

Summer 2022

Wren

Wildlife & Conservation Group

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Four-spotted Chaser - pic by Tim Harris

a word from the chair

I am writing this at the beginning of June; a month often looked down on by birders as the worst for birds. But the wonderful thing about natural history is that as some cycles enter their quieter phases (Spring passage migration of birds comes to an end for example), other cycles move into their ascendancy. Invertebrate life explodes during the summer months and so, whilst there may be fewer new and interesting birds to see, there are lots more dragonflies, butterflies, moths, beetles, bugs, and bees to keep us occupied.

And so the summer is often the peak time to sample the great multitudinous diversity of life that we have on our doorstep. The Wren Group has traditionally done this through BioBlitz activities. Fun-for-all events with a serious scientific seam running through them - we invite experts and locally knowledgeable people to join us to look for at the flora and fauna that we have locally.

We will be doing exactly that on the last weekend of June (25-26 June) on Wanstead Flats and Wanstead Park and the following weekend (most likely Sunday 3 July) on Leyton Flats in a special set of Bioblitz activities to help celebrate our 50th anniversary.

We will also do another BioBlitz-style visit to East Ham Nature Reserve in September which was the location of the first Wren visit 50 years ago.

And what better way to help celebrate the natural diversity on our doorstep than by a photography competition with a nature theme. Guidelines on entering the competition can be found later in this newsletter. Please send your submissions to wrenconservationgroup@gmail.com as soon as you like but no later than 30th September.

Photos will be judged and prizes awarded at our 50th birthday celebrations in October. We hope to see you there.

James Heal
Chair of Wren Group



*“Don’t waste electricity, don’t waste paper, don’t waste food
..... live the way you want to live but just don’t waste.”*

Sir David Attenborough,
Patron of the Wren Group



Epping Forest stopped mowing on some of the heath land on Wanstead Flats. In no time at all the land turned into a rich meadow much welcomed by local wildlife and visitors. Picture by Moira Duhig

rewilding

is spreading throughout the land

Rewilding seems to be the subject of the moment. A rewilding themed garden won a top gold prize at the recent Chelsea Flower Show. Then, there is the Mayor of London's plan to rewild the capital. This initiative focuses on eight core areas around London, including Hainault Forest and Rainham Marshes of which many will be acquainted. There are also smaller projects, such as pocket parks and new nature reserves. In addition, there is also the role of individuals bringing rewilding into their gardens and places of work. It is an exciting initiative that draws on other major rewilding projects, such as the Knepp estate in Sussex.



The idea is to let nature reclaim it's natural state, rather than be pushed into false constructs at the behest of human kind.

The government has committed to 30% of land being given over to nature by 2030. Some though have raised concerns about food production, the need to feed ourselves with locally produced produce.



Live near a street tree? Why not adopt it and plant wildflowers at its base? This can help bees and other creatures when they're moving about and stop the use of harmful chemicals. Pic courtesy of Wild Wanstead.

James Rebanks is someone who has really taken on this challenge, seeking on his hill farm in Cumbria, to increase biodiversity whilst farming in the most sustainable way. Jame's outlines his journey in his fascinating book English Pastoral - an inheritance. Well worth a read. The owners of the Knepp estate are now trying to do a similar thing with a new farming development. This is clearly the right direction of travel.

In our own area, there have been efforts to rewild, with the Growzones developed in Redbridge. Among these are parts of George and Christchurch Greens plus Riding Valley Park at the end of Elmcroft Avenue.

There are plans to extend these wild areas out further across the borough, as part of the Green Urban Landscape plan.

The need to develop the green corridors of connectivity has to be central to this development.

Epping Forest have also embraced rewilding with the introduction of the Longhorn cattle to parts of Wanstead Park, as well as developing wetlands. The work of Thames 21 on the River Riding fits into the rewilding jigsaw.

The growing movement that is no mow May also fits into the ethos of rewilding. It has been great to see the wild flowers and grasses looking resplendent along the road sides and rivers.

It is possible to go no mow for May in our own gardens. I have done so for the last few years.

It is fascinating to see the insect life develop, when you just leave the grass alone.

The role of everyone as mini-rewilders is important as part of the overall effort to improve biodiversity.

Allotment sites can also adopt the principles of rewilding. This brings together food production and improvement

of biodiversity in a smaller way to the farms mentioned earlier but the principle is the same. The allotment sites also contribute significantly to the development of green corridors.



The City of London Corporation have brought back Long Horn cattle to Wanstead Park and other parts of the forest for a more natural form of land management. Pic by Tony Morrison Chingford Plain

So there is much going on internationally, nationally and locally to extend rewilding - long may it continue. The future has to see humankind operating much more in accordance with rather than against nature. Then everyone will be able to enjoy a more sustainable future.

