

Winter 2014

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a word from the chair

Biodiversity. It's a word maybe more associated with the Amazonian rainforest than with a smallish patch of East London, but as our patron, Sir David Attenborough, put it: "It is the range of biodiversity that we must care for – the whole thing – rather than one or two stars."

My areas of interest are mainly flying things – birds, bats, dragonflies and moths. Just in the past few months local naturalists have found the

200th species of bird for the area and the 450th species of Lepidoptera (butterflies and moths). But I thought it would be a good idea to find out the total amount of biodiversity we have locally, a task made easier by looking at the Wanstead Wildlife website www.wansteadwildlife.org.uk run by Wren Group member Paul Ferris. After adding plants, bees, wasps, flies, bugs, beetles, slime moulds, fungi and much more to the 'sexier' birds, mammals and butterflies, the total came out at more than 2,000 species. That is 2,000 different life histories; 2,000 different evolutionary pathways; 2,000 different things of beauty and wonder. Most have been recorded in Wanstead Park, on Wanstead Flats or in the City of London Cemetery. In my opinion, all of them are worth conserving.

We know that there must be many more that so far have gone unphotographed, undescribed, unnoticed. According to an oft-used adage, you

can't conserve what you don't know, so wouldn't it be great to discover more of the variety that is all around us: the beetles, grasshoppers, fungi and – yes – even mammals that have so far gone unrecorded. To this aim the Wren Group is hoping to organise several bio-blitzes during 2015, including a big one on the weekend of 27–28 June. Then, we hope to find more than 250 species. I've no doubt we will, but what would be even better would be to inspire new groups of people to take notice of, and record, what they see around them. If you are one of those people – or know someone who might be – please get in touch with us!

I hope you have a happy festive season and a nature-filled 2015.

Tim



no trees were harmed

Welcome to the winter 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 happen 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 editor@wrengroup.org.uk

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/>

Why trees matter

Trees are good for us. When actively growing in the summer, they soak up carbon dioxide and produce oxygen; they help reduce pollution and are good for wildlife too. They are aesthetically pleasing and of course some produce edible fruits or other useful products, too. We all feel better if we can wake up to see a tree and walking or sitting beneath them has a calming effect and incidentally property prices are higher in tree-lined roads.

Find out more with **Wren** Group's resident ecologist Tricia Moxey



A recent survey carried out by the company Bluesky has revealed that there are 280 million trees in England and Wales, but that their distribution is uneven with some areas being more densely wooded than others. At 38% Surrey is top of the county leader board as a well wooded area and Greater London scores well, too at 21.5% overall, although there is variation within the individual London boroughs. This figure is a measure of the canopy cover provided by such



Yew tree bark

trees and includes those found in woods, parks and gardens as well as those in streets. In summer this

canopy cover provides shade from the heat which helps to lower the temperature in the surrounding area. In winter, trees will provide some shelter from chilly winds and well wooded areas are now considered to play an important role in flood management.

Sadly, some tidy minded urban folk see trees as a nuisance, their fallen leaves cover lawns and driveways, or block drains, and their foliage screens the view, or aphids feeding on the leaves drip honeydew onto parked cars. All too often trees in front gardens are sacrificed to make way for hard standing for parking and the leafy streets become denuded of their softening greenery.

Once the leaves have fallen from deciduous trees then the form of their trunks and branches is clearly revealed and it is possible to appreciate the characteristic silhouette of each species. During the winter months, this can be highlighted by the low angle of the sun's rays on a sunny day. Some like the Silver Birch are slender with delicate branches. Oaks have stout trunks and a well-rounded crown of branches. This is also the season to look at details of bark or to examine



Scots Pine tree bark

More Trees for London

The Mayor of London has encouraged the partnership known as Re:Leaf to get busy across Great London over 6,300 trees have been planted across 23 boroughs. Locally the plantings in Ray Park have grown very well. As part of the scheme to encourage a greater interest in the trees of Great London for those with the latest i-phones there is an app called 'Tree-Routes' which is free to download. This was developed in partnership with the Woodland Trust and gives the location and a photograph of some of trees of interest across London listed by borough or tube line. Although far from exhaustive, it does give a few details about our local special trees!

<http://www.transportapi.com/blog/2014/05/tree-routes-iphone-app/>



Photo of several oaks and a rainbow which was taken 5 December 2007 showing that it was a late season that year for leaf fall - as it is this year

the buds on the twigs and is good time to test your skills to identify trees without leaves. Red buds are found on Lime trees, black buds are characteristic of Ash trees and Beech twigs have cigar shaped brown ones. Most identification books have illustrations of the silhouettes of winter trees and a handy guide to the different twigs can be downloaded from the Woodland Trust website:

www.woodlandtrust.org.uk

An excellent place to visit to look at winter trees is of course the City of London Cemetery which has an excellent variety of trees, many native ones, but others from different continents too. Other collections of trees are worth visiting too such as those in West Ham Park or Valentines Park. Each tree within these formal locations has been carefully planted and nurtured over time to enhance the appearance of the area.

Other locations in Essex have some interesting trees. There are several ancient Oaks at Marks Hall, and of course there is the runner up to England's Tree of the Year 2014, the magnificent ancient Oak known as Old Knobbly which stands in an area of woodland on Furze Hills at Mistley. This tree is possibly some 800 years old, with a hollowed trunk and a circumference approaching 10m. It was one of 10 finalists in a field of 200 nominated trees, but lost out to the better known Major Oak in Sherwood Forest. For more information about Old Knobbly visit his website: www.oldknobbly.com

In the Wanstead area there are a number of significant trees which might be worthy of greater fame! The Sweet Chestnuts on George Green or those within Bush Wood are great trees with a story to tell. Do you agree or can you think of others worthy of nomination? Suggestions please.

Various organisations are looking at ways to collate information about such trees and give them the national recognition they deserve, especially as others less well protected are under threat. In England there are planning policies

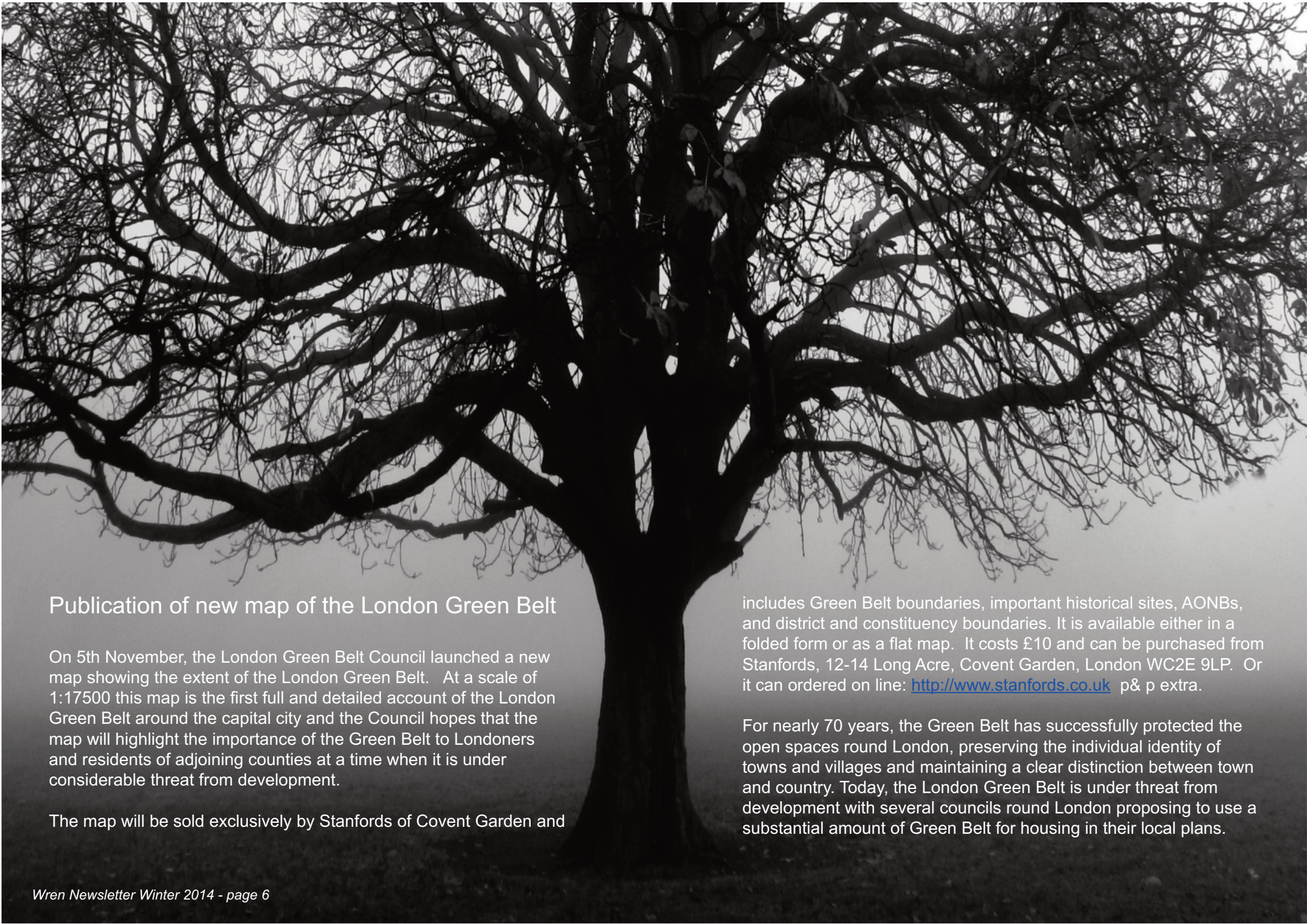
to guide Local Planning Authorities to protect aged and veteran trees during development and many urban trees are protected by a Tree Preservation Order, but others in the wider countryside may not be so fortunate. Concerns are mounting that many special trees are under threat and the Woodland Trust is spearheading a campaign to develop a national register of special trees. By encouraging their owners to seek professional advice in how best to look after them, it could also influence a change in management to safeguard the future of such living green monuments.

If you feel that a tree register in England would be a helpful move then please visit the Woodland Trust website to register your support.

So why not take a walk down your local road and see how many different species of tree have been planted there or are surviving in front gardens and marvel at their beauty.

Article
by Tricia Moxey





Publication of new map of the London Green Belt

On 5th November, the London Green Belt Council launched a new map showing the extent of the London Green Belt. At a scale of 1:17500 this map is the first full and detailed account of the London Green Belt around the capital city and the Council hopes that the map will highlight the importance of the Green Belt to Londoners and residents of adjoining counties at a time when it is under considerable threat from development.

The map will be sold exclusively by Stanfords of Covent Garden and

includes Green Belt boundaries, important historical sites, AONBs, and district and constituency boundaries. It is available either in a folded form or as a flat map. It costs £10 and can be purchased from Stanfords, 12-14 Long Acre, Covent Garden, London WC2E 9LP. Or it can be ordered on line: <http://www.stanfords.co.uk> p& p extra.

