

Spring 2025

Wren

Wildlife & Conservation Group

*Longhorn cattle in Wanstead
Park - pic by Tushar*

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a word from the chair

Local artist, Alex Glenn, has turned the Wanstead Park pump house (in between the Ornamental Waters and the Roding) into a psychedelic art piece that manages to be both otherworldly yet also familiar and in keeping.

The bright green swirls remind me of fingerprints, map contours, but also something... stranger.

I was lucky enough to meet to Alex while he was working. He is a lovely guy and I was struck again, as I have been when Wren has engaged with visual artists and storytellers before, how there are very many ways to interact with our natural environment.

Our local wild spaces are constantly changing. Have a look at the old photos of Wanstead Flats when it seemed like a vast bleak space. Over time ponds were dug and plantations (or copses as we probably slightly inaccurately call them)

were planted, scrub grows and is managed back, areas are rewilded, whilst others are mown and sprayed as football pitches.

Water comes in torrents (I have seen the Roding above the footpath) and large parts of the SSSI under water, but I have also seen several of our waterbodies dried out. I have witnessed huge grass fires. We have had anti-aircraft guns mounted on local buildings during the



Local artist, Alex Glenn, working on the pump house. Main picture shows Wanstead Flats in the early 1900s looking south down Woodgrange Road toward Forest Gate. Still recovering from it's industrial past and before the building of ponds, the creating of plantations and the laying out of football pitches - showing change is the only constant.

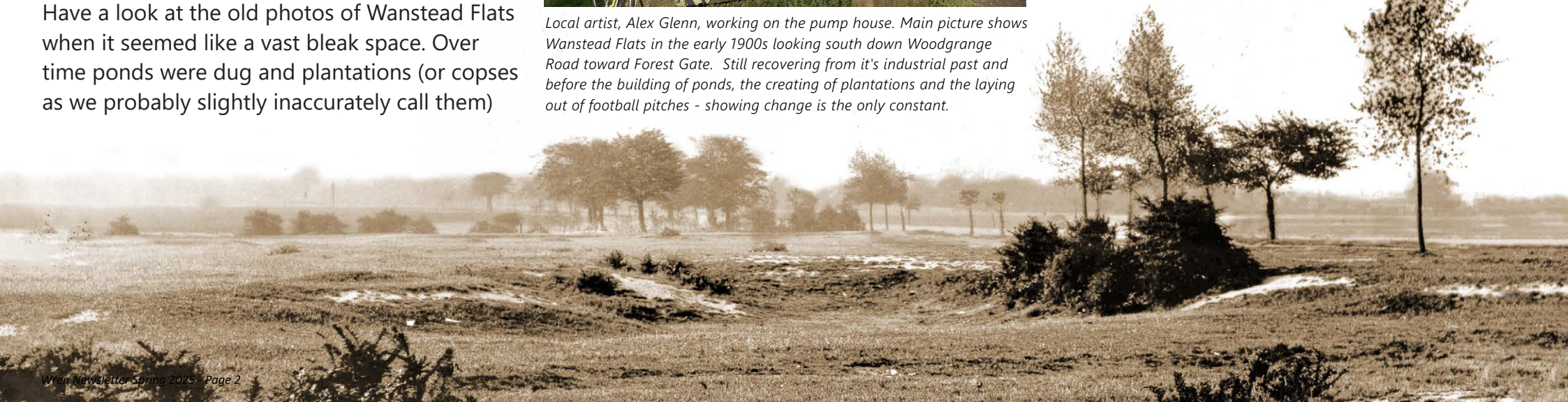
Olympics, and an overflow morgue built but luckily never used during the recent pandemic.

Landscaped gardens have been turned into golf courses and wild areas. A stately home was built and then demolished. We have even had a prisoner of war camp.

And we have had some temporary rope to help our Skylarks have the space to breed. The local area has gone through much iteration - many at the hand of humans and others at the hand of Mother Nature.

The great cliché tells us that change is the only constant. Alex Glenn's outdoor wall art reflected this fact brilliantly with its fluid shapes.

James Heal
Chair Wren Group



Wren annual general meeting Chair's Report

Looking back over 2024, I am pleased to report that the Wren Wildlife & Conservation Groups continues to grow and thrive. We held multiple activities through the year, walks, talks, social events, regular and very popular practical work sessions, we conducted survey work and liaised with local stakeholders and other affinity groups.

Our flagship event, the Wanstead Wildlife Weekend was another huge success with various activities across a weekend in late June. It was a great show of team work from Committee members but a real tour de force of organisation by our amazing outgoing Secretary, Gill James. A highlight of the weekend for me was Tony Madgwick's bee walk in the Park where I was introduced to the amazing diversity and ecological minidramas played out on a small sandy patch of worn earth near the Tea Hut where various wasps and bees burrow their nestholes, and patrol for prey.

There was a great display of resilience by the group as we continued to engage in dialogue with local dog walkers around the skylark fence rope, we repaired it numerous times after it was repeatedly cut by

a tiny minority of disgruntled people, and worked with the City of London to celebrate as the rope was taken down at the end of the season. We know a couple of pairs of Skylark bred successfully and the rope is now back up again, and so far undamaged, for the new season.