Article by Cllr Paul Donovan



More; Knepp <https://knepp.co.uk/home>

Wild Wanstead <https://www.wildwanstead.org/grow-zone>

The background of the entire page is a soft-focus photograph of a forest. A thick layer of white fog or mist hangs low over a grassy field in the foreground, partially obscuring the trees in the background. The trees are mostly bare, suggesting a late autumn or winter setting. The overall color palette is muted, with greys, whites, and soft browns, creating a serene and atmospheric mood.

epping forest

for everyone to L♥ve

Peter Lewis is the new Chief Executive for Epping Forest Heritage Trust (EFHT). The EFHT is a charity based organisation, largely run by volunteers, aiming to promote access, understanding and interest in Epping Forest through awareness and conservation programmes. They work with a variety of adults and young people including schools, special needs groups, Scouting organisations, volunteer groups, community groups. They also work closely with the Corporation of London - the owners and custodians of the forest.

Here Peter gives us an update on the latest events and campaigns in the Forest.

In the last few months I have been absolutely delighted to be able to partner with the WREN group, as well as the Epping Forest Transport Action Group and the Buckhurst Hill Residents' Society, on the awareness campaign, 'Epping Forest for Everyone to Love' in the run up to the local elections.



Those standing for the council in Epping Forest District and Newham, Redbridge and Waltham Forest have vowed to show their love for Epping Forest in their decision-making. Here Peter Lewis is with Redbridge Councillor Jo Blackman - having taken the pledge. Pic thx to Epping Forest Heritage Trust (EFHT)

A big thanks to everyone who individually supported the campaign. We had lots of excellent conversations with candidates, as well as with sitting councillors, and secured 84 pledges of support from candidates, 39 of whom were subsequently elected. We are now following up with the elected councillors and Cabinet Members, so we can support them to put Epping Forest at the heart of their decision-making. For me this collaboration between community organisations around the Forest is something I want to build on as we move forward.

Each of the groups has specialist expertise, knowledge and insight about either different areas of the Forest or about issues that relate to the Forest as a whole. Each also benefits from committed volunteers offering their time. And we all know the Forest is now facing its biggest challenges in a generation, ranging from the impact of development nearby to levels of pollution, from climate change to budget tightening and organisational changes at the City of London Corporation.

All of this means that not only is the work of organisations like the WRENs in the south of the Forest even more important, but it is also important, that where appropriate, we come together to share expertise and insight, and work together for the good of the common ground we all love and cherish.

I am genuinely excited by the passion that exists for the Forest in the communities that surround it.

At the end of our recent event "[Does Epping Forest Need Saving Again?](#)" (The conclusion was that it does!), members of the audience were keen to offer their support to keep an eye on planning applications in their area, bringing them to our attention so we can take action as appropriate. And this mobilisation of people who care is perhaps one area where we can work together for mutual benefit, linking people to the areas where they might be able to add most impact.

But all is not gloom and doom. There are opportunities too. Just as Spring brings back new life to the Forest, the elections at the City of London Corporation and in the local authorities around the Forest bring new politicians with new energy and ideas, as well as, we hope, renewed commitment to protect

and preserve the Forest. We look forward to working with them all, and in particular Ben Murphy as the new Chair of the Epping Forest & Commons Committee, and Caroline Haines as the new Chair of the Open Spaces Committee. We need to work to support them in their roles to ensure that the City of London Corporation truly value and invest in this wonderful ancient Forest, so we can enhance its biodiversity and protect and preserve it for generations to come.



Tricia Moxey and Mark Gorman delivered excellent talks, at the recent event, looking into the history of how the Forest was saved in the late 19th century, and the threats it is facing now, followed by a lively discussion session with the audience. Pic thx to Epping Forest Heritage Trust (EFHT)

Most vital of all, is for us to continue to share our love of Epping Forest with family, friends, neighbours, acquaintances and colleagues. Many people are still not aware of its importance, history or simply the joy of exploring it. And we can only protect it if for generations to come if more people come to love it as we do. We have been delighted to partner with CPRE London and Fences and Frontiers in the last month to introduce refugee families to its joys. Every initiative like this brings new horizons and pleasures to new people, and means more people come to care about the Forest.

bird report

by James Heal

Spring 2022 (for the purpose of this summary, March, April, and May) saw 109 bird species recorded locally with March (77), April (a month record of 95), and May (88).



One of the best birds of the Spring was only seen by a single lucky birder, Tim Harris: our third Turtle Dove in 12 years perched briefly near Alex before disappearing south on 1 May. Tim was also alerted by a call while inspecting his moth trap in his garden and watched a Whimbrel (our sixth sighting) fly over on 5 May.

A slightly wider audience were enthralled by a Merlin (our fifth record) on 23 April which flew low up over the Brooms, around Long Wood and then picked up pace and took out a small passerine over Centre Copse. A few more saw it again the following day.



Goosander - pic by Jonathan Lethbridge

Some other notable records:

- Jono found a Pheasant on 2 April; a long staying bird in the Brooms, last reported on 26 April (only seventh on record).
- Nick had a Goosander west over Long Wood on 9 April.

