

# Friends of Crossness Nature Reserve

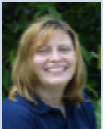
## ■ Newsletter



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Issue 11 / January 2008

### Welcome



2007 was so exciting! If one brood of barn owls in the spring wasn't enough, we were very fortunate to have our pair of barn owls raise a second brood in the autumn!! Who needs Spring Watch and Autumn Watch when we have our own wildlife dramas unfolding right on your doorstep?! Move over Kate Humble!

Another five young owlets were raised in the reserve's nest box. Breeding was confirmed at the end of September when six young were found in the nest ranging from 4-6 weeks old. Unfortunately, one of the chicks didn't make it, but so far as we know, five young owls dispersed from Crossness in October. With the five that were additionally raised in the spring, we have ten young barn owls out there somewhere, all originating from Crossness. Considering breeding barn owls are rare in London, and two broods exceptionally so, we have certainly boosted London's barn owl population!!

All the young owls were ringed by the Dartford Ringing Group, so hopefully we can monitor the progress of some of them in the coming years; it would be especially interesting to know where they are dispersing. On average, young barn owls will disperse to a distance of 7.5 miles, but in a less than optimum habitat, there's no telling how far they will travel. Owls have been known to disperse from Devon to Yorkshire, and even from Germany to Cornwall but these are very, very unusual (see [www.barnowltrust.org.uk](http://www.barnowltrust.org.uk)) dispersal distances.

Of course, we had all the excitement of our visit from the Squacco Heron in the Spring of 2007, but in addition, we had a number of site firsts. We had a coal tit, spotted flycatcher and flocks of siskins recorded for the first time ever at Crossness, and there is even the possibility of a cattle egret, though we can't be certain of this record. But certainly, great things are happening at Crossness!

I'm now working through an extensive winter programme of habitat management, with lots of ditch work going on, both in the channels and on the banks, as well as reedbed management and other vegetation control. I'll be running some volunteer task days early in 2008 to help with this (P.12).

Many thanks to all of you who so diligently recorded your sightings in the logbook, and to those of you that go to the trouble of sending your sightings to me directly. I've usually got my head down working (and missing all sorts in the process!) so without details of your sightings, we really couldn't maintain an accurate record of wildlife happenings at Crossness, so thank you all so much.

Karen Sutton – Crossness Nature Reserve Manager

### Barn owls – second brood



This pic by Dave Pressland, with kind permission

## Wildlife records – Jul - Sept 2007

Species	No. throughout quarter	Peak no. recorded	CES number captured	Species	No. throughout quarter	Peak no. recorded	CES number captured
Arctic tern	2	1	0	Little tern	1	1	0
Barn owl	3	1	6	Long tailed tits	14	5	7
Black headed gulls	1200	500	0	Magpie	20	6	0
Black tailed godwits	3	3	0	Mallard	38	20	0
Black terns	8	8	0	Marsh harrier	1	1	0
Blackbirds	7	4	38	Meadow brown	34	20	0
Blackcap	23	12	99	Meadow pipits	10	5	0
Blacktailed godwit	1	1	0	Mistle thrush	2	2	0
Blue tit	16	5	33	Moorhen	40	10	0
Broad bodied chaser	1	1	0	Mute swan	8	1	0
Canada geese	372	100	0	Oystercatcher	5	4	0
Carrion crows	29	20	0	Peacock butterflies	7	4	0
Cattle Egret (unconfirmed)	1	1	0	Peregrines	2	2	0
Chaffinch	8	5	22	Pheasant	3	1	0
Chiffchaff	16	5	16	Pied wagtail	3	3	0
Common blue butterfly	1	1	0	Red admiral	4	2	0
Common gull	1	1	0	Red darter	4	2	0
Common sandpiper	29	5	0	Redshank	3	3	0
Common terns	83	80	0	Reed bunting	16	5	4
Coot	21	8	0	Reed warbler	26	8	145
Cormorant	30	20	0	Ringed plovers	6	3	0
Curlew	2	1	0	Robin	0	0	34
Curlew sandpiper	1	1	0	Roesels' bush cricket	6	5	0
Dunnock	0	0	73	Ruddy darter	5	4	0
Dunlin	4	4	0	Sand martin	9	4	0
Emperor dragonfly	4	2	0	Sedge warblers	3	3	10
Fox	1	1	0	Shelduck	7	7	0
Gadwall	177	21	0	Shoveler	44	21	0
Garden warblers	2	2	8	Skylark	3	2	0
Goldfinch	272	80	0	Small white	12	10	0
Great crested grebe	2	2	0	Snipe	2	2	0
Great green bush cricket	1	1	0	Song thrush	0	0	28
Great spotted woodpecker	4	2	0	Sparrowhawk	12	2	1
Great tit	10	5	30	Speckled wood butterfly	1	1	0
Goldfinch	16	10	3	Spotted flycatcher	1	1	0
Green sandpiper	39	10	0	Starling	1304	500	11
Green woodpecker	6	2	1	Stock doves	3	3	0
Greenfinch	17	5	79	Stonechat	17	4	0
Grey heron	27	5	0	Swallow	30	17	0
Grey wagtail	10	6	0	Swifts	28	10	0
Greylag geese	10	2	0	Teal	1116	170	0
Herring gull	1	1	0	Tufted duck	14	6	0
Hobby	4	1	0	Turtle dove	1	1	0
House martins	110	30	0	Weasel	1	1	0
Kestrel	4	1	0	Whimbrel	1	1	0
Kingfisher	2	1	1	Whinchat	19	8	0
Lapwing	391	69	0	Whitethroat	20	8	92
Lesser black backed gulls	10	10	0	Willow warbler	3	1	3
Lesser whitethroat	2	1	9	Wood pigeons	6	6	2
Linnet	162	50	1	Wren	16	6	47
Little egret	2	1	0	Yellow legged gull	10	5	0
Little grebe	41	6	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

