

Friends of Crossness Nature Reserve

Newsletter



Issue 18 February/May 2011

Dear Friends of Crossness Nature Reserve,

I must firstly apologise for the late arrival of this newsletter. Anybody who has been to Crossness recently will have seen all the work that is going on and will hopefully understand why my priorities have had to lie elsewhere. As a result of this late arrival, this newsletter is a combination of the February and the forthcoming May issue, although the first quarter's wildlife records will be included in the next issue.

The good news is that all this work means greater improvements to Crossness Nature Reserve and Crossness Southern Marsh. We have some new habitat, new ways of controlling water levels, lots of new fencing and much more as you will read in this issue. There has also been the downside as we try to tackle vandalism and unwanted access on both sites.

From a wildlife perspective, things are looking great. We have had some interesting sightings this year including a Marbled Duck (see page 12) on the foreshore immediately north of the reserve, spotted by a keen-eyed regular. We have had several Cetti's Warblers (a Schedule 1 species with a high level of protection) singing their hearts out from the reedbeds. With males holding territories through the winter and a number of females being recorded, breeding attempts are looking hopeful. I don't wish to speak too soon, but Barn Owls appear to have made a return to the reserve and we are desperately keeping our fingers crossed for a breeding attempt, and following last years' breeding Kestrels, they appear to be trying again this year too.

It has been a challenging winter managing all the various projects and the subsequent disturbance and inconvenience, as well as coping with higher than normal water levels (i.e. flooding!), but with the exception of one or two outstanding projects which should be complete by end of May, things are starting to return to normal and we can begin to enjoy the site and all its wildlife.

With that in mind, the events programme can be seen on the back page. Unfortunately I wasn't able to run a dawn chorus event as hoped, largely because of the double bank holiday commitments and subsequent lack of availability, but I promise to run one next year, and I'm sure you'll find plenty more events of interest this year.