In January the practical work team spent three sessions scything and raking a neglected meadow on the old sewage works, next to Wanstead park.

In wildlife terms, we had 137 species of bird locally through the year with highlights being Nightjar, Ferruginous Duck, and Stone Curlew. It was a year of multiple sightings of a Barn Owl, previously an extremely rare bird locally, so we may have a locally roosting bird, and there were several records of Bullfinch after a few years missing. But it is not all good news: Common Snipe is becoming increasingly scarce, and Jack Snipe was not recorded at all.

Our breeding bird records will soon be profiled in the London Bird Report for 2025.

An Otter was spotted and photographed several times in the Roding much to the delight of local wildlife watchers.

Tim Harris and a small team of moth trappers helped contribute to the 361 species of moth and butterfly for the year which was the second highest on record. Well over a thousand other invertebrate records were also submitted to iRecord.

Turning to practical work led by Peter Williams. A reminder that the Wren practical work team meets weekly October to March each, and has a schedule of works agreed with the City of London.

Particular highlights this year include:

Our usual work in Chalet Wood, the bluebell wood, Wanstead park to get ready for the spectacular display in April. The City's tree surgeons were able to provide us with some new logs to renew the path edgings.

In January the Wren team spent three sessions scything and raking a neglected meadow on the old sewage works, next to Wanstead park. We also scraped away some grass exposing the bare soil. The aim is to encourage wild flowers to grow there and for it to become a wildflower meadow, good for butterflies and other insects. In April/May we will be back to plant yellow rattle on the bare patches. This semi parasitic plant helps to reduce some of the coarser grasses giving wild flowers a better chance. At the end of February a team of more than twenty of our volunteers turned out on Wanstead Flats to help City staff put up the blue roping round the skylark enclosure. This was our biggest ever cooperation with the paid staff to complete a

practical task, and we got the whole job done inside a couple of hours, and the City made clear their appreciation for our efforts.

As always, I am hugely grateful for all the efforts of Committee members and other active members. The events all take lots of effort, organising, the ticketing, the recording, the newsletter, the website, the finances, the membership, the Facebook group and everything that requires work. I won't name you all, but thank you for everything you do - the Wren Group wouldn't exist without you. Whilst I am not naming individuals, I would like to call out the outstanding efforts over several years

of our outgoing Secretary, Gill James. Gill has been a major figure, often behind the scenes, who has kept the committee meetings running effectively with agendas and minutes but also gone above and beyond in terms of organisation and coordination of some of our major events such as the Wanstead Wildlife Weekend.

Lastly, it's always nice to be recognised for the work that we do. The Wren Group were one of a dozen 'Redbridge heroes' honoured at the 2025 Mayor's Community Awards on March 12th. The group was chosen from 42 individuals and groups nominated for the award. Wren committee members Tim Harris

and Lucinda Culpin were present to pick up the award.

Thank you very much for everything you have done.

James Heal
Chair Wren Group



For those people who missed the AGM Zoom Meeting the excellent talk from Tanith Cook on the Conservation Strategy for Epping Forest is available here: <https://wrengroup.org.uk>

your wren committee 2025



*Richard Oakman
President*



*James Heal
Chair*



*Sharon Payne
Secretary*



*Simon Raper
Treasurer*



Moira Duhig



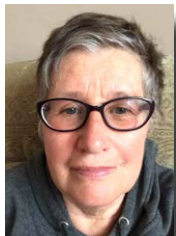
June Nicholson



Jackie Morrison



Tim Harris



*Mary Holden
Membership,
Social Media*



*Bob Vaughan
Wren Website*



Marion Lobo



Tony Madgwick



Lucinda Culpin



Neil Herrington



*Tony Morrison
Wren Newsletter*



*Peter Williams
Works Coordinator*

Wanstead butterflies & moths

Butterflies and moths are an important gauge of the health of any environment. If numbers fall, that trend is likely to reflect more general problems. And if the number of species declines, that points to negative changes in an area's floristic diversity.

Amateur naturalists have been recording the butterflies and moths of the Wanstead area for many years. In the case of butterflies, this probably goes back to the early 20th century, with moths taking a back seat – the nocturnal nature of most makes them harder to enumerate. This began to change in the 1980s when former Wren chairman Colin Plant conducted serious moth-trapping, and in the early years of this century Paul Ferris picked up the recording baton. The years since 2013 have probably seen the most consistent efforts to find out what moths live in our area, and those efforts continue to this day.



The marbled white butterfly. Adults can often be seen feeding on purple flowers, such as field scabious, common knapweed and wild marjoram. The caterpillars feed on a variety of grasses, but red fescue is especially important - pic by Tim Harris.

Colin Plant and others used light-traps in the early 1980s. More recently, Paul Ferris revived interest from 2005, using a light-trap in the garden of his house in Capel Road. In the autumn of 2011, I began regular trapping in my garden at Belgrave Road, and Tom Casey and James Heal have both used light-traps regularly in Overton Drive and Barclay Road respectively. We have also run traps in Bush Wood and Wanstead Park. In 2024, a mixture of actinic and MV traps were used in every month of the year, with Tom being the most regular. But that is not the full story: observation has involved a much larger team of local naturalists – too many to list here. Long may this continue!