For nearly 70 years, the Green Belt has successfully protected the open spaces round London, preserving the individual identity of towns and villages and maintaining a clear distinction between town and country. Today, the London Green Belt is under threat from development with several councils round London proposing to use a substantial amount of Green Belt for housing in their local plans.

invertebrate report winter 2014

Garden or Cross Spider *Araneus diadematus*

During the last months it has been difficult for me to get out to find, photograph and study our local invertebrate population. Luckily, my knowledge of what was out there, and even a few excursions, have been greatly aided by a relative newcomer to the local natural history scene, Rose Stephens. Rose has provided me with a host of sightings and, in many cases, identifications

Spiders particularly seem to have caught our interest this year, and sightings of the beautiful and impressive Wasp Spider *Argiope bruennichi* began in August. They are very common in the rough grassland of Wanstead Flats, and by September there were many of their egg-cases to be found, particularly along the edge of Capel Road to the east of the Golden Fleece. However, along came a big machine and slashed a great strip of vegetation along the whole stretch, taking with it most of the egg-case plus goodness knows how many other invertebrate habitats in the process. It is a shame that this part of Epping Forest can't be maintained more to enhance rather than destroy habitats. All that was required was to do the job later in the year when the invertebrate population was not so active. Nevertheless, nature sort of survives us, and in a September expedition we found quite a few of the equally impressive, Garden or Cross Spider *Araneus diadematus*.



Both these and the Wasp Spider are quite big, but careful searching will reveal some smaller spiders, such as the **Cucumber Green Spider** *Araniella cucurbitina*, which I mentioned in the Summer Newsletter. Its common name sort of gives away its colour, or at least the colour of its abdomen; its head is more pale brown. Early October produced some examples of *Agelenatea redii*, which is sometimes known as the **Gorse Orb Weaver**. It is a funny little thing, tending to rest – or at least attempt to hide – with its head downwards and its legs curled up tight to its body.



Sage Leafhopper *Eupteryx mellissae* (pic by Rose Stephens)

All of the above were on Wanstead Flats, but I have also been observing spiders in and around the house. My problem here, is that – apart from *Araneus diadematus* in the garden and some examples of the frightening **house spider** *Tegenaria* - I have been having difficulty identifying some of those I have seen! One of my favourite spider habitats – as I've mentioned before - is the compost bin at the end of the garden, and there have been a few in there which I haven't identified as yet.



Red-black Leaf Bug *Corizus hyoscyami* (pic by Rose Stephens)

Some examples of other groups of Arachnids have been seen by Rose and myself, such as Harvestmen. In the City of London Cemetery, on the wall of the Gatehouse Pantry – tucked in really tight to the stonework - we found **Odellius spinosus**. This is a relatively short-legged species, and I say relatively short-legged, because some common species of harvestmen have long legs, and hence are sometimes called Daddy Long-legs. This is most confusing, as Crane Flies also get called this. Anyway our *Odellius* was the

first time this species has been recorded locally. On 24th October, Rose photographed another new-to-the-area species. **Dicranopalpus ramosus** in Lorne Road, Forest Gate – quite near to Wanstead Flats. New to our area, at least as far as our records are concerned, but also interesting because this species has spread across Europe from Morocco, reaching England in about 1957.

From spiders to beetles. Rose sent me a photograph of what she described as a 'podgy-looking' beetle from Wanstead Flats, and which she soon had identified as **Galeruca tanacetii**. There didn't seem to be a reference to this species on the Essex Field Club's website, so I suggested that she wrote to the recorder for beetles, informing him of the find. Unfortunately, he didn't reply. They seem common on the Flats, anyway, as more were seen later.

A group of beetles that I find fun are the weevils, and a few species of those have been seen during the late summer and autumn. One, found on a



Rhododendron Leaf-hopper *Graphocephala fennahi*
this one is doing a headstand – actually extracting sap from the leaf of the rhododendron

number of occasions on oak trees in the vicinity of Alexandra Lake is – appropriately – the **Acorn Weevil** *Curculio glandium*. I have mentioned this one before in an earlier invertebrate report, as I have also found it in my garden. Rose has been doing some close-inspections particularly of broom, and has come across the **Nut Leaf Weevil** *Strophosoma melanogrammum*, yet another new-to-the-area identification. Another species found by Rose on the broom was **Sitona regensteinsis**. We have been informed by entomologist Tristan Bantock that this species is quite common on broom on Wanstead Flats, but this is the first time I have been aware of it.

From beetles to bugs, and another mention of a definite favourite and perhaps one of our most attractively coloured animals, the **Rhododendron Leaf-hopper** *Graphocephala fennahi*. On a visit with Rose to the City of London Cemetery on 23rd



Harvestman *Odellius spinosus*



Snail and Globular Springtail (both unknown species)
the springtail (*Collembola*) is only a few mm long, so the snail is very small as well.

October there were many of these to be seen, on the rhododendrons, not surprisingly. Many of them were lined up in a processional fashion along the mid-ribs of the leaves and I noticed that many were expelling a liquid from their rear end. Some times this squirted out to some distance from the individual, sometimes it was laid just behind them and deposited on the leaf, but one or two of the bugs appeared to be rolling a ball of it in their back legs, like some juggler (or bugger, perhaps?). To add variety to the juggling act, some were also doing headstands.

Also present in the cemetery on 18th November were some mirid bugs – also known as capsid or plant bugs - including *Kleidocerys resedae*, the **Birch Catkin Bug**, which was found for the first time in Rose's garden just a week earlier. Rose had found another Mirid Bug in her garden on 9th September which she didn't recognise. I thought it

looked similar to one that I'd found in my garden in April 2008 and which I had identified as ***Rhyparochrous pini***, but Rose had already tracked her specimen down to what she thought as ***R. vulgaris***. Now these two are very similar, and hers was confirmed by Tristan Bantock as *R. vulgaris* after she sent her photograph to the British Bug Association. The great thing about that was that the species has only recently invaded Britain, and wasn't even "invented" when I had looked my *Rhyparochrous* up. However, our two specimens still looked remarkably similar so I did another take on mine, and sure enough it was actually *R. vulgaris* – and the first British record! Just goes to show – it is easy to be wrong on these things, but also possible to find – even around Wanstead – a new species to the country! Last of the plant bugs that I shall mention is ***Corizus hyoscyami***, which has an amazing red-and-black colouration. It looks very similar to a real newcomer to the country, *Arocatus longiceps*, but our *Corizus* is distinguishable in one respect because it is hairy, and Rose's photograph from a specimen found a couple of times on a sage bush in her garden shows that. *Arocatus* is apparently common in London, and on plane trees, so in both respects we might expect to find it here. The fine distinguishing features between these two species give a little indication of how difficult the identification of some species may be.

Another – very small – bug seen during the 18th November expedition, but on Wanstead Flats, was a yellowy-green leafhopper with a white stripe. Rose got an identification on that one from an expert as ***Alebra albostriella***, found on oak. Another, from Rose's garden on 3rd October, was *Eupteryx mellissae*, known as the **Sage**

Leafhopper and, indeed, was on the sage plant. Also on the sage was ***Macrolophus rubi***, where there seems to be a colony. Its specific name 'rubi' indicates an association with brambles, but it can live on other plants, as in this instance.



Crane fly *Nephrotoma quadrifaria*

I mentioned Crane Flies earlier, and the confusion of names with Harvestmen. A look in Alexandra Wood (the wooded area between Alexandra Lake and Aldersbrook Road) on 7th October found a very attractive crane fly, ***Nephrotoma quadrifaria***, the first seen in the area. Nearby, on a patch of bramble in the midday October sunshine, a female **Migrant Hawker Dragonfly**, *Aeshna mixta*, was sunning itself. After I'd taken a photograph or two, Rose was taking some when I heard a rustle of

wings and shouted to her "male!". It came in from behind Rose, landed right on the female dragonfly and started to mate with her. It happened very quickly, and he flew off in moments, but Rose had her camera focused and got some wonderful shots. Right place, right time. You have to be out there to experience it. Also out there, on a warm October day, was a good selection of spiders, hoverflies, ladybirds and shield-bugs.

Obviously as the temperatures drop for winter, the number of insects will decrease. The moth-traps have come in for the winter, too – although it must be said that my out-of-action stint meant that I didn't moth-trap after May. Tim Harris did, though, and some remarkable moths have turned up in his trap. I shall leave the reporting of that to Tim, and the butterflies, too – which group Kathy Hartnett has been reporting local observations to the appropriate recorders. One moth I shall mention is the Emperor, which laid eggs in my moth trap earlier in the year. Before I went off on a holiday to the Hebrides, I shared out the caterpillars between Tim Harris and Jennifer Charter. Jennifer informed me that towards the end of June, they had started pupating. About 70 remain in Tim and Jennifer's care, and I hope that come the spring we shall be able to report on at least some of them hatching into moths.

Winter will of course cut down considerably the number and variety of invertebrate species to be found, but even in late November – albeit a very mild late November – I am still finding invertebrates around the house and garden. Rose has just sent me a photo of a spider seen in Lorne Road today, ***Zygiella x-notata***, which goes by the somewhat cumbersome name of the Missing Sector Orb-weaver. There are spiders in the front



Acorn Weevil *Curculio glandium*

porch, and if I look in my compost bin I shall see more arachnids, crustaceans, slugs and snails – as well as flies and other invertebrates such as springtails, which are wingless arthropods, no longer even classified as insects. The more you look, the more realisation that there really is so much to see around us – though sometimes you need to look very closely indeed.

Photos of all of the species mentioned here can be found on my website: www.wansteadwildlife.org.uk



Paul Ferris
November 2014

Cliché

by Alison Chisholm

They came between dusk blue
And the watery moon's rising,
Arrows of geese
That made the sky a river
Flecked with froth.

Their calling silvered the air,
Reflected in glass and puddles,
Made twilight a cliché.

But one small boy
Who knew geese only from a picture book
Watched,
Gasped,
Wondered

<http://www.windowsproject.net/writers/chisholm.htm>





muntjac

By Thibaud Madelin

I recently stepped in for Forest Keeper Jordan Thomas to deliver a talk on deer biology and management in the UK, with particular references to Epping Forest. It was great to see so many Wren Group members as well as non-members attend and I was grateful for the fantastic reception.

Following the talk, I wanted to expand a little bit on the deer that can be found in the Southern end of the Forest, namely the Muntjac deer (*Muntiacus reevesi*). This is also the species of deer I am most familiar with, having undertaken population studies in a previous role as Ranger at Burnham Beeches NNR, another of the City of London's Open Spaces in Buckinghamshire to the west of London.

