



# Wren

Wildlife & Conservation Group

## autumn 2015

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# a word from the chair

“The clearing of forests and savannahs, the trawling or dredging of coral reefs and seamounts and other such daily acts of vandalism deprive the world of the wonders that enhance our lives.”

How prescient are these words of George Monbiot at a time when habitat destruction and global climate change – and the two are strongly linked – are the great environmental monsters of our age. Of course, it's easy to point the accusing finger at governments in Brazil and Indonesia for

encouraging the destruction of rainforests, Russia and the United States for battling over control of the Arctic and the Canadian government for overseeing the Alberta tar sands nightmare.

Depressing as all these attacks on the environment are, this country also has much to be embarrassed about. We could see fracking on a wide scale, including beneath many sites of special scientific interest, and then there's the ongoing 'cleansing' of our arable countryside – the use of herbicides and insecticides on an industrial scale that means there are no 'weeds' for insect larvae to feed on, so very few insects for birds and bats to eat. The consequence is all too obvious: dramatic falls in population, in some cases to the point of near-extinction.

But what can we do about it? At a macro level we can put pressure on our elected representatives to enact measures more sympathetic to nature. We can also support organisations that campaign for the environment. And at a domestic level we can make our gardens more wildlife-friendly, check the provenance of the food we eat etc. But there's something else, too: we can collect information on the status of the plants and animals around us, in our gardens, in local parks, even *in* our houses.

By becoming 'citizen scientists' we can build a clearer picture of what lives around us, and how it's changing. And no one is going to do it for us.

For example, the local observations of Wren Group members have identified many signs of global warming. Some of the effects have been negative, for example the virtual disappearance of Cuckoos migrating through our area, a reflection of the national collapse in numbers of this iconic species. Since Cuckoos parasitise host species such as Reed Warblers that now arrive in the UK much earlier than the Cuckoos, the latter's breeding success has plunged. Other results have been positive, including the colonisation of Wanstead Park by Small Red-eyed Damselflies and the recent discovery of the area's first Willow Emerald Damselfly in an Aldersbrook garden.

With this in mind we will shortly be launching the Wanstead 1000 campaign to see if we can find 1,000 species in our area during the course of 2016. A launch meeting will be held at Wanstead Golf Club on Tuesday 27 October. Why not come along and find out more!

Have a great autumn  
Tim Harris



## no trees were harmed .....

Welcome to the autumn Wren newsletter. This is an online newsletter so we can make it as long as we like and have as many pictures as we want without a single tree being harmed. We can also afford to go 'off-piste' now and then to embrace interests on the periphery of the group's traditional subject of wildlife, such as walks, places to visit and local history etc. By doing this I hope that there will be a little something of interest to everyone. I also hope that we might get a wider audience and more people interested in what we do.

However, this is your newsletter and will not survive without your support so if you have any news, views or stories please send them in. Similarly, if you would like to see any changes in the newsletter either in the way it looks or the content please get in touch with me at [wreeditor@talktalk.net](mailto:wreeditor@talktalk.net)

Members often ask me for previous newsletters - these can now be found on the Wren website at <http://www.wrengroup.org.uk/about-us/newsletter/>

# fruit & seeds

By Tricia Moxey

As the days shorten and the nights become colder we may wish to eat apple pies and roasted chestnuts as we give thanks for another bountiful harvest. Indeed, there are plenty of apples, hawthorn berries and other brightly coloured fruits and the oaks are heavily laden with acorns yet again. 2006, 2009, 2011 and 2013 were also good mast years with masses of acorns and such bumper crops may have a survival advantage – the seed predators maybe overwhelmed so more seeds survive to grow.



Each seed is produced as a result of fertilisation of the ovule and contains the recombined genetic material from both its parents. Within the seed coat or testa is a supply of food which will nourish the growing embryo until its developing leaves turn green and can start to make food by photosynthesis. The seed coat is often black or brown as it contains dark coloured tannins which are resistant to attack by fungi or bacteria. In addition, some seeds contain unpalatable chemicals to protect them from predation by the many creatures which might consume them. Apple pips are best avoided as they contain cyanide!



*Sweet Chestnut*

The seeds may be packaged within a fruit which helps to protect them from cold or dry conditions and often play a vital rôle to ensure that the seeds are distributed well away from the parent plant. Brightly coloured fruits are eaten by birds and the swallowed seeds pass through the digestive system to be deposited elsewhere. You only have to look beneath a mature tree to find young Yew, Holly or

Hawthorn saplings which were bird-sown!

Annuals seem to be more prolific in setting seeds and have various mechanisms that help to scatter them; capsules which act like pepper pots, pods which burst open or plumed seeds which can float on the wind. There is a formula which has been developed for estimating the potential distance for wind dispersal:  $x = \text{horizontal dispersal distance}$ ,  $H$  is the release height,  $u$  the mean wind speed and  $Vt$  the terminal velocity of the propagule. Thus  $x = Hu/Vt$ . However, there are many problems in measuring this in the wild!

Water too can help to distribute seeds. The invasive Himalayan Balsam has explosive seed pods with its seeds being propelled a metre or so from the parent plant. Those that fall into water can be swept a long way downstream.



*Horse Chestnut*

Hooked fruits catch onto fur or clothing and get moved along trackways. Small mammals may



*Sycamore seeds*

move such seeds 100 m and larger ones up to 1 km. Even livestock can play their part. Scientists made 16 searches of the fleece of a German sheep which revealed 8,511 diaspores (fragments of fruits or seeds) from 85 different species. Many came from plants with tall fruit spikes so their propagules could lodge in the fleece. This means that 400 sheep could theoretically transport 8 million seeds.

A UK study found that the seeds of 37% of the species growing in turf turned up in sheep and rabbit dung, but most of these seeds were small round ones so were not chewed. A great many ruderal plants (those found in waste places) have small seeds which become embedded in mud that is then moved on feet or wheels to fresh locations. To find out what gets transported in this way why not remove some mud from your boots after a hike in the autumn countryside and then keep it moist in a sealed polythene bag outside in the cold and see what germinates over the coming months?

In reality, the actual resting place of the seed is very much down to chance; many fall by the wayside and

some get consumed but the lucky ones may become incorporated into the seed bank to germinate at a future date. Small seeds germinate best on bare ground with little competition, while larger seeds with a good reserve of stored food can germinate under some competitive shade.



*Acorn*

As local authorities look for ways of cutting costs, reducing the expenditure on weed control does allow plant hunters to discover many more interesting species in urban settings. The majority of these have wind dispersed seeds, but others have escaped from nearby gardens or arrive via mud or droppings, or fall from fur.

Some seeds germinate as soon as they are ripe. This is certainly true of many plants considered to be weeds of cultivation! Others remain dormant until they are exposed to light, or have been chilled several times through the winter or have passed through the digestive tract of an animal. A great deal of research is being carried out to find out how

to ensure effective germination of plants in cultivation and endless variations are being recorded. One result of this germination research appears on the back of most packets of seeds as we expect a good success rate provided we follow the instructions!

An understanding of what triggers germination is of vital importance to those running the International Seed Banks at Kew and elsewhere. Many of the rare or endangered plants set very few seeds that tend to have very exacting requirements for successful germination. Sharing the responsibility for keeping rare plants alive in the wild requires careful management of often fragile habitats, but a good safeguard for their continued existence is to spread growing colonies of certain endangered species plants between botanical gardens around the world, but sadly they can't find room for all of them.



*Hawthorn berries*

Why not take a look at what is growing in all the



*Blackberry*

unloved corners which are being reclaimed by nature and identify what is there and then observe or look up how their seeds are dispersed? All plants are at the base of the food chain and provide nourishment and shelter for a wide range of creatures and although these small corners may not rival the expanses of the wider countryside, they can make a valuable contribution to the biodiversity of any area.

Article by Tricia Moxey



A useful guide when out and about in the countryside in the autumn is the AIDGAP key *A Guide to Fruits and Seed Dispersal* published by the Field Studies Council.

For info go to <http://www.field-studies-council.org>

# Wanstead nature club



*Why not come along with your child to have fun with others learning about our local nature – birds, plants, trees, butterflies, pondlife, insects and more.*

*The group meet at the changing rooms, Harrow Rd, Wanstead Flats, E11 3QD every month.*

*The group is run by Wren committee member Gill James and volunteers. Only £1.50 a session. To find out more about the group or to register contact [gilljames@btinternet.com](mailto:gilljames@btinternet.com)*

## JUNE: BIRDS & BUGS

We had seven children (Holly, Menuo and Ruduo, Nils, Ruby, Clementine and Anya the vicar's daughter). Jane and Tim were there and two mums stayed too. We looked at some patterned feathers, tried to work out how they 'zip' up, and drew them. Ruby brought an abandoned robin's nest complete with old eggs (she donated it to the club).

Tim's game on bird migration was great fun and we learned a lot. Some birds make amazing journeys. We walked through the long grass to the Cat and Dog pond, looking for bugs en route. There were some huge tadpoles and we spotted lots of baby frogs. Tim identified some moths for us. Then back for refreshments and more feather sketching and bug identification. Time seemed to fly by.



Then we took our nets and waded into the pond where it is shallow. We found lots of tiny things such as small fish, big fat leeches, mayfly larvae, and a perfect tiny bivalve shell. We saw big Emperor dragonflies swooping about and we saw a mother tufted duck with four tiny ducklings which she was

## JULY: POND-DIP & BUTTERFLIES

Eight children today and a special visitor, Minakshi, and a lovely new helper, Charlotte.

The sun was shining and there were hundreds of little brown butterflies flitting around the nettles and grass (Small Skippers). We had fun chasing them with our nets. We also found two large brown ones (Meadow Brown and Speckled Wood) and a large white one (called a Large White!)

Then we did a Ducks' Picnic. Ducks should not eat too much bread as it is bad for them so we laid out a pondside buffet at Jubilee Pond for them to choose from: grapes, carrot, lettuce, peas, birdseed, a fatball, and some mealworms. The ducks and swans were quite fussy and went for the seedy things and mealworms and not the veggie things!



protecting from a gull which was trying to snatch up a duckling for its dinner. Every time the gull swooped down, the ducklings disappeared under the water and in the end the brave mother duck flew up and chased the gull away.

Then we sat down at one of the picnic tables by the Pond and had a mini-picnic and the custard creams disappeared in a flash.

Last of all we spotted some scary yellow and black striped caterpillars on the ragwort. They will magically turn into something quite different next month. Do you know what?

## AUGUST: INSECT HOTELS

Where do insects go in the winter? There are lots of bees and wasps and ladybirds and other insects buzzing about now it is summer but when it gets colder there are no flowers and so no food. Many insects will die but some will hibernate and wake up again next spring.

Where do they hibernate? They look for somewhere cosy and dry!

So we went on a stick safari to find some suitable material for insect homes. We found lots of hollow stems of grasses and reeds.