Pine Carpet Pennithera firmata sighted Belgrave Road: 29 June. Photo verification received. The first record for the patch.

Despite the inclement weather, the total number of species recorded in 2024 was the second highest on record, 366. This was only surpassed by the 375 seen in 2020. That headline figure

masks that fact that numbers of many species were down. This was true of butterflies generally, as demonstrated by the data collected on the new Wanstead Park transect, but also for a range of moths. Some expected species – Rustic (*Hoplodrina blanda*), for example – were not recorded at all.

Despite this, it was an extraordinary year in terms of quality.

There was much to celebrate, including the addition of an impressive 30 species to the patch list. These include Light Crimson Underwing (*Catocala promissa*, the 4th record for Essex), and the first records for south-west Essex of Great Prominent (*Peridea anceps*) and Waved Black (*Parascotia fuliginaria*). Also new were Pine Carpet (*Pennithera firmata*), Maple Pug (*Eupithecia inturbata*), August Thorn (*Ennomos quercinaria*) plus the 7th and 8th Essex records of Crescent Dart (*Agrotis trux*). Add to these the caterpillars of Scarce Umber (*Agriopsis aurantiaria*) and Mullein Moth (*Cucullia verbasci*) – neither recorded as adults locally – and 22 new micromoths, including the third Essex records of Gold Cloak (*Phtheochroa schreibersiana*) and Rufous Pearl (*Udea fulvalis*), plus Yellow-headed Spring Jewel (*Eriocrania salopiella*), Maple Snout (*Anarsia innoxia*), and Marbled Fern (*Musotima nitidalis*) ... and 2024 was certainly a year to remember. Of course, it's not only about rare records. Our varied matrix of grassland, scrub, woodland, freshwater, and leafy gardens provides food and

shelter for a great range of commoner species, all crucial pieces in the jigsaw puzzle that makes up our local ecosystems. And we should never take even the most common for granted; the environment is changing so rapidly at present – mostly for the worst – that we should treasure them all.



Rufous Pearl Udea fulvalis - sighted in Belgrave Rd: 16 July. A new record for the patch, and the third record for Essex.

New on our website a comprehensive, well-illustrated report on the butterflies and moths found in the Wanstead area in 2024. Compiled by @timharris57.bsky.social

https://wrengroup.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Wanstead-Butterflies_Moths_2024-.pdf

stilettoes making a comeback

in Epping Forest

The rare stiletto fly (*Pandivirilia melaleuca*) has been discovered living in Epping Forest—the first-ever sighting in the Forest and in the vice-county of South Essex. This striking species is named after its slender, high-heel-like legs. But it's not just stylish, it also reflects the Forest's rich ecosystem.



Classified as Near Threatened/Nationally Rare, the stiletto fly has only been recorded in a handful of UK sites and is associated with lowland wood-pasture where old growth trees are present. These landscapes are the most wildlife rich terrestrial habitats in Europe and Epping Forest is an internationally important example.

The fly's larvae thrive within the decaying wood of hollow ancient trees and are thought to feed on saproxylic beetle larvae that inhabit the dry, red-rotten heartwood, of the Forest's oaks. Its presence highlights the importance of Epping Forest's veteran tree management and [Habitat Restoration Programme](#) in maintaining such habitats for rare species.

Veteran trees are vital to biodiversity, providing shelter and sustenance to countless specialist species. The presence of this elusive insect underscores the importance of the Forest's internationally important collection of trees and the role that dead wood plays in sustaining wildlife.

This hidden ecological wonder was discovered by Epping Forest's Biodiversity Officer Andy Froud. Can you help us find more ?

Epping Forest is home to a vast array of species, from rare insects to breeding birds, butterflies, reptiles, and small mammals. We need passionate volunteers to help us monitor these incredible creatures. Your data will inform the conservation work we do. If you're passionate about wildlife and enjoy spending time outdoors, you could become a vital part of our species surveying efforts beginning this spring.



Stiletto Fly - Picture by Andy Froud

Volunteering opportunities include:

Breeding bird surveys – Recording bird populations to track species health.

Butterfly transects – Walking set routes to monitor butterfly numbers and trends.

Grassland habitat assessments – Evaluating plant diversity.

Reptile transects – Searching for slow worms, lizards, and grass snakes.

Small mammal surveys – Monitoring populations of voles, mice, and shrews.

Develop valuable field skills and deepen your knowledge of wildlife, spend time in nature, making a real impact on conservation as part of a dedicated community helping to safeguard Epping Forest's wildlife.

You'll be identifying and recording species starting this spring while exploring the Forest, using maps and mobile technology to navigate survey routes and collecting data and submitting findings to support conservation efforts.

The stiletto fly's unexpected appearance is just one example of the fascinating discoveries waiting to be made. Want to be part of the next big find? Get involved and help us protect the incredible biodiversity of Epping Forest.

Tom Boughton

Epping Forest, City of London Corporation



To find out more about how you can help follow [Epping Forest on Eventbrite](#) for future events.

