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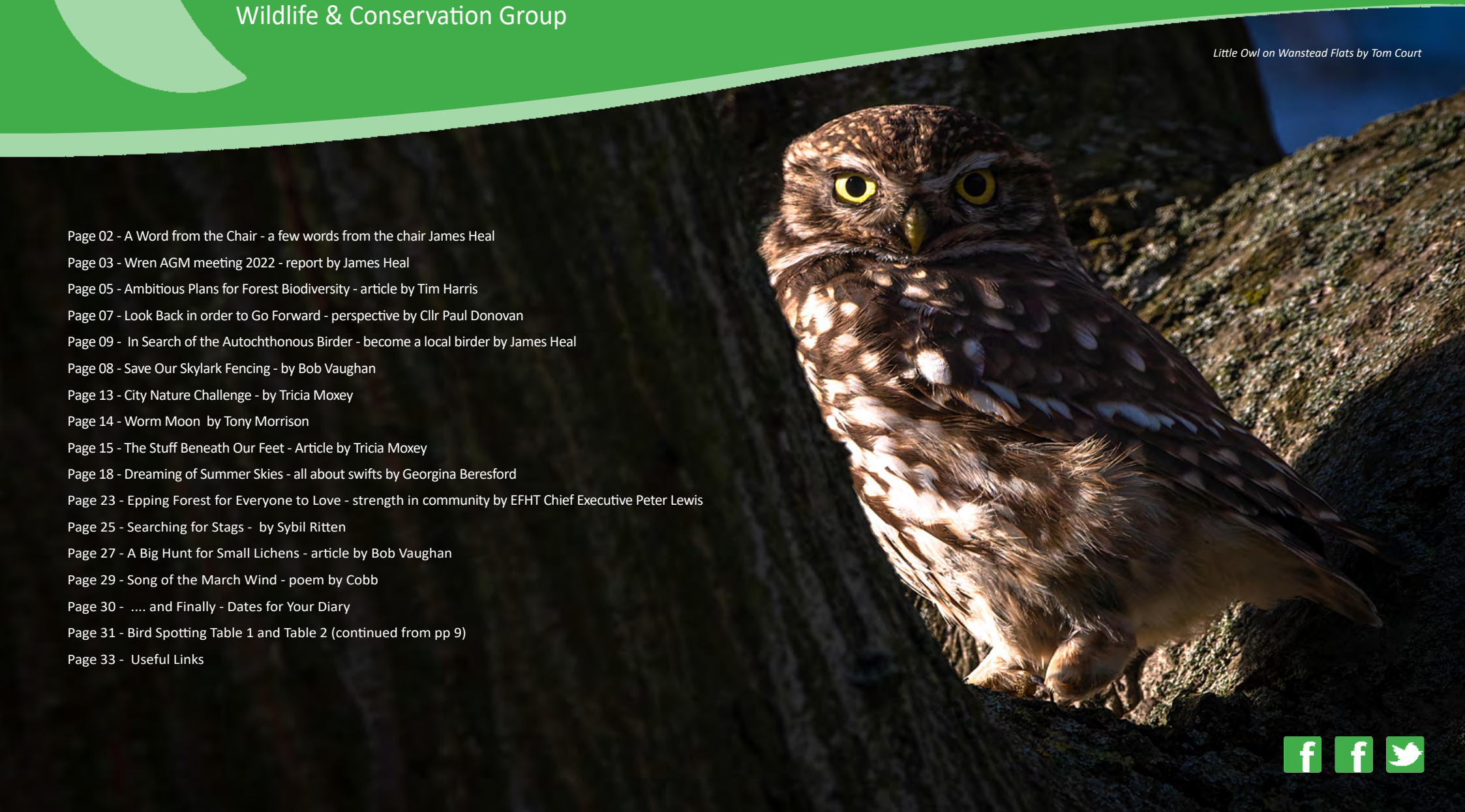
Spring 2023

Wren

Wildlife & Conservation Group



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a word from the chair .....

On 12th March some of the Wren Committee visited one of our neighbours on the Patch; the Quaker centre, in the fascinating modernist building – Friends' Meeting House – on Bush Road with an enclosed section of Bush Wood as a burial ground and garden.

It was an interesting meeting and members should watch this space as we hope to run a partnership activity there and do a spot of wildlife surveying later in the year.

We learned a bit about the history of the site. It was an illegally enclosed section of the forest used for archery in the 19thCentury before the Quakers purchased it and signed a covenant with the City of London that the land could be used for sacred purposes but never built on or sold on for development.

The meeting reminded me of the importance of liaising with different local interest groups. The Quakers are admirably doing what they can to reduce their carbon footprint and take efforts – including using their own land – more harmoniously for wildlife. But, I was also struck by the points around the concept of enclosure. We are all so lucky that, at certain points in history (and my fellow Wren Committee colleagues, Mark and Peter, could tell you a lot more about this), Wanstead Flats has been at risk of enclosure and being developed. I feel forever grateful for the committed local citizens of East London and Essex who resisted those moves.

But Friends Meeting House also reminded me that parts of Wanstead Flats have been temporarily utilised or even enclosed: A PoW camp in World War II, a police muster station during the 2012 Olympics, and temporary mortuary (that was thankfully not really used) during the recent Covid pandemic. I am also minded of the temporary fencing put up around sections of the Broom fields on Wanstead Flats where our Skylark breed. Nobody wants to see Wanstead Flats enclosed, but, as with all things in life, there are times for compromise, and it seems to me that temporarily not being able to walk or take dogs into a relatively small section of grassland to try and give our ground nesting birds the best chance of survival, seems like a price worth paying. Unfortunately, the fence was recently very badly vandalised.

The Wren Group has been actively involved in trying to take the local community – especially dog walkers – on this journey of understanding with us around the need for temporary fencing and has found the vast majority of conversations to be understanding. Unfortunately, an angry and belligerent minority can make it harder for those of us used to coexisting alongside each other as best as we can.

Community. Neighbourliness. Dialogue. Understanding. Progress. These all seem like pertinent words at the moment.

James Heal
Chair of Wren Group

Some of the Wren members helping to erect the sklark enclosure

Wren annual general meeting

To be honest I sometimes struggle to remember what I did last weekend so re-capping on last year, 2022, is not the easiest task for me.

However, 2022 was a very special year for the Wren Group as it was our 50th Anniversary. The celebratory event we held in October was a wonderful opportunity to bring together some of our original founding members and celebrate our history together.

We held lots of events and activities throughout the year, celebrating some of our 'hidden gems' - local allotments and churchyards, through to a big bioblitz across three days in the summer with multiple different activities. We also went back to our roots and visited East Ham Nature Reserve which the Wren Group had played an active role in securing with nature reserve status many years ago. A real example of continued community friendship and solidarity.

Talking of friendship, I was personally moved to receive a handwritten letter from our Patron, Sir David Attenborough, saying how pleased he was that we are still thriving. And I was delighted to welcome a new Patron to the group, our speaker for the AGM, the celebrated local artist, Dr Gayle Chong-Kwan. It is fantastic to have someone with Gayle's immense creative energy on-board.

It was through some of the activities I mentioned just now that we continued to showcase some of the remarkable wildlife we are blessed to have in the green corner of East London. Given it was our 50th anniversary it was fitting that some of the best birds of 2022 were something of a blast from the past - birds we sadly no longer often get in this area anymore: Our Membership Secretary, Mary, found a Tree Sparrow - we believe our first on the Patch for 35 years. Dartford Warblers (two) returned to the Patch for the first time in a decade; Tim Harris had a Turtle Dove - a bird now very scarce in most parts of the UK; and a Black-necked Grebe returned for its second year running after a forty year gap for the species.

Old Friends - Original founder members of the Wren Group on the group's 50th anniversary back in October. From left to right: Colin Plant, Tricia Moxey, James Heal, David Spivack, Richard Oakman and Paul Ferris.

Tim led the way with moth trapping again and recorded a staggering 350 species of moth and butterfly for the year. Two local highlights for 2022 were the colourful Rosy Footman and the rather more subtle but cryptic Yarrow Pug. Tony Madgwick continues to lead our work for bees and tells me that last year - courtesy of prolific insect finder Rose - we recorded the nationally scarce Bryony Bee (Andrena florea) and Tony and Rose also had several sightings of an even rarer mining bee, Andrena labiata.

But surveying isn't only about the unusual, it is also about understanding the trends in populations of the common, about changing arrival/emergence or departure dates; and about studying and learning behaviour. The Planthopper, *Issus coleoptratus* is not rare, but it is the only species in the world known to incorporate mechanical gears into its anatomy, and I found my first locally last year.

I also want to call out some of the superb work carried out by volunteers within the Wren Group - those who helped spread the word about the importance of the temporary skylark fencing, or those who joined Peter week in and out to conduct practical work; sensitive clearance of some brambles (not all of them), moving and protect logs and other practical work.

And I also want to thank my fellow committee members for managing the finances, supporting members, producing our brilliant newsletter, moderating our social media groups and pages, managing the website, taking the meetings, organising and leading activities, coordinating practical work and volunteering, coordinating and reporting our survey work, engaging with other groups and liaising with our landlords. You all do so much and I am very grateful to you all.