Muntjac Deer in the South of Epping Forest with a perspective on population study

Muntjac deer, or Reeve's Muntjac, is one of the six species of deer currently found in the wild in the UK and one of the most recently established. They are believed to have been introduced to the UK by the Duke of Bedford at Woburn in the late 1890's. They originate from Southeast Asia, where there are 9 members of the genus *Muntiacus* in the subfamily *Muntiacinae* of the family *Cervidae*:

Reeves Muntjac *Muntiacus reevesi*

Indian Muntjac *Muntiacus muntjak*

Giant Muntjac *Muntiacus vuquangensis*

Roosevelt's Muntjac *Muntiacus rooseveltorum*

Bornean Yellow Muntjac *Muntiacus atherodes*

Leaf Muntjac *Muntiacus putaoensis*

Black Muntjac *Muntiacus crinifrons*

Fea's Muntjac *Muntiacus feae*

Truong Son Muntjac *Muntiacus truongsonensis*

The Indian Muntjac was also imported by the Duke of Bedford. A larger deer, it was also released and a population did establish in the wild until 1925.

Muntjac deer like dense woodland where they can

hide and feed. They also are a territorial species so despite the Duke's best effort, they could never settle in the environment at Woburn. Escapees and released animals quickly established viable populations in our woodlands and they can now be found across most of the South East.

This interesting and somewhat alien looking little deer is unique in that as originating from the tropics, they breed all year round. A doe is sexually mature at 7 months old and when mated, will produce a single fawn after a 7 months gestation. She will be able to mate again only two days after giving birth and the fawns are independent after 4 to 6 months. In the absence of the predators that can be found in the jungles of Southeast Asia, the UK population has grown to an estimated 60,000 and is believed to increase by a potential 10% year on year. Their small size does not prevent them inflicting significant damage to the vegetation, as they use their body to push down saplings and reach the new growth. An average buck will measure 46cm at the shoulder and weigh 18kg while a doe will measure 43cm and weigh 16kg. They live on average 12 years.

The bucks are characterised by their long pedicles and short antlers as well as large suborbital glands below the eyes.

To understand the potential impact of Muntjac deer on the woodland biodiversity of the south of Epping Forest, we need to revisit the understood impact of deer on conservation in the UK.

The main impacts of deer on conservation sites are through grazing and browsing. Grazing refers to eating of the ground flora and browsing to shrubs and trees. Indeed, on sites where deer are numerous, those impacts often translate in the

removal of the 'middle layer' of vegetation, leaving a gap between the ground layer and the tree canopy. The difference between such a wood and a wood devoid of deer can be seen on pilot plots at Wytham Woods, Oxfordshire (University of Oxford). Where deer have been excluded, a dense middle layer can be observed, with bramble and tree and shrubs regeneration providing a denser vegetative layer beneficial to small mammals and woodland birds (*pers. observations*). This has also been observed at other woodland sites in the UK (*Putman, 1994*) (*Mitchell & Kirby, 1990*).

This is particularly true in woodlands where coppicing is still active, such as Hatfield Forest NNR in Essex (National Trust) and Bradfields Woods NNR in Suffolk (Suffolk Wildlife Trust). Those sites' floral and faunal communities directly depend on the growth cycles created by coppicing in rotation, so heavy deer browsing of any new shoots can have a detrimental impact. Incidentally, at both site this is managed by lethal cull and exclusion (*pers. observations*). Indeed, Muntjac deer are one of the most effective browsers of coppice shoots (*Rackham, 2006*) (*Kay, 1993*).

Alongside the well-studied potential impact of deer grazing and browsing on conservation sites, particularly semi-natural woodlands, ancient woodlands and coppiced woodland (whether new or ancient), conservationists have to take into consideration the aesthetic value of deer populations, particularly charismatic deer such as Red, Fallow and Roe. Sika deer are often mistaken for Red deer and their current limited range and threat to the genetic integrity of the native Red deer poses other problems.

In the south of the Forest, Muntjac deer have been observed as far down as Bush Wood. I recently

took a report of a Muntjac deer in a garden in the heart of Walthamstow, relatively far away from an established population in Walthamstow Forest, which is just north of the A406 and is the most deer-rich area of the Southern Area of Epping Forest that I help manage. As Muntjac deer are not a herding species, unlike Fallow deer, they adapt better to the urban and suburban habitat, although you'll most probably all have seen the BBC footage of Fallow deer in Havering by now to somewhat disprove that theory.

So how can we find out where and how many there actually are? At Burnham Beeches NNR, I completed a population study using faecal standing crop (FSC) following Forestry Commission guidance (*Mayle et al*, 2008). The advantages being that it only necessitated one visit per plot, was suitable for large areas and most habitats type, was not restricted by weather and necessitated little equipment. In this case, over four days, pellets were counted within 50 randomly located 10mx10m plots. The population density estimate can then be extrapolated using the mean number of pellet groups per hectare divided by the pellet groups average decay time in days multiplied by the defecation rate (pellets groups per day). Habitat-specific decay rates and species-specific defecation rates were obtained from Forestry Commission research:

Decay rate: 100 days (*Mayle et al*, 2008)

Defecation rate: between 8 and 12 pellet groups/day/ha (*Mayle et al*, 2008). 10 was used as an average.

A faecal pellet group is defined as a group of 6 or more pellets produced when defecating. Muntjac often use latrines, so groups lying on top of each

other have to be separated and distinguished by changes in colour texture and sometime small size variations. Other species pellets have to be discounted so identification needs to be accurate for the species targeted. When a group was found on the edge of the 10mx10m square, it would be alternatively counted and discarded.



Muntjac pellets are the smallest of all six British deer species. They are generally black, shiny, spherical or cylindrical in shape and pointed at one or both ends. One group can number between 20 to 120 pellets and the animals often defecate regularly at some sites, forming latrines. Muntjac pellets are closest in appearances to Roe deer so as both species were present at Burnham Beeches, extra care was needed in identifying pellets accurately. When identification was problematic, groups would be alternatively counted or discarded. Length of pellets varies between 6 to 13mm long and 5-11mm wide, with juveniles at the lower end of the scale.

The equipment used for the survey included folding bamboo poles to mark the plot out and a tape measure to ensure all side of the plot were 10m long. In addition, collected pellets were carried as a reference from an earlier outing with a qualified deer manager. Plots positions were not recorded as the study was not be undertaken again in the future, but compartments in which plots were randomly chosen were recorded to ensure a fair reflection on all habitats.

The survey showed that pellets group were found in 34 out of 50 randomly located plots. The total area surveyed amounted to 5000sq/m or half a hectare. Surveying twice the amount surveyed in this study would have ensured better accuracy of results, as what is generally needed is a pellet count for one hectare. For the purpose of this study however, the total count needed to be multiplied by two. The total number of pellet groups per hectare is then: $111 \times 2 = 222$

So to estimate the population density of Muntjac deer at Burnham Beeches, the following equation needed to be followed (*Mayle et al*, 2008):

Number of pellet groups per ha

Decay rate x Defecation rate

Which translated to: $222 / (10 \times 100) = 222 / 1000 = 0.222 / \text{ha}$

Burnham Beeches is a 220ha site so it can be estimated that the population size was: $0.222 \times 220 = 44.4 = 44$

The disadvantages of the survey were that habitat

and species-specific decay rates are only approximate and may indeed have been different to the generic figures used for this survey. Defecation rates are just as likely to have been influenced by local factors. Changes to either of those two values would have changed the population estimate, perhaps significantly. In addition, faecal counts do not give any indication of sex or age variations within the population studied.

As a result a $\pm 20\%$ variation on the total should be applied, to mitigate those issues. That would put the estimate of the population at between 35 and 53 animals.

Such a study could be replicated on sites in the southern end of the Forest, the main candidate being Walthamstow Forest. However the large amount of traffic, disturbance and use (the Bush Wood side of Wanstead Flats was estimated to receive 288,549 visits/year) would have an impact on population numbers.

There are other ways to estimate deer populations, which can be broadly divided in three:

Direct counts:

Daylight counts, based on counting individual animals on foot, by driving and using aerial equipment.
Night counts, with spotlights or thermal imaging equipment.

Indirect counts:

Impact levels: using browsing and grazing impact levels on a habitat (Gill, 1992).
Slots counts: using tracks left by deer.
Faecal pellets counts: using *Faecal Accumulation Rates (FAR)* or *Faecal Standing Crop Counts (FSC)*.

Cull information:

Population reconstruction from mortality data
Cohort analysis (Mayle *et al*, 2008)

The deer population on the buffer lands of Epping Forest is estimated yearly using direct counts, informed by cull information.

Muntjac deer are resident of woodlands in the South of Epping Forest. They can be regularly seen and their distinctive bark heard in Walthamstow Forest, Gilbert's Slade and Bush Wood. They are most susceptible to disturbance by dogs and the bucks can be lethal to dogs when attacked so this is something to bear in mind. As time allows, we hope to gain a better picture of numbers and impact.

References:

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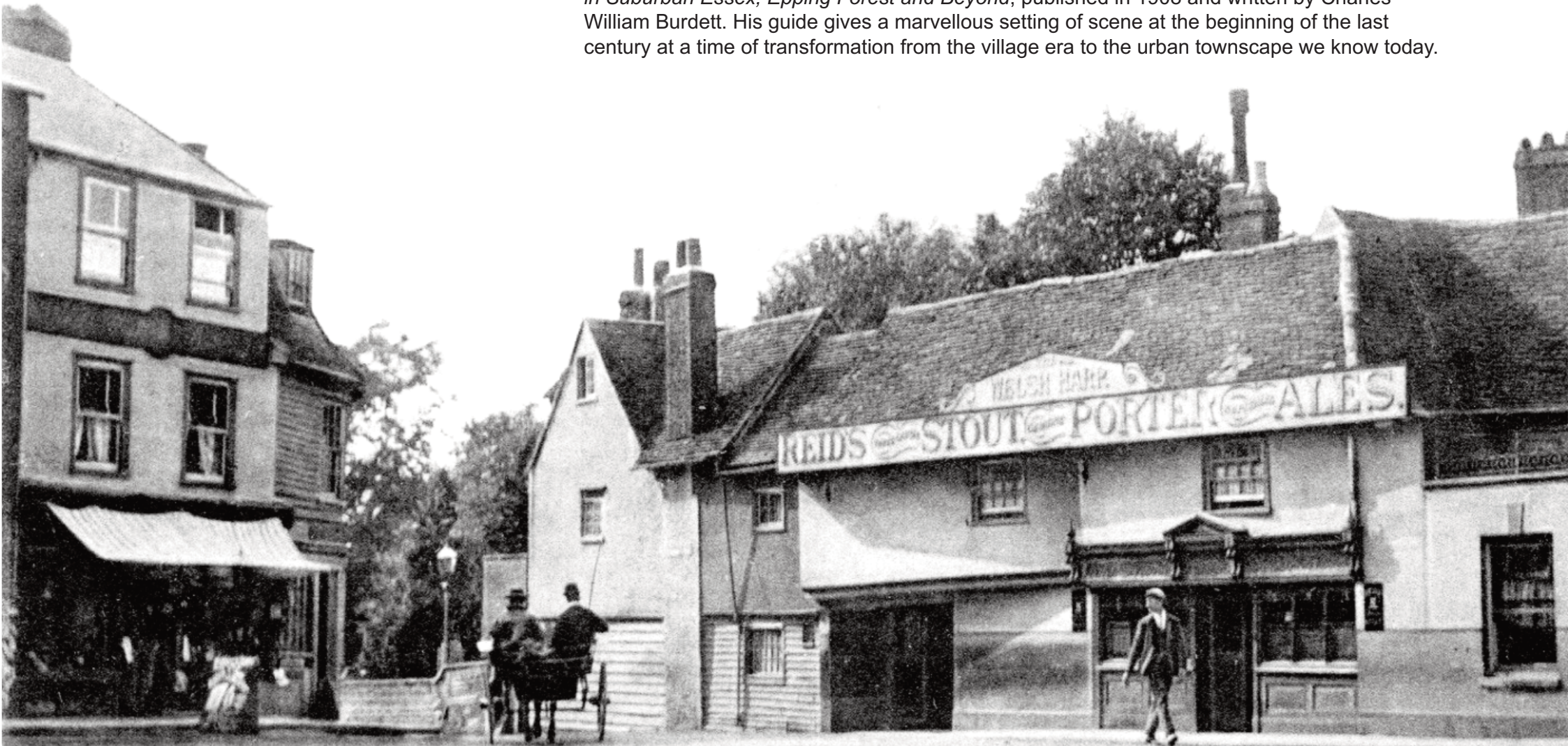
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Article by Thibaud Madelin
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gossiping rambles

Continuing on our journey taken from 'Round London' Publishing Company's *Gossiping Rambles in Suburban Essex, Epping Forest and Beyond*, published in 1908 and written by Charles William Burdett. His guide gives a marvellous setting of scene at the beginning of the last century at a time of transformation from the village era to the urban townscape we know today.