- We got our hopes up when a male Lesser Spotted Woodpecker appeared at a location which will remain undisclosed on 13 April and stayed for several days.
- Jono found a singing Nightingale in Long Wood on 15 April.
- A poor start of the year for gulls meant that our first Caspian Gull for the year was seen on 7 May and our first Caspian Gull on 31 May; both second calendar year birds and both found by Tony B.
- Bob's Noc-mig recording device picked up Oystercatcher (15 April) and then Dunlin and Little Ringed Plover (both on 1 May).

Spring passage migrants

The Spring migrant passage was kicked off, as it is so often, by the arrival of the first Wheatear; this year on 13 March. This was our second earliest on record (after 2017; 11 March) and six days earlier than our mean average first arrival. It was also the second Wheatear of



Common Whitethroat - Picture by Nick Croft

the year for the London recording area. Richard found the male in the Brooms and Louis & Gosia won this year's prestigious Wheatear sweepstake trophy; with Louis wearing black tie to collect the trophy a few days later.

Passage Migrants Spring 2022 (and 2021 for comparison)					
Species	Days recorded	First & 'Last'	Arrival vs average	Average Count	High Count
Wheatear	20 (24)	13/03 - 17/05	-6 (+7)	2 (3)	5 (12)
Willow Warbler	27 (23)	31/03 - 27/05	-4 (-6)	1 (2)	3 (11)
Swallow	39 (36)	06/04 - 27/05	+4 (-6)	13 (5)	96 (50)
Sand Martin	14 (22)	10/04 - 24/05	+13 (-7)	2 (2)	7 (6)
Yellow Wagtail	18 (14)	13/04 - 19/05	-1 (0)	2 (2)	4 (6)
Tree Pipit	1 (0)	15/04	-8 (-)	1 (-)	1 (-)
Ring Ouzel	2 (3)	19/04 - 23/04	+9 (-6)	1 (1)	1 (1)
Garden Warbler	2 (4)	25/04 - 26/04	-5	1 (1)	1 (2)
Sedge Warbler	3 (5)	29/04 - 09/05	+4 (+6)	1 (1)	1 (1)
Whinchat	5 (4)	29/04 - 17/05	+4 (+2)	2 (2)	2 (3)
Spot Flycatcher	1 (1)	14/05	+5 (-4)	2 (1)	2 (1)

The table on passage migrants should hopefully speak for itself and with a comparison in grey of spring last year to give some context. In terms of calendar days when a species is recorded, the most notable call-outs are: Sand Martin (down six); Yellow Wagtail and Willow Warbler (up four); and Wheatear (down four).

A single record of Tree Pipit this Spring was a notable improvement on the blank last year, but this year we got through Spring without a single record of Common Redstart (compared with four last year).

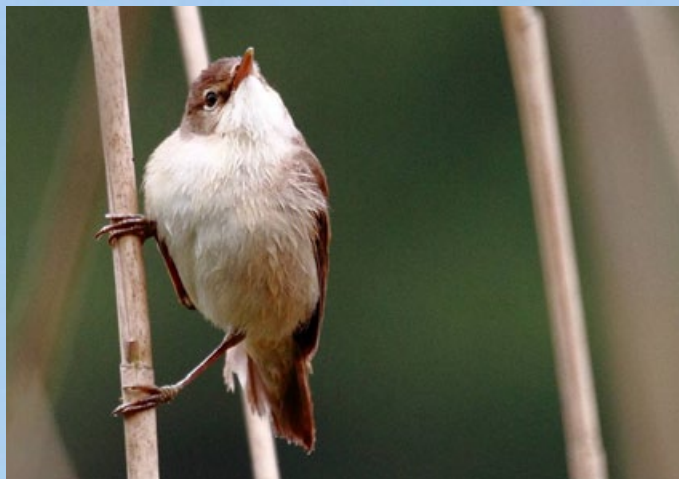
Breeding birds: some selected comments

This was the second year we had the benefit of the Skylark fencing. An organised Skylark count in March

revealed 11 birds on Wanstead Flats with 4-5 males regularly singing. There was evidence of successful breeding with at least one pair feeding young, although there was also sadly evidence of possible predation of one nest.

Meadow Pipit was last recorded on 29 April and whilst we still have healthy numbers through the winter, this is the second year in a row that this species has not stayed around to breed locally - I didn't hear a single Meadow Pipit song this Spring.

Reed Warbler have popped up all over the place during the Spring, but the most reliable singing territory has been by Shoulder of Mutton pond again - although only one male this year. There have also been at least one regular singing Cetti's Warbler on the Roding in the Old Sewage Works.



Reed Warbler - pic by Nick Croft

We had one or two wintering Chiffchaff but then numbers started to increase from around 9 March up to a peak count of 22 singing males in mid April. This followed a very similar pattern to the previous year. A

similar story can be told about Blackcap - with one or two being reported in gardens through the winter and then numbers starting to build in March up to a peak count of 27 singing males on 14 April.