Then we made our insect hotels. Some were made out of

upside-down plastic drinks bottles stuffed with hollow stems. Some were made from pieces of wood which we screwed together to make little houses. We stuffed them with lots of cosy leaves, sheep's wool, old decayed bits of wood, and hollow stems and reeds. Some already had insect lodgers in them! Our homes looked very inviting so we will put them somewhere sheltered in the garden and hope for the best.

Report and pics by Gill James



## now & then

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



A scenic sunset over a body of water. The sun is low on the horizon, casting a warm orange glow across the sky and reflecting on the water. In the foreground, there are tall reeds and grasses. On the left side, a tall, dark building is visible against the sky.

Over the year, Wren Group walkers, led by committee member Peter Aylmer, have been making their way round the Capital Ring, a 78-mile path encircling London.

So far they have completed the south London section, taking them through wonderful places for wildlife such as Oxleas Wood and Richmond Park - and learnt a lot more about the capital along their travels. Crossing the river to the West of London to Perivale and beyond.

..... and back to  
the beginning

## pudding Mill Lane DLR station on Wednesday 19 August 2015: up there with the bio-blitz and day trips to Wallasea Island in the annals of Wren? Not likely, but that's how it's turned out.

It was here that the Wren Group's circuit of the Capital Ring, the 78-mile trail that stitches together many of inner London's finest open spaces, had begun in July last year. Not with a fanfare. On a wet Thursday, just one other walker joined me for a four-mile tramp along the Greenway and through Beckton District Park. But this year, there were eleven of us on the final stage, bringing us back home by the New River and Lea.



*Wren members by the New River*

And we'd had a treat. Those of us who were at the Wren AGM last March will remember keynote speaker David Mooney of the London Wildlife Trust, who told us of his two wetlands projects. David met

us at one of these, the Woodberry Wetlands, and gave us a privileged preview on land not yet open to the public.



*Oxleas Wood is one of the few remaining areas of ancient deciduous forest in the Royal Borough of Greenwich, in south-east London. Some parts date back over 8,000 years to the end of the last Ice Age, the Younger Dryas. Wikipedia*

A bit of context: the New River, the extraordinary 17th-century watercourse that still brings fresh

water from Hertfordshire to the capital, has two reservoirs just north of Clissold Park in Stoke Newington. They mark the effective modern termination of the river, for it is from here that water is taken to Walthamstow for treatment and onward to taps. The West reservoir is now given over to water sports, but the East has been less tended. In the complex ecology of a modern city, such neglect does not necessarily lead to a flourishing biodiversity.



*David Mooney talking to Wren members*

With aid from Hackney Council and the developers of the adjacent Woodberry Down Estate, £1.3m of funding has been secured to allow the London Wildlife Trust to create a managed wetland here. There is much to build on: Reed Bunting and Great Crested Grebe already make it their home. But with new channels being laid down to discourage fox and cat predation, there is much hope that new visitors will arrive. Already, it's possible that Cetti's Warbler will breed. From late autumn, there will be public access here, with the formal opening due in the spring.

After this, one of London's best urban parks, Clissold Park, and Victorian cemeteries, Abney Park, led us towards the Lea – we joined just south of David's even larger Walthamstow Wetlands project, due to open in 2017 – and 'home'. What a varied urban walk the Capital Ring is; the month before, we'd enjoyed the Parkland Walk along the old Muswell Hill rail line, with an impromptu tree class from our own Jackie Morrison, while in June we had followed a green corridor just yards from the North Circular and into Hampstead Garden Suburb.



*Clissold Park in Stoke Newington*

## Lucky dip walks

So how to top this? I'm currently researching my second book for Cicerone Press, following on from *Walking in Essex*. With a working title of *Walking Wild London*, it's set a bit closer to home and will feature around 25 walks, mostly five to seven miles, each with a specific wildlife focus. So the Wanstead Flats walk (I could hardly leave it out!) will look for Skylarks, Richmond Park might well be deer, and orchids on the chalk downs south of Croydon.



*Some of the Wren party on trek*

And Wren can help in the research. Each month, I'll bring some of the draft walks with me to our usual meeting place on Stratford station. The group will pick one at random. And, armed with Oyster Card or Freedom Pass, off we will go.

## Lucky dip walk dates

Wednesday 28 October. Meet 10am at Stratford station, outside Jubilee line platforms 13-15. Just turn up, no need to book. Walks are between five and seven miles, check Wren Facebook page for future dates and updates.

Article and Pics by Peter Aylmer



Read Peter's notes on the whole walk on his website, <http://trailman.co.uk> - follow the link on the front page



*Woodberry Wetlands*

# redstarts in Wales

I'd seen Black Redstarts on travels abroad and even, lately, near the Olympic site in Hackney Wick. But I first saw a Common Redstart in the Welsh village of Knucklas. I was visiting my friends Maggie and Robert who'd moved there from Peckham. Later Robert sent me these photos of fledglings taken from inside his postbox. Robert said

"Four years ago I went to fix a hole in a postbox which used to hang on our gate. I noticed the chestnut flash of a bird's tail as it flew into the box. Later, watching the box from my car, I could see by the male's black throat that the adults were Redstarts. I screwed the lid of the box down, so the postman couldn't use it. When I knew the parents had flown, I unscrewed the lid and saw two blue eggs. The next day there were three eggs. In all that year they laid seven eggs – and all fledged. The second year they returned and laid five eggs, although only three hatched. I was present when the first of these juveniles fledged. I would unscrew the lid of the box and take my picture using a flash. On that occasion one of the three panicked when I unscrewed the lid and took off. The third year, we had to move the postbox and the birds were less happy. Instead, they built a nest in the eaves of my partner's studio. Then this year we had no birds."

Article by Eleanor Moreton  
Photo credits: Robert M Wood



# h is for hawk

‘Look! Isn’t that a hawk up there on those railings?’

Indeed it was. Amazingly, we were standing on the concourse inside Kings Cross Station.

It was one morning this August and we were waiting for a train to Kings Lynn. We were very surprised to see this large brown hawk gripping the railings of the gallery above us. Its handler was standing quietly behind it and the hawk was intently scanning the main concourse below. Presumably for its dinner.

The hawk was large and rich chestnut brown, with a yellow beak and legs and white on the base of the tail feathers. I couldn’t resist going up to the handler and asking what kind of hawk it was. ‘A Harris’s Hawk’, I thought he said. ‘She comes here three times a week’.

But when I looked up Harris’s Hawk in my *Field Guide to British Birds* it wasn’t there. Nor was anything like it in the illustrations. Had I misheard?

Nothing for it but to ask Mr Google and Wikipedia- and all was revealed!

The Harris’s Hawk hails from the south-western United States down as far as Chile and Argentina. The female is 35% bigger than the male. Unusually, it hunts in packs, which is unique amongst raptors. It is highly intelligent which makes it suitable for training in falconry. It is capable of taking quite large prey

so would be very interested in catching the fat pigeons in London Town. It was named Harris by John James Audubon after his ornithological friend and supporter Edward Harris (as far as I know no relation to our very own ornithologically gifted Harris).

Aria is a one-year old female employed by Network Rail to scare off the pigeons and thus reduce the perennial problem of pigeon mess. Apparently she does 4-hour shifts with her handler on the leash three times a week and her presence alone should scare off the pigeons. She is only allowed to fly in the station when it is closed in case she catches a pigeon and its dramatic demise upsets pigeon-loving passengers. Apparently she is well fed before flying to lessen the chance of pigeons becoming lunch.



What a brilliantly simple and natural way of dealing with the pigeon problem! No nasty chemicals or ugly pointy anti-pigeon spikes. Well done Aria!



# bug life

*Pictures and commentary by Rose Stephens*

Wren member Rose Stephens is a self-taught naturalist and artist who was born in Newham and still lives there - in Forest Gate, close to Wanstead Flats.

Rose has built up a collection of artwork using various mediums. Through her love of all things to do with nature and her passion for art, she manages to produce work that is original and different from her contemporaries. Her love of nature shines through in her work.

In the past Rose has used photographs as a basis for her work - painting from pictures taken in the area. More recently, she has started to express her fondness of all things natural solely in the media of photography.

Rose has an extraordinary eye for seeing the detail in the nature around her. This she has recently used to her advantage by taking up 'macro' or close-up photography.

*I saw this tiny fly on Wanstead Flats, there were a few on them resting on a dead tree, they are members of the Dolichopodidae family, Medetera sp. They seemed to be just waiting on the tree trunk possibly, for their prey. I saw these on 4/8/15.*

There are so many highlights to report on invertebrates, I wish I could list them all! There have been many different species of bees locally. Just when I was getting my head around identifying the *Andrena* species, along came a new set of other species of bees and second broods.

There have been so many interesting plant bugs and beetles and an interesting story about a rare fly (*Ogcodes pallipes*) stuck to a Greater Lettuce that I thought was doing a ritual dance which I actually videoed and subsequently, realising it was actually stuck whilst making the evening tea, trekked all the way back over the flats to rescue it! Another interesting fly seen in Wanstead Park was a Banded General (*Stratiomya potamida*) it looked very similar to a hoverfly or wasp but is one of a



This is the Longhorn Beetle *Rutpela maculata* I first spotted in my garden. It stayed on the Dock for quite a few days. I also saw a few on them on Wanstead Flats. They are quite a large and very striking beetle.

group of soldierflies, many having the names of various ranks of soldiers.



I could not exclude the fabulous Wasp Spider *Argiope bruennichi*, which are in abundance not only on Wanstead Flats (where I saw this one) but also in Manor Park Cemetery. I mainly see them on coarse long grass, broom or rushes. I saw this one a few days ago, along with quite a few others in the same area.

I was pleased to see that the Wasp Spider *Argiope bruennichi* had made a come back after the City of London decided to cut back the grass in their peak season along the top of Capel Road. This year I noticed they cut the grass earlier.



This is a male *Cistogaster globosa* fly on Yarrow. It mainly parasitises Bishops Mitre Shieldbugs. I have seen these on the flats quite frequently. The female is all black. I saw this one on 31/07/15.

I was really pleased to find lots of Yellow-faced Bees (*Hylaeus communis*) in my garden. Others from my garden were *Anthophora furcata*, *Halictus tumulorum* and a whole host of others. This year I decided to let some of the weeds grow, including Dandelions, Buttercups, Dock, Green Alkanet etc. It's very tempting to pull weeds up as they aren't in a place you would like them, but these are the plants that our native species of invertebrates rely on. I was so amazed at how much more wildlife came to my garden. The *Ballota nigra* attracted the most species of insects, including a range of rare or scarce bees, along with quite a colony of Woundwort Shieldbugs (*Eysarcoris ventustissimus*). The minute the flowers appeared, the bees were abundant. The most interesting bees to watch and observe were the Wool Carder Bee on the *Ballota nigra* and the Leafcutter Bee which I observed making a nest in a hole in my front garden wall.



