

The logo for Wren Wildlife & Conservation Group features a stylized green leaf on the left and the word "Wren" in a white, bold, sans-serif font on a green rectangular background to the right.

# Wren

Wildlife & Conservation Group

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# winter 2012

<http://www.wrengroup.org.uk/>

*Pic - Wanstead Flats in the snow*

A small photograph of a person wearing a dark, heavy winter coat and hat, standing in a field covered in snow. The person is facing away from the camera, looking towards the horizon. The background is a vast, flat, snow-covered landscape under a pale sky.

# a word from the chair

I'd first like to wish everyone Season's Greetings!

It's worth reflecting on what has been a memorable year for our area.

Yes, it was an Olympian year, but - after a dry winter - a very wet one. The positive short-term consequences of this were high water levels in our lakes and ponds, luxuriant plant growth and an absence of serious summer fires on Wanstead Flats. The downside was a very poor flight season for many butterfly species and a poor breeding season for our Skylarks. It will be interesting to see whether this has a damaging effect in

the medium term, since we know the larks and the blue butterflies (Common Blue and Brown Argus) are hanging by a thread in our area.

Wren Group members have worked miracles during the year. The practical work team led by Peter Williams has contributed to keeping paths in Wanstead Park accessible and showing off its bluebells and daffodils. The waterbird counters have generated reams of statistics for the British Trust for Ornithology, helping to paint a picture of how Britain's ducks, geese, grebes and gulls are faring. The visible-migration watchpoint on Wanstead Flats has done something similar for our migrant songbirds and has produced records of species not seen in our for many years, if at all. Group member Nick Croft deserves special thanks for that. Two Group members operated moth traps from February onwards, again 'discovering' species that had not been recorded before. A series of walks and meetings have kept interest bubbling away - and new members signing up.

the other Nature Club organisers, who throughout the year have produced imaginative activities for the next generation of naturalists and conservationists. This work is probably the most valuable of all, and long may it continue.



Finally, a word of praise for Gill James and

Let's hope 2013 is just as good as 2012 has been.

Happy New Year! Tim Harris



# a word from the editor

Because this is an electronic newsletter we can include links to other sites and snippets of information. When you see blue underlined text it means that it is a link. Just click on the link for more information or to be taken to another site. Clicking the link will always take you to another frame so your newsletter will still be there in the background – just close the new window to continue reading your newsletter.

I've also included at the back of the newsletter a

list of links which I think are useful or interesting – if you have any links you would like to add please send them in.

Previous newsletters can now be found on the wren website at <http://www.wrengroup.org.uk/about-us/newsletter/>

Lastly, thanks to everyone who has helped with the newsletter this past year. I have been amazed at the number and quality of contributions as well as

the amount of enthusiasm shown by everyone – it makes my job a piece of cake. Please keep it up.

Remember this is your newsletter and will not survive without your support so if you have any news, views or stories please send them to me at [editor@wrengroup.org.uk](mailto:editor@wrengroup.org.uk)

Have a great Christmas and a wonderful new year

All the very best Tony Morrison



# danbury

*Wood pigeon, stock dove, collared dove ...*

**When I set off with Tim on a circuit around Danbury, we had very different objectives: he, to see if 40 bird species could be identified on the walk; me, to make sure my route directions made sense. One of us had a bit more success than the other.**



*Willows at a bend in the Chelmer*

Over the course of 2012, I've been putting together a guidebook on Essex for Cicerone Press. It includes all the walks you would expect and a few you wouldn't. Danbury was a natural of course, but so stuffed full of good things that getting a coherent route together was an effort in itself. I had settled on a circuit that started in the parklands to the west of the village, dropped down to the Chelmer, then rose back up to the heaths and woodlands of the ridge itself. It would need

careful checking, and that's where Tim came in. His job was to follow my text and not get lost. Every so often though, the pace slowed to a dawdle, out came the binoculars, then the notebook.

*... swallow, house martin, meadow pipit ...*

But we cantered through the landscaping of Riffhams Park, laid out by the last of the great classical landscape gardeners Humphry Repton, and had time to vie for 'best depth of field' photographing a compliant comma butterfly just before the unimproved grassland of Waterhall Meadows. Beyond Little Baddow's hall and church, we joined the willow-lined Chelmer, with a convenient café half-way.

*... moorhen, coot, dunnock ...*

As we climbed back to the ridge, large parts of Essex spread out behind us: surprising how little elevation is needed to give depth to views. A charm of goldfinches appeared in a bare tree just before the Heather Hills, and the woodlands beckoned.

*... robin, song thrush, mistle thrush ...*

Here, the route becomes more intricate. On Woodham Walter Common, my guide-notes made little sense, even to me, but with a bit of toing and froing and careful pacing we agreed on changes. On Poor's Piece, the apparently simple task of following waymarkers was beyond us for a while, and I resolved to return another day for the detail; then a fallen waymarker on Lingwood Common had us careering downhill in the wrong direction. But we got there in the end, 'there' being the Griffin Inn for a swift pint(s), since this is an easy place to get to by bus and train from east London.

*... common buzzard, sparrowhawk, kestrel ...*



*Tim Harris at Woodham Walter Common*

Tim finished on 46 species. No peregrine though. Why this should be relevant, in the space between Danbury and the Chelmer, find out next time.

Article and pics by Peter Aylmer





# ash trees killed by fungus in uk

In recent weeks, much publicity has been given to a minuscule pathogenic fungus *Chalara fraxinea* and its impact on ash trees.

This harmful fungus causes die-back and death of ash trees. Since the mid 1990's this fungus has been ravaging the ash woodlands of Eastern Europe from where it spread to westwards into Denmark and Holland.

It took a while to identify the actual pathogen which turned out to be a new species, *Chalara fraxinea*.

However, in 2011 molecular studies concluded that *C. fraxinea* is closely related to *Hymenoscyphus albidus* which normally rots fallen ash leaves. It seems that this new species is an Asiatic one which somehow arrived in Eastern Europe and started to spread through the ash woodlands there, killing the trees.

It reached Denmark in 2003 and two years later reports suggested it had become widespread in the ash woods. Now some 80% of this country's mature trees, many of which were being grown for timber, are dead or dying. The fungus stains the wood black making it unsuitable for furniture so much is now being burnt for firewood.

The European Plant Protection Organisation, an intergovernmental organization responsible for European co-operation in plant health decided to add *C. fraxinea* to the EPPO Alert List in 2007, but this has not prevented the movement of infected plant stock across Europe with disastrous consequences. Dutch growers have built up a reputation for producing quality plants and saplings for the horticultural trade. For many years, UK ash seeds were sent to Holland, germinated and grown on and the young trees imported back into the UK.

The first imported infected stock was reported in the UK last March, but the alarm bells did not ring sufficiently loudly for action to be taken until this autumn, by which time it was too late as diseased stock had been sent out to many localities.



*Symptoms of ash die back include blackened leaves looking much like frost damage*

The symptoms of infection become visible on the bark of young ash trees as necrotic or dead spots appear on stems and branches. These necrotic lesions then expand, resulting in wilting and the die-back of branches above the damaged section, although the tree may produce some extra shoots.

The crown of the tree dies as the disease takes hold and it can ultimately be lethal. Ash die-back has been observed not only on woodland trees but also trees in urban areas including parks and gardens. Whilst felling diseased trees is an option; it would not halt the spread of infection as the fungal spores produced on dead leaf stalks will have spread to other nearby trees.

By the end of November ash die-back has been noted at 237 locations across the UK, some of which are known to be from infected imported trees. However, as many of these sites are in the eastern counties, Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, Kent and Sussex, as well as Northumberland and Yorkshire, it can be assumed that some of these infections may be caused by wind-blown spores crossing the North Sea. Surveyors have been out in force checking sites across the country and for the latest information on the spread of this disease visit the Forestry Commission's website <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/chalara>.

Within the Wanstead area, ash trees are found in many places within the built up area, gardens, recreation grounds and parks. Ash seeds vigorously and many young trees have grown in the informal greenways along railway lines, odd neglected corners and road verges too. It is not a common tree within the southern part of Epping Forest, but there are scattered individuals of all ages present.

Should ash die-back get a hold, then the loss of young and mature ash trees will alter the appearance of the local landscapes. Not only that, it is a tree with many uses as it can be used to make fine furniture. Ash poles make good handles for various tools and it burns easily. From a wildlife point of view, bullfinches like eating the ash keys

and there are at least 110 insect species noted as using ash as a potential food source. For more details of this see the BRC list of insects and host plants at [www.brc.ac.uk](http://www.brc.ac.uk).

There are several key signs to look out for:

- Blackened, dead leaves – may look a bit like frost damage.
- Dark lesions – often long, thin and diamond-shaped – appear on the trunk around the base of dead shoots.
- The tips of shoots become black and shrivelled.
- The veins of leaves, normally pale in colour, turn brown.
- In mature trees, die-back of twigs and branches in the crown, often with bushy growth further down the branches where new shoots have been produced.

In autumn and winter, native ash trees will naturally be shedding their leaves, making it very difficult to identify ash die-back. All of these symptoms can also be caused by other problems, so final diagnosis should be made by an expert.