All moth photos were taken at the event by Ron Waters and used with kind permission



Setaceous Hebrew character



Brimstone moth



Straw underwing



Flame shoulder



Bulrush wainscot

## National Moth Night on Crossness Southern Marsh

On Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> August 2007, we celebrated National Moth Night by holding a moth trapping event at the eastern end of Crossness Southern Marshes.

The event was hosted by internationally renowned entomologist, Colin Plant, who erected a light sheet among the scrubby area adjacent Eastern Way (close to the pedestrian footbridge leading to Path Meadow) and three skinner light traps. One was located within the reedbed alongside Erith Marsh Dyke East, and the other two were located along the path leading up towards Saline Field.

Seven people attended the event. It was a warm night, but unfortunately we didn't see any major activity until after midnight once the traps had been on for some time and the moths had become accustomed to them. Our late night was rewarded, however, by recording 63 different species. Colin advised us that the species we recorded were a good representation of wetland habitat (8 species are directly associated with marshland), and 2 species of moth were nationally notable: Reed Dagger (*Simyra albovenosa*) and Webb's Wainscot (*Archanara sparganii*).

Below is a complete species list of the moths that were recorded on the night (many thanks to Ron Waters who kindly photographed a number of species seen and provided permission to use them within this newsletter):

Scientific name	Common name	Status
<i>Hepialus sylvina</i>	Orange Swift	
<i>Yponomeuta evonymella</i>	Bird-cherry Ermine	Immigrant
<i>Coleophora trifolii</i>	Large Clover Case-bearer	
<i>Agapeta hamana</i>		
<i>Cochylis atricapitana</i>		
<i>Pandemis heparana</i>	Dark Fruit-tree Tortrix	
<i>Epiphyas postvittana</i>	Light Brown Apple Moth	
<i>Acleris forsskaleana</i>		
<i>Celypha lacunana</i>		
<i>Bactra furfurana</i>		
<i>Epiblema uddmanniana</i>	Bramble Shoot Moth	
<i>Eucosma campoliliana</i>		
<i>Spilonota ocellana</i>	Bud Moth	
<i>Cydia splendana</i>		
<i>Cydia pomonella</i>	Codling Moth	
<i>Chrysoteuchia culmella</i>	Garden Grass-veneer	
<i>Agriphila straminella</i>	A grass moth	
<i>Agriphila tristella</i>	A grass moth	
<i>Eudonia mercurella</i>		
<i>Cataclysta lemnata</i>	Small China-mark	Marshland species
<i>Phlyctaenia coronata</i>		
<i>Pleuroptya ruralis</i>	Mother of Pearl	
<i>Trachycera advenella</i>		
<i>Euzophera pinguis</i>		Local
<i>Pterophorus pentadactyla</i>	White Plume Moth	
<i>Emmelina monodactyla</i>	Common Brown Plume	



Common carpet



Rosy rustic



Colin Plant – a very rare specimen indeed!!

Scientific name	Common name	Status
<i>Idaea rusticata</i>	Least Carpet	Local
<i>Idaea dimidiata</i>	Single-dotted Wave	
<i>Idaea subsericeata</i>	Satin Wave	
<i>Idaea aversata</i>	Riband Wave	
<i>Epirrhoe alternata</i>	Common Carpet	
<i>Camptogramma bilineata</i>	Yellow Shell	
<i>Eupithecia centaureata</i>	Lime-speck Pug	
<i>Eupithecia absinthiata</i>	Wormwood Pug	
<i>Gymnoscelis rufifasciata</i>	Double-striped Pug	
<i>Opisthograptis luteolata</i>	Brimstone Moth	
<i>Peribatodes rhomboidaria</i>	Willow Beauty	
<i>Cabera exanthemata</i>	Common Wave	
<i>Pheosia tremula</i>	Swallow Prominent	
<i>Phragmatobia fuliginosa</i>	Ruby Tiger	
<i>Agrotis puta</i>	Shuttle-shaped Dart	
<i>Ochropleura plecta</i>	Flame Shoulder	
<i>Noctua pronuba</i>	Large Yellow Underwing	
<i>Xestia c-nigrum</i>	Setaceous Hebrew Character	
<i>Xestia xanthographa</i>	Square-spot Rustic	
<i>Lacanobia oleracea</i>	Bright-line Brown-eye	
<i>Mythimna straminea</i>	Southern Wainscot	Local / marshland species
<i>Mythimna impura</i>	Smoky Wainscot	
<i>Mythimna pallens</i>	Common Wainscot	
<i>Simyra albovenosa</i>	Reed Dagger	Nb / coastal marshland species
<i>Acronicta megacephala</i>	Poplar Grey	
<i>Thalpophila matura</i>	Straw Underwing	
<i>Mesoligia furuncula</i>	Cloaked Minor	
<i>Mesapamea secalis</i>	Common Rustic	
<i>Hydraecia micacea</i>	Rosy Rustic	
<i>Celaena leucostigma</i>	Crescent	Local / marshland species
<i>Nonagria typhae</i>	Bulrush Wainscot	Marshland species
<i>Archanara dissoluta</i>	Brown-veined Wainscot	Local / marshland species
<i>Archanara sparganii</i>	Webb's Wainscot	Nb / marshland species
<i>Arenostola phragmitidis</i>	Fen Wainscot	Local / marshland species
<i>Hoplodrina ambigua</i>	Vine's Rustic	Local
<i>Rivula sericealis</i>	Straw Dot	
<i>Hypena proboscidalis</i>	Snout	