Wanstead Park's historic

map tree

Wanstead Park was once a formal landscape surrounding the great Wanstead House, often compared to Blenheim Palace.

The Park's, the Long Walk once provided the eastward vista from Wanstead House toward the Ornamental Water. Near the end stands a lone Cedar of Lebanon on the bank of the lake. It is something of a landmark, and the only example of its species in the park.

Wanstead Park's Ornamental Waters (when it had water) with the iconic Cedar of Lebanon or Map Tree.

Cedars of Lebanon, frequently mentioned in the Bible, were introduced into this country about 400 years ago and became very popular ornaments in parks and gardens (though they have an alarming habit of shedding branches without much warning).

At some point, Wanstead Park's tree acquired the nickname of the Map Tree or the Tree of England, on account of its shape. Viewed from the north, its lopsided profile, with its longest branches spreading over the lake, give it something of the appearance of a map of England and Wales. The Map Tree is interesting because it must have been planted in the very last days that the gardens of Wanstead were being actively augmented (probably up to about 1818).

The Map Tree is over two centuries old, but hasn't grown very large – it may be that the gravelly soil doesn't suit it. The tree also has a pronounced lean toward the Ornamental Water, which appears to have increased over time – exacerbated by the frequent lack of water in the lake for many years. This has provoked some concern that time or a winter gale will cause it eventually to topple over.

It would be a great pity if the tree were to be lost, but it was planted very close to the bank and, as it has grown, it has become unstable. If the branches over the lake had been cut back at an earlier stage it might have stabilised (while regrettably losing some of our western counties). It may be too late for that now, but

we must await the verdict of the arborists.

While deemed safe by the City of London Corporation – which manages the park – damage to the 200-year-old tree's roots from footfall and a worsening lean towards Ornamental Water have raised concerns.

Ben Murphy, Chairman of the City of London Corporation's Epping Forest and Commons Committee, has confirmed they are aware of the problem and the tree has been inspected, revealing damage to major structural roots. Epping Forest's conservation team are looking at options to prolong the tree's life as much as possible and will announce their decision later this year.

According to Ben Murphy, the safety of Epping Forest's visitors and staff is the number one priority. To achieve this, arborists carry out tree inspections as part of a rolling programme to identify vulnerable trees and put measures in place to keep them safe. The rise of more extreme weather conditions, a result of climate change, is a significant challenge we face in our mission to protect them.

This issue was self-identified and the tree is deemed safe. However, there is damage to major structural roots caused by footfall near the base of the tree and the lean towards Ornamental Water continues to worsen. There remains a high degree of uncertainty around how long the tree may last, so our team are doing what they can to prolong its natural life whilst we create a succession plan.



The Cedar of Lebanon (Cedrus libani) by the Ornamental Waters in Wanstead Park, shown on an Edwardian postcard and today in March 2025.

The present day image shows the severe lean towards the currently dry lake. The tree is over 200 years old and in addition to its leaning it is small for its age. It may be that the tree does not thrive in the sandy habitat it finds itself in.



With respect to the Map Tree London Corporation's arborists explored a range of options with tree industry professionals, including:

- Propping, which would introduce rigid structures anchored in the ground that support tree branches or trunks from below.
- Introduction of static towers and steel cable braces to stop any further decline.
- Relocating the footpath from the base of the tree, reducing damage to buttress roots.

Unfortunately, these options cannot be implemented at this location or would not sustain the tree over the long term. Therefore, the recommended option is to plant a replacement tree nearby and establish knee-high fencing around the base in a horseshoe shape around the tree's drip line.

At present the tree is considered healthy and,

I recognise the connections people feel towards this iconic tree, which is of historical significance to Epping Forest. There remains some optimism the tree may surprise us and continue for decades to come, but it seems sensible we make plans now for its eventual replacement.

Ben Murphy

adapt to them. In this case, the stress is the lean, which trees adapt to through additional structural roots and the production of reaction wood.

There remains some optimism the tree may surprise us and continue for decades to come, but it seems sensible that plans are made for its eventual replacement. This project is likely to cost around £4,000 for the new tree, fencing and its installation. London Corporation is working with partners to raise funds for this ahead of planting next September.

More: <https://www.benjaminmurphy.uk>

as such, it is a self-optimising structure. It has the ability to identify stresses and

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.



act to avert biodiversity crisis

Remember those days of driving down country lanes, then having to clear the insects that smothered the windscreen. There haven't been many of those days recently. It is rare now to get an insect build up on a car windscreen.

This has something to do with the destruction caused to insect populations by human beings. Some 59% of the insect population was lost between 2004 and 2023. Yet, still humankind blunders on destroying fellow species that are key to its own existence.



The last biodiversity illiterate government allowed farmers to use the previously banned neonicotinoids pesticide for the past four years. These pesticides do incredible damage, especially to the bee population.

The campaigning group 38 degrees claim that just a teaspoon full of neonicotinoids pesticide can kill 1.5 billion honey bees.

The group are seeking to get the present government to ban neonicotinoids.

Nearly one in six species in the UK are threatened with extinction. Some 19% of species have become extinct since the 1970s.

