

autumn 2014

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a word from the chair

Although we should be concerned about the environment everywhere, our core area lies around the convergence of Newham, Waltham Forest and Redbridge, especially Wanstead Flats, Wanstead Park, the City of London Cemetery and the corridor of the River Roding. These are the areas where we concentrate both our nature-recording efforts and our practical work. These are the places where we can make a difference.

We know we're lucky to live close to these open spaces, but they're not perfect. So what changes would we like to see? I'm sure we've all got our own priorities, but these

would be my top five.

*Wanstead Park is special for lots of reasons, but without its lakes it would be severely diminished. That's why I would like to see a commitment to fixing the leaks in Heronry Lake as a first step to sorting out the hydrology of the whole lake system.

*A redoubling of efforts to manage the acid grasslands of Wanstead Flats to prevent the deterioration of the floral mix that is taking place in some areas, not least in the Site of Special Scientific Interest. The fate of our ground-nesting Meadow Pipits and Skylarks – not to mention a whole host of invertebrates - depends on this.

*Investigating ways to rid Alexandra Lake of the invasive aquatic plant *Crassula*, which threatens to strangle the lake.

*A determined effort to rid our open spaces of the perennial eyesores and health risks of fly-tipping, general littering and dog mess. The

Flats' footballers have a big role to play in this regard; somehow they have to be held responsible.

*A serious examination of ways in which the exchange lands can be managed for the joint benefit of nature, cyclists, walkers and horse-riders.

Everyone knows that resources are stretched at the moment. The City of London and the aforementioned local authorities are finding it difficult to make ends meet. But most of the things I've listed would actually cost very little, particularly if the energies of local volunteer groups – including our own – are put to good use. The Heronry Lake project *will* cost serious money, but surely that would be a price worth paying to ensure the future of this wonderful amenity?

These are personal views, although I know I share them with lots of other people. Do you have thoughts on how our local environment can be improved? Why not send them in to the Editor.



Tim

no trees were harmed

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

However, this is your newsletter and will not survive without your support so if you have any news, views or stories please send them in. Similarly, if you would like to see any changes in the newsletter either in the way it looks or the content please get in touch with me at 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/>

butterfly report

Report and pictures by Kathy Hartnett

Since June 2013, I have been recording butterfly sightings on my - and the Wren Group's - 'local patch' – ie Wanstead Flats, Wanstead Park, and the Old Sewage Works (adjacent to Wanstead Park); and also on few further-afield nature walks. I have then uploaded my findings (which species, how many, and where) to the website of the corresponding local branch of Butterfly Conservation covering the area of my particular sightings. BC's publicity literature says that the records they collect "form one of the most important data sets on insects anywhere in the world. They provide essential information on how the fortunes of our butterflies have changed over hundreds of years. Records gathered over the last 40 years show that 24 species are now threatened and three-quarters of species are in decline." So, hopefully, my recordings and those of others will contribute towards helping the future conservation of these beautiful little creatures.



Butterfly Report: May - August 2014

There are currently 59 species of butterfly in the UK and, according to Wren Group member Paul Ferris's website (www.wansteadwildlife.org.uk), until recently 26 of those species have been found on our local patch. Butterfly populations are dependent on habitat and climate – for instance, the **Swallowtail** is only found in Norfolk, as it has a preference for fens and marshes. Different butterflies emerge at different times of the year, some producing more than one brood, whilst some are actually migrants. I find it quite amazing that a small, delicate creature can fly here from far-away countries, and across the English Channel!



For this article, I have been asked to report on which species of butterfly I have seen on our patch since May 2014. As my main butterfly surveying has been carried out on Wanstead Flats, I will focus on that particular area. We have three species of **skippers**

on our patch, **Small**, **Large**, and **Essex**. When I first came across skippers a few years ago, I mistakenly thought they were moths as, to my then unskilled eyes, they appeared to have chunkier bodies than butterflies. I have since read somewhere that skippers were once officially classified as moths. It is also very difficult to tell the skipper species apart, unless you manage a very close look at them – in fact, it's sometimes down to looking at the differences in the undersides of the tips of their antennae! I haven't fully mastered identifying skippers yet, but my first sighting of them on the Flats this year was in June, of about 20 or so unspecified skippers; then (as in previous years) their numbers suddenly 'exploded' into the hundreds in July, whilst more or less disappearing by the end of August.

There are three species of **white** butterfly in our area, **Large**, **Small**, and **Green-veined**. These are the other butterflies which I sometimes have difficulty identifying, as they fly quickly and don't often settle. Just because a white looks large or small does not necessarily mean that it is a Large or a Small White – you have to look closely at its wing markings to be sure of an ID. All three of these whites have a long flight period, from April to the end of September. One especially delightful, small butterfly is the **Green Hairstreak**, which is the only truly green butterfly in the UK. Tim Harris first noticed a small colony of these on the Flats last year, and I'm pleased to report that our Green Hairstreaks now seem to be spreading across at least two of the three sections of the Flats, as a few small colonies were found dotted around this year, mainly during

May. Although I haven't seen many **Small Coppers** so far on the Flats this year, they tend to have a long flight period, so there is still time to see them – in a good year they can have three or four broods between late April and November. It is a butterfly that thrives in hot, sunny conditions, but in cool wet summers populations may crash, then taking several years to recover.



We have two of the blue-coloured butterflies in our area – the **Common Blue** and the **Holly Blue**. I have seen more Common Blues than Holly Blues on the Flats, so the former's name is rather apt! However, Holly Blues prefer shrubby parks, woods, churchyards and gardens, so perhaps that's why it's not seen so much on the mainly heathland habitat of the Flats. It also flies and basks high up in the foliage of trees, so that's another reason for it to go



unseen. The rather glamorous **Peacock** flies most of the year, with a gap around June, re-emerging again in July. However, I have only noted one sighting on the Flats this year, as they mainly prefer gardens, woodland glades and meadows where they can feast on flower nectar – the Flats are not known for an abundance of flowers! Another very attractive butterfly is the **Small Tortoiseshell** – once more, I have had only one sighting on the Flats this year, in June, as this species also prefers to feed on the nectar of cultivated flowers. The unassuming **Speckled Wood** is far more common, and prefers the shaded areas of woodland – I've found that locations such as Bush Wood and the wayleave path on the Flats which backs onto Belgrave Road are good places to see Speckled Woods.

I have only recorded a few sightings of the **Small Heath** in recent months and, although it is one of our most common grassland butterflies, one of my butterfly books states that its numbers have declined

in recent decades. The **Comma** is one of our most easily recognisable butterflies, due to its jagged wing edges. However, I have only recorded two sightings on the Flats so far since May (one each in June and July), as its preferred habitat is woodland rides and margins, and orchards and gardens. The two most numerous butterflies I have seen on the Flats are the **Gatekeeper** (also known as the Hedge Brown) and the **Meadow Brown** (the commonest and most widespread of UK butterflies). Of the two, Meadow Brown appears slightly earlier, from around end of May, whilst the Gatekeeper appears around mid-June. They can both fly into September and, up until the end of August, I had seen nearly 300 Meadow Browns and just over 200 Gatekeepers!



Well, I make that 17 species of butterfly that I've seen so far on the Flats since May, whilst not accounting in this report for a few other different species seen earlier in the year, or in Wanstead Park

or the Old Sewage Works. (For information, these other species would include: **Brimstone**, **Orange Tip**, **Purple Hairstreak**, **Red Admiral**, and **Ringlet**; and in previous years I have seen **Brown Argus** and **Painted Lady**.)



On a personal note, I have managed to see three other species away from our patch this year, which were 'firsts' for me: **White Admiral** (in Hatfield Forest and also in Balls Wood Nature Reserve); **Silver-washed Fritillary** (also in Hatfield Forest); and **Clouded Yellow** (Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park). That brings my personal tally to 26 of the 59 UK butterfly species so far.

Report and Pictures by Kathy Hartnett



Members interested in the 2014 results of the Big Butterfly Count conducted by Butterfly Conservation visit

www.bigbutterflycount.org/results

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.



Picture - Fenchurch Street Station - c1905

Fenchurch Street

Fenchurch Street Station is about five or six minutes' walk from the Bank of England, via Lombard Street. It is an important terminus, from which hundreds of trains are dispatched daily to a great many stations on the Great Eastern system, also to many others on the London Tilbury and Southend Railway; whose terminus it also is. Though not so large as St. Pancras or so busy as Liverpool Street, it is still a very busy spot indeed, and is the scene of perpetual activity. People of all nationalities may be seen here at times, as a large number of trains go to and fro between it and the East and West India Docks, the Royal Albert and Victoria Docks, Tilbury, Gravesend, and so on. Some of these are known as "Tilbury" trains, indicating the company to which they belong, others are of course Great Eastern.