Learn to spot the signs – download the [Forestry Commission picture guide](#)

We shall have to be vigilant in checking local ash trees next spring for signs of infection. Fortunately the native population comes from a varied genetic base and there is optimism that some of the trees will show resistance to the infection and their descendants can be used to ensure that this iconic and biologically useful tree continues to thrive.

Article by Tricia Moxey



# the flats at war

**This picture shows the National Fire Service (NFS) drilling on Wanstead Flats. The NFS was formed in 1941 in response to the extreme pressures caused by the Blitz from September 1940 to May 1941. The government**

**decided to nationalise the fire services as before the war there had been 1,400 different fire services in the UK.** They did not share common equipment so for example the hoses of one urban district (UDC) fire brigade would not fit the pumps of an adjacent rural district council's fire engine if they were called to a large incident! The government promised this was a wartime contingency and that control would be handed back to local authorities which it was in 1948, though to fewer fire authorities than pre-war.

In 1939 Wanstead Flats was divided between a number of local authorities including East Ham County Borough Council, West Ham County Borough Council, and Wanstead and Woodford UDC. All these council's were part of Essex, not London as London did not extend east of the River Lea till 1965. Then the London Fire Brigade assumed responsibility for fires on the Flats.



In the picture you can see men hauling what are called trailer pumps across the Flats, presumably near to the model yacht pond (now the Jubilee pond) on Dames Road. Here they would put a suction hose in the lake and practice pumping water. In the background you can see what is called an auxiliary towing vehicle (ATV) parked on the road. These were not fire engines as such but just small lorries, often produced by Austin or Ford. The ATV had no pump like a proper fire engine and towed the trailer pump. ATVs were produced in their thousand in the war and also London taxis were requisitioned in large numbers to tow trailer pumps. They would have been painted grey like all wartime fire appliances.

Even the gleaming red ones were painted grey much to the chagrin of regular firemen. Before the war they would have intense pride in the gleaming red fire engines with their brass fittings kept at the main Stratford fire station of West Ham Fire Brigade; the fire engines made by Dennis or Leyland.

Notice also the men are wearing boiler suits, not proper uniforms, and they would have worn the tin hats of auxiliaries not proper fireman's helmets. The regulars looked down on the auxiliaries though many of the latter earned their spurs in the Blitz and won respect.

This is a very atmospheric photo of a particular period of the history of Wanstead Flats.

Article by Peter Williams



Peter is a veteran Wren member who is researching a history of West Ham Fire Brigade and is an expert in the history of the fire service. He is also researching with others a history of the Flats in the War.



# the wonderful - and very strange! - world of fungi

Q: What fungi actually moves about?

Answer: Slime Mould (*Leocarpus fragilis*)

Q: Which fungi glows in the dark and is the cause of many a fright on a dark night?

Answer: Honey Fungus, otherwise known as Bootlace Fungus

These are a couple of the more spooky things I learned about the world around me when local naturalist Tricia Moxey gave an illustrated presentation on the fascinating kingdom of fungi on Monday 17th September at Wanstead House. Fungi are fascinating: some turn blue when squashed, and some can be used to light fires, or provide ink, or even antiseptic. Fairy rings get bigger by 6cm a year and can live for more than 100 years. No wonder they are associated with fairies and elves!

We also learned the surprising fact that 90% of plants have symbiotic relationships with fungi. Most plants have a beneficial relationship with a particular fungus, which exists with its mass of fine feeding threads called mycelium around the roots of the host plant. This mass of threads can extend up to 19km! Which raises the question, should we be digging up the soil around our plants and disturbing this relationship?



*Amanita muscaria*, commonly known as the fly agaric or fly amanita, is a poisonous and psychoactive basidiomycete fungus, one of many in the genus Amanita. Pic by Andrew Spencer. Text courtesy of Wikipedia

the deer in the Forest in the autumn. They are best not eaten as part of our human food chain, however, or the consequences can be very unpleasant. Fungi are susceptible to pollution, and the increasing amount of nitrates in the soil precipitated by car exhaust is having a deleterious effect. Some types of fungi naturally eat away the dead heartwood in the middle of mature trees, a process that is not visible to the naked eye. This creates a problem for those responsible for the health and safety of our amenity trees in parks and public gardens, and trees can now be electronically scanned to assess their health and to prevent unhappy accidents.

So if you go down to the woods today, look out for Fairy Bonnets and Jelly Ear, King Alfred's Cakes, Stinkhorn, Chicken in the Woods - and try to guess how they got their names!



*Auricularia auricula-judae*, known as the Jew's ear, jelly ear or by a number of other common names, is a species of edible Auriculariales fungus found worldwide. Pic by Andrew Spencer. Text courtesy of Wikipedia

The different types of fungi can be summarised as stinkhorn, bracket, trumpet, club, sponge and gill, and all can be seen in their glory in Epping Forest at the right season. Fungi are an essential element in the food chain for many creatures. For example, they can make up to 75% of the diet of

## Fungi Walk 28 October 2012 in Bush Wood

Leader Tricia Moxey; article by Pam Orchard

The weather proved kind to the group that met to walk through Bush Wood to look at the fungi. After a wet week and a bitterly cold Saturday, the Sunday was warmer and dry although it was a little wet underfoot. Tricia Moxey led us in our search for fungi and we walked through open grassland to a solitary young oak tree which was host to a cluster of Brown Deceivers. Tricia explained how a single spore would find a host to live on and would thrive in this case underground with expanding strings finding food around the roots. The plant fruits by producing the fungi that we were observing and when mature release spores into the atmosphere. Very close to the deceivers was a solitary Yellow Field Cap a variety that grows in open grassland. As we continued we saw small brown Fairy Bonnets growing in clusters and we were to see several more varieties on our way round.

Walking to the edge of the woodlands we saw the first group of Clouded Agaric, these are quite sturdy fungi, whitish in colour with a pleasant mushroom aroma. They grow in rings which may be several metres in diameters. The rings increase about 6cm in diameter each year and some rings may be several hundreds of years old. Many fungi expand in this way and we were soon busy looking for the growth patterns of the species that we found. As we moved deeper into the wood we found Common Funnel Caps, which looked just as their name suggests a host of small white funnels on the wood floor.

Article by Gill James



Examining the tree stumps and felled trees Tricia soon identified the first bracket fungi, Jelly Ear which always grows on dead elder wood. As some of the group were still examining the Jelly Ear, others appeared with what bore a striking resemblance to the Olympic Torches; it was a piece of dead wood covered with White Fairy Bonnets. It looked spectacular as the bonnets were white and shining.



*The Shaggy parasol is the common name for three closely related species of mushroom, Chlorophyllum rhacodes, C. olivieri and C. brunneum, found in North America and Europe. Text courtesy of Wikipedia Pic Jackie Morrison*

Shortly afterwards Tricia pointed out the first Wood Blewit. They grow in deciduous woods and have a purplish cap which turns brown as they get older. They have a very pleasant aroma and are recommended for cooking. By now members of the group were beginning to spot various fungi in different locations in the wood and the cry of "Tricia, what's this one called" was heard at increasingly frequent intervals and Tricia patiently

identified what we had found. On a fallen tree we found Curtain Crust, a bracket fungus that looked like groups of small yellow mussels attached to the bark. Then there was Sulphur Toft a gill fungus with a bright yellow dome also growing on tree stumps and fallen branches. Then we found a Bay Bolete, a brown toadstool with a spongy cap; a piece had been knocked off, and so Tricia was able to show us how the flesh turned a bluish colour as soon as she pressed it with her finger. Growing very close to the Bay Bolete was a clump of Pink Fairy Bonnets, these were larger than the bonnets that we had seen before and were far more striking in appearance. Not far away we saw our first (of many) Butter Cap which looked as if indeed it was covered in butter. A keen-eyed member spotted a large creamy fungus shaped like a funnel, we all knew by now that it was one of the funnel group, but we needed Tricia to identify it as a Trooping Funnel.

We emerged into the open space of Evelyn Avenue and started to walk towards Wanstead Flats. We were all fascinated by the Heartrot bracket fungus on a hollow tree. Tricia explained that the spores grew on the dead wood at the centre of the tree and then fruited on the outside. The tree was still living but would be weakened by the hollow centre and could be blown down more easily in a storm. The fungus grows on the tree for many years and can reach quite sizeable proportions. We were making for a young silver birch tree that is growing on the open heathland at the edge of the playing fields. The members of the Saturday Nature Club run by Gill James knew the treat that was in store as we had taken the youngsters to see it the previous day.