These are just some of the statistics that highlight the climate and biodiversity crisis that has engulfed us over recent times.

The devastation caused by the destructive way in which we live becomes more evident every day. The fires, droughts and floods. Soaring food prices. (Food production will become ever more difficult and expensive if we go on destroying insects and other life).

We have to change the way they live. How can 35% of food produced in this country be thrown away?

Humans have to collectively wake up to the damage being done and take radical action. The sort of sustained action that was taken to counter the COVID pandemic - it is that kind of emergency.

Instead, there seems a collective form of amnesia, as humanity creeps ever closer to the abyss.

It is quite disillusioning to attend talks on this crisis and be reminded of the ineptitude of the political class. The failure to act, the creeping back from hesitant commitments, the catch all cop out 'it can't be afforded. Always putting off to another distant day the need to act now.

The arrival of Donald Trump in the Whitehouse and the silly comments of senior members of the Labour government regarding bats and newts do not augur well for the future.

Yet, on a more upbeat note, there have been positive things done. The saving of bird species like the red kite, sea eagles and the osprey. There have been great initiatives. Some farmers are leading the way, producing food, whilst fostering the environment. There is much happening but it needs to happen more quickly and on a bigger scale.

It is important that more people get involved. This can mean volunteering in groups to work on the land. Locally, the Wren Group does work every week in Wanstead Park or on the Flats.

Much of this work will enhance conditions in the future for insect and other life.

The Friends of Wanstead Park do monthly litter picks. The councillors also do a monthly litter pick on the third Saturday of each month. The River Roding Trust do regular work on the river.

There are council sponsored tree pits and pollinator pathways that local people can become involved with. Also, those who have gardens can make them more nature friendly.

Join different groups like the wildlife trusts, Friends of the Earth, the Woodland Trust and RSPB. Locally, there is the River Roding Trust, Wanstead Climate Action and Wanstead Community Gardeners to name but a few.

Put forward contributions to consultations. Open a dialogue with politicians to engage them with the issues. Don't stand for excuses like it cannot be afforded.

Also, demand more of a voice when contributing volunteer work to improve the biodiversity around us.

So there is much that can be done. Everyone needs to get more involved take responsibility for the way they behave. Then just maybe the climate and biodiversity crisis can begin to turn around.

Cllr Paul Donovan



Tundra Bean Goose on Wanstead Flats - sighting and photo by Tony Brown. Always check those flocks of Greylag geese! Urban patch birding at its finest



bird report

I am writing this as Spring is blooming, but let's cast our mind back across the grey, long cold winter and back into 2024. Let's remind ourselves of some of the birds that we recorded throughout last year.

Report by James Heal

©THECOWBOYBIRDER

We recorded 137 species through the year, which was a big step up on the 126 we had in 2023, and a nudge up on 2022 when we had 135, but six down on our record year of 2021.

As author of this mini-report, I get the privilege of choosing the best bird of the year. I'm picking Nightjar. It was found by a visiting birder and was the first record since 1893 on our patch and many of us got to enjoy views of the bird roosting on Wanstead Flats on 9 September.



Drake Ferruginous Duck, Wanstead Flats, Jubilee Pond - pic by Tim Harris

Honourable mentions, and perhaps joint second place, would go to Tim's Ferruginous Duck on Jubilee on 16 January which was actually a patch first and Tony B's Stone Curlew flyover on 12 May.

The best of the rest would include: Whimbrel, Quail, Wryneck, Dartford Warbler, Hawfinch, Bullfinch, Nightingale, Cuckoo, Raven, Great White Egret, Woodlark, Marsh Harrier, Red-legged Partridge, Red-crested Pochard, and Mandarin Duck. Not bad for a small patch of green in urban East London.



Greenshank - pic by James Heal

Bob Vaughan's nocturnal migration recorder also picked out the following flyovers while the local birders slept in their beds: Grey Plover, Golden Plover, Redshank, Greenshank, Common Ringed Plover, Avocet, Oystercatcher, and Dunlin.

Notably, in 2024 Barn Owl shifted from being a mega rarity to a relatively regularly seen bird towards the end of the year, with a bird clearly choosing to roost somewhere on the patch or nearby. Bullfinch also made a surprise return

after a gap of several years, with a single bird recorded over several days in the Old Sewage Works.

The only stand-out omission from the year, and for the second year running, was Jack Snipe. Time will tell if that is just a blip or reflective of the species shunning our patch as a winter stopover.

Skylark breeding success was disappointing and down on the previous year we believe. The results of our Skylark 'walkover' survey at the end of the breeding season was a total of six birds which is only just above half what we had the previous year. Despite a couple of singing days, Meadow Pipit has not resumed breeding on the patch and it is looking increasingly likely that it is now lost locally as a breeding bird, although a single bird singing for a couple of days got our hopes up.



