

Friends of Crossness Nature Reserve

■ Newsletter



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Issue 12 / May 2008

Welcome



Hello. I must begin by apologising for the late arrival of this newsletter. A number of recent projects have taken my time and attention away from the production of this latest issue, but I do hope you will enjoy the content despite the late arrival.

Unfortunately, I have to report that our barn owls have not bred this year. This is a great shame and I, and many others, are deeply disappointed by the news. It appears that the nest box is leaking and the subsequent damp conditions have probably deterred a breeding attempt. Dry conditions are of great importance to barn owls. They are poorly adapted for wet conditions due to their soft, little-oiled plumage which rapidly becomes saturated. Owlets are particularly vulnerable and can soon become waterlogged and chilled – the most common cause of juvenile mortality, so it does make sense that the present conditions would have been avoided. Repairs to the box will be made as soon as possible and two more nest boxes are due to be erected, so hopefully we haven't seen the last of them yet.

Experts have stated that this year will not be as successful as 2007 for barn owls, with second broods being particularly uncommon; 2009 is likely to be a bad year due to the vole cycle and subsequent lack of prey availability.

I have put two collapsable chairs in the bird hide intended for barn owl watching purposes. They are lightweight, compact camping-type seats that fold into a narrow case with a strap. They can be carried conventionally, or over the shoulder. People may still wish to keep a look out – barn owls are quite site faithful and once their home range has been selected and successful breeding takes place, it is rare for either partner to move in subsequent years even with the loss of a nest site. Our owls could therefore still be breeding or roosting nearby. In the unlikely event that the owls may attempt a late season brood, could I please urge you to keep a good distance from the nest site. Barn owls are protected by Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, and disturbance of barn owls during the nesting season is illegal.

Sorry to be the bearer of bad news, but you will find plenty of other good news within this newsletter – happy reading.

Karen Sutton – Crossness Nature Reserve Manager

Crossness Wildflowers



Wildflower photos taken at Crossness by David Pressland
(Oxeye Daisy, Common Poppy, White Dead Nettle)

Wildlife records – Oct–Dec 2007

Species	No. throughout quarter	Peak no. recorded	CES number captured	Species	No. throughout quarter	Peak no. recorded	CES number captured
Bar tailed Godwit	2	1	0	Lesser black backed gull	10	6	0
Black headed gull	751	300	0	Little grebe	6	3	0
Black tailed godwits	35	30	0	Long-tailed tit	6	1	6
Blackbird	30	3	16	Magpie	26	6	1
Blackcap	2	1	1	Mallard	190	50	0
Blue tit	20	7	0	Meadow pipit	7	3	0
Broad bodied chaser	1	1	0	Moorhen	31	8	0
Canada geese	95	25	0	Mute swan	8	1	0
Carrion crow	16	5	0	Peregrine	1	1	0
Chaffinch	15	5	2	Pied wagtails	2	2	0
Chiffchaff	2	2	0	Red darter	2	2	0
Coot	23	8	0	Redshank	259	135	1
Cormorant	103	30	0	Redwing	15	5	4
Curlew	5	2	0	Reed bunting	4	2	1
Dunlin	548	500	17	Ring necked parakeet	1	1	0
Duncock	32	4	18	Robin	14	3	5
Feral pigeon	15	15	0	Shelduck	22	12	0
Fieldfare	15	7	0	Shoveler	107	46	0
Fox	2	1	0	Siskins	14	7	0
Gadwall	120	50	0	Skylark	3	2	0
Goldfinch	257	150	5	Snipe	25	9	0
Great crested grebe	3	2	0	Song thrush	10	2	8
Great spotted woodpecker	2	1	0	Sparrowhawk	2	1	0
Great tit	24	4	19	Starling	121	50	0
Greater black backed gull	1	1	0	Stoat	1	1	0
Green sandpiper	9	5	0	Stonechat	15	3	0
Green woodpecker	5	1	1	Teal	1326	625	1
Greenfinch	78	11	62	Water rail	1	1	0
Grey heron	18	6	0	Water vole	1	1	0
Grey wagtail	6	5	0	Wheatear	1	1	0
Herring gull	2	2	0	Wigeon	4	2	0
Kestrel	7	3	0	Wood pigeon	110	65	0
Kingfisher	2	1	0	Wren	22	4	14
Lapwing	261	220	0	Yellow wagtail	1	1	0

No. throughout quarter = total number of times species has been recorded during three month period.
(better indicator of number using the site).