I would like to pay tribute to three members of the Committee who are stepping down. Mirza Rashid who continues to support us with bat walks etc. Alan James - hasn't been a committee member for long but has played a fantastic role in the practical side of Wren activities and I understand will continue to do so. Also, I want to pay a warm tribute to Mark Gorman who has served for many years on our Committee as Membership Secretary - your service to the Wren Group has been well above average and I would like to thank you sincerely on behalf of the Committee and the group as well.

2023 has already got off to a good start, with photography walks, bird watching walks, a lichen study, and much more planned. Please do get involved. The Wren Group is ultimately only as successful as the level of engagement of our members. We are here for you, so please do get stuck in and help us become even more successful.

by James Heal

Wren committee 2023

Richard Oakman
President

James Heal
Chair

Simon Raper
Treasurer

Moira Duhig
Committee Member

June Nicholson
Committee Member

Gill James
Secretary

Jackie Morrison
Committee Member

Tim Harris
Committee Member

Mary Holden
Membership, Social Media

Bob Vaughan
Wren Website

Marion Lobo
Committee Member

Tony Madgwick
Committee Member

Lucinda Culpin
Committee Member

Tony Morrison
Wren Newsletter

Peter Williams
Works Co-ordinator

Please don't spray or pull spring dandelions !!!

They are one of the first sources of food for bees

Ambitious plans for Forest

biodiversity

by Tim Harris

The City of London is currently planning a 10-year programme for habitat conservation in Epping Forest. Those who have drawn up the plans deserve our congratulations, writes Tim Harris.

Work is due to start in 2024 on an ambitious number of projects across the Forest, subject to a successful grant application from DEFRA through its Countryside Stewardship grant scheme. If enacted, these are likely to have a major positive impact on the Forest's biodiversity.

The City of London Corporation In the south of the Forest are to introduce measures to improve the condition of the acid grassland on Leyton Flats and Wanstead Flats. Pic by Tony Morrison

Much of the work proposed involves restoring wood pasture, heathland and grassland, which are all important elements of the rich habitat mosaic that makes up Epping Forest.

The habitat works will include selected tree thinning, veteran tree pruning, creating new pollards, pond management, grazing and mechanical cutting. In some places turf may be stripped to remove competitive plants to allow the recolonisation of scarce species.

Wood pasture restoration

Wood pasture restoration is planned for parts of Wintry Wood, Epping Thicks, St Thomas' Quarters, Woodbury Hollow and Staples Hill, Barn Hoppitt, Hatch Forest, Knighton Wood, Lords Bushes, Highams Park, Gilberts Slade and Leyton Flats. This will increase the light reaching the old pollards and encourage plants to grow on the Forest floor again. Some of the old pollards will be managed to help prolong their lives, and new pollards will be created.

At Sheppard's Meadows, Theydon Plain, Fernhills, Trueloves, The Lops, Leyton Flats and Wanstead Flats, management will see the removal of young trees and scrub that have encroached on the grassland. At Long Running, heathland management will see areas of heathland being restored through the selective removal of young trees and small areas of competitive grass will be grazed by cattle to promote a greater diversity of plants.

Water bodies will be opened up at Speakman's Pond, Warren Pond and Oak Hill. There will be selective tree removal around these ponds to increase the amount of light reaching them and so help aquatic vegetation – and its dependant fauna - to flourish. Invasive species such as Crassula will be removed to help this.

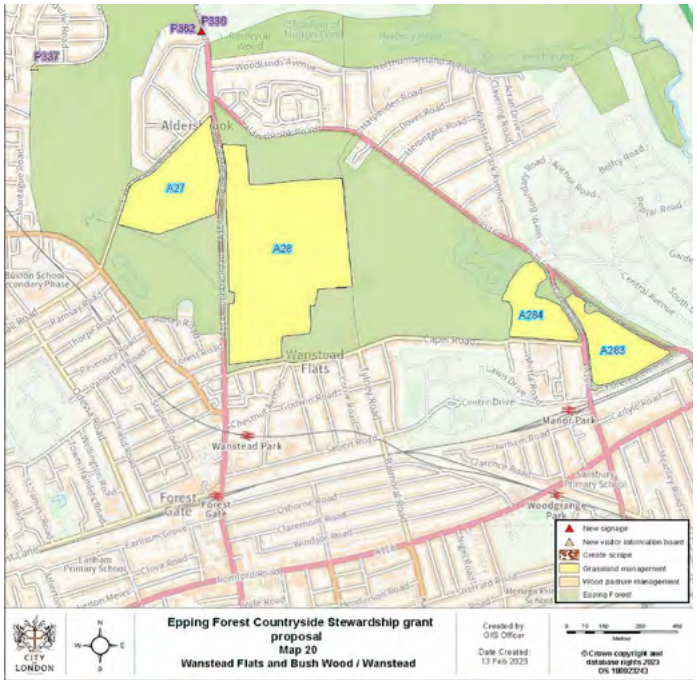
The City of London Corporation have brought back Long Horn cattle to Wanstead Park and other parts of the forest for a more natural form of land management. Pic by Tony Morrison

These are exciting proposals, which could see a healthier future for a wide range of plants, insects and animals, ranging from Cow-wheat and heather to stag beetles, Downy Emerald dragonflies and Skylarks. Who knows, we may even attract Tree Pipits and Spotted Flycatchers back to the Forest as breeding birds.

Acid grassland

In the south of the Forest, I am particularly interested in the measures to improve the condition of the acid grassland on Leyton Flats and Wanstead Flats.

Intriguingly, the map of Leyton Flats in the proposals document shows four scrapes. The Wren Group has sought more information on how these will be created and how their sustainability can be achieved.



On Wanstead Flats, the proposals are in a sense nothing new - a combination of annual cutting and the restoration of the rotational cutting of patches of grassland to provide a more varied grass structure, which will benefit birds, invertebrates and wildflowers. Additionally, the Wren Group has requested that those areas of the Flats not allocated for leisure be set aside for restoration of acid grassland, either through natural reversion or re-seeding.

by Tim Harris

look back

in order to go forward

Life is a conveyor belt of change. Human beings are constantly seeking to get off the journey, settle and feel some security of tenure. But you cannot stop the journey. The thought occurs when looking around and back at people and places around us.

Wanstead Park and the Flats have been constants for the whole of my life, yet they are places of evolving change.

When I was a child, John Dexter was the park keeper. We'd always see Mr Dexter around, a respected, imposing figure. He kept order as well as doing much work in the park. I was at school with Ann his daughter. The Dexter's lived in the park keepers houses by the Temple. John left the park in the early 1990s, moving locally. He died recently. Ann put up a number of pictures of John from the old days, in front of the Temple and various other places. They brought back memories of great times.

Another memory was refreshed, when standing recently by the Shoulder of Mutton Lake. The area immediately adjacent to the east used to be open grassland. We used to play football there. Earlier still, a couple of guys came in all weathers to swim in the lake. I only found out later that one of the guys was the father of a later friend of mine. He used to cycle from Dagenham for a dip. Now, that area is totally covered in bramble, a good terrain for the birds but no one would know what it was like before. No one swims in the lake. Times change.

The park of course has a long history, with people from across classes and generations enjoying the area.

The recent photo exhibition of the COVID times by Russell Boyce, marked another period. A time that is already being looked back on as part of the story of the park.

Getting older can of course seem a lonely business, as those you have known die off. The net can appear to be closing in. But more positively, looking back should show the way forward. Learn from the past to progress in the future.

Not everything in the past was great. People can come to romanticise the past as they grow older, a resistance to the inevitable.

Moving forward, we do have more knowledge as to how to work in harmony with nature, not seek to dominate it as has so often been the case in the past. The promotion of biodiversity and efforts to combat climate change are to be welcomed. Never forgetting of course that these crises have largely been created by the reckless behaviour of human beings.

If humankind is going to survive, it most certainly needs to learn the lessons of the past. Indeed, maybe for the first time in recent history there needs to be a step back in order to progress forward.

A need to live more simply and tread lighter on the earth. This will be a progression, that is likely to come when we recognise our own mortality and that we are only part of a passing phase in the history of life. Enjoy our time here, learn from the past and look to the future. But recognise we all have our own unique experience of life, enjoy it while we can.

by Cllr Paul Donovan

save our skylark fencing

This quote is from the Lark Ascending, a poem by George Meredith which inspired Vaughan Williams' beautiful composition, best known for solo violin.

> He rises and begins to round,
> He drops the silver chain of sound,
> Of many links without a break,
> In chirrup, whistle, slur and shake.

The lark is of course the Skylark which can be heard singing on Wanstead Flats every spring, the closest colony to central London. However, the Skylark is now a red list species of conservation concern in the UK. Over the years the Wren Wildlife and Conservation Group have been monitoring the numbers of singing males on Wanstead Flats and have noticed a rapid decline from double figures in 2010 to just three or four in the last few years. As it is a ground nesting bird the Skylark is prone to disturbance, and with the increase in footfall on the Flats the Wren group were concerned that Skylarks might soon be lost as a breeding species locally. A further complication is that Skylarks will not nest near tree cover, they prefer open spaces.