The River Lea

To those familiar with London and its suburbs nothing is more amazing than the remarkable growth of the latter during the past decade or so. Our present ramble takes in a part of suburbia which is now within very easy reach of central London by either road or rail; and as a consequence it is fast losing its rural characteristics.



Liverpool St Station in 1907

In addition to the Great Eastern service from Liverpool Street *via* Bethnal Green and Hackney Downs, as well as from Stratford *via* Lea Bridge, the L.C.C. electric trams run to Finsbury Park, where they are linked up with the Middlesex cars passing through Edmonton (the home and burial place of beloved Charles Lamb) and are, at the time of writing these lines, being pushed further out, ultimately to run as far as Waltham Cross.

Taking train at Liverpool Street we pass out of London by way of Hackney Downs junction, and



Farming watercress on the river Lea - a far cry from the landscape that the coming of the railway and growth of industry was to bring

are presently winding in and out of the bewildering maze of lines between Lea Bridge and Tottenham, where, by this route, we again catch sight of the River Lea, referred to in our third ramble. This pretty little river rises at Houghton Regis, near Dunstable in Bedfordshire, and runs through to Hoddesdon in Herts, where it is joined by the river Stort. Near this spot it forms the boundary line between Essex and Hertfordshire until it reaches Waltham, where it separates Essex from Middlesex, finally reaching the Thames by way of Bow, where the river enters at Blackwall. It was once of much larger proportions than is now the case, and no doubt it has had a great deal to do with the present appearance of all the district through which it flows. At one time beavers swarmed upon its banks, as peat deposits full of timber have been found, caused by these industrious animals blocking up the water-courses of both the Lea and the Roding.

Izaak Walton

In far later times than these Alfred the Great diverted its channel to check the incursions of the Danes. Many of the channels said to have been cut by him may yet be seen at Waltham Cross, and a few years ago an old boat was found, deeply buried in the mud, which antiquaries think to be one of the very boats used in his day. In the stretch of the river lying between Tottenham and Ware good old Izaak Walton loved to angle, and his immortal book owes its inspiration to the happy times he passed along its banks, watching the flow of its gentle current, philosophising in his genial way; cheering the heart of his reader by his happy outlook on men and things. He did not begin to write till he was sixty years of age; he lived to be over ninety. The river Lea and the name of Izaak Walton are inseparably associated. But we have arrived at Waltham Cross and must leave the genial fisherman with this brief tribute of affection and gratitude for many pleasant hours spent in the perusal of his entertaining pages.



Waltham Cross early 1900s

Waltham Cross

Turning to the left on leaving the station we soon reach *Waltham Cross*, from which the little town takes its name. Here is one of the few crosses still standing of the ten erected by Edward I in memory of Queen Eleanor. Legend relates that wherever her body rested on its way from Lincolnshire to burial in Westminster Abbey, the pious and grief stricken king caused a large stone cross to be erected. The one we are inspecting is a fine piece of workmanship, and well worth a visit. Hard by is the old hostelry known as “Ye Olde Foure Swannes,” claiming to date back to 1260. Its quaint sign-board spans the road like a gallows, and is a conspicuous object.



Waltham Cross - Foure Swans Public House 1907

Anthony Trollope

Another literary man who has left a deep mark in English Literature lived here Anthony Trollope. He was the author of a large number of novels, and his life story as told by himself is most interesting. He



High Bridge Street - Waltham Abbey 1907

was an employee of the General Post Office for many years, fulfilling all his duties in a most praiseworthy manner; but in spite of this he found time to write an enormous amount. His constant habit was to rise at five thirty, do his literary work of a fixed quantity, and then to go about his official duties afterwards. He speaks very fondly of Waltham. He says “In December 1859”, I settled myself at a residence about twelve miles from London, in Hertfordshire, but on the borders of Essex and Middlesex which was somewhat too grandly called Waltham House-in which I could entertain a few friends modestly, where we grew our own cabbages and strawberries, made our own butter, and killed our own pigs. I occupied it for twelve years, and they were years to me of great prosperity.” His love for Waltham peeps out many times in his memoirs. He was an indefatigable worker, and made what some people would think to be a lot of money by his writings, £70,000. As this was in addition to his official salary he did not do so badly out of the inkpot!

The Abbey

Retracing our steps we cross over the railway bridge. Quite a number of little streams soon meet the eye. These are the divisions of the River Lea referred to above. On one bridge we cross (known locally as Old Smalley Bridge) is an inscription which informs us it is the boundary line between Herts and Essex. Presently we reach *Waltham Abbey* or “Holy Cross” to give it its correct name. This must not be confounded with the Waltham Cross we have just left. Ancient legends state that in a dream or vision a carpenter had revealed to him the whereabouts of a miraculous cross, with a figure of the Saviour upon it. This occurred in Somersetshire. Other versions give Tofig the Proud, standard bearer to Hardicanute, as the fortunate finder.



Waltham Abbey - High Gate early 1900s

He that as it may the cross was at length brought to Waltham, to which flocked many devotees on account of its supposed miraculous powers.

Harold, the last of the Saxons, built the fine pile still standing, and it looks to this very day quite fresh and almost new. It is one of the finest ecclesiastical monuments in England. The ceiling has been restored, the work being done by Sir E. J. Pointer, R.A. It is a replica of the one at Peterborough Cathedral, and represents the twelve signs of the zodiac. Noble stone pillars, said to be the finest of their kind in the country, with deep zig-zag carvings, support the roof. No two are alike, and at one time they were ornamented with deeply inlaid brasses which have disappeared, having been stolen centuries ago. A



Waltham Abbey early part 1900s

piece of Harold's tomb is among the proud possessions of the Abbey; also the old stocks, and a whipping post. Sixpence is charged to view the interior. The key can be obtained from Mrs. Knight, 32 Romeland, close by.

Harold's Bridge

Leaving the old but beautifully preserved fabric, we pass through the little passage on the left of the Abbey, across the open square known as *Romeland*, by the old gates of the Abbey, a fine old ruin, and passing on the left hand by the stream of water we arrive in a few minutes at what some people are disposed to consider as perhaps the most curious bridge of its kind in the world. This is *Harold's Bridge*, and it was erected by King Harold in 1062. It is a low single arch, the top of which is now carefully preserved by a coating of asphalt, and spans a branch of the ubiquitous Lea. It is most picturesque in appearance and quite a striking object. No visitor to Waltham Abbey should miss seeing it. Many a bloody battle has been fought near here between Dane and Saxon and no doubt many a warrior's bones still lie beneath the quiet grass beside the gentle river. Says Palgrave,

*"Lie still, old Dane! This restful scene
Suits well thy centuries of sleep;
The soft brown roots above thee creep,
The lotus flaunts his ruddy sheen,
And-vain memento of the spot-
The turquoise-eyed forget-me-not."*

We next make our way back past the front of the church through the churchyard, turn to the left along *Sun Street* and on reaching the *New Inn* we turn sharp to the right along the *Sewardstone Road*. We pass a street with a very unusual name for an English town, *La Rue de St. Laurence*, and feel quite "Frenchified" as we note this. On the top of *Quintan Hill* we pause to view the lovely landscape on our right, the county of Middlesex,

which lies spread out before us with a grand panoramic effect. One would have to go many weary miles to get a better view of open country: On the left not far away are the wooded slopes of Epping Forest, the dark green foliage of the trees taking on a sombre hue from a thunderstorm which passing overhead. This soon bursts and passes away leaving the air beautifully sweet. We pass *Avry Lane* on our left, walking a little further along till we reach another road on the left leading to *Leppits Hill*. Along this pleasant lane we saunter, noting how used the birds are to the incessant firing of the small-arms at *Enfield Luck*, the Government factory not far off. But the case is altered when some local sportsman blazes away with a charge of small shot. This causes the birds to arise in clouds. To the human auditors the difference between the noise of the reports is very small but the birds know far better. The one is harmless, the other means death. Hedge sparrow and Linnet fly about in alarm but some philosophic old crows simply flutter away, for a few yards and then settle down again as calm as ever. By and bye we come to a small narrow opening in the lane on our right hand. It looks as if it only extends a few yards to dwindle away into a *cul-de-sac*. As a matter of fact it is the entrance to one of the most charming lanes in the whole of the district. It is *Green Lanes*, and leads to Sewardstone Green.

A "Devonshire Lane" In Essex

The lane we have now entered is as near a Devonshire lane as any to be seen which is not the actual thing itself. High hedges which almost meet, tall trees, plenty of undergrowth, sudden and quite unexpected openings and apparent

closings of the roadway, short side walks to avoid the little puddles, leafy avenues on either hand; all these abound. It is more wild and beautiful than words can paint.

“A Sleeping Beauty.”

At a point where the lane forks is a secluded spot formed by a group of trees growing in a semi-circle, as silent as the Sahara, as quiet as the grave. Beneath the sheltering branches of the bushes which form a complete screen around him lies one of the nomads beloved of George Borrow, a gipsy tinker, fast asleep.

His swarthy face is toil blackened and sunburnt; his hands, as they lie exposed to view, shew hard and horny, giving proof of real hard work; no idler this, though a veritable *Romany Chat*. For aught we know he may be a lineal descendant of the Flaming Tinman himself, “hose marvellous fighting powers are so graphically narrated in *Lavengro*.

The sharp shower and the rolling thunder have passed over him and made the ground uncomfortably damp, but they were not sufficient to disturb him.