Peak no. = peak number of particular species seen at any one time
CES number captured (Constant Effort Site) = the number caught during the Dartford Ringing Group's population monitoring



Photos by David Pressland, used with kind permission

Male and female Stonechat, and Robin

Wildlife records – Jan–Mar 2008

Species	No. through-out quarter	Peak no. recorded	CES number captured	Species	No. through-out quarter	Peak no. recorded	CES number captured
Black headed gull	300	300	0	Magpie	17	6	0
Black tailed godwit	85	59	0	Mallard	32	20	0
Blackbird	15	2	6	Meadow pipit	32	9	0
Blue tit	37	5	20	Mistle thrush	1	1	0
Canada goose	10	1	0	Moorhen	38	5	0
Carrion crow	33	30	0	Mute swan	6	2	0
Chaffinch	11	6	3	Peregrine falcon	3	2	0
Chiffchaff	4	1	3	Pheasant	2	2	0
Collared dove	1	1	0	Pied wagtail	20	20	0
Coot	37	4	0	Pochard	1	1	0
Comma butterfly	1	1	0	Red admiral	1	1	0
Cormorant	8	8	0	Redshank	210	110	0
Curlew	2	2	0	Redwing	49	40	0
Dunlin	600	400	0	Reed bunting	4	2	1
Duncock	20	1	19	Robin	20	5	10
Fieldfare	25	20	0	Shelduck	110	110	0
Fox	2	1	0	Shoveler	304	107	0
Gadwall	668	136	0	Skylark	12	4	0
Goldfinch	11	6	0	Snipe	13	10	0
Great crested grebe	6	6	0	Song Thrush	5	1	3
Great spotted woodpecker	1	1	0	Sparrowhawk	3	2	0
Great tit	45	5	23	Starling	6	6	0
Green sandpiper	5	2	0	Stock dove	1	1	0
Green woodpecker	1	1	0	Stonechat	35	4	1
Greenfinch	32	12	0	Teal	1579	850	0
Grey heron	6	1	0	Tufted duck	21	6	0
Grey wagtail	2	2	0	Water rail	2	1	0
Jack snipe	1	1	0	Water vole	1	1	0
Kestrel	10	2	0	Weasel	1	1	0
Kingfisher	1	1	0	Wheatear	2	2	0
Lapwing	604	320	0	Wigeon	49	13	0
Lesser black backed gull	3	3	0	Woodpigeon	6	6	0
Little grebe	11	2	0	Wren	12	3	3
Long tailed tit	13	3	10	Yellow legged gull	2	1	0

No. throughout quarter = total number of times species has been recorded during three month period.
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In February, routine maintenance of the windpump from a cherry-picker provided an ideal opportunity to get some aerial photographs of the reserve. Both of these photos concentrate on the southern half of the protected area.

The image on the left shows the pond-dipping platform, a bit of the mini-beast area, the north end reedbed, with Island Field seen in the distance. This shot also shows the area of cut reedbed that was cleared by volunteers in January. It is a significant area and I hope the volunteers will be proud of their efforts and achievement. The image on the right again shows the reedbed, including the large stand at the bottom half of the protected area where the boardwalk is located.

It's a bug's life – a close-up look at the invertebrates of Crossness

With photos from Dave Pressland

These beautiful photos were all taken at Crossness Nature Reserve during 2007 by Friend member, David Pressland. I'm sure you'll agree that these photos, and the many wonderful creatures, are pretty remarkable. Heartfelt thanks to Dave for sharing his photographic skills with us.