Our first Common Whitethroat arrived on 12 April this year (last year 14 April). I am not sure we have conducted a thorough survey of singing males this year but it will be at least approaching 20 territories. The first Lesser Whitethroat arrived on 15 April (26 April in 2021) this year and we had a peak count of 6 singing males with closer to 2-3 holding territory across the Spring.

Our Spring high count for Song Thrush was 17 birds across the Patch but this may have been swelled by local or wider movement and the number of regular birds holding territory is closer to half that number.



The Spring migrant passage was kicked off, as it is so often, by the arrival of the first Wheatear - Picture by James Heal

At some point you may have heard that many birds migrate at night. While it is now fairly popular to watch birds migrating at daytime, you may have wondered, how on earth can we experience bird migration at night? Well the answer is to listen and record sounds made by migrating flocks.

Here Wren committee member Bob Vaughan gives us an insight into this very niche activity.

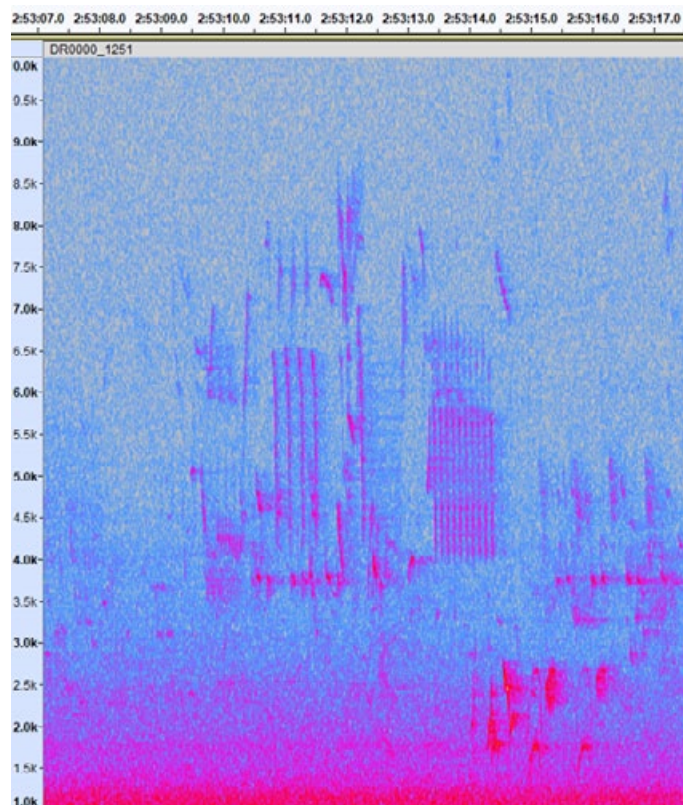
fly-by-nights

Recently it has become possible to listen to and identify birds calling as they flying over at night, so-called nocturnal migration or nocmig. The technique is to leave a microphone outside, from early evening to early morning, so that the any audio-activity can be recorded on a sound recorder (similar to a dictaphone) kept inside.

The resulting many hours of sounds recorded can be analysed on a computer programme such as Audacity, which enables sounds to be viewed as a visible trace or sonogram.

To get a feel for the information sonogram picture 1 shows a 10 second trace of my garden spring dawn chorus, with the frequency of the sounds from 1000 to 10,000 kilohertz on the vertical axis and time on the horizontal:

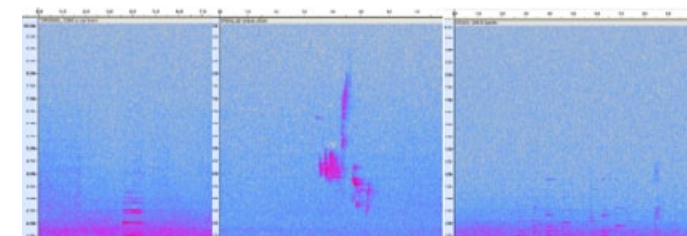
It features a Wren singing centrally; with the close purple jagged lines representing its trill, the repeated notes slightly lower down represent a Great Tit while a Blackbird is singing at the lower right.