The dying embers of a small wood fire emit a few feeble flickerings, he has been mending a kettle and the tools of his trade lie all around him. No wild beast could better have chosen a hiding-place than he; awake he may be ferocious, asleep he is merely picturesque. Wrapped in an old piece of sacking for a bed-quilt, and indeed for all his bedding, he is sleeping as calmly and peacefully as an infant in its mother's arms; we respect his slumbers, and steal noiselessly, away.

*“Sleep on secure! Above control
Thy thoughts belong to heaven and thee:
And may the secret of thy soul
Remain within its sanctuary!”*

The Sleeping Beauty.—Samuel Rogers

On we saunter, finding the lane beautiful and more beautiful at every turn; passing a roadside pool where thrushes and starlings are standing to drink ; listening to the song of a blackbird in the bushes near at hand ; drinking in the lovely sights and sounds around us with a perfect intoxication of delight.

*“I heard a thousand blended notes
While in a grove I sate reclin’ed,
In that sweet wood when pleasant thoughts
Bring sad thoughts to the mind.*

*The birds around me hopp’d and played,
Their thoughts I cannot measure,
But the least motion which they made
It seemed a thrill of pleasure.*

*The budding twigs spread out their fan
To catch the breezy air,
And I must think, do all I can,
That there was pleasure there.”*

Wordsworth

To be sure the road at times is very muddy, there are deep ruts across it which require skilful avoidance; but what matters it? We are happy. A little further on we pass the fine golf links of the

West Essex Golf Club, and watch for a few minutes the frantic efforts of an elderly amateur as he tried to hole the ball. Language not quite according to Lindley Murray escaped from him as his club flies out of his hand, nearly decapitating the caddie. But all's well that ends well, he at length accomplishes his arduous task, and beams a satisfied and a happy golfer...



Royal Forest Hotel - Chingford in 1906

At length we come out at the *Cinder Path*; and a pleasant walk of half-a-mile or so by the *Gilwell Park* estate brings us to *Sewardstone Green*, afterwards walking through the small part of the forest which lies straight before us, until we reach Chingford once more, where we refresh the inner man at the Royal Forest Hotel; again owning that we have spent a delightful day. True, not much of the tune has been passed in the actual forest, but it has all been full of its own special interest; many objects to charm eye, ear and mind, have offered themselves to our notice.



A close-up photograph of a bird, likely a lorikeet, with vibrant green, blue, and yellow plumage. The bird is looking down, and its feathers are highly detailed and colorful. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green.

autumn bird report

Pipit and bunting top the bill

Nick Croft summarises another good autumn on the patch

Migrants continued to move through our area, especially Wanstead Flats, in September. As well as the common species we always attract a number of specialities, birds that don't breed anywhere near here but always stop off on their way south. Whinchat is one such. Numbers were down compared with September 2013 but 60 bird-days is still not too shabby. Wheatear numbers were up on last year, Common Redstarts were about the same and Pied Flycatchers and Spotted Flycatchers were also down, though only just in the case of the last species. Tree Pipit numbers were also reduced compared with last year, but then we had good numbers in August. And we had virtually double the number of Yellow Wagtails.

Migrants generally came through earlier and a because the weather was so kind the great majority probably went straight through unseen. So what made September memorable?

- An Olive-Backed Pipit near Long Wood on 26th
- A juvenile Red-crested Pochard in Wanstead Park on 3rd, but which disappeared pretty sharpish
- A Cuckoo over the 'pub scrub' (by the Golden Fleece) on 1st
- The first Wigeon of autumn on 4th

- A record 24 Common Buzzards (with two possible Honey Buzzards) over Heronry Lake on 6th, a sight I will not forget
- A probable Osprey over Leyton Flats on 9th
- A record count of Common Pochard for the patch: 74 on Heronry on 12th
- Sedge Warbler on 16th
- Two Short-eared Owls on Wanstead Flats: one on 22nd and probably the same bird back for a prolonged show on 30th

- A Jack Snipe by Alexandra Lake on 23rd
- The mass hirundine movement of previous years didn't happen this year, with only 150+ Swallows, 70+ House Martins and just five Sand Martins on 24th
- A Firecrest in Long Wood on 26th
- Also an early returning Water Rail by Perch Pond on 26th
- The year's first Woodlark, a cracker, on 27th
- The first Greenshank for two years



Oktoberfest

Off went the last of the summer's migrants. There were no Whinchats at all this October, but a couple of Wheatears hung on till the middle of the month. Of the warblers, just Blackcaps and Chiffchaffs remained. In the place of the departed came Goldcrests - not in the high cold-weather numbers,

but in every scrap of woodland. Stu Fisher had Firecrest on and off in Snaresbrook and they returned to Bush Wood in October. Stu also had the latest Sand Martin on 10th, while a few game Swallows were still undecided on which way south was.

Meadow Pipit numbers peaked early on, and then

fell back to less than 10 birds by the end of the month, scattered across the Flats. Maybe some more will turn up if gets cold on the Continent. Skylark numbers were down on last year, and most had already opted for the Fairground, where they were joined by a few Linnets.

Vis-migging was not great for finches, though small parties of Bramblings (20-strong) moved through in the middle of the month. There were a few Redpolls and fewer Siskin, but as usual a lot of UFOs (unidentified finches over), which is annoying. Rather unexpectedly it was a good autumn for Bullfinches on the Flats. Stu had the only other bunting of note, a Yellowhammer on 22nd.

Look away now: it's gull time! Hurtling up during the month were numbers of Common Gulls, dragging with them an influx of Black-headed Gulls, and the veteran Valentino (a Mediterranean Gull), splitting his time between here, Valentine's Park and South Park, Ilford - he's a busy bird. October is usually the best month for Yellow-legged Gulls, and I usually miss them by being up in Shetland; this time I missed them by being much closer and in bed.

There was of course one day I will not forget in a hurry: 13th, which was not unlucky at all, just extremely grim and mucky. The kind of grim and mucky we like and provided you don't die of hypothermia, the kind of day to make birding worthwhile. There was a great cast of hundreds of Redwings, 60 Lapwing, 15 Golden Plover, a Dunlin,

Mistle Thrush



Snipe, Ring Ouzels, Bramblings and even a late trio of Swallows. Then, three days later, a Lapland Bunting turned up opposite the Golden Fleece. It was on the deck, showy and stayed for two days. A little wonder!

- A Lapland Bunting stays for two days
- For the first time in years I don't predict a good Brambling year and we have our best Brambling year: 30+ on one day
- A dribble of Siskins and Redpolls, but Bullfinches break out onto the Flats
- A bumper 60 Lapwing, a record count of 15 Golden Plover and the first Dunlin for two years on the same rainy day
- A good Ring Ouzel passage with some very obliging birds
- Valentino the Mediterranean Gull returns, again, and again...
- A Firecrest is back in Bush Wood
- Two Short-eared Owl sightings this month

And bon voyage to our late-summer visitors:

- Wheatear, Swallow and Sand Martin
- A Treecreeper in the Park on the 7th



November

Working a patch can get dull, very dull. Not so much the fault of the patch itself - it's always good to be out there. No, it's more the thought of the mile slog there and back in the sure and certain knowledge that you are going to see bugger all. But hope springs eternal. It was so-oo dull that my camera decided a better course of action would be to ingest a large amount of lime-scale remover – that serves me right for even considering cleaning my bath.

Linnet numbers rose and fell on the Fairground

(with a high of 27 towards the end of the month). Stu had more Redpolls on Leyton Flats but few made it further south. There was just one Siskin record, but Bullfinches continued to be seen or heard over the Flats until the middle of the month. Reed Buntings became scarce again but a calling Yellowhammer was an audible highlight on one dull day. Gadwall numbers continued to rise across the patch and – against the odds - the Wigeon prolonged their stay in Wanstead Park. So thanks, November, I'm off for my medication now.

- Another (or the same?) Short-eared Owl on the Flats on 20th
- A first-winter Mediterranean Gull on Jubilee Pond
- A Yellowhammer calling over the Alex
- Two Stonechats on the Flats early in the month
- A couple of Brambling records

Article and pics
by Nick Croft



Don't forget you can follow Nick on his excellent blog at <http://wansteadbirding.blogspot.co.uk/>

brickfields

From bricks to bees and butterflies - how a brickworks became a wildlife haven on Wanstead Flats

By Mark Gorman and Tim Harris

Brickmaking was hard work. Clay was dug out by hand during the winter months by seasonal brick making gangs, turned into slurry and sieved to remove stones and poured into washbacks to settle for 6 to 9 months. When ready the clay would be dug out, shaped in wooden moulds and air dried before firing in a clamp (later a tunnel kiln). Chalk was often added to the clay which gave the bricks a distinctive yellow colour. These bricks were widely used in London and the southeast and are known as 'stock bricks' or 'London Stocks'.

Picture shows a clamp at Gregory's brickfield, Wood Street, Walthamstow c1885. Clamps like these would also be used on Wanstead Flats brickfields.



Have you noticed the steep banks on the part of Wanstead Flats bordering Centre Road and Aldersbrook Road, and wondered how they came to be there? The rest of the Flats are fairly level, apart from the odd dip in the ground like the one at the corner of Aldersbrook Road, formed by a second world war bomb, and the ponds. So what led to these banks being formed?



Looking south-west across Wanstead Flats at Centre Road in the early 1900s. The landscape still showing scars of local industry some 15 - 20 years earlier. Picture courtesy of Vestry House Museum, London Borough of Waltham Forest

The answer lies in the mid-Victorian era, when the Flats looked very different from today. In 1864, Lord Cowley, heir to the Wanstead estate which his cousin William Wellesley-Pole had bankrupted 40 years before, decided to turn this part of his lands to profitable use. He leased 4 acres east of Centre Road to an east London builder to set up a brickworks, and for the next 17 years clay was stripped from the Flats to make bricks and clay pipes. London was spreading east of the river Lea, and the brickworks contributed nearly 400,000 bricks a year

to the thousands of houses being built around Stratford. The brickworks was a local eyesore, and Cowley made sure that his tenant agreed to avoid lawsuits with residents objecting to the “nuisance” caused by the operations there.



Much the same view today more than 100 years later. Center Road is now obscured by trees and local scaring grassed over.

The works closed in 1881, leaving a devastated site several metres lower than two decades before. The site flooded regularly, and the brickworks pond (now gone) was a local feature for many years afterwards. However, it has left us with more than just steep slopes up to the road. Today, the contours of the site remain but it looks very different. The depressed, flattish area is mown regularly and is set aside for leisure use. It has had winter football pitches until quite recently, and is used by local schools for sports days in summer.

Despite its uninteresting appearance, this disturbed ground is valuable for wildlife, notably feeding birds. Large numbers of Starlings and Woodpigeons - and

increasing numbers of Jackdaws - feed on the short sward. Look carefully through the Woodpigeons and you might see the odd Stock Dove. In winter, gulls join the throng, mostly Common and Black-headed Gulls but with the occasional Lesser Black-backed, Herring or even Mediterranean Gull among them. In 2013 a couple of Golden Plover dropped in, and migrating Ring Ouzels



One of the oldest methods of firing bricks was by a clamp. A clamp is a temporary construction of unfired or green bricks which is dismantled after firing and could be erected near the clay source.

have also stopped off here. More regular are Mistle Thrushes, Song Thrushes and Blackbirds.

