In summary I suggest the decrease in the number of winter duck in the Park is probably an effect of recent low water levels and poor feeding opportunities. As the work has finished, we hope that things will improve. It should be said that Shoulder-of-Mutton (SoM) pond has had quite good water levels throughout the period and the duck numbers are low here too. It is likely any dye flowing through from The Basin would affect SoM initially. The dye in The Basin may be a separate issue, but we should monitor this as the water flow through the Park has returned to normal. The association between the addition of food dye to lakes and low duck numbers has not been publicised, so it will be interesting to see if it has been seen elsewhere. I have heard of a similar problem at Dagenham Chase.

This article is also intended to emphasise the power of the collection of data on our wildlife. I believe it is important that we actively contributing to Webs counts and increase our monitoring of other wildlife so that we can use the information collected to make informed decisions, particularly during this time of rapid climate change.

Article by Bob Vaughan

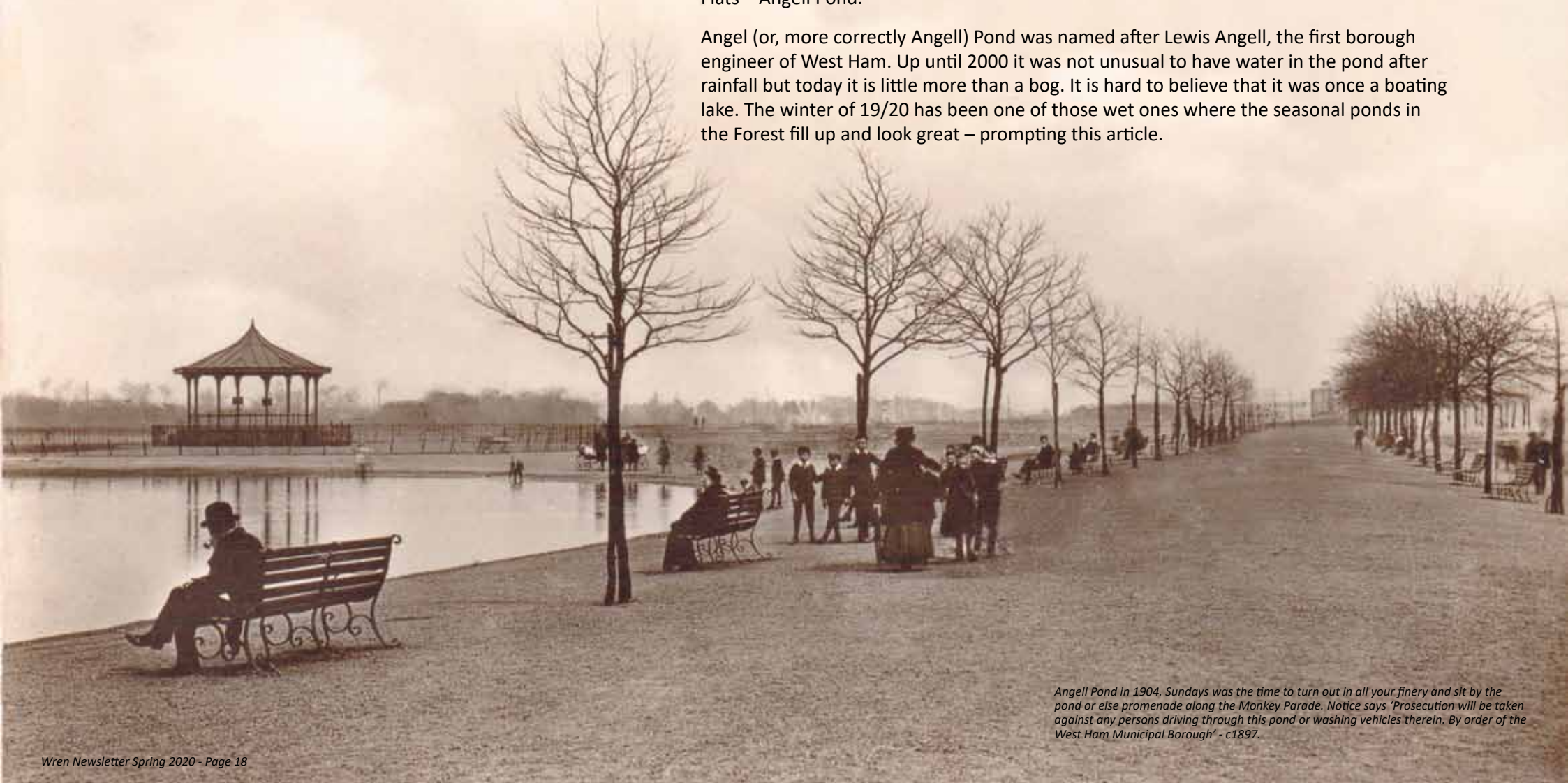


# angell pond

The Wren Group is predominantly a group for wildlife and conservation enthusiasts. The group monitors and helps conserve the beautiful natural surroundings of Wanstead Park, Wanstead Flats and adjoining areas. An important aspect of this is being aware not only of the wildlife in the area but of how these areas came into being. So here at Wren newsletter we like to show the history of our patch as well as the wonderful wildlife that can be found there.

In this edition Wren committee members and local historians Peter Williams and Mark Gorman have put together a potted history of a small and often invisible part of Wanstead Flats – Angell Pond.

Angel (or, more correctly Angell) Pond was named after Lewis Angell, the first borough engineer of West Ham. Up until 2000 it was not unusual to have water in the pond after rainfall but today it is little more than a bog. It is hard to believe that it was once a boating lake. The winter of 19/20 has been one of those wet ones where the seasonal ponds in the Forest fill up and look great – prompting this article.



*Angell Pond in 1904. Sundays was the time to turn out in all your finery and sit by the pond or else promenade along the Monkey Parade. Notice says 'Prosecution will be taken against any persons driving through this pond or washing vehicles therein. By order of the West Ham Municipal Borough' - c1897.*



Angell Pond at the corner of Capel Road and Woodford Road was originally dug by West Ham Council in 1893 with a sluice, to trap water which had been flowing off the Flats and into the newly-built shops in Woodgrange Road . The Flats were very boggy and poorly drained when the City of London took over the land in about 1880 following the act of parliament that saved it from development.

Land drains were put in partly by West ham Council and they took surface water and deposited it in Angell Pond. This allowed the development of sports pitches on the Flats and their much more intensive use. There were hundreds of cricket and football pitches by World War One.