Epping Plain

Procuring a ticket for Epping, we take a seat in one of the latter, and leave London by way of

Leman Street (passing through the heart of Whitechapel, the great Jewish quarter of London), via Bow Road, in which is situated one of the oldest churches in London, until at length we arrive at the town of Epping. Turning to the left on leaving the station and then to the right we find ourselves in the High Street, along which we proceed for about half-a-mile until Epping Plain is reached. While not so extensive as Chingford Plain, it yet possesses interesting features of its own, and affords a fine play-ground to the youth of Epping. Its sward is delightfully green and springy, sinking underfoot like an excellent pile carpet. On the day of our visit its surface is gemmed with many a wild flower, odoriferous, and pleasant to the eye. The Lesser Celandine puts forth its little flowerets in abundance, causing Wordsworth's lines to rise to one's mind.

*"Pansies, lillies, kingscups, daises,
Let them live upon their praises –
There's a flower that shall be mine,
'Tis the little Celandine."*

Here and there are the little green squares of turf beloved by golf players, a small white flag denoting the number of the hole. Purple patches of heather beautify the landscape, and as we approach the precincts of the wood, an abundance of young oak trees is seen springing up in all directions; their green and tender foliage making a pleasing contrast with the darker green of the grass. Many clumps of the yellow gorse are noticed, dear to us in childhood's days by the familiar name of "eggs and bacon," though why so called we never knew, famous in history as the plant agenet from which the house of the

Plantagenets derived its name. Blackberry bushes are plentiful, their pretty flowers giving promise of a bounteous yield later on in the year, primroses and wild violets have already made the plain beautiful at an earlier period, but their leaves still look fresh and green, forecasting the glories of another spring-time to follow.

The Lower Forest

The Lower Forest which we are now entering on the left hand side is quite detached from the main portion of Epping Forest; it is triangular in shape and about 300 acres in extent. It is bounded on the north-western side (the left hand as we enter) by the road leading to Bishop's Stortford and Cambridge, on the west to the east by a road leading to Chelmsford, etc., and from the eastern corner a road runs back into Epping through a section of the Forest, making a well-defined triangle.

Greensted Church

The Great Eastern Railway skirts it on the extreme right hand (or eastern side) running to Ongar. Near Ongar is Greensted Church, too far away for us to visit on this occasion, but undoubtedly one of the most remarkable objects of its kind in Essex, if not indeed in all England. It is supposed to have been standing about 1000 years, and the nave is built entirely of wood, smoothed inside with the adze, the marks of the chippings being still plainly visible. It is twenty-nine feet nine inches long, and fourteen feet wide. The wood is oak and chestnut, tongued together in a manner indicating Anglo-Saxon



Greensted Church - Widely acknowledged as the oldest surviving wooden church in the world, and one of the oldest wooden structures of any sort in Europe

workmanship. Local tradition asserts that the body of St. Edmund, King and Martyr lay here in 1010. He was put to death by the Danes in 870 A.D., for refusing to abjure the Christian religion. In 1848 an old tree at Hoxne in Suffolk fell, and an arrow head was found deeply embedded in the trunk. The annular growth of the tree showed that about 1000 years had passed since the arrow was shot from the bow, and it may have been one of those fired at the martyr king himself. This by way of digression, as our immediate concern is with the Lower Forest. We wander obliquely across the plain, and at length strike into Wintry Wood by bearing a little to our left hand; and find ourselves in a sweet and shady green lane lined on either side with lofty oak and beech trees. The lane is known locally as "the ride" and runs almost parallel with the road to Bishops Stortford, before mentioned. The oak trees here are very characteristic in growth. Surrounded as they are for the most part by many other trees, they do not develop the short sturdy stems shewn in open

glades and exposed places, but push up a comparatively smooth trunk for a distance of fifteen or twenty feet before throwing out their arms and lateral branches. These latter are splendid specimens of the gnarled and twisted "knee joints" so beloved of ship and boat builders in the ancient days when England's "wooden walls" were her chief defence against the foreign foe. The zig-zag growth of the oak and its enormous strength and solidity gave these old heroes just the kind of wood required for hulls and bows of vessels. As the oak rarely bears acorns until it has reached fifty years, it is easy to see how necessary to it are its strong firm roots, its sturdy limbs, its firm close grain. More than fifty different kinds of insects find it a happy hunting ground and use it for food and shelter. It is bitten by flies, bored into by caterpillars, has eggs deposited upon its tender leaves and in its young branches, "galls" are formed by the irritation caused by the growth of young grubs within their



Stump Road was the ancient trackway between London and Harlow and here it bisects north to south The Lower Forest which is separate from the main forest. Wintry Wood is to the right.

acid enclosure, but it survives them all, and braves the storms and the breezes of heaven for hundreds of years; sometimes living to be a thousand years old. At times its young leaves have a deep russet tint on their surfaces, inclining one to think the autumn is at hand before its time, or that the tree is dying. But the contrary is the fact. The russet tint is clue to the absence of green colouring matter, and is a preservative, known as anthocyanin. Until the young shoot can get enough light and air it is in danger of dying. The anthocyanin supplies it with a protective colouring matter which disappears in due time, being no longer wanted.

Chaucer

Our great English poet Chaucer must have been a close observer of this fact. He says (Dryden's Version) in *The Flower and the Leaf*:-

"Straight as a line in beauteous order stood
Of oaks unshorn, a venerable wood;
Fresh was the grass beneath: and every tree
At distance planted in a due degree,
Their branching arms in air with equal space
Stretched to their neighbours with a long
embrace,

And the new leaves on every bough were seen
Some ruddy coloured, some of lighter green."

The glade or "ride" we are following is very pretty, and has been provided with many wooden seats. Here and there we find places awkward to be crossed over, as the ground is somewhat oozy and spongy, though for the most part it is sound enough.



The Magpie

I'll sit upon your rooftop
And cast my glittering gaze
Across your feeble landscape
That's lost in winter haze

I find your fears amusing
Superstitions make me smile
Count to seven, tip your hat
When I your thoughts beguile

I steal things that glimmer
Rings and keys and foil
I glide above your heads by day
While laughing at your toil

The swallow does not fly like me
The nightingale cannot match
The robin, dull by comparison
The sparrow easy to catch

I boast my blackened feathers
A blue-green shimmer to gleam
My obsidian eyes are priceless
The white of my breast like cream

Rebecca Kate Summers

<http://www.poemhunter.com/rebecca-kate-summers/>

Magpie on Wanstead Flats by Tony Morrison





invisible mammals of Wanstead

Article by Tim Harris

Ask anyone what mammals live wild in the local area and most people would probably struggle to come up with more than Red Fox, House Mouse, European

Hedgehog and Grey Squirrel. There are actually plenty of others, but they generally keep themselves to themselves and go unnoticed.

Wood Mouse by Tony Morrison

Some of the Wren Group's most popular summer activities are traditionally the bat walks in Wanstead Park. These don't involve very much walking, and some years – when the weather has been cool, windy or wet – not many bats. This year we were lucky, and the weather gods gave us perfect bat-watching conditions: warm, still and dry. On 31 July, a group of 30 of us took up position at the east end of Perch Pond, which I have found is one of the best places in the park ... and waited. One of the reasons for choosing this spot is that after sunset the dying embers of light in the western sky reflect on the waters of the pond, enabling the silhouettes of flying bats to be seen much more easily than if they have a backdrop of trees. After a quiet period a Noctule was picked up, first by one of the detectors, then by sight, as it flew high to the south-west. Unfortunately, not everyone in the group got views of the creature, and it was to be the only one of the night. Then, from 9:15 to 10:15, when we finally tore ourselves away, there was a continuous succession of bat passes, with at one stage Soprano Pipistrelle (which appeared first), Common Pipistrelle and Daubenton's Bat flying around in front of us at the same time.

With sunset coming earlier, the 29 attendees at the repeat performance on 4 September witnessed peak activity – this time overwhelmingly Soprano and Common Pipistrelles – between 8:15 and 9:15. Probably two Daubenton's fed close to the water in the north-east corner of Perch, with Josh Selfe and Hannah Williams probably getting the best views, but these 'water bats' were not as much in evidence as they had been a month earlier. Again, the Soprano Pips began feeding

before their Common congeners; I wonder whether this is a general trait, or whether they simply roost closer to where we were watching.

Incidentally, for those who want to check out the park's bats, provided the weather is mild they can still be seen, particularly from half an hour after sunset, through October and even in early November. Numbers are high at this time of the year because these year's young are on the wing in addition to the adults.



Last August, Darren Tansley, Water for Wildlife Officer for the Essex Wildlife Trust, demonstrated survey methodology for small mammals in the Old Sewage Works. Here, Darren demonstrates how checking the pellets of owls and other raptors can indicate what species of prey are on-site.

Terrestrial mammals

Sandwiched between the two bat events was an exercise in trapping small mammals on the

exchange lands near the Riding Stables. We were fortunate in having the services of Darren Tansley, the Water for Wildlife officer of the Essex Wildlife Trust, who laid 30 Longworth traps on the evening of 29 August. The following morning we checked the traps and found four Wood Mice and one Field Vole, which Darren duly weighed and sexed. This doubled the number of Field Voles I'd seen in the area, and I'd never previously noticed a Wood Mouse in the vicinity. In addition to the five occupied traps, six more had been sprung ... but contained no small furry creatures. The explanation for this was probably that shrews – either Pygmy or Common – had entered the traps but left through the 'escape hatch' at the rear. This round hole is large enough to let shrews out, but too small for mice and voles to escape. It is vital because shrews have to eat every couple of hours, and overnight incarceration in a trap could lead to trauma. It makes the surveying of shrew numbers more of a problem but better an escaped shrew than a dead one!

