

Notes from the Nature Reserve

Green Gym Conservation Volunteers at East Ham Nature Reserve March 2017

The next Saturday sessions will be on 25th March. Please come along if you can. We will be making a dead hedge and woven fence from coppiced hazel.



Spring is in the air already, with clumps of snowdrops, crocuses and daffodils appearing all over the reserve. Cow parsley leaves are already growing, so there will be plenty of path clearing to do in April and May.



We have had some good news from Active Newham. They now have a 3 year lease on the Nature Reserve, instead of only 3 months at a time, so they (and we) will be able to plan for the longer term. The other good news is that Anna Yusuf is now in charge of the nature reserve for Active Newham. She is keen to encourage people to visit and use the nature reserve and also to work with us on conservation projects.

Animal of the month

Magpie - *Pica pica*

“One for sorrow, two for joy.....” There are many different versions of the rhyme.

Magpies gather in ‘parliaments’ in winter to choose their mates. The male brings material to make the large roofed nest and the female arranges it.

They are members of the crow family. They feed on birds and their eggs as well as small mammals, insects, grain and fruit.

They have a sinister reputation and are associated with the devil.

Magpies are extremely intelligent and one of very few species of animal that can recognise itself in a mirror.

They are notorious thieves, especially liking a bit of ‘bling’.



Peter, Penny, Helen and Marian have been laying the hedge and it is now finished as far as the arch by the church. This section was quite tricky because there were big gaps and some of the hawthorn trunks were very thick. It is also not quite straight because we had to avoid the gravestones. Nevertheless, we are pleased with it and look forward to it making an easily maintained green feature of the site. We also hope that it will provide a good habit for animals and birds.

Plant of the month

Snowdrop - *Galanthus nivalis*



Snowdrops grow from bulbs, which each produce 2 leaves and a flower. The flowers have 3 petals in the outer whorl and 3 petals, tipped with green, making the smaller whorl in the middle.

The name *Galanthus* comes from the Greek words for milk and flower. They are one of the earliest flowers, in winter and early spring, before the woodland becomes too shady as the trees get their leaves.

Snowdrops are native to Europe, but were probably only introduced to Britain in the 16th century.

Snowdrops contain galantamine, which can be used in the treatment of Alzheimer's disease. There are several species of snowdrops. Within the species there are lots of varieties with very small differences between them.

Lovers of snowdrops are called galanthophiles and many are keen collectors of the different varieties. Anglesey Abbey near Cambridge has a huge collection of snowdrops.

At the Saturday session in February we were mainly coppicing hazels. Coppicing means cutting the hazel stems close to the ground, to encourage them to produce new shoots. The thinner poles are very useful around the site, for laying the hedge and making woven structures. Many of our hazels have been neglected and are much too large to be useful. Here Kairen is cutting out thick trunks of hazel, which will be used for path edging.



Judi and Hiromi cutting out thick branches. We do like our volunteers to be colour coordinated!



Tracey and James are cutting poles to length for fencing.



These are healthy coppiced hazels, producing poles and weavers for use in a year or two's time.



Please contact us if you have any suggestions of things to put in the newsletter or on the website. Email newhamgg@gmail.com Phone Judi 020 8470 7680 or Frances 078 4597 3156. Check out the website www.newhamgreengym.org for more information about us.