The original small pond was extended and made into an ornamental lake the following year, using local unemployed workers as a kind of job creation scheme. Though it was on Corporation of London land, and is now in the modern borough of Redbridge, in the late nineteenth century it was located inside the West Ham borough boundary (West Ham joined East Ham borough in 1965 to become Newham, a made up name). The borough boundaries were only rationalised in the 1990s.



*Tram terminus outside 111-113 Woodford Road. After 1904 the trams system was owned by West Ham council. Trams brought people from busy London to what was countryside on the edge of Forest Gate and the lower forest.*

The borough engineer for West Ham at the time was Lewis Angell, hence one of its names (though it is also recorded as Angel Pond). That council wanted to construct a kind of recreation or resort area in the corner of Wanstead Flats for the benefit of local people. There was a tram terminus right there so access from the rest of the borough was easy. Bus and train connections were also very good with two railway stations nearby, Wanstead Park station opening in the mid 1890s on the Tottenham and Forest Gate Railway, now Barking-Gospel Oak. The name Wanstead Park was a bit of marketing by the railway company.



*The boating station on the Bandstand Pond. It was added later it seems as it is not on the other photos. In the background is the bandstand built in the 1890s.*

As part of the recreation area boating was allowed on the pond as it was deeper then than now. And then a bandstand was built by West Ham in late 1890s, and regular concerts were performed there, though local residents were not happy about the noise of the crowds.

An avenue of plane trees was planted by the council with a gravelled walk in between. Remnants of this can still be seen today parallel to Capel Road. This was the so called Monkey Parade, a tradition that had started in



*Nannies with parambulators and smart clothes of the Edwardian era sitting on council provided benches. However the area was not without it's problems - Notice says "Prosecution will be taken against any persons driving through this pond or washing vehicles therein. By order of the West Ham Municipal Borough" - c1897.*

Mile End in the third quarter of the nineteenth century and equivalent to the passeggiata you may know from the continent. It was an opportunity on a Sunday evening to dress up in your finest, and take your lover for a stroll, to see and be seen.



*Birdcage Walk as it is today showing a circular copse of trees in the background where the bandstand once stood*

Despite the popularity of this part of the Flats, Angell Pond was plagued by problems in its early years. There were regular complaints in the local press about the



pond, including flytipping, dead dogs and cats, and tradesmen driving their carts into the water to wash them. In more recent times, in hot weather it was common to see cows standing in the shallow water.



