

Spring 2026

Wren

Wildlife & Conservation Group

*Black Headed Gull on Wanstead
Flats - pic by Prenav*

Page 02 - A Word from the Chair - by the outgoing chair James Heal

Page 04 - Song of the March Wind - poem by Cobb

Page 05 - Demand for Action - view by Cllr Paul Donovan

Page 08 - Making Peace with our Foxes - article by Robert Nurden

Page 11 - Our Patch Wakes Up - article by Tony Morrison

Page 15 - Dragonfly Monitoring - by Bob Vaughan

Page 18 - Wren Practical Work - update by Peter Williams

Page 28 - Useful Links



Wren annual general meeting

Outgoing Chair's Report

All good things come to an end. It has been an honour and a privilege to serve as the Chair of the Wren Wildlife & Conservation Group for the last seven years. Time has flown! At the March AGM I stood down as Chair and was succeeded by my eminently capable colleague, Bob Vaughan. I served the same tenure as my predecessor, Tim Harris.



The newly elected chair Bob Vaughan (right) presenting outgoing chair James Heal with a well deserved thank you gift for seven years over and above dedication to the group at the recent AGM - pic by Marion Lobo.

As I shared at the AGM, I am proud of what we have achieved together as an organisation over the last seven years.

We showed the power of what a small community conservation group can achieve when they put their passion and mind to something and in fighting against threats to local habitats. When a music festival was planned which would have posed very significant trample threat to the habitats on Wanstead Flats, the Wren Group stood up to ensure its voice was heard. Following advocacy which involved letters, radio interviews, and social media campaigns, the idea was dropped and we haven't heard anything about it since.

We showed our resilience and adaptability as the world struggled with the impact of the Covid pandemic by switching to a very popular set of online meetings.

We showed our respect for our own heritage and history and also had a lovely party to celebrate our 50th anniversary in 2022, which included welcoming several early and founding members of our organisation which included our President, Richard Oakman, and a handwritten congratulatory letter from Sir David Attenborough.

We have held several successive years of very popular Wanstead Wildlife Weekends. Perhaps peaking in diverse sets of activities when organised significantly by Gill James. These activities have helped us display our strength in local wildlife recording.

Working with experts like Tony Madgwick, bee recorder for London and David Carr, a renowned

spider expert, and Tristan Bantock, a bug expert, we have continued to showcase some of the fascinating and sometimes nationally scarce and rare species we are lucky enough to have in our local area.

I confess that taking on the chairmanship when I had a newborn baby (he is now 7) and a busy job in the City may not have been the most sensible decision, but I have thoroughly enjoyed it even if I couldn't dedicate as much time to the duties as I would have liked. It has been possible because of the fantastic team on the Committee I have worked with.

I am proud of
what we have
achieved together
as an organisation
over the last seven
years.

James Heal

I always knew Tim Harris's boots would be impossible to fill but luckily he has remained on the Committee, providing expert counsel when needed and continued to do a great job - especially in liaising with the City of London over habitat management.

Peter Williams has continued to run a tight ship in leading our highly successful and popular programme of practical work.

I have been supported by two enormously helpful Secretaries in Gill and more recently, Sharon.

Tony Morrison has continued to produce the very slick and well-read newsletter

Simon has done a very professional job as our treasurer.

Mark and Mary have managed membership. Bob and Mary have done a great job at leading

our digital interaction with our membership. And all the other members of the committee have been unstinting in their support behind the scenes, often putting in the hours of work needed to get activities to happen, leading walks, organising venues, sorting ticketing and third party management.

All of these people dedicate their time for free as volunteers and showing great community spirit. I plan to remain on the Committee and support Bob as he now takes over as Chair.

Finally, I would also like to thank all of the wonderful members who join us and make what

we do worthwhile... and for any of you that have tolerated my ramblings by reading Word from the Chair for the last seven years.