Hoverfly



Lacewing



Nursery web spider



Broad bodied chaser



Sloe bugs



Black tailed skimmer



Speckled wood



Soldier beetle



Thick legged flower beetle



Hoverfly

Sand martin modification day



The only mating that's occurred on our modified sand martin bank so far – grrr!!
Photo: Dave Pressland with kind permission

An artificial sand martin nesting bank was built at Crossness in 2004 but has unfortunately been unsuccessful in enticing nesting martins. We were recently advised that the holes were probably too big (100mm) and it was suggested that we fill the 29 holes with sand and reduce the opening size to between 40mm and 58mm.

Sand martins and their nests are protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) and they are also a priority species in the London Biodiversity Action Plan. They are a migratory species that winter in Africa and breed in

Europe. Unfortunately they are severely affected by droughts in the Sahel regions of Africa and several population crashes have resulted over the past 50 years. They usually nest colonially in the sheer sandy faces that develop naturally on river meanders or are created in the course of sand and gravel

mining, but they frequently use man made sites including artificial banks such as that provided at Crossness. In their natural environment, the nest hole is usually 35cm to 1m long and is excavated over a period of two weeks by both parents. They hover at the face of a sand cliff and scratch with their feet to start the tunnel.

On Saturday 23rd February, myself and six volunteers filled the 1.5-2m pipes with sand. We then created smaller entrance holes using pipes and a weak sand and cement solution.

Sand martins are not exclusively waterside birds, but proximity to water is a preference where they will feed on airborne insects over the water. Sand martins are one of the earliest summer migrants to return to Britain, visiting between March and September, and, in previous years, they have been seen in small numbers feeding over the wader scrape that is adjacent the sand martin wall. Unfortunately however, we have yet to see any breeding sand martins using the renovated bank, but somebody did see a pair of wood pigeons fornicating on top of it!! At least there's breeding activity of some kind going on, just not the right species!!!



Birdsong identification workshop

Wednesday 30th April was a wet and rainy day. It was also the day selected to run a birdsong identification workshop on the nature reserve.

Eight of us braved the elements and came out to learn what we could from Andrew Waller about identifying birds by their calls and their song. We began with a session in the birdhide listening to recordings of the birds we might see and hear at that time of year on the reserve. Forms and clipboards were issued for those that wanted to make notes (I forget if I don't write it down!), and then we dashed in and out trying to identify singing birds while also trying to avoid the showers – which did, incidentally, provide ample opportunity to scoff the food and down some hot drinks to keep the cold at bay (in spring!!).

Considering the poor weather and the subsequent discomfort, we actually did quite well. We managed to hear and see reed warblers in the reedbed, got some stunning views of a linnet, and numerous reed bunting and whitethroat. We heard wren and song thrush singing, and watched great tit and blue tit sing. We also watched a group of 16 swift come in ahead of a rather large and menacing cloud, and later saw other hirundines: swallows and house martins. We heard, but didn't see, chaffinch, greenfinch and dunnock within the protected area. Other species seen or heard on the day included: mute swan, canada goose, shelduck, gadwall, mallard, pheasant, little grebe, grey heron, kestrel, moorhen, coot, lapwing, black-headed gull, lesser black-backed gull, feral rock dove, wood pigeon, pied wagtail (a number of them on the wader scrape island), blackbird, magpie, carrion crow and starling.

By the end of a rather wet workshop, we were pleased to have seen a number of birds, and, with the help and expertise of Andrew Waller, most of us had perfected, among others, the song of the reed bunting (3 or 4 notes like "three blind mice"), reed warbler, song thrush (one note 6 or 8 times, followed by a repetition of a different note), whitethroat (scratchy, manic), wren (twiddle in the middle), chaffinch (descending sound like a bowling ball or 'women's institute'!!), dunnock (squeaky supermarket trolley) and greenfinch (sings its own name: 'grrrrreeeeeee'). Many thanks to Andy Waller for hosting another great event and thanks to those people that came along despite the awful weather.



Reedbed cutting volunteer workday

Reedbeds are dominated by Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*) and defined as a pure reedbed where the *Phragmites* cover exceeds 90%. Reedbeds are part of the succession from open water to woodland so management aims to slow or halt succession to woodland. Without management, dead vegetation and litter builds up and dries the reedbed, allowing colonisation of other vegetation types – particularly nettle in our case.