If anything the display of Fly Agaric toadstools was

even more impressive than on the day before, there were newly grown red domes still covered with the shattered spots of the sheath together



*Tricia Moxey admiring an example of the many species of fungi to be found in the Wren catchment area - Pic by Jackie Morrison*

with the bright red older toadstools fully grown with their flattened caps shining in the sunlight. The younger children had imagined pixies sitting on them and no doubt the adults did as well but did not articulate their thoughts in quite the same way. It was time to make our way back towards the



*Clitocybe nebularis* or *Lepista nebularis*, commonly known as the clouded agaric or cloud funnel, is an abundant gilled fungus which appears both in conifer-dominated forests and broad-leaved woodland in Europe and North America. Text courtesy of Wikipedia - Pic Jackie Morrison

Friends Meeting House. The next find was a Shiny Ink Cap, an innocuous looking domed fungus with a shiny surface. However if it is collected and kept in a container (such as a jam jar) for a few hours it decomposes into a sludgy black liquid which resembles ink and was once used for that purpose. The ink cap shared a rotting tree with several other fungi, a bracket known as Turkeytail, some delicate white Oysterlings are best viewed through a magnifying glass, a cup fungus which needed closer identification which we were not able to determine on the walk, and a small brown Toadstool, no more than 1cm tall and 1cm wide but perfectly formed. On the way back we seemed to find increasing numbers of fungi, many of them further examples of the ones we had already found earlier in the walk, but there were still a few new species, including some Crusted White fungi, also

best viewed through a magnifying glass when its intricate detail can be seen. There was a clump of Orange Funnel Cap (sometimes referred to as the Tawny Funnel Cap in the literature) which were very similar to the Common Funnel Cap other than in its colour. Finally a keen-eyed member spotted a Common Puffball, it was slowly disintegrating but made a fitting end to our walk which had provided us with so much to see and think about.



*Fungi Walk in Bushwood last October. Pic Jackie Morrison*

Several of the species that we saw are edible, some of which are highly prized. Tricia pointed out that anyone wishing to collect mushrooms in the Forest needs a licence to safeguard both the fungi themselves, and the general public, as not all are edible and some are very poisonous. We were all appreciative of her identification of the species and her knowledge of the way in which fungi live and reproduce.



*Parasol Mushroom. This is a basidiomycete fungus with a large, prominent fruiting body resembling a lady's parasol. It is a fairly common species on well-drained soils. Text Wikipedia - Pic by Tony Morrison*

After the group had dispersed three of us found a small clump of Wood Mushrooms but it would not be advisable to even think about eating them as they were so close to the road and would therefore almost certainly contain high levels of toxins from the traffic.

# Help to protect Epping Forest fungi

Yvette Woodhouse  
City of London Corporation

**Epping Forest Keepers are once again issuing a warning that people found collecting fungi will be liable for prosecution.** Whilst the fungi season so far has not seen a wealth of fruiting bodies, the City of London Corporation, which is responsible for Epping Forest, one of the UK's most historic open spaces, is issuing the stark warning in a bid to conserve their nationally important fungi species.



*Coprinus comatus, the Shaggy Ink Cap, Lawyer's Wig, or Shaggy Mane, is a common fungus often seen growing on lawns, along gravel roads and waste areas. Text courtesy of Wikipedia - Pic by Andrew Spencer.*

Epping Forest is a Site of Special Scientific Interest and a Special Area of Conservation partly because of the vast number of fungi species found there. It is important to conserve these important species, including some very rare and declining species, as not only can collecting destroy the visual spectacle provided by the fruiting bodies across the Forest but collecting can cause trampling and compaction of soils around tree roots where many fungi occur as well as having a negative impact on wildlife, such as scarce insects that depend on the fungi for their survival. In addition, large groups of people out collecting mushrooms in sensitive wildlife habitats within the Forest can be damaging to other flora, and can disturb wildlife, including the deer during their rutting season.

Head Forest Keeper, Keith French, said: "Every

year our Forest Keeper team works extremely hard to ensure that Epping Forest's fungi are protected. The season so far has not produced great quantities of fungi and we would once again like to remind people that collecting fungi from Epping Forest is against the byelaws and anyone found collecting the fungi is liable for prosecution."



*Bracket Fungus cause decay and rot in the heartwood of trees and produce bracket-shaped fruiting bodies on the trunk or main branches. These fungi usually lead to the weakening and eventual breakage or fall of affected trees. Text courtesy of Wikipedia - Pic by Tony Morrison*

Superintendent of Epping Forest, Paul Thomson, said: "We welcome visitors to come out to Epping Forest at this time of year to enjoy the autumnal colours of the woodland and to appreciate the amazing forms of fungi growing in this spectacular setting. We urge all visitors, however, to respect the byelaws and leave the fungi as they are found, on the Forest floor, for other visitors, and future generations to enjoy."



*Hypholoma fasciculare, commonly known as the Sulphur Tuft, Sulfur Tuft or Clustered Woodlover, is a common woodland mushroom, often in evidence when hardly any other mushrooms are to be found. Text courtesy of Wikipedia - Pic by Andrew Spencer.*



# deer hunter

**I must confess I'm new to this wildlife business. This time last year I wouldn't have known the difference between a Fallow Deer and a Honda Fifty. Having been a 'pen-pusher' for the past thirty-odd years I have now semi-retired and am looking at getting a little closer to nature. As editor of the Wren newsletter I am now on 'fast-track'. I need to earn my wings. So I am hunting deer – with a camera that is.**

I have been told that late autumn is a good time to see deer in all their glory. Most animals and birds up and down the country are fattening themselves on wild fruits and nuts. Looking at going to ground or even hibernating ready for when the cold snap arrives. Not the deer though. Deep in the forests and deer parks, tensions are rising – it is the rutting season, the time when male deer are driven by an urge to do their stuff – to reproduce.

So I have been informed - from October until early November strange groaning and belching sounds echo from clearings in the woods. The clash of antlers are heard as males show off their virility to potential mates and, like gladiators entering an arena, they parade around showing off their armoury of antlers. All I can say is this year they must all have gone on holiday or something because I didn't get to see any of that.

Now I did not enter into this project lightly. I've been building up to this. I did my homework - I surfed the internet and thumbed through many a book. I even bought myself a new 'Field Jacket' which claimed to make me invisible. On a more practical level, for the past six months I made weekly visits to the northern parts of Epping Forest spending hours and hours familiarising myself with my quarry, learning more about the deer's habitat and activities. I sat in my car with a flask of hot cocoa on the outskirts of the forest at the unearthly hour of 6.30 a.m. waiting for the sun to rise. I did the same waiting for the sun to start its journey down again.



Don't get me wrong during these expeditions I got to see deer all the time – mocking me from thickets. Posing tantalisingly - before melting away into the trees. During this time I learned a thing or two about deer - or so I thought.

I learned that during the day the deer rest in thick undergrowth and are difficult to



photograph, but you can see them for a few hours around sunrise and sunset. I learned that when first encountered they will often stop and stare for a just a few seconds before springing away – just long enough not to be able to take a photograph.



Most of all, I learned that you do not stalk deer. By definition to stalk is an act of intrusive behaviour or unwanted attention. I learned that

if you set off with this attitude then they sense you long before you them and indignantly bound off through the forest with a speed and a stretched gait that is breathtaking.



So I don't stalk the deer in Epping Forest, I just walk round the areas they like and hope for a chance encounter. Hope that they will feel kindly enough to give me a fleeting chance – time enough to take a quick snap or possibly two.

I didn't get to witness the rut – there's always next year. But as I sit here in my car with a flask of hot cocoa, waiting for the sun to come up I can hear the faint rumblings of the M25 motorway in the distance - that stop and start of commuters on their way to office, shop and factory and I'm reminded how fortunate I am to be here and just how privileged I am to be allowed to share the home of these wonderful animals.

Story by Tony Morrison



# across the flats to epping

*Angell Pond overlooking Capel Road in c1904. Note houses in process of being built. Also, shops no longer there - possibly as a result of bomb damage during the Second World War.*



The large open space on the edge of the southern extremity of Epping Forest is easily reached from either Forest Gate or Manor Park stations on the Great Eastern Railway, or Manor Park on the Midland Railway. It is now under the control of the Epping Forest Conservators, and, as a matter of fact, a pedestrian may walk from Rabbits Bridge at Manor Park, across the Flats, through Bush Wood, Snaresbrook, and so on right through the heart of the Forest itself until Epping and the Lower Forest are reached.

On the further side of the Flats is the beautiful City of London Cemetery, of very large extent.

*In the eighteenth century an annual cattle market was held on Wanstead Flats in March and April but it was in the nineteenth century that Wanstead Flats came into its own as a place of recreation for East Enders. During the summer months people came in large numbers to enjoy donkey and pony races, and a variety of sports. What Hyde Park was to the West End, the Flats were to the East Londoner:*

*"Thousands on a Sunday evening swarmed over that open space, the largest crowd around the bandstand. The pond opposite Capel Road attracted several children and dogs. A young man was giving an account of his imprisonment and begged boys around to keep honest. We saw no single instance of roughness or disorder. About 9.00 p.m. the crowds began to disperse".*

*An extract from the East Ham Echo,  
5th August 1904:*



*Angell Pond showing the bandstand in the distance. The Bandstand that stood beside the pond lost its popularity after the 2nd World War and was demolished in 1957. All that remains is a copse of trees planted in the bandstands heyday.*

Immediately adjoining this is Wanstead Park, through which a short cut leads to Cranbrook Park, Ilford.... As further indicating the remarkably open nature of this particular part of Essex it may be stated that a reference to a map of the world will shew that a line drawn across Wanstead Flats in a north-easterly direction does not go through any large town or even village of any considerable size, but crosses the German Ocean and the North Sea until the pole is reached; which is the first land in a direct line after leaving the shores of England. This undoubtedly tends to keep the air of the district fresh and sweet. Electric cars from East Ham cross a corner of the Flats at Manor Park; the West Ham cars run for a short distance on the western edge, being linked up with the Leyton cars at Forest Road. This noble open space is the property of the people forever, and is the playground of thousands.

