

News from East Ham Nature Reserve July 2023

Dates for Saturday work sessions are 24th June, 29th July and 26th August 10am-1pm. Friends' walks on the same dates at 2pm, everyone welcome. Work sessions also every Wednesday 10am-1pm. Please come along if you can make it.

Learn to identify trees. Can you tell oak from ash? What about hazel and elm?

The walk on Saturday 24th will focus on looking at tree leaves, bark, flowers and fruit.

Our last walk was very successful with tea and cakes afterwards. Rev John Smith kindly opened the church for us to visit and even rang the bell, much to the delight of the children.

Good news this month.

Parks have appointed a new person with special responsibility for the nature reserve. She is called Sarah and she is very keen to make links with the community, the church, the volunteers and the Friends. She has just started and will be working part time, but she has already begun to tidy up the building and find out what is going on.

Slow worms are present in their greatest numbers in September, but September is the best time to cut the meadows short to encourage wildflowers to seed. As with many things in nature, a compromise is needed that will work for both plants and animals. The Council's Parks team have agreed to trim the grass in the meadows to 25cm, rather than the 10cms suggested in the management plan and only to do it in September. This is good because it should leave the slow worms in the grass, relatively undisturbed at the time when they are producing babies. It will also work fairly well for the flower seeds, which can fall to the ground.

Plant of the month

Viper's bugloss - *Anthriscus sylvestris*



This is one of our most beautiful wild flowers. It also happens to be one of the best for bees, because it produces nectar throughout the day, unlike most other flowers.

It is a biennial, growing leaves the first year and flowering in it's second year, so don't cut wildflower areas later than March, or you may cut off the flowers.

There are various suggestions for how it got it's name. Maybe the spotted stems looked like snakeskin, maybe the stamens poking out from the flowers looked like snakes' tongues. We have some growing in Cricket Meadow , have a look and decide for yourself.

It is very garden-worthy, although it is prickly and does seed itself around easily. If you want to grow it there are details on the Gardener's World website.

[https://www.gardenersworld.com/how-to/grow-plants/how-to-grow-vipers-bugloss/`](https://www.gardenersworld.com/how-to/grow-plants/how-to-grow-vipers-bugloss/)

Animal of the month

Common lizard - *Zootoca vivipara*



Common lizard on anthill

East Ham Nature Reserve is a great place to see common lizards, although they are quite shy and often all you see is the flick of a tail as they disappear. They like to bask in the sun on the logs to the south of Cricket Meadow.

Common Lizards are grey to dark brown, with bands or spots running along their back. The underside of males is yellow or orange spotted with black. The females have a yellowish grey underside.

They are 15-16cm long. About half the length is tail.

The Common Lizard is the most common reptile in Britain and is the only reptile native to Ireland since, according to legend, St. Patrick drove out the snakes in the 5th century!

Like slow worms, they incubate eggs inside their bodies and give birth to live young.

More details at <https://www.arc-trust.org/common-lizard>



St Patrick with snakes

Tasks for July



- We are still pulling and raking goosegrass (Sticky Willy), which is taking over the whole site.
- Removing ivy in the woods so bluebells can come through in spring.
- Removing herb Robert which has finished flowering.
- Cutting back the huge *Philadelphus*, mock orange, in butterfly walk, working in the shade with loppers and saws. This is Peter showing how it's done.
- Clearing ivy off gravestones.

A success story

Daisy, one of our volunteers, has managed to get a placement as Royal Parks horticultural apprentice at St James's Park. She has passed the first RHS level 2 exam with 100% for plant identification, and starts work at the end of summer.

She very kindly says "I can't thank you and everyone at GG enough because I feel like without being able to volunteer and learn at the nature reserve I wouldn't have gotten the opportunity to progress in a horticultural career".



Daisy raking a meadow with Nik

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 Penny at newhamgg@gmail.com 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