*This is a Blue Carpenter Bee *Ceratina cyanea*. I saw a couple of these in Manor Park Cemetery, They caught my eye straight away as they were a metallic blue-green colour and I hadn't seen them before. I love the yellow face! I saw them on 12/08/15.*



*This is a robberfly. It is hard to identify these to species level as the robberflies look very similar, but I think it may be a *Machimus* sp. I quite often see these sitting on leaves on Wanstead Flats waiting for their prey. Their sharp mouthparts are designed to kill other insects. I saw this one on 4/08/15.*

# Curry Farm

By Sharon Payne

On a warm and sunny Saturday in August several members of the Wren Group set off on a trip to Curry Farm, near Bradwell on the Essex coast. We were relieved to be on our way as heavy rain had forced cancellation of our first attempt, three weeks previously.



*Hummingbird Hawkmoth at Curry  
Farm by Peter Wame*

Curry Farm's 65 acres have been given over to a nature reserve, carefully created and managed almost single-handed by its owner, Stephen Dewick, who also runs B&B at the farm. Unaware of the other attractions of the farm, we thought we would just be going on a tour of the moth-trap, built by Stephen's father Bob in 1946. This is the largest purpose-built moth-trap in the UK.



*It's a hard life for some - Wren members at Curry Farm  
Pic by Kathy Hartnett*

Upon arrival we received a warm reception from Stephen, who gave us an introduction to his ethos for the management of the farm while we sat in the idyllic garden drinking tea and coffee. Stephen then proceeded to show us around the garden, the nature reserve and – of course – the moth-trap. The trap, so large that it has an antechamber into which all seven of us could fit with room to spare, is surrounded by planted banks on three sides so as you approach all you can see is the 400W light protruding from the roof. It is this that draws the moths in.



*Poplar Hawkmoth - Pic by Tim Harris*

Once inside we were able to look at and photograph the results of the previous night's catch, which including many Mothers of Pearl and Straw Dots, an impressive collection of Poplar Hawkmoths and Swallow Prominents, and a good number of migrants, including Small Mottled Willow and a rare Rest Harrow.

After a good 45 minutes inside it was nice to get into the daylight again, exploring more of the



*Hoverfly Helophilus pendulus on Common Fleabane  
Pic by Tim Harris*

woodland planted 30 years ago, as well as areas of grassland and scrub. A good variety of butterflies –



*Inside the moth-trap - Pic by Sharon Payne*

including Brimstone, Red Admiral, Peacock, Large White, Gatekeeper, Meadow Brown, Holly and Common Blues and Large Skipper were seen. The most exciting finds were a number of Hummingbird Hawkmoths.

Richard, a very knowledgeable friend of Stephen's, was also on hand to help us identify some of the many plants. There were good displays of Common Fleabane, Lady's Bedstraw, Rosebay Willowherb and other common plants but also scarcer species, notably Lesser Calamint, a member of the mint family that only grows in Essex and parts of adjacent Kent and Suffolk.

Even after several hours at the farm we agreed that there was a lot more to explore. A second trip looks likely. Thanks again to Stephen for his hospitality and to Iris Newbery for organising the visit. Check out Curry Farm at [www.curryfarm.co.uk](http://www.curryfarm.co.uk)

# hogwatch

## The search for Hedgehogs in the Wanstead Parklands.

Many of you reading this will have never seen a Hedgehog, well at least not a live one! This was the definitely the case for me. In fact some of you may only know Hedgehogs through the exploits of Mrs Tiggy-Winkle or playing Sonic the Hedgehog.

It's sad to say that my first sight of a real live Hedgehog was last year when I just surpassed my half-century. My sighting came in the August of 2014, whilst I was out in my garden after dark and heard some rustling noise in the undergrowth.

There to my surprise there was a Hedgehog, which was smaller than the size of a football. To see this small mammal was both exciting and fascinating. At last I was finally able to see one of these creatures I had only heard or read about. Luckily I had the pleasure of seeing and feeding this Hedgehog for just over a month before I assume it went into hibernation. I was hoping to see it again this year, but alas the only Hog I have managed to see this year was in Manor Park Cemetery and it had been predated by another animal.

The current state of our local Hedgehog population

was a topic of conversation I had with Tim Harris (Wren Group chair) and after a short exchange of emails it was decided we should carry out a survey to determine how our local Hogs were fairing.

Appeals for sightings whether the animal is dead or alive (all recordings help) when posted online and have far exceeded anything we may have originally hoped for and the results have been posted on the Wren Group's Facebook page. These results have been very encouraging and we still seek more sightings before the Hedgehog hibernation season begins around November.



The reason for carrying out such a survey is due to the evidence that Hedgehogs are declining severely in Britain and they seem to be doing just as badly in the wider countryside as they are in our towns and cities. The decline is most likely due to several different factors that are at play.

Ecologists stress that the likely candidates are habitat loss, there are far fewer hedges, woodlands

and wild areas than there used to be and fragmentation of habitat, due to new roads, housing and other developments.

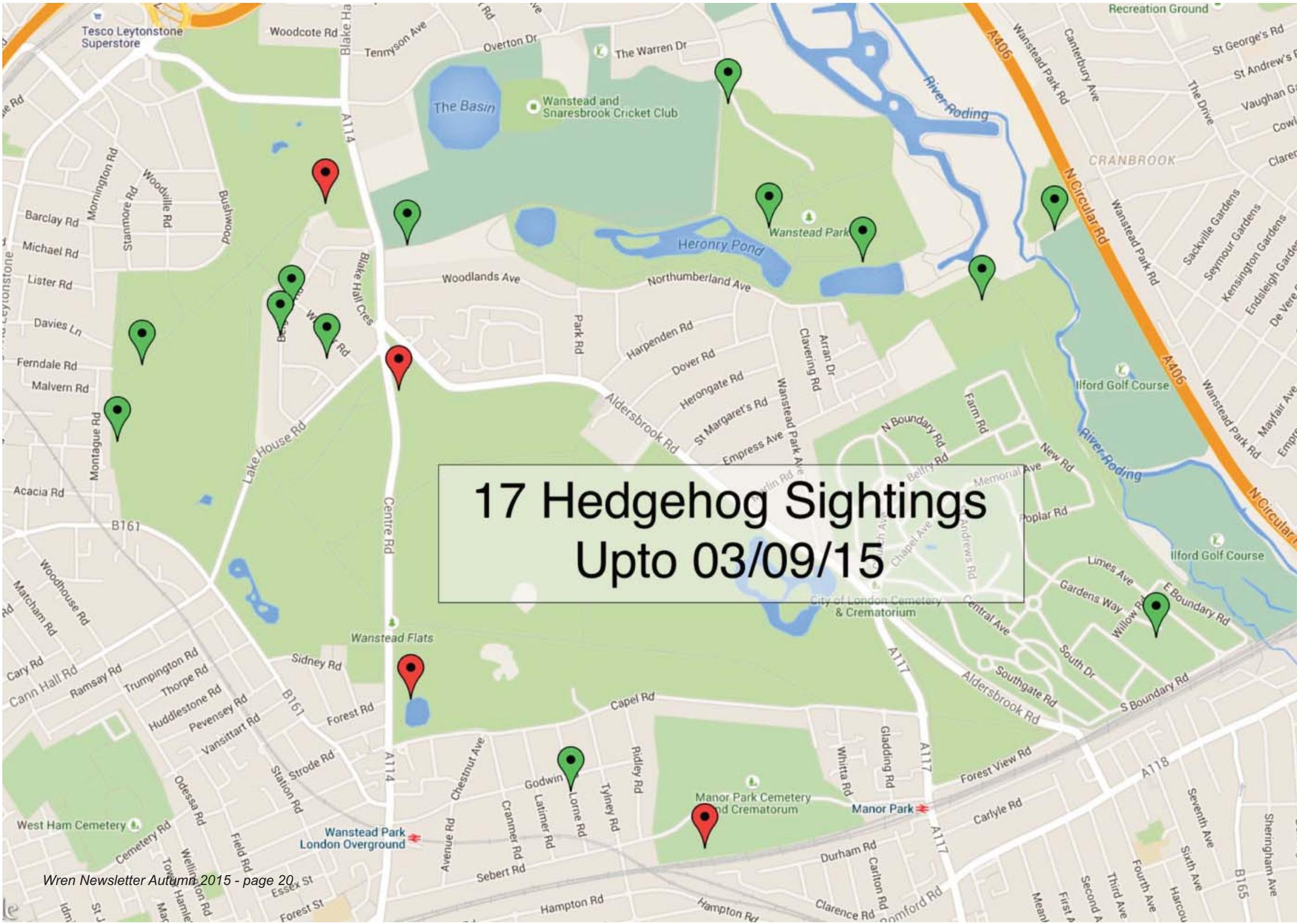
The use of pesticides also reduces the amount of prey available, and slug pellets, weed killers can harm Hedgehogs directly. Gardens, parks and school grounds have become too tidy and smaller, paved over for parking, or enclosed with impenetrable fences and walls.

New buildings and roads carve up suitable habitat, so that small populations can become isolated and more vulnerable to local extinction. Hedgehog road deaths might also be a cause of decline locally, with tens of thousands of Hedgehogs killed by road traffic each year in the UK.

The threat of extinction in the near future is unlikely, but the rate of decline has wider implications for the state of the UK's ecosystems because Hedgehogs, like butterflies, are seen as an 'indicator' species for the health of the natural world

Badgers are a natural predator of Hedgehogs and Hedgehogs actively avoid sites where there are Badgers in high numbers. When there is sufficient cover and good foraging opportunities, Badgers and Hedgehogs can coexist, but when there is no safe refuge and the prey that the two species compete for is scarce, Hedgehogs may lose out

Locally though, the number of deaths are usually come down to three factors, crossing roads, garden control sprays/pellets and predators. The deaths are normally caused by Dogs and rarely Foxes as some might think, though Foxes could eat younger Hogs, whereas adults would normally see off a Fox.



# 17 Hedgehog Sightings Upto 03/09/15

## The decline in numbers

In the early part of the last century, Hedgehogs were abundant throughout Britain, with an estimated population of perhaps 30 million in the 1950s. By 1995, the population was estimated to be only about 1.1 million in England. We appear to have lost around 30% of the population since 2002 and therefore it seems likely that there are now fewer than a million Hedgehogs left in the UK.

## Hedgehogs in your garden

Hedgehogs are a gardener's friend, as they eat snails, slugs and insects.

Leave areas of your garden 'wild', with piles of leaf litter and logs. These are an attractive nest as well as a home for the invertebrates (slugs, beetles) that Hedgehogs like to eat.

Making an artificial home can be as simple as placing a piece of board against a wall, or you can buy a purpose-built Hedgehog house online.

Food and fresh water will encourage Hedgehogs to return. Leave out foods like minced meat, tinned dog or cat food (not fish-based), crushed cat biscuits, or chopped boiled eggs. Specialist Hedgehog food can also be bought from wild bird food suppliers.

