

News from East Ham Nature Reserve March 2024

Dates for the next Saturday Green Gym Nature and Heritage Conservation Volunteers work sessions are March 30th and April 27th 10am-12. Work sessions also every Wednesday 10am-12.

News

Gary, the Parks gardener has been doing great work making ways through the Wilderness. We have always wanted to make access paths, but have never had enough volunteers for the task. He has made the paths going under arching trees and round graves so it is exciting to explore, but be careful because the ground is quite uneven and there are trip hazards.

The cherry plums and blackthorn are flowering, about two weeks early. Butterflies and bees are already on the wing feeding on the flowers.



Peacock butterfly on blackthorn

Big Garden Birdwatch survey 27th January 2024

Report by Sandy Davies.

This is a report of the Big Garden Birdwatch survey that I carried out in the nature reserve on Saturday, 27th January for which I have to record only birds that landed.

For the RSPB survey I have recorded the following birds



great tit

Wood pigeon - 6
Great tit - 3
Robin - 1
Collared dove - 1
Magpie - 3
Blue tit - 2
Blackbird - 2
Spotted Woodpecker - 1
Ring-necked parakeet - 2
Crow - 6



bluetit

There are easily many more in number, but I think this represents the range of birds we could expect. There was a great deal of birdsong of course, which I recorded on my phone, and from that information I can confirm that there were three robins that I could hear simultaneously. I also heard a number of sparrows but they were being elusive! The two blackbirds were a pair, a male and a female that I saw in two places very clearly, and together.



collared dove

In the case of the woodpecker my first sighting was at the rear of the reserve and was very a distinct call. Later, I heard drumming and approached the tree where indeed I did see the woodpecker drumming the trunk. At the same time I heard another drumming from the first location. This was not an echo, very definitely 2 birds. I'm speculating whether the first one was a female, but my view was restricted. The second was definitely a male. How exciting to think there could be a pair but this may not be the case.

Animal of the month

Great spotted woodpecker - *Dendrocopos major*



Great spotted woodpeckers are about the size of a blackbird. They are black and white, with red under the tail. Adult males have a red nape of the neck. Juveniles have red foreheads, which they lose at their first moult.

They eat insects and spiders as well as nuts and seeds. They wedge pine cones in clefts and hammer them open with their bills.

They make a new nest each year by excavating a hole in a dead tree. They have nested at the nature reserve before.

Both males and females drum on dead trees in the spring, probably to attract mates.

The downside of greater spotted woodpeckers is that they will take the young of small birds, sometimes drilling into nest boxes to reach them.

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.



What we have been doing



We have laid a section of hedge to the south of the church, by High Street South and continued the supporting posts and weavers to fill a gap. We hope that Parks will be able to supply some small trees to fill the gap after March. The hawthorn is coming into leaf really early this year so we can't lay any more of the hedge because the trees lose too much sap when we cut them.

I forgot to take a picture this time, but here is one we did a few years ago.

Ink Cap Journal reported that, if laid end to end, England's hedgerows would stretch around the Earth almost ten times. This is one of the findings from the first survey of England's vast network of hedges. Scientists used innovative aerial laser scanning to produce a comprehensive map, revealing a total of 390,000km of hedgerows on field boundaries.

Tasks for March

- Tidying up coppiced hazel stools (cut trunks left after coppicing).
- Hoeing when it is not too wet and preparing ground for planting wildflower seeds
- Removing ivy in the woodland.
- Clearing goosegrass before it gets chance to set seed. Still lots to remove!
- Clearing ivy off gravestones.
- Making wood piles and dead hedges as habitats for minibeasts.

Please consider becoming a volunteer

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. We always stop for tea/coffee, biscuits and chat at 11.30. Some people leave after tea, others stay until 1pm.



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 and receive a newsletter by email each month please email friendsofehr@gmail.com