The Riding Stables kindly leant us use of their marquee so Darren could demonstrate techniques for studying owl pellets – and hence appraising small mammals' presence by means of an indirect method. An informal discussion took place on what kind of mammal survey work we could continue. Suggestions included more surveys with Longworth traps, perhaps in different parts of our study area; the use of open traps for Water Shrews; and regular observations of the River Roding for Water Voles and Otters. Watch this space ...

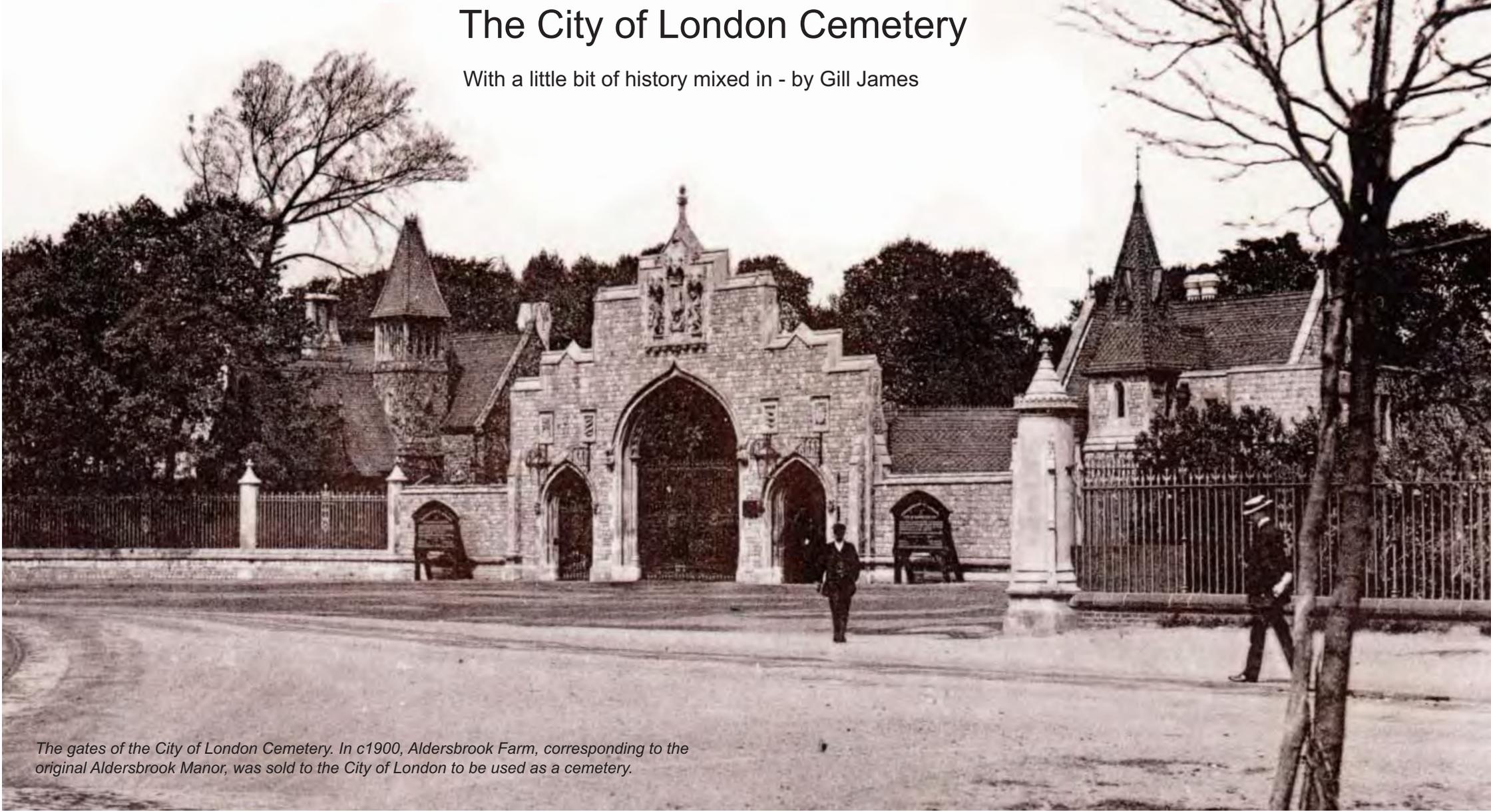
Report by Tim Harris



a thoroughly good day out

The City of London Cemetery

With a little bit of history mixed in - by Gill James



The gates of the City of London Cemetery. In c1900, Aldersbrook Farm, corresponding to the original Aldersbrook Manor, was sold to the City of London to be used as a cemetery.

The City of London Cemetery in Aldersbrook Road was designed to be the Cemetery in a Garden, with a pleasant open aspect a world away from the doom and gloom of other conifer-ridden cemeteries. It was planted up with a majority of deciduous trees in order to give it a tranquil park-like aspect and the impressive gates revealed a pleasing vista when the Cemetery was opened in 1856, just as they do today.

Many people do not realise what a pleasant and expansive place this Cemetery is, with a wide variety of unusual and beautiful trees mainly planted in the nineteenth century, a large memorial garden full of roses, and some very fine Victorian buildings, all beautifully maintained and financed by the City of London.



Strenuous efforts are made to cater for the needs and tastes of the modern community: for example the popular cafe with its fountain has provided many a traditional English breakfast to the local

community, and its seven miles of quiet roads even have some tasteful green bus stops to help one get around and to reduce car traffic.

The original design for the cemetery was the brainchild of William Haywood, who was active in the redevelopment of modern London. He was also the architect of the Holborn Viaduct scheme. There was a great need for more cemeteries to serve London at this time as the population had expanded rapidly since the beginning of the nineteenth century and the churchyards of the City were literally overflowing. It was not uncommon to find human remains scattered and bones gnawed by dogs. So Haywood was given the job of finding a suitable site for a new cemetery and he chose and purchased 200 acres of what was at that time Aldersbrook Farm. The purchase of this land, with its attendant grazing rights, had an important knock-on effect for us, for it enabled the City of London at a later date to acquire Forest land, including Wanstead Park & Wanstead Flats, which would otherwise have been developed for housing.

A walk in the Cemetery is interesting in many different ways, not least to observe the variety and change of fashion in funeral monuments. Many people come to search out the graves of notable persons, such as Bobby Moore, Robert Hooke, & more recently Bob Crowe. But this really is a People's Cemetery, meant to accommodate everyone including paupers and murderers. Some of the most impressive graves are the Churchyard Removal monuments, necessitated by the clearance of some of the ancient churchyards in the City and the reinterment of the remains of thousands of our forebears.

In August the Wren Group led a well-attended walk

in the Cemetery to look at some of the more unusual trees. Examples are the delightful evergreen Brewers Weeping Spruce, with its curtainlike foliage, originating from North America. There are more examples of weeping-style trees, such as the Weeping Silver Lime and the Weeping Ash, and we wondered if this was a deliberate theme. Another unusual tree is the Strawberry Tree, a native of south-west Ireland, so called because its fruits resemble (but do not taste like) strawberries. This tree was blown down in a recent storm but has regenerated well.



Admiring the beanlike fruit on an Indian Bean Tree (Southern Catalpa) in the Cemetery.

Some of us were intrigued by the fine avenues of plane trees and wondered why they were called London Planes. These deciduous trees are in fact hybrids between the Oriental & the Western Planes and are commonly planted in cities in central and Western Europe because of their ability to withstand pollution, as their distinctive bark peels

off leaving lighter smoother bark exposed, producing a mottled effect.

Many trees which were once rare and special and were collected from far-off spots such as India, China and America, are now familiar to us because they are commonly planted in our streets, parks and gardens. An example is the Purple-Leafed Plum, well-known to us for its pink blossom cheering our streets in spring, but which originated apparently by accident in the garden of the Shah of Persia before 1880. How are the mighty fallen!

The Cemetery is a good place to look for wildlife: the mature trees attract a variety of birds and many urban foxes find a home here. Some areas are left unmown to encourage wildflowers, and we saw many harebells, but there is always pressure to find more space for burials.

Now for some history

In 1849, William Haywood, Surveyor and Engineer to the City of London Commissioners of Sewers, reported to the Commissioners that there were 88 churchyards within the square mile of the City of London, and many were in a terrible, overcrowded condition. The pressure for a new cemetery was increased following the closure of City churchyards in the early 1850s, and in 1853 the Commissioners began looking for suitable land.

In 1854 the City of London Commissioners purchased 200 acres of Aldersbrook Farm lands for £30,721 to create the new cemetery from the owner, Lord Wellesley, a relative of the Duke of

Wellington.