A few years ago this great plain was quite bare of trees or shrubs, except for one or two isolated clumps, and was very boggy in patches. But, thanks to the efforts of the Epping Forest Committee, its surface is now broken up by picturesque groups of trees and shrubs, relieving its

former monotony. Drainage has brought about a much better state of surface and good paths cross the Flats in many directions. Near us is a pond known as Angel Pond, the delight of scores of happy youngsters who sail craft upon it or try to capture the furtive minnow. Within a railed enclosure is the bandstand erected by the Corporation of West Ham whose borough boundaries extend for a short distance in a northerly direction. In the distance, on our left, we may descry the square tower of Leytonstone Church; facing us is a grassy slope, a mile away behind which we see Wanstead Church peeping above the tree tops near Bush Wood; the eye, sweeping round, sees the high trees of Wanstead Park over the tops of the houses of a small new residential estate, while on our extreme right the Flats extend across to Ilford Cemetery and to Manor Park. Their total circumference is between five and six miles, the width varying from about three-quarters of a mile to a mile and a half. Here cricket and football find many ardent supporters according to the different seasons; there are no jealous notices of 'please keep off the grass', or 'trespassers will be prosecuted'; the whole expanse is free to all at all times and seasons; here and there are beautifully verdant plots of grass, the home of certain lawn tennis clubs, where Dan Cupid often shoots a sly arrow at the moment when some fair maiden cries 'Love, fifteen', while her responsive swain doubtless thinks 'Love me' the better phrase.

Taken from 'Round London' Publishing Company *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.

# bad hair day for epping trees

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

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

Pollarding and coppicing are very effective methods of producing a great deal of fast growing, sustainable timber without the need to replant. The ability of native broad-leaved trees to be pollarded and coppiced has greatly influenced British woodland. Although trees will grow from seed there can be many setbacks like browsing by deer and cattle and shading from dense canopies. Because pollarded and coppiced trees already have a fully

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



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

to produces upright poles favoured for fence rails and posts, as well as for boat construction. Pollarding was preferred over coppicing in wood-pastures and other grazed areas such as Epping because animals

would browse the regrowth from coppice stools.

One benefit of pollarding and coppicing is that trees tend to live longer than unmanaged specimens because they are maintained in a partially juvenile state, and they do not have the weight and windage of the top part of the tree.

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

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

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

growth of the pollarded trees. Epping Forest has the highest remaining concentration of historic pollard trees in Britain, so these are of particular significance in the Forest.



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

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

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

Article Tony Morrison



# bird report



*The Ring Ouzel is a European member of the thrush family Turdidae. It is the mountain equivalent of the closely related Common Blackbird, and breeds in gullies, rocky areas or scree slopes (Wikipedia). But also known to frequent Wanstead Flats - Ed*



## 'Mountain blackbirds' visit Wanstead

**It seems a trifle strange that Ring Ouzels, or 'mountain blackbirds', which breed in upland areas like the Pennines, the Cairngorms and the mountains of Scandinavia, should be so fond of flat-as-a-pancake and near-sea-level Wanstead Flats.**



*Stonechats are one of the few insectivorous birds to tough it out through the British winters. This renders them highly susceptible to cold weather, so they often keep to southern, coastal areas. They make a call that sounds like two pebbles being struck together, which perhaps explains their name. (Wikipedia) Pic by Nick Croft*

Yet every spring and every autumn we attract some of these marvellous thrushes as they stop over to feed and rest before continuing on their migratory journeys. This autumn ouzels were present every day between 16-23 October - at least two males and a female, and possibly five birds in total. Another dropped in on 29 October and yet another on 8 November. No other site in London attracts so many. These birds were almost certainly Scandinavian breeders en route to north-west Africa, where large numbers spend the winter in the Atlas Mountains.



*The Fieldfare is a member of the thrush family Turdidae. It breeds in woodland and scrub in northern Europe and Asia. It is strongly migratory, with many northern birds moving south during the winter. (Wikipedia) Pic by Nick Croft*

They weren't the only thrushes to pass through our area in large numbers. On many days in October and the first half of November, migrant Song Thrushes, Blackbirds, Redwings and Fieldfares could be seen passing overhead, sometimes quite low. Again, these were birds from northern Europe. The first Redwings were seen on 7 October, with 500 logged on 20 October at the visible-migration

watchpoint manned by Wren Group member Nick Croft. The first Fieldfares were on 9 October, with a slightly later peak: 650 on 6 November. In total, more than 1,500 Redwings and more than 2,100 Fieldfares were counted between the second week of October and the third week of November.



*The Redwing (Turdus iliacus) is a bird in the thrush family Turdidae, native to Europe and Asia, slightly smaller than the related Song Thrush. (Wikipedia) Pic by Nick Croft*

For birds migrating across the North Sea, it helps if they don't have to fly into a south-westerly gale. Very light winds, or easterlies are generally good for migration in the autumn. So it was no surprise that light easterly winds and murky conditions from 21-23 October helped produce an interesting mix of migrants: Skylarks, Meadow Pipits, Pied Wagtails, thrushes and many finches were involved. The highlights were a Short-eared Owl chased over the SSSI by crows; two Hawfinches in the copse by the Esso garage on Aldersbrook Road for three days; a female Brambling in Long Wood; two Golden Plover flying north over the

Flats; three Woodlarks flying west; a male Merlin shooting through, and finally a Ringed Plover heard crossing the southern flats on the morning of 3 December.



*The Mistle Thrush is a member of the thrush family Turdidae. It is found in open woods and cultivated land over all of Europe and much of Asia. Many northern birds move south during the winter, with migrating birds sometimes forming small flocks. (Wikipedia) Pic by Nick Croft*

It was nice to see parts of the SSSI looking wet, and the pools on the Fairground site regularly hosted good numbers of gulls. Common Snipe were regular in the SSSI, including three at the end of November. On 1 December a Woodcock flew over the copse on Aldersbrook Road. The first Firecrest for Wanstead Flats was in Long Wood on 16 October and at least one of the Bush Wood birds had returned by the end of November. Water Rails were seen in the Alders Brook, at Perch Pond and at Shoulder of Mutton Pond.

For a short while on the morning of 15 October there were two Goldeneyes (a female and a first-winter male) on Heronry Lake. The autumn's waterbird counts produced some interesting records, including 24 Little Grebes in Wanstead Park in late October and 93

Gadwall in late November. Unaccountably, a good flock of Pochard that spent much of the autumn Heronry Lake disappeared in mid-November, apart from a few birds on The Basin, only to reappear at the end of the month.

More details will be included in the Wanstead Bird Report, to be published in January 2013.

Report by Tim Harris



## 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.



# how to make an exceedingly good cake for our feathered friends

In our last newsletter I included an article on looking after our feathered friends when the seasonal weather turned for the colder. Now in the middle of winter this is even more important. Insects and other food are difficult to find in the winter so birds need to look for alternative sources of protein to survive. Small songbirds need to eat around 40% of their body weight every day and you can help them by making this special bird cake. It's a tried and tested recipe, which will attract

many different species. You can make more than one cake at a time. If you cover the extra cakes, and store them in the fridge, they'll keep fresh for a few weeks.

## STEP 1

Prepare the ingredients. Sunflower seeds and peanuts are good high energy foods. Crush the peanuts into small pieces to prevent the birds choking on whole nuts. Just put a few in a bag and then bash them with a rolling pin. You will also need a block of lard fat - a 500-gram block will provide enough for two or three cakes.

## STEP 2

Place all the ingredients in an empty food container, such as a foil tray. You can buy these new, but it is better and cheaper, to recycle old ones. You can also use old yogurt pots or old margarine tubs.

## STEP 3

Next take your fat, which will bind all the ingredients together. Get a grown-up or someone with a City & Guilds in Marginally Dangerous Sports to cut off about half of the block of fat, and melt it in a saucepan over a very low heat.

## STEP 4

No need to let the fat get too hot - after a couple of minutes the block should have completely melted. Get your grown-up to remove the pan from the heat and pour the fat over your seeds. Leave it in a cool place to set, and when it has fully hardened it's ready to give to the birds.

## 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.



# volunteers improve access to Connaught Water

**The City of London Corporation has completed improvement works to the much-loved local landmark, Connaught Water on Rangers Road near Chingford.**

Volunteers have been busy constructing two accessible angling platforms and a boardwalk across the lake.

Aquatic planting by volunteers has significantly improved the habitat with the addition of species such as water mint, reeds, water lily and water forget-me-not.

The new plants have been surrounded with temporary fencing to protect them from water fowl and dogs until they are established - after a year or so.



The City of London Corporation's dedicated Lakes and Ponds Task Force volunteers joined forces with the Scouts and Ranger Guides – who came from all over the UK - the Challenge Network, Youth

Rehabilitation and the Epping Forest Centenary Trust over the summer and autumn to build the boardwalk.

