

# Friends of Crossness Nature Reserve

## Newsletter



Issue 17 / November 2010

Dear Friends of Crossness Nature Reserve,

This last quarter has certainly been a busy and productive period. The habitat enhancement works is pretty much complete with an extended southern marsh wader scrape, a new reedbed and deep water areas on the nature reserve's Island Field, and several new ditches constructed (please see full details on Page 3; access arrangements on Page 15). The sluice control at the bottom of the new Sea Wall ditch just requires completion, and a second windpump is still to be installed.

Murphys are still on site, on behalf of EDF, but should be complete by the end of November, although Footpath 2 along the southern boundary remains closed (see Page 13).

The regular conservation volunteers have been invaluable with all the habitat work required over recent months. We've been doing lots of bankside management of ditches on Crossness Southern Marshes, as well as vegetation control on the nature reserve wader scrape, plus ongoing maintenance of footpaths within the protected area. We've had a couple of volunteer events for youths on the southern marshes which were very successful (see Page 4 for details of one of the summer volunteer events).

Our dedicated birding community have not been put off by all the recent disturbance on site, and I am ever grateful to them for their dedication and commitment, and for keeping such detailed records.

We've had some wonderful community events over the past few months too, including a fantastic treasure hunt event for 120 local school children.

We are about to get especially busy with winter habitat works, including ditch works, coppicing and reed cutting. A number of work party dates can be seen on the back page for those of you that fancy getting involved, or wanting to burn off some of that Christmas pud.

Ralph and Brenda Todd are delivering a winter bird walk for us next month (Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> December) so I look forward to seeing some of you then. Otherwise, I shall take this opportunity to wish you all a very happy Christmas and all the best for the New Year.

**Karen Sutton – Crossness Nature Reserve Manager**



Photo by David Pressland, used with kind permission

# Wildlife records – Jul-Sept 2010

Species	No. throughout quarter	Peak no. recorded	CES number captured	Species	No. throughout quarter	Peak no. recorded	CES number captured
Arctic tern	6	2	0	Little gull	7	3	0
Avocet	2	1	0	Long-tailed Tit	4	0	4
Bar-tailed godwit	1	1	0	Mallard	114	100	0
Black tern	162	20	0	Meadow brown	1	1	0
Blackbird	12	0	12	Meadow pipit	3	3	0
Blackcap	62	2	60	Mediterranean Gull	35	4	0
Black-headed gulls	350	200	0	Mistle thrush	4	4	0
Black-tailed godwit	63	30	0	Moorhen	17	10	1
Blue tit	57	4	52	Mute swan	8	7	0
Brown argus	2	1	0	Nuthatch	1	1	0
Canada geese	23	15	0	Oystercatcher	4	3	0
Caspian Gull	1	1	0	Peacock	1	1	0
Cetti's warbler	4	2	2	Peregrine falcon	3	1	0
Chaffinch	8	0	8	Pied flycatcher	1	1	0
Chiffchaff	12	1	7	Pied wagtails	3	3	0
Cinnabar moth larvae	30	30	0	Pochard	2	2	0
Common buzzard	7	3	0	Red admiral	1	1	0
Common darter	1	1	0	Red kite	2	1	0
Common gull	5	4	0	Redshank	13	4	0
Common sandpiper	55	14	0	Reed warblers	228	3	225
Common scoters	33	28	0	Robin	23	0	23
Common tern	61	40	0	Ruddy shelduck	3	1	0
Coot	2	2	0	Sand martin	35	24	0
Cormorant	5	4	0	Sanderling	2	1	0
Cuckoo	4	1	0	Sandwich tern	15	4	0
Curlew	9	3	0	Sedge warbler	44	1	40
Curlew sandpipers	5	5	0	Shelduck	4	3	0
Dunlin	16	13	0	Short-eared owl	1	1	0
Dunnock	29	0	29	Shoveler	24	11	0
Egyptian geese	2	2	0	Skylark	1	1	0
Gadwall	26	13	0	Small copper	1	1	0
Gannet	1	1	0	Small skipper	6	4	0
Garden warbler	9	2	4	Small tortoiseshell	6	4	0
Garganey	1	1	0	Small white	10	10	0
Gatekeeper	15	12	0	Song Thrush	8	0	8
Goldcrest	3	2	0	Sparrowhawk	8	2	0
Goldfinch	534	130	19	Spotted flycatcher	6	3	0
Great black-backed gull	3	3	0	Starling	2	0	2
Great crested grebe	2	1	0	Stock dove	4	2	0
Great Spotted Woodpecker	5	0	5	Stonechat	2	1	0
Green sandpiper	29	4	0	Swallow	24	10	0
Greenfinch	131	1	129	Swallow x House Martin hybrid	1	1	0
Grey heron	8	8	0	Swift	8	5	0
Grey plover	2	1	0	Teal	882	250	0
Grey wagtails	5	3	0	Treecreeper	1	0	1
Guillemot	1	1	0	Tree pipit	1	1	0
Herring gull	6	6	0	Tufted duck	2	2	0
Hobby	6	2	0	Turnstone	2	1	0
House martin	44	40	0	Water vole	2	2	0
Hummingbird Hawkmoth	1	1	0	Weasel	1	1	0
Jackdaw	1	1	0	Wheatear	19	2	0
Jay	1	1	0	Whimbrel	5	2	0
Kestrel	3	2	0	Whinchat	17	5	0
Kingfisher	10	2	0	Whitethroat	131	3	125
Lapwing	98	42	0	Wigeon	2	2	0
Large skipper	2	2	0	Willow warbler	27	4	13
Lesser whitethroat	12	1	9	Wood sandpiper	1	1	0
Leucistic woodpigeon	1	1	0	Wren	32	0	32
Linnet	65	40	5	Yellow wagtail	20	3	0
Little egret	20	9	0	Yellow-legged gull	24	5	0
Little grebe	16	4	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