**Never** feed Hedgehogs milk as it can cause diarrhoea; instead provide plain, fresh water in a shallow bowl.

Cover drains and holes and place bricks at the side of ponds to give Hedgehogs an easy route out.

Check for Hedgehogs before using strimmers or mowers, particularly under hedges where animals may rest and check compost heaps for nesting hogs before forking over.

Build bonfires as close to time of lighting as possible and check them thoroughly before lighting.

Remove sports or fruit netting when not in use to prevent Hedgehogs becoming entangled, and getting injured.

Slug pellets can poison Hedgehogs and should only be used as a last resort. Try using beer traps or sprinkling ground-up shells around the plants you need to protect. If you have to use pellets, place them under a slate which is inaccessible to Hedgehogs.

Hedgehogs usually hibernate between November and mid-March and animals must have enough fat reserves to survive hibernation.

As many as 10 different Hedgehogs may visit a garden over several nights, which could mean 'your Hedgehog' is a number of different individuals visiting at different times.

Hedgehogs also travel long distance, their normal range can extend to 14 gardens, so if possible leave that hole in the fence, as it will help them in the quest for food.

As autumn draws closer, and the breeding season for Hedgehogs comes to an end, the young leave their mothers in search of independence.

Their first time alone in the wild can be challenging as the autumn and winter months see their food supply (insects, worms, slugs and other garden creatures) beginning to dwindle.

If they lack this food they can die during hibernation, so as the weather turns colder it's good for them to have a comfy garden spot to nest in.

## Further Information

For more information and useful tips on helping and caring for Hedgehogs you can go to either The British Hedgehog Preservation Society ([britishhedgehog.org.uk](http://britishhedgehog.org.uk)) or Hedgehog Street ([hedgehogstreet.org](http://hedgehogstreet.org)).

So if you see a Hedgehog in the areas surrounding the Wanstead Parklands please notify us on our Facebook Page, Tim Harris or myself Barry Chapman (aka The Wanstead Flats Womble).

All we need is the following information.

Location: just a street name or landmark if it's in the parklands. Was the animal alive or dead: even if the Hog is dead this information still builds a picture of the local population. Finally, the date: this does not need to be specific - just the month will help if you cannot remember the date.

Thank you if you have already supplied us with your sightings. We hope all the information will help preserve what is a British Wildlife Hero for future generations.

Report by Barry Chapman





# Today I Saw A Hedgehog

by Graham Jones

Today I saw a Hedgehog  
A funny looking thing  
He crept across the lawn outside  
As I sat watching him

He snuffled through the leaves and grass  
His nose twitched like a snake  
And then he stopped quite suddenly  
As he came across a rake

At first he rolled into a ball  
Quite comical to see  
Then slowly poked his head out  
And I'm sure he winked at me

Once more he turned towards the rake  
Who's spines looked somewhat higher  
And slowly moved toward it  
With what to me, looked like desire

First he nudged it with his nose  
Then rubbed against the prongs  
Then getting no reaction  
Seemed to sense that somethings wrong

And then he tried to mount it  
But that just came to grief  
And shuffled off indignantly  
Which came as some relief

And so I've learned a moral  
From this hedgehog in his teens  
Things that we take for granted  
Are not always as they seem.

<http://www.grahamjonespoetry.co.uk/poetry.html>



# Summer bird report

## In anticipation of August

After such a wonderful spring we birders eagerly await the shortening days and the returning migrants: the bio-blitz was a fascinating education, butterflies and dragonflies a beautiful distraction—but what we want, what we really, really want, is grubby weather and the month which starts with an A. To get there, just the torpor of June and July to negotiate. Patience!

*Report and pics by Nick Croft*

## June

As Junes go, and considering it was June, it really wasn't that tediously painful, *really!* OK I spent a week with eyes to the ground doing the bio-blitz thing, but I have to say I enjoyed that immensely. I've already forgotten virtually everything that some exceedingly patient people told me but it's a start. Birding wise: not as bad as was feared, which serendipitously leads us into the highlights.

- A late, late Wheatear (the latest ever or, conversely, the earliest ever returning bird) on the 4<sup>th</sup>.
- Stu's still getting Firecrest noises in his ears, which could be a specific case of tinnitus
- Siskin on the 8<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>.
- Shoveler, four of them, the first returning birds of autumn on the 19<sup>th</sup>. A pair of Teal followed in the same week.
- A young Shelduck flew west over Heronry on the 19<sup>th</sup>.
- The month's only Red Kite on the 23<sup>rd</sup>.
- The first breeding report of a Common Pochard on Alex on the 27<sup>th</sup>; three young are still avoiding gulls, swans or other mishap.

John Whele snaps a Cuckoo by Long Wood on the 29<sup>th</sup>.

The same day a visiting birder ruffles a few feathers by reporting a duo of juvenile Little Ringed Plover on Alex that same morning.

... and a Black Kite over the Old Sewage Works on the 28<sup>th</sup>.



*Wheatear*

Thought I might slip that one at the end so no-one would notice. I originally twittered that to the London Bird Club account as a "possible" only due to the fact I hadn't a clue as to what a juvenile Red Kite should look like, not sure I've ever seen one – and this wasn't one either. So just to be on the safe side, I erred with caution, while completely erring on not having my camera out (not that my camera has helped with my IDs in the past, so maybe a good thing). Anyway, a description is soon to be winging its way



*Tree Pipit*

to the rarities committee to add to my growing collection of records that have bin (sic) filed.

But, wow! Pochard breeding, that's great news. Great news for Reed Buntings too as signs that they are/were rearing young in the SSSI accumulated during the month. Sticking with the SSSI, I'm not sure what's happening with the Garden Warbler – it's all gone quiet down at Motorcycle Wood. Not so quiet have been the offspring of Common and Lesser Whitethroats, two or three of which have started singing again: failed or on seconds?



*Wryneck*

Meanwhile the Willow Warbler sings on. As for the other warblers, both Chiffchaff and Blackcap are doing well, and in the reeds on The Shoulder of Mutton we now have another male singing, though probably too late to attract the ladies, while Reed No. 1 is hard at it rearing a family. Back on the Flats and the struggle to see any increase in the populations of either Skylark or Meadow Pipit goes on; birds are still singing but where's the result?

No Swallows after the beginning of this month and no reports of Sand Martins either, but House Martin activity over Shoulder of Mutton has been frenetic with a few dozens Swifts thrown in for good measure. As for their nemesis, there have been very few records of Hobby, and then only singles.

[In other news Ringlets appear to be on the increase and the Purple Hairstreaks have started appearing, as too have Gatekeepers.] Yup it's another long month before the real birding can begin again...



*Pied Flycatcher*

## July

As Julys go that was pretty good. Something of interest (OK most of the time that was in the form of a butterfly or other non-avian items) virtually every day, and what's more we are now out of it, August is upon us and with only a little more patience required before it all kicks off again. Most of us are still waiting for our fill of Redstart (the spring passage was woeful), Spotted and Pied Flycatchers, Tree Pipit and whatever biggie lurks out there. What we would



*Meadow Pipit*

also like is a bit of kick-ass weather to bring it all down - none of this hot sunny days and clear nights tosh...

### Highlights:

- Firecrest still featuring at Snaresbrook.
- Tufted Duck with four young on Jubilee, while mum Pochard fends off all-comers to keep her three ducklings through the month.
- More Siskin reports for the month than virtually the whole of the winter period!
- First returning migrants (Willow Warbler and Swallow) on the 16<sup>th</sup>.
- Red Kite on 20<sup>th</sup>.
- Little Owl lost but now found from the 21<sup>st</sup>.
- Green Sandpiper creates a mini-twitch on 21<sup>st</sup> (Mike Messenger also had a Common Sandpiper in the Park).
- Yellow-legged Gull (first-winter).
- Garden Warbler: returning or just re-found (from the 25<sup>th</sup>).

- Two Cuckoos over Alex on the 25<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>.
- The first Common Crossbill for two years.
- Big movements of Swifts on the 26<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup>.

Otherwise: The Great Crested Grebes succeeded where it looked like they were a disaster waiting to happen; all four birds have now left the Shoulder of Mutton. For Little Grebes the story has not been so good: Heronry has been grebe-free (there is one first-winter there now), while on SoM they have tried, failed, tried again and failed. The Alex has been the only place where young can be seen and heard, and even here broods are down and the young hard to find. What went wrong here then?



*Lesser Whitethroat*

The Shoulder of Mutton produced a brood of three Reed Warblers, while the late-comer in the NE corner sang and sang to no avail and was probably the bird Dan found singing on Alex later in the month. What happened to the nesting Garden Warblers, and for that matter the Reed Buntings in the SSSI, I couldn't say. Young Garden Warblers were heard, but then nothing – do they head



*Green Sandpiper*

south straight away? The buntings, too, were seen to be busy but sightings had all but evaporated by the end of July.

Hit and miss, too, for our raptors: one family of four Kestrels hunted over the Flats, while Hobby have gone AWOL. Bob's Red Kite was the only large raptor for the month. In the credits column the Little Owl made itself known to us again on the 21<sup>st</sup> – in the same place, so where the hell has it been?

Dan's Green Sandpiper (the 10th this year) was notable in that it stayed on the Shoulder of Mutton and didn't fly off at the first sight of one of us.

And finally: Siskins are meant to be winter visitors or so we would lead you to believe, but sightings from here and elsewhere in London would make you think otherwise.

Whatever, they make a nice change from wheezing Greenfinches.

## August

What we all had been waiting for and...

... well that was pretty good when it kicked off on the 11th with the arrival of a juvenile-looking Whinchat in the pub scrub, and later that day a Spotted Flycatcher in Long Wood, then a Pied Flycatcher in the SSSI. It just got steadily crazier after that. Certainly it has been the best autumn we have managed, and we are not through September yet. The only issue is the lack of sightings from the Park, and with Dan now holed up in a caravan in Dorset, who's going to look out for ducks during the autumn. With everything happening around Long Wood I



*Common Redstart*

can't see many of us venturing that way for a few weeks. Maybe the closure of the Costa at the Esso garage will persuade us to venture down to the tea hut of happiness. The problem is the Park has too much cover and when you get there it's like migration isn't happening.