Our reedbed on Crossness Nature Reserve, is not only the largest reedbed in the Bexley Borough, but it is also the most ancient natural habitat present; it is marked on the first edition of the Ordnance Survey maps which were surveyed in the 1860s.

Reedbeds are important for a range of birds such as bittern, bearded tit, marsh harrier, Cetti's warbler and Savi's warbler, and all but bittern have been recorded at Crossness although there was an unconfirmed possible bittern sighting last year. Our reedbed is especially important for breeding reed and sedge warbler, but reedbeds are also important pre-migration roost sites for hirundines, and ideal winter roosts for pied wagtails, starlings, and hen harriers.

In addition to the bird life, our reedbed supports good numbers of the nationally declining water vole. Water shrews and harvest mice are other mammals associated with reedbed.

And then of course there are the invertebrates. Forty species in four orders are known to feed only on reed, with a further 24 insects feeding partly on reed during their life cycle. The Crossness reedbed supports a diverse invertebrate community including 1 Red Data Book 3 moth, 7 Nationally Notable species and 4 Regionally Notable (London) invertebrates. Moth species recorded here that are associated with reedbed include the twin-spotted wainscot, the fen wainscot, obscure, silky and Webb's wainscot.

The management objective for reed warbler is to maintain a dense wet reedbed with little litter and high seed production by winter cutting; for sedge warbler, the objective is to maintain old reed with a litter layer by long-term winter cutting; and for invertebrates, to ensure that there are areas of reed that are not in standing water. A mosaic of reedbed habitat is clearly required, with a succession from young reed through a gradation of increasingly dry conditions to controlled scrub invasion.

It was with the aim of meeting these management objectives that five volunteers came to help me cut and clear blocks of reed in January this year. So for Bernard, Ken, Dave, Colin and Reg, although it may have felt like unnecessary hard slog on the day, you can rest assured that your efforts are not only greatly appreciated by myself, but by all the wildlife that have since moved into the reedbed. In fact, a number of snipe were seen feeding in the reed stubble just days after cutting, so it's not only the warblers that like our management regime. Thank you so much for your help; it is simply too much for just little 'ol me on my own – thank you.



Crossness Nature Reserve breeding bird survey

Following the cold, wet birdsong identification workshop the week before, we couldn't have hoped for better weather for the first of our breeding bird survey events led by Andrew Waller.

Fifteen of us enjoyed a walk in the sunshine watching and listening for breeding birds around the nature reserve. As well as providing data in terms of a species list and location of breeding bird territories, it also enabled attendees to put their identification skills to the test. We certainly got an opportunity to perfect our identification skills of singing birds such as reed warbler, reed bunting, wren and blackcap, all of which were present in abundance.

Highlights of the event were finding a greenshank on the West Paddock, and watching a pair of kestrels as they hunted nearby, providing fantastic close views throughout the event. The pair were clearly working hard; their relentless hunting would indicate that they had young on a nearby nest.

The following is a list of the 38 species and the area in which they were found. One singing male generally indicates one breeding territory present so those birds identified in **blue**, are those that were holding a territory and therefore thought to be breeding. Time constraints meant that we were unable to survey the whole of the reserve, so the Sea Wall Field is excluded from the survey, as is the southern boundary of the protected area (so as not to disturb breeding barn owls) and the southern boundary of the reserve leading to Eastern Way.