Karen Sutton – Crossness Nature Reserve Manager

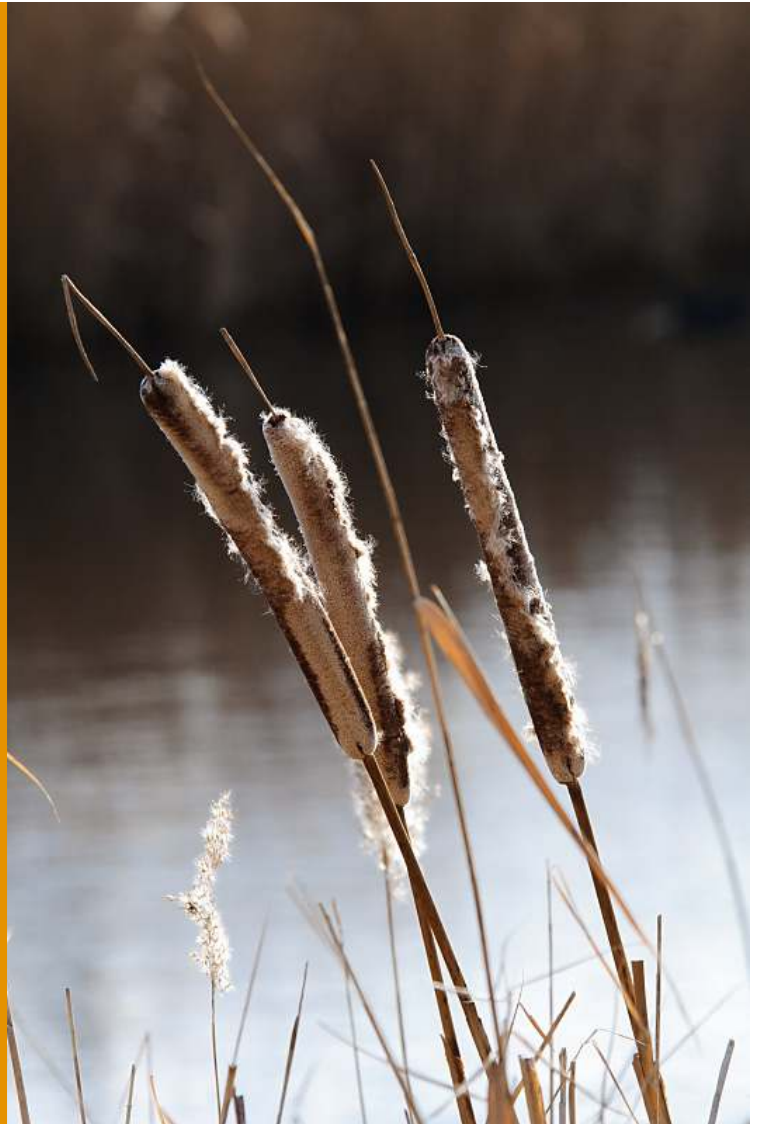


Photo by David Pressland, used with kind permission

Wildlife records – Oct-Dec 2010

Species	No. throughout quarter	Peak no. recorded	CES number captured	Species	No. throughout quarter	Peak no. recorded	CES number captured
Arctic tern	1	1	0	Manx shearwater	1	1	0
Bar-tailed Godwit	11	5	0	Marsh Harrier	1	1	0
Bean Geese	14	14	0	Meadow Pipit	15	1	7
Bearded Tits	3	1	0	Mediterranean Gull	6	3	0
Blackbird	32	1	31	Mistle Thrush	4	1	0
Blackcap	14	1	11	Moorhen	39	30	0
Black-headed Gull	247	1	247	Oystercatcher	1	1	0
Black-tailed Godwit	666	100	0	Peregrine Falcon	4	2	0
Black Redstart	1	1	0	Pied Wagtail	2	1	0
Blue Tit	66	1	66	Pintail	3	2	0
Brambling	3	2	0	Red-breasted Merganser	3	2	0
Brent Goose	10	4	0	Red-headed Smew	3	1	0
Buzzard	1	1	0	Redshank	614	114	0
Canada Geese	3	1	0	Redstart	2	2	0
Caspian Gull	2	2	0	Redwings	12	1	0
Cetti's Warbler	15	6	6	Reed Bunting	11	2	4
Chaffinch	13	1	13	Reed Warbler	7	1	6
Chiffchaff	14	2	9	Ringed Plover	4	4	0
Coal Tit	1	1	0	Robin	20	1	14
Common Buzzard	1	1	0	Rock Pipit	6	2	0
Common Gull	1	1	1	Ruff	13	3	0
Curlew	13	5	0	Sanderling	4	1	0
Dunlin	348	200	0	Sandwich Tern	8	2	0
Duncock	23	1	23	Scaup	2	160	0
Fieldfare	70	3	0	Sedge Warbler	2	1	2
Gadwall	721	200	0	Shelduck	360	1	0
Goldcrest	12	3	2	Short Eared Owl	1	3	0
Goldeneye	1	1	0	Shoveler	45	2	0
Goldfinch	33	2	5	Siskin	6	1	0
Goosander	1	1	0	Skylark	2	1	0
Great Crested Grebe	9	2	0	Snipe	4	2	0
Great Spotted Woodpecker	4	1	4	Snow Bunting	1	1	0
Great Tit	45	1	45	Song Thrush	17	1	15
Greenfinch	77	1	77	Spoonbill	1	1	0
Grey Heron	1	1	0	Starling	1	1	1
Green Sandpiper	8	2	0	Stock Dove	3	1	0
Grey Plover	47	15	0	Stonechat	9	6	0
Grey Wagtail	4	2	0	Swallow	41	2	0
Housemartin	57	3	0	Swift	1	1	0
Jackdaw	24	1	0	Teal	895	450	0
Jack Snipe	3	1	0	Tufted Duck	4	1	0
Kestrel	1	1	0	Turnstone	2	2	0
Kingfisher	7	7	0	Water Pipit	8	4	0
Lapland Bunting	2	1	0	Water Rail	3	2	0
Lapwing	520	150	0	Water Vole	1	1	0
Lesser Redpole	2	1	0	Waxwing	1	1	0
Little Egrets	5	1	0	Wheatear	4	4	0
Little Grebe	2	1	0	Wigeon	6	1	0
Little Gull	3	1	0	Woodcock	1	1	0
Long-tailed Tit	1	1	1	Wren	14	1	14
Mallard	36	2	0	Yellow Wagtail	1	1	0

No. throughout quarter = total number of times species has been recorded during three month period.

Peak no. = peak number of particular species seen at any one time (better indicator of number using the site).