Volunteer Development Officer, Martin Whitfield, said: "Working with the young people was a fantastic experience; they were so

enthusiastic. Those involved worked incredibly hard and they should feel very proud of themselves for what they have managed to achieve in such a short time."

This is the culmination of improvements at Connaught Water, which also include a new accessible path, more seating, car park resurfacing with five disabled spaces, and the introduction of a waymarked trail linking Connaught Water to the newly refurbished Butler's Retreat café and the brand new Visitor Centre, The View.

The works were undertaken by GC Tilhill to the designs of landscape architects, Chris Blandford Associates, and funded by the Heritage Lottery funding as part of the City's Branching Out project. Prior to the works, 205,000 visits were recorded at Connaught Water in 2010 and the site will be re-surveyed in 2014.

Gordon Haines, Chairman of the City of London Corporation's Epping Forest Committee, who opened the boardwalk on Saturday 3 November said:

"The generous support from Heritage Lottery Fund, and the dedication of our wonderful team of volunteers, is enabling us to greatly improve the experience for visitors to Epping Forest. The boardwalk at Connaught Water provides a new opportunity to walk amongst the reeds and observe the colourful aquatic wildlife."

To get involved in volunteering in Epping Forest, visit:

[www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/eppingforestvolunteers](http://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/eppingforestvolunteers)

See the film of the boardwalk construction visit:

[www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/things-to-do/green-spaces/epping-forest/news/Pages/connaught-water-boardwalk.aspx](http://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/things-to-do/green-spaces/epping-forest/news/Pages/connaught-water-boardwalk.aspx)

Yvette Woodhouse, City of London Corporation, November 2012



# shhhhhh! - grasshoppers making out

**A team of ecologists have found that grasshoppers are having to shout to be heard over sounds like traffic noise with possible consequences for their mating habits. In order to attract mates, male grasshoppers rely on a continuous call which becomes more of a challenge with increased levels of background.** [\(Click to read more\)](#)

Ulrike Lampe of the University of Bielefeld in Germany says in [Science Daily](#),

*“Increased noise levels could affect grasshopper courtship in several ways. It could prevent females from hearing male courtship songs properly, prevent females from recognising males of their own species, or impair females’ ability to estimate how attractive a male is from his song.”*

There are fewer and fewer places in the world that remain silent, as cities and roads expand and new airports and other transportation centers are built in what were once quiet rural environments. The level of background noise has, without question, increased and all that noise can mask the sound signals that animals make.

Lampe and the ecologists collected 188 male bow-winged grasshoppers (*Chorthippus biguttulus*) from eight different places, half from roadside habitats and half from rural ones. The insects produce their mating song by rubbing a tooth file on their hind legs on a vein that protrudes on their front wings. Here is what they found from

analysing some 1,000 songs:

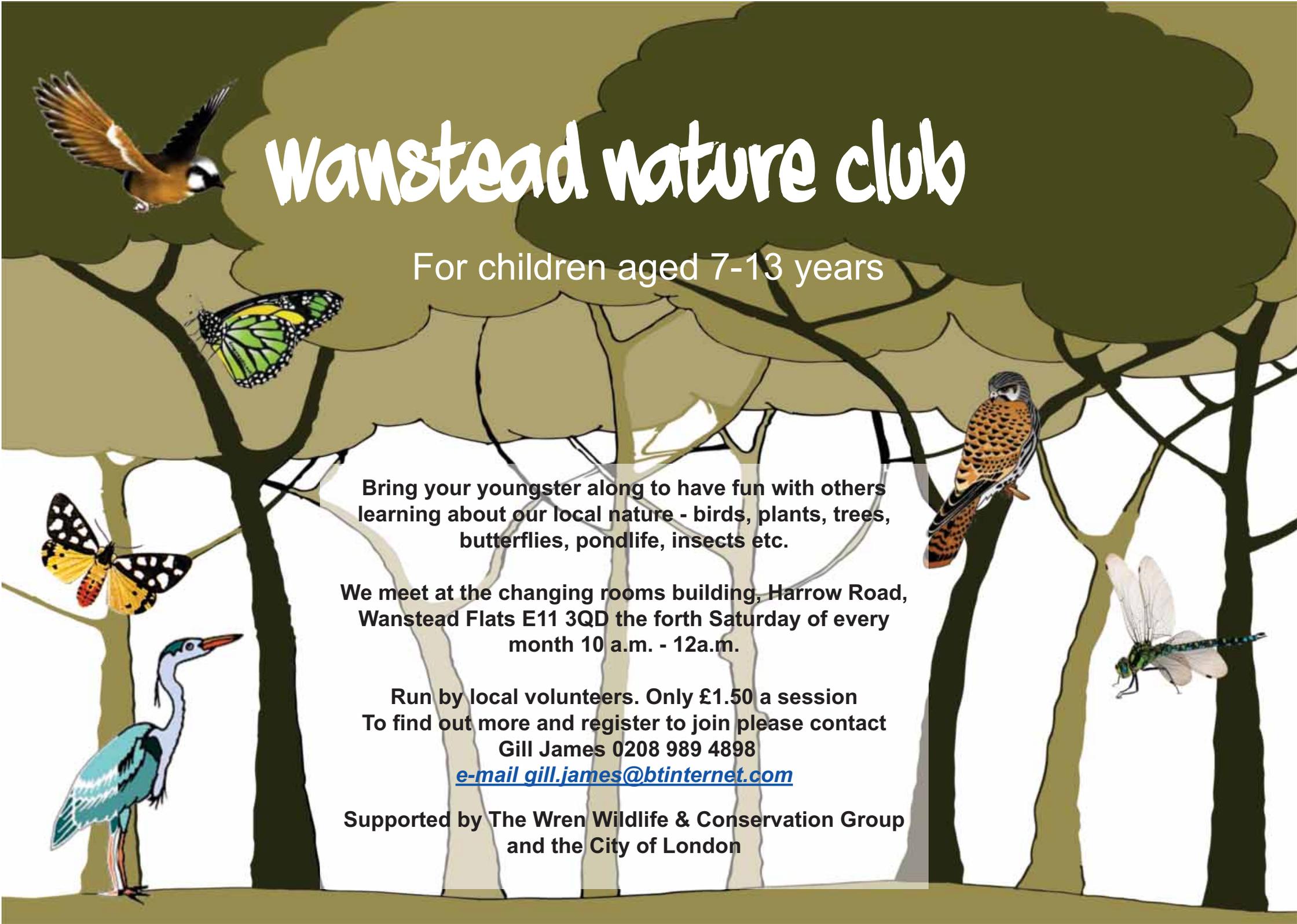
Comparing courtship songs of males from roadside and control habitats, they found that roadside grasshoppers now produced signals with a higher frequency components in the low-frequency band of their signals (i.e. 6-9 kHz). Low-frequency road noise at major highways is easily loud enough to degrade or mask this part of the grasshopper signal spectrum. Fine-tuning song frequency upwards would allow grasshoppers to shift their signals to more “private” frequency ranges.

The ecologists are now seeking to find out how the grasshoppers are able to shift the frequency of their songs. Do they adapt to the noise during their development as larvae, or do males from noisy habitats have genetic differences that lead them to produce different songs?

Grasshoppers are not alone; previous research has shown that frogs, whales and birds ([such as sparrows who tweet louder in urban environments](#)) change their sounds because of noise pollution. The study by Lampe, which is published in the British Ecological Society’s journal [Functional Ecology](#), is the first to note the impact of human-caused noise on insects and suggests that they employ strategies similar to those of birds and other animals to address the changes in their environments.

Researched by Tony Morrison





# 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 \[gill.james@btinternet.com\]\(mailto:gill.james@btinternet.com\)](mailto:gill.james@btinternet.com)

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

# Wanstead nature club

## September Nature Club: Spiders and Pond Creatures

Eleven children turned up on a lovely sunny morning.

First we examined and drew the various live spiders which we had carefully collected. We talked about their behaviour and heard the Greek myth story of Arachne.



(It is curious how we draw the image which is

in our heads rather than what we can observe in front of us: most of our children's drawings of spiders had a round body with no head, despite evidence to the contrary!)



Then we went outside and played a game of tag called Spider and Fly.



After that we trooped off with our nets and trays to Jubilee Pond for a late summer Pond Dip which we hoped would be more productive than our cold and wet Spring Pond Dip! Luckily we found lots of lovely creatures such as a water beetle, a dragonfly nymph, pond skaters, water boatmen, water snails, and lots of minute creatures we could not identify on our new Pondwatch Bugdials. We got gloriously muddy, found lots more large spiders in the grass, and watched a heron being harassed by noisy crows. Then we went back and had another stab at drawing our

*As always, a roaring success. Hassan and Sara love the club. Thank you to you and your lovely volunteers for all the hard work. See you next month.*

*Shine x*

creatures before returning them to their homes.

There was an unfortunate incident during our game of Tag when Jasmine fell on the grass whilst avoiding the 'spider' and hurt her leg badly. Jasmine has a pre-existing weakness in this leg. Fortunately her mother was there and there were plenty of adults present so we were able to arrange her transport there and then and later get the rest of the family group plus their bikes home. We wish Jasmine better soon and look forward to seeing her as soon as she can make it back to Nature Club.