*Edwardian Postcard view of Monkey Parade. This is a quote from a popular song at the time! There appear to be fences here but these are not shown on the photos and were probably not there.*

Wren members and local residents may ask why the City of London has not tried to de-silt Bandstand Pond in the last 20 years. There are a number of issues. First it is very expensive as the Environment Agency impose stringent regulations on the disposal of the silt. It can no



*A view of Angell Pond looking west towards Woodford Road around 1918. The concrete drain in the lake is still there today but rarely if ever surrounded by water, as the pond has silted up no doubt. Note litter on the Flats is not just a modern problem.*

longer just be dumped on the Flats as happened 20 years ago when the Alexandra Lake was de-silted. It has to be carted away in sealed containers to specialist disposal sites many miles away. This is because of contaminants found in the pond, some from road run-off which contains diesel and other pollutants.

Second there are invasive species of plants present in the pond like Crassus, which can choke ponds and need to be carefully treated. This also costs money, as has been seen in Perch Pond Wanstead park in recent years.



*Another view of the pond looking south to Capel Road. Notice the houses still being built. Builders often built just half a dozen houses, not whole roads, which is why many terraces have breaks in them with slightly different designs and sizes.. Prior to the houses, earlier maps show this area made up of market gardens or strip allotments between Wanstead Flats and the newly built railway. Note also the newly planted Plane trees which still have timber pallings to protect them. These rows of trees were to become 'Birdcage Walk'*

Third the City just accept that some ponds are going to be seasonal, only full when the water table is high. These have a charm of their own as they change over time, with different species thriving at different times. The British countryside is full of seasonal ponds.

Fourth groundwater levels are generally much lower than in historic times, so in most years there is simply not enough water to fill the pond. It has no running source of water, as the land drains put in by the council will mostly

now be broken. You can still see their remnants on the Flats (Jubilee Pond Dames Road is partly filled by new land drains off the fairground site, but that scheme cost many hundreds of thousands of pounds a few years ago)



*A bandstand was built adjacent to the pond between 1897-1898 by the West Ham Corporation. This early photograph shows the bandstand under construction. Notice the scaffolding. 26/11/1897 Epping Forest minutes: A bandstand is to be built. "The resident of Capel-road were not looking forward with unmixed pleasure to the prospect of having the bandstand, with the more or less disorderly crowds who would surround it..."*

It is sad to note in the last two winters there has been virtually no frogspawn in Bandstand Pond, whereas only three years ago it was heaving. This is because of a frog disease that has killed off large numbers and this affects many ponds across the area, including garden ponds.





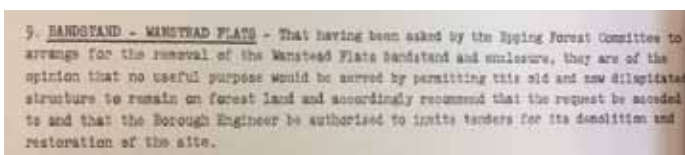
In wet winters water birds will sometimes nest there, though this is now rare due to generally low water levels.



Angell Pond in 1930 - the bandstand is still very busy but outdoor shows ceased to be as popular after the war and the bandstand was demolished in 1957

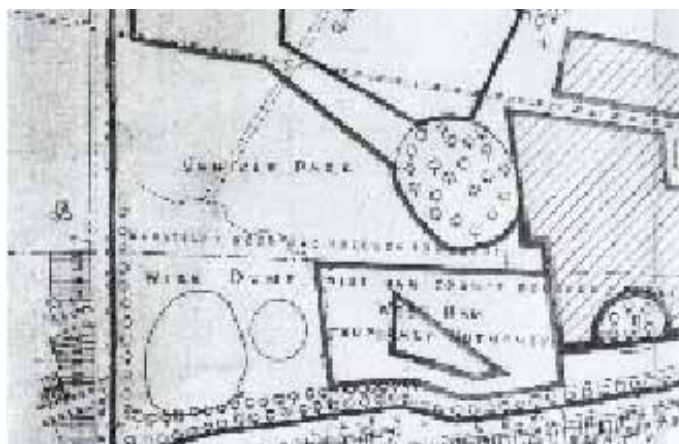
## The fate of the bandstand

As we have seen the bandstand was next to the pond. It had been built in late 19thC by West Ham council as part of a job creation scheme. In WW1 a Zeppelin dropped incendiary bombs nearby.