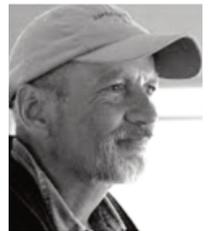
Scores on the doors for August past and present (numbers are 'bird-days'):

- Whinchat: 79 [22 2014; 20+ 2013]
- Common Redstart: 52 [22; 5]
- Northern Wheatear: 24 [25; 8]

- Spotted Flycatcher: 60 [49; 8]
- Pied Flycatcher: 11 [2; 7]
- Reed Warbler: 19 [n/a; 10]
- Wood Warbler: 1 [1; 0]
- Yellow Wagtail: 56 [37; 20-30]
- Tree Pipit: 29 [16; 1]
- Green Sandpiper: 4 [2; n/a]
- Common Sandpiper: 2 [2; 2]
- Common Snipe 1
- Siskin: 10+
- Bullfinch: 1
- Yellowhammer: 1
- Swallow: 133+
- Sand Martin: 2
- Red Kite: 1
- Wryneck: 1 [-; -]

*Now while some of the numbers look fantastic for this year, it must be remembered that the bulk of the records are for long-staying birds – that's the theme for this year, birds lingering and arriving earlier: Whinchat is a good case in point, arriving almost 10 days before usual. What this means for September we have yet to find out. The numbers above also don't give a true representation of the actual numbers involved (up to Green Sandpiper) and are 'bird-days', so while Pied Flycatcher was reported on 11 occasions, there certainly weren't 11 individuals, indeed I would be surprised if there were half that number.*

*Report and Pics by Nick Croft*



# butterfly, moth and dragonfly report



*The metallic-green abdomen and spread wings of  
Gill's Willow Emerald Damselfly. Pic by Tim Harris*

## Damsel first for the area

Gill James and I were relaxing in her back garden, enjoying a cuppa in the sunshine on 6th September. Our survey work for the morning – looking for reptiles in the Old Sewage Works – was done. Gill remarked that a damselfly had alighted on some vegetation by her small, but perfectly formed pond and I casually walked over to take a look. I say casual, because I didn't expect it to be particularly interesting and I was reluctant even to get off my chair. I'm glad I did, though - because it was green. Never having seen a Common Emerald damselfly in the Wanstead area, I took some pics, as did Alan. But a few things about the creature, which was clearly a male, didn't fit the description of Common Emerald. I decided to cycle home, grab my macro lens and try to get to the bottom of it. Of



*Painted Lady. Although the mass invasion didn't come, several were seen locally. This individual was at Langdon Hills NR in late August. Pic by Kathy Hartnett.*

course, scenarios like this rarely work out. As I peddled furiously I convinced myself that the damselfly would have left by the time I returned...



*Ringlets go from strength to strength in our area. This one was seen in Wanstead Park. Pic by Kathy Hartnett*

How wrong I was! It posed for more photos and showed all the characteristics of a male Willow Emerald Damselfly. The pattern on the side of the thorax was spot-on, so was the shape of the anal appendages and the wing spots were white, neatly framed in black. According to Andy Froud at The Warren this was the second record for the Epping Forest area and the first for the south of the Forest. Since the late summer of 2009, when 400 were reported in Suffolk and north-east Essex, the species has become established in parts of East Anglia, seemingly one of the positive products of global warming. And now it's one to look out for in our area, too.

## Mixed fortunes for butterflies

The mooted mass invasion of Painted Lady butterflies did not materialise, although there were a good few records from our area. Green Hairstreaks continued to thrive well into June, with sightings coming from most areas of Wanstead Flats. Without wanting to jinx this beautiful butterfly, it does now seem to be well established locally. Also a regular part of our insect fauna, Purple Hairstreaks spent most of their time in the canopy of oaks and proved to be as hard to photograph as ever. One of our area's scarcest butterflies, Brown Argus, was seen in several places between the SSSI and Manor Park Cemetery but this grassland species seems to be very thinly distributed. In contrast, a real success story concerns Ringlet, which was seen in many locations on the Flats and in the Park during the summer. Late in the season very large numbers of Gatekeepers and Meadow Browns were on the wing but my impression was that it wasn't a good year for either Small Heath or Small Copper.



*Green Hairstreak is very much a butterfly of the second half of May and early June. Pic by Kathy Hartnett*



*This Crescent Dart at Belgrave Road was a major surprise in mid-September. It was probably a migrant from the continental European population rather than from south-west England, where it also breeds, and was the third Essex record. Pic by Tim Harris*



*Spear Thistle, White Dead-nettle and Common Nettle are three of the food plants of the amazing looking Burnished Brass. All these plants are very common locally so it's surprising that we don't see more Burnished Brass. This one was attracted to the Belgrave Road light-trap in June. Pic by Tim Harris*



*Unspectacular, but distinctive with a black streak running around a pale 'kidney mark', Webb's Wainscot had not been noted previously in our area. Bulrushes provide the main foodplant for this scarce species, so what was the provenance of this individual – attracted to the Belgrave Road light-trap at the end of July? Pic by Tim Harris*



*Another moth recorded at the bio-blitz moth-trapping session at the end of June was Poplar Hawkmoth. As its name suggests, the larvae feed on poplars, but they also go for willows. This individual was at Belgrave Road in August. Pic by Tim Harris*

## A bumper summer for moths

It was an excellent summer for months, with several species not previously seen in the area either seen during the day on Wanstead Flats or attracted to one of the area's light-traps. The bio-blitz moth-trapping session at The Temple, in Wanstead Park, on 26 June produced several Red-necked Footmen, a species new for the area, as well as at least three Leopard moths. June highlights also included Bordered Straw, Figure of 80, Burnished Brass, Dark Spectacle and Dusky Brocade. A run of hot, humid nights in early July also proved to be good with the Belgrave Road trap attracting more than 50 species on several dates. The area's first Webb's Wainscot turned up on 30 July. Thereafter, numbers and variety tailed off through August but more than 260 species had been noted by the end of the month. Paul, Rose and myself used pheromone lures to attract clearwing moths for the first time this summer – with great success. Yellow-legged, Orange-tailed, Red-belted and Six-belted Clearwings were all lured, in Wanstead Park, the City of London Cemetery and Wanstead Flats respectively.

The variety of moths on the wing usually decreases in September and this year that trend was made worse with a lot of rain mid-month followed by a period of chilly nights. However, September usually has a surprise or two, and this year was no exception with a Crescent Dart at the Belgrave Road trap on the night of 19th. According to the Essex Field Club this is only the third record for the county.

Report by Tim Harris



*Always popular, Small Elephant Hawkmoth is a vividly coloured local speciality, its larvae probably taking advantage of the plentiful Rosebay Willowherb on Wanstead Flats. Adults are on the wing from late May to mid-July. This one was in Belgrave Road in June. Pic by Tim Harris*



*Lime Hawkmoth is a real beauty. Adults fly in May, June and July, and the caterpillars feed on limes, London Planes, Silver Birches and Wild Cherry. Belgrave Road, June. Pic by Tim Harris*

*The caterpillars of Red-necked Footman feed on lichens and algae growing on oaks, Silver Birch and Beech. We certainly have plenty of those, but the first local records of this moth were on the evening of 26 June in The Temple grounds. Pic by Tim Harris*



# bio-blitz 2015

*Tim Harris reports on the Wren Group's first midsummer bio-blitz, an event that inspired feats of stamina, determination and creative genius. And also produced moments of madness.*

On the long weekend of 26-28 June a team of Wren Group members and other local naturalists worked hard to record every bird, tree, grass, butterfly and bee they could in our study area. We saw this as a way of raising the profile of nature in our area, giving local people an opportunity to learn and find out more about survey techniques – and, of course – to add to our knowledge of Wanstead Flats and Wanstead Park.



A total of 11 activities were organised that weekend. In addition, Tricia Moxey's wildflower walk in the Old Sewage Works a week beforehand and a bat walk led by myself in Wanstead Park at the end of July made up the Wren Group's contribution to the inaugural Wanstead Festival. A total of 298 people participated in the Wren programme, and a magnificent – dare I say, totally surprising? – number of 698 species was recorded. Many were expected, others weren't. Quite a few had not previously been recorded in the area.



*Showing that you're never too young - small people demonstrate some serious flower arranging*

Space precludes giving a report of each activity, but I'll dish out a few random awards.

*The imagination and artistry award:* Nicola Cunningham's nature-themed art installation for children. It kept the kids enthralled and became a thing of real beauty. Can you come back next year, Nicola?

*The identification award:* Derek McEwan, pond-dipper extraordinaire, spent weeks securing accurate identifications for numerous species of water beetles and water boatmen, some of them not



*Alison Tapply. Community Liaison Officer from CofL showing her bushcraft skills*

previously recorded locally (and some of them scarcely visible to the naked eye).

*The productivity award:* Tristan Bantock, Jim Flanagan, Jeremy Richardson and Sarah Barnes found more than 200 different kinds of beetle, bug, fly and grasshopper in a marathon session on Wanstead Flats. The sight of rapid, synchronised grass-sweeping is something to behold. I think it should be an Olympic event.

*The stamina award:* Tricia Moxey led a wildflower walk in the Old Sewage Works, another walk in search of plants, grasses and galls on Wanstead Flats, and yet another to look at trees and

wildflowers in Wanstead Park. If there'd been any fungi around I'm sure she would have done a fungi walk as well.

*The silly o'clock award:* Nick Croft (and the 20-odd who turned out to join in) on the dawn chorus walk – which started at 5am. Unfortunately, Nick's best bird find – the area's first Black Kite – had been and gone the previous day.

*The craziness award:* OK, moth-trapping is usually a sedate affair, but not so the Friday night session at The Temple, with a bunch of grown men and women



*Wren member and valued contributor to this newsletter Tricia Moxey giving a walk and talk on the subject of the wide variety of trees and other flora in Wanstead Park*

running from trap to trap at midnight to check on the latest hawkmoth, footman, or wainscot. Any nocturnal visitors to the park must have wondered what the hell was going on.

*The attendance award:* 70 turned up to the bat walk,

led by the City of London's Keith French and Andy Froud. At one stage I thought we were going to turn people away.



*Wren Committee member and Wanstead Nature Club organiser Gill James talking 'Bugs' to a young customer*

Thanks are due to other activity leaders and co-leaders, including Graham Smith, Anthony Harbott and Martin McCleary from the Essex Moth Group, and Jono Lethbridge who provided an additional trap; and to our very own Gill James, Kathy Hartnett, Cath McEwan, Mark Thomas, Anita McCullough, David Giddings and Jackie Morrison. A big thank you also to Epping Forest keepers Thibaud Madelin and Alison Tapply for their invaluable help with the logistics, and to the many others who came along and made it such a fun event. Last, but not least, the City of London Corporation supported the whole event and ensured there were no logistical problems.

## The list

So what did we actually record? Space won't allow me to list everything – and I'll have very tired fingers typing the whole list – but this is a summary, broken down by group. In some areas we could have done much, much better if we'd had more specialists on hand. However, some of the totals are truly impressive. And every one of these species has its own beauty, its own unique lifestyle, and its own value to our environment.

- 2 mosses
- 201 plants
- 14 molluscs
- 2 crustaceans
- 78 beetles (Coleoptera)
- 93 true bugs (Hemiptera)
- 107 butterflies and moths (Lepidoptera)
- 11 damselflies and dragonflies (Odonata)
- 7 grasshoppers (Orthoptera)
- 45 flies (Diptera)
- 13 bees and wasps (Hymenoptera)
- 6 galls
- 18 spiders
- 12 other invertebrates
- 6 fish
- 3 amphibians
- 1 reptile
- 70 birds
- 9 mammals

With 203 species of plants and mosses, 406 invertebrates and just 89 vertebrates, this goes to show how important the less obvious, overlooked and seemingly invisible species are for biodiversity.