Sonogram picture 1 - a 10 second trace of my garden spring dawn chorus

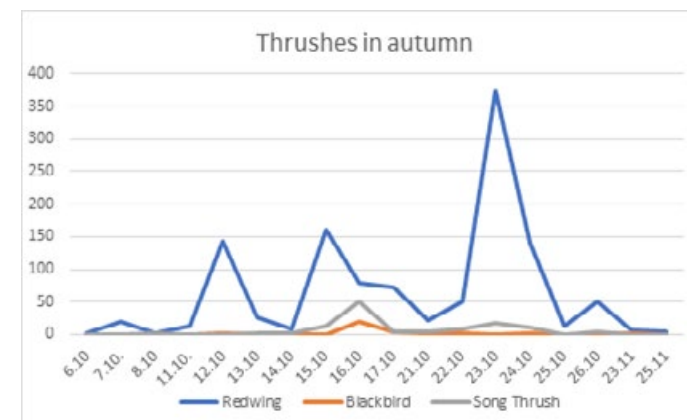
After a night's recording it's possible to click through, 30 seconds at a time, looking for likely bird sounds. An obvious problem is recognising any birds that might be present, which means separating out sirens, car horns, helicopters, airplanes, boy racers, cats, dogs and foxes amidst the surprisingly loud ambient drone of activity in London. Initially the analysis can be full of stops and checks, with a trace looking interesting but then

sounding non-avian, but with practice most sounds can be eliminated on sight of the trace. The first trace in the next series of images is a car horn (make unknown), the second is a Robin, usually the first birds to starting their singing in the morning, this one was just after 03-30 in early May. The recording to the right is St Gabriel's church clock chimes followed by a Mallard's quack.



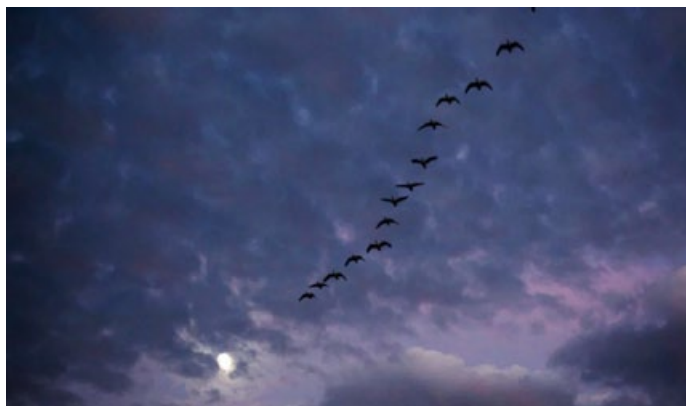
The first sonogram trace is a car horn, followed by a Robin and finally St. Gabriel's Church clock chimes followed by a Mallard's quack..

Many birds probably fly over at night without calling, but can we identify the ones that do. In the autumn thrushes start to fly in from the continent and one of the easiest of these to recognise is the Redwing. This graph shows the numbers recorded over Belgrave Road last October. Blank days are usually due to poor conditions such as high winds or rain.



Other species can be difficult to identify even if recorded in ideal conditions, but there are experts on hand to help via WhatsApp groups. The surprise for me has been the relative frequency of wading birds recorded at night. Wanstead Park and Flats is generally acknowledged as a wader-free zone. Only Common Sandpiper, Lapwing and Snipe are recorded on an annual basis, every other wader is an event. In two years I have recorded twelve species of wader flying over my house, four of which I haven't seen on the patch in over thirty years of bird-watching here.

As an example, my next-door-neighbour contacted me to say she thought she had heard some waders fly over at 23-45 the night before. My immediate scepticism turned to astonishment as I listened to that night's no-cmig file. There were clearly the calls of a few Common Redshank flying over at the time she suggested, and on top of those a single calling Dunlin. It should be noted that none of the local birders have seen a Redshank on the patch!



Listening to nocturnal migration is now growing in popularity to the point that it has its own nickname: 'noc-mig' (from 'nocturnal migration').

The effective range of my microphone to record identifiable bird calls is limited, perhaps a 500m arc, the patch is about 2 square kilometres, so it is likely that waders are flying over the patch at night far more regularly than any of us

had realised. Is there a pattern to these over flights? Is it related to weather and tides? Given that I would like to see or hear some of these birds directly, I am now depositing the sound recordings and details on eBird for future analysis.

Article by Bob Vaughan



More

[The Sound Approach guide to nocturnal flight calls](#)

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.



Hainault forest

by Lucinda Culpin

A group of Wren members got together on a bright and clear Saturday morning for a walk in Hainault Forest, led by Francis Castro of Vision Redbridge.

Francis explained that the forest is in two parts; one half is more ancient forest and is managed by the Woodland Trust on behalf of Essex County Council.

The other half, where we were walking, had been brutally cleared and turned into farm land in the mid-19th Century. However in 1902, after pressure from Edward North Buxton, the land was bought back by the London Council and others for public use and replanted. It's now managed by Vision Redbridge on behalf of Redbridge Council.



Buzzard over Hainault - pic by Ricorelli Alessandro

There was a chill wind by the cafe on the plain where we met, but we had some beautiful sunshine once we started our walk into the woods. The leaves were starting to appear in that beautiful bright green that shows that it's Spring at last.

As we approached the large man-made lake on the edge of the woods a buzzard hovered right above us, almost as if it had been prearranged. We also spotted a Mandarin Duck on the lake, along with Tufted Ducks, Canada and Greylag Geese, swans and Mallards.