West Ham council minutes 1950s. The decision to get rid of the derelict bandstand.  
(Source Newham Archives - Photo PW)

A bandstand stood there until 1957 when it was demolished. Open air concerts were never as popular after the war as they were before. It was also used during the Second World War as a collection point for wood salvaged from damaged



Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) map drawn at the end of the war by West Ham council. You can see the pond bottom left and the other circle is the bandstand used for materials salvage. West Ham wanted to build houses and schools on the Flats. Hence the CPO.

houses. This was available to local people for rebuilding work or firewood – and also provided a useful source of timber for children to build rafts to sail on Alexandra Lake or Jubilee Pond. A circle of plane trees now marks the spot.



Angell Pond in 2020 after a wet season - hard to believe that the water level was once to the top of the overflow in the foreground. Centre of the picture can be seen a small copse of trees - the only clue that there once stood a bandstand on that site.

Article by Peter Williams and Mark Gorman

More [www.e7-nowandthen.org/search?q=angell](http://www.e7-nowandthen.org/search?q=angell)



Top picture - a view across Angell Pond opposite the corner of Capel/Barwick Roads 1906. Only half that terrace now survives. 2nd picture - same view around 1999 before regular droughts and 3rd picture - as it looks today.

# Wren Walkabout

On a windy and rainy Saturday morning in February (the 22nd to be precise) the Wren Group kicked off a new series of monthly events: the Wanstead Wildlife Walks.

Now, of course, the Wren Group has been organising wildlife walks in the local area for many years (in fact, for more years than I have been alive), but this new series has a few different objectives:

- It will be a regular, monthly event - we will aim to hold one on Saturday morning late in the month throughout the calendar. We will try and stick to a regular time (10-12) although meeting places will vary month to month around either the Wanstead Flats or Wanstead Park (this won't stop us from holding other events across the year, but is a regular commitment).
- They are specifically aimed to be as family and child-friendly as possible: the Wren Group is passionate about trying to encourage young people to take a greater interest in the natural world all around us.
- We want to focus on different wildlife aspects on different months - following the seasonal changes and profiling a wide range of diverse wildlife that can be found locally.

We were delighted that, despite the weather, around twenty people showed up for the walk on 22nd Feb. We started at Jubilee pond and spent some time there studying the water-fowl. The children had picture check-lists and managed to find many of the birds on their sheets.



*James Heal attracting more than just a passing interest from local bystanders at Jubilee Pond last month - Pic by Tim Harris*

Highlights on Jubilee were getting good views of the wonderful plumage on drake Gadwall, and picking up a pair of sleeping Pochard on the opposite side of the pond. Everyone enjoyed watching a Grey Heron arrive and then patrol the margins and the background music, when audible over the wind, was provided by our regular flock of Linnets, flying back and forth.



*Jubilee Pond on Wanstead Flats - Pic by Tony Morrison*

We had an opportunity to study some gulls on the eastern island of Jubilee; mostly Black-headed Gulls (with a range of moult stages, i.e. some with black heads and some without). Many of us, myself included, learned from Mary that Common Gull is so named because of its

tendency to frequent 'commons'. We also got to look at the immature brown and white plumage of an immature Herring Gull (a first winter bird) and a couple of smart adult Lesser Black-backed Gull.

The children also enjoyed feeding some of the waterfowl with some bird seed.



*Elizabeth looking through a scope at the abundance of wildlife living on and around Jubilee Pond on Wanstead Flats - Pic by Gill James*

Some of our group headed off at this stage, but a few remained to cross the road and explore the Broom Fields on Wanstead Flats for a short period. Despite the very strong wind, the sun had come out and odd snippets of Skylark song were occasionally audible. As we walked around the paths we occasionally sent Meadow Pipits squeaking up into the sky. But, for many, the highlight of the day was the pair of Stonechat we eventually got good views of perching low in the Broom out of the wind.

Walking around the Brooms, seeing the perching Stonechat was a reminder that soon it won't be long until they are replaced with Whinchat, there will be Wheatear on anthills and there will be almost constant song from our few remaining Skylark as well as Chiffchaff and Common and Lesser Whitethroat singing from out of the scrub. Roll on Spring and the next instalment of Wanstead Wildlife Walks - I do hope you can join us!

Report by James Heal





# forest verderers

Epping Forest has four verderers, two for the north of the Forest, and two for the south. They are elected locally and an election has recently been held. You were probably not invited to vote unless you are a Commoner.

To be a Commoner, you need to live in a Forest parish, and own or occupy land of at least half an acre of old enclosure and not covered by building and capable of receiving cattle.