Aldersbrook was first listed as a separate manor in the early 16th century. By 1517 it was the home of John Heron, Treasurer of Chamber to Henry VII and VIII. In the 1770s Aldersbrook was the largest estate in the area; in 1786 it was purchased by Sir James Long of Wanstead who demolished the manor house and farmed the land.

The new cemetery was laid out by William Haywood in 1855 and was opened in 1856, the first burial taking place in that year on the 24th June. It is among the largest municipal cemeteries in Europe and is second largest in London after the huge St Pancras and Islington Cemeteries. It has been described as William Haywood's 'masterpiece' and 'the finest example of a Victorian cemetery. Haywood had worked with Joseph Bazalgette on the Abbey Mills pumping station, 'the cathedral of sewage' which still stands adjacent to The Greenway further to the south in Newham. Haywood's layout for the cemetery included the extensive network of curving paths and avenues



The new cemetery in 1856 showing the gate and the view east across the cemetery grounds towards the River Roding and Ilford beyond. This was before the land was laid out to plots and it was customary (as it is today) for gentle folk to take the air.

which now comprise 7 miles of roads; two Gothic chapels; Catacomb Valley formed by draining the lake, a former fishpond, with the catacombs built into the lakeside banks. The grand entrance retains its original ornamental iron gates flanked by porter's lodge and superintendent's house.

A number of enclosures were formed to contain the reburied remains from old City churchyards which were closed and cleared when the City was rebuilt in Victorian times.

There are also reburials from churches destroyed as a result of bombing in World War II. In 1903 one of the first Crematoria to be built in this country was erected here, designed by engineer D J Ross. Its 80ft chimney is hidden beneath a Gothic framework. In 1973 a second Crematorium, with two chapels and six cremators able to deal with 40 funerals a day, was built and opened by the Lord Mayor. Over half a million people have to date been buried or cremated here including William Haywood himself (d. 1894). Others buried here include George Micklewright (d.1876), a 19th century conservationist instrumental in saving Epping Forest; Elizabeth Everest (d.1895), nanny to Winston Churchill; two Lord Mayors of London; and George Binks, the inventor of wire ropes.



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.



The forecast was mediocre: grey with perhaps the chance of a few showers later on. Well, we might miss them, I thought; perhaps a few people will be waiting for me.

As it happens, the Met office was far too optimistic for the first Wren Group Capital Ring walk: five miles across Newham, mostly on that great Victorian contribution to the public health of the capital the Greenway. And so was I: just one person, Geoff (whose first Wren Group activity this was to be) sheepishly checked out whether I was Peter.



Things were rather better for stage two, picking up the route of inner London's 78-mile walking trail at Cyprus DLR: the sun was happy to get the better of the clouds, and Kathy, Les, Paula and Ruth were waiting to keep me company – an apologetic Geoff told me later that he was poised on his threshold, sack on back, when work

inconveniently called with a new assignment.

These two first stages, each about five miles, gave an excellent introduction to the varied walking that London provides. Rarely did we share our space with cars. On stage one, we joined the Greenway almost immediately, enjoying the rooftop-level views, picking out familiar landmarks from an unfamiliar viewpoint – what a metropolis Stratford looks these days, St John's church almost hidden like a New York cathedral! – and stopping to wonder at the Gothic miracle of Abbey Mills pumping station.

And In Beckton District Park (ask yourself honestly Wren regulars, how many of you know this local space?), some of the more exotic tree trail species were having a little more success in shrugging off the by now heavy rain than two increasingly bedraggled walkers.

A fine and breezy late summer day greeted the stage two crowd. An excursion through the Royal Docks took us round an unpromising corner to a wide view of Gallions Reach on the Thames, the piers of the former Beckton gas works (important to me as my grandfather's place of work – walking London can be good for personal reminiscence too) to one side, Woolwich and its ferry the other. On the river itself, many bird species bobbed up and down, and we longed for a Wren specialist who might tell us which was which!

We took the foot tunnel under the river, diverted to the Thames Barrier, and then took a succession of



parks, some sculpted, others largely wild, up towards Shooter's Hill. Woolwich Common, our last open space, reminded us very much of our own Flats, though with an elevation and distant views which our beloved space can't claim.

Next up? A classic of the Capital Ring, through some of London's most ancient surviving woodlands, home still to Tawny Owl and Song Thrush. I'd be delighted to meet you.



Walk and talk by Peter Aylmer

Next walks

Thursday 23 October, Tuesday 18 November
Meet 10am at Stratford station, outside Jubilee line platforms 13-15

Most walks 5-6 miles, check Wren Facebook page for updates

autumn moth report

Report and pics by Tim Harris

Running a back-garden light trap for moths is highly rewarding, and gives a fascinating insight into the mostly hidden world of these insects. It is also the best way to evaluate the changing status of species from year to year. I would also hasten to add that if it is done properly, trapping does not involve any moth casualties. This summer, for the third consecutive year, I've been running a trap in my garden at Belgrave Road on the Lakehouse estate. I don't run the trap when it's windy, nor when it is raining, so there were periods earlier in the summer when it wasn't switched on a great deal! However, there have been some very good sessions.



Jersey Tiger Moth courtesy of Wiki

On 29 May I recorded my third Broom-tip (*Chesias rufata*) of the year. This is a local speciality and an Essex Red Data species. Its caterpillars feed on broom, so presumably they are dependent on the clumps of that plant that grow freely on Wanstead



The **Brimstone Moth** is a medium-sized, mainly night-flying moth that is on the wing between April and October when it frequently comes to lights in the garden. It can also be found in woodland, scrub and grassland habitats. Its twig-like caterpillars feed on a variety of shrubs in the rose family, including Hawthorn, Blackthorn and Rowan. The Brimstone Moth hibernates as a dense cocoon, usually on the ground. [Wiki](#)

Flats. At that time, in late May and early June, the most common species visiting my light were Pale Mottled Willow (*Paradrina clavipalpis*), Willow Beauty (*Peribatodes rhomboidaria*), Heart and Dart (*Agrotis exclamationis*), Garden Carpet (*Xanthorhoe fluctuaria*) and Common Pug (*Eupithecia vulgata*). Meanwhile, day-flying moths on Wanstead Flats included many – probably thousands – of Garden Grass-veener (*Chrysoteuchia culmella*), Cinnabar (*Tyria*

jacobaeae), and Mother Shipton (*Callistege mi*). At the end of June there were hundreds of dancing male Yellow-barred Long-horns (*Nemophora degeerella*) in copses around Wanstead Flats, including ‘BP copse’ and the SSSI. Then, on 11 June another Essex Red Data species appeared in the Belgrave Road trap: a Beautiful Hook-tip (*Laspeyria flexula*), along with 16 other species.

The endlessly fascinating thing about moths is that the species on the wing are constantly changing throughout the spring, summer and autumn. As the adults of one species peak in number, mate and die out, other species are emerging from their pupae. So when I returned to trapping after a three-week break in late June and early July, things had moved on dramatically. Yet another Essex Red Data moth, *Catoptria falsella*, appeared on several



The **Jersey Tiger Moth** until recently was restricted in distribution to the Channel Islands and parts of the south coast. It now seems to be expanding its range quite quickly. There is a thriving population in parts of London, but whether this is due to range expansion or the result of accidental introduction is still unclear.



Old Lady Moth
(*Mormo maura*)

nights in July and August. Trapping also gives strong indications about changing status. For example, in my excellent field guide, Jersey Tiger

Watch out for

Phenology is the study of the dates on which natural phenomena occur such as bud burst, egg laying and the emergence from hibernation. It also includes the dates for fruit ripening, leaf fall. Initiated by the Woodland Trust, the interactive website Nature's Calendar is helping to monitor changes and it is worth viewing the website to see how these are changing as a result of modifications to the climate. www.naturescalendar.org.uk You can add your own records too!

(*Euplagia quadricunctaria*) is described as a nationally rare species. Yet I recorded 44 of these beauties between 17 July and 15 August. Clearly it has become well established in our area. And Tree-lichen Beauty, apparently a "rare migrant", numbered 34 individuals in the same period.



The Tree-lichen Beauty
(*Cryphia algae*)

(*Opisthograptis luteolaria*), orange September Thorn (*Ennomos erosaria*), deep red Ruby Tiger (*Phragmatobia fuliginosa*) and greenish Tree-lichen Beauty. Dull? I don't think so!

As August wore on, Common Footman (*Eilema lurideola*) and Scarce Footman (*Eilema complana*) were replaced as the commonest moths by Large Yellow Underwing (*Noctua pronuba*), Vine's Rustic (*Hoplodrina ambigua*) and Square-spot Rustic (*Xestia xanthographa*), while a second generation of Pale Mottled Willow began to emerge. Then, in early September, the magnificent Old Lady (*Mormo maura*) began to put in her first appearances of early autumn. As I write, in the second week of September, a total of 160 species have visited my light trap since March, and plenty of others have been seen in Wanstead Park, on the Flats and in other gardens. And there are plenty more to come before the end of the season in early November.