James Heal
Outgoing Chair Wren Group



your wren committee 2026



Mary Holden
Membership,
Social Media



Heather Noble



Marion Lobo



Lucinda Culpin



James Heal



June Nicholson



Tim Harris



Peter Williams
Works Coordinator



Tony Morrison
Wren Newsletter



Richard Oakman
President



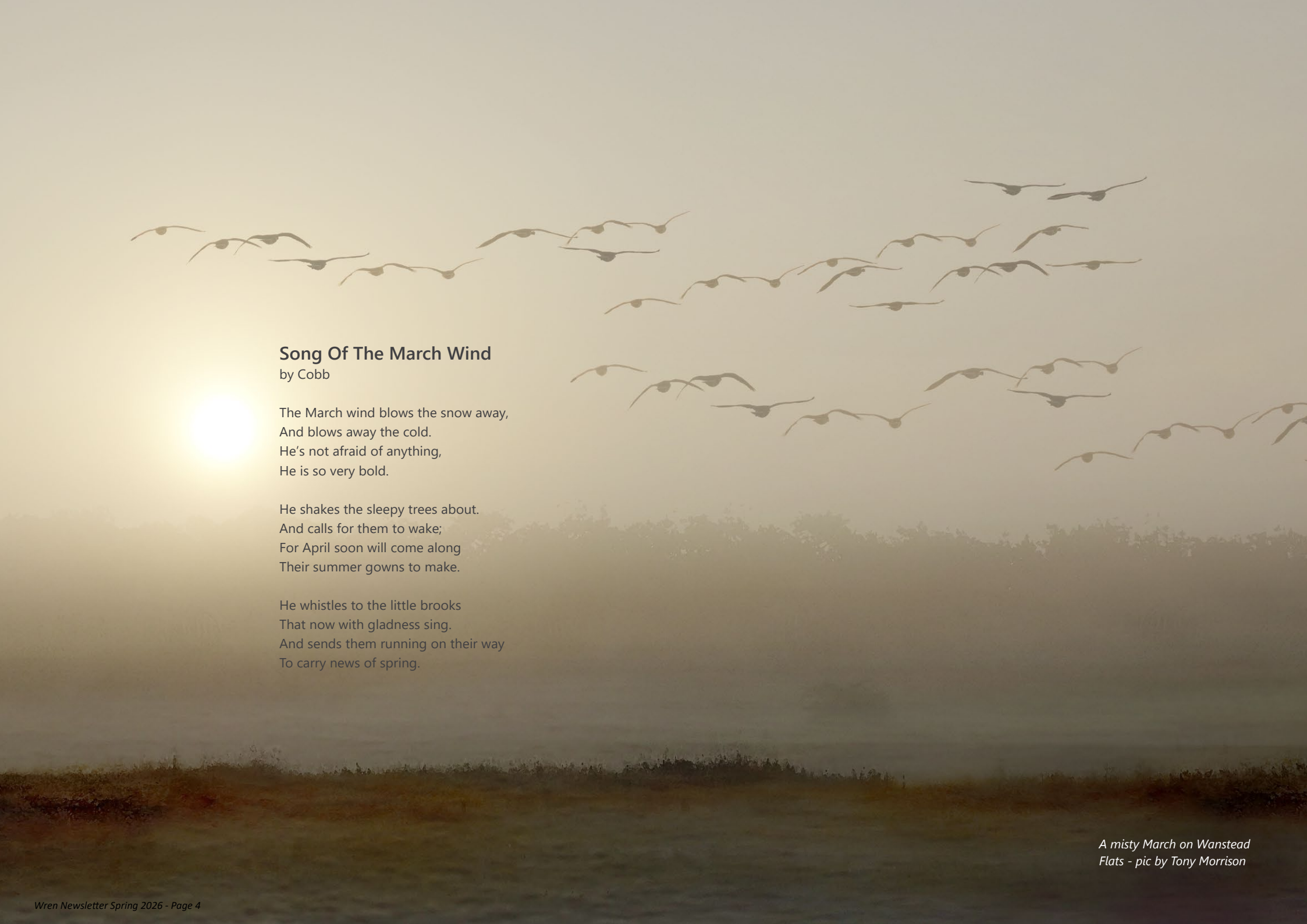
Bob Vaughan
Chair & Website



Sharon Payne
Secretary



Simon Raper
Treasurer



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.

*A misty March on Wanstead
Flats - pic by Tony Morrison*

demand for action

Privatised water has failed - causing pollution, underinvestment, and rising costs. Local communities are mobilising to protect rivers, demanding renationalisation, stronger regulation, and real political action to restore waterways and biodiversity.

Here, environmental campaigner and local Councillor Paul Donovan argues the case for grass roots movements demanding action in areas like water and the natural environment.