So what is a verderer? Amazingly, this role has existed for 800 years. They used to administer Forest Law when it was a royal forest and literally protected the flora and fauna. Nowadays, they represent the interests of Commoners and the public living around the Forest to the Court of Common Council of City of London, who manage the Forest. They are independent and work entirely voluntarily. Verderers have the same “powers, authorities, rights, and privileges as the members thereof

selected from the Court of Common Council, and no other or different powers, authorities, rights, or privileges”.

We now have four new verderers, whose term of office is seven years. The City listens to their opinions, as many City folk are not familiar with this part of the world. So it is worth getting to know our verderers as they can represent our concerns.

In the South of the Forest, we welcome the re-election of Nicholas Munday along with new boy William Kennedy. As nominations were uncontested, both were elected without need for polling. Nicholas has shown considerable interest in local affairs and has listened sympathetically to the Wren Group’s concerns. Jo Thomas stood down after many years as a verderer.

In the North of the Forest, Michael Chapman was re-elected and the new verderer is Paul Morris. Paul Morris runs the Epping Forest Forum and takes a keen interest in local affairs, for example the impact of Local Neighbourhood Plans and development proposals impacting on the Forest.

The Verderers of Epping Forest The office of the Verderer was first introduced almost 1,000 years ago by

Saxon and Norman Kings. Verderers administered the Forest Law over the 60 forests used for hunting. The Verderers protected the ‘vert’ (all the vegetation in the forest) and the ‘venison’ (the hunting animals, principally deer and wild boar which relied on the habitat) of the forest. The Epping Forest Act 1878 removed the Royal status of the forest, swept away the obligations of Forest Law and established the City of London as the Conservators of Epping Forest. The Act recognised the value of the post of Verderer and confirmed the customary four posts. The role and importance of the Verderers has changed over the centuries as had that of the Royal Forests over all. The Verderers played an important role in the fight to save Epping Forest. The 1878 Act perpetuated the Verderers position with a stronger governance role.

Article by Gill James



[www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/things-to-do/green-spaces/epping-forest/about-us/Documents/verderer-role-description.pdf](http://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/things-to-do/green-spaces/epping-forest/about-us/Documents/verderer-role-description.pdf)

## then & now

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



A photograph of a flock of birds, likely geese or swans, flying in a V formation against a clear blue sky. The birds are silhouetted against the light sky, and their wings are spread, showing the characteristic V shape. The text 'smart birds hitch a ride' is overlaid on the left side of the image in a white, handwritten-style font.

# smart birds hitch a ride

Anyone watching the autumn sky would have seen migrating birds flying in a 'V' formation - with birds taking turns taking the lead. More attentive birdwatchers have always assumed that the reason for this was to somehow share the burden of flying what can sometimes be very large distances.

Scientists from the Royal Veterinary College at the University of London in Hatfield have now confirm, in

a recent study of ibises, that these big-winged birds carefully position their wingtips and sync their flapping in order to catch the preceding bird's updraft - and save energy during flight.

It was known that squadrons of planes can save fuel by flying in a V formation, and many scientists suspected that migrating birds did the same.

The study, published online today in *Nature*, took advantage of an existing project to reintroduce endangered northern bald ibises (*Geronticus eremita*) to Europe. Scientists used a microlight plane to show hand-raised birds their ancestral migration route from Austria to Italy. A flock of 14 juveniles carried data loggers specially built by Usherwood and his lab. The device's GPS determined each bird's flight position to within 30 cm, and an accelerometer showed the timing of the wing flaps.





Just as aerodynamic estimates would predict, the birds positioned themselves to fly just behind and to the side of the bird in front, timing their wing beats to catch the uplifting eddies. When a bird flew directly behind another, the timing of the flapping reversed so that it could minimize the effects of the downdraft coming off the back of the bird's body. "We didn't think this was possible," Usherwood says, considering that the feat requires careful flight and incredible awareness of one's neighbors.

The findings likely apply to other long-winged birds, such as pelicans, storks, and geese, Usherwood says. Smaller birds create more complex wakes that would make drafting too difficult. The researchers did not attempt to calculate the bird's energy savings because the necessary physiological measurements would be too invasive for an endangered species. Previous studies estimate that birds can use 20% to 30% less energy while flying in a V.