# New reedbed, ditches and wader scrape



On 7<sup>th</sup> June, the ecological mitigation associated with the Tidal Thames Quality Improvement Project (TTQI) began on Crossness Nature Reserve. At the time of writing (5<sup>th</sup> Oct) it is all very nearly complete.

We now have a new 1.6ha reedbed and three open water lagoons in Island Field which is looking fabulous and already attracting wildlife. The base of the reedbed is approximately 1.5m from existing ground level and the deep water areas are approximately 3.5m deep. This depth will help them to remain as open water areas and not get encroached by reed and other emergent vegetation. This will be great for wildfowl and although there have not been any islands incorporated into this design, we may consider installing floating rafts at some point. Surrounding the open water will hopefully be a dense, lush reedbed. 60,000 reed plugs were planted, by hand, by ten people over the course of two weeks. Since planting took place during a particularly dry spell, a major concern was keeping the area wet enough for the reeds to establish, but following some pumping of water and additional rainfall, we were then concerned that we had too much water and were faced with the risk of drowning out the new plants, so water had to be pumped out again!!



The reedbed has been designed with access berms to aid management, and flow control structures have been provided at the four hydrological connections with Great Breach Dyke West and Horsehead Dyke. A new path running parallel with Footpath 2, leads to a wildlife viewing screen. This has been designed to match the existing concrete and timber screens found elsewhere on the reserve and the southern marshes.

There is stockproof fencing and vehicle access gates around the whole area and a further line of water vole fencing on the outer perimeter. Unfortunately, this does temporarily detract from the overall aesthetics of the new earthworks, but the reedbed and new ditches will form receptor sites for the progeny of water voles captured from the development area in 2009; the fencing will therefore need to remain in place until their release next year. It is important to keep the existing water vole colonies out of the new habitat, otherwise the habitat will be over capacity for the new voles, and there will be increased competition upon their release.



A dry ditch at the southern end of Sea Wall Field has been restored and a new ditch dug up to the northern end of Sea Wall Field. This will not only serve as a receptor site for water voles, but it will also provide a barrier ditch from the old Ford Car Park where bikes had previously been cutting through and getting onto site. The field has been stock-fenced to control grazing and a horse-drinking pool incorporated into the new ditch. Similarly, at the southern end of West Paddock, a new ditch has been created and planted up with reeds. This too has a horse pool and also a number of scallops and backwaters to increase diversity. Again, these ditches have been stock-fenced to keep horses from grazing the reeds, and they are also surrounded by water vole fencing. This will be removed when the water voles are released next year.