**Colin said: “Species labelled as ‘marshland’ represent the native fauna of the Thames marshes still managing to hang on in the face of urban expansion across the marshes. The list suggests a well-balanced marshland fauna of species expected in the region and shows that Thames Water policy is working well to preserve invertebrate biodiversity on this important site.”**

# Green Chain Walk event – Crossness Health Walk



At sunset, the night walkers gather for a photo at the Crossness Southern Marsh wildlife viewing screen. Minutes later, at the viewing platform overlooking Erith Marsh Dyke South, we were in darkness. Much later, we enjoyed views of the River Thames at night.

I made the error of running an event for the Green Chain Walking Festival at 7pm on the 18<sup>th</sup> September 2007. While the late start time was all very well in theory, it did mean that much of the walk took place in the dark! (The event was planned in the spring when sunset was much later – that’s my excuse anyway!). However, 9 people came along to join our Crossness Health Walk despite the fact that it was dark by 7.30pm and in fact, it was this that made the walk particularly interesting. After all, not many people would take themselves off on a nighttime hike across the marshes had they been alone, but, in the safety of an organised group, this was an ideal opportunity to see a different aspect of the site.

The Green Chain run a considerable number of walking events throughout south-east London over the two week festival period, but ours was one of only two evening walks. Nearly all attendees said that the reason for coming along to our event was because other walks clashed with daytime work commitments, so in fact, the timing worked in our favour.

To take advantage of the late hour, I took a bat detector along, and since all attendees (but one) had never attended a bat walk or seen a bat detector in action, it made for an interesting experience. There wasn’t a great deal of bat activity, but we did pick up a common pipistrelle as it did a number of passes and people were fascinated to see this amazing little mammal feeding in a frenzy right over our heads.

We began the walk at Southmere Lake, through Southmere Green and on through Crossness Southern Marsh. We then walked up through the nature reserve, stopping briefly in the bird hide, went up to the River Thames – which looked particularly attractive with all the lights on it at night – and then down the Ridgeway (alongside Thamesview Golf Course), back down to Southmere Lake where we started, covering approximately 5km in 3 hours.

Several attendees lived very locally but were previously unaware that the southern marshes were open to the public, so they came along to investigate and were delighted by what was on offer to them. Other attendees have since become members of the Friends scheme so clearly the site was appealing even in the dark!! I think I’ll probably run a similar event next year. An evening event proved to be popular, so I’ll stick with this, but perhaps bring the start time forward slightly to encourage a greater number of attendees and so that people can see at least some of Crossness in daylight – silly me!!

## Species firsts for Crossness in 2007

2007 has seen a number of species firsts at Crossness. The grey phalarope (which was actually on the Thames but close to the reserve) and the squacco heron were certainly site firsts, with the squacco being the first to be recorded in Greater London in 141 years. While the squacco was attracting a vast number of birdwatchers, a purple heron was also seen for the first time, and a quail was heard on the southern marshes.

In addition to these spectacular birds, we have had spotted flycatcher (recorded 3<sup>rd</sup> Jul on CNR and 18<sup>th</sup> Aug on CSM), coal tit (7<sup>th</sup> Oct) and siskin (11 Nov), all recorded on the nature for the first time. Who knows what goodies 2008 will bring!

Spotted flycatchers are in rapid decline in the UK and as such, the species is on the UK red list indicating a greater than 50% decline. They are summer visitors to the UK arriving mainly in May, and leaving in July and August. Passage birds from northern Europe can be seen in September.

Siskins are doing well. The long-term trend is considered to be a probable increase in numbers. Siskin breed mainly in coniferous forest but there has been an expansion of the breeding range into southern Britain over recent years.

As with the siskin, the coal tit is considered to be on the increase with species abundance being pretty stable since the 1970s. However, this is a species that is not often seen in our area, or habitat, since coal tits are typically coniferous forest and woodland species.