The recent Channel 4 drama *Dirty Business* exposed the scandal that is the privatised water industry. Literally thousands of gallons of sewage being poured into our waterways. The damage caused to humans and wildlife.



There are countless outlets into the River Roding. They are designed to take clean surface water from adjacent areas into the river and out to sea. However, under certain circumstances raw sewage and other pollutants can end up being discharged into our river. A problem that is becoming more and more frequent due to an ageing infrastructure and greater numbers of homes and other development - pic by Alan James.

The privatisation of water has been a disaster since it took place in 1989. People were sold the lie that privatisation would bring money and expertise into the sector. The reverse occurred, less money spent on infrastructure, so no reservoirs built, leaks not fixed and sewage

pumping into the seas and rivers. Meanwhile, the companies paid out generous dividends to shareholders and piled up debt.

It is difficult to see why people cannot see the futility of privatising public utilities. The privateers want one thing -profit. Privatisation offers a great opportunity to asset strip and operate monopolies on vital services. The pattern is well known: sell off assets (often property), the cost to consumers goes up and services gets worse. It has been seen with water, the railways and most recently Royal Mail, yet still this madness continues.

Grass roots movements are demanding action in areas like water and the natural environment

Water needs to be renationalised with proper regulation. *Dirty Business* exposed the ineffectual nature of the Environment Agency, which seems to have an unhealthily close relationship with the water companies it is supposed to regulate. The good news is that people are fighting back and taking control.

'*Dirty Business*' features the Windrush Against Sewage Pollution and Surfers Against Sewage. There are many of these type of groups springing up across the country.

Here, there is the River Roding Trust (RRT). The growth and influence of this group has been a wonder to behold.



The Roding has struggled with pollution in the past and, if we want continue to enjoy fantastic wildlife like Otters and Trout and Kingfishers, we must do what we can to protect the river. Pic - Otter in river Roding by James Heal.

Wren members, who attended the recent AGM, will have heard Paul Powesland's inspirational account of how he got involved and fell in love with the river.

RRT members take action on the river, monitoring sewage leaks, clearing rubbish and planting trees on the borders. One recent action saw members clear out and recover the Aldersbrook.

What is for sure is that the Roding now has a strong group of guardians, looking out for its welfare. Thames Water and the Environment Agency will not be allowed to ignore their responsibilities anymore, on this stretch of water.

The Wren Group of course fulfil a similar role with Wanstead Park and the Flats. The Wrens do practical work alongside Epping Forest staff. They also have a significant voice in the management of the area.

These types of groups proliferate in this area - Friends of Wanstead Park and the Wanstead Community Gardeners all playing different roles.

The growing concern of people about the environment has been reflected in the support for the Nature Emergency called by Redbridge Council in January. An

inaugural meeting, attended by over 100 people, to get things moving, took place at in Ilford library in March. Expectancy levels are high.

So, much is happening, a real grass roots movement, fired by direct action and demanding results is taking shape. It would be very silly for politicians and other decision makers to take these people for granted. They expect not simply to do voluntary work and get a pat on the head for their troubles. Taking these actions comes with a price which is a real voice in making decisions effecting our natural heritage.

The time for talking has long passed. People want action, starting with cleaning up our waterways and

addressing the biodiversity crisis. Voters at the upcoming council elections will be looking to elect those genuinely committed to bringing about such change. The time for sitting on the fence has long since passed. Onward.

Cllr Paul Donovan



Paul Donovan is a Labour councillor for Wanstead Village ward, Redbridge Council and a blogger paulfdonovan.blogspot.com

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

making peace with our foxes

Foxes, while undoubtedly beautiful animals, can sometimes be a nuisance - especially in suburban and urban areas where they have learned to live close to people. Although they are a valued part of our local wildlife, their behaviour can occasionally cause property damage, noise, and disruption. With plenty of food and shelter available and few predators around, foxes have flourished in our cities. By working together as a community to limit food sources and safe hiding places, we can help naturally reduce the numbers of foxes, as well as rats, feral pigeons, and seagulls. Sometimes, though, more active deterrents may be needed.

Here, Wren member Robert Nurden, explains the lengths he went to in order to rid his garden of these loveable but unwanted intruders.



It's over three weeks now since we've had foxes in our garden. For decades they've been invading us, clambering down off the shed, burrowing under fences on both sides and digging holes in all shapes and sizes across our much-loved expanse of cottage garden in Chestnut Avenue.