## Wanstead 1000

Will we do it again? Dead right we will, some time in the middle of next year. And we intend to go a step further and encourage year-round recording of all groups of flora and fauna. The Wanstead 1000 challenge will see how long it takes us to note 1,000 different kinds of plants and animals in our study area – broadly the southernmost section of Epping Forest but also including the back gardens of Forest Gate, Manor Park, Leytonstone and Wanstead.



*Wren Committee Secretary Jackie Morrison rushed off her feet at the event.*

Different Wren Group members will take responsibility for each of the major groups of species. If you fancy taking on a group, why not get in touch? And if you fancy doing that but feel you don't know enough about the subject, we'll help you find the right course to go on to train you up.

by Tim Harris Pics by Tony Morrison



# weather

Falling water levels in the lakes of Wanstead Park have been a source of constant frustration over the years.

The most important surviving features of the park's 18<sup>th</sup> century landscape, which total 43 acres in size, were once part of an even larger system which was fed via a complex method from the River Roding.

Over the years I've read many reasons as to why the levels struggle. A lack of maintenance in the early 1800s has been put as one reason while another theory says the railway, what is now the Central Line, may have had an impact on supply. Another theory suggests the digging of a sewage system for the Aldersbrook estate over a century ago had an impact. Bomb damage during World War Two is also blamed.

I believe there is a much more simple reason: a steady decline in rainfall.

I don't have local rainfall figures for when Sir Richard Child commissioned the complex lake system in tandem with the rebuilding of Wanstead House in 1715, but figures for the end of that century show that the park received, on average, 100mm more rainfall per year than it does today. This alone, I believe, would be enough to disrupt the engineering calculations for the supply of the lakes all those years ago.

What has caused this decline in rainfall? I believe that the 'London rainfall shadow' may have a significant affect, the warm air of the capital's centre causing frontal rain to 'dump' most of its rainfall in the west and south-west.

Summer 2015 has had quite a bad press recently but it hasn't been that bad overall in this area. And, as ever with the weather, it wasn't without interest.

Two extreme records were broken: The maximum on the 1st of July of 36.1C and the minimum on the 30th of July of 6.9C. There were also a couple of cracking thunderstorms.

A mean temperature of 17.9C (0.3C above the 1981-2010 average) for the three months was the lowest since 2012, the same year that saw more rain than this summer's 168mm. Both 2012 and 2011 were a fair bit wetter than this summer and this season's rainfall wasn't a patch on some of the washout summers of my youth – both 1985 and 1987 were at least 150% wetter than summer 2015.

The number of occasions that the magic 80F was reached matched last year's level of 16 days, though this is not a patch on 2013 when 80F was recorded on 25 occasions.

More notable was the lack of sunshine – it was the dullest summer since 2002.

The lack of rainfall from March to June has had quite an impact on water levels in the lakes of Wanstead Park. While the same period in 2014 was similarly dry record winter rainfall, which included the wettest January for 130 years, gave the lakes a headstart.

Despite an almost constant top-up from a borehole the level of Heronry Pond has fallen and parts of Ornamental Waters are now so shallow that it is

almost possible to walk to the islands.

The wet August has had little effect on the Heronry pond. Perch Pond has risen 6cm while the Ornamental Waters has risen by 2cm. Considering this summer's lack of sunshine - August was the third dullest since 1881 – it is unlikely that evaporation is to blame. Indeed mean monthly temperatures through 2015 have all been very close to average – much cooler than the warm year of 2014 and going against Met Office forecasts that 2015 would be the warmest year ever.

Obviously this has been the case for other parts of the world: parts of Iberia have been hot.

Unless the positive rainfall anomalies of July and August continue through the autumn and winter it is likely that the Heronry borehole pump will have to be left on just to sustain current levels – a factor that goes against the City of London Corporation's abstraction conditions, the licence for which expires next March.

Article by Scott Whitehead



*N.B. Local data that has not been averaged for the 'South-East' is hard to find. For my Wanstead series I have used a combination of sites including Luke Howard's readings taken at Plaistow and Stratford between 1806 and 1833. Other readings include those from Greenwich from 1877 and the Met Office's own readings from City of London Cemetery taken between 1959 and 2002 when the station was discontinued. Readings from 2002 are my own.*

Visit Scott's site <http://www.wansteadweather.co.uk>

# a day to remember

A day trip to Walberswick with the Wren Group way back in 1983 had an unexpected long-term influence.

By Steven Swaby

There below us in the wan December sunlight lay a stretch of wild coast that seemed full of possibilities. Growing up in Newham in the 1970s, I'd had limited opportunities to travel very far from London, and today was my first experience of proper East Anglian fenland. The big skies, endless sea of pale winter reedbeds and the distant shingle spine of the seawall beyond made me feel this was going to be special. It was my first day trip with the Wren Group beyond the local axis of East Ham and Wanstead, having joined just a few months previously. I was 13, with my interest in wildlife – birds in particular – really just beginning to take off. Early experiences had sparked something quite addictive, and now



Paul Webb and RFO with Troglodytes at The Temple

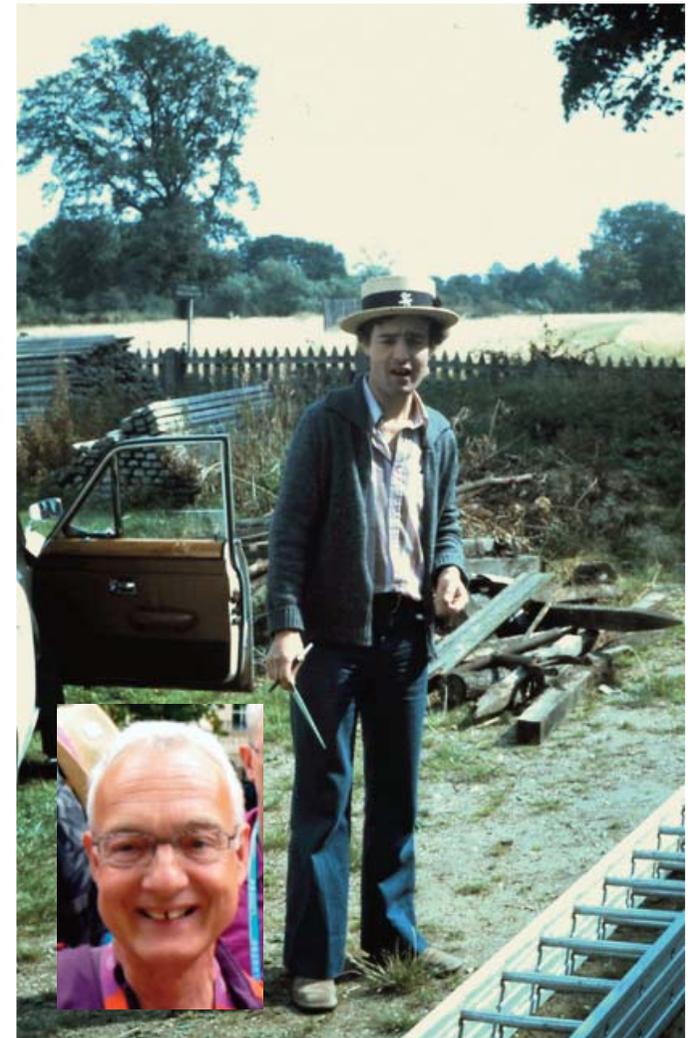
with a local group I had opportunities to travel a bit further and feed this new addiction.

The group had a couple of particularly hardy leaders – Dave Spivack and John Skerry – who were not the sort to be put off by minor obstacles like ten minutes of wading through incredibly swampy woods no sooner had we left the car park. It seemed like an initiation test at the time as I slopped about in the mire, but I was soon rewarded with my first-ever Lesser Spotted Woodpecker. Two, in fact; a species that had up to that time eluded me locally in Wanstead Park. It was a good start.

The other teenage birders in the group had begun filling me in with lurid tales of the rarities found along this stretch of Suffolk, including the 'so-mega-it's-almost-mythical' Houbara Bustard. My imagination got all fired up about this, until I learned that the bird was actually seen in... 1962. Even with the boundless enthusiasm of youth I realised I wasn't likely to see one of those today. And although I would eventually find one of these birds, years later on the remote steppes of Kazakhstan, I still haven't seen one in Britain – but then, neither has anyone else.

Nonetheless, an air of possibility charged the day as we emerged on the footpath down into the fen. I was bound to see *something* new today. The low sunshine lit up countless thousands of *Phragmites* heads like candles, and turned the coast a rich gold. A male and female Hen Harrier appeared, quartering the marshland and conjuring eruptions of wildfowl into the air – mainly Teal, Mallard, Gadwall, Shoveler and Pochard – all scattering in unruly lines across the fenland sky.

As we went deeper into the reeds visibility shrank to our immediate surroundings, and listening became



President of the Wren Group, the very dapper Richard Oakman at The Temple back in 1979 - and still very dapper today.

even more important. Listening for things like the bell-like *Ping! Ping!* of Bearded Reedlings, for instance, which were picked up distantly a few times but which remained tantalisingly out of view. Until suddenly a flock of eight bounded in and settled right next to where we stood. We watched them clambering up the reed stems, too preoccupied with

feeding on the seedheads to pay us any notice. Seeing these smart little birds in the flesh for the first time was a revelation: the slightly washed-out plate in my newly minted *Shell Guide to the Birds of Britain and Ireland* just didn't do them justice.

Eventually we made it to the seawall, to be met with a bracing wind and a very choppy North Sea, where we struggled to keep track of a distant flock of Common Scoter just below the horizon. A cloud front had moved in, turning the sea grey and sombre. Brackish pools hosted parties of Dunlin, Redshank and Brent Goose, and my first-ever Stonechat popped up jauntily on some dead vegetation nearby. Another slightly masochistic initiation test followed; scanning through hundreds of gulls looking for something unusual. Believe it or not, we *were* rewarded: not with the hoped-for white-winged gulls but my first-ever Mediterranean Gull. A particularly shabby winter-plumaged individual it was too, but having the ID features explained to me by more experienced hands was a small revelation, as if some arcane secret had been decoded and I was now that bit better-equipped for future birding trips. It was an early lesson in how invaluable that transfer of knowledge – and by extension, confidence – in the field really is.

As we neared the halfway mark on the long walk back, scopes and bins were suddenly trained on the distant car park, with much sniggering from certain individuals – because the Group's 'missing' third carload had finally turned up several hours late, and among them was future Wren Group President, Richard Oakman. In the years that followed I would learn what the others already knew: that broken-down vehicles and the venerable Oakman went hand-in-hand. Many's the hour I would end up spending with him and an assortment of AA

mechanics... usually in remote places like Dungeness, or remote mountainsides in the French Pyrénées. Oh, how we laughed.