Spotted flycatcher (Source: BTO website)



Siskin (Source: BTO website)

## Fantastic wildlife photos by Dave Pressland



This Grey Heron was on the CNR wader scrape island during our winter bird walk event



Grey wagtail



Little egret on the Thames foreshore

## Crossness heronry

Within the Crossness Sewage Treatment Works lies an ornamental lake that once housed a thriving heronry. In 2003, when the tree was beginning to break up as a result of damage caused by the grey heron's own defecation (this is not uncommon), the number of nesting herons dropped from 8 to 3. It became obvious to our Conservation and Heritage Team (as it was called then) that the heronry would be lost altogether if an artificial structure was not provided.

In 2004, a structure was erected as a 'quick-fix' solution. The long-term view was to provide some kind of sculpture with nesting platforms, but the success of an artificial structure had to be demonstrated before such an investment could be made.

Scaffolding offered a cheap solution. Such a structure could support the 9 nesting platforms (baskets) required, of which 4 would be willow baskets and the remaining 5 were metal.

Finally, our efforts have been rewarded. Until this year, individual herons were frequently seen sitting on the artificial structure, but not nesting. Earlier this year however, a pair raised three young in one of the wicker baskets! On an area of short mown grassland just inside the entrance to the works, the whole family could be frequently spotted. Since herons are generally quite solitary outside of breeding, it was nice to see five grey herons together (2 adults and 3 juveniles).

Grey herons are a London Biodiversity Action Plan species due to the declining number of breeding pairs, so this is an important success in a regional context as well as a great success for Thames Water.

It has been quite a year for herons at Crossness. We had our first breeding pair of grey herons on the purpose-built heronry; we were graced with the presence of a rare squacco heron for just under two weeks in May (the first in London since 1866); and a purple heron was spotted at Crossness on a number of occasions during the squacco's presence.



1 adult Grey Heron with 3 juveniles on top of the artificial structure



There are 8 Grey Herons in this shot: 6 on the structure and 2 on the surrounding vegetation below. The structure may not win awards for appearance, but the herons clearly like it



The quality of this photo is not so good, but it shows 6 herons on the heronry – the sixth is on the extreme right of the shot disguised by background foliage



The 3 juveniles and 1 adult enjoying raised views over the lake



This Grey Heron in flight was taken by David Pressland – thanks Dave

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## Norman Road closure

To facilitate the construction of the Riverside Resource Recovery Facility (Belvedere Waste Incinerator) on the 14 acre site at the northern end of Norman Road, it is necessary for Cory Environmental to widen the road. Norman Road is a private highway, which has a public right of way along it and is one of the temporary vehicular access routes to Crossness Nature Reserve when community events and volunteer task days are being held.

Cory Environmental plan to provide a 7.3m wide two-way carriageway plus a 1.8m wide footpath. At the northern end, the 70m carriageway will be reduced to a single way road with a 2m wide footpath (also to be used by dismounted cyclists). The reduced width section of the road improvement scheme was necessary due to land use constraints at the time the planning application was submitted. These issues are now being resolved and future improvements may involve widening the road at the north end to a two-way carriageway also.

The programme of road improvement works is envisaged to start on 2 January 2008 and run for 6 months, during which time, a 6 month diversion order will be issued. For the first 4 months it will be necessary to close the road completely. Thereafter, under a traffic management scheme, restricted access will be available along Norman Road whilst the highway works are being completed.

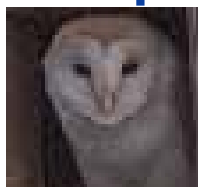
This does unfortunately mean, that for all community events held on the reserve between 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2008 and June 2008, there will be no vehicular access available to attendees. Other options include parking and walking from Belvedere Road along Public Footpath 1 (southern end of the reserve), parking in Norman Road South and accessing the reserve using Public Footpath 2 through Norman Road Field (except during March 08 – see below), parking at the Thamesview Golf Course and walking east along the Thames Path, or parking on the Belvedere Industrial Estate and walking west along the Thames Path, joining the reserve at the north end. If these pedestrian routes provide any major problems for people, please contact me beforehand and I can perhaps arrange to collect people (from the Lakeside Complex on Belvedere Road, for example) and drive them, in my Thames Water vehicle, through the sewage treatment works. **Unfortunately, vehicular access to the reserve through Crossness Sewage Treatment Works is not permitted.**

Apologies for the inconvenience that this will cause. On the plus side, once completed, they'll be no more pot-holes to contend with as you drive up Norman Road!!

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## Footpath closure – Tilfen Land enhancement work



Tilfen Land own a 1.31ha (3.21 acres) area of land situated south-east of the nature reserve. We refer to this area as Norman Road Field, but it is officially known as Area 5.

As part of their ecological mitigation for development on Southmere Green, Tilfen are carrying out ecological enhancement work on Area 5. The plans involve the creation of a seasonal wetland on 0.47ha of the site, and 0.84ha will be converted to species rich neutral grassland.

The proposed developments are scheduled to start in March 2008 and last for approximately one month. As a result of this, health and safety requires that Footpath 2 will need to be closed during the construction period and alternative access routes to the reserve will need to be sought. Parking at the southern end of Norman Road should still be possible (if not, park on Norman Road South, off Yarnton Way) and then a short walk along Eastern Way will bring you to Footpath 1 (the footpath that links Crossness Southern Marsh to the southern end of Crossness Nature Reserve). Please take great care along Eastern Way, as this is a very busy and potentially dangerous dual carriageway.

