

East Ham Nature Reserve

Friends' newsletter June 2023

Dates for Saturday work sessions are 27th May, 24th June, 29th July and 26th August 10am-1pm. Friends' walks on the same dates at 2pm. Work sessions every Wednesday 10am-1pm.

Please come along if you can make it.

We had a stall at the Green Fair in Forest Lane Park on 1st May and also at the Help Out Festival in Central Park on the 8th May. It created lots of interest amongst the children, who were fascinated by a tray of live slugs, snails, millipedes, caterpillars and woodlice.



The main idea was to create interest in the nature reserve. It's surprising how many people living locally don't know that there is a 9.5 acre nature reserve in East Ham and that it has a very large population of slow worms as well as common lizards with legs. Not what you expect right next to the A13!

Newham Green Gym Heritage and Conservation Volunteers have worked at the site for nearly 20 years. For those who are interested, but not wanting or able to join the work group, we now have the Friends of East Ham Nature Reserve. There will be a newsletter for Friends and Volunteers each month and a walk and talk at the nature reserve at 2pm on the last Saturday of each month. Please come and join us if you can.



Plant of the month

Cow parsley - *Anthriscus sylvestris*

This plant grows mainly in the meadows. It used to grow in the bluebell wood. We are hoping to replant so you can walk between the tall stems in May.

It has several common names. A nicer one is Queen Anne's lace.

It is a member of the Umbellifer family. They have flowers in flat panicles. It is related to carrot, fennel and celery.

Beware! The family also includes some very poisonous plants like water dropwort and hemlock, the poison used to kill the philosopher, Socrates.

Hemlock can be distinguished from cow parsley because it has purple spots on its stems and is usually a bigger plant. We have not found any hemlock at the nature reserve. However, if in doubt, don't eat anything.

Heritage news

The East of London Family History Society are mapping the graves. There are over 7,500 named and listed about 40 years ago.

The War Graves Commission are going to replace some worn gravestones. We will be the only place in the world that has both gravestones and a war memorial.

Animal of the month

Slow worm - *Anguis fragilis*

There are lots of slow worms, including small black and gold babies at the moment. You can find them in the grass around the anthills, or under the black survey mats.



Slow worms are legless lizards, not snakes. They grow to 40-50cm long, and are easier to spot than our common lizards, because they are quite slow moving.

Unlike snakes, slow worms have smooth skin with small scales. Males are often paler, sometimes with blue spots. Females have dark sides and a dark stripe down the back. Juveniles look more like females until they mature.

Slow worms take 7 years to reach maturity and can live for 30 years or more.

Most lizards can shed the end of their tails if they are caught. The tail carries on wriggling to distract the predator, whilst the slow worm escapes. Most of the slow worms at the nature reserve have lost the ends of their tails, probably to the resident cats.

More facts about slow worms in this article from the Natural History Museum:

<https://www.nhm.ac.uk/discover/slow-worms-most-unusual-lizards-in-britain.html#:~:text='Slow%20worms%20seldom%20bite%20people,important%20use%20for%20their%20teeth>

Tasks for June



- Pulling and raking goosegrass (Sticky Willy), which is taking over the the whole site. This is one barrow load. We are removing about eight loads each session! It is starting to flower and we need to get as much as we can before it spreads seeds everywhere.
- Removing brambles from the meadows where they compete with wild flowers.
- Planting wild flower seeds in small cleared areas. We have to remove grass first, otherwise the flowers don't have a chance.

Our work sessions are very relaxed. You can work on something that interests you, at your own pace. You can leave whenever you like and there is no obligation to be there every week.

Tea and biscuits at 11.30 and there is always time for a chat.





Please contact us if you have any suggestions of things to put in the newsletter or on the website.

Email newhamgg@gmail.com or phone Frances 078 4597 3156.

Check out the website www.newhamgreengym.org for more information about Green Gym, East Ham Nature Reserve Heritage and Conservation Volunteers.

If you would like to join the Friends of East Ham Nature Reserve please email friendsofehr@gmail.com