Report and pics by Tim Harris



Another misconception about moths is that they look dull. Well, many do until you look at them closely, but my haul on 26 July showed the range of colours that British moths can exhibit. In the trap were pink-hued Maiden's Blush (*Cyclophora punctaria*), bright yellow Brimstone

Watch out for ...

It appears that 2014 is an excellent year for apples, berries, hips, haws, plums and sloes. I have watched a Robin and several Wood Pigeons feasting on the Elderberry bush in the hedge outside my kitchen window, Starlings enjoy them too as they are rich in sugars. Hawthorn berries are really plump and will provide feasts for the migratory Redwings and Fieldfares as well as Blackbirds. There will be plenty to go round for all this winter.

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.





autumn bird report

Report and pics by Nick Croft

While it has been highly pleasant being out in sunshine, with butterflies, dragonflies, damsels, hovers, bees, wasps, hoppers, flowers and trees all looking fantastic, this is a birding report and sadly neither June nor July is hot for birds. Not here in Wanstead anyway. So the highlight of my summer goes to the inflatable Zebra drifting high south down the River Roding.

OK there was a bird or two of note and some unseasonal appearances, but mostly it was about singing warblers, thrushes and the constant wheezing, chirruping calls of Greenfinches.

The highlights: June and July

A *what-else-could-it-have-been* Hoopoe, the first for 38 years seen briefly in flight, skirting round Wanstead Cricket Club towards the golf course. Made doubly rare by the fact that it was spotted by Jono, not in some foreign place for once, and actually, very nearly on the patch. It wasn't located again as it was probably tucked away somewhere on someone's well-watered lawn.



Common Redstart

A really late or really early Spotted Flycatcher, feeding from the tall trees in Motorcycle Wood

before flitting west along the birches and disappearing. The second non-autumn bird this year and a hint that July just might be a stellar improvement on June.



Tufted Ducks

Good, but mixed news on the warbler front: The Garden Warblers in the SSSI looked to have bred and now could have had a second brood, meanwhile his compatriot in Long Wood gave it a good shot for most of June before finally giving up and, presumably, moving on. A good summer for our Lesser Whitethroats as well: it looks like they might be on brood number two, too. Common Whitethroat young were everywhere (but probably not as many in the past due to the destruction of prime habitat). The Reed Warblers were seen carrying food, so good news. A Willow Warbler sang near Bush Wood but the only young were found on Leyton Flats.

On the hirundine front, a few Swallows made it into

June, and it looks like there might be four pairs of House Martins in the colony of Aldersbrook Road, which is excellent news. Swift numbers reached three figures early on and fell back by the end of the month.

The Common Terns were still using Heronry for a quick snack throughout June and July, while the first returning Black-headed Gulls were quickly followed by more, mostly first-summer jobs with a few failed breeders in with them. A solitary Common Gull was on Jubilee where the large gull crèche finally disbanded.

The first returning Gadwall, both male, spent a couple of days on the Alex, while there was a Teal on Shoulder of Mutton. Good news for Egyptian Goose fans with a pair and young being spotted by Jono during an act of trespass in his search for his Hoopoe. Nothing doing on the Tufty front and the



Egyptian Geese



Great Crested Grebes

Pochard continue to be stubbornly against settling down too. There were only a couple of Shelduck sightings for the month - which is to be expected. It's not looking like a good year for the swans, pairs on Alex, Shoulder of Mutton and the west end of Heronry have a grand total of three cygnets, while the Perch pair (now on Heronry) have six, which has inspired the month's cod science: has the feeding of water birds reduced their ability to attain their physical prime when it comes to raising young? My evidence - the birds on Perch get no bread and have lots of young, while the birds most likely to get stuffed with rubbish have very few. Case closed, stop feeding the birds!

The Great Crested Grebes had three young on Heronry, though where the second parent went was a mystery, and over on the Basin a single youngster was in tow. Little Grebes are starting to hatch, with five being spotted with one pair on the

Alex. One youngster was even seen on Angell (AKA Bandstand) pond, but it was only seen once.

Raptors were few and far between: a couple of Peregrine sightings, no Hobby bar one on Leyton Flats, though by the middle of August a young bird was sighted along with adults over the Ornamental Waters. Kestrels have been sighted daily on the flats, but were mostly in the singular, but now are at least three.

Just the one singing Meadow Pipit now and really they are more of a concern than the Skylarks, which appeared and sounded in rude health but still stubbornly refusing to show any increase in numbers.



Whinchat

Greenfinches have maintained their position as uber-finch and more could be on the way. Chaffinches can be heard singing and the tinkle of



Firecrest

Goldfinches is always welcome. The Linnets though have gone, for the moment.

July could have been totally written off if it hadn't been for a Wheatear (an early returning bird) and a Pied Flycatcher, which just squeaked in on the last day of the month. That was July!

Aaaaugust, that's better!

We might have lost the Swifts by the 19th but now it's migrant time...

Scores (bird days) on the doors till the end of August. Note: we use bird-days to count the relative abundance of our migrants rather than trying to count individuals, because not only do they move around, but also it's hard to tell them apart. The only true figure given below is probably for Yellow Wagtail, which are all flyovers! (Dates in parentheses are for arrival.)

Watch out for

What to lookout for in autumn: *Come the colder early mornings we will be investing in a cup of Costa coffee and getting down to some serious visimigging just south of Long Wood: migrant Meadow Pipits, far-flying finches, obstinate ouzels, tornadoes of thrushes, and wave after wave of Wood Pigeons. Time to look out for Short-eared Owls and perhaps if you're lucky a Merlin - and to listen out for the wheezy call of a Brambling or maybe the flutey call of a Wood Lark. With Firecrest soon to be back in the holly and the return of wintering ducks, it may well be worth a trip back to the Wanstead Park.*

Whinchat (12th): 22 (high of 11 on 31st)

Northern Wheatear: 25 (high of 4 on 25th)

Common Redstart (16th): 22 (high of 7 on 31st)

Pied Flycatcher (1st and 24th): two

Spotted Flycatcher (15th): 49 (high of 14+ on 31st)

Tree Pipit (15th): 16 (high of 3, though Stu got 4 on 15th at Leyton)

Yellow Wagtail: 37 (a couple of days with 6)

So poor for Pied Flycatchers, but a good autumn for Tree Pipits.



Wheatear

The rest of the highlights:

Wood Warbler: one or two on a rainy Alex island on 17th

Sedge Warbler: only one autumn record so far (22nd)

Lesser Whitethroat: highs of 15 on 16th and 14+ on 28th

Turtle Dove: two juvenile birds on 24th and 29th

Treecreeper: what could be the first record for the Flats on 1st

Firecrest: singing at Snaresbrook

Water Rail: one or two juveniles by the Roding, possible locally bred bird?

Mediterranean Gull: a metal-ringed 1st-winter bird on 19th

Buzzard: a group of four (I wonder if we will ever get a bigger group at one time...)

Honey Buzzard: oh yes, one on 27th - get in!

Green Sandpiper: one for two days by the Roding on 4-5th

Common Snipe: a returning bird on 15th

Common Sandpiper: two records after 15th

While numbers of migrants were a bit disappointing there was enough variety to keep everyone keen and certainly a bit of an improvement on July...

Report and pictures by
Nick Croft



Follow Nick on his excellent blog
<http://wansteadbirding.blogspot.co.uk/>

sick trees

Article by Tricia Moxey

Trees enhance our landscapes, providing inspiration, shade, shelter and vital oxygen as well as timber. They are good for wildlife and help to soak up excess water and are important for flood mitigation. The majority are incredibly resilient, standing up to high winds and brilliant sunshine, surviving episodes of drought, excessive rainfall and pollution. Generally those that are native support many different forms of wildlife, with introduced trees harbouring fewer creatures. Most have strategies for dealing with attacks by insect pests as they contain toxic chemicals to reduce insect predation.

Insect pests or fungal pathogens can threaten the health of a specific tree species and where one of these take hold, it may weaken or ultimately kill the tree. The widespread loss of a particular species leaves gaps in the landscape and one well-documented case is that of the virulent fungus *Ophiostoma novo-ulmi*, which caused Dutch Elm Disease and the almost total loss of hedgerow Elms in the late 1960s and 1970's.



Although some people dislike Sycamores, often treating them as a weed tree because they produce so many seeds, a well grown specimen is worthy of the name Great Maple! This species is under threat from a disease known as Sooty Bark Disease, caused by a lethal fungus *Cryptostroma corticale*. This was first identified in the UK from specimens found in Wanstead Park. The fungus originated in the USA where it lives on Sugar Maples and appeared on a dead tree in the Park in 1945, but how it arrived in the UK remains a mystery. It is spread by spores which can live in trees for many years, as a latent pathogen, becoming active if the host tree is stressed during long hot and dry summers. It could become more of a widespread problem if our summers continue to be warm and dry.