In 2021 the City of London agreed to put up fencing during the breeding season (March to August) over a couple of small areas in the middle of the Flats. This experiment has worked well and, although it is difficult to be precise, with no breeding recorded in 2020 it is believed at least one pair bred successfully in the last two years. The public have been very supportive and appreciated the lovely lilting song as they walk through on the main paths.

When the fencing comes down in August more paths are opened for the public, however this year someone has been cutting down the ropes which makes repairing the fence in spring more costly and time consuming. We are not sure why this is happening, but we hope that everyone will support our Skylark initiative, which is now being adopted elsewhere to ensure the Skylark's song will remain a delight throughout the UK.

Article and picture by Bob Vaughan

In support of the

autochthonous

birder

by James Heal

Some of the local birders (me included) have been around for a while. I will spare the blushes of one of my fellows who has been ticking stuff locally since before I was born. There are a range of capabilities and specific interests (some of us like gulls, some like surveying breeding birds, some use nocturnal migration recorders and heat sensory binoculars, and some like taking the best photos of birds possible) but this group of core local birders have kept the records flowing over the last decade and more and found some amazing birds.

I dread to think the number of combined hours we have put into birding Wanstead Flats and Wanstead Park - it would be a very large figure indeed. Most of us are out at least weekly, and some of us (those of us - unlike me - who have been unshackled from work and young children) almost daily!

So, there are probably about ten or more of us who really, really know the patch and its birds. When something turns up slightly unexpected, we can pounce on it knowing immediately that it sits outside of the norm.

However, more recently a fresh crop of new birders / bird watchers (including a couple of youngsters) have materialised almost seemingly autochthonously (please excuse the jargon, but it is a great word emanating from ancient Greek mythology referring to those who emerged from the ground, soil, and earth) by which I mean local people who have been here a while, perhaps, but have recently decided to take up birding, rather than established birders moving to the area.

We are lucky enough to have a good number and diversity of birds on our patch. Pic - Stonechat by Tim Harris

Birding is about so much more than numbers, but there are few committed birders who are not at least somewhat interested in the numbers game. Birders, as we know, like lists; with several of us now contributing regularly to centralised applications, most notably eBird, which enable our bird data to contribute to wider ornithological science.

I moved to the local area in late 2014 and 2023 is now the ninth year I have been regularly birding the patch. In that time, I have been lucky enough to record 148 species of bird (I say record rather than 'see' as two species on my list are 'heard only': Quail and Tawny Owl. There are six local birders who have all got over 150 species on their patch lists. I am not going to indulge in false modesty here; for a relatively small and unassuming site, those are impressive numbers! And with 150 years worth of records (albeit some long periods of bird record droughts) and almost 15 years of very comprehensive records, the total patch list is just over the '200' mark. Quite phenomenal really!

Anyhow, I need to get to the point! I realise that for someone early on in their journey of birding, knowing where to start, or how to start, amassing a substantive list may be a little daunting. But I thought I would share the experience I have learned in almost a decade locally of how to build a decent sized patch list, and, in particular, how to build a decent sized patch year list.

In my first full year birding locally (2015), I recorded 98 species of bird. Not a bad start. I have recorded over 100 species every year since then and most of the ten or so hardcore local birders I mentioned earlier do this without fail. My best ever year was 2021 when I recorded 119 species locally (2021 had the combination of Covid restrictions and good birds which meant nearly all of us broke our year records). Jonathan Lethbridge, aka 'The Wanstead Birder' broke Nick Croft's year record and ticked off an astonishing 131 species of bird in 2021. To be honest, I wouldn't be hugely surprise if that record is never beaten - it would certainly take someone with a lot of experience, a lot of local knowledge, probably a house on the patch (Jono has this, and I don't for example), a lot of time to go birding (the pandemic helped there), and a lot of luck (if the good birds don't come, you can't tick them off!)

Even commomn birds can be a joy to spot - particularly this time of year when they are breeding or feeding their young. Pic of blackbird foraging by Tony Morrison

So, for the benefit of those who are starting out on their birding journey or might like to at some point, or for those who don't quite visit often enough to make building a big list easy, the following tips are for you...

Get to know the patch

The main way to do this, is to spend time walking around the local area as regularly as you can. Note what you see, where you see it, and when (time of year, but also time of day - these factors can make a massive difference). We have a map on the Wanstead Birding website with some of local names for things - Motorcycle Wood, The Gates of Mordor, The Ditch of Despair, and the Forbidden Triangle are all on there.

Some finds can be unusual as in this picture of a Little Egret - unusual because it was feeding in the middle of the horse paddock by the Old Sewage Works , far away from standing water. Pic by Tim Harris

Go out regularly and across all four seasons

You don't need to be a daily or even a weekly birder to clock up some good birds locally, but you do need to get out relatively regularly. You will also build a disproportionately strong list by focusing in on birding during the Spring and Autumn migration periods: September, April, October, August, and May (in that order) are the best months for diversity of birds; while June, December, February, January, and July have the lowest diversity of bird species numbers.

Study your targets

I won't say much on this as it should go without saying, but to be able to keep a list, you need to be able to accurately identify your targets by sight (and often at distance) and sound (learning flight calls essential for the passage migration period). If you are starting from a low base of knowledge, I would suggest using a field guide like the Collins Bird Guide (which you can get on your phone) and looking up the birds you see while you are out and about.

Build a base of easy targets

If you really are starting out from scratch and with limited experience, it may seem that 100+ species sounds too tricky. And it can be difficult to discern what is commonplace, what is season-specific, what is scarce, and what is rare - you might find yourself just looking at long lists that don't mean much to you. So, one of two gifts to you from this article is a list of 71 species which should be pretty much guaranteed if you follow steps one to three above. Admittedly some of these 'easy' birds are easier than others - I doubt I have ever set foot on the patch in the day without ticking a Robin, whilst I have managed to get 71 days into the year (at the time of writing) without yet adding Grey Wagtail to my year list - but I would be shocked if I didn't add it before the year is out.

Against each of the 71 species, I have put where and when you are most likely to see them.

So, if the full patch lists seem a bit daunting, start with this list of 71. You will be amazed at how quickly your own list starts to grow. I spent a few hours walking around the patch today (in February which can be a bit poor) and ticked off 53 species. Getting at least 30-40 species of bird in a day should soon start to become easy. *(See Table 1 pp 42).*

Some finds can be a bit harder to spot but very rewarding when you do - such as this Little Owl on Wanstead Flats. Pic of by Tony Morrison

Devise a list of more challenging targets

Once you have got your 60-70 foundation species - well done! You are two thirds of the way there (!), you can now set yourself a target of the species which should be doable within a typical year.

The list of 39 species in Table 2 *(See Table 2 pp 43)* is my attempt at setting out the largely annual birds which can be tricky, but with some dedication should be largely doable within any given year. As with above, some are easier to get than others. There are arguments that birds like Snipe, Little Owl, Coal Tit, and Yellow Wagtail should all really be in the 'easy' list above (although each have a reason why they can be tricky) while others are borderline scarce and it would considered good to get one in a year (Short-eared Owl and Yellowhammer are borderline scarcities and could be considered too difficult for a list of this nature).

However, the purpose of the list below is more of a target list of birds you might reasonably expect to see and so even if you only got two thirds of the list below in a year would set you well on your way to getting a 100 birds for the year.

Be ready to engage in a spot of local twitching

Every year, we get a small smattering of rarer/scarcer birds than those on the lists above. If you start to get serious about your patch list or patch year list and would like to see interesting birds locally, you probably need to be ready to respond to news and come out to try and see the good birds when the news goes out.

I remember that within a few months of moving to the area, a Slavonian Grebe showed up on Heronry. It was the first record for the patch and the only one to date. If I hadn't made the effort to go and see it, there is no guarantee that opportunity will come up again locally.

Conclusion

Building a patch list can be a great way to develop your understanding of birds - the stronger the sense of the ordinary will give you greater intuition for the extraordinary.

If this article was of use to a small handful of people who then go on to strengthen the network of local birders, the more trained eyes there are out on the patch, the better (from rarity-finding perspective, but also to contribute to the local science of understanding what birds we have present locally and what is happening to their numbers.

then & now

In each edition of the Wren newletter 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.

City Nature Challenge

Discover the Wildlife on your Doorstep

April 28 to May 1, 2023

Now in its 7th season this weekend event started off as a friendly competition between wildlife enthusiasts in Los Angeles and San Francisco who recorded the variety of living organisms within their local areas. Since then, the City Nature Challenge (CNC) has grown into an international event, encouraging people around the world to find and document wildlife in their own cities. It is organised by the Community Science teams at the California Academy of Sciences and the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County (NHM) and is an annual four-day global bioblitz at the end of April.