CES number captured (Constant Effort Site) = the number caught during the Dartford Ringing Group's population monitoring

2011 results to follow in next issue

Mud, mud, glorious mud

If ever a picture demonstrated the feeding behaviour of a wading bird, this surely has to be it: a Black-tailed Godwit in January up to its eyeballs in mud!!! Photo courtesy of Dave Pressland, used with kind permission.



Changes to the local landscape



There are some considerable changes to the local landscape on and around Crossness. There is the new Waste to Energy Facility (RRRL: Riverside Resource Recovering Facility) at the end of Norman Road (north-east of Crossness Nature Reserve); lots of cranes and piling rigs associated with our Crossness Sewage Treatment Works expansion (Tidal Thames Quality Improvement Project); the removal of the electricity pylons from the south-east corner of Crossness Nature Reserve and the north-east boundary of Crossness Southern Marshes (gone is my landmark to which I directed people from the southern marsh to the nature reserve!); the very speedy removal of the old electricity substation on Norman Road (east of the reserve and Tilfen Land's wetland creation); and there is soon to be a second windpump located within the protected area of the reserve (May 2011).

The earthworks and pipework for this have just been completed and await the delivery and installation of the windpump itself. It is to be located immediately north of the pedestrian access gate, between the gate and bird hide. This forms part of the ecological mitigation package associated with the Crossness STW expansion and aims to help manage water levels at the northern end of the reserve. There is heras fencing around the location which will remain in place until the windpump itself installed in May. From a distance, this may look as though it prevents access into the Protected Area, but I would just like to confirm that it does not impede access and visitors are very welcome to use this area as they have done previously.

Photo courtesy of David Pressland

Bankside clearance volunteer event 15th Dec



The horses were the lucky recipients of some of our hard work on this volunteer taskday.

Throughout the winter we have been cutting alternate sections of ditch banks as a management tool to prevent scrub encroachment. In order to minimise the impact on wildlife, this is done in sections so that there are always areas of refugia in addition to the freshly cut areas.

The hardest part of the job, with only small numbers of volunteers, is not the cutting, but the raking and clearing afterwards. If the cut reed and grass is not raked up, it creates a thick horrible mat that makes future cutting very difficult and can also dry out the reedbed.

While some cut vegetation helps create habitat piles for burrowing small mammals and invertebrates (including the life-cycle completion of reed specialists like the Wainscot moths), at a time when grazing was minimal in the paddocks (mid-December), the horses certainly made the most of some freshly cut vegetation and followed the volunteers around like shadows. Shame I couldn't give them a rake and a pitch fork each!

A post-Xmas volunteer day to work off all those mince pies – followed by mince pies ☺ Oh well, resolutions are made to be broken!!



Four volunteers braved the elements to get wet and muddy on 12th January. Armed with hay forks and drag rakes, they waded into the shallow-flooded wader scrape to remove the reed and reedmace that had been cut previously at the back of the bat hibernaculum. It was wet and sticky underfoot, but invigorating after all that indulgence over Christmas and New Year. Of course, upon completion, we indulged in a not-so-little picnic lunch. Not too different to Christmas really!! Well, you do tend to work up an appetite with this conservation volunteering lark!



Dave Pressland's photographic presentation

Telephoto



Mallard

Crossness Nature Reserve

Macro + Extension Tubes



German Wasp

Crossness Nature Reserve

Friends of Crossness Nature Reserve member, Dave Pressland, kindly gave an amazing photographic presentation to 23 members of the Friends scheme on Friday 19th November. The two hour presentation by award-winning photographer delighted viewers with beautiful wildlife photography from the local area and further afield. Images were displayed from Crossness Nature Reserve and Southern Marshes, nearby Footscray Meadows and Danson Park, to as far afield as Wales, and St Abbs Head in Scotland.

In addition to a stunning array of photography, Dave shared his knowledge of photographic skill and technique. We learned of the hardware and software available, composition, lighting techniques, image enhancement and manipulation, in addition to macro-photography techniques: a particular area of expertise for Dave. Towards the end of the presentation, Dave displayed his personal favourite shots and explained why he liked them or what he might have changed about them given the opportunity, and I was very happy to see some photography from Crossness included in this favourites category.

I'd like to say a big thank you to Dave. The presentation was very well received, both by people who were purely interested in seeing his wildlife photography, and by those amateur photographers who were keen to pick up some useful tips and pointers. As well as a general question and answer session at the end, Dave kindly stayed on to answer more technical queries from other photographers present.