A few things from my notebook that day stand out as significant at over thirty years distance. Willow



*Keith Winterflood, John Skerry and Linda Savidge in The Bund*

Tits were seen in that boggy woodland and we barely batted an eyelid, having no idea the species was heading for a freefall decline in the years ahead. Likewise, a flock of Twite was a sight still pretty much guaranteed on a winter's walk along the east coast in the 1980s, but today is sadly so much scarcer. One member of our group glimpsed a Coypu in the reeds; those fenland outlaws were on borrowed time even then, and would be eradicated from Norfolk by the end of the decade, though probably fewer people would mourn that particular absence from our countryside. Also notable was something that *wasn't* seen that day – Little Egret. Nowadays very much part of the scenery, back then the species had yet to colonise the UK and it was still a bit of a rarity. In fact, I later travelled all the way to Cornwall to see my first one, perched

dejectedly in the rain behind a petrol station. Oh for a little hindsight, eh?

But there was something more personally significant about that day than any of those experiences. Of the small group that made the journey up to the Suffolk coast on that midwinter Sunday, half of them went on to become my lifelong friends. I ended up as college roommate with one in Devon, and I travelled far and wide twitching and birding overseas with several of them. Some 20 years later, one of them even became my brother-in-law when I married his sister; another was best man at the wedding. That's a pretty good return on the meagre annual subscription fee to the Wren Group, wouldn't you say? Even if it does make us sound slightly like a bunch of banjo-strumming in-breds from some remote Tennessee backwater.

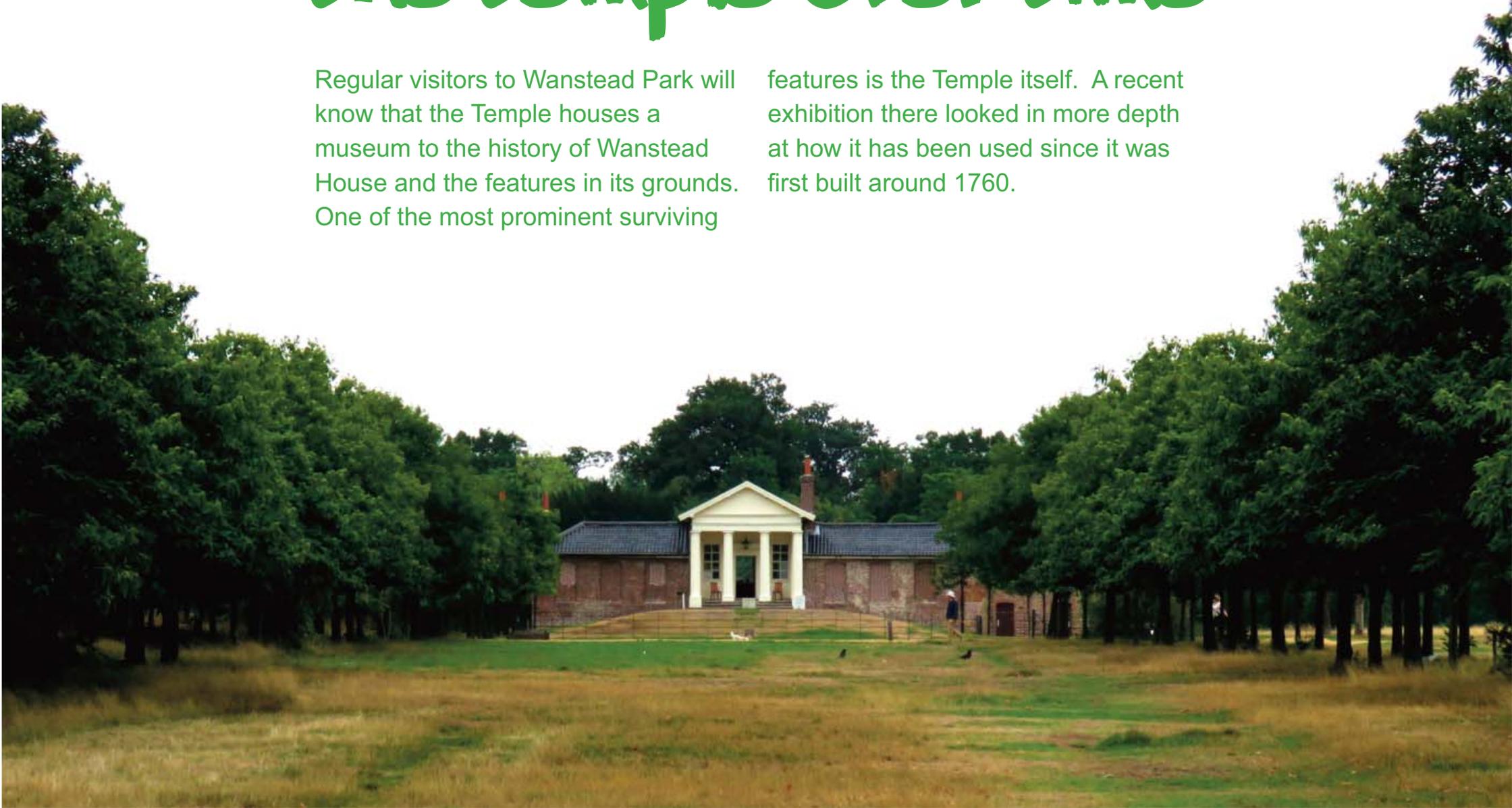
Ultimately, what the experience of that day at Walberswick did was feed my interest in the natural world at just the right time, and it began a process of widening my horizons that continues to this day. I feel it underlines the value of local organisations like the Wren Group in connecting like-minded people and offering them a platform to do something positive, be it practical work, collecting local records or joining trips further afield. It is the opportunity to engage, learn, share, have fun and maybe make a difference. Today, with the mounting pressures on our wildlife and urban kids so often growing up disconnected from nature without opportunities to engage and explore, that all seems more important than ever.

**Steven Swaby is a freelance writer and heritage consultant. He is currently Curator of the Walthamstow Wetlands project.**

# the temple over time

Regular visitors to Wanstead Park will know that the Temple houses a museum to the history of Wanstead House and the features in its grounds. One of the most prominent surviving

features is the Temple itself. A recent exhibition there looked in more depth at how it has been used since it was first built around 1760.



The owner of Wanstead House at the time was John, 2nd Earl Tylney (1712-1784). He had been on the Grand Tour of Europe and inspired by Roman architecture he wanted a classical Temple in his garden. While in Florence in 1753 John met the young architect William Chambers, later famous for Somerset House in London, who designed a small circular temple for him.

Chambers' design was not used but a simple 'Tuscan' style building was built. Originally it was free-standing with a portico of four stone columns. It was placed at the end of a double avenue of trees on a low brick-built mound, concealing a ground floor-room, which was entered from behind. Wings were added shortly after the building was finished and certainly by 1779.



*Originally the Temple consisted of the central free standing portico with four stone Roman Doric columns*

In that year a plan shows the Temple as a poultry

house and an inventory suggests that it then housed a menagerie, which we know existed at Wanstead from at least the 1760s. Exotic aviary may be a better description; the keeping of exotic birds was then very fashionable.



*The rear of the Temple looking more like the original humble uses of poultry house, menagerie and stables*

The 2nd Earl died childless in 1784 and the Wanstead Estate passed to his nephew James Tylney-Long. His daughter Catherine became one of the richest heiresses in the country when she came of age at the end of 1810. She was courted by royalty among others. Her choice of husband, the Regency rake, William Wellesley-Pole, nephew of the Duke of Wellington, was unfortunate. Together the couple, bearing the faintly ridiculous surname Pole-Tylney-Long-Wellesley, lavished money on the house, the estate, themselves and a huge entourage to the extent that they were forced to sell first the contents and then the very structure of Wanstead House. It was demolished in 1824.

The sale of the contents took place over six weeks in the summer of 1822. It included the outbuildings, and the Temple was described as item No.55, Gamekeeper's Cottage, with three beds, numerous nets and traps, including '5 men traps', plus many guns. Outside, there were 7 dog kennels, several bird coops and 'the erection of the Pheasantry, with 3 partitions and net over, 48ft square'.

After Wanstead House was demolished, its grounds were mortgaged and managed by trustees of the Pole-Tylney-Long-Wellesley family. They stripped the park of its assets, chopping down trees, including the avenue in front of the Temple. The grounds, parts let out for grazing, parts for arable farming, were overseen by gamekeepers who continued to live at the Temple.



*The interior of the Temple showing its current use of a fine museum and gallery*

This name Temple first appears on the Ordnance Survey map in 1863, but it is not listed as such on census returns until 1881, when it is described as a 'shooting box'. It then housed no less than three

families but a year later the Corporation of London opened Wanstead Park to the public following its purchase from the then owner Lord Cowley. William Puffett, a carpenter born in 1820, was appointed Head Keeper, as he had been 'for many years in charge of the grounds and the Grotto'. He moved into the Temple, along with his son Robert (born 1853), who had been appointed as one of three Underkeepers. After the Grotto burnt down in 1884 Puffett senior moved into the newly built Refreshment Chalet in front of the building and ran this until 1902.



*Two images of the Temple at the turn of the last century - at the time a keeper's residence*

The Epping Forest Committee kept one room within the Temple for its own use on its regular visits to the Forest. Once a month the members would expect dinner. Robert Puffett was instructed by the Superintendent to shoot ducks for the meal, which was cooked by his wife, and Puffett and George Paveley, the resident staff, would serve at table dressed in their white summer uniforms.

From 1882 until 1960 the Temple's main function was to house Forest keepers and their families. Two families generally lived there. Outside there were stables, a tool shed, a duck pond and duck shed, as well as a ferret hutch for frequent ratting parties. Keepers entered the building from behind. The front lawn and portico were out of bounds. The Committee room in the south wing could be accessed via a short flight of steps leading to door (both now removed). The Temple was never open to the public, and was not particularly visible, shrouded as the front was in bushes, with trees around the enclosure.

The building suffered bomb damage in both World Wars but was patched up. It continued in use as a domestic building until new lodges were built alongside at the end of the 1950s, into which the Keepers moved. In 1990 an extensive landscape survey of Wanstead Park recommended reinstating the original view of the Temple at the end of a double avenue of trees and sweet chestnut trees were subsequently planted. The building then underwent a major overhaul, completed in May 1997. More authentic, glazed black pantiles were placed on the roof. Paint was stripped off the brickwork which was repointed. Internally, a new wooden staircase was inserted in the southern wing, now the public stairs, and the upstairs rooms were restored as close as possible to their 18th-century appearance. Afterwards, the shrubs and trees masking the front of the building were removed.