The unmown fringes of the site have a variety of vegetation ranging from Bramble to Hawthorn, Gorse to Red Dead-nettle and Common Ragwort. The thicker areas provide cover for breeding Common Whitethroats, Wrens, Dunnocks and Robins. A Lesser Whitethroat sometimes sets up territory for a while in spring, delivering its rattling song from a Hawthorn. The gentle incline at the west end of the site is cut annually

to allow the meadow-grass flora to thrive and there is a good sprinkling of Birdsfoot Trefoil here. This meadow has a healthy population of day-flying moths, including several of the grass-veneers and Mother Shipton. On a spring or summer day this is also a good place to look for butterflies, with Common Blue, Small Heath, Gatekeeper and Meadow Brown on the wing at the appropriate time.



Another picture of a clamp under construction. Clamps contained anything between 30,000 to 150,000 bricks. An average size would take two or three weeks to burn out, although larger ones could take as much as ten or twelve weeks. An average semi used around 4,500, to 6,000 bricks.

At the north-west corner, a mud path leads up to Centre Road. Small excavations in the baked mud here have been made by Tawny Mining-bees. And in May the south-west corner, around the large area of Gorse and the clumps of Bramble, is the place to look for one of our recent butterfly colonists, the Green Hairstreak. So those Victorian brickmakers unwittingly contributed to creating a wildlife haven that we can enjoy today.

Tim Harris and Mark Gorman



The Brick-making Process

Farmers leased land to brickmakers – hence the name Brickfields

The brick earth is first washed and pumped with washed chalk into washbacks at the brick works

This settles to form clay called Pug, which was then layered with the soil (Town Ash) in the brick mould or 'hand berths'. In later times, Town Ash was mixed separately, as was chalk in some systems

The materials were mixed in mills. Early mills were controlled by steam engines this was in the days of hand berth making. Later mills and machines had electric motors

Brickmakers worked in gangs of 6: 3 men, 1 youth and 2 boys. They were paid by piecework

Hand berths made bricks one at a time, a Moulder would make approximately 900 per hour

A Flattie would cut and roll a wad of Pug the size of a brick

The Moulder would throw the wad into his mould and strike off the surplus Pug. He would then turn the brick onto a board

A Barrow Loader placed the brick and the board onto a Hack Barrow

A Pushy would wheel the loaded barrow of 30 bricks to the Drying Hacks, where an Off Bearer would set the brick, minus its board, onto long hack boards

When dry, the bricks were built into clamps by Setters to be burnt. Clamps varied from yard to yard but there were general rules which most followed. The floor had to be level and was made of burnt brick. Channels were often made in the floor and filled with fuel, usually breeze (crushed coke) but any fuel would suffice and wood, furze, charcoal were also used. Next came three or four layers of green bricks which were placed on edge and then another layer of fuel was added. After this, green bricks were packed closely together to a height of 14 or 15 feet. The bricks were 'dished' or tilted inward to prevent injury to workmen during firing.

What to see in winter

By Tricia Moxey

There is always a degree of uncertainty about the weather. Will the coming months bring high winds, crisp snow or just some long spells of overcast grey and rainy days when we will be slithering about in the muddy countryside? Being outside even for as little as 20 minutes a day is sufficient to bring health benefits so wrap up warm and get out there!

One of the great pleasures of being outside during the winter months is the chance to see frost on many of the fallen leaves, the dead stems of grasses or ferns. This tends to highlight their form and textures which might be so easily overlooked and thus, the seemingly ordinary is transformed into something magical!

An instructive activity is to make a note of flowers that are actually in flower at the turn of the year as many flowers are responding to the mildness of the current winter season. This list can include just the 'wild ones' or can include those found in gardens too! Comparisons year on year are interesting and of course there are some insects

which will find them vital sources of nectar and pollen. There are several types of Mahonia which are in full flower at this time of the year and some of the winter flowering Viburnums are sweetly scented too. Primroses and Sweet Violet are now in flower from late autumn through to spring and in addition you may well find Dandelions, Chickweed and Hogweed. What will be your score? More than 25 is a good one.



Towards the end of January the catkins on Hazel start to lengthen and once fully expanded, they shed their pollen grains which can then be blown about to be caught on the stigmas of the tiny red female flowers. As the days lengthen, the leaves of Honeysuckle start to grow to be followed by sprouting shoots on Elder bushes. Look out for the yellow flowers of Coltsfoot as they push

through the barren ground of roadside verges or wasteland sites.

Those who feel the need to mow their lawns in winter may have continue to do so if the ground temperatures remain above 6°C for several days, but for many of us, it is preferable to leave it slightly longer. This gives you the chance to notice that the uncollected leaves will disappear

underground as various species of earthworm remain active, pulling different leaves into their burrows. Recent research using an infra-red webcam has revealed that the 25cm long Night Crawling Earthworm, *Lumbricus terrestris* shows a particular preference for the fallen leaves of Alder, Ash and Birch over non-native Eucalyptus, Sweet Chestnut and Sycamore. Interestingly in the 1880's Darwin came to similar conclusions without the help of webcams! You could conduct your own experiments to see which leaves are preferred – some worms apparently even like chocolate!

It is easy to overlook the smaller components of vegetation, but the bright green mosses are more obvious as many species produce their seed capsules on long stalks at this time of the year. The tops of walls, fallen logs, rockeries, lawns and the tops of flower pots are all good places to find these interesting plants. The British Bryological Society has produced a downloadable guide to *Common Mosses and Liverworts of Town and Garden*. Check out the website to download your own copy!

www.britishbryologicalsociety.org.uk



denali national park

Article and pics by David Playford

Okay – so it's a little 'off piste' but after seeing Wren member David Playford's story and stunning pictures of his recent visit to Denali National Park and Preserve in central Alaska I couldn't refuse but publish. In David's own words:

The centrepiece of the Park is the highest mountain in the USA, Mount McKinley – known to local Alaskans as Denali and to the indigenous Athabascan Indians as the Great One. The mountain is more often than not shrouded in cloud and accommodation lodges in the vicinity of the Park often call their guests, day or night, when the mountain is "out" (visible)



Denali National Park and Preserve in central Alaska covers an area of over 6 million acres, a massive area which changes from forest vegetation at lower levels, to tundra wilderness in the middle and mountain ranges at the top.

Such is the extreme cold in Alaska – where life carries on as normal until temperatures reach minus 40 degrees and then everything shuts down – that Denali national park is open for just 4 months of the year from mid May until mid September. During this period thousands of Americans from all over the country descend on Alaska to work in hotels, as tour guides and as bus drivers - many of them college students earning their fees for the next semester, but also many others who return year after year to do the same job.



Caribou (reindeer) from the 2000 strong Denali herd, one of 32 herds in Alaska. Over one million caribou are found in Alaska. Male caribou always shed their antlers in December

The Park has just one road, Park Road, which is 92 miles long. Private vehicles are allowed only as far as mile 14 and beyond that point you have to walk, take a park shuttle bus or a tour bus. In mid-May only a short section of the Park is open but as weather conditions ease the road is opened further to allow access deeper into the Park.



Dall sheep are found only in Alaska inhabiting the rocky hillsides. The males are easily distinguishable by their beautiful curled horns. These grow only in the summer season and the age of the male Dall can be told by the number of rings on the horn as each growing season ends with a ring left on the horn.

I went to Alaska on a 6-day Princess land cruise prior to taking the Princess sea cruise down to Vancouver. At the start of the season weather and wildlife sightings can be unpredictable but we were incredibly fortunate – temperatures were several degrees warmer than expected (in the low teens), conditions were so clear that Mount McKinley was clearly

visible for almost 24 hours, and we were the first tour bus to find the whole of Park Road open to us.

All visitors to the area are given a “what to do if you confront a bear” guide which tells you not to run away under any circumstances, make yourself as tall as possible by putting your hands above your head and, as a last resort, punch it on the nose if it looks like attacking you! Nice to know that only one person has ever been killed by a bear in Denali but I would not want to get that close!



Black bears, which number over 100,000 in Alaska, are more common than grizzlies in Denali but it was only outside the Park that we spotted them during our trip. Similarly moose were only seen later, our one chance of seeing one very close to our lodge was dashed when rangers closed off the trail for our own safety – a female was calving and a disturbed moose is apparently feared much more than a grizzly.

Outside the Park we visited the Alaska pipeline, tried our hand at gold panning



The grizzlies of Denali mainly live on berries and other vegetation with the glacier fed streams of the Park having very few fish. This means the grizzlies are “only” between 300 and 600 pounds in weight compared to those who gorge on salmon outside the Park and can reach 1000 pounds

and rode the Alaska railroad, but the highlight of our 6-day stay was our 8-hour trip into Denali National Park where we saw Dall sheep, caribou , brown (grizzly) bears and willow ptarmigan. Outside the Park we also saw the smaller black bear and, courtesy of a local Alaskan with a very powerful telescope, a pure white mountain goat so high up on the mountain top that it was invisible to the naked eye.

Story and pics by
David Playford





Green
Chain
Walk

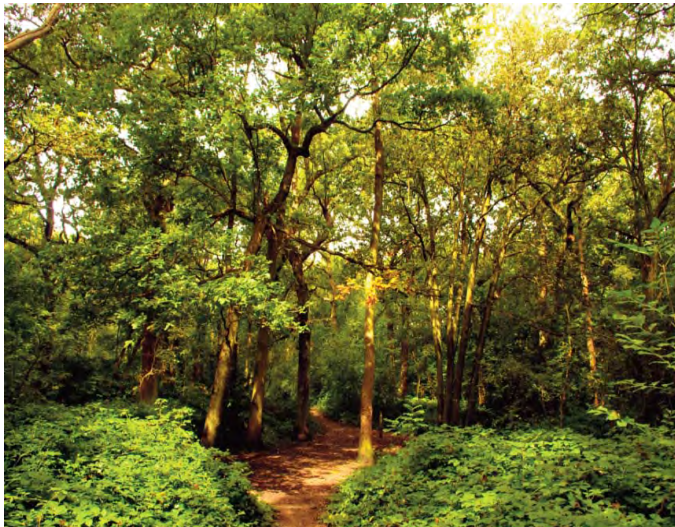
wren rings london

Once a month, Wren committee member Peter Aylmer will be leading a short weekday walk around part of the 78 miles of the Capital Ring, a long-distance path that links many of the city's green spaces.

Days in the south

Eltham. Beckenham. Penge. Norwood. Ah, what a litany of place names, and the memories they evoke!

And that's the trouble with stereotypes, especially for those of us whose lives have been lived very largely in London north of the Thames. After all, Forest Gate and Manor Park aren't seen as the new Hampstead by most Londoners, at least not yet. But a secret of the capital is that good green spaces permeate suburb after suburb. The Wren group has been discovering them – and surprising ourselves a little in the process – as we work our way round the 78-mile Capital Ring footpath, a bit each month.