Recently it's been getting worse and all our deterrents such as spraying Scoot, administering a repellent called Get Off and sloshing concentrated garlic water everywhere have come to naught. In the summer they trampled all over the delphiniums, reduced the poppies to a pulp and went to sleep on the irises.

We detected three types of digging. The worst and most invasive was the burrowing under the fences and the shed. We were forced to place stones or anything bulky – even watering cans



Beloved flowerbeds trampled and dug up, burrowing under fences, burrowing under the shed and hanging out in the irises - even setting up dens underground - pic by author.

proved useful – along the base of every panel, hoping that this might destroy any of their attempts to create entry and exit points.

Then there was deep burrowing in the centre of the border itself. These were the dens where the family of foxes slept, we were told. Finally, there were the countless small holes which marked the spots where they dug for insects and creepy crawlies. The fact that these were numerous showed that the quality of our soil was excellent – small consolation for the Battle of Somme scenario which greeted us very morning. We were in despair as, bit by bit, we saw our gardening endeavours of the previous day wrecked.

It was time to call in the experts. We were anxious not to harm the foxes, so we chose a company which holds animal welfare at its heart. Like us, it believes in deterrents, not slaughter.

We booked one of their staff to come one Monday morning and he arrived armed with the necessary equipment to see off our invaders. First, he filled the holes with Get Off – the substance we'd already used but we had omitted to put it in the actual holes. Then I showed him the outside tap on the back wall and he disconnected the jet from our hose pipe and attached a battery-powered sprinkler mechanism, complete with Passive Infrared sensor, that came as part of the package we'd purchased.

I showed him where exactly in the garden the foxes gained entry. Now that the cubs had grown up, they were able to climb up and down

the fence and no longer needed to burrow under it. We could see the muddy claw marks they'd made on the panels. He positioned the device – a German-made Wasser-Tierabwehr – in the soil and set it so that it would propel a jet of water in a 180-degree arc across the area of the garden the foxes had been using. It spurts an arc of water for about five seconds while making a mechanical noise that acts as a secondary deterrent.



We placed anything to hand along the edges of the fence, from large stones to watering cans, in the hope of stopping their digging. All attempts to curb the anti-social behaviour failed - it was time to call in the experts - pic by author.

The overriding key point to all this is that foxes hate getting wet so they will avoid being splashed at all costs. I was told me it may take a day or two for the foxes to twig that entering the garden was likely to end up with them getting soaked, so that they learned to keep away. In fact, ours learnt very quickly – one bedraggled visit was enough for them to keep their distance.

There's no denying their intelligence, though. From an upstairs window, my partner saw two gingerly picking their way along the top of the fence – after the sprinkler had been installed – in such a way that the heat from their bodies would not set off the sensor. They were intent on entering the garden further away from the danger area. But a hefty bang on the window frightened them off and they retreated and, luckily, never tried again.

If you are tempted to try this, keep any eye on the temperature. If the water in the pipe or device freezes, the plastic may crack and the sprinkler will stop working. Watch the weather forecast and if temperatures are expected to dip below 0 degrees, remove the device from its stand and bring it indoors overnight.

Our property became a target because it contains plenty of established shrubs, quite close together. Even if there is no fox in the vicinity, a strong wind can activate the sprinkler, too. One way to save water – in daylight hours – is to turn the tap



Finally the solution arrived in the form of the German-made 'Wasser-Tierabwehr'. This gizmo senses the fox and spurts a harmless arc of water in their direction whilst at the same time making a mechanical noise that acts as a secondary deterrent - pic by author.

off at the wall. A fox is unlikely to venture into the area in full view. The night is their active time.

The holes in the earth are all filled up now and remain undisturbed. We occasionally see a fox lying contentedly on the roof of a neighbour's garden shed, soaking up the sun. But we're already making tentative plans for some spring planting, confident that the resulting plants will escape damage this year. Fingers crossed.

by Robert Nurden



The company we use is called Fox-a-Gon. The all-in price, with guarantees, was £289.80. They can be contacted at: enquiries@fox-a-gon.co.uk

then & now

In each edition of the Wren newsletter we show 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.



our patch wakes up

Spring to Summer

For those of us lucky enough to call it our "patch", Wanstead Flats, Wanstead Park and Bush Wood form a remarkable sweep of green along the eastern edge of London - the southernmost tip of Epping Forest. Though they sit within the London Borough of Redbridge and border Waltham Forest and Newham, they feel far removed from the city - even if central London is only a short train ride away.