As part of their ecological mitigation, Tilfen also plan to erect some bird nesting boxes on their landholdings. They are keen to help the Crossness fledgling barn owls (ten this year!!) and as such, they plan to erect a pole-mounted barn owl nest box at the north end of Area 5 (near Great Breach Lagoon) during the Area 5 improvement works. At a later date, Tilfen hope to erect a further two barn owl boxes at the northern end of Veridian Business Park (formally East Thamesmead Business Park). These will be located within the buffer zone between the development and Crossness Southern Marshes, and positioned close to the ditches, as advised by leading barn owl expert, Colin Shawyer. So, in addition to the two additional nest boxes that Thames Water plan to install, our resident barn owls should be in for quite a treat in future years with plenty of roosting, and potential nesting, opportunities.

Having taken advice from the Wildlife Conservation Partnership, Tilfen Land also plan to erect a Tawny Owl nest box and a range of other boxes for small cavity-nesting birds (Great Tit, Blue Tit, Nuthatch and Tree Creeper) throughout the woodland belt that runs across the southern end of the Veridian Business Park.

If timing of the footpath closure should alter, I will advise members of the Friends scheme via email.

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## Volunteer event – sand martin bank modifications

Help!! Our artificial sand martin nesting bank needs modifying to attract breeding martins in 2008. The structure, erected in 2004, has not yet been used (except by spiders!!) and we believe that it may be due to the dimension of the holes and the lack of excavation material within.

Our sand martin wall contains 29, 100mm diameter holes constructed from clay/ceramic pipes. The pipes, which are some 1.5m deep with a 1:60 slope, have sand at the base in which it was hoped that sand martins would nest.

However, despite similar structures being used successfully elsewhere, ours remains empty. We are therefore going to make some modifications in the hope of attracting these Biodiversity Action Plan species. We have been advised that the holes should be smaller and that the pipes should be filled with more sand and a weak cement solution so that the martins can excavate their own nest cavity.

We are going to have a go at this on 23<sup>rd</sup> February. If you fancy lending a helping hand, please feel free to come along. I would advise that you wear wellies in the event that water levels are lapping at the base of the nesting bank. Everything else, including light refreshments, will be provided.

Unfortunately, I am unable to open the Norman Road gate due to road improvements. Please make your way on foot or meet me for a shuttle service in my truck at 9.45, at the Lakeside Complex car park of Belvedere Road.



The back of the sand martin bank during construction

## Winter bird watch



Dave Pressland captured this magnificent photo of a mute swan preening on the wader scrape island

On Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> November, we held a winter bird walk on the nature reserve. The event was hosted by expert ornithologists Ralph and Brenda Todd. Despite being bitterly cold with a hard frost that morning, 21 people turned out for the event.

Ralph and Brenda did a fantastic job, once again, of teaching attendees basic identification skills. They discussed the ecology, behaviour, conservation status and habitat requirements of a range of birds species. They ensured that everybody got the opportunity to see each species up close through the spotting scope and they even taught attendees the correct way to adjust their binoculars!

It was a great event with a good turnout and a reasonable species list: Mallard, Teal, Shoveler, Gadwall, Shelduck, Canada Goose, Moorhen, Grey Wagtail, Snipe, Redshank, Black-tailed Godwit, Lapwing, Cormorant, Grey Heron, Black-headed Gull, Mute Swan, Starling, Magpie, Stonechat, Reed Bunting, Robin, Little Grebe, Redwing and Kestrel.

Many thanks to Ralph and Brenda for giving up their Saturday and coming out on a very cold day to host this great event.



Black headed gulls on the Thames foreshore. Photo by Dave Pressland, with kind permission



Ralph addresses some of our attendees

## 2008 Spring event – birdsong identification workshop and breeding bird surveys

Following the success of our birdsong identification workshop this spring, we are going to repeat the event on Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> April 2008. In addition to the workshop, in the two consecutive weeks, we will follow this up with breeding bird surveys on both Crossness Nature Reserve (Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> May) and Crossness Southern Marsh (Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> May).

Since breeding bird surveys involve identifying calling males and mapping subsequent territories, this will be a great opportunity to put our newfound birdcall identification skills to good use.

Wildlife ecologist, Andrew Waller, will run each event. The birdsong workshop will follow the same format as that held in 2007, with a session in the bird hide listening to recorded bird calls and giving us the opportunity to make notes on sheets provided; this will be followed by a walk around the reserve seeing what birds we can identify by sound. The workshop will begin at 08.30. Apologies for the early start, but unfortunately birds are best identified by their calls first thing in the morning. Dawn would have been ideal, but I couldn't be that mean! Unfortunately, due to the Norman Road closure, we cannot permit vehicular access, so please make your way to the reserve on foot, or meet me at the Lakeside Complex car park (off Belvedere Road) at 08.15am where I will offer lifts through the works in my truck. Unfortunately, vehicular access through the works is not permitted for event attendees.