Cameraria ohridella damage

All our Horse Chestnut trees are looking very battered with shrivelled brown leaves where the leaf miner caterpillars of the micro-moth, *Cameraria ohridella* have had their fill! First noticed in Wimbledon in 2002, it has now spread

out across the Home Countries and beyond as millions of these micro-moths lay eggs in the leaves each summer. As the leaves unfurl they look fine, but soon the blotches appear and as

Watch out for

As the days shorten, the leaves of many trees start to change colour prior to falling. Each leaf is an incredible structure, designed to be the manufacturing part of the plant. The cells within it contain special structures called chloroplasts which are packed full of the green pigment chlorophyll. This pigment captures the radiant energy from the sun and uses this to drive a complex series of biochemical reactions to reassemble the chemicals in carbon dioxide and water to make sugars and release oxygen. As leaves age, their surfaces become damaged by wind, rain and sunshine or munched by insects and they become less efficient. Chlorophyll is a complex molecule containing magnesium, in autumn this is broken down so the magnesium can be stored for reuse next spring when the new leaves form. Leaves contain a yellow pigment carotene and this becomes more obvious as the green colour dissipates. Various waste products are passed into leaves and these may become brightly coloured especially if the night time temperature falls.

successive generations munch their way inside the leaves, they become less efficient at producing food. Inevitably in time the trees become more stressed and are then liable to be infected with the organisms that cause bleeding canker, where a dark liquid oozes from fissures in the bark of mature trees. As many are street trees, their health is being monitored closely.



Phyllonorycter platani damage

Another less widespread leaf miner is also on the wing, another micro-moth, *Phyllonorycter platani*. The caterpillars feed within the leaves of London Planes where their mines form unsightly white blotches. First noted in London in 1989, it is spreading more slowly, only reaching Epping High Street in 2014. It may be that newly planted trees were already infected when purchased or that they are more prone to attack, but the young London Planes in parts of Wanstead look less than healthy! Removal of infected leaves in autumn does seem to reduce the infestation rate the following spring.

50 years on from the loss of the Elms, we are facing yet another major threat to another common and treasured tree, the Ash. It is estimated that in the UK there may be as many as a staggering 1,600,000,000 Ash trees. Many grow within woodlands, almost 20 million grow in hedgerows and others are found alongside roads and railways, in parks, gardens and cemeteries. Although it is not common as an old tree within Epping Forest, there are plenty of mature ones present all over the district and many younger saplings are appearing.

In the early 1990's alarm bells starting ringing in Eastern Europe as foresters started to notice that Ash trees were dying in large numbers. It took until 2006 to identify the cause as a small fungus *Chalara fraxinea* which grows on fallen leaves. It appears to be a species from Asia which was probably introduced into Europe via infected wood.

The tiny fruiting bodies send out spores on warm summer days where they are blown by the wind. Younger trees seem to be more vulnerable to infection and the fungus spreads through the tissues, causing black lesions on the stem and preventing water from reaching the canopy, so the leaves turn black and the tree dies. There is a time lag of up to 10 years between infection and the appearance of symptoms and the dispersal to other trees within an area. Evidence suggests that wind born spores can spread up to 30km a year from heavily infected areas! Older trees may suffer repeated infections and continue to grow for a while, becoming weakened and then finally being attacked by Honey Fungus *Armillaria mellea*, which

finishes them off.

For the past couple of decades, Ash has been a favoured tree for planting schemes with over 5.25 million bare rooted trees being imported from Europe to meet this need. Some of these trees were infected and the spores dispersed along the major roads into Norfolk, Suffolk and Kent where there are now many infected younger trees on public or private land. Sadly, reports of Ash Dieback seems to on the increase.



In November 2012, Kent County Council agreed with various partners to declare the *Chalara* outbreak within the county as a Major Incident in compliance with the Civic Contingencies Act 2004. The definition of such an emergency is '*an event or situation which threatens serious damage to the environment of a place in the UK and which threatens disruption or destruction of plant life or animal life*'. To reduce the spread of disease and

for safety reasons diseased trees need to be felled. Kent County Council has estimated that it costs £800 to fell a mature tree so the overall costs will be upwards of £176 million across those counties where *Chalara* has been noted. The loss to biodiversity and the landscapes of the UK cannot be given a monetary value.

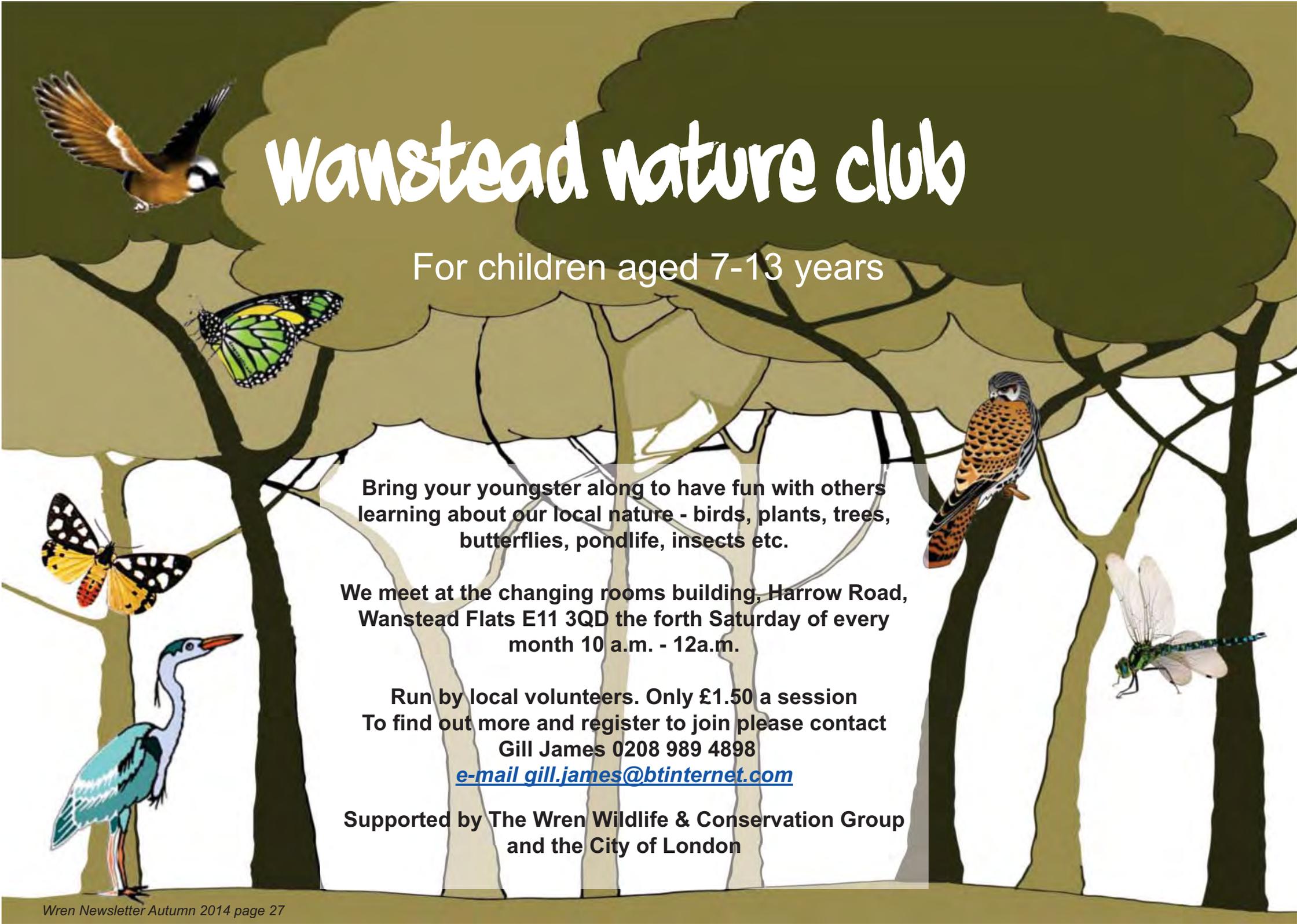
To end on a brighter note a great deal of research is being undertaken both here and in Europe to study the biology of this pathogen and to search for resistant strains of Ash trees. It is encouraging to think that this extensive collaborative scientific approach to a pan European problem will have many consequences in forging new friendships, in advancing biological techniques and most importantly in the recognition of the immense value that trees bring to the wellbeing of all life forms on the planet. This story needs extensive publicity and must be brought to the notice of politicians and bureaucrats so that they note that the biosphere is threatened and they must heed the concerns of those of us who cherish the environment.

Article by Tricia Moxey

Pics courtesy of Wiki



For more details about the research into the *Chalara* infection see: www.forestry.gov.uk/forestresearch



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

February: Floods and moths

We don't often see moths, as they fly at night, so it was surprising to see Tim's lovely pictures of moths and learn about their weird and wonderful life cycle. Thanks Tim. We coloured in a large moth shape, which started off as a Death's Head and ended up a very mixed but colourful moth. Then we played Bat and Moth where the blindfolded Bat has to find the very quiet and elusive Moth.