*Just wanted to say thanks for a brilliant nature club on Saturday - Holly (Manning, there with my aunt) has a fantastic time and we all went out in the Wanstead Park woods and did it all over again on Sunday with her little sister, finding 13 types of fungi (we think) including a great fairy ring and some red ones (forgotten the name).*

*Kind regards  
Marianne Manning*

## October Nature Club: Autumn Leaves and Spooky Fungi

We (seven children) made brilliant leaf firework pictures with the colourful Autumn leaves we had collected, sticking them onto black night-sky paper in pretty patterns.



Then we examined some fungi on some rotten wood branches, which were helping the process of decay: Candle Snuff, and some weird black slimy stuff called Witches' Butter. Very Hallowe'en! Then we put on our coats and scarves as it was very cold and went outside equipped with cameras and a mirror on our Spooky Fungi Hunt.

We found lots of large fungi called Shaggy Parasols under the trees, some tiny little Fairy Bonnets and Yellow Field caps in the short grass, and finally a group of spectacular red fungi with white spots on under the silver birch

trees, called Fly Agaric. Poisonous but lovely! Apparently these help the trees, and the trees help the fungi, so it is a happy relationship. No pixies were seen.

The mirror came in useful to look under the fungi to see the gills under the caps without touching them.



Then we came back and Jacob made a very handsome twig skeleton on the floor before we went home.

Report by Gill James



# autumn waterbird counts

*Cormorant. The bird family Phalacrocoracidae is represented by some 40 species of cormorants and shags. Several different classifications of the family have been proposed recently, and the number of genera is disputed.*

*Text Wikipedia - Pic Tony Morrison*



**A good-sized group of around 15 turned out in reasonable weather for the waterbird count on Sunday 21 October. What became apparent very quickly was that there had been no massive increase in wildfowl numbers since the previous month.**



*Great Crested Grebe is an excellent swimmer and diver, and pursues its fish prey underwater. The adults are unmistakable in summer with head and neck decorations. In winter, this is whiter than most grebes, with white above the eye, and a pink bill. It is the largest European grebe. Text Wikipedia - Pic Sofia Benajeh*

Gadwall had built to 63, with numbers divided between Heronry, Perch and the Ornamental Waters, and 70 Tufted Ducks were likewise spread around the park's waters. Pochard remained remarkably loyal to Heronry, and were up on the previous month, at 38. Disappointingly, two Common Goldeneye, which had been on Heronry earlier in the week, had decided to move on. It often seems to be the case that unusual birds 'disappear' on the day of the WeBS count! After doing a circuit of Heronry and Shoulder of Mutton, we walked slowly up the east side of the Ornamental Waters, finding five Common Teal,

quietly going about their business in an area with lots of overhanging vegetation at the south end of Lincoln Island. This is a favoured spot throughout the winter. A highlight here was having a Little Egret loop around overhead, just over the canopy. In terms of numbers the most interesting count was that of Little Grebes: 24 represented the highest count of the year; most of these birds were on The Basin.

The count on 18 November was very different. For a start, all the Pochard had left Heronry and for no good reason that we could make out. We later found seven of them on The Basin, but as to the whereabouts of the others, who knows?



*Tim Harris, Kathy Hartnett and David Giddings taking a well earned rest at a waterbird count earlier in the year in Wanstead Park - Pic Tony Morrison*

Black-headed Gulls had moved into the Park in force (we counted almost 300 in the Park) since October's count, and Gadwall numbers were up as well, to 93 – exactly the same number as the



*Unlike many waterfowl, Mallards have benefited from human contact. They are very adaptable, being able to live and even thrive in urban areas which may have supported more localized, sensitive species of waterfowl before development. Text Wikipedia - Pic Tony Morrison*

Mallard. A Little Egret was in the same spot as in October, but this time perched on an overhanging branch. The group of 11 counters was treated to brief views of a Kingfisher darting across the waters of Heronry and later one individual chasing another around over Perch Pond. Also of note was a Grey Wagtail giving very good views in front of the refreshment kiosk and an aerial battle between a Sparrowhawk and a Carrion Crow almost directly overhead as we walked along the north side of Heronry. For many the most memorable aspect to the day was the wonderful autumnal light and the spectrum of browns, oranges and yellows of the turning leaves. Since there was not the slightest breeze, the reflections of trees in water were simply stunning.

Report by Tim Harris



# new kid on the block

In our last newsletter I mentioned that we have a new member of the Southern Forest Keeper Team. Thibaud Madelin previously worked for the National Trust on the River and Godalming Navigations, near Guildford in Surrey. There he was involved in looking after a 5 miles length of river, including tree and vegetation management, water level control



*Thibaud (far right) with a group of local residents discussing options for the clean up and maintenance of the Capel Road hedgerow.*

through weir operation and community work with volunteers and local groups. Before that he spent time with the City of London at Burnham Beeches. His background is in nature conservation, particularly ancient tree management, through an early career as a large event and festival organiser.

Thibaud has been assigned Wanstead Park as his 'patch' and building on all the good work that has already taken place there, with a particular emphasis on developing more volunteer opportunities through a regular ongoing maintenance programme.



In Thibaud's words – "Already 5 months into the job and I have barely had a chance to stop and reflect. It seems only yesterday that I started as a Forest Keeper and I have come across the

whole gamut of experiences the job can throw at you, from dealing with byelaw infringements and patrolling on sunny summer days through to

educating school kids and working with volunteers on cold winter days. As a Keeper you always have to be prepared for any eventualities and no two days are the same so it has been a sharp learning curve with more learning to come I'm sure! More recently, I have been working on a variety of projects, trying to support emerging volunteer groups and coming out with well-established one such as the EFCV. With my background as a Ranger, I still enjoy a good day out with chainsaw in hand, sharing banter with like-minded individuals who care just as much if not more about the Forest and certainly know a lot more about it than I do! But a lot of my time consists of liaising with members of the public, giving directions if needed, advice about how to best enjoy the Forest and ensuring that as an organisation we continue to protect the Forest while balancing the needs of people and wildlife.

With Christmas around the corner, a New Year will soon be upon us, the days will grow longer and the Spring will herald the return of the bluebells in Wanstead Park so I would like to take this opportunity to commend all the people who continue to help with the display by clearing brambles and other scrub this winter and wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year from Senior Forest Keeper Andrew Gammie, Forest Keeper Ian Greer, Jordan Thomas and myself."



Feel free to say hi if you see Thibaud around the Park or mail him at [thibaud.madelin@cityoflondon.gov.uk](mailto:thibaud.madelin@cityoflondon.gov.uk)

# gallery

3



4



6



7



5



2

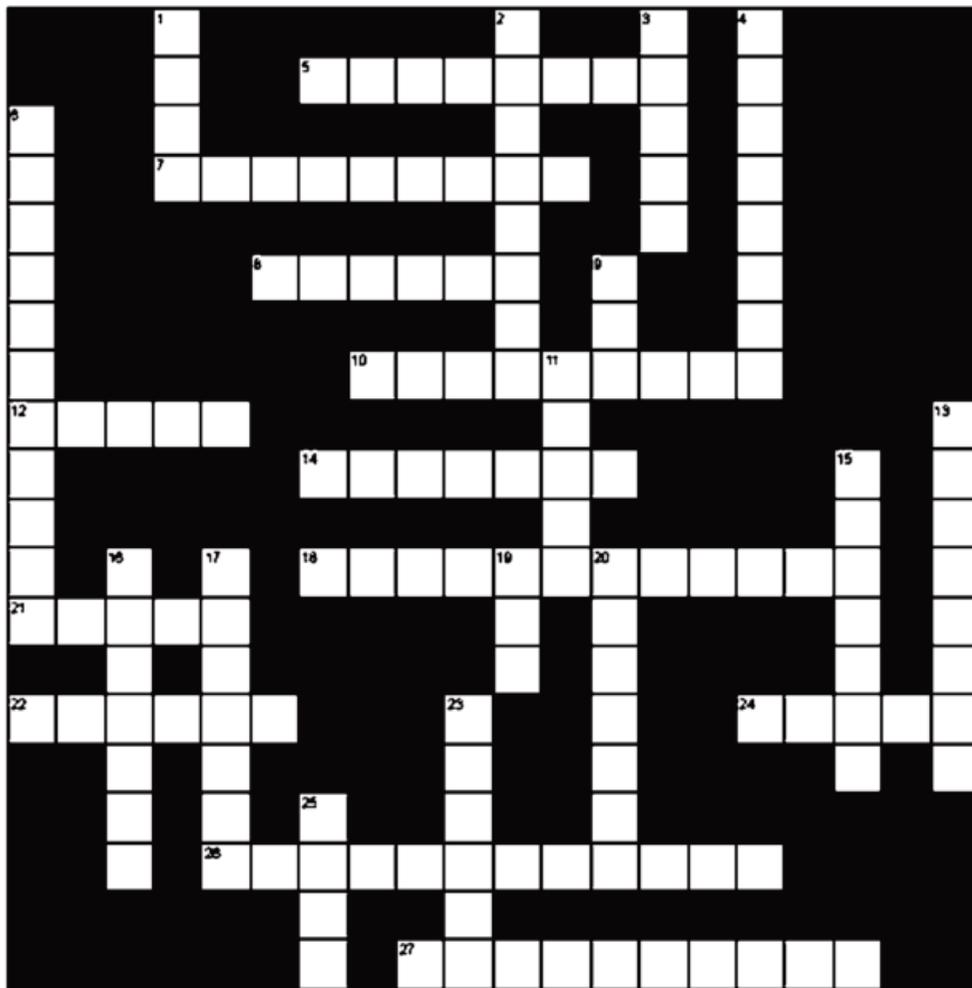


1



1. Cinnabar Moth Caterpillar - Gill James
2. Fly Agaric - Andrew Spencer
3. Speckled Wood Butterfly - Linda Tillbrook
4. Emperor Dragonfly Egg Laying - Paul Ferris
5. Grey Heron - Tony Morrison
6. Tricia Moxey in action - Jackie Morrison
7. Frosty spider's web - Gill James