Many different woodland birds were singing loudly too. As we walked along through the trees various birds were heard such as chiffchaffs, blackcaps, great tits, gold crests and chaffinches.

We crossed over a stream and Francis showed us how he and his team have been placing groups of branches in the streams to slow the water flow to encourage wildlife and reduce flooding.

Part of the modern management of the woods also includes creating some open glades. We saw gorse and honeysuckle flourishing here and log

piles which have been dotted around to encourage beetles and butterflies and other insects.

Francis took us past a group of beech trees that had been planted by Edward Buxton as part of the original reafforestation project, with the trees being brought over from Epping Forest. That particular experiment wasn't very successful as the soil is more acidic here and doesn't suit the beeches. However Buxton's overall work in carrying out various trial planting schemes as they reafforested the land is now seen as pioneering and it led the way to other projects in Britain and other parts of the world.

As the walk came to an end we ambled down a beautiful avenue of trees towards the cafe and Francis showed us a new pond and an accessible path there that are being created as part of their current Restoration Project. We then retired to the cafe for a welcome cup of tea. Thank you to Francis for a fascinating outing.

More background on the HF Restoration Project t <https://visionrcl.org.uk/parks-outdoor-spaces/hainault-forest-project/>



The Blackbird

by William Ernest Henley

THE nightingale has a lyre of gold,
The lark's is a clarion call,
And the blackbird plays but a boxwood flute,
But I love him best of all.

For his song is all of the joy of life,
And we in the mad, spring weather,
We two have listened till he sang
Our hearts and lips together.



.... don't forget

During the breeding season there are millions more hungry mouths to feed. Nesting parents will have to work hard to feed their young, while maintaining their own energy levels. So why not give them a helping hand.

- ☐ 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 ?

Cows watering in Alexandra Lake, Wanstead Flats, in the early 1900s with the Courtney Hotel on Aldersbrook Road behind and how it looks today.

The modern view was almost impossible to obtain owing to scrub and sapling growth. Parts of the lake have also become silted - changing the overall layout and causing flooding on the adjacent road. This scrub encroachment is almost certainly caused by the ending of cattle grazing on the Flats around 1996.



look out for

What to see this season

The tall pink spires of the Rose Bay Willow Herb often indicate areas of burnt ground as its fluffy seeds germinate on such areas of Wanstead or Leyton Flats.

Of course, the purple flowers on the Heather are a special delight on part of Wanstead Flats where this heathland plant is spreading as a result of conservation measures. 150 years ago, this species would have been much more widespread across the intensively grazed ancient common lands of the Greater London area, but changes in land use on most of them means that it is now a much rarer plant within the confines of the M25.

Brambles are now in flower, providing nectar and pollen to many insects. Brambles come in many different forms: some of which will produce small fruits, but others grow large juicy blackberries. Many of you will know a good spot to gather plump blackberries to enhance an apple pie or turn into jelly! Why not see how many different varieties you can find? The recent Springwatch programmes have shown just how many creatures nest

and feed in Bramble patches, but Brambles do tend to take over, especially in a good growing seasons when they can grow several centimetres per day!

In Australia where European Brambles are an invasive plant, DNA profiling of the various forms is being carried out to find the most effective means of biological control. In the UK much of the time by conservation volunteers is spent on Bramble 'control'.

Of possible concern to those who like to produce their own sloe gin is the discovery that a number of Blackthorn bushes in the area are infected with a fungus which distorts the developing sloes. They become like an empty bag with no stone inside. The fungus is *Taphrina pruni*, a pathogen that causes the Pocket or Bladder Plum Gall, by producing chemicals which distort the developing fruit. The twigs on infected plants may also be deformed with small strap-shaped leaves. I have seen it too on some of the fruits on the ornamental plum trees in local streets.

It would be helpful to know how widespread this is in the Wanstead area as sloes are an important part of the winter food for birds such Blackbirds, thrushes, Redwings, Fieldfares, Woodpigeons and mammals like Foxes and Woodmice.

August! June and July are the pits, birding wise, in your local inner city patch, so it's time to look at other stuff, but then August arrives and the excitement really kicks in. Expect returning waders by the end of July, and Wheatears from mid-August. Then of course it gets manic: can't wait!

If you're in the Park around August time, Small Red-eyed Damselflies will put in an appearance, as well as Common Darter and Emperor dragonflies. Meadow Brown and Gatekeeper butterflies will be everywhere there is long grass.

Family groups of Skylarks may be feeding in the areas of long grass on Wanstead Flats come August. Also there will be Large, Small and Essex Skipper butterflies and – hopefully – Burnet Companion moths. From mid-month, more and more birds will be feeding in the Elders and Bramble bushes around Long Wood, in the SSSI and near Alexandra Lake. Look for Blackcaps, Garden Warblers, Lesser Whitethroats and thrushes. Near the end of the month Spotted Flycatchers will hawk for insects in the same area, and there may be a Common Redstart or two.