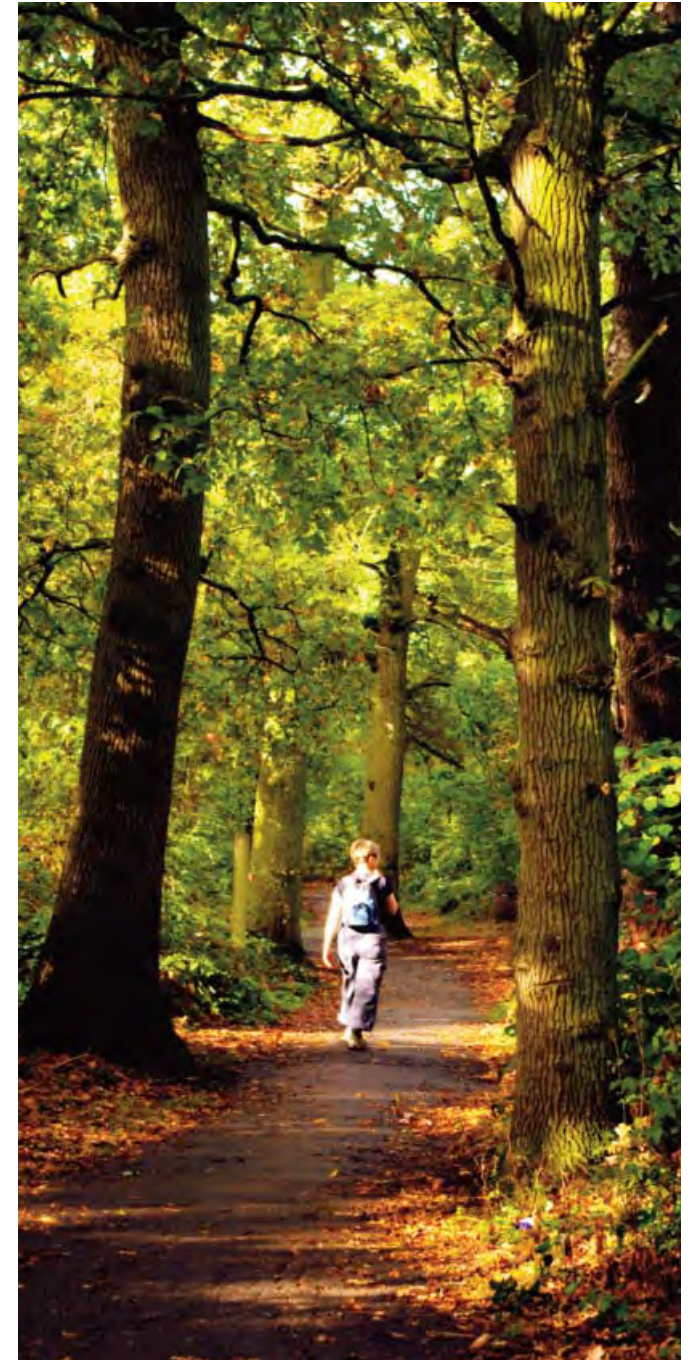


Oxleas Wood is one of the few remaining areas of ancient deciduous forest in the Royal Borough of Greenwich, in southeast London. Some parts date back over 8,000 years to the end of the last Ice Age, the Younger Dryas. Wikipedia

Right South of Catford. The Capital Ring is an easily navigable walk that connects some of the extraordinary nooks, crannies and enormous green spaces of London. It passes through nature reserves, sites of special scientific interest, grand country estates and along rivers and canals.

Picking up on Woolwich Common in September, we were soon climbing onto Shooter's Hill, with a choice of cafés for the coffee stop. We chose one with the dramatic downward sweep of Eltham Park before us, before a circuit of Oxleas Wood. This is one of London's great survivors – 190 acres of pristine oak and hornbeam woodland, self-seeded for 8,000 years, and all-too-nearly victim to the road-planner's chainsaw in the 1990s. Parakeets squawking in the branches above us were an reminder that diversity spreads to London in many ways. Later, beyond the art-eco-Tudor mix of Eltham Palace, I'd promised a wonderful sweeping view of London from King John's Walk, but grey clag made sceptics of my companions, until I showed the pictures from my earlier reconnaissance.

If that stage had at least the benefit of significant green splodges on the map, less of the wild was evident for the next two walks. But somehow, astute urban planning and no doubt a little bit of luck had maintained some delicate green corridors between the grander highlights such as Beckenham Place Park and Crystal Palace Park. The latter, a high spot as well as a highlight – we were discovering just how hilly south London can be – lends a bit of variety to wildlife-spotting with dinosaur plaster-casts, shaped according to the best Victorian palaeontology.



The short November stage thankfully saw better weather, and grand autumn russet and orange to accompany it. It's through the ancient Great North Wood, just a couple of remnants surviving in what were once the forested combes and dells of northern Surrey. The ridge of Upper Norwood, alas now the A215, gives a sudden and dramatic view south to the City, and then a moment or two later across modern Croydon to the North Downs – surprisingly evocative. Finally, we swept down Streatham Common, a fine lung for south Londoners.

Winter walking in the capital can be fun. We make our way to Wimbledon in January, and across Richmond Park in February – I'm hoping for snow. March will see us cross the Thames and head back towards the east.

Next walks

Wednesday 7 January, Thursday 12 February, Tuesday 10 March

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 updates

Article, legwork and pics
by Peter Aylmer



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.





Wanstead nature club

For children aged 7-13 years

Bring your youngster along to have fun with others learning about our local nature - birds, plants, trees, butterflies, pondlife, insects etc.

We meet at the changing rooms building, Harrow Road, Wanstead Flats E11 3QD the forth Saturday of every month 10 a.m. - 12a.m.

Run by local volunteers. Only £1.50 a session
To find out more and register to join please contact
Gill James 0208 989 4898

[e-mail gill.james@btinternet.com](mailto:gill.james@btinternet.com)

Supported by The Wren Wildlife & Conservation Group
and the City of London



Wanstead nature club

Report by Gill James. Wonderful pictures by Claire Misata

JULY: SNAIL-RACING & MINI BEASTS

The Emperor Moth caterpillars which Nils had taken home last month and fed with lots of bramble leaves have now turned into rather dull brown pupae. They will stay like that until they hatch out as beautiful moths and Tim has taken them home to look after them.

We took our bug pots and nets and went to look for minibeasts. We walked a short distance and found lots of butterflies. We identified four kinds: little orange skippers, larger meadow browns and pretty gatekeepers in the long grass in the sunshine and speckled wood butterflies in the shade under the trees. We also found crickets, spiders, a giant black slug and lots of bees visiting the clover on the playing field.



Then we had our snail race! We labelled up our snails, put them on the edge of a large damp sheet



and pointed them in the direction of a pile of delicious-looking lettuce & carrot in the middle. Sure enough they headed in the right direction and Ruby's snail practically galloped to the winning post, despite being nobbled by another snail. Gill's large black slug was, sadly, last.

Eight children again today.

AUGUST: DEN BUILDING & BEES

We went on a foraging expedition to find suitable branches of dead wood to make our den. They had to be tall enough and strong enough. We leant the branches together in a wigwam shape and then covered them with grass and leaves to keep out the wind and rain, taking care to leave a door and a window, and when it was finished it was just big enough to fit us all inside! It looked really nice and we decorated it with brown leaves and wished we had a flag to put on top.

We found a dead hedgehog full of maggots which

made us feel sad. We thought it might have been killed by a fox. But it means there must be more hedgehogs around on Wanstead Flats which is good.

Then we went back and looked hard at Gill's collection of dead garden bees to see if we could identify the differences between a honey bee and different kinds of bumble bee. We identified a little furry orange tree bumblebee.



Then we played the Nectar Collector game where we pretend to be bees collecting nectar for the hive-we were running backwards and forwards with a sponge full of water (nectar) to our buckets (the hive) and got quite wet.

Seven children today.

SEPTEMBER: SPIDERS AND POND-DIPPING

We went spider-hunting and found hundreds! Some were busy building webs in the brambles and some were scuttling about in the leaf litter on the ground. We saw one garden spider with a big cross on its back catch a crane-fly in its beautiful sticky orb web and paralyse it and wrap it up in a little parcel.

Then we went pond-dipping in Jubilee Pond and found a water beetle and lots of other tiny creatures but the best things were the leeches looping their way along and sticking to stones. A lady with a dog kindly showed us a very large terrapin who lives around the pond and it kept sticking out its stripey face at us.

A very scary thunder and lightning night and early morning - just three children today.

OCTOBER: DEER ANTLERS, TRACKS AND TRAILS

Jordan Thomas who is an Epping Forest Keeper



brought along his collection of deer antlers and skulls to show us. We were surprised how heavy they were! There were antlers from British deer such as red deer, roe deer and fallow deer, though the only kind of deer we might see near here in Bush Wood is the little Muntjac, which is the size of a dog.

Then we went out to look for tracks and signs nearby and we followed some interesting trails in the long grass, until we found a fox den and a mouse's nest, and some very smelly mystery poos which we thought might be mink.

NOVEMBER: FUNGI AND GIANT TREE FORAYS

Today we found some pretty and curious fungi with strange names- Trooping Funnel, which are large and cloudy grey in colour, little black and white Candlesnuff growing on dead wood, some

large Bracket fungi on the trunk of an old lime tree in Evelyn Avenue, lots of little Fairy Bonnets in the grass, and a pretty pink one called Plums and Custard!

Jane showed us one called a Yellow Stainer from her garden which is quite poisonous although it looks like an edible one. You can eat some fungi if you know them well but it is better not to risk making a terrible mistake.

Then we went for a muddy walk in Bush Wood and found a lovely big old sweet chestnut tree and we measured the circumference with a piece of string and a tape measure and found that it was over 200 years old! A tree trunk grows fatter at a rate of about 2.5cm a year so you can work out its age.

Article by Gill James



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

The group meet at the changing rooms, Harrow Rd, Wanstead Flats, E11 3QD every month. Sessions are planned for Sept 20th, Oct 11th, Nov 15th, Dec 13th 2014 and Jan 10th, Feb 7th. Mch 14th and Apr 11th 2015.

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

young hunters & gatherers in Wanstead park

The seven-year-olds at Aldersbrook Primary School have been learning about our ancestors long ago who lived in the Stone Age. They were very excited to learn how to light a fire and they knew how to catch a mammoth but their teachers thought they also might benefit from a trip to the local park to find out how to forage for food.



Although we have mixed feelings about the benefits of foraging these days, Jane and I felt that

it would be fun and a good way to introduce the children and their teachers to the joys of the great outdoors on their doorstep. So we agreed to lead not one but three trips as there were three classes!



So after we gave them solemn warnings about not eating anything we found, especially fungi, and illustrating this by showing them a Yellow Stainer fungi which gives you a very big tummy ache, we proceeded to the Park. The first thing we saw was a fairy ring of Trooping Funnel fungi hiding in the leaves under a beech tree. Then there were lots of joyous shrieks as they negotiated the muddy path and looked for mammoth prints as they went along.