I've had the good fortune to live here for more than forty years, walking these spaces most days with my dogs, in every season and all weathers. I may not know the names of everything I see, but I've come to recognise the rhythms - the light, the sounds, the subtle shifts that mark the passing year.

Wanstead Flats is the wild, open heart: wide skies, rough grassland, and a sense of space rare within the M25. Skylarks rise almost unseen, their song carrying across the open ground. A familiar sight is the trio of geese - Canada, Greylag and Egyptian - each adding to the character of the Flats.

Further north, Wanstead Park softens the landscape. Ornamental lakes, old trees and traces of a designed past create a gentler atmosphere, where reflections and birdsong replace the wind of the open ground that is Wanstead Flats.

Then there's Bush Wood - quieter, shadier, not a true ancient woodland but with the feel of ancient roots. Here, the paths narrow and the details draw you in: fungi in the leaf litter, shifting light beneath the canopy, the sense of a slower, older rhythm.

Together, these places form a living mosaic, rich with wildlife and everyday encounters. More than that, they offer breathing space, seasonal change, and a lasting connection to nature - right on London's doorstep.

On a cool March morning, Wanstead Flats can feel almost empty - a wide sweep of grass under a pale sky, wind moving steadily across it. Then a skylark lifts, a chiffchaff calls from a bare branch, and the stillness begins to loosen. Spring doesn't arrive here all at once. It reveals itself in small shifts, if you know where to look – if you know how to look.



Greylag geese flirting early in the season, an almost constant presence on Wanstead Flats - pic by Tony Morrison

In early March, the signs are subtle: a faint green haze along hedgerows, the first dandelions pushing through worn grass, that same chiffchaff calling insistently, and the rich, earthy smell of soil beginning to warm after months of cold. Light lingers longer each evening, and even the air feels different - softer, carrying the promise of change.

By June, everything has shifted. The same paths

are enclosed by dense foliage, birdsong spills from every direction, and insects move through every layer of the landscape - above, at eye level, and down in the grass. What felt open and sparse in March becomes textured, busy, and alive.

This is the most dynamic phase of the year. Migrants return in waves, woodland plants race to flower before shade takes hold, and insects reappear in sudden bursts of activity. For those who walk here often, the change is not dramatic but cumulative - a steady unfolding that rewards attention.

March - First Movement

March can still feel like winter on Wanstead Flats, especially under a cold easterly wind sweeping across the open ground - but wildlife is already responding.

Chiffchaffs are often the first migrants to announce themselves, their simple, repetitive call cutting through the quiet. Out on the grassland, skylarks rise in spiralling song flights, climbing almost vertically before hanging high above the Flats. Their continuous, shimmering song feels out of proportion to such a small bird. In London they are now scarce, which makes their presence here all the more significant.

An almost constant presence on the Flats, whatever the season, are geese. Canada geese, greylags and Egyptian geese are all regulars

here, often grazing in loose groups across the open grass or gathered noisily near the ponds. Their size, confidence and familiarity make them one of the most visible features of the landscape - a steady backdrop to the more seasonal rhythms unfolding around them.



Early in the spring, each male lark makes prolonged song-flights, spiralling ever higher while constantly emitting, what the English poet George Meredith calls a unique "silver chain of sound" - pic by Tony Morrison

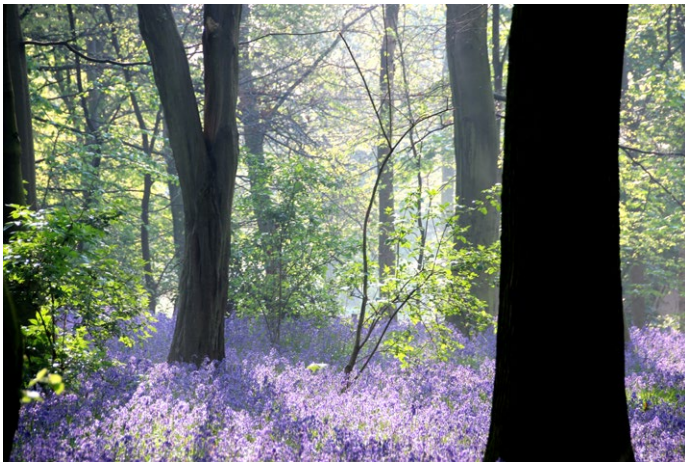
In Bush Wood, the shift is more intimate. The woodland floor begins to stir as light reaches through still-bare branches. Dog's mercury spreads into soft green carpets, while wood anemones push through leaf litter, their white flowers opening and closing with the light - quiet markers of a venerable woodland.