At the height of summer there are a number of flowers which catch the eye. One in particular is the white Ox-eye Daisy, which is frequently seen alongside roads. It is often included in wild flower mixtures. Red Poppies naturally grow in disturbed ground, but additional plantings have been made this year as a reminder of the start of WWI.

Other members of the daisy family in flower at this time of year including the spiky purple-headed Spear Thistle and the yellow-flowered Ragwort, Hawkbits and Hawkweeds.

by Tricia Moxey





the sea
starts here

Every minute, every single day, the equivalent of a lorry load of plastic enters our oceans. In the name of profit and convenience, we are literally choking our planet with a substance that just will not just go away.

According to a report by Eunomia in 2016 an estimated 12 million tonnes of plastic – everything from plastic bottles and bags to microbeads – end up in our oceans each year. That's a lorry load of rubbish a minute.

Travelling on ocean currents this plastic is now turning up in every corner of our planet – from Cornish beaches, to uninhabited Pacific islands. It is even being found trapped in Arctic ice.

80% of the plastic polluting our oceans comes from the cities

Our oceans are slowly turning into a plastic soup and the effects on ocean life are devastating. Larger pieces of plastic are choking and entangling turtles and seabirds and, when broken down, the smaller pieces are clogging the stomachs of creatures who mistake it for food, from tiny zooplankton to whales. Plastic is now entering every level of the ocean food chain and eventually ending up in the seafood on our plates.



Juvenile Herring Gull with plastic rubbish in its beak. In 2015, a study by Australian and British scientists determined that 90 percent of seabirds living today have ingested some form of plastic, mistaking it for food. If plastic consumption continues at its current rate, 99 percent of seabirds will carry plastic in their guts by 2050.

Plastic Pollution - Facts & Stats

- ❑ Plastic pollution can now be found on every beach in the world, from busy tourist beaches to uninhabited, tropical islands nowhere is safe.
- ❑ Scientists have recently discovered microplastics embedded deep in the Arctic ice.
- ❑ In 1950, the world's population of 2.5 billion produced 1.5 million tons of plastic; in 2016, a global population of more than 7 billion people produced over 320 million tons of plastic. This is set to double by 2034.
- ❑ Every day approximately 8 million pieces of plastic pollution find their way into our oceans.
- ❑ There may now be around 5.25 trillion macro and microplastic pieces floating in the open ocean. Weighing up to 269,000 tonnes.
- ❑ Plastics consistently make up 60 to 90% of all marine debris studied.
- ❑ Approx 5,000 items of marine plastic pollution have been found per mile of beach in the UK.
- ❑ Over 150 plastic bottles litter each mile of UK beaches.
- ❑ Recent studies have revealed marine plastic pollution in 100% of marine turtles, 59% of whales, 36% of seals and 40% of seabird species examined.
- ❑ 100,000 marine mammals and turtles and 1 million sea birds are killed by marine plastic pollution annually.

Plastic enters our oceans through a variety of ways; bad industries, poorly managed bins and landfill sites near the coast, lost fishing gear, waste dumped by shipping, rubbish dumped in the sea or into our rivers as refuse – to mention but a few. We are all aware by now that there are things we can do to help stem this tide of plastic pollution; we can support new laws to phase out nonessential plastics, we can lobby supermarkets and corporations to use less, we can buy less single-use plastics and shop more responsibly and we can recycle.



People's rubbish doesn't look nice and spoils the enjoyment of our green spaces for everyone. But aside from the environmental impact - flytips and litter also pose a real hazard to wildlife.

If you think it doesn't happen that often or not on our patch - think again !!! Local Wren member Tushar Bala spotted this heron in distress in our very own Wanstead Park.

However there is another, less obvious, way that plastic finds its way into our oceans.

80% of the plastic that pollutes our oceans comes from cities? Much of the rubbish we throw on our streets, such as cigarette butts, wrappings, chewing gum (yes that's

plastic) drops down drains and ends up in the oceans. Similarly - many of the products we use daily are flushed down toilets, including wet wipes, cotton buds and sanitary products. Some of the larger pieces of plastic are filtered out before they enter our seas but the smaller pieces are too small to be filtered out by waste water plants and end up being consumed by small marine species, eventually even ending up in our food chain. Microfibres are even released into waterways when we wash our clothes in the washing machine.

Here's What We Can Do

Don't forget the four R's: **REFUSE** - **REUSE** - **REDUCE** - **RECYCLE**!

Most of us don't know that the first step in protecting the oceans is to throw our rubbish into the bin - not on the street or beach.

- ☐ Don't flush plastics down the toilet
- ☐ Buy and reuse carrier bags (preferably from cloth) instead of plastic bags.
- ☐ Don't chew gum! Gum

is made of synthetic rubber, which is also plastic.