## Earn Your Travel Back volunteers – ragwort pulling



We have run a number of Earn Your Travel Back (EYTB) volunteer days at Crossness this year. This is a partnership scheme with TfL (Transport for London), the London Wildlife Trust and BTCV (British Trust for Conservation Volunteers). The scheme offers young people who have misused their oyster cards, the opportunity to earn back their right to free travel by undertaking a days' conservation work.

On 31<sup>st</sup> July, thirteen EYTB youths aged between 11 and 17 came to Crossness Southern Marshes to help pull ragwort. This is a plant that is noxious to livestock and so must be controlled, and the best way of doing this is to pull it up by the root.

The young people made considerable impact on the ragwort growth and it was a great opportunity to introduce some local young people to a site that many of them were not previously aware of.

Many thanks to the volunteers and to LWT.

## Ragwort pulling event

The enormous task of pulling up Ragwort from horse-grazed paddocks on Crossness Southern Marsh did not simply end following the Earn Your Travel Back volunteer day – there was much more work to be done! Fortunately, 11 members of the Friends of Crossness Nature Reserve kindly gave up their time to come and tackle the problem. With all hands on deck, we managed to clear two paddocks of Ragwort in blazing hot sunshine. The volunteers were rewarded for their efforts with a picnic on the marsh, even though the horses thought that the picnic was theirs!! Thank you so much to all the volunteers that came out and helped clear tonnes of this plant which is otherwise a danger to the horses that graze the marshes – thank you so much.



## Crossness bat walks, fireworks and constellations



We ran two bats walks this summer, one on Crossness Nature Reserve in August and another on Crossness Southern Marshes in September. Both were successful in different ways. On the nature reserve bat walk we didn't get much in the way of species diversity, but we did get some fabulously close bat activity. A Common Pipistrelle was doing some continuous feeding right in front of us and over our heads within the Protected Area of the reserve, and we also had activity along Footpath 2 where 2 bats were clearly using this as a feeding route. From the bird hide, we saw and heard on our bat detectors a number of Common and Soprano Pipistrelles feeding over the wader scrape.

On the southern marsh bat walk, it was less successful in terms of the number of attendees (the weather was atrocious and I was surprised anybody turned up!), but we had a really nice evening once the rain had stopped and we were treated to lots of bat activity. We had several Pipistrelles over the southern marshes, and much later we stood at Southmere Lake and watched numerous Pipistrelles, Noctules and Daubenton's bats. The latter were scooping insects off of the water right in front of us. A rather nice touch to the evening was when we stopped to take a rest on the new timber bench on the raised footpath. This bench gives lovely views across the marshes, and on this particular evening, we were treated to views of fireworks going off somewhere in Thamesmead. I tried to convince our small party that I had laid these on especially for the evening's bat walk, but I'm afraid I was rumbled. On this rather clear and starry night, I was also taught by one of the attendees how to identify the constellation Cassiopeia. All in all, it was a great evening despite the earlier rainfall that threatened to spoil the whole event.

## Kingfishers



Photos by Steve Charter. Used with kind permission

We have had a number of Kingfishers seen over the wader scrape this year and more importantly, they have been frequently seen using the perches provided specifically for them. On 17<sup>th</sup> September, one lucky visitor, Steve Charter, managed to photograph this Kingfisher diving into the wader scrape. There is always something very rewarding about seeing that lovely flash of orange and iridescent blue over water, and even better when you get to capture it on film. Steve, many thanks for sending in this great photo.

# New designer benches

The new contemporary benches mentioned in the previous issue, were finally installed in September thanks to the London Borough of Bexley, designers Peter Beard\_Landroom, and Conways who undertook the installation.

Three of the Portland stone benches (pictured below) and three of the timber and steel benches (pictured right) have been installed on each of the two sites: Crossness Nature Reserve and Crossness Southern Marshes. In addition to this, two of the stone benches have been installed near the Crossness Southern Marsh entrance gate on Gallions Housing land.