Species	Number	Location
Blackbird	1 male	Protected area, near reedbed
Blackcap	4 singing males	In protected area scrub
Black headed gull	2	Flying over reserve
Blue tit	1	Protected area scrub
Canada goose	2 adults + 5 chicks (plus 2 other adult geese present)	Wader scrape and reserve
Carrion crow	3	Flying over reserve and in nest
Chaffinch	1 male	Protected area – on fence (heard singing)
Common whitethroat	4 singing males	Wader scrape, protected area and west paddock
Coot	2 adults + 2 chicks	Wader scrape
Cormorant	1	Flying over reserve
Dunnock	1	Protected area – on fence
Feral rock dove	1	Flying over reserve
Gadwall		Wader scrape and west paddock
Greenfinch	3	Protected area scrub (includes one singing male)
Greenshank	1	West paddock
Grey heron	3	Wader scrape and flying over
Grey wagtail	1	Wader scrape in front of hide
Herring gull	2	Flying over reserve
Kestrel	2 pairs	Hunting over reserve and on sub station
Lapwing	5 (2 pairs displaying)	West paddock
Lesser black backed gull	1	Flying over reserve
Linnet	4	East paddock fence posts
Little grebe	2	Wader scrape
Magpie	2 (1 mobbing Kestrel)	Flying over
Mallard	6 males	Wader scrape and Great Breach Lagoon
Moorhen	2	Wader scrape and west paddock
Mute swan	2	Lagoon
Pied wagtail	2	West paddock
Reed bunting	4 males, all singing	Protected area – near boardwalk/in bushes near pond
Reed warbler	6 singing males	Protected area – in reedbed, near pond and in ditch
Robin	1	Protected area – on fence
Shelduck	5	Wader scrape – on bat cave; on west paddock
Skylark	2 singing males	West paddock
Starling	4	Flying over
Swallow	4	Flying over Island Field
Swift	2	Flying over
Woodpigeon	2	Protected area – in bushes
Wren	7 singing males	Protected area and near west paddock

Crossness Southern Marsh breeding bird survey

Despite another wet and cloudy day, the 9 people that attended the southern marsh breeding bird survey event recorded 33 bird species. The rain was so heavy in the morning that I thought I might have to call the event off, and I had very little expectation of anybody actually showing up given that it was so wet, so it was a nice surprise to see that 9 people had braved the elements to join us for a walk across the marsh recording breeding bird territories.

The highlight of the day was undoubtedly discovering 18 reed warbler territories throughout the reeds that were fringing the 1.5km ditches, the wader scrape reedbed and the larger reedbed area at the east of the site. It was also interesting to see so many carrion crows. When we arrived, just about every fence post had a crow sat upon it. It made for an interesting sight (not too dissimilar to Hitchcock's 'The Birds'!!) and would have made a great photo; unfortunately because of the rain, I didn't bother to take my camera along, something I regretted later when the rain dried up.

A good day despite the weather.

Species	Number	Location
Blackbird	2	Flew over
Blackcap	2	Boundary of Wetland Field, Bridge Meadow
Canada Goose	4	Wader scrape island, Great Breach Dyke Paddock
Carrion crow	50	Fence posts and bushes in paddocks, nest in Long Meadow
Chaffinch	4	Long Meadow, Great Breach Dyke Paddock
Chiffchaff	1	Bridge Meadow
Coot	3 + 5 young	Wader scrape, Erith Marsh Dyke West
Cormorant	1	Flew over
Dunnock	2	Long Meadow & Little Paddock
Feral rock dove	2	Flew over
Great Tit	3	Saline Field
Greater Black Backed Gull	1	Flew over
Green Woodpecker	1	Main Paddock flew over
Greenfinch	3	Pond Meadow, Long Meadow & flew over
Grey Heron	3	Flew over scrape & Saline Field
Herring Gull	2	Flew over
Kestrel	1 male	Great Breach Paddock
Lesser Black Backed Gull	9	Flew over
Linnet	3	Flew over
Little Grebe	1	Wader scrape
Magpie	3	Flew over & Great Breach Paddock
Mallard	4 + 6 chicks	Wader scrape & flew over
Moorhen	3	Belvedere Road Path Ditch & wader scrape
Mute swan	2	Flew over
Reed Bunting	5 (incl. 1 pair)	Wader scrape reedbed, Saline Field, Erith Marsh Dyke East
Reed Warbler	18	Wader scrape reedbed, Belvedere Path Ditch, Erith Marsh Dyke West, Erith Marsh Dyke South, Saline Field, Erith Marsh Dyke East
Ring Necked Parakeet	4	Flew over
Robin	2	Long Meadow
Starling	5	Flew over
Swift	4	Flew over
Whitethroat	7	Boundary of Wetland Field, Belvedere Path Ditch, Pond Meadow, Long Meadow, Erith Marsh Dyke East, Great Breach Dyke Paddock, Erith Marsh Dyke West
Wood pigeon	21	Wetland Field, Erith Marsh Dyke South Paddock
Wren	7	Boundary of Wetland Field, Long Meadow, South Paddock hedge, Bridge Meadow, Saline Field, Pond Meadow

Bexley RSPB tour



On Saturday 26th April, I led a tour for Bexley RSPB members. It was a lovely scorching day (the hottest so far this year, I believe) and 46 members came out for a look at Crossness Nature Reserve.