The presentation was so good, that he has since been asked to present it to other groups and forums. He has already delivered the presentation to the Sidcup Natural History Society, and is soon due to present to the CSMA Club: a British motoring and leisure association. But I do have to say an extra special thank you, because there were 145 slides with associated notes, and 117 very carefully selected photographs from Dave's huge catalogue (the selection process alone was a huge undertaking!). Dave put this presentation together specifically at my request for this event, so he really did work very hard and I, and all other attendees, were extremely grateful.

Focus stacking



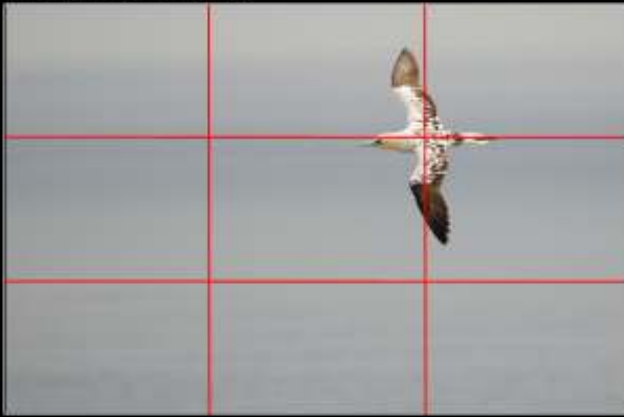
Focus stacking – final image



Hawthorn Shield Bug

Bostall Woods

The rule of thirds...



Fox Cub

Grossness Nature Reserve



Hoverfly on Field Bindweed

Grossness Nature Reserve



Speckled Bush-cricket Nymph

Belvedere, Kent

The Great Big Litter Pick

Armed with litter pickers and a lot of rubbish bags, eight of us tackled the big litter problem along Foot-path 1 at the southern boundary of the nature reserve heading to Eastern Way. This area, running alongside the busy A2016 gets incredibly littered from the road, so before the trees came into leaf and made much of it inaccessible, we undertook a Great Big Litter Pick and retrieved everything from tyres, lorry parts, road cones and lots of lots of bottles, tins, and plastic.

I would like to thank the volunteers who came out to help in February; it's not the most pleasant task, but it is certainly a rewarding one being able to look back to see a previously heavily-littered area picked clean. Unfortunately, we didn't have enough time to complete the whole path, though we did complete two-thirds to a very high standard. I think we'll wait for the leaves to drop in Autumn and run another volunteer event to tackle the last section. Thanks again for the hard work and dedication of the volunteers.



One of our volunteers had to leave before our 'up with litter' pic was taken

Bikers, quads, vandalism and graffiti

Unfortunately, we've been experiencing problems with vandals and unauthorised access on both Crossness Nature Reserve and Crossness Southern Marsh.

There has been an increasing problem with youths (and adults!!) on motorbikes and quad bikes who think it is acceptable not only to come onto our land, but to remove or destroy fencing and gates in order to do so. We have erected 'no motorbike or quad bike' signs at various locations and while these look ugly and don't actually deter them (they simply ride alongside them!), there needs to be something in place to state that this kind of behaviour is not permitted on our land. We have repaired and/or replaced angle-grinded-off kissing gates, field gates that have been lifted off hinges, and demolished post and rail fencing, but clearing up after these jobs is clearly not working; it is also a waste of resources that could be better spent on habitat improvements. We are subsequently in discussions with the police about how we resolve these ongoing issues. Hopefully police presence will be much more frequent in the area so do please stop and tell them if you see anything untoward going on so that we might get on top of these activities before the summer holidays begin – thank you.



Some of the damage to grassland can be seen on the right of this picture



Some of the graffiti issues we've been experiencing



Damaged fencing and extensive motorbike tracks



One of six signs erected prohibiting the use of motorbikes or quads on site

Pile 'em up



Now here was a tough task. The reedbed on the Crossness Southern Marsh was long overdue a haircut. It was cut over winter but when the weather was drier (and resulted in the flushing of 30 Common Snipe from the reedbed – the largest number seen at any one time on the southern marsh) and then it was left to be raked up on 19th January. Unfortunately, come mid-Jan, we'd seen an awful lot of rain as well as snow-melt and it was very, very wet underfoot. The conditions were challenging enough, but wet reed is surprisingly heavy and it made hard work of gathering and piling the cut vegetation. The poor volunteers were soaked, filthy and utterly exhausted on completion, and well and truly ready for a cup of hot coffee. But don't let that put you off joining us for future volunteer events; it was also a beautifully crisp and sunny day with plenty of wildlife around, and then of course there's the enormous satisfaction of seeing the results of a hard days' work.