Since 2016 the number of participating cities grew from the initial two to over 440 registered participating cities in 2022. Various locations in the UK have participated since 2018. Whilst this survey provides just a snapshot of what is living in cities it can showcase just how rich urban biodiversity can be. The challenge is to add more species!

The Natural History Museum in London is involved and the team there is encouraging wildlife enthusiasts to participate in recording what is living in and around their own communities across London during the weekend of April 28 to May 1, 2023.

So please spend some time looking around you to note as many forms of wildlife as possible and encourage your friends and families to participate right across London. For more information see: https://uk.inaturalist.org/projects/city-nature-challenge-2023-uk-leaderboard

Using the downloaded i-Naturalist app from the App Store or Google Play you can take a photograph of wild plants, animals, fungi or lichens and submit these as a record of what you find over that weekend. You can record spiders lurking in your bath, or weeds growing in your garden, unkempt paths and waste ground. Notice what insects, slugs or snails are using the cultivated plants in your garden as habitat or a food source. Which birds are swimming on the lakes or flying high above your head or using a bird feeder. Take a look at what creatures are hiding under flowerpots or in crevices in walls?

How many different species will you find?

Globally in 2022 1,694,877 observations were made by 67,220 individuals who collectively recorded over 50,176 different species. Across Greater London 337 people submitted 4,436 observations of 1,087 different species. Let's get that number even higher in 2023!

by Tricia Moxey

Worm moon

The full moon is the lunar phase when the moon appears fully illuminated from Earth's perspective.

Full moons occur every 29.5 days, which is the time it takes for the Moon to orbit the Earth and complete one lunar phase cycle. There will be 13 full moons this year, with two falling in August.

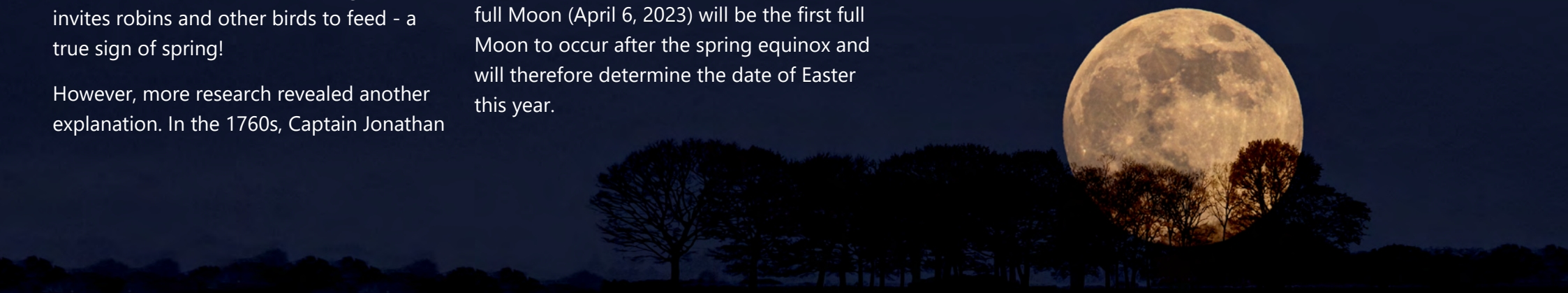
The final full moon of the winter season appeared on the nights of Monday, March 6, and Tuesday, March 7. March's full Moon goes by the name **Worm Moon** it occurs during the changing of the seasons from winter to spring.

For many years, we thought this name referred to the earthworms that appear as the soil warms in spring. This invites robins and other birds to feed - a true sign of spring!

However, more research revealed another explanation. In the 1760s, Captain Jonathan Carver visited the Naudowessie (Dakota) and other Native American tribes and wrote that the name Worm Moon refers to a different sort of "worm"—beetle larvae—which begin to emerge from the thawing bark of trees and other winter hideouts at this time.

March's full Moon often plays a role in religion, too. Specifically, in Christianity, this Moon is known as the **Lenten Moon** if it is the last full Moon of the winter season (i.e., if it occurs *before* the spring equinox) or as the Paschal Full Moon if it is the first full Moon of spring (i.e., if it occurs *after* the spring equinox).

This year, March's full Moon (March 7, 2023) occurs before the spring equinox (March 20, 2023), making it the Lenten Moon. April's full Moon (April 6, 2023) will be the first full Moon to occur after the spring equinox and will therefore determine the date of Easter this year.



Full moon over Wanstead Flats - pic by Tony Morrison

the stuff beneath our feet.

It can be dry or muddy but the material beneath our feet should not be dismissed as a dirty nuisance, soil really matters. Soil is the thin layer of material covering the land surfaces around the globe in which plants grow. Soils are formed over many centuries by the weathering of the underlying geological material and each soil type so formed influences varied ecosystems that they support. Soils are fragile resources providing a medium to support plant growth and lock up carbon.

These weathering processes are physical, such as changes in temperature and abrasion by wind or rain, which break rocks into smaller mineral particles. These are further fragmented by chemical reactions with air, water and chemicals. Living organisms play a role too.

Plant roots can split rocks, burrowing animals help water and air penetrate the substrate, and many micro-organisms such as lichens, bacteria and fungi help to degrade minerals.

The underlying geology of our local area is made up of a series of Terrace Gravels laid down in the valley of an earlier route of the River Thames, which flowed east through the southern part of what is now Essex. Recent research into these deposits is revealing how changes in climate have helped shape the local topography since the Anglian glaciation, c.450,000 years ago, when the Thames shifted south to its current location.

Within the various layers of these deposited materials are seams of impervious clay. Water seeping down through the gravel will emerge as springs, a feature occasionally recognised in street names such as Leyspring Road. Those digging out the ornamental lakes within Wanstead Park were able to make use of these layers of clay as a base for their aquatic landscaping works. Late 19th century excavations for gravel for road repairs or clay for brick manufacture allowed the Conservators of Epping Forest to create Alexandra Lake and the Hollow Ponds. Gravel patches exposed by erosion near the banks of these two lakes show these geological formations.

Fantastic facts about soil

- Most of the food you eat, material for the clothes you wear and timber for the house you live in is produced by using soil
- It takes more than 500 years to produce an inch of soil
- There are more microorganisms in a tablespoon of soil than there are people on Earth
- There can be 10 miles of fungi in a teaspoon of forest soil
- Soils store and filter our fresh water
- When you walk in the forest you are being carried by thousands of bugs in the soil
- Soil is the home of a quarter of the world's living creatures
- Soil consists of 45% minerals, 25% water, 25% air and 5% organic material from plants and animals
- Soil is a natural filter for water

University of Sheffield

The nature of the underlying geological material influences the type of soil produced, which in turn has an impact on the vegetation that thrives on a particular type of soil. As the local parent material tends to be acidic, so the soils produced are acidic too, thus suiting heathers, wiry grasses and gorse.

Recently the Cranfield Environment Centre has released an interactive map called Soilscapes. This is a simplified dataset covering England and Wales mapping the various soil types. Take a look at this website for more information. https://www.landis.org.uk/soilscapes/

From the maps, it is clear that the soil covering much of Wanstead Park and Leyton Flats is designated Soilscape 6, a freely draining, slightly acidic loamy soil, where the natural vegetation is likely to be acidic grassland with gorse and scattered trees. Much of Wanstead Flats appears as Soilscape 22: loamy soils with naturally high groundwater, where drainage is slow, so this is best suited to plant species that thrive in damp conditions. And the wooded area round Gilbert's Slade has developed on Soilscape 18: slowly permeable, seasonally wet, slightly acidic loamy and clay soils where oaks and hornbeams are the predominant trees.

These maps are generalised and so do not pick up the actual landscape history of the area – such as the utilisation of areas of Wanstead Flats as football pitches, the location of the post-war prefabs or the impact of recently burnt areas. The naturally occurring soils within Wanstead Park have been modified by human activity since at least the Iron Age!

Healthy soils

A healthy soil contains so much more than its mineral, air and water content and will team with microscopic life-forms as well as larger creatures such as earthworms, woodlice, slugs and beetles.

Within a handful of undisturbed woodland soil there could be as much as 40 km (26 miles) of threadlike fungal mycelia, providing vital support for plants - passing them water and minerals in exchange for manufactured foods. These fungi are just part of the soil microbiome, where assorted algae, bacteria, viruses and minute creatures carry out a range of important functions within the soil, decomposing organic material or providing defensive chemicals to counteract diseases.

Recent research has revealed the vital importance of this active microbiome in the soil and the need to rehabilitate impoverished soils that have been contaminated by pesticides and herbicides. This is best achieved by using locally sourced organic compost as this will help restore the microbiome. Soils with a thriving microbiome store greater amounts of carbon too and sustain healthier green plants, which in turn provide a range of food for herbivores.

Soil monitoring

As soil forms, many different micro-organisms become established. Then plants begin colonise, growing, maturing and dying, with new ones taking their place. Plant leaves and roots are added to the soil. Animals eat plants and their wastes and bodies are added to the soil, these together forming organic material called humus.

Soils provide ecosystem services such as flood prevention and clean water and host a significant proportion of our terrestrial biodiversity. Monitoring will help us understand how soils work and how changes to land management, climate and pollution may change soil properties and communities.