We began at the north end of the reserve, looking at the birds on the River Thames before heading down into the protected area. There was very little bird life around unfortunately and the sheer numbers of people didn't help. This was however a good introduction to a local site, and I urged attendees to

return under their own steam when they could quietly amble around the reserve and catch glimpses of all the wonderful wildlife. All attendees received copies of the last newsletter and application packs to join the 'Friends Scheme.' This has resulted in a number of new members and some new faces at subsequent events over recent weeks.

Wheatear, meadow pipit and skylark were seen over the East Paddock area. Grey heron, mute swan, gadwall, mallard and coot were spotted on the lagoon, and the wader scrape, though quiet, produced good views of nesting Canada geese (also a dead black headed gull!!), coot with 3 young chicks, shelduck, gadwall and whitethroat. Within the protected area we saw reed bunting, kestrel, sparrowhawk and whitethroat; one person also saw a cuckoo but I missed that unfortunately (a pair have since been heard calling to each other). Though warblers had recently come into the reedbed, we weren't fortunate enough to see any on this particular day. Aside from the usual suspects on the Thames foreshore, we did get good views of a black-tailed godwit, common tern which had only recently returned, and an arctic tern was also seen.

Here are some brilliant photos taken on the day by David Pressland (with kind permission):



Bank holiday rarities



The first May bank holiday this year brought all kinds of excitement to Crossness (the second was too wet for people to venture out!).

The 5th May 2008 saw a very rare Richard's Pipit on the winter-flooded West Paddock. This bird is a real rarity. It breeds largely in Siberia, central Asia and China, and migrates south to winter in the India subcontinent, South-East Asia and southern China. A small population regularly moves west in the autumn where it is often recorded in Europe, and, although it is sometimes recorded in the UK from September to November, it is very rare to see one in Britain outside of this autumn period. The Richard's Pipit is brown streaked with a pale buff breast. It is long-legged and long-tailed with an extremely long hind-claw. It is similar to the more common Meadow Pipit but the Richard's is larger and more slender – a real find for Crossness.

On the same day, and also on the West Paddock, a Grey-headed Gull (*Larus cirrocephalus poiocephalus*) was recorded, as was a Wood Sandpiper. This race of gull originates in Africa, but the one spotted at Crossness is thought to be an escape from London Zoo and probably a hybrid with a Silver Gull (*Larus novaehollandiae*).

The very next day, 6th May, a member of the Friends Scheme was watching the Wood Sandpiper on the paddock, and saw an Ashey-headed Wagtail – a wagtail subspecies! This race of wagtail breeds in Sicily, Sardinia, Italy and Slovenia, and winters in the coastal areas of Tunisia and Algeria.

The same person also recorded a Blue-headed Wagtail just a few days later (13th May). This subspecies breeds in southern Scandinavia down to France and central Europe, and winters in sub-Saharan Africa.

A member of the Friends Scheme rather excitedly said: 'Crossness is fantastic at this time of the year. Absolutely anything can turn up!'

Norman Road update

Norman Road is still closed and reconstruction work is proceeding well. The work is due to be completed during the second week in August. Cory Environmental contractors (Breheny) have excavated 2 to 2.5 m along the whole length and width of the new road area and have installed over 7000 supporting columns (which are 800mm diameter) in the underlying ground. On top of the columns, the new supporting substructure for the road – some 2m deep – has been constructed, and the kerbs and road sub base are being installed ready for the tarmac finishing layers. Buried trenches and ducts for the new water, electricity and telephone lines are well advanced and the new water main itself was started (by Thames Water) on 2nd June with installation of the new electricity cables (by EdF) starting on 16 June. There is a whole package of minor improvements being carried out to the junction with Picardy Manorway which will take about another 4 weeks to complete.