# Wren Crossword



## Across

5. This spikey little fellow is a bit of a pig (8)
7. Time goes fast for a mythical fire breather (9)
8. This little bird is a bit of a heavy breather (6)
10. Angry William (9)
12. He had a great time (5)
14. Push the doorbell with too much force (7)
18. Cowardly tool hits a nail on the head (12)
21. Larger than a weasel (5)
22. Black and white faced mammal (6)
24. What does a dendrologist study ? (5)
26. Wintry flags (12)
27. Green or Spotted bird is a bit of a head banger (10)

## Down

1. Still freshwater pools, not as big as a lake (4)
2. Habitats associated with water (8)
3. Sorry – looks like a heron but the r's missing (5)
4. Feeling glum in the church tower (8)
6. I can't believe it's not, as birdies do (11)
9. What name is given to a male swan (3)
11. Tiny mouse-like predator needs taming according to the bard (5)
13. Open a ? as quiet as a... (8)
15. Is it a bird? Is it a plane? (7)
16. The male of this hoofed animal has a black, shiny nose and antlers (7)
17. They often run in to rivers (7)
19. This bird is a bit of a hoot (3)
20. A place where animals and plants live (7)
23. What is the tallest and thickest kind of grass (6)
25. This little mammal likes making hills (4)

# find the word

HABITAT, WETLANDS, BAT, FORESTRY,  
 DRAGONFLY, WILLOW, DENDROLOGIST,  
 CORMORANT, WOODPECKER, BUTTERFLY,  
 ACORN, HAWTHORN, MAGPIE, BADGER,  
 DEER, BARNOWL, BROOK, FOOTPATH, ANT,  
 BAT, ENDANGERED, WOOD, WARREN,  
 LEAVES, TREE

D	W	E	B	C	B	J	L	K	K	O	T	B	B	A	Q	F	Q	C	D
C	O	R	M	O	R	A	N	T	M	H	M	U	U	J	O	Z	E	X	O
O	O	F	F	O	O	T	D	Q	X	A	D	L	T	L	Y	C	B	O	Q
N	D	Z	O	G	O	C	U	S	C	C	Q	Q	T	H	Q	G	A	A	P
L	H	C	Q	P	K	K	G	W	O	O	D	P	E	C	K	E	R	Y	U
E	I	S	B	Y	J	X	E	E	R	R	Z	F	R	G	R	P	N	U	D
A	N	H	A	B	I	T	A	T	U	N	Z	T	F	L	F	F	O	T	P
V	U	K	T	A	R	U	U	L	W	P	R	A	L	T	O	Q	W	J	X
E	Y	C	M	U	Y	D	Y	A	F	Y	S	B	Y	E	O	W	L	D	S
S	N	P	C	S	I	T	P	N	Z	B	C	X	Q	C	T	F	P	H	P
I	B	A	T	M	Q	D	Y	D	L	K	R	I	P	Z	P	P	O	A	I
O	A	D	R	F	O	R	E	S	T	R	Y	B	M	Y	A	N	X	W	Z
N	D	Z	P	I	Q	A	U	T	W	B	Q	G	A	N	T	U	M	T	Y
Q	G	I	Z	X	E	G	M	H	P	Y	Q	H	G	X	H	U	S	H	P
D	E	E	R	H	C	O	Y	A	Q	X	Q	U	P	U	Y	M	C	O	F
W	R	I	Q	D	E	N	D	R	O	L	O	G	I	S	T	Y	G	R	R
X	O	D	U	T	L	F	H	U	Z	T	P	N	E	P	N	T	R	N	H
C	R	A	W	I	L	L	O	W	M	L	T	F	R	A	Z	R	Q	P	U
J	Y	Z	O	P	Z	Y	L	T	H	D	K	T	S	J	U	E	T	L	N
W	A	R	R	E	N	G	M	E	N	D	A	N	G	E	R	E	D	W	I

# now & then

Were you right ?

Answer

Angell Pond, Capel Road in 1906 and how it looks today.



# events diary

## December 2012

2nd December - Chalet Wood again if it needs further attention this time accompanied by mince pies and mulled wine

Contact Peter Williams Tel: 020 8555 1358  
[wrengroup.distribute@gmail.com](mailto:wrengroup.distribute@gmail.com)

Sunday 16th, Water birds in Wanstead Park, 10a.m. at the Refreshment Kiosk, Wanstead Park. With mince pies!

Contact Tim Harris Tel: 07505 482 4898/  
[tharris@windmillbooks.co.uk](mailto:tharris@windmillbooks.co.uk)

Saturday 22nd, Nature Club, 10a.m.–12p.m. in Harrow Road changing rooms, Harrow Road E11 3QD

Contact Gill James Tel: 0208 989 4898  
[gilljames@btinternet.com](mailto:gilljames@btinternet.com)

## January 2013

January 6th - Practical Work tbc  
Contact Peter Williams Tel: 020 8555 1358  
[wrengroup.distribute@gmail.com](mailto:wrengroup.distribute@gmail.com)

January 11th - New Year Social 7.00 pm onwards  
Bring your own booze and food  
44, Grosvenor Road, Wanstead, E11 2EP  
Contact Tim Harris Tel: 07505 482 4898

January 13th - Waterbird Count tbc  
Contact Tim Harris Tel: 07505 482 4898

January 19th - Nature Club tbc  
Contact Gill James Tel: 0208 989 4898  
[gilljames@btinternet.com](mailto:gilljames@btinternet.com)

## February 2013

February 3rd - Practical Work tbc  
Contact Peter Williams Tel: 020 8555 1358  
[wrengroup.distribute@gmail.com](mailto:wrengroup.distribute@gmail.com)

February 10th - Waterbird Count tbc  
Contact Tim Harris Tel: 07505 482 4898/  
[tharris@windmillbooks.co.uk](mailto:tharris@windmillbooks.co.uk)

February 16th - Nature Club tbc  
Contact Gill James Tel: 0208 989 4898  
[gilljames@btinternet.com](mailto:gilljames@btinternet.com)

February 25th - Guest Speaker tbc  
Contact Tim Harris Tel: 07505 482 4898/  
[tharris@windmillbooks.co.uk](mailto:tharris@windmillbooks.co.uk)

## March 2013

March 3rd - Practical Work tbc  
Contact Peter Williams Tel: 020 8555 1358  
[wrengroup.distribute@gmail.com](mailto:wrengroup.distribute@gmail.com)

March 10th - Waterbird Count tbc  
Contact Tim Harris Tel: 07505 482 4898/  
[tharris@windmillbooks.co.uk](mailto:tharris@windmillbooks.co.uk)

March 23rd - Nature Club tbc  
Contact Gill James Tel: 0208 989 4898  
[gilljames@btinternet.com](mailto:gilljames@btinternet.com)

March 25th - AGM tbc  
Contact Tim Harris Tel: 07505 482 4898  
[tharris@windmillbooks.co.uk](mailto:tharris@windmillbooks.co.uk)

March 30th - Joint Migrant waterbird walk with British  
Naturist Association  
8.30 am - Jubilee Pond  
Contact Tim Harris Tel: 07505 482 4898  
[tharris@windmillbooks.co.uk](mailto:tharris@windmillbooks.co.uk)

## April 2013

April 6th - Joint RSPB Waterbird Walk - tbc  
Contact Tim Harris Tel: 07505 482 4898  
[tharris@windmillbooks.co.uk](mailto:tharris@windmillbooks.co.uk)

April 28th - Mucking Tip Visit tbc  
Contact Tim Harris Tel: 07505 482 4898  
[tharris@windmillbooks.co.uk](mailto:tharris@windmillbooks.co.uk)

# useful links

Got any links to go on this page ? Get in touch  
[editor@wrengroup.org.uk](mailto:editor@wrengroup.org.uk)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