Starting with Open House weekend in 1996, by



2006 the Temple was open to the public one weekend in four, with craft activities and guided walks offered. The cleared garden became the venue from 2000 for the annual Music In the Park event and then also for summer theatre performances as well. Since April 2008, the Temple has been open every weekend and Bank Holiday with a programme of events and temporary exhibitions. As part of the public consultation in early 2015 plans were unveiled for the Temple to become the main visitor hub for Wanstead Park. Its future is secure.

Article by Steve Denford



*Steve Denford works part-time as a member of the heritage team for Epping Forest Visitor Services. He has produced a number of exhibitions on the history of Wanstead House and Park at the Temple. A London blue badge guide, he also leads walks in Epping Forest.*

## Consultation on Epping Forest

# the next ten years

The City of London has launched an online consultation about the future of Epping Forest - "Epping Forest - the next 10 Years". The consultation has six themes representing the key duties established by the Epping Forest Act of 1878 and later legislation on a diverse range of subject. The themes are public recreation and enjoyment, preservation of the natural aspect, protection of the unspoilt Forest, regulation and management, heritage and deer management.

For WREN Group members there are obviously priority areas to look at. For example, preserving the natural aspect is one that is close to our interests. Here the consultation highlights "the careful balance we need to strike between welcoming visitors to the Forest and preventing environmental damage and the disturbance of wildlife", especially with visitor numbers growing year by year. The theme has a variety of areas to consider, ranging from habitat management through to considering the impact of climate change on the forest.

The consultation documents says that "Epping Forest contains a nationally-important mosaic of natural habitats within a wood-pasture landscape including veteran pollarded trees, secondary woodland, scrub, grasslands and heathlands, and lakes, bogs and ponds. The protection of these habitats is one of our main duties and requires

significant time and resources". One aspect of particular interest in our part of the forest is the grassland and heathland of an area such as Wanstead Flats. The consultation acknowledges the importance of the Flats, for example because it is now the only part of the forest where Skylarks still nest. The growing problems of disturbance, especially because of the heavy use of the Flats for sports, as well as by dog walkers, provide major challenges, and nitrogen pollution from traffic just adds to the problems.

The consultation puts forward practical proposals for tackling some of these issues, including ones that the WREN Group has already been promoting, such as actively discouraging dog disturbance during the bird breeding season with signage and temporary fencing. Other proposals through the document cover a huge range of issues, from working with conservation groups on monitoring activities to restriction of access by car to the Forest and encouraging use of public transport.

The consultation is a welcome development, though the document itself is a long read, so give it plenty of time! But as a guide to the thinking of the Conservators it is invaluable.

Article by By Mark Gorman



*Editor note: The opportunity to comment on the proposals has ended but the consultation can be seen at <https://consult.cityoflondon.gov.uk>*

*The Corporation will use feedback to inform the drafting of a new Epping Forest Management Plan and a further consultation report will be published in late autumn giving an opportunity for us all to contribute ideas and views.*

*The 1878 Act put the Corporation of the City of London in charge of Epping Forest as Conservators. The Act did not mince its words when it specified their responsibilities: Section 7 says*

*Subject to the provisions of this Act, the Conservators shall at all times keep Epping Forest uninclosed and unbuilt on, as an open space for the recreation and enjoyment of the public; and they shall by all lawful means prevent, resist, and abate all future inclosures, encroachments, and buildings, and all attempts to inclose, encroach, or build on any part thereof, or to appropriate or use the same, or the soil, timber, or road thereof, or any part thereof, for any purpose inconsistent with the objects of this Act.*

*Subject to the provisions of this Act, the Conservators shall not sell, demise, or otherwise alienate any part of the Forest, or concur in any sale, demise or other alienation therefor, or of any part thereof.*

*The Epping Forest Act states in unambiguous terms the will of Parliament, Queen Victoria, the Corporation of London and the people of the day that this area of open land should remain unenclosed and undeveloped in perpetuity. Ordinary people fought then for their rights to use this land for grazing and recreation. They continue to this day to defend the lungs of London.*

# events diary

## October

Saturday 10th - Wanstead Nature Club for Children. Meet: Harrow Road Pavilion, Wanstead Flats - 10.00 a.m.

Cost: £1.50 per child. Enquiries: 020 8989 4898 e-mail [gilljames@btinternet.com](mailto:gilljames@btinternet.com)

Sunday 18th - Waterbird Count in Wanstead Park, Meet 10:00 a.m. by the tea hut. Contact Tim Harris [tharris@windmillbooks.co.uk](mailto:tharris@windmillbooks.co.uk)

Sunday 18th - Nature Walk in Wanstead Park for autumn trees and an overview of the historic features of the Park. Open to all. Meet at the Tea Hut 2.00 p.m. Led by Gill James and Jackie Morrison. Enquiries: 020 8989 4898 e-mail [gilljames@btinternet.com](mailto:gilljames@btinternet.com)

Sunday 25th - Fungus walk in City of London Cemetery with Tricia Moxey – Meet at entrance to City of London Cemetery, 10.30 a.m. start

Tuesday 27th - Presentation on Biodiversity in Essex given by Peter Harvey from the Essex Field Club. Members £1, non-members £2. 7:30 Wanstead Golf Club. Contact Tim Harris [tharris@windmillbooks.co.uk](mailto:tharris@windmillbooks.co.uk)

## November

Sunday 1st – Practical work in Wanstead Park. Meet at Temple 10.00 a.m. Leader Peter Williams [wrengroup.distribute@gmail.com](mailto:wrengroup.distribute@gmail.com)

Saturday 14th - Wanstead Nature Club for Children Meet: Harrow Road Pavilion, Wanstead Flats - 10.00 a.m.

Cost: £1.50 per child. Enquiries: 020 8989 4898 e-mail [gilljames@btinternet.com](mailto:gilljames@btinternet.com)

Sunday 15th - Waterbird Count in Wanstead Park. Meet 10:00 a.m. by the tea hut. Contact Tim Harris [tharris@windmillbooks.co.uk](mailto:tharris@windmillbooks.co.uk)

Sunday 29th - Wallasea RSPB reserve, near Burnham-on-Crouch. Leaders: Steven Swaby and Tim Harris [tharris@windmillbooks.co.uk](mailto:tharris@windmillbooks.co.uk)

## December

Sunday 6th – Practical work in Wanstead Park. Meet at Temple 10.00 a.m. Leader Peter Williams [wrengroup.distribute@gmail.com](mailto:wrengroup.distribute@gmail.com)

Saturday 12th - Wanstead Nature Club for Children Meet: Harrow Road Pavilion, Wanstead Flats - 10.00 a.m. Cost: £1.50 per child. Enquiries: 020 8989 4898 e-mail [gilljames@btinternet.com](mailto:gilljames@btinternet.com)

Sunday 13th - Waterbird Count in Wanstead Park. Meet 10:00 a.m. by the tea hut. Contact Tim Harris [tharris@windmillbooks.co.uk](mailto:tharris@windmillbooks.co.uk)

*Soldier Beetle on Wanstead Flats  
(*Cantharis rustica*) by Rosemary Stephens*

# links

## Links

Got any links to go on this page? Get in touch [wreeditor@talktalk.net](mailto:wreeditor@talktalk.net)

Wren links page <http://www.wrengroup.org.uk/links/>

Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/WrenOrg>

Twitter <https://twitter.com/wrenwildlife>

## Local

Wanstead Wildlife  
<http://www.wansteadwildlife.org.uk/>

Friends of Wanstead Parklands  
<http://www.wansteadpark.org.uk/>

RSPB North East London Members Group  
<http://www.rspb.org.uk/groups/northeastlondon>

Wanstead Birding Blog  
<http://wansteadbirding.blogspot.co.uk/>

Epping Forest  
<http://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/things-to-do/green-spaces/epping-forest/Pages/default.aspx>

British Naturalists' Association  
<http://www.bna-naturalists.org/>  
Bushwood Area Residents' Association  
<http://www.bara-leytonstone.org.uk/>  
East London Nature <http://www.eln.yorkshirefog.co.uk/>

East London Birders <http://www.elbf.co.uk/>

Friends of Epping Forest  
<http://www.friendsofeppingforest.org.uk/index.htm>

East London Nature <http://www.eastlondonnature.co.uk/>

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

## National

The Wildlife Trust <http://www.wildlifetrusts.org/>

BBC Nature <http://www.bbc.co.uk/nature/>

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

British Naturalists Association <http://www.bna-naturalists.org/>

RSPB <http://www.rspb.org.uk/england/>

UK Safari <http://www.uksafari.com/index.htm>

Natural England <http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/>

The British Deer Society  
<http://www.bds.org.uk/index.html>

# and finally ....

I quite often walk across Wanstead Flats on the Capel Road side going towards Alexandra Lake. Normally it is a pleasant walk, with the hedgerows and plants full of interesting insects and the trees whistling with birds, mainly Starlings and Goldfinches. Recently I have noticed that every time I walk along there not only is there the fly-tipping that we usually see near the road and along the edge (on the Newham council side) but now a new abundance of rubbish has appeared. This is mainly left in large black bags, which are full of food, bottles and other picnic or barbecue waste, including what looks like household waste left under bushes and trees lining the inside edge of the Flats on the Redbridge side. At the moment, this walk has become quite unpleasant. Nasty odours come from the food waste, there are quite a large number of rats eating from this waste (which is natural for a rat to do) and I am finding that the rubbish is not being dealt with, maybe because it is on the Redbridge side and so not the responsibility of Newham Council. I have informed the City of London Corp, via Twitter,

but as in so many cases I was not answered and nothing seems to have been done.

The problem of littering on the Flats is getting more out of control. I met with the City of London and the police last year to address this problem. I raised many issues. The Redbridge parks police were very happy to help and said we can ring them if we have any concerns. I was very much in favour of policing this situation and ensuring that fines are enforced upon people who drop litter or fly-tip. We can carry on picking up litter voluntarily until it gets to a point where walking on the Flats no longer becomes pleasant. Instead of focusing on the wildlife and nature, the litter you picked up the day before is back again the next, but what else can we do? The CofL Corporation are presently putting together a new Epping Forest Management Plan and further a report open to further consultation will be published in late autumn giving an

opportunity for us all to contribute ideas and views.

In the meantime I think we as a group need to highlight these problems in our newsletters. As a conservation group we could make a big difference collectively and any issues need to be reported and addressed.

I was thinking we could target certain hotspots like Capel Road and any other areas of the Flats that need our help. I am looking for a group of us to target Capel Road maybe after work one evening with bags and gloves. Any help appreciated. Email; [rosemary148@hotmail.com](mailto:rosemary148@hotmail.com)

Rose Stephens



## Were you right ?

Manor Park at the Junction of High Street North and Romford Road looking at what is now the Army and Navy Stores.

Manor Park used to be a very vibrant shopping centre and people used to travel from far and away to shop there. Fine clothes, corsets and Haberdashery were a favourite with the ladies.