Volunteer event – willow removal



Volunteers had a very tough day on 2nd Feb removing Willow on the nature reserve. The reedbed around the north end of the wader scrape was getting very encroached, and if not managed, a reedbed will quickly revert to willow-carr, followed by complete succession to woodland.

It was amazing just how much was there! It's not until you get into the reedbed and really get your eye in that you understand the severity of the problem. Our hard-working team of volunteers (Roger, Bernie, Dorothy and Reg) did an amazing job of removing the Willow trees and saplings – a huge thank you to them for such a hard days' work.

Earn Your Travel Back volunteer day: bankside clearance

We did our final bankside clearance of the winter season on 24th February with another Earn Your Travel Back day (the scheme that allows youths to earn back their Oyster Cards after having them confiscated for misuse).

Six youths and three London Wildlife Trust staff came out to rake up the last of the bankside vegetation cut in alternate sections along the Crossness Southern Marsh ditch network. It is important not to allow scrub encroachment along the ditches, so we cut the top of the banks ensuring that sections are left for refugia. At the same time the marginal vegetation needs to remain in place for wildlife such as the Water Vole who use it for food and cover from predators.

Volunteers have worked tirelessly this winter to undertake the bankside cutting, and the Earn Your Travel Back youths did a fantastic job raking and clearing the arisings.

This group was very fortunate because they were also treated to a session with the London Wildlife Trust bushcraft team. They were taught how to safely make a fire in the wild, and they were shown the safe use of knives and how they could be used to carve items such as tent pegs. This session was particularly well received; the hard part was getting them back to work again after sitting around the campfire!!



Barn owls and Kestrels

Some rather nice news for the reserve is that we have at least one Barn Owl resident in the original nest box. The last time Barn Owls bred at Crossness was in 2007 when a pair raised two broods, so it has been lovely to have a number of sightings and numerous pellets found since January 2011. We are keeping our fingers very firmly crossed that a breeding attempt is made this spring.

In addition, a pair of Kestrels have been showing increasing interest in the roof of the nest box. A pair bred there last year and it is looking hopeful that we may have a repeat. It would be fantastic if we had Barn Owls breed in the central compartment and Kestrels in the apex. The box is designed for such, and with owls being nocturnal and Kestrels diurnal, it is not beyond the realms of possibility that the two could share breeding accommodation – fingers crossed!

Join us on 15th July for a Barn Owl Watch at sunset, but please bear in mind that wildlife unfortunately doesn't read the guide books and sightings cannot therefore not be guaranteed. Photos by Roger Taylor, used with kind permission



Some unusual wildlife captured on film at Crossness this winter



Marbled Duck, 10th January 2011,
Photo by Ian Miller, used with kind permission



Brambling, 30th January 2011,
Photo by Ian Miller, used with kind permission



Black-necked Grebe, 27th December 2010,
Photo by Ian Miller, used with kind permission



Caspian Gull, 23rd December 2010,
Photo by John Archer, used with kind permission



Jack Snipe, 2nd January 2011,
Photo by John Archer, used with kind permission



Black-backed Gull eating a **Gurnard** – a bottom-dwelling fish that uses its legs to stir up food on seabed.
Photo by Ian Miller, used with kind permission

Belvedere Green Links Project

There has been a lot of activity on and around the reserve in recent months, and visitors will have seen the stable block progressing, as well as improvements to the viewing platform at the north end of the reserve. These improvements are part of the Belvedere Green Links Project run by the London Borough of Bexley and funded by the London Development Agency, the European Regional Development Fund and the Homes and Communities Agency.

The viewing platform scheme is scheduled for completion at the beginning of May and will include a DDA compliant access ramp for people with mobility difficulties, and new railings with integrated seating and interpretation panel. The wildlife viewing screens on the River Thames flood defence have also been reoriented to provide views across the river once on the elevated platform, but they still screen the mudflats, thereby preventing disturbance to wading birds. The remaining panels removed during this process will be used to increase the length of screening on the Thames wall.