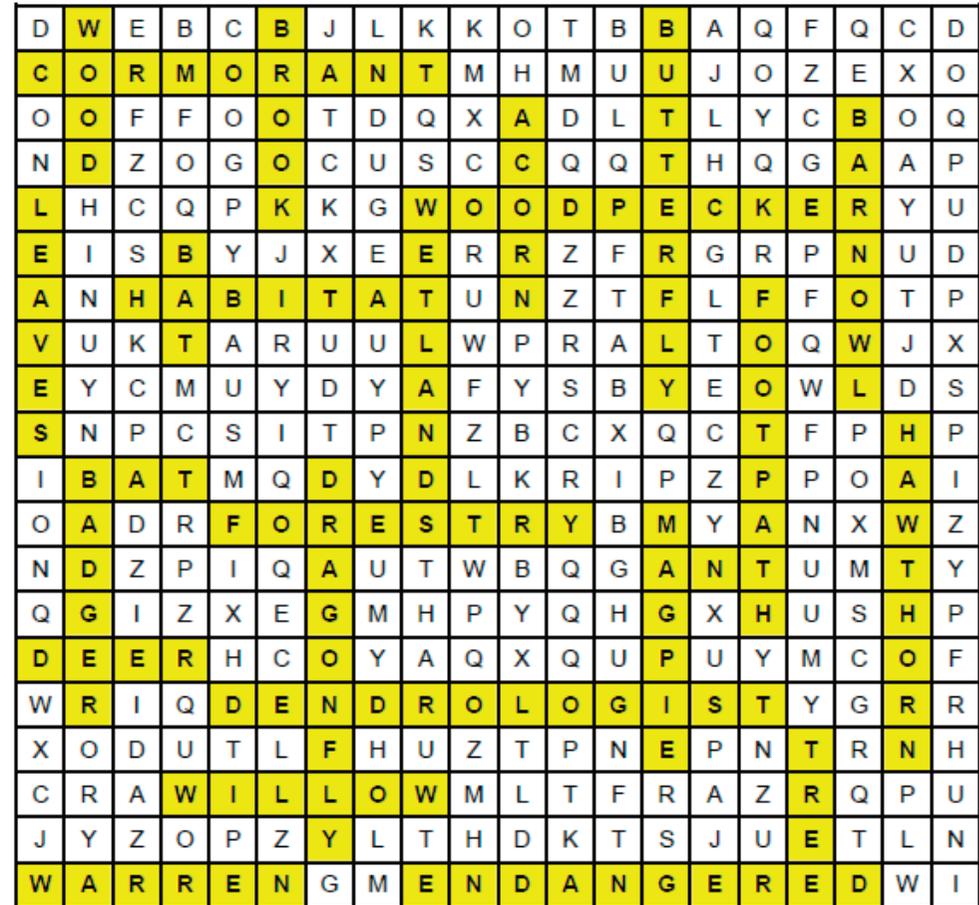
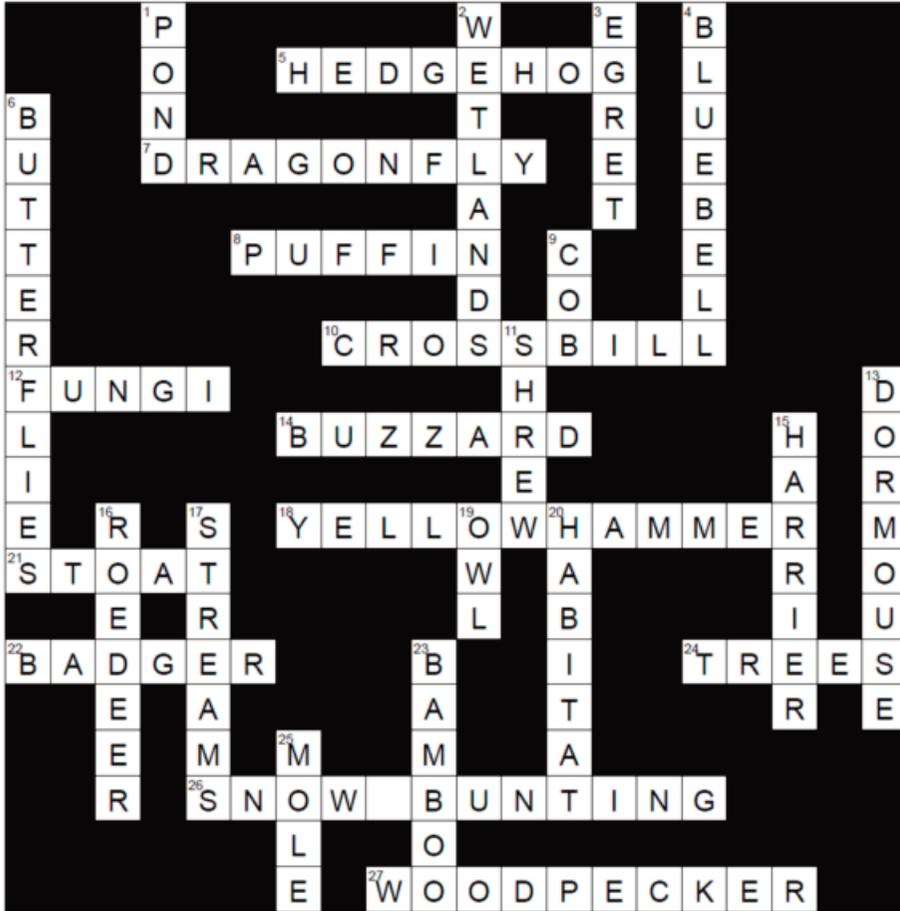
The British Deer Society  
<http://www.bds.org.uk/index.html>

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

Newham Story <http://www.newhamstory.com/>

Leyton & Leytonstone Historical Society  
<http://www.leytonhistorysociety.org.uk/>

# teaser answers



# and finally .....

## Moths in Wanstead 2012

A report **Wanstead Moths 2012** has just been published. Produced by Tim Harris and Paul Ferris this is the first report of its kind in the area. Together Tim and Paul recorded well over 200 species.

Traps were run regularly in gardens towards the east end of Capel Road and in Belgrave Road on the Lake House estate, near the southern end of Bush Wood. It was generally a cool and wet summer and conditions were often not conducive to trapping, especially in May.

The report can be downloaded from the Wren website or direct from the following link [http://www.wrengroup.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Moths\\_2012.pdf](http://www.wrengroup.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Moths_2012.pdf)

## W.E.A Course

About 15 months ago, Gill James, Kathy Hartnett and I joined the W.E.A. course on Natural History tutored by Tricia Moxey. We have learnt amazing facts about the natural world around us, from how colour is perceived differently by other species to which creature has 5 hearts and can (hopefully) clear my winter lawn of its leaves. Introducing us to magnifying glasses and microscopes has made us more aware of the hugely detailed complexity of nature, something we do not see or appreciate simply looking about us. And it has been deeply thought-provoking, illustrating how processes in nature are reflected in our own lives and the evolving, and precarious, nature of our relationships. For example a newly planted wood is a barren affair compared to older woodland that has developed mutually sustaining

relationships, e.g. with fungi. Overall we have learned something of our place in a highly complex and interdependent world. We have had much fun doing so, creating our own welcoming, friendly and interesting "eco-system". For details of the Spring term course (C2218956), see the W.E.A. website <http://www.wea.org.uk/> ask us or simply turn up on January 9th and enrol if you enjoy it. We meet Wednesdays 10 -12 at the Jack Siley Pavilion, Off Palmers Hill, 1 Tidy's Lane, Epping, CM166SP.

Jackie Morrison

## Wren Practical Work



*The crew looking rather nervous with Peter Williams at the rowlocks on the Ornamental Waters early on in the year*

On the first Sunday of October we opened the practical work season with our annual visit to Lincoln Island to clear undergrowth to ensure a good show of wild daffodils and bluebells next year. This involves getting out the Wren Group's very small rowing boat stored in the pump house on the Ornamental Waters, Wanstead Park. Rowing is very difficult as there is a huge amount of weed in the water at that time of year. This year seemed worse that

the average for weed. The difficulty rowing may explain the rather nervous look on the faces of some passengers. We only had one minor accident this year - a leg in the water as we climb out on the very slippery bank on the island - we have had worse in previous years. For more information regarding practical working sessions contact Peter Williams Tel: 020 8555 1358 [wrengroup.distribute@gmail.com](mailto:wrengroup.distribute@gmail.com)

## Lakehouse Lake Project Update

Since the AGM we have learnt that there has been a slight delay in the tendering process for the repairs to the Jubilee pond. However, work is scheduled to start early in the New Year (rather than before Christmas) and should last 12 weeks. This still gives time for ground and water plants to establish themselves over the summer.

Lakehouse Lake Projects for 2013 are:

Pond Dips - Sunday 15th June, Sunday 14th September.

Litter Picks - April 7th and 21st, May 5th and 19th, June 2nd; 16th and 30th, July 14th and 28th, August 11th and 25th, September 8th and 22nd, October 6th

All events start at 11.30 and last for one to one and a half hours. Meet by the bench at the north end of the Jubilee Pond (just down from the car park of Lake House Road).

The Project carried out three work days in the autumn cutting down scrub along Dames Road which had become a focus for anti-social behaviour. These were very successful and we hope to carry out more in the New Year. We are working with the City of London to find a way that we can carry this out with less dependence on Epping Forest staff. This involves method statements, risk assessments and insurances. As soon as this is resolved we will advertise dates.

For more information on the Lakehouse Lake Project contact [bob.howell@btinternet.com](mailto:bob.howell@btinternet.com)