Scientists still do not know how the birds find that aerodynamic sweet spot, but they suspect that they somehow align themselves either by sight or by sensing air currents through their feathers. Alternatively, they may move around until they find the location with the least resistance. In future studies, the researchers will switch to more common birds, such as pigeons or geese. They plan to investigate how the animals decide who sets the course and the pace, and whether a mistake made by the leader can ripple through the rest of the flock to cause traffic jams.

For more click on the links below

[www.nature.com/nature/journal/v505/n7483/full/nature12939.html](http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v505/n7483/full/nature12939.html)

[www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-25736049](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-25736049)

[http://english.pravda.ru/science/mysteries/16-01-2014/126613-bird\\_formation-0/](http://english.pravda.ru/science/mysteries/16-01-2014/126613-bird_formation-0/)

Article and pics by Tony Morrison



# house sparrows

## Making a comeback

According to the RSPB's 'Big Garden Watch' House sparrows are flocking back to British gardens - along with coal tits, wrens and long-tailed tits.

The decline of the house sparrow in British gardens appears to be reversing, according to the latest survey.

Tony Morrison together with the RSPB website bring you the surprising results of the National Big Garden Birdwatch.





The house sparrow is known to have lived in close contact with humans, rather than in forests and has, for years, peacefully coexisted with us in our buildings and gardens - however, numbers of the bird have been on the decline.

According to conservation organisation, The World Wide Fund (WWF), factors leading to their decline were thought to be; rapidly changing cities that are inhabitable for the bird species, modern infrastructure that does not account for space for the sparrow to nest, and the sharp rise in pollution levels, caused by microwave towers and pesticides.



*While house sparrows may be the UK's most commonly sighted birds and have increased by 10% in the last decade, a closer look at Big Garden Birdwatch data shows that numbers have in fact dropped dramatically since the Birdwatch began in 1979 with the bird down by around 53%.*

This has never been a problem in my garden with the feisty little devils running the place and it seems that the

trend is now happening all over the UK according to the latest RSPB national garden survey with sparrows being the most commonly sighted bird.



*Sightings of Coal Tits were up 10% this year compared with 2019*

## The RSPB survey shows numbers of the chirpy bird have grown by ten per cent in the last decade

As well as a rise in house sparrows, the milder winter also brought long-tailed tits, wrens and coal tits to British gardens in huge numbers this year. More gardens reported seeing long-tailed tits, which were up 14%, while wrens were up 13% and coal tits up 10% in 2020 compared with 2019.

Nearly half a million people across the country took part in the Big Garden Birdwatch on 25-27 January and counted nearly 8 million birds.

The RSPB, which has run the event for 41 years, said the results showed much of the population kept in touch with nature by watching garden birds.

The house sparrow was the most counted visitor this winter with nearly 1.3 million sightings over the bird-watching weekend.

Since the Big Garden Birdwatch began in 1979 house sparrow numbers have declined by 53%. But in the past 10 years their numbers have begun to recover, with a 10% increase in sightings.



*The Starling was the second most sighted bird in people's gardens this year although sadly down by 80% compared to 1979*

This year the house sparrow remained at the top of the rankings as the most commonly seen garden bird. Starlings were the second most sighted, followed by the blue tit.

Daniel Hayhow, an RSPB conservation scientist, said: "Small birds suffer during long, cold winters but the

warmer January weather this year appears to have given species such as the wren and long-tailed tit a boost. Over the survey's lifetime, we've seen the increasing good fortunes of birds such as the coal tit and goldfinch and the alarming declines of the house sparrow and starling. But there appears to be good news for one of these birds ... giving us hope that at least a partial recovery may be happening."

*"Regular visits to garden feeders in urban areas appear to have led to population growth across more than 30 different bird species, while there has been no change in the average population sizes of birds that don't visit feeders."*

**RSPB**

The popularity of birdfeeders in gardens across the UK has helped increase the number of some bird species.

"We now know that garden bird feeding is one of many important environmental factors affecting British bird numbers," explains lead author of the study Dr Kate Plummer. Beccy Speight, the RSPB's chief executive, said: "Despite everything that's going on in the world, nature is still doing its thing. Birds are singing and

blossom is bursting. Watching wildlife, whether from a window or a balcony or even online, can offer many of us hope, joy and a welcome distraction, and so we are keen to help you carry on connecting with the natural world."

## The Big Garden Birdwatch 2020 Results

Back in January nearly half a million people counted almost eight million birds, making this year's Birdwatch one of the biggest ever! But what do the results mean for our garden birds?