The timber and steel benches have been well received, but the stone benches have had a mixed response. People seem to either love them or hate them, but nobody can argue that there isn't plenty of opportunity to sit down, have a rest and enjoy wonderful views of the marshes.

Many thanks to the London Borough of Bexley for supplying these benches as part of the Belvedere Green Links programme ([www.belvederegreenlinks.org.uk](http://www.belvederegreenlinks.org.uk)).



# Erith Marsh treasure hunt



On 30<sup>th</sup> September, we hosted the Erith Marsh Treasure Hunt to 120 local school children. The Bexley-led event celebrated recent investment in the area as part of the Erith Marshes and Belvedere Green Links Programme.

The event was organised by Arts Express and charity organisation 1<sup>st</sup> Framework. 120 children, in small groups, from St Augustine of Canterbury CE Primary School, Northwood Primary School, Belvedere Junior School and Parkway Primary School walked over 2km from the Thames Innovation Centre, through Crossness Southern Marsh and Southmere Park to Southmere Lake. Along the route, they undertook a range of activities and met a number of actors along the way from

3rdthought, a community satellite project of 1<sup>st</sup> Framework. The children, knowing that they were going to be meeting some actors, unfortunately didn't fall for it when I told them that I was Angelina Jolie having a day off!

The pupils got to take part in an anagram quiz, with all the anagrams based on plant species that they would see along the route. I then took them on a nature trail, identifying the various plant species along the way. All correctly completed answers received a coloured token which would lead to a prize later on. At a small marquee, I told them a 'story' about the Erith Marshes (at this point, I tried convincing them that I was in fact Jennifer Aniston, but they just weren't having any of it!!). They were told about the importance of the marshes for people and wildlife, the history of the grazing marsh and the gypsy community that used to live upon it, they learned about the devastating flood of 1958, the influence of the River Thames, and the fact that Crossness is a water vole stronghold and has been an important breeding site for barn owl.

They also learned of the Squacco Heron that dropped in in 2007 having not been recorded in London for 140 years. When I told them that the paparazzi descended upon Crossness to see the Squacco, I was amazed that this was a word they were all (with no exception) familiar with – this is definitely the age of media!

A quiz based on the facts they'd heard in the story was next, followed by an activity at the wader scrape viewing screen where they had to find 12 species of birds. Well ok, we cheated a little here. No way were 12 species going to stay put with all that primary school commotion, even if 12 species managed to find their way to the scrape in the first place, so Arts Express came prepared with beautifully crafted stakes upon which were the stencilled names of bird species you might expect to find in such a place. This proved a very popular activity and it was difficult to draw them away from here. But then at the next station, came a fabulous little art project. The students were shown how to make folded-paper boats which they carefully decorated with oil pastels. Next stop: Southmere Lake, where they got to launch their boats! Of course they loved this; who wouldn't?! Here they were awarded many counters for completion and creativity. They then had to identify a couple of actors in panama hats, reading the FT and ask them a couple of cryptic questions before being awarded prizes.

Winning groups received a pack of oil pastels and a book called Eco Art. Consolation prizes for all children taking part were carthorse badges (featuring the Belvedere Green Links website address: a nice touch), pens and rulers. I am sure the children were thrilled, even though I had children throughout the day ask me if the prizes were a Nintendo DS, a computer or perhaps an X-Box. Oh dear, I take it back, this must be the age of technology!!

It was a fabulous day, with glorious sunshine despite heavy rains both the day before and after. We had lots of very happy and very excited children, many of whom said they were going to come back with their parents. Oh and I got a yummy box of chocolates as a thank you – definitely a bonus.

I would like to say a massive thank you to Peter Avery and Damion Viney for their creativity, dedication and organisational skills; Rozina Akram, Jennifer Counsell and Elliot Donald from the London Borough of Bexley; and the 3rdthought actors: Jeanie Deane, Donald Elliott, Paul Riley, Richard Russell and Richard Worland who did a tremendous job – thank you.