People may have also seen the new artwork in the area: the beautiful 6m high gypsy cob (horse) on the Picardy Manorway roundabout. This dynamic galvanised steel sculpture was designed and installed by Scottish sculptor Andy Scott. It has been very positively received, and as well as a lovely piece of public art, it also makes for a wonderful navigation tool: visitors from Dartford can now be told to go 'straight over the fish roundabout at Erith, and take the second exit at the cob roundabout towards Crossness Nature Reserve!' It's wonderful and definitely worth a look for those that haven't already seen it as it is certain to become much-loved local landmark. There are plans to light it at night too, which should look pretty spectacular.



Crossness Nature Reserve Manager speed-dating!



The things you do! On 28th February I took part in a STEM career networking event at Bexleyheath Secondary School. The event, organised by the Bexley Education Business Partnership, aimed to give students the opportunity to meet employers from a range of different careers in the Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) sectors, and for them to find out something about those careers/jobs by interviewing the employer.

I opted to take part and the format followed a speed-dating type event, whereby a group of students, armed with a list of questions, spent ten minutes 'interviewing' each employer before a whistle was blown and they had to move on to the next employer. I was of course there in my role as nature reserve manager for Thames Water, alongside engineers, army personnel, hairdressers, construction workers etc.

It was a fascinating event and good to have the opportunity to explain the scientific requirements and qualifications of a role such as mine (something which surprised them), and to also promote the conservation, access and recreation element of Thames Water, again something which they hadn't expected from a water and wastewater company.

One of their questions was what salary could you expect to earn in this sector. Coming to my table after talking to an engineer chap who currently earned £75k and had previously earned over £90k, I suddenly found that the students were less interested in roles in the environmental sector, and were suddenly very keen to learn about engineering!!! In fact, I suddenly found that I was rather interested in engineering too!! 'But of course,' I told them, 'it's about job satisfaction and roles such as mine can be hugely rewarding and satisfying.'

Red-breasted Goose drops in at Crossness



Imagine my surprise when I saw this little beauty among some Canada Geese on 28th March.

Already running late for a meeting, I was further distracted when I spotted this Red-breasted Goose (*Branta ruficollis*) at the side of the lake sited on Crossness Sewage Treatment Works.

The yellow unnumbered ring on its right foot suggests that it is an escapee from a private collection, and further investigation revealed that it had been seen previously on Rainham Marshes and elsewhere in Essex.

It may not be a genuine wild bird, but it made my day nevertheless. The plumage is absolutely stunning.

In the wild, these birds breed on arctic tundra and winter on the north and western plains of the Black Sea.

Winter wildlife enhancements at Crossness

In addition to the habitat creation (new reedbed/lagoons in Island Field, and new ditches in West Paddock and Sea Wall Field) associated with the Tidal Thames Quality Improvement Project, and the enhancements that form part of LB Bexley's Belvedere Green Links Programme, visitors may have also noticed some other recent improvements.

Wildlife hedge

A new 150m mixed hedge of six species has been planted along Footpath 2, north of the entrance to the Protected Area. Seven hundred native trees consisting mainly of Hawthorn, but also Blackthorn, Hazel, Guelder Rose and other species have been planted to screen off the wader scrape located within the Protected Area. This area, designed for waders and wildfowl, is vulnerable to disturbance from pedestrian use of the public footpath and also vehicle movement associated with reserve management and access to the Great Breach Pumping Station; it is therefore hoped that, once mature, the hedge will minimise disturbance to this wildlife sensitive area and encourage breeding of wetland birds. In addition, the hedge feature will provide great foraging and nesting opportunities for a range of bird species and small mammals, and may also be used as a commuting route by bats. Clearly the hedge will need time to mature; at the moment you can simply see small whips protected by spiral guards. We have also put mulch mats around each tree and a layer of bark mulch over the whole area to suppress weed growth. Fingers crossed it thrives and provides a wonderful new linear habitat.