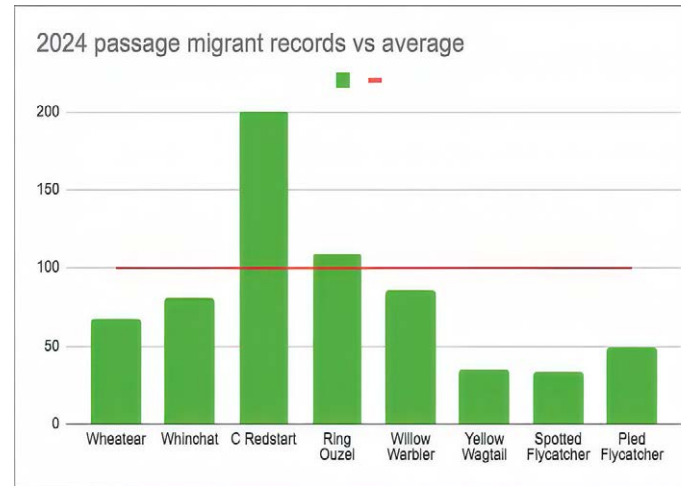
Skylark perched on lark enclosure, Wanstead Flats - pic by James Heal



Wheatear perched on lark enclosure, Wanstead Flats - pic by James Heal

Sadly, overall, it was a poor year for passage migration with every regular spring and autumn passage passerine migrant down in numbers on average with the exception of Common Redstart (boosted by some long-staying individuals) and Ring Ouzel which, with four records, was just up on the average of the three.

As you can see from the chart, Wheatear, Pied Flycatcher, Spotted Flycatcher, and Yellow Wagtail were all well down on average.



As with every year on the patch, it had its highs and its lows. A mix of some

great local rarities tempered with some sobering figures which hopefully don't become trends.

The reason we have a particularly good grasp over what breeds locally, what passes through, and what flies over (even at night) is all thanks to a dedicated group of local birders.

You know who you are. Thank you!

Report by James Heal



“हर चीज़ में खूबसूरती ढूँढें”

“Find the beauty in everything” - Hindi



epping forest

for everyone to L♥ve

I am one of those very strange people who like strategy. I often repeat to myself “if you don’t do the right thinking you won’t do the right doing”.

So it has been a great pleasure over the last 6 months to do a lot of thinking with our Board of Trustees to ensure we develop the right strategy to optimise Epping Forest Heritage Trust’s (EFHT) impact in protecting and preserving the Forest between 2025 and 2030.

Over that time the Board have reflected on the context in which we work – centring, of course, Epping Forest itself as well as the wider context it currently inhabits: climate change, the biodiversity crisis, adjacent development and the new government’s focus on building new homes, amongst other things. They have also reflected on our progress against our previous

strategy, where we have succeeded, and where we perhaps haven’t done as much as we could have done.

And we have consulted partners for their views, including the Wrens and other local community groups around the Forest, our funders and, of course, the City of London Corporation, as well as our members and supporters. And I have had the absolute pleasure and privilege to read all the feedback. Thank you to those of you who responded.

What has struck me most is people’s absolute love and passion for the Forest, and desire for it to be protected and preserved for generations to come. On average our members spent 17 minutes each responding to the survey, reflecting and commenting in detail, sharing their experience and guiding us as to future priorities. Topping the responses as to why people love the Forest were: to enjoy nature, and the Forest’s plants and nature; to walk and exercise in nature; and the trees! The issues of biggest concern being new housing or other developments which might damage the Forest;

fly-tipping; damage caused by visitors; and cars traveling too fast through the Forest.