The nature reserve breeding bird survey will also begin at 08.30 and meet up arrangements will be as detailed above for the workshop. This will be a little more scientific, since we will make our way around the reserve, in a group, listening for calling birds. From this, we will map the breeding bird territories that we identify. So, although this will be a bit of a stop-start exercise, it is a unique opportunity to put your birdsong skills to the test, and also to see how professional bird surveys are carried out. We will be adopting the methodology that is used professionally by wildlife ecologists. We may not be as thorough given that we are attempting to turn this into a community event, but we will nevertheless gather some great data while hopefully providing an educational and entertaining event.

The final breeding bird survey will take place on the Crossness Southern Marsh (CSM). We will meet at 08.30am at the Lakeside Complex and head over to the marsh (approx. 10 min walk). We will stick to the 1.5km footpath through CSM which will provide a transect from which to record breeding bird territories. The route will also provide a standardised method should we repeat the surveys in subsequent years.

This should be a really interesting exercise and the three events, though each can be attended individually, can be treated as a unique (and free!!) short course in breeding bird surveys. Since these events are having to be held midweek and I understand that many of you have work commitments, I realise that it will be impossible for some of you to attend all three sessions, so please do feel free to attend whichever individual session works best for you. Obviously, unless you already possess good birdcall identification skills, attending the workshop prior to a survey event will be useful, but not essential.

Unfortunately, refreshments will NOT be provided for the Crossness Southern Marsh event, but I would advise bringing a drink with you and do feel free to bring snacks along.

I hope you will be as excited about these events as I am, and I look forward to seeing some of you then.

All these amazing photos were taken by Dave Pressland and used with kind permission



Duncock



Reed warbler



Wren

## Barn owl – record number of fledglings



A meeting with Colin Shawyer, author of 'Barn Owls' and many other books, revealed that we may have the only breeding barn owls in Greater London. The only other breeding site that he had been previously aware of was Beckton gas works which no longer exists. Although Rainham Marshes have had breeding barn owls and are only located just across the River Thames, Rainham is located in Essex. No other London sites are known, so far as we are aware.

Another exciting revelation was the fact that we may hold a record for the largest number of barn owl fledglings this year. Although there have been a number of second broods throughout the country, few have been as successful as ours. Colin said, 'I've visited thousands of breeding sites this year, and none of them have had as many as ten fledge from the one nest site.'

Our owls laid 6 eggs in each of two broods this year. One owlet in each brood died, but ten were ringed and fledged. Since the average brood is 3-4 young with pre-fledging mortality being fairly high, this is a remarkable number of young barn owls to have been raised at Crossness this year.