Ditch management

We have also desilted some of the ditches at Crossness. The nature reserve's Parsley Field Ditch and Ford's Dyke have seen some attention, and half of Eastern Way Dyke West on the Crossness Southern Marsh has had the central channel desilted. In accordance with guidelines, the arisings were placed on the banks to rot down and also to allow any aquatic beasts that might have been removed in the process to find their way back to water. Some of the established reed rhizomes from Ford's Dyke were placed in the Island Field reedbed to encourage growth in time for our water vole reintroduction.

Fencing

Livestock fencing at Crossness doesn't last very long. The wet marshland ground conditions mean that posts rot at the base all too quickly, and the grass being greener on the other side means that horses put a great deal of pressure on our fence-lines. That is why visitors will see some new fencing in key areas of the nature reserve and southern marshes. Where grazing pressure or timber rotting is a particular problem, we are installing a higher-spec fence of post and rail, together with stock netting and three lines of wire. The posts and struts are closer than standard and they are also considerably higher. This will (hopefully!) prevent the horses from leaning over the fence to graze the other side (thereby pushing the fence over) and the top line of wire should further prevent this. Unlike previous fencing, we have put the rails on the inside this time so that the horses aren't leaning against the rails and pushing the nails out. This is the correct way to install livestock fencing, but we went for aesthetics last time which clearly didn't work in terms of longevity; this time we hope our fencing will last much longer and stand a lot more pressure. There are considerable areas on both sites still in need of replacement fencing and we hope to address these when additional funding becomes available.

You might also notice some new kissing gates on the southern marsh, including a new metal one to replace the timber gate that kept getting damaged. In addition, the old kissing gates on the nature reserve have had a bit of tender loving care.



Portakabin comes to Crossness



As of the beginning of April, we are now the proud owners of a Portakabin on the nature reserve. Now, when it rains during our community events (as it invariably does!), we will have somewhere to take shelter!



Photo of the wader scrape complex taken by Dave Pressland and used with kind permission

An old male returns to Crossness



On 17th April, a rather impressive Reed Warbler returned to Crossness. Reed Warbler (no. R302889) was first ringed here as an adult on 1st June 2003 and was captured again this month as part of the Dartford Ringing Group's bird monitoring programme.

This makes this old timer at least 9 years old and possibly older! Perhaps even more impressive is the fact that Roger Taylor (of the Dartford Ringing Group) calculated that he would have travelled in excess of 79,000 kilometres (49,000 miles) travelling to West Africa and back eighteen times!!!! You have to admire this in a bird that weighs roughly the same as a £2 coin!

Particularly nice is the fact that this warbler has probably returned to Crossness every year to breed. He was captured (as part of the BTO Constant Effort Site bird monitoring) in 2003, 2004, 2007, 2010 and now 2011. Whether he went elsewhere in the gap years (perhaps back-packing around Europe?!) or whether he just managed to avoid the nets, we cannot know for sure, but the likelihood is that he has faithfully returned to his south-east London stomping ground for every one of his 9 years. Doesn't that just gladden the heart?!

Gull ringing

"Snow means gulls" is what I was told by Roger Taylor of the Dartford Ringing Group, and indeed he was right!

On the 2nd December in the depths of the cold and snow, Roger and his colleague, spent 6 hours alongside the lake on Crossness Sewage Treatment Works, capturing and ringing gulls.

They set up a small whoosh net measuring approximately 40' x 20' powered by bungies. They baited it with bread and sprats, gave the gulls a chance to come down and settle before firing the net. They then extracted the birds from the net, before identifying, measuring, weighing and ringing the birds prior to release.

I joined them in the afternoon and was surprised at how reluctant they were to come down, despite the snow and need of food, but once one was brave enough to give it a go, the rest would soon follow.

Strangely, all captures were Black-headed Gulls. There were also a few Black-backed Gulls around but only the black-headededs were brave enough. 174 new birds were ringed and 1 UK control (previously ringed elsewhere). And if all that hard work in the snow wasn't enough, Roger came back for another shorter session on the 19th December where he caught a further 69 Black-headed Gulls, plus 1 Common Gull and 3 UK controls. One of these Black-headed Gulls was sighted 97 days later, 938km away, at Utterslev Mose del II, Kobenhavns Amt, Denmark on 26th March 2011.



Ready for your close-up sir?



Not always so obliging!



You think your arms are long!?!



Retrieving gulls from whoosh net



With this ring...



My ring's better than yours!