Above, great spotted woodpeckers drum from dead branches - a dry, rattling sound that carries clearly through the open trees. It's one of the defining sounds of early spring woodland, as territories are established before the leaves return.

April - A Brief Window

April brings acceleration. Wanstead Park feels fuller, more active, as different habitats begin to overlap in energy.

In Chalet Wood, bluebells spread beneath the trees, forming a dense blue-violet haze that seems to glow in the angled spring light. This display is brief - a narrow window before the canopy closes and the woodland floor falls back into shade. Walking through at this time carries a faint, sweet scent, and a sense of something fleeting.



In Chalet Wood, bluebells spread beneath the trees, forming a dense blue-violet haze that seems to glow in the angled spring light. - pic by Tony Morrison

Birdlife becomes more visible. Nuthatches move briskly along trunks, pausing to wedge seeds into bark crevices. Blackcaps return, their rich, fluting song echoing through the trees - often mistaken for blackbirds.

Around the ponds, activity gathers pace. Great

crested grebes begin their courtship rituals - facing one another, rising upright, mirroring movements with careful precision before slipping back into the water. Reed edges rustle with hidden life.

Warmer days bring the first real surge of insects. In sunny clearings, peacocks, commas and brimstones flicker through the air, pausing to bask or feed. Buff-tailed bumblebees move low over the ground, investigating holes and tussocks for nesting sites. On the Flats, gorse and dandelions become focal points, drawing in early pollinators - small, busy centres of activity in an otherwise open landscape.

May - The Patch Finds Its Voice

By May, the patch is fully awake.

Dawn arrives with a layered chorus - robins and wrens starting early, blackbirds and thrushes joining in, each species occupying its own space in the soundscape. The effect is immersive, almost overwhelming at times, yet never chaotic. Competing with the constant hum of the nearby A406 London Ring Road.

Whitethroats return to the scrub edges of Wanstead Flats, singing from hawthorn tops with scratchy, energetic bursts, often flicking into short display flights. Their presence gives the grassland a new voice.

Overhead, swifts arrive by mid-May, slicing through the sky with long, curved wings and high-pitched screams. They seem almost

detached from the landscape below - birds of air rather than land - yet their return is one of the clearest signals that early summer is approaching.

On the Flats, grasses lengthen and begin to sway, softening the ground. Invertebrate life expands quickly. Grasshoppers flick away from footpaths, spiders string fine webs between stems, and beetles move unseen through the rough. The structure of the grassland now matters: skylarks depend on these open conditions to nest, their survival closely tied to how the land is managed.

Urban pressures remain constant - trampling, disturbance, invasive species. Maintaining the balance between open grassland and encroaching scrub requires careful, ongoing work, much of it supported by Wren volunteers.



By June bird behaviour shifts - less flirting and song and more frantic rushing backwards and forwards with beaks full of insects for their young. Blackbird - pic by Tony Morrison

June - Early Summer

By June, the patch reaches a kind of fullness.

Butterflies are widespread - speckled woods patrolling shaded paths in looping flights, while red admirals and small tortoiseshells visit sunlit edges. Bramble comes into flower, its white blossoms alive with bees, hoverflies and other pollinators. Later it will feed birds and mammals, but for now it hums quietly with activity.



The Small Tortoiseshell Butterfly is one of the first butterflies to be seen in spring and by June can be seen in large numbers often basking in sunshine on nectar rich flowers - pic by Tony Morrison

In Bush Wood, the canopy has closed, and the woodland floor settles into cool shade. The urgency of spring flowering has passed, replaced by ferns and darker greens. Bird behaviour shifts too - less song, more movement. Adults slip through branches carrying caterpillars and insects, returning again and again to hidden nests. Blue tits are especially noticeable in this

constant, purposeful motion.