The road will remain a restricted closed area with access controlled under the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2007 until the work is completed mid August. Following this, we will be able to reinstate vehicular access for community events.

Tilfen update

The ecological enhancement work that was scheduled to take place on Tilfen Land's Area 5 (Norman Road Field), situated south-east of the nature reserve, has had to be postponed until after the breeding season.

Tilfen are creating a 0.47ha seasonal wetland and a 0.84h species-rich neutral grassland in this area, but when the planning application was granted, the buffer zones required as part of the planning conditions on the wetland scrapes were so wide that they would have obliterated the public footpath. As a result of this, Tilfen have had to formally apply for a Section 73 Notice in order to vary conditions. Since the Environment Agency need to be consulted again over this matter, it was decided that the work should be delayed until after the nesting season.

The work will now take place some time during or after September. During construction work (approximately one month), Footpath 2 will be closed and alternative access routes to the reserve will need to be sought. The closest access point would be Footpath 1 at the bottom of the reserve, but this would require a short walk from Norman Road South along Eastern Way (A2016). This is a busy dual carriageway, so please take great care if opting for this route. Other alternatives include parking on Belvedere Road and using that section of Footpath 2 to access the southern end of the reserve, or accessing the north end of Footpath 1 from the Thames Path.

The good news is that as well as providing a wildlife-rich area as a result of the habitat creation, Tilfen are also erecting a pole-mounted nest box for barn owls. Even if not used as a nest site, the adults might use this as a roost while the young are still in the nest box. The box will be located at the top end of Norman Road Field, so good views will be available from Lagoon Field or through the Great Breach Lagoon viewing screen. We (Thames Water) are erecting a further two barn owl boxes on the nature reserve; one pole-mounted box within the scrape complex of the protected area, and the other mounted onto the Environment Agency's Great Breach Pumping Station.

Forthcoming 2008 events

Crossness Nature Reserve

Date	Event	Meeting details
Sat 26 th Jan	PRACTICAL CONSERVATION DAY REEDBED MANAGEMENT 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 rd Feb	PRACTICAL CONSERVATION DAY MODIFICATION TO SAND MARTIN NESTING BANK TO CELEBRATE NATIONAL NEST BOX WEEK 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 th Apr	GUIDED TOUR OF NATURE RESERVE 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 th Apr	BIRDSONG IDENTIFICATION WORKSHOP 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 th May	BREEDING BIRD SURVEY 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 th 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 th June	PRACTICAL CONSERVATION DAY TO CELEBRATE VOLUNTEERS WEEK AND WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY 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 th June	DRAGONFLY AND BUTTERFLY WALK 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 th July	BARN OWL AWARENESS DAY – 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 th July	BAT WALK 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)
Sun 14 th Dec	WINTER BIRD WALK Please bring binoculars, though some are available for loan if required. Refreshments provided.	10am at entrance to protected area. Norman Road gate open at 9.45 for vehicular entrance

Forthcoming 2008 events

Crossness Southern Marshes

Date	Event	Meeting details
Thurs 15 th May	BREEDING BIRD SURVEY 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 th May. You do not need to have attended the previous workshops to join in. REFRESHMENTS WILL NOT BE PROVIDED FOR THIS EVENT – SORRY.	8.30am at Southmere Lake/Lakeside car park off Belvedere Road
Sat 7 th June (Cancelled)	MOTH SURVEY ON NATIONAL MOTH NIGHT 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. Look out for further communication regarding this event and whether or not it goes ahead	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 (Cancelled)
Thurs 17 th July	PRACTICAL CONSERVATION DAY ROOT OUT RAGWORT 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 th Aug	BAT WALK TO CELEBRATE EUROPEAN BAT WEEKEND 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. REFRESHMENTS WILL NOT BE PROVIDED FOR THIS EVENT – SORRY.	8.15pm at Southmere Lake/Lakeside car park off Belvedere Road
Mon 22 nd Sept	CROSSNESS HEALTH WALK 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