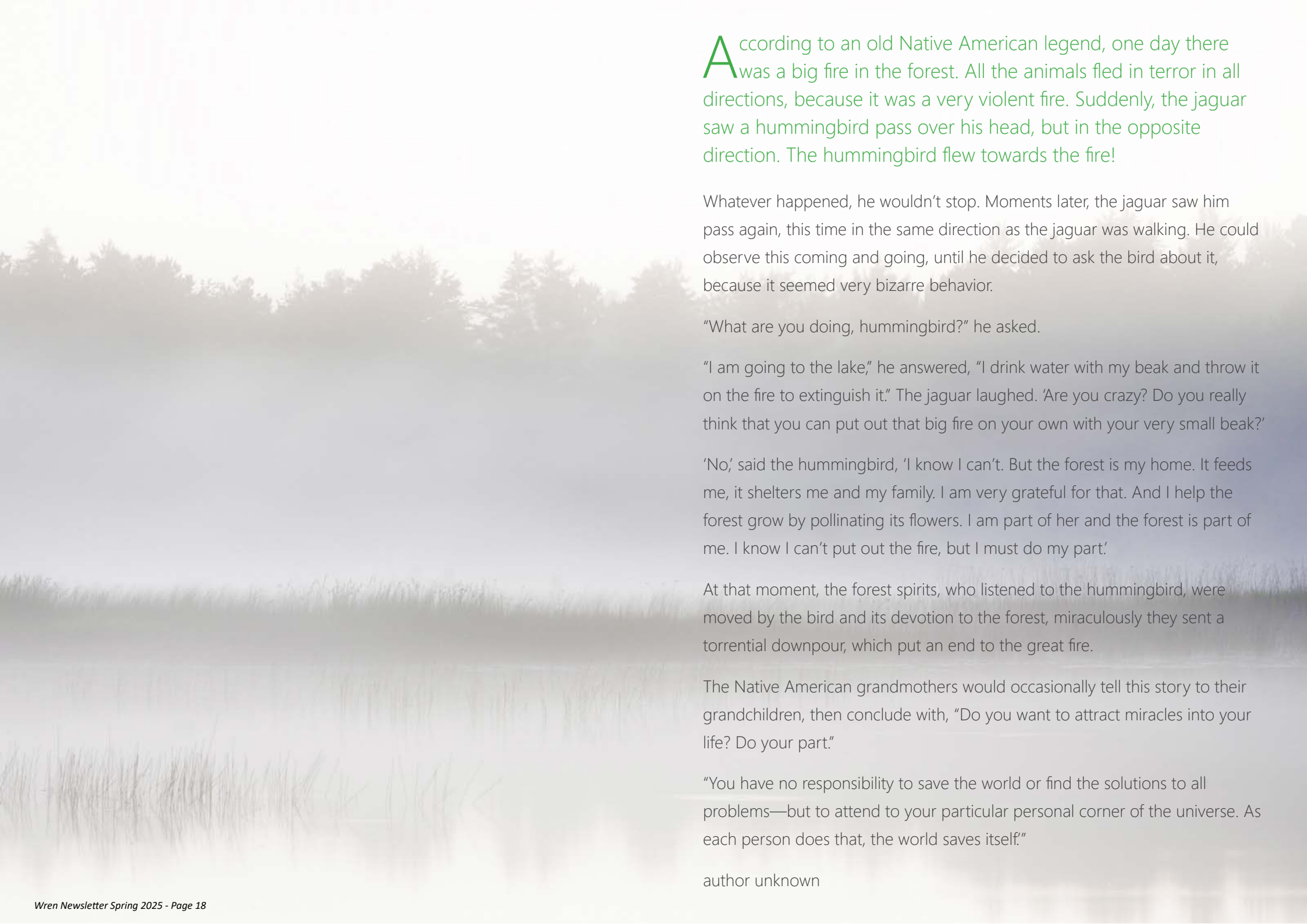
Our members also expressed a strong desire for us to do more advocacy and campaigning on behalf of the Forest, alongside continuing our work educating and inspiring people about the Forest and helping to directly conserve it.

Our Trustees will now reflect on all this feedback before agreeing our strategy for the years ahead, and then working out how we resource and deliver our new objectives.

The Board have already agreed that collaboration and inclusion will continue as core values, and as we move forward, I look forward to further collaboration with all the groups around the Forest, including of course the Wren Group, to make sure we can together deliver more than the sum of our parts, and in that way help protect and preserve this wonderful Forest that we all love so much.

Peter Lewis
Epping Forest Heritage Trust



A misty landscape with a body of water in the foreground and a line of trees in the background. The scene is hazy and atmospheric, with soft light filtering through the mist.

According to an old Native American legend, one day there was a big fire in the forest. All the animals fled in terror in all directions, because it was a very violent fire. Suddenly, the jaguar saw a hummingbird pass over his head, but in the opposite direction. The hummingbird flew towards the fire!

Whatever happened, he wouldn't stop. Moments later, the jaguar saw him pass again, this time in the same direction as the jaguar was walking. He could observe this coming and going, until he decided to ask the bird about it, because it seemed very bizarre behavior.

"What are you doing, hummingbird?" he asked.

"I am going to the lake," he answered, "I drink water with my beak and throw it on the fire to extinguish it." The jaguar laughed. 'Are you crazy? Do you really think that you can put out that big fire on your own with your very small beak?'

'No,' said the hummingbird, 'I know I can't. But the forest is my home. It feeds me, it shelters me and my family. I am very grateful for that. And I help the forest grow by pollinating its flowers. I am part of her and the forest is part of me. I know I can't put out the fire, but I must do my part.'

At that moment, the forest spirits, who listened to the hummingbird, were moved by the bird and its devotion to the forest, miraculously they sent a torrential downpour, which put an end to the great fire.

The Native American grandmothers would occasionally tell this story to their grandchildren, then conclude with, "Do you want to attract miracles into your life? Do your part."

"You have no responsibility to save the world or find the solutions to all problems—but to attend to your particular personal corner of the universe. As each person does that, the world saves itself."

author unknown



epping trees

a bad hair day

Wandering through Epping Forest you may be forgiven for thinking that at least some of the trees seem to be having bad hair days with lots of branches springing either from the base of the tree or from branches higher up.

Most ancient woodland in the UK and including our own Epping Forest has been managed in some way by humans for hundreds (in some cases possibly thousands) of years. Two traditional methods are coppicing (harvesting wood by cutting trees back to ground level) and pollarding (harvesting wood at about human head height to prevent new shoots being eaten by grazing deer).



A pollarded tree - cutting at about human head height to prevent new shoots being eaten by grazing deer. Picture shows an ancient pollarded Beech.