Around the ponds, young birds begin to appear. Grebe chicks sometimes ride on their parents' backs, tucked safely between their wings - a brief, intimate glimpse of care within an otherwise busy landscape.

Urban Nature, Ongoing Care

These landscapes may feel natural, but they exist within a densely urban setting.

Pressures - habitat fragmentation, disturbance, pollution and climate change - shape what survives here. Conservation work is therefore essential. Volunteers carry out habitat management, surveys and monitoring, building a clearer picture of how species and habitats are changing.

Wanstead Flats, in particular, depends on active management to remain open grassland. Without intervention, scrub and woodland would gradually take over, reducing its value for species such as skylarks.

At a broader scale, these spaces act as ecological stepping stones, linking Epping Forest with smaller parks, gardens and green corridors across the city.

Watching It Unfold

What stands out most between March and June is how quickly things change - and how easy it is to miss it if you're not paying attention.

A path that feels empty in early March can be filled with birds within weeks. A stretch of grass that seems unremarkable may hold nesting skylarks by May. A bramble thicket buzzing with insects in June may have appeared lifeless not long before.

Returning regularly is the key. Even familiar routes offer something new each time - a different sound, a shift in movement, a change in weather, light or growth.

And perhaps that is the quiet gift of our patch: not just that nature persists here, but that it asks you to return, to notice, and to see the same ground differently each time you walk it.

by Tony Morrison



Sources and Further Reading

London Wildlife Trust – Urban wildlife conservation
<https://www.wildlondon.org.uk>

Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) – UK bird migration and species information
<https://www.rspb.org.uk>

Butterfly Conservation – UK butterfly identification and monitoring
<https://butterfly-conservation.org>

Natural England – Urban habitat conservation guidance
<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/natural-england>

dragonfly monitoring

Spring is with us, after a rather damp start to 2026. With rising temperatures some butterflies have emerged already, and damselflies and dragonflies won't be far behind. It would be good for Wren members to get involved with Dragonfly monitoring, alongside the established Butterfly transects. The proper term for dragonflies and damselflies as a group is Odonata, but I will use Dragonflies with a capital to cover both.

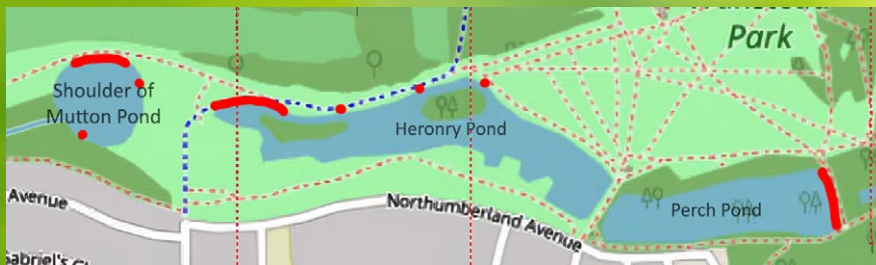
by Bob Vaughan
Chair Wren Group



*Male Norfolk or Green-eyed
Hawker - pic by Bob Vaughan*

Some Wren members did some surveys last year, with advice from the British Dragonfly Society (BDS), and we have a plan. There are two prime areas where Dragonflies can be seen in numbers during the summer, the eastern dam end of Perch Pond and the north-west end of Heronry.

These two areas allow good views with enough plants for the Dragonflies to perch on. This allows the Dragonfly species to be distinguished more easily with binoculars or a camera. Afternoon will be best for the dam end of Perch Pond as the sun moves around to warm the area. A half-hour watching these areas over the summer will allow the succession of species and their numbers to be sent to the BDS. It will also be important to do a transect. Starting at the Park Tea Hut a slow walk around Prech Pond and along the northern side of Heronry to Shoulder-of-Mutton will allow us to see the species that are found away from water.



A map of the best areas last year for Dragonfly spotting in Wanstead Park (the red marks)

The first damselfly to appear is most likely to be the Large Red Damselfly, this is a species I regularly see in May flying around the kitchen, if it is sunny enough to have the door open.



Large Red Damselfly - pic by Bob Vaughan

Common Blue and Azure Damselflies will be early too, but they require a close look at the abdomen to distinguish between them. The photographs have arrows pointing to the diagnostic marks on the abdomen.