Soil monitoring includes measuring soil biodiversity and we use DNA analysis to determine what bacteria communities are more prevalent and interacting with plant communities above ground. They can be good indicators of change as they react more quickly than plant communities to changes in the environment. Soil chemistry monitoring allows us to track the total nitrogen deposition from the air to the soil as nitrates to better understand the uptake of nitrogen by the vegetation and understand the effect nitrogen deposition on plant and soil communities.

Earthworms are the underground gardeners - they enrich the soil with their castings, or the soil that has gone through their bodies. They eat only rotten plant and animal matter. - pic from Wikipedia

Worm Detective mission

Soil invertebrates, including earthworms, are keystone species in the natural environment. Not only do they help keep ecosystems healthy, they are also an essential part of the diet of many birds and mammals. The aim of the British Trust for Ornithology's (BTO) **Worm Detective Project** was to estimate how abundant this vital food source is in different garden habitats.

Across the UK, 8,849 gardens participated in the Worm Detective mission, counting a total of 340,791 invertebrates, with ants, worms and woodlice comprising 70% of all individuals recorded. Worms were the group most frequently encountered, occurring in 86% of surveyed gardens.

According to the BTO, populations of earthworms in the UK may have fallen by about a third in the past 25 years, an assessment has shown. "It's looking like there is evidence of a long-term decline," said Prof James Pearce-Higgins, the director of science at the BTO, which conducted the research. "A large-scale decline in soil biodiversity – particularly the loss of earthworms – would sit alongside concerns about 'insectaggedon' and the wider biodiversity crisis.

"It would have widespread impacts on the species that feed on soil invertebrates, like birds, but also affect soil processing and nutrient cycling, the whole functioning of our ecosystems," he said. "Thrushes, starlings and many waders that rely on soil invertebrates are in long-term decline. These declines are greatest in south-east England where hotter, drier summers may also reduce the availability of earthworms to foraging birds."

by Tricia Moxey

Swifts in flight - pic by Robert Booth

Dreaming of Summer skies

by Georgina Beresford

Ever stopped to ponder on the quintessential sounds of summer ?

Along with the sound of skylarks, ice cream vans and the chirrup of grasshoppers is the wonderful sound of swifts swooping & screaming in aerobatic delight.

Ah yes , to observe a scream of swifts on a balmy Summer's eve is one of life's true pleasures.

Sadly though like so much of nature, swifts are suffering, with a worrying decline in numbers.

Picture by Robert Booth

Swifts are seasonal visitors to our skies. They migrate thousands of miles from their winter feeding grounds in equatorial and southern Africa.

They begin their migration around late February to early March, pausing at the Congo basin to feed up on the abundant insect supply found there, before heading up over the Sahara to arrive in Europe & British air space by early May. A distance of over 5000 miles!

- Migration journey averages about 5000 miles one way.
- Top speed 70mph at level flight.
- Shortest recorded journey time from Africa to UK. 5 days!!
- Average miles flown per day 500 m
- Lifetime miles can add up to a staggering 4 million, that's to the moon and back 8 times!
- Swifts have been known to fly to heights of 10,000 ft and higher.
- They ascend to higher altitudes at dusk to sleep on the wing.
- Their ways of finding out where to go on migration are not really understood, but we do now that birds have an inbuilt magnetic compass, they use remembered star maps, and they have a photographic memory for landmarks. Swifts may add to these by studying the weather and the winds from high in the sky.

Swifts live off a rich diet of flying insects. They feast on aphids, mosquitoes, flying ants and many other wind borne prey including spiders and beetles. Swifts go where their food source is in abundance. They can consume up to 100, 000 insects a day.

Their scientific name Apus Apus translates to 'without foot'. A bird that spends 90% of its life on the wing has very little need for feet. Even so their feet are very powerful and claw like, which enables them to cling to walls & climb up into the nest entrance. As graceful and acrobatic as they are in flight observing a swift 'walking' in its nest is quite a clumsy sight to see.

Swifts have been around for millions of years. The Scanish swift, the fossilised remains of a swift found in Germany, has been dated back to about 49 million years ago. It was smaller than our modern day swift but otherwise pretty much the same. The only major changes are perhaps in the swift's habitat. Swifts primarily nested in tree holes, and rock crevices but since Roman times they have been observed living alongside humans in roof eaves & crevices. Image courtesy Senckenberg

Today Swifts still nest amongst us in our towns & cities, choosing sites high up in our roof gables and eaves. They require a good bit of height to swoop and ascend in and out of the nest entrance.

Swifts are nest site loyal, they return to the same site year in year out.

They are also fiercely loyal to their mates, keeping their partnerships for their entire lives, if they can.

They are sadly losing their long established traditional nest sites because of building repairs, improvements and conversions. New builds invariably exclude them and bats too.

If they return to find their nest entrance blocked or no longer there, they repeatedly attempt to gain access, even to the point of concussing and injuring themselves.

In the last 20 years swifts have suffered a dramatic decline, with over a 50% drop in numbers.

They are now on the red list of threatened species along with many other of our native & migrating birds.

Unsurprisingly a bird that spends most of its time in flight also mates on the wing. But like all birds it needs to land to nest & incubate eggs. Swifts usually lay a clutch of two to 3 eggs several days apart. The incubation period is about 3 weeks. Newly hatched chicks are usually brooded continuously but sometimes in unseasonably cold weather when air borne insects are hard to find, both parent birds may leave the nest for longer periods to hunt further afield. Swift chicks can survive quite cold conditions as they can go in to a state of torpor, thus enabling them to withstand periods of food shortages.

A swift chick or swiftlet is usually ready to fledge around 6 weeks of age. Chicks have been observed building wing strength by doing push-ups in the nest. Once a swiftlet launches from the nest it will be continually in flight for 2 years or more, so it is imperative it gets its maiden launch and flight just right. This is an extremely vulnerable time for the young swift. If it misjudges its 1st swoop out of the nest entrance it can become grounded. Swifts as a general rule cannot take off from the ground. If a grounded swift is found in time, there are swift rehabbers & carers who can assist and help get them back to optimum weight and strength in preparation for their long migration back to Africa.

What can we do to help?

If you are lucky enough to have an existing nest site, or know of any please observe it and add your findings to the swift mapper. Swift Mapper is a web-based mapping system and mobile app.

By recording where you see nesting swifts you'll be helping to build a picture of where swift nest sites need to be protected and where it would be best to provide new nest sites https://www.swiftmapper.org.uk

So, What else can we do?

How about making your home a home for swifts!

You can create nest places for Swifts easily and cheaply in both existing buildings and new builds.

Older buildings that haven't had much in the way of renovations will have more gaps, crevices & open eaves for swifts to nest in. Modern roofing materials often deny swifts any access to these nooks and crannies. Simple alterations and modifications can be made to eaves, gables and soffit boards to allow swifts to gain access. For example cutting holes in soffit boards.

Holes cut in to soffit boards. Image credit: Action for Swifts

Or how about fitting a swift nest box or swift brick? There's quite a selection readily available

If your home has wide eaves for shade and shelter, then most types of box are suitable.

You will need to have at least a two-storey building or a high gable end to be suitable for swifts.

Peak Boxes is a brand that offer a good range & have a high success rate with uptake of nesting birds.

https://peakboxes.co.uk/shop-1?category=Swift+Boxes

If you don't have wides eaves then a box with a sloping roof is recommended as this will deter pigeons and predators from perching on the box. Also a heat resistant box is a good idea if the location is unshaded.

The John Stimpson Model 30 box is a good value option and Action for Swifts now produce a uPVC box to the same design which once up should never need maintenance.

Swift bricks can be incorporated in to the existing brickwork. Swift bricks are also perfect if you're having any building work done or a loft conversion.

Anytime from early Spring is a good time to put boxes up!

Swift boxes in Waltham Forest. Image credit: Mike Priaulx

Prospecting swifts or 'Bangers' are juvenile swifts that search out potential nest sites for the following nesting season. They usually arrive a bit later than breeding pairs. They can be attracted to your nest box by other near by existing swift colonies or by playing swift calls to attract them in. Other birds like house sparrows may take up residence, but their breeding season is much earlier so the nest will be free in time for when the swift arrive. Bats also can make use of the nest as a roost. Some nest boxes are designed with this multipurpose, multi-function in mind.

These nest boxes are the John Stimpson Model 30 with heat-resistant sloping roofs .They can be installed on any elevation and not necessarily under eaves. Boxes are made from uPVC so no cleaning out or maintenance is required. The boxes are installed by two screws through the back on to the wall.

If you are interested in having a nest box installed on your home, help may be available depending on availability of installers. Please do get in touch via redbridgeswifts@gmail.com or via the Facebook page Redbridge Swifts to find out more.

Swift peeping out of swift brick. Image credit Action for Swifts

Remember if you are having any roof work done, please avoid doing so from May- Early August so not to disturb any nesting swifts (and in fact it would be illegal to do so).