Forthcoming events 2011

Crossness Nature Reserve

Date	Event	Meeting details
Fri 6 th May	PRESENTATION: MAN AND BIRDS – TRAVELS THROUGH TIME by Ralph and Brenda Todd. This indoor slide presentation will take us back in time, drawing on Ralph and Brenda's first-hand experience of visits to Egypt and China. They will go back some 3000 years BC to explore man's association with birds depicted in tomb paintings, then move through the 17th and 19th centuries looking at the resulting changes in land use. They will then look at our relationship and appreciation of birds over the last 100 years or so, using a variety of sites in the UK and overseas. Refreshments provided. DUE TO NUMBER RESTRICTIONS, THIS IS A BOOKABLE EVENT. Please book your place with Karen Sutton on 07747 643958 or karen.sutton@thameswater.co.uk	19:00 – 21:00 (including a half hour refreshment break) at the Crossness Sludge Powered Generator meeting room (Incinerator). Head for Thames Water's Crossness Sewage Treatment Works at the very end of Belvedere Road, Abbey Wood (SE2 9AQ). Please sign in at the security gate and follow signs for Crossness SPG (you're heading for the big silver wavy building and the room is on the ground floor, right of entrance).
Sun 15 th May	BEGINNERS BIRDWATCHING with members of Bexley RSPB. A look at the birdlife of Crossness with binoculars and scopes, starting with birds on the River Thames, followed by species found on the reserve. Please be aware that refreshments will NOT be provided for this event. Please bring a drink and packed lunch if desired.	9:30 – 12:30. Meet the RSPB group at 9.30am at Thamesview Golfcourse if you are driving, or meet me on foot at 10am at the Thames Path viewing platform (north end of the nature reserve).
Tues 28 th June	BUTTERFLY AND DRAGONFLY WALK led by Andrew Waller. We will walk the paths in search of butterflies and deviate off of paths to have a look around water courses looking for dragonflies and damselflies. Refreshments provided, but you may wish to bring a drink for the walk as it could be hot.	11-14:00 Meet at the entrance to the protected area. The Norman Road gate will be open and vehicular access permitted in the protected area. Please bring binoculars if you have them, otherwise some will be available for loan
Fri 15 th July	BARN OWLS AT DUSK We will spend an evening, hopefully watching the emergence of barn owls and subsequent hunting over the reserve (last time I tried this, the owls decided to have a very long lay-in and it was too dark to see anything by the time they did emerge, so be prepared for possible disappointment). Please also be aware that we will keep a safe, respectable distance from the nest site and view activity through binoculars. Light refreshments will be provided on site whilst keeping a watch for owls.	20:30 at the entrance to the protected area. The Norman Road gate will be open and vehicular access permitted in the protected area. Please bring binoculars if you have them, otherwise some available for loan, and if any of you are lucky enough to have night-vision equipment, please feel free to bring it along.
Sat 30 th July	WILD ABOUT WATER VOLES led by Nature Reserve Manager. Join us as we take a look at the field signs of this protected mammal species alongside ditches, and learn about recent habitat creation for water voles. As much as I would love to promise you a glimpse of a vole, a sighting of this elusive creature is highly unlikely I'm afraid. I <i>can</i> promise you plenty of water vole poo though!! Refreshments provided – beware the dark coloured tictacs!!	10am at the entrance to the protected area. The Norman Road gate will be open and vehicular access permitted into the protected area. Unfortunately, this event is unsuitable for young children due to proximity to water and tall vegetation growth.

Crossness Southern Marshes

Date	Event	Meeting details
Fri 17 th June	BAT WALK (and maybe a bit of stargazing) led by Nature Reserve Manager. We will walk across the marshes with bat detectors at the ready, looking and listening for bat species. On the return journey, we will spend a bit of time at Southmere Lake watching the nocturnal hunting activity of Daubenton's and other bat species. Refreshments will NOT be provided for this event but please feel free to bring drinks/snacks.	21:15 at Southmere Lake/Lakeside Complex car park off Belvedere Road. Please bring your own bat detectors if you have them available and please bring a torch.
Weds 10 th Aug	PRACTICAL CONSERVATION DAY – RAGWORT PULLING Please join us for the annual task of ragwort pulling in the grazed paddocks of the southern marshes. Gloves and bags provided. Refreshments provided	10am at Southmere Lake/Lakeside Complex car park off Belvedere Road.