Which bird is top of the flocks? - The UK top ten

1. House sparrow down 53% since 1979
2. Starling down 80% since 1979
3. Blue tit up 20% since 1979
4. Woodpigeon up 1035% since 1979
5. Blackbird down 46% since 1979
6. Goldfinch up 50% since 199
7. Great tit up 72% since 1979
8. Robin down 32% since 1979
9. Long-tailed tit up 37% since 1979
10. Magpie up 199 % since 1979

This year's top ten for the UK is little changed from 2019, with the top three birds unchanged from last year. Once again, top spot is taken by the house sparrow, making it first for the seventeenth year running. There's a little bit of shuffling at fourth and fifth, with the woodpigeon moving into fourth and, last year's number four, the blackbird, dropping one spot to fifth.

There is one new entry to the top ten, with long-tailed tits flying into ninth position. The chaffinch meanwhile has dropped from number nine last year to number 11.



*Sightings of the Robin were down by 32% since 1979 when the survey first started*

While house sparrows and starlings may be the UK's most commonly sighted birds, a closer look at Big Garden Birdwatch data shows that numbers have in fact dropped dramatically since the Birdwatch began in 1979. House sparrows are down 53%, while starlings are down 80%. It's a pattern echoed by two more garden favourites, with blackbirds and robins down 46% and 32% respectively.

The reasons behind these declines are complex and continue to be investigated, but fewer green spaces, pollution and a changing climate are just some of the challenges faced by garden birds.

For more information go to [www.rspb.org.uk/get-involved/activities/birdwatch/results](http://www.rspb.org.uk/get-involved/activities/birdwatch/results)



We may be living under lockdown during the coronavirus pandemic, but outside nature carries on and spring has well and truly arrived. Maintaining a connection with nature is more important than ever if you are stuck indoors for most of the day.

Our opportunities to engage with nature may be fewer during the pandemic but there are still a number of things we can do to stay connected to nature, look after our wellbeing, and keep safe.

All of the regular Wren activities have been cancelled. However, we are using new ways to keep in touch with our members by holding free online meetings and presentations using Zoom. Go to our website and Facebook page to keep in touch with new online events.

Instead of our usual 'Links Page' we will be maintaining a list of online resources and ideas to help keep us all engaged with nature.

# lockdown links

Ten ways to connect with nature without leaving your home this spring

[www.positive.news/lifestyle/10-ways-to-connect-with-nature-without-leaving-your-home-this-spring/?fbclid=IwAR2tI3IRSudyYpn9c\\_IF5YySy8bOksS-56TSXmkpr1CyGEbngbpoVGVRnfk](http://www.positive.news/lifestyle/10-ways-to-connect-with-nature-without-leaving-your-home-this-spring/?fbclid=IwAR2tI3IRSudyYpn9c_IF5YySy8bOksS-56TSXmkpr1CyGEbngbpoVGVRnfk)

Enjoying nature from your home or garden is good for your mental health

[www.richmond.gov.uk/council/news/partner\\_comment\\_spot/new\\_blog\\_enjoying\\_nature\\_mental\\_health](http://www.richmond.gov.uk/council/news/partner_comment_spot/new_blog_enjoying_nature_mental_health)

#VitaminN: How to enjoy nature under lockdown

[www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/52216267](http://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/52216267)

Wildlife Watch - downloadable spotting sheets

[www.wildlifewatch.org.uk/spotting-sheets](http://www.wildlifewatch.org.uk/spotting-sheets)

Home birds: how to spot 20 of the most common species from your window, walk or garden

[www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/apr/16/home-birds-how-to-spot-20-of-the-most-common-species-from-your-window-walk-or-garden](http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/apr/16/home-birds-how-to-spot-20-of-the-most-common-species-from-your-window-walk-or-garden)

How to avoid people and stay in touch with nature during lockdown

[www.scotsman.com/news/environment/how-avoid-people-and-stay-in-touch-with-nature-during-lockdown](http://www.scotsman.com/news/environment/how-avoid-people-and-stay-in-touch-with-nature-during-lockdown)