Dragonflies are larger than damselflies and the early ones may include Four-spotted Chaser, Emperor and if we are lucky a Hairy Dragonfly may be found. Last year one took up territory at the western end of Heronry, it is one of the hawkers which are almost always flying and rarely settle.



Azure Damselfly - pic by Bob Vaughan

We will start monitoring at the beginning of May and anyone can join us, we will have some equipment, identification sheets and answer questions. We'll need to choose fine sunny days, much as with the Butterfly transects, and we will note the time and weather conditions for future reference. A form has been produced with all the likely species and the major sites. I'll notify



Hairy Dragonfly - pic by Denise Rooney

the first session via the Wren WhatsApp group but to keep up to date we've created a Damsels and Dragons WhatsApp group, so if anyone feels inclined to try these sessions please get in touch via WhatsApp or email badger.vaughan@gmail.com.

For all the Dragonflies seen locally I have put some pictures on the Wren website, from the front page click on the Dragons and Damsels at the top: <https://wrengroup.org.uk/whats-about-on-the-patch/> Click on each picture for a closer view and some annotation.

We hope you will join us in May and learn about and enjoy our many local Dragonflies, from the Dragonfly Team: Denise Rooney, Geoff Gramlick and Bob Vaughan.

Common Blue Damselflies (Enallagma cyathigerum) mating forming what is known as a "mating wheel" or "heart shape" - pic by Bob Vaughan



wren practical work

Each Thursday in the winter Wren has about 12-15 volunteers working in the park or on the Flats. There is also a smaller Sunday group once a month focussed on the bluebell wood.

The Thursday group carries out a wide range of habitat management tasks for example:

Creating a new meadow area in the old sewage works and planting yellow rattle to parasitise grass and encourage wildflowers.

Scything grassland inside the Wanstead Flats lark enclosure - different heights of grass there



Every year the practical work team spend much of their time scything, raking and clearing unwanted scrub on the patch - here they can be seen posing after work on a neglected meadow on the old sewage works, next to Wanstead park.

encourages the lark population to thrive.

Clearing unwanted scrub on the Plain in the park to complement the cattle grazing.

Working to reduce vegetation encroachment in the bed of the empty Ornamental waters where the machines can't go.

Clearing areas on the Flats which attract ASB; and dealing with unwanted invasive plants.



The scything done by the Wren practical work team is already having an impact in the Old Sewage Works, with a profusion of Red Dead-nettle and Hairy Bittercress - pic by Tim Harris.

Managing scrub at the top of the Glade in the park to maintain the historic viewpoints, and keeping side paths open for walkers.

This year we have had close joint working with the paid City staff especially in the park and they have allocated us new jobs for this year. We also manage the bluebell wood and the paths there jointly with them, this year clearing some

Spanish bluebells that could soon overwhelm the native type.



Wren volunteers help string blue rope to demark a suitable breeding site for our local skylarks. The Larks that choose to nest in this area will have a much better chance of raising young.

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.

Peter Williams
Practical Work Coordinator



Peter Williams has led this work for about 15 years and is now training up another volunteer leader to provide some better resilience.



.... don't forget

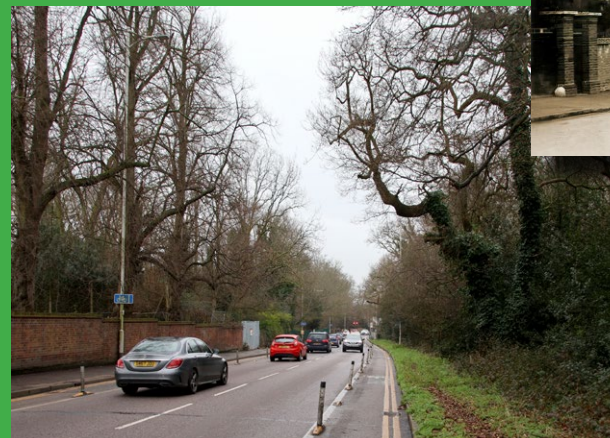
It's that time of year again to keep an eye out for our feathered friends.

- Provide fresh clean water every day.
- Feed a seed mix meant for wild birds.
- Also 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 ?

Blake Hall Rd in 1913 showing Wanstead Golf Club on the left founded in 1893. To the right can be seen Bush Wood. The area is situated on the historic grounds of the former Wanstead House.



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