If you already love swifts or have a new found love for them, they'd really appreciate you helping them out by providing a home for them and thus helping to ensure our summer skies will continue to be filled with their delightful sights and sounds for years to come.

by Georgina Beresford

The Swift-conservation website is a fantastic resource for all things Swift.

With lots of information and helpful tips on making your home a home for swifts https://www.swift-conservation.org/Contents.htm

And Action for swifts blog is another great resource https://actionforswifts.blogspot.com

& here's the link to the Redbridge swifts Facebook page.
https://www.facebook.com/groups/redbridgeswifts

And the Waltham Forest one.
https://www.facebook.com/groups/2352184645075681

& don't forget to log your findings on Swift mapper https://www.swiftmapper.org.uk

Check out Robert Booth's fantastic swift photography
https://www.flickr.com/people/rjb8267/

.... don't forget

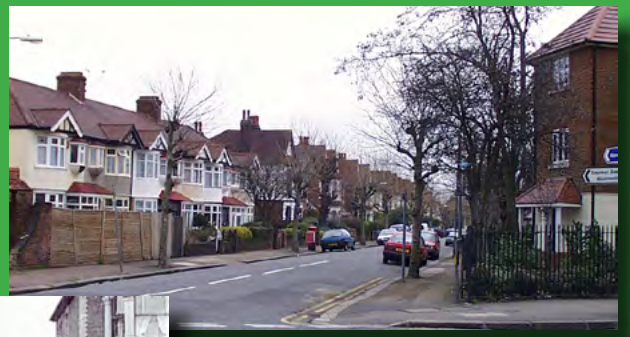
During the breeding season there are millions more hungry mouths to feed. Nesting parents will have to work hard to feed their young, while maintaining their own energy levels. So why not give them a helping hand.

- 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 ?

Flooding in the area is nothing new. The image shows Empress Avenue at the turn of the last century and how it looks today. The Aldersbrook Estate was built in the Roding valley and parts on what used to be watercress beds so were prone to flooding. Note the first row of houses are post war those shown on the older picture suffered bomb damage during WWII.



epping forest

for everyone to Love

Strength in community

As part of the Wren group you will all know and love Epping Forest, perhaps particularly the birdlife on Wanstead Flats and in the south of Epping Forest.

However, anecdotal evidence suggests that many other people, despite living close to the Forest, hardly or never visit, and therefore do not enjoy the benefits we all reap to our physical and mental health, to our sense of community and identity, to our overall wellbeing. At Epping Forest Heritage Trust we want to begin to address that.

As well as specific walks we have planned later this year with Muslim Hikers and Black Girls Hike we will be reaching out to community organisations around the Forest to better understand what the obstacles to visiting the Forest might be, and how we, or others, might help address them.

We will also be expanding our volunteer conservation activities, thanks to funding we have received from City Bridge Trust, and piloting women-only conservation sessions, to see if we can involve more women in our work.

Partnership and collaboration will be key to the success of this work, as we build relationships with new and different organisations who understand their communities better than we do, and develop deeper working relationships with some of our existing partners, such as the Wrens. A great example of that partnership work is the walk we jointly staged on Wanstead Flats, led by our Chair, Judith Adams, with lots of specialist local and ornithological expertise provided by James Heal and a number of members of the Wren group.

And the exciting thing is that if we are successful in engaging more people in the Forest, not only will the wellbeing of those people improve, but the latest evidence shows it will be good for us as a society, as the ensuing health benefits to individuals bring savings to our health and care system.

It will also create a whole new cohort of people who love and care about the Forest, its flora and fauna.

Partnership and collaboration will be key to the success of Epping Forest Heritage - picture shows a joint walk with EFHT and the Wren Group on 12th Feb last

We have also been stressing the importance and potential of community engagement to the City of London, and hope that extra resources will be dedicated to engaging with, and supporting, local community organisations such as the Wrens once their new structure is in place.

We have also been stressing the importance and potential of community engagement to the City of London, and hope that extra resources will be dedicated to engaging with, and supporting, local community organisations such as the Wrens once their new structure is in place.

In lieu of the Epping Forest Consultative Group late last year members were circulated with the draft headline strategic objectives of the City's new Natural Environment Department. Our feedback focused on suggesting that in developing a new strategy for the Forest, partners, community groups and local authorities around the Forest should be engaged early, so they can actively participate in developing the strategy, with the result that they will then be more willing to help deliver it in due course. We also strongly suggested they rather than "balancing" biodiversity against other City objectives, biodiversity net gain should be prioritised. We wait to see whether these suggestions will be taken up.

We also expressed our concerns about the adequacy of the budget for the maintenance of Epping Forest. This year the plan is for a net 2% increase in budget at a time when inflation is running at over 10%. These real time cuts continue the trends of previous years. We believe Epping Forest needs to be given greater priority within the City, and higher levels of core investment.

Let's hope that once the new structure in the Epping Forest team is in place there is broad consultation and engagement on their new strategy for the Forest, that community engagement is embedded in their work and that together we can all work together to protect and preserve the Forest for generations to come.

Peter Lewis
Chief Executive EFHT

"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

searching for stags

by Sybil Ritten

Would a walk on a balmy summers evening in our local area appeal to anyone?

It appears that Bushwood, Wanstead Flats and Wanstead Park have never had a survey for Lucanus Cervus, despite there being areas which are suitable habitat for their breeding and despite them being found both within these areas and on the surrounding streets.

I am planning to do a transect survey this summer in Bushwood and wondered if anyone else would be interested in doing one in this or an adjoining area.

Lucanus Cervus is part of the Saproxylic group of beetles so is found in areas where there is a supply of dead and decaying wood. After around 6 years as a larva, they pupate and emerge as adults to find mates from late May to early August. The males searching for females tend to migrate to surfaces of warmth, hence often being found on pavements and roads.

Stag beetle. Pic by Bill Plumb

Briefly it will entail

- Choosing a 500-metre walk which you record and walk 6 times over June and July at sunset. If possible, from west to east.
- It needs to be above 12 degrees C, with little or no wind and dry.
- There seems to be a dearth of surveys within woodland and wilder green spaces but if it is more convenient, a transect on streets or a local park is also accepted.
- The time, date, temperature, humidity and wind speed are recorded and the amount of live and dead wood habitat is estimated by you for each walk of the transect. You will ideally take a photograph to confirm your identification, if you are lucky to come across any form of the stag beetle alive or dead! The adult male is distinctive but the female bears a resemblance to the lesser stag beetle (Dorcus Parallelipipedus) which has a wider distribution but is matt black as opposed to a shinier dark conker brown colour.
- Your survey can be uploaded to the Peoples Trust for Endangered Species or the European Stag Beetle study or if preferred return forms to me so that I may scan and enter them. It will be easier to retrieve the data as a group if we submit the collective data to one account and I am willing to take on this role. The PTES data is fed into the National Biodiversity network.

https://ptes.org/campaigns/stag-beetles-2/
https://www.stagbeetlemonitoring.org/

I hope to also encourage local people via residents' associations and other contacts to raise awareness and report any isolated findings through the PTES website.

Apart from the above links you may find Maria Fremlin's articles and papers a great resource. She has been studying them for 20 years! http://maria.fremlin.de/stagbeetles/index.html

Currently she is looking at egg development in the Stag Beetle female so would value if anyone finds a dead female to dissect it i.e., open the abdominal sternites and take a photograph. Alternatively, if you can get them to me quickly, I am happy to perform the task!

Male and female stag beetles. Pic by Ross Bower

Please get in touch if you want to know more, sibs48@hotmail.co.uk

by Sybil Ritten

a big hunt for small lichens

On Saturday March 11th the City of London Cemetery and Crematorium in Manor Park was invaded (with permission) by members of the Wren Conservation Group and others in search of lichens. The CoL Cemetery is one of the largest municipal cemeteries in the UK and covers 200 acres. It was opened in 1856 and has many miles of tree lined avenues and some well curated gardens.

The theme of the walk was to find examples, and look closely at, the four most common forms of lichen thallus: leprose (powdery), crustose (forming a crust firmly attached to the substrate), foliose (with leaf-like lobes) and fruiticose (resembling a shrub).

Lecanora campestris - pic by Bob Vaughan

After a brief introduction to the lichen life-form in general, we went to look at some gravestones and soon found some fine examples of crustose lichens: Lecanora campestris (see main pic) gave us views of the small jam tart-like structures, called apothecia, which produce fungal spores. The white slightly fluffy margin helps identify this lichen.

A yellow Caloplaca flavescens gave an instant red colour reaction with Potassium hydroxide (K+ red) although it was a young specimen with poorly developed apothecia - in this case looking like lemon curd tarts. The flatter gravestones had round white Caloplaca teicholyta and yellow Caloplaca dalmatica amongst other more cryptic species.

We then moved on to the memorial gardens where young trees, with conveniently low branches, are scattered in small flower beds surrounded by well mown grass. The branches were laden with foliose lichens of many different species and a hand lens allowed us to get to grips with the ID features.

Tree in garden - branches were laden with foliose lichens of many different species- pic by Bob Vaughan

Punctelia jeckerii - pic by Bob Vaughan

The diversity here focused on foliose lichens with differences in their lobes and the presence and distribution of soralia, structures contain tiny propagules of fungus and algae which allow the lichen to spread easily. Here is Punctelia jeckerii with soralia punching though the outer lobes of the lichen thallus and coalescing on the inner upturned edges.

Evernia prunastri - pic by Bob Vaughan

It was noticeable that different trees had different lichen communities, and on one Japanese Maple the western aspect of the trunk was covered in Evernia prunastri. Although not technically a fruiticose lichen, as it has differences in upper and lower surface it was our closest example of the shrubby lichen form.

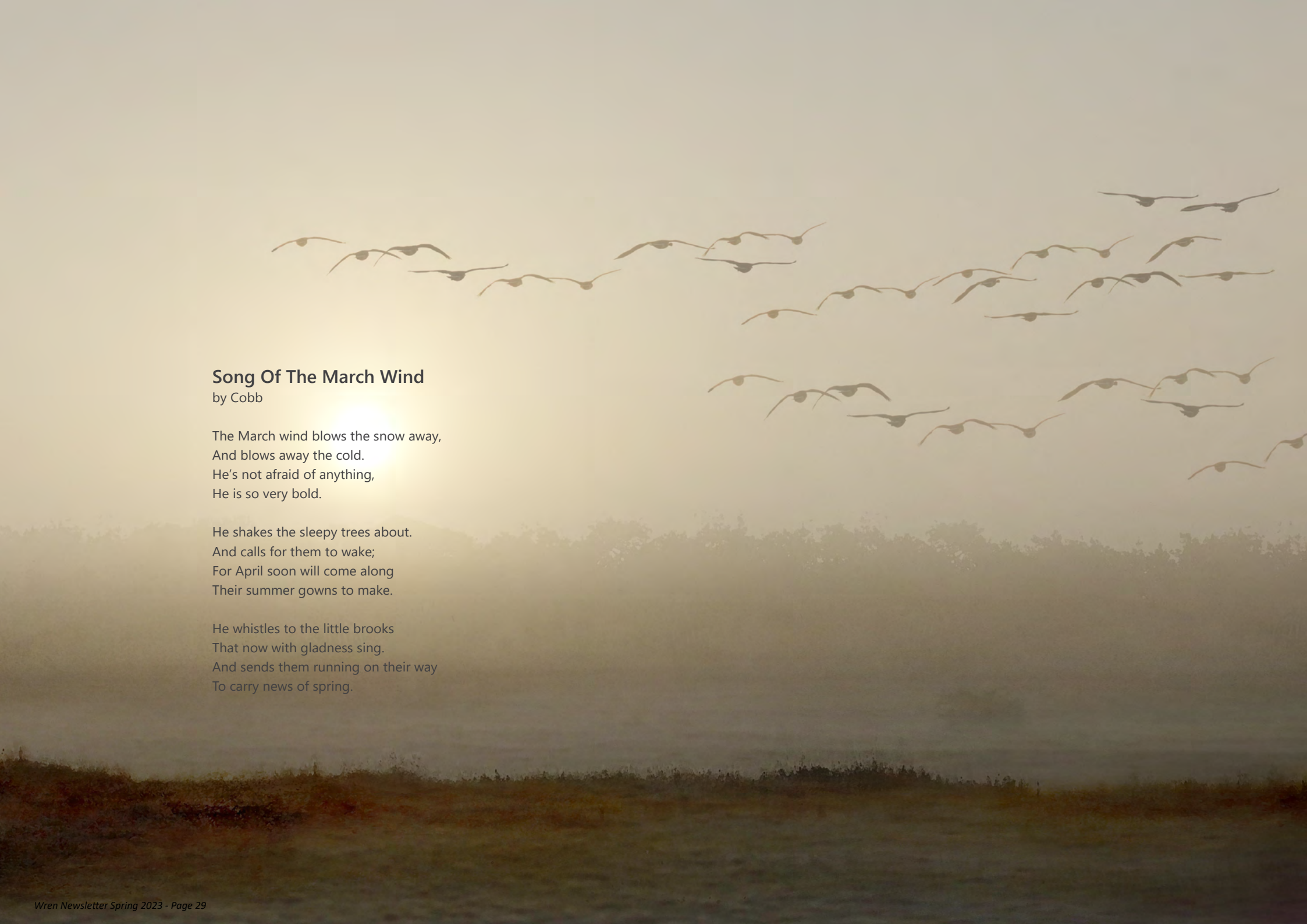
This left the leprose thallus form to find and on the lower part of a few trunks we found green patches of Lepraria (probably L. lobificans).

Lepraria lobificans - pic by Bob Vaughan

As we spread out Liz Andrews found a lichenicolous fungus on Physcia, this was probably Marchandiomyces aurantiacus but I'll need to go back and check. On the way out our sharp-eyed hunters discovered some areas of Cladonia on a sunny bank, consisting of both the much branched reindeer-type lichen and the well-known pixie cups.

This was a useful day out, thanks to all the participants. I added a couple more species to growing list and there are a lot more lichens to find this cemetery so look out for more Wren walks in the autumn.

by Bob Vaughan



Song Of The March Wind

by Cobb

The March wind blows the snow away,
And blows away the cold.
He's not afraid of anything,
He is so very bold.

He shakes the sleepy trees about.
And calls for them to wake;
For April soon will come along
Their summer gowns to make.

He whistles to the little brooks
That now with gladness sing.
And sends them running on their way
To carry news of spring.

..... and finally

Some dates for your diary!

This year's Bio Blitz Weekend has a new name: **The Wanstead Wildlife Weekend.**
24th and 25th June, 10am -5pm

Sunday 18th June: Pre- Wildlife Weekend workshop (Time tbc)

A workshop for those who wish to help with activities and would like to learn more- such as how to run a pond dip or a minibeast hunt or be a wildlife recorder.

We have some great varied activities for all lined up for the big weekend. We are delighted to be able to use the new Woodland Play Area on Sunday 25th for children's activities.

All times to be confirmed nearer the time.
Saturday 24th June:

6.00am: Moth Trap Reveal at the Temple!
10am: Morning Walk in Wanstead Park, led by Tajinder Lachhar of Redbridge Nature Conservation.

Bees and Hoverflies with Tony Madgwick

2pm: Spider Hunt & Invertebrates on Wanstead Flats with spider expert David Carr

All day: Bush Craft workshops for families and teens run by local environmental charity Tindersticks

Sunday 25th June:

Macrophotography Workshop on Invertebrates for keen photographers with Nicola. Time tbc.

10am: Morning Bio Diversity walk for all with Tony Madgwick and James Heal

10am: Pond Dip at the Shoulder of Mutton Pond for families with children aged 4+

2pm: Pollinator Walk for children aged 10+ led by Tony Madgwick, followed by an art workshop with Dr Gayle Chong Kwan.

12pm Family Climate Picnic in the Woodland Play Area

1pm: Insect Stories in the Play Area

2pm: Minibeast Hunt and other activities in the Play Area

Can you help? Tell us what's missing. (eg Botany? Bats?)

Recorders of flora and fauna wanted on the walks to record both on i-Record and also to make up a list total for the weekend.

Info Tent: help wanted to run the info Tent by the Tea Hut on both days.

Contact: gilljames@btinternet.com

TABLE 1

BACK TO ARTICLE

Species	Common locations	When most commonly found
Greylag Goose - Anser anser	Patch lakes and ponds	All year
Canada Goose - Branta canadensis	Patch lakes and ponds	All year
Mute Swan - Cygnus olor	Patch lakes and ponds	All year
Egyptian Goose - Alopochen aegyptiaca	Patch lakes and ponds	All year
Northern Shoveler - Spatula clypeata	Patch lakes and ponds	Winter
Gadwall - Mareca strepera	Patch lakes and ponds	Winter
Mallard - Anas platyrhynchos	Patch lakes and ponds	All year
Eurasian/Green-winged Teal - Anas crecca	Patch lakes and ponds	Winter
Common Pochard - Aythya ferina	Patch lakes and ponds	Winter
Tufted Duck - Aythya fuligula	Patch lakes and ponds	All year / winter
Little Grebe - Tachybaptus ruficollis	Patch lakes and ponds	Winter
Great Crested Grebe - Podiceps cristatus	Basin or SoM or Perch ponds	All year
Rock Dove - Columba livia	Jubilee and Alex and near food	All year
Stock Dove - Columba oenas	Woodland	All year
Common Woodpigeon - Columba palumbus	Anywhere	All year
Collared Dove - Streptopelia decaocto	Urban fringes and gardens	All year
Common Swift - Apus apus	Look up	Spring and Summer
Common Moorhen - Gallinula chloropus	Patch lakes and ponds	All year
Eurasian Coot - Fulica atra	Patch lakes and ponds	All year
Black-headed Gull - Chroicocephalus ridibundus	Lakes or pitches	Autumn to Spring
Common Gull - Larus canus	Lakes or pitches	Autumn to Spring
Herring Gull - Larus argentatus	Lakes or pitches	Autumn to Spring
Lesser Black-backed Gull - Larus fuscus	Lakes or pitches	All year
Great Cormorant - Phalacrocorax carbo	Perch Pond or flyovers	All year
Grey Heron - Ardea cinerea	Lakes or pitches	All year
Little Egret - Egretta garzetta	Perch Pond, sometimes Heronry, and on the Roding	All year
Eurasian Sparrowhawk - Accipiter nisus	Woodland, or soaring	All year
Common Buzzard - Buteo buteo	Soaring, or OSW and sometimes in Park	All year
Great Spotted Woodpecker - Dendrocopos major	Anywhere with mature trees and flyovers	All year
Eurasian Green Woodpecker - Picus viridis	Woodland and grassland	All year
Common Kestrel - Falco tinnunculus	Flyovers and OSW	All year
Eurasian Hobby - Falco subbuteo	Woodland and overhead	Summer migrant
Ring-necked Parakeet - Psittacula krameri	Woodland and overhead- particularly early and late	All year
Eurasian Jay - Garrulus glandarius	Woodland	All year
Common Magpie - Pica pica	Anywhere	All year
Eurasian Jackdaw - Corvus monedula	Jubilee, Alex and other corvid congregations	All year
Carrion Crow - Corvus corone	Jubilee, Alex and other corvid congregations	All year
Eurasian Blue Tit - Cyanistes caeruleus	Woodland and gardens	All year
Great Tit - Parus major	Woodland and gardens	All year
Eurasian Skylark - Alauda arvensis	Brooms	All year
Barn Swallow - Hirundo rustica	Passing through the Brooms or anywhere - often low	Summer passage migrant
Common House Martin - Delichon urbicum	Breeding in Aldersbrook estate and often over Brooms	Summer migrant
Willow Warbler - Phylloscopus trochilus	Trees, copses, woodland, and scrub	Summer passage migrant
Common Chiffchaff - Phylloscopus collybita	Trees, copses, woodland, and scrub	Predominantly summer migrant with some winter presence
Long-tailed Tit - Aegithalos caudatus	Woodland	All year
Eurasian Blackcap - Sylvia atricapilla	Woodland and copses	Predominantly summer migrant with some winter presence
Lesser Whitethroat - Curruca curruca	Scrub	Summer migrant
Common Whitethroat - Curruca communis	Scrub	Summer migrant
Goldcrest - Regulus regulus	Woodland - predominantly evergreen	All year
Eurasian Nuthatch - Sitta europaea	Woodland	All year
Eurasian Wren - Troglodytes troglodytes	Anywhere	All year
Common Starling - Sturnus vulgaris	Anywhere	All year
Mistle Thrush - Turdus viscivorus	Copses - most often seen near Esso Copse, Coronation Copse, and OSW	All year
Song Thrush - Turdus philomelos	Woodland and copses	All year
Redwing - Turdus iliacus	Woodland and copses - high concentrations in OSW	Winter migrant
Eurasian Blackbird - Turdus merula	Gardens and woodland margins	All year
Fieldfare - Turdus pilaris	Copses or flyovers	Winter migrant
European Robin - Erithacus rubecula	Anywhere	All year
Whinchat - Saxicola rubetra	Brooms	Summer passage migrant
European Stonechat - Saxicola rubicola	Brooms	Predominantly Autumn to Spring
Northern Wheatear - Oenanthe oenanthe	Brooms and grassland	Summer passage migrant
Dunnock - Prunella modularis	Scrub, gardens, and woodland	All year
House Sparrow - Passer domesticus	urban fringes and gardens	All year
Grey Wagtail - Motacilla cinerea	Sometimes on edge of Heronry, Ornamentals, Perch and in OSW	All year
Pied Wagtail/White Wagtail - Motacilla alba	Lakes and ponds	All year
Meadow Pipit - Anthus pratensis	Brooms and grassland	Predominantly Autumn to Spring
Common Chaffinch - Fringilla coelebs	OSW and Ornamentals or flyovers	All year
European Greenfinch - Chloris chloris	Copses and scrub - often Enclosure or OSW	All year
Common Linnet - Linaria cannabina	Often near Jubilee or Brooms	All year
European Goldfinch - Carduelis carduelis	urban fringes and gardens	All year
Common Reed Bunting - Emberiza schoeniclus	Brooms, SSSI	All year

TABLE 2		BACK TO ARTICLE
Species	**Common locations**	**When most commonly found**
Common Shelduck - Tadorna tadorna	Flyovers	Spring or all year
Eurasian Wigeon - Mareca penelope	Most commonly in Wanstead Park	Winter
Common Cuckoo - Cuculus canorus	Scrub and copses	Summer migrant
Water Rail - Rallus aquaticus	Roding in OSW and sometimes in the Park	Autumn to Spring
Northern Lapwing - Vanellus vanellus	Flyovers - especially during cold weather	Winter or all year
Jack Snipe - Lymnocryptes minimus	Fringes of lakes of Wanstead Flats	Winter
Eurasian Woodcock - Scolopax rusticola	Dusk watches of SSSI or Roding (no pun intended)	Winter
Common Snipe - Gallinago gallinago	Grassland or lake fringes	Winter
Common Sandpiper - Actitis hypoleucos	Alex on Heronry fringes	Spring to Autumn
Mediterranean Gull - Ichthyaetus melanocephalus	With other gulls	Winter
Yellow-legged Gull - Larus michahellis	With other gulls	Winter
Caspian Gull - Larus cachinnans	With other gulls	Winter
Great Black-backed Gull - Larus marinus	Flyovers or sometimes with other gulls	Winter
Common Tern - Sterna hirundo	Lakes in the Park	Summer migrant
Red Kite - Milvus milvus	Flyover	All year
Little Owl - Athene noctua	Wanstead Flats copses	All year
Tawny Owl - Strix aluco	Bush Wood or Reservoir	All year
Short-eared Owl - Asio flammeus	Flyovers or in Brooms	Autumn to Spring
Common Kingfisher - Alcedo atthis	Roding or sometimes in Wanstead Park lakes	All year
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker - Dryobates minor	Wanstead Park woodland	Predominantly winter
Peregrine Falcon - Falco peregrinus	Flyovers	All year
Coal Tit - Periparus ater	Woodland	All year
Sedge Warbler - Acrocephalus schoenobaenus	Scrub by river and lakes	Passage migrant
Common Reed Warbler - Acrocephalus scirpaceus	Shoulder of Mutton	Summer migrant
Sand Martin - Riparia riparia	Flyovers - especially Alex	Summer visitor
Cetti's Warbler - Cettia cetti	River Roding	All year
Garden Warbler - Sylvia borin	Woodland and fringes of woodland	Passage migrant
Common Firecrest - Regulus ignicapilla	Evergreen woodland	Predominantly winter
Eurasian Treecreeper - Certhia familiaris	Woodland	All year
Ring Ouzel - Turdus torquatus	Scrub and copses	Passage migrant
Spotted Flycatcher - Muscicapa striata	Edges of woodland and copses	Passage migrant
European Pied Flycatcher - Ficedula hypoleuca	Edges of woodland and copses	Summer
Common Redstart - Phoenicurus phoenicurus	Edges of woodland and copses	Passage migrant
Western Yellow Wagtail - Motacilla flava	Flyovers	Passage migrant
Tree Pipit - Anthus trivialis	Scrub and copses	Passage migrant
Brambling - Fringilla montifringilla	Flyovers and copses	Predominantly Autumn migrant
Lesser Redpoll - Acanthis cabaret	Copses	Predominantly winter
Eurasian Siskin - Spinus spinus	The Dell	Predominantly winter
Yellowhammer - Emberiza citrinella	Flyovers	Predominantly passage migrant

links

Wren links page www.wrengroup.org.uk/links

Facebook www.facebook.com/WrenOrg

Twitter https://twitter.com/wrenwildlife

Wanstead Wildlife

www.wansteadwildlife.org.uk

Friends of Wanstead Parklands

www.wansteadpark.org.uk

RSPB North East London Members Group

www.rspb.org.uk/groups/northeastlondon

Wanstead Birding Blog

wansteadbirding.blogspot.co.uk

Epping Forest

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

British Naturalists' Association

www.bna-naturalists.org

Bushwood Area Residents' Association

www.bara-leytonstone.org.uk

East London Nature www.eln.yorkshirefog.co.uk

East London Birders www.elbf.co.uk

Friends of Epping Forest

www.friendsofeppingforest.org.uk

East London Nature www.eastlondonnature.co.uk

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

Wild Wanstead - greening up the local area

www.wildwanstead.org

BBC Nature www.bbc.co.uk/nature

British Naturalists Association

www.bna-naturalists.org

BBC Weather http://www.bbc.co.uk/weather

Field Studies Council (FSC)

www.field-studies-council.org

London Natural History Society

www.lnhs.org.uk

Natural England www.naturalengland.org.uk

RSPB www.rspb.org.uk/england

UK Safari www.uksafari.com

The British Deer Society www.bds.org.uk

The Wildlife Trust www.wildlifetrusts.org