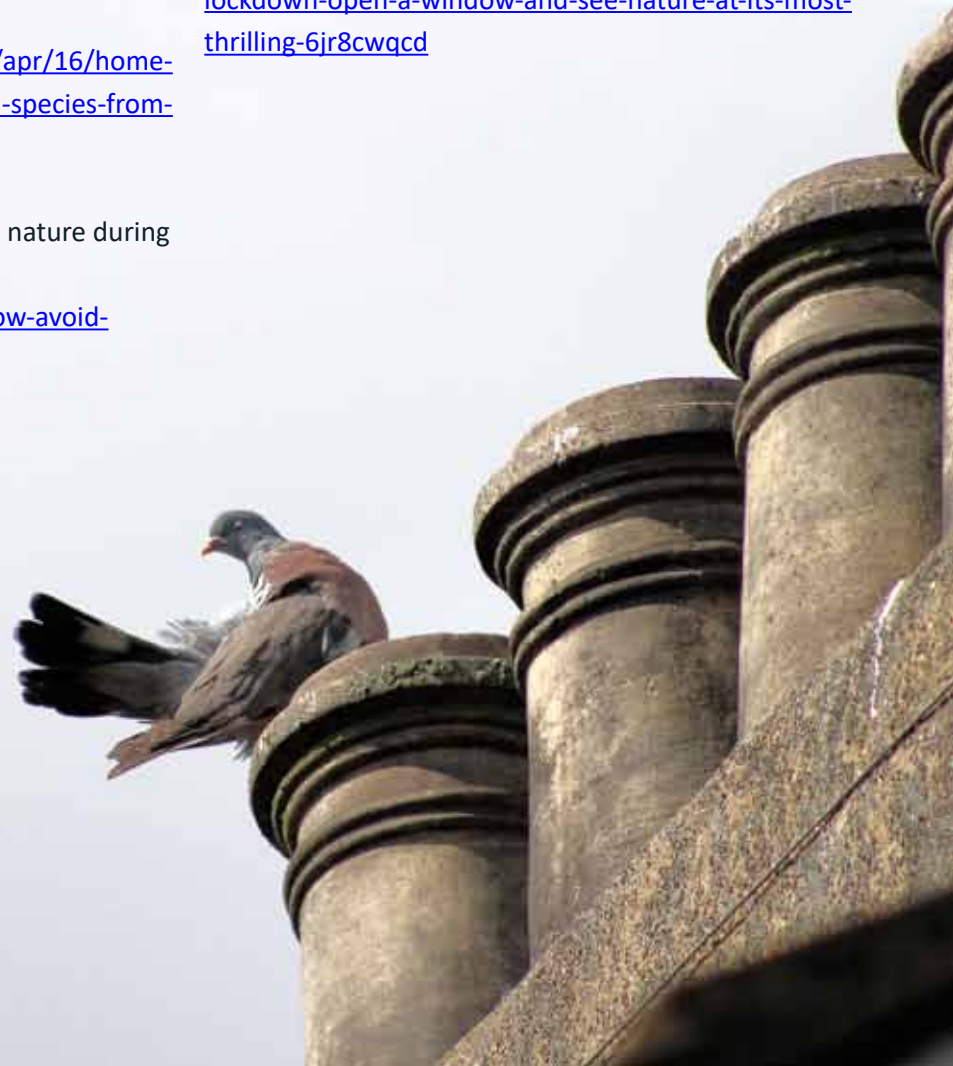
[people-and-stay-touch-nature-during-lockdown-2521708](http://people-and-stay-touch-nature-during-lockdown-2521708)

Watching the birdies is a chance to connect with nature – and each other – during lockdown

[www.thecourier.co.uk/fp/lifestyle/1252432/watching-the-birdies-is-a-chance-to-connect-with-nature-and-each-other-during-lockdown/](http://www.thecourier.co.uk/fp/lifestyle/1252432/watching-the-birdies-is-a-chance-to-connect-with-nature-and-each-other-during-lockdown/)

In the coronavirus lockdown, open a window and see nature at its most thrilling

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/in-the-coronavirus-lockdown-open-a-window-and-see-nature-at-its-most-thrilling-6jr8cwqcd>



# .... don't forget

It can still be pretty parky out there and under lockdown, with fewer visitors, food may be hard to come by for our birds - so please keep an eye out for our feathered friends.

- Provide fresh clean water every day.
- Give kitchen scraps like cheese, cooked potato and bread.
- Clear up uneaten food at the end of the day as it could attract rats.
- Avoid giving salted nuts and only give peanuts from a good supplier.
- Clean feeding areas regularly to prevent any disease.



## then & now

Were you right ?

Centre Road looking towards Forest Gate. The road has been widened since the original photo was taken in 1910 and the verge has become overgrown somewhat - but the London Plane trees are a giveaway. The Plane trees in the original picture were newly planted as can be seen by the use of protective timber cages around their trunks.