Photos above were taken by Laurence Burns. Used with kind permission



Pupils complete their anagrams and start on the nature trail



Me with some pupils from Parkway Primary School



Could that be Angelina Jolie captivating the students with tales of devastation and mayhem? Ok, maybe not!



Pupils show off their completed anagrams

## New stable block



Our new stable block (part of the London Borough of Bexley's Belvedere Green Links Project: [www.belvederegreenlinks.org.uk](http://www.belvederegreenlinks.org.uk)) is progressing, but not quite complete unfortunately. A range of issues has delayed the programming of this project, but the external fibre-cement cladding has now been attached and the interior walls lined; we are just waiting now for the stable partitioning, guttering and other finishing touches, now due for completion end-November.

# Reedmace pulling volunteer day



A willing group of 13 helped undertake the very messy task of clearing reedmace from around the moated bat hibernaculum and wader scrape area. Low summer water levels led to this fast-growing plant spreading out and colonising areas where it was not wanted. The best way to get rid of it is to hand-pull it by the roots – no easy task! The ground was dry, the reedmace roots large and solid, and there was an *awful* lot of it. The volunteer team did an amazing job and cleared much more than I had anticipated.

But it didn't end there: we were multi-tasking! In addition to reedmace pulling, we raked and burned a lot of previously cut Common Reed from around the scrape, and we cut further areas of reed and long grass in preparation for raising of water levels.

As a result of their efforts, the wader scrape is now looking lovely and the wildlife certainly making the most of it. I would like to say a big thank you to Ann Turvey, Dave Sorrell, Roger Gabriel, Cheryl Osborne, Steve Carter, Dorothy Nears, Reg Northam, Bernard Leahy, Roger Taylor, Roza Guzzetta, Johnno Thurgood, and to Andrew Stotesbury for arranging for two Costain graduates to come out and help their neighbours. Thank you so much, a job well done.



# Bird ringing demonstration



The Dartford Ringing Group gave a fantastic bird ringing demonstration to some of the Friends of Crossness Nature Reserve this August.

Seventeen people attended despite the overnight and morning rains which threatened to spoil the whole event. Fortunately, it dried up soon after starting, and later the sun came out and it turned into a beautiful summer's day. Luckily, the rain didn't affect the bird activity too much either. We had a great array of species captured in the mist nets. The birds were identified, sexed, measured and weighed before being ringed and released by Roger Taylor and his dedicated team.

The presentation concentrated particularly on a number of bird species that we could expect to see at Crossness in August. Roger produced some lovely posters and hand-outs detailing the ecology, conservation and migration routes of the four key species: Sedge Warbler, Reed Warbler, Blackcap and Common Whitethroat. The flyers also provided information on how these species are doing at Crossness, how many have been captured here in each of the last 8 years and they also illustrated where some of these four species have been 'controlled' elsewhere in Europe and Africa, and vice-versa. Fortunately for the group, following detailed information, they were then able to see the species up close and in the hand. Other species such as Robin and Blue Tit (pictured) were also captured.

Roger produced some amazing facts about the birds captured at Crossness which included the following:

- Our longest-living Reed Warbler was ringed as an adult on 1st June 2003 and retrapped on 9th May 2004, 6th May 2007 and 16th May 2010. This bird has made at least 15 journeys between the UK and West Africa totalling over 40,000 miles. Quite a feat for a bird weighing little more than a pound coin!
- Our longest-living Whitethroat was ringed as an adult male on 2nd May 2004, retrapped on three dates in 2005 but not recorded again until 31st May 2009. It is estimated that this bird will have travelled in excess of 28,000 miles between the UK and its winter quarters in West Africa.
- Good numbers of Common Whitethroat breed at Crossness, with 61 individual adults recorded during 2010, although some of these will have been passage birds. In the same period, 129 juveniles were recorded.

The table and map that follow form part of the presentation given during the demonstration. They detail the birds retrapped at Crossness and also the recovery and control locations. This information is fascinating and also demonstrates the importance of a site like Crossness.

I would like to thank Roger Taylor, his assistant Mary, and trainee Julie Willet for a fantastic event.



# Birds ringed at Crossness in previous years and re-caught in 2010 – by Dartford Ringing Group