- ☐ Refuse single-use plastic straws. If you need a straw to drink, carry your own reusable one instead.
- ☐ Purchase food from bulk bins as much as possible, using your own reusable containers.
- ☐ If you do have to buy containers for food, reuse those containers for storing left-overs or buying bulk.
- ☐ Make your own sandwiches and don't buy pre-packed.
- ☐ Get a reusable bottle or mug for your drinks. All major beverage shops will happily fill your own cup and water re-fill stations are becoming more popular.
- ☐ Try to use sustainable and nature-friendly soaps and cleaning products.
- ☐ Avoid cleaning-products with micro-beads. These micro-beads are often made of plastics.
- ☐ Use a safety razor with replaceable, recyclable blades instead of disposable ones.

- ☐ Plastic microfibres from synthetic clothing travel unseen from washing machines and into our waterways. Opt for clothing made from natural fibres like cotton and linen, or use special washing filter in your machine.
- ☐ Buy less stuff or buy second-hand !
- ☐ Wash clothes at low temperatures and don't spin-dry.
- ☐ Check around your own home for containers, bags and other items you can reuse, or purchase reusable items - like bottles, mugs, cloth shopping bags.

by Tony Morrison



<https://www.eunomia.co.uk/reports-tools/plastics-in-the-marine-environment/>

Remember- when you throw it away;

There is no throwing it away



and finally

In this tiny corner of London between Forest Gate, Leytonstone and Wanstead we are lucky enough to have an amazing diversity of birds, butterflies, wildflowers, moths and beetles. We shouldn't be shy about it: we should be celebrating it. To help us do just that we will be holding a **Wren BioBlitz**.

The BioBlitz has three aims: to excite the imagination of local people by showing them what's on their doorstep and how it can be identified; to add to our own sum of knowledge; and to demonstrate to all who will listen just how important our area is for all things natural – flora, fauna and wildlife. It should also be a whole load of fun.

wren photography competition

Over the years we have had some wonderful and fun photos sent to our newsletter and posted on social media. We are so impressed that we want to offer you the chance to showcase your talent and as well as the flora, fauna, wildlife and landscapes we are lucky enough to have in our area – so Wren will be holding a competition to coincide with our 50th anniversary this autumn.

The BioBlitz will be held on Saturday 25th, Sunday 26th June and Sunday 3rd July. The BioBlitz is not just for Wren members - please pass the word and invite your family and friends. There's no need to book ahead just turn up for the events on the day and enjoy.

SATURDAY 25 JUNE - WANSTEAD FLATS

Visit the Wren Stall near Centre Road Car Park from 0900

0530-0700 **Dawn-ish chorus bird and nature walk**
Bush Wood / 'School Scrub'
Meet on Wanstead Flats near Davies Lane School

0900-1030 **Intro nature and flower walk**
Meet at Centre Rd Car Park by Wren stall

1030-1230 **Bugs and Spiders**
Centre Rd Car Park (join for as long as you like)

2100 **Moth trapping**
The Temple

SUNDAY 26 JUNE - WANSTEAD PARK

Visit the Wren Stall near the Tea Hut from 0900

0600-0700 **Moth Trap results**
The Temple

0900-1030 **Bee Walk**
Meet at Wren stall near Tea Hut

1030-1200 **Pond Dipping / Dragonflies**
Meet at Wren stall near Tea Hut

1330-1500 **Old Sewage Works - flowers, birds, and invertebrates**
Meet at Wren stall near tea hut to OSW

2030-1030 **Bat walk**
Near Tea Hut

SUNDAY 3 JULY - LEYTON FLATS

Visit the Wren Stall to the west of Hollow Ponds from 0900

0900 -1030 **Bee and Nature Walk**
Meet near Hollow Ponds Car Park

1100-c1300 **Nature Hike**
Meet near Hollow Ponds (Wren stall) and 2 hour lengthy walk in loop (water, snacks, and walking shoes needed)

The only guidelines for your pictures are:

- ☐ they should have some kind of nature theme
- ☐ they should be taken in the local area (ideally Wanstead Flats, Wanstead Park, Leyton Flats, and the surrounding areas)
- ☐ they should be taken this year
- ☐ if the photograph is of people, you should have their permission before submitting
- ☐ if you are under 18 please give your age
- ☐ you are happy for the Wren group to use the images in their newsletter and local media

Please email your high resolution photos to wrenconservationgroup@gmail.com with your name (please state the photographer's age if you are a parent or guardian submitting on behalf of your child). Please send us your pictures anytime now up until 30th September.

We will announce and display the winners at our 50th anniversary celebration event on 8 October (we hope to see you there - more details to come).

We may be living under lockdown during the coronavirus pandemic, but outside nature carries on and winter 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.

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.

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

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

#VitaminN: How to enjoy nature under lockdown

www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/52216267

Wildlife Watch - downloadable spotting sheets

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

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

www.scotsman.com/news/environment/how-avoid-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/

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>