# Forthcoming 2008 events

## Crossness Nature Reserve

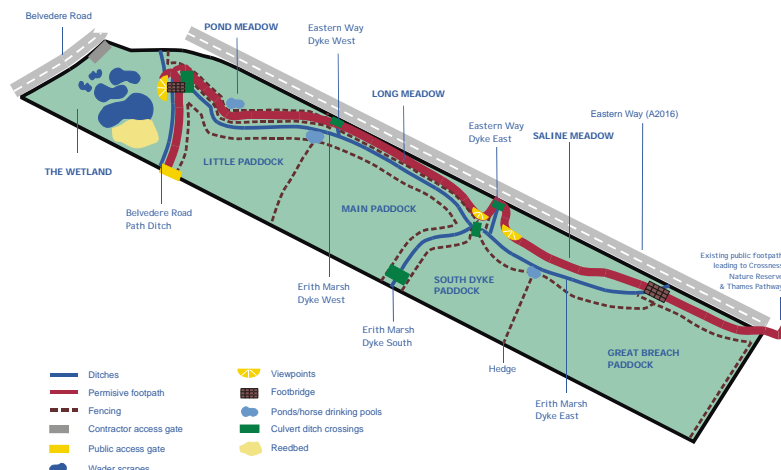
Date	Event	Meeting details
Sat 26 <sup>th</sup> Jan	<b>PRACTICAL CONSERVATION DAY REEDBED MANAGEMENT</b> Tools and gloves supplied, but do feel free to bring billhooks, sickles and scythes if you have them. Light refreshments supplied.	10am at the gate to the protected area Unfortunately the Norman Road gate will be closed due to road improvements. Please make your way to the reserve on foot, or meet me at 9.45am at the Lakeside complex car park (off Belvedere Road) and I can run a shuttle service though the works in my truck
Sat 23 <sup>rd</sup> Feb	<b>PRACTICAL CONSERVATION DAY MODIFICATION TO SAND MARTIN NESTING BANK TO CELEBRATE NATIONAL NEST BOX WEEK</b> Tools and gloves supplied (see page 8 for details) Light refreshments supplied.	10am at the gate to the protected area Unfortunately the Norman Road gate will be closed due to road improvements. See above for alternatives
Sat 26 <sup>th</sup> Apr	<b>GUIDED TOUR OF NATURE RESERVE</b> This event is essentially for the Bexley RSPB group, but all members of the Friends scheme are welcome. REFRESHMENTS WILL NOT BE PROVIDED – SORRY.	10am at the Thames Path viewing platform. Please bring binoculars if you have them
Weds 30 <sup>th</sup> Apr	<b>BIRDSONG IDENTIFICATION WORKSHOP</b> with Andrew Waller. This workshop will begin with an indoor (bird hide) teaching session listening to recorded bird sounds, followed by a walk around the reserve identifying birds by their calls. This event is being opened up to anybody wishing to come along, not just to members of the Friends scheme, so do feel free to promote this event more widely to friends and family. Some light refreshments provided. Please bring stout shoes, outdoor clothing and binoculars if you have them.	8.30am in the bird hide Unfortunately the Norman Road gate will be closed due to road improvements. Please make your way to the reserve on foot, or meet me at 8.15 at the Lakeside complex car park (off Belvedere Road) and I can run a shuttle service though the works in my truck
Thurs 8 <sup>th</sup> May	<b>BREEDING BIRD SURVEY</b> with Andrew Waller. Building on what we learned on the birdsong identification workshop, we will undertake a breeding bird survey of the reserve by identifying singing pairs. Please bring binoculars if you have them. Refreshments provided. We will undertake a similar survey on the southern marshes the following week on Thurs 15 <sup>th</sup> May. You do not need to have attended the workshop to join in.	8.30am in the bird hide Unfortunately the Norman Road gate will be closed due to road improvements. See above for alternatives
Thurs 5 <sup>th</sup> June	<b>PRACTICAL CONSERVATION DAY TO CELEBRATE VOLUNTEERS WEEK AND WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY</b> Ragwort control (which is toxic to livestock) on Crossness Nature Reserve. Gloves supplied. Refreshments supplied.	10am at the gate to the protected area Unfortunately the Norman Road gate will be closed due to road improvements. Please make your way to the reserve on foot, or meet me at 9.45am at the Lakeside complex car park (off Belvedere Road) and I can run a shuttle service though the works in my truck
Thurs 26 <sup>th</sup> June	<b>DRAGONFLY AND BUTTERFLY WALK</b> with Andrew Waller. Please bring clothing suitable for the weather conditions. Binoculars are useful for this event. Refreshments provided.	11am at the gate to the protected area. Estimated completion time 2pm
Mon 7 <sup>th</sup> July	<b>BARN OWL AWARENESS DAY</b> – A discussion about barn owl ecology and conservation, and a look at barn owl pellets and their content on the pond dipping platform; then, if we're lucky, an opportunity to watch some owl activity around the nest site (the latter can't be guaranteed unfortunately)	7.45pm in the protected area for 8pm start. Barn owl watch starting approximately 9pm (sunset at 21:18)
Fri 25 <sup>th</sup> July	<b>BAT WALK</b> with site warden. Please bring torches and clothing suitable for the weather conditions.	8.45pm at entrance to the protected area (sunset at 20:59)
To be confirmed	<b>WINTER BIRD WALK</b> Please bring binoculars, though some are available for loan if required. Refreshments provided.	To be confirmed