Then we went for our wettest walk yet ! As it has rained so much this year Jubilee Pond had flooded right over its banks and across the new path in many places. It was impossible to see where the pond banks were: we had to be careful not to fall in!

After that we had a game of Bird Bingo and Sara and Alanna won.



March: Owl Hoot

Richard Oakman came along. The children seemed to like the stuffed Tawny Owl, and the clock that uses bird calls every hour - and the Birdmike to

demonstrate owl calls. They looked at numerous bird books that were suitable for every age group and Richard was impressed that one child was able to read Roman numerals (1905); Richard's chat lasted about 20 minutes or so, then they went on to make clay owls and after that to examine owl pellets, then it was a short walk to a little pond to watch out for pond life. There were about a dozen children there so it was a good meeting for attendance and Richard was able to chat to several parents as well as the young people aged 4 - 12! All in all, a very rewarding session.

April: Spring Flowers and Pond-dipping

We looked at some oak tree seedlings and saw how their roots grew out of last autumn's acorns. Then we went into the little wood and planted some of the oak seedlings. Will they grow into massive trees one day?

The wood was ablaze with wildflowers, perhaps because of the very wet early spring - banks of white Comfrey, blue Green Alkanet (what a strange name!) two different kinds of Bluebells including some white bluebells- white Cow Parsley, yellow Dandelions, Daisies, pink Cranesbill - and a small jumping frog which Menuo wanted to take home but which we let go.

Then we went to Jubilee Pond. It was looking very dismal as the winter floods have now receded, leaving the soil around the edges compacted, and the geese have busily nibbled away the struggling new grass. As the water level was quite low the new pond-dip platform was too high above the water for us to reach properly with our new pond-dip nets so we went to another area & waded in and found lots of minute animals which you could really only see through a magnifying lens- water

fleas, water boatmen, beetles, damselfly & mayfly larvae, snails- all good food for something bigger!



May: Nest-testing and Skylarks

The birds are very busy feeding their young in their nests right now. We had a look at some old nests from last year, which were made out of grass, moss, leaves, twigs, even some strange green stuff which felt like tennis balls! Then we had a go at making our own. Could we make nests that were strong enough to hold an egg safely? Would it be

strong enough to stay in a tree on a windy day?

We put a raw hen's egg in each nest and took our nests outside and dropped them from a great height! There was a lot of raw egg on the grass! Only Emily and Samantha's egg survived the fall: they were declared Nest-Making Champions.



Then we went on a hot walk across to the rough grass on Wanstead Flats where the Skylarks lay their eggs in nests in the grass. The nests are well hidden and we had to be careful not to walk in the long grass in case we trod on them. We saw a Skylark fly straight up into the sky until it was a tiny dot among the clouds and heard it sing its lovely song.

June: Smelly Cocktails and Emperor Moths

Our Moth Man, Tim, brought us some spectacular caterpillars which were voraciously eating nettle leaves. They were bright green with black and red spots. We looked at these and drew them. They will eventually become pupae and then hatch out into lovely Emperor Moths. We also looked at lots of wild flowers like foxglove (poisonous!) and lavender (smelled nice!) which nectar collectors like bees and butterflies like to visit. Then we did a smell test to see how good we were at recognising different smells. We smelled little pots of smelly things like garlic which was very strong and jasmine flowers which were very sweet. Sara was very good at this - she would make a good bee.

Then we went outside with nets and bugpots to see what insect were hiding in the grass. We found lots of creatures, including three different ladybirds - a ladybird larvae, a very tiny yellow ladybird, and a big red ladybird.

We also collected stuff to make smelly cocktails and bashed them up to make a nice mixture - earth, lavender, flowers, leaves etc. The cocktails had exotic names, like Lavender Sunset or Evening Dream.

The last thing we did was to have a Skylark Race- to see who could shout loudest and longest on one breath! We thought Emely and Hassan were very good at this and would make the best Skylarks singing to defend their territories.

July: Snail-Racing and 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.

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

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.

a challenging time for the flats

On a recent damp but warm Saturday a party of Wren Group members helped Forest Gate's Woodcraft Folk and Womens' Institute to organise a practical work session for local youngsters on Wanstead Flats' Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) west of Centre Road.

Natural England calls SSSIs "the country's very best wildlife and geological sites," with unique and varied habitats, supporting plants and animals which would find it difficult to survive elsewhere.

Sadly, as those who are familiar with the 11 or so hectares of Wanstead Flats' SSSI will also know of its degraded state, with broom and birch saplings invading the site, crowding out less vigorous growth such as heather and other acid grassland plants, along with their invertebrate fauna.

This was the challenge set for a group of young local volunteers on the UK Challenge programme - spend a Saturday cutting back the birch trees to open up parts of the SSSI, and pull up as much of the invasive broom as possible to give the heather a chance. After a delayed start - it was Saturday after all - 15 or so young people from Ilford and East Ham got stuck in with saws, spades and loppers. Despite the fact that most had never been on the Flats before, nor used a saw, they worked

with determination. Fortified by an excellent lunch provided by the Woodcraft Folk/WI team, they cleared a large area, ready for further improvement work by the City of London later in the year. A good time was had by all, and there was even time for a bit of flora and fauna identification, with Kathy Hartnett, Anita McCullough and Mark Thomas offering tips on the identification of grasshoppers and day-flying moths.

If you'd like to get involved with the activities coordinated by Newham Woodcraft Folk & Forest Gate WI, they meet at the SSSI on the first Sunday of every month, from 2 to 4pm. All are welcome.

Article by Mark Gorman
Pic by Kathy Hartnett



gallery

2



4

1



5



3



6

- 1. Fly agaric - Jackie Morrison
- 2. Common Darter - Andrew Spencer
- 3. Small Tortoiseshell Butterfly - Paul Ferris
- 4. Stratford Pumping Station - Peter Aylmer
- 5. Longhorn - Tony Morrison
- 6. Bee Fly - Kathy Hartnett

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

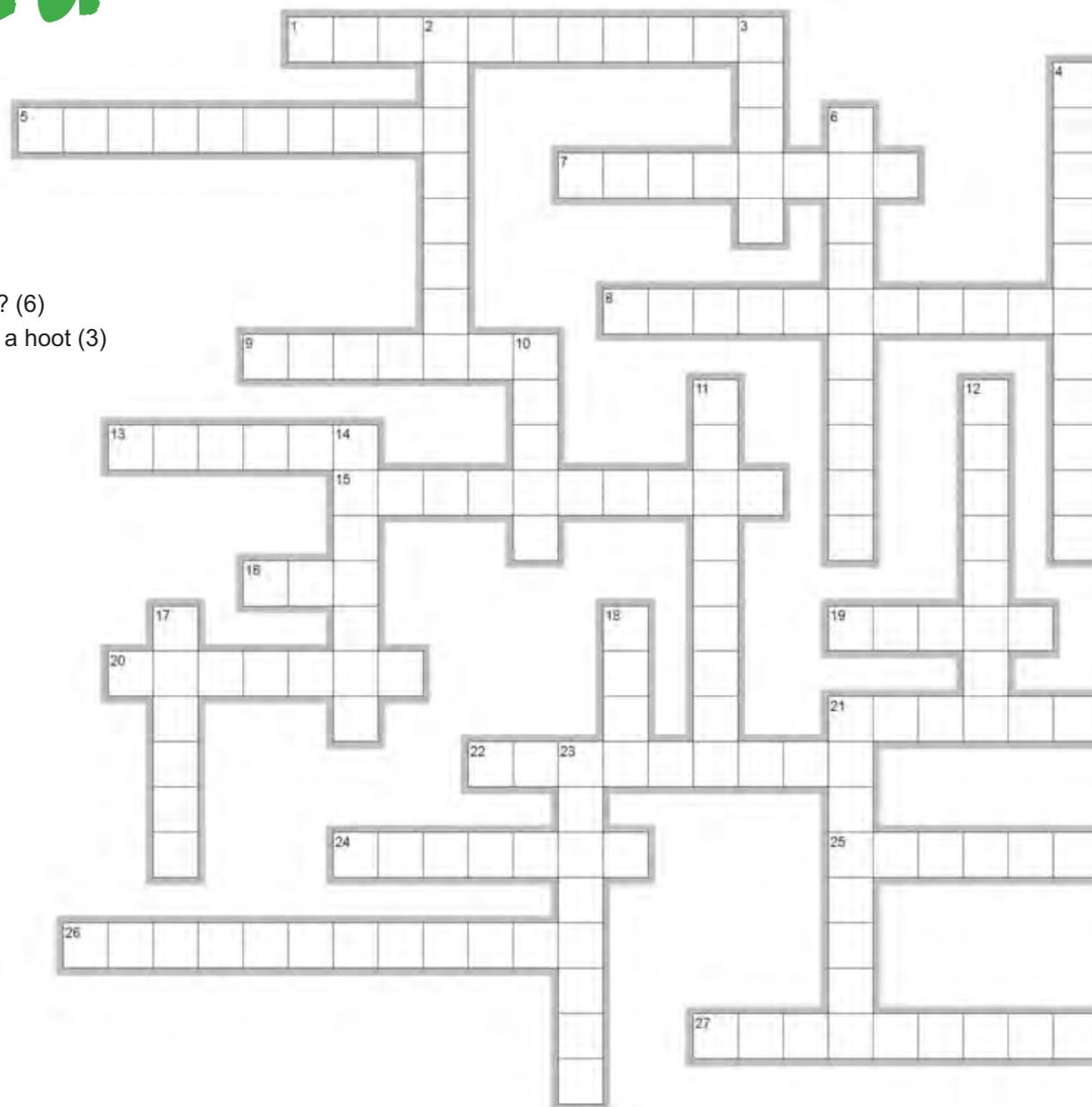
Wren Crossword

Across

1. Bit windy when the sun goes down (11)
5. A collection of larks is called an (10)
7. This spiky little chap is a bit of a pig (8)
8. Turned into a butterfly (11)
9. Fun to play - from the horse chestnut tree (7)
13. Which creatures may collectively be described as a unkindness ? (6)
15. This royal bird always catches the fish (10)
16. This bird is a bit of a hoot (3)
19. Tiny mouse-like predator needs taming according to the bard (5)
20. Push the doorbell with too much force (6)
21. This tree's a bit of a cry baby (6)
22. What some animals do when winter comes (9)
24. Baby frog found in your pond (7)
25. What is a group of moles called? (6)
26. Cowardly tool hits a nail on the head (12)
27. Angry William (9)

Down

2. This flying insect is a bit of a sweetie (8)
3. Sorry – looks like a heron but the r's missing (5)
4. A flock of Starlings is called (11)
6. Green or Spotted bird is a bit of a head banger(10)
10. A sign of summer this bird is really fast (5)
11. A tree that has leaves even in winter (9)
12. Feeling glum in the church tower (8)
14. Frolic in the clouds (7)
17. This little bird gets out of breath (6)
18. This little mammal likes making hills (4)
21. Habitats associated with water (8)
23. This bovine reed is always in a hurry (8)



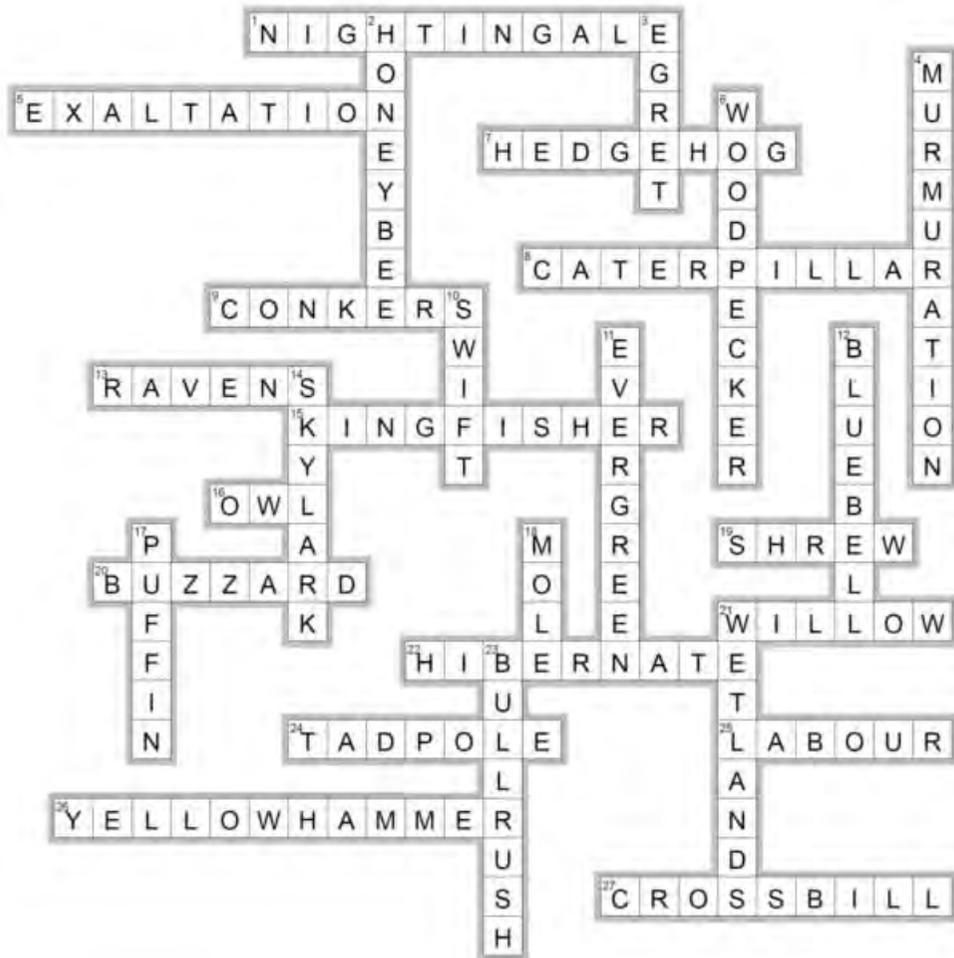
find the word

CAN YOU FIND THE HIDDEN WORDS?

MURMURATION; NIGHTINGALE; HEN; WILLOW;
CORMORANT; ANTLERS; FLEDGELING;
SPARROW; BADGER; GULL; EGRET;
EVERGREEN; PARRAKEET; CURLEW; GNAT;
HERON;

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

teaser answers



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

events diary



September 2014

Saturday 20th

Nature Club for children: pond-dipping
Venue: Harrow Road changing rooms, Harrow Road, E11. Times: 10am to noon
Contact Gill James on 0208 989 4898

Sunday 21st

Three Mills Open Day A look around the historic mill then walk to Cody Dock, looking at wildlife along the way.
Meet: 10am at Three Mills, 3 Mill Lane, London E3

Wednesday 24th

The Historic Gardens of Wanstead House
Speaker: Dr Sally Jeffery, eminent garden historian
Venue: Salvation Army Hall, Southwell Grove Road, E11 (just off Leytonstone High Road) Time: 7:30 for 7:45. £2.50 entrance

October 2014

Sunday 5th

'Bio-blitz' in Wanstead Park
Venue: Tea Hut, Wanstead Park
Times: 10am to noon
Contact Tim Harris on 07505 482328 or tharris@windmillbooks.co.uk for more information

Sunday 5th

Practical Work in Wanstead Park
Venue: outside The Temple, Wanstead Park
Times: 10am to 1pm

Saturday 11th

Nature Club for children: Deer in Epping Forest
Venue: Harrow Road changing rooms, Harrow

Road, E11. Times: 10am to noon
Contact Gill James on 0208 989 4898

Sunday 12th

Waterbird count in Wanstead Park
Venue: Tea Hut, Wanstead Park
Times: 10am to 1pm
Contact Tim Harris on 07505 482328 for more information

Thursday 23rd

Walk the London Ring
Leader: Peter Aylmer
details tbc

Saturday 25th

Fungus Walk in Bush Wood
Venue: outside Friends Meeting House, Bush Road.
Time: 10am
Leader: Tricia Moxey

November 2014

Sunday 9th

Practical Work in Wanstead Park
Venue: outside The Temple, Wanstead Park
Times: 10am to 1pm

Saturday 15th

Nature Club for children: Trees in Autumn
Venue: Harrow Road changing rooms, Harrow Road, E11
Times: 10am to noon
Contact Gill James on 0208 989 4898 for more info

Tuesday 18th

Walk the London Ring
Leader: Peter Aylmer. Details tbc



links

Links

Got any links to go on this page ? Get in touch
wreeditor@talktalk.net

Wren links page <http://www.wrengroup.org.uk/links/>
Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/WrenOrg>
Twitter <https://twitter.com/wrenwildlife>

Local

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

National

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

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

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

British 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>



*Parasol Mushroom
by Tony Morrison*

and finally

Autumn is the time when the fruiting bodies of many fungi appear. They are sensitive to changes in temperature and rainfall and records indicate that they may be appearing earlier or later than in previous years. Ones to look out for include the Fly Agaric, Brown Birch Boletus, Puff Balls and the Stink Horn but of course there are many others too!

Some species of tree are noted for their vivid coloured leaves in the autumn. These include varieties of Cherries and Maples which

often have red leaves as does the Hawthorn. Birch, Poplars and Hornbeam fade to various shades of yellow and leaves Beech become a glorious deep gold before turning brown. The leaves of our native Oaks turn a russet brown. Brown shrivelled leaves may remain on the twigs of young Oaks, Beeches or Hornbeams throughout the winter and act as a leafy frost resistant overcoat, keeping the tender twigs a little warmer!

Tricia Moxey

now & then

Were you right ?

Drinking fountain on Wanstead Flats - near the junction of Capel Road and Woodford Road, Forest Gate at turn of last century. The fountain is dedicated to the memory of Joseph Fry, 1809-96. Fry was a Quaker and philanthropist, the son of Elizabeth Fry the famous prison reformer. The fountain was moved a year or so ago and no longer works,