November is a bit late to go foraging but we found plenty of food, sufficient to make an excellent supper- nettles for a tasty soup, roast duck stuffed with sweet chestnuts for main course with dandelion salad, followed by blackberries with

rosehip syrup. (If you know how to catch the duck and how to make a fire of course...)



The children were thrilled to enter Chalet Wood, which has a mystical feel at this time of year, and see the dens there. Although some people think these crude children's play structures are just an eyesore and a nuisance, they do have educational value: you can learn about the value of wood for warmth and shelter, and learn about how to make a simple structure. This is not so easy as you might think, especially if you are a small boy who has not previously been allowed to rush about with a stick or two in a wood. They had a go at making their own mini-shelters and it has to be said that the girls were a lot more methodical than the boys....

Article and pics by
Gill James and Jane Cleall



gallery

1



2



4



5



3



6



- 1 Fungi - Peter Adamson
- 2 Mistle Thrush - Nick Croft
- 3 Line of Oaks - Tricia Moxey
- 4 Gadwall - Tim Haris
- 5 Greylags - Tony Morrison
- 6 Foxes - Rosemary Stephens

Please e-mail your pictures to editor@wrengroup.org.uk

Wren crossword

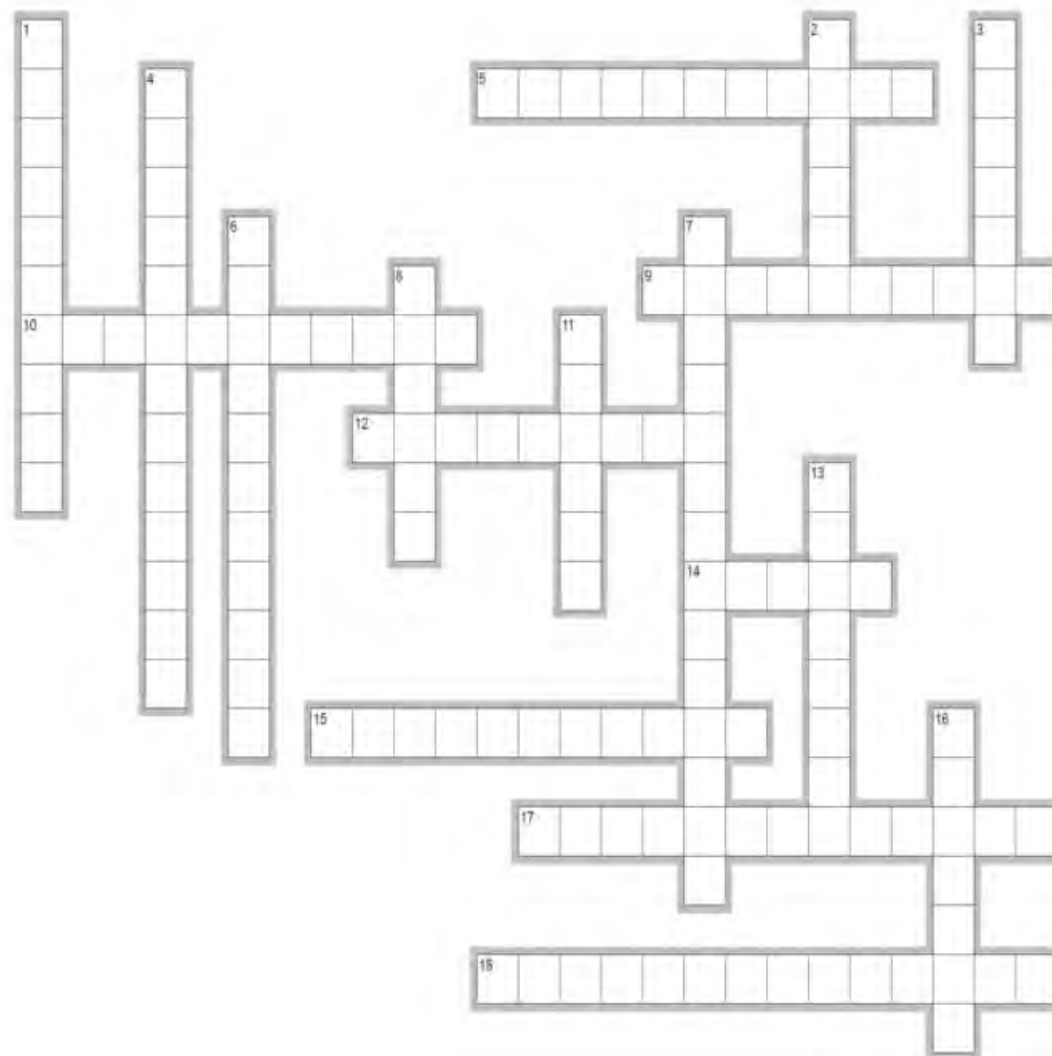
Puzzle produced by **wren** Treasurer Norman Olley. Why not print off this page and have a go? Norman has a **wren** teeshirt for the first person to send in the correct answers. Mail to olleyfam@hotmail.co.uk

ACROSS

- 5. Russian Sailor
- 9. Winged Lady
- 10. What is another name for Queen Annes Lace
- 12. Talks to a Rock
- 14. What Flower looks sweet on a tandem?
- 15. Mayfair Singer
- 17. Europes tallest herbaceous plant
- 18. Who designed the new Wanstead House in 1715 ?

DOWN

- 1. OWORDKECPE
- 2. This bird likes whiskey
- 3. Scottish Emblem
- 4. Which Famous Astronomer Royal made his observations in Wanstead Park
- 6. Largest Native Butterfly
- 7. Where would you find the Jubilee Pond ?
- 8. Do not grasp this
- 11. Swiss timekeeper
- 13. Wooden Plane
- 16. Liverpuddlians



events diary

January 2015

Sunday 4th: practical work in Wanstead Park

Sunday 11th: trip to Rainham Marshes RSPB reserve.
Contact Tim (tharris@windmillbooks.co.uk) for details

Sunday 18th: waterbird count in Wanstead Park
Meet by the tea hut, Wanstead Park, 10am

February 2015

Sunday 1st: practical work in Wanstead Park
Times: 10am to 1pm; Details: Peter Williams (020 8555 1358)

Sunday 8th: Trees in Winter walk.
Meet by the tea hut, Wanstead Park, 10am

March 2015

Sunday 1st: practical work in Wanstead Park
Times: 10am to 1pm; Details: Peter Williams (020 8555 1358)

Sunday 8th: waterbird count in Wanstead Park
Meet by the tea hut, Wanstead Park, 10am

Wednesday 25th: AGM and presentation on the Walthamstow Wetland Project, given by David Mooney.

Venue: Wanstead Golf Club, Overton Drive, 7.45pm

April 2015

Sunday 12th: Wanstead Flats, joint walk with Friends of Epping Forest
Meet: 10.30am, Jubilee Pond car park, Lake House Road

Sunday 19th: Wanstead Flats, joint walk with north-east London RSPB group
Contact Tim (tharris@windmillbooks.co.uk) for details

May 2015

Sunday 17th: trip to Canvey Wick nature reserve
Contact Tim (tharris@windmillbooks.co.uk) for details

June 2015

Thursday 18th: Wild Flowers in Wanstead Park, a walk led by botanist Tricia Moxey
Meet outside Riding Stables, Empress Avenue, 7.30pm

Saturday 27th: bat walk, Wanstead Park
Contact Tim (tharris@windmillbooks.co.uk) for details

Sunday 28th: midsummer bio-blitz, Wanstead Park
Meet outside The Temple, in Wanstead Park, at 10am. There will also be activities on Wanstead Flats.

July 2015

Thursday 30th: bat walk, Wanstead Park
Contact Tim (tharris@windmillbooks.co.uk) for details





Links

Got any links to go on this page ? Get in touch
wreneditor@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 Naturalist Association <http://www.bna-naturalists.org/>

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

UHK Safari <http://www.uk safari.com/index.htm>
Natural England <http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/>

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

and finally

It's winter – and for those regular and more lasting readers of this newsletter you know that means my reminding you all that it's time to look to our feathered friends and extend to them a helping hand during the colder months.

I know many of you regularly feed garden birds but it is good to supplement their birds' diet with extra food in the winter. This can be a real life-saver in harsh weather. What benefits the birds also benefits us with the addition of beautiful wild creatures and hours of entertainment.

People have fed birds for many years simply for their own pleasure, but there is more to it than that. The massive loss of habitat in the wider countryside has meant that birds have retreated back to where there is still food - surviving hedgerows, nature reserves and privately owned wildlife friendly areas – of which gardens form the major part.

There is also an important knock-on effect for the organic gardener – birds will get used to searching for food in your garden and will search for greenfly, caterpillars and snails during the rest of the year.

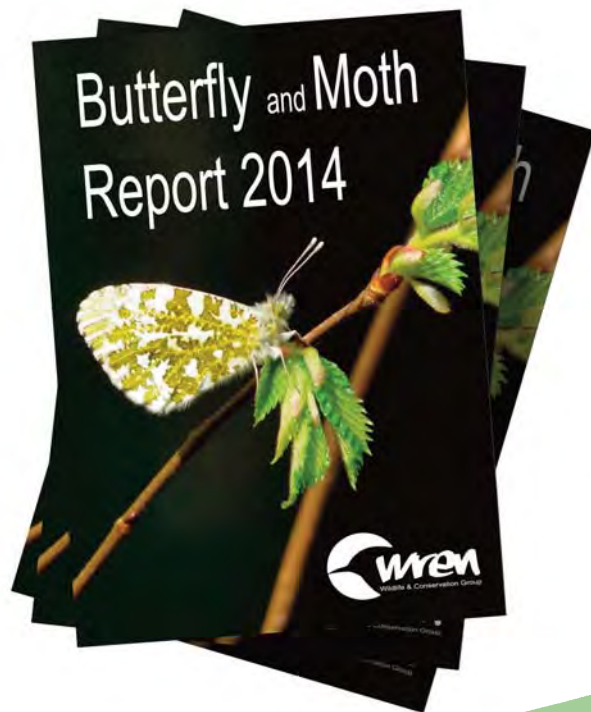
BIRD FEEDING TIPS

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

For more detailed information on how to feed our feathered friends look online or go to <http://www.rspb.org.uk/makeahomeforwildlife/advice/helpingbirds/feeding/>



Blue tit feeding - dawn and dusk are the key times of day to ensure there is food available, especially during these colder months.



Welcome to the 2014 butterfly and moth report for the Wanstead area. Unlike the previous two moth reports (covering 2012 and 2013), this year butterflies are included, something I hope to continue in future years. Indeed, given the high level of interest in this group, they are given pride of place at the front of the report.

This and other Wren reports can be found at

<http://www.wrengroup.org.uk/about-us/published-reports>

Tim Harris



now & then

Were you right ?

The Grove in Stratford in 1907 and how it looks today