# Forthcoming 2008 events

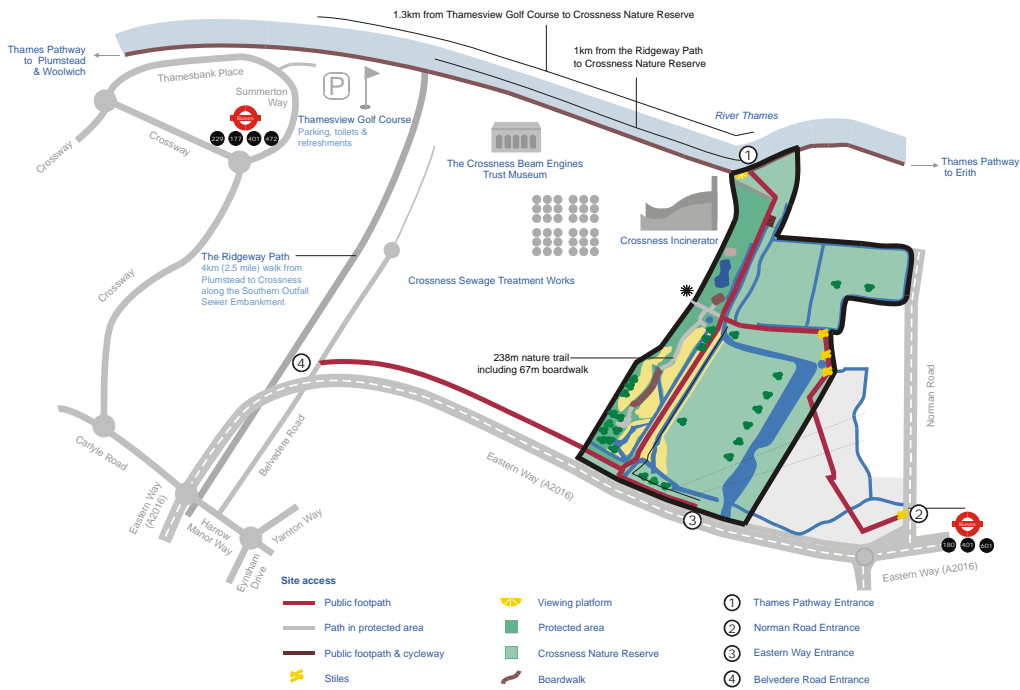
## Crossness Southern Marshes

Date	Event	Meeting details
Thurs 15 <sup>th</sup> May	<b>BREEDING BIRD SURVEY</b> with Andrew Waller. Building on what we learned on the birdsong identification workshop, we will undertake a breeding bird survey of the marshes by identifying singing pairs. Please bring binoculars if you have them. A similar survey will be undertaken on the reserve the week before on Thurs 8 <sup>th</sup> May. You do not need to have attended the previous workshops to join in. <b>REFRESHMENTS WILL NOT BE PROVIDED FOR THIS EVENT – SORRY.</b>	8.30am at Southmere Lake/Lakeside car park off Belvedere Road
Sat 7 <sup>th</sup> June (to be confirmed)	<b>MOTH SURVEY ON NATIONAL MOTH NIGHT</b> hopefully with expert entomologist Colin Plant. We have been running this popular event for a couple of years now and there is always much to see and learn. Refreshments provided, usually in the comfort of Colin's camper!! Be prepared for a late one (though people are free to leave earlier of course) as sunset isn't until 21:14 and the traps need to be out a while before we get decent moth activity. <b>Look out for further communication regarding this event and whether or not it goes ahead</b>	9pm (or make your way to Crossness Southern Marsh earlier if you wish to help set up) at Southmere Lake/Lakeside car park off Belvedere Road <b>(to be confirmed)</b>
Thurs 17 <sup>th</sup> July	<b>PRACTICAL CONSERVATION DAY ROOT OUT RAGWORT</b> Ragwort control (which is toxic to livestock). Gloves supplied. Some light refreshments supplied. Please be advised that the paddock in which we will be working will have grazing horses, so this event is unsuitable for anybody with a fear of horses	10am at Southmere Lake/Lakeside car park off Belvedere Road
Fri 15 <sup>th</sup> Aug	<b>BAT WALK TO CELEBRATE EUROPEAN BAT WEEKEND</b> with site warden. Please bring torches and clothing suitable for the weather conditions. Actually, European Bat Weekend is the following weekend but since that falls on the August Bank Holiday when many people will be away, I've decided to bring our event forward. <b>REFRESHMENTS WILL NOT BE PROVIDED FOR THIS EVENT – SORRY.</b>	8.15pm at Southmere Lake/Lakeside car park off Belvedere Road
Date to be confirmed	<b>CROSSNESS HEALTH WALK</b> with site manager for the South East London Green Chain Walking Festival. The route will lead from Southmere Lake to the Crossness Southern Marsh footpath (1.5km), take us through Crossness Nature Reserve, along the Riverside Walk and down the Ridgeway back to Southmere Lake. This is approximately a 4km walk which we estimate to take around 2.5 hours. Please be advised that Public Footpath 1 requires walking up and over a fairly steep bank which leads to the Eastern Way (A2016) dual carriageway, and crossing the A2016. Please wear stout, comfortable walking shoes; clothing appropriate for the weather conditions; and please bring a bottle of water.	1pm at the Southmere Lake/Lakeside car park (Belvedere Road, Abbey Wood).

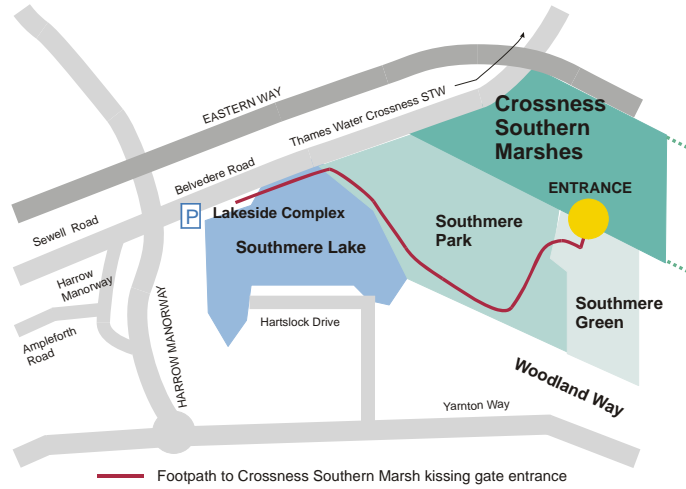
## Crossness Southern Marshes



## Getting to Crossness Nature Reserve



## Getting to Crossness Southern Marshes



**Recommended route for Crossness Southern Marshes:** Park at the Lakeside Complex, walk alongside the lake and through Southmere Park to the top right corner. Cross over the dry ditch crossing (close to tethered horses) and head for the kissing gate on the left leading to Crossness Southern Marshes

### Correspondence

Send any correspondence, including ideas for reserve management, species monitoring and community events to:

**Karen Sutton (Crossness Nature Reserve Manager)**

Thames Water

Crossness Sewage Treatment Works

Nature Reserve Office

Belvedere Road

Abbey Wood

London SE2 9AQ

Email: [karen.sutton@thameswater.co.uk](mailto:karen.sutton@thameswater.co.uk)