Stretching back into Anglo-Saxon times, pollarding was universal under a system that has been called wood-pasture. Fuel wood was lopped, supposedly on a cycle of around 14 years, well out of reach from cattle and deer grazing on the rough pasture below. Before this regime became established, the

Forest was lime wildwood. When the Corporation of London became responsible for the Forest in 1878, they promptly suppressed all further pollarding and went on to thin many 'mops on sticks' with the ambition of achieving, eventually, a 'proper' forest of regular trees; naturalists and forest managers alike regarded pollards with disdain. But then, a hundred years later, at a pioneering and persuasive conference held in the new Field Study Centre at High Beach, a fresh generation of naturalists proclaimed that pollarding was an essential prerequisite for restoring the Forest's fast-falling biodiversity.

For some years, the Corporation of London studiously ignored these claims until, eventually, they saw the light. After a few false starts, when old beech were given perfunctory and often fatal military haircuts, arboricultural science has prevailed. As such, the Corporation has carried out a careful program of wood-pasture restoration, accelerated of late by substantial Lottery funding. This is now one of the largest and most ambitious habitat restoration programs in the country. While celebrating the achievement, this paper suggests a few quibbles with the underlying history.

Pollarding and coppicing are very effective methods of producing a great deal of fast growing, sustainable timber without the need to replant. The ability of native broad-leaved trees to be pollarded and coppiced has greatly influenced

British woodland. Although trees will grow from seed there can be many setbacks like browsing by deer and cattle and shading from dense canopies.



A coppiced tree or - cutting trees back to ground level. Picture shows an Alder with a years growth.

Because pollarded and coppiced trees already have a fully developed root system, regrowth is rapid. Traditionally, trees were pollarded or coppiced for one of two reasons: for animal fodder or for wood. Fodder pollards produced "pollard hay", which was used as livestock feed; they were pruned at intervals of two to six years so their leafy material would be most abundant. Wood pollards were pruned at longer intervals of eight to 15 years, a pruning cycle that tended to produce upright poles favoured for fence rails and posts, as well as for boat construction.



*Picture from postcard early 1900s
from collection of Tony Morrison*

A common sight at the turn of the last century a keeper or tenant using a sledge as the easiest method to transport materials in the forest. Lopping rights were traditionally limited to those holding ancient tenements. Lopping was permitted only between 1 November and 23 April and might be done only on Mondays. The wood had to be removed on sledges, wheeled carts being forbidden, and no lopper might employ more than two horses to draw his sledge.

In English law, 'estovers' is wood that a tenant is allowed to take, for life or a period of years, from the land he holds for the repair of his house, the implements of husbandry, hedges and fences, and for firewood.

Coppicing is a traditional woodland craft used to produce strong young stems for fencing, fuel or building. New shoots will start to sprout from the stump and if they are allowed to grow they will produce several tree trunks. Coppicing can only be successful in areas where there were no animals allowed to graze the new shoots. Coppicing was never

widely carried out in Epping Forest as cattle and deer were allowed to roam freely.

Pollarding is similar to coppicing but plants are cut back to a stump, rather than down to the ground. Use a saw to remove all the branches from the tree at the trunk height you've chosen. New stems will sprout from this point, and can be cut back again the following year or in a few years' time.

Beech pollards in Epping Forest are somewhere between 200 - 400 years old

Pollarding was preferred over coppicing in wood-pastures and other grazed areas such as Epping because animals would browse the regrowth from coppice stools.



Pollarded Beech trees in Epping's Great Monk Wood

One benefit of pollarding and coppicing is that trees tend to live longer than unmanaged specimens because they are maintained in a partially juvenile

state, and they do not have the weight and windage of the top part of the tree.

Another incidental benefit of pollarding and coppicing in woodland is the encouragement of underbrush growth due to increased levels of light reaching the woodland floor. This can increase species diversity.

However, in woodland where pollarding was once common but has now stopped, the opposite effect occurs, as the side and top shoots develop into trunk-sized branches. This is the case in Epping where the majority of trees were pollarded until the late 19th century. Here, light levels on the woodland floor are extremely low owing to the thick growth of the pollarded trees.

Epping Forest has the highest remaining

concentration of historic pollard trees in Britain, so these are of particular significance in the Forest.

Unfortunately in the early period of public ownership many thousands of pollards were removed from the Forest, but today they are rightly regarded as important relics of historic management and also important habitats for wildlife.

Ancient coppiced and pollarded trees are now given the respect they deserve and are maintained by the Corporation of London which has also reintroduced coppicing and pollarding trees as part of their overall forest management plan.

by Tony Morrison



*“Put your phone away - look up not down.....
.....because this world is amazing.”*



I Watched a Blackbird

I watched a blackbird on a budding sycamore
One Easter Day, when sap was stirring twigs to the core;
I saw his tongue, and crocus-coloured bill
Parting and closing as he turned his trill;
Then he flew down, seized on a stem of hay,
And upped to where his building scheme was under way,
As if so sure a nest was never shaped on spray.

by Thomas Hardy



During the spring and early summer 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.

It can still be pretty parky out there and food may be hard to come by for our birds.

So please keep an eye out for our feathered friends.

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

then & now

Were you right ?

The Glade, Wanstead Park otherwise known as the Long Walk original from a postcard dated June around 1930 and roughly the same view in March 2025.



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



Egyptian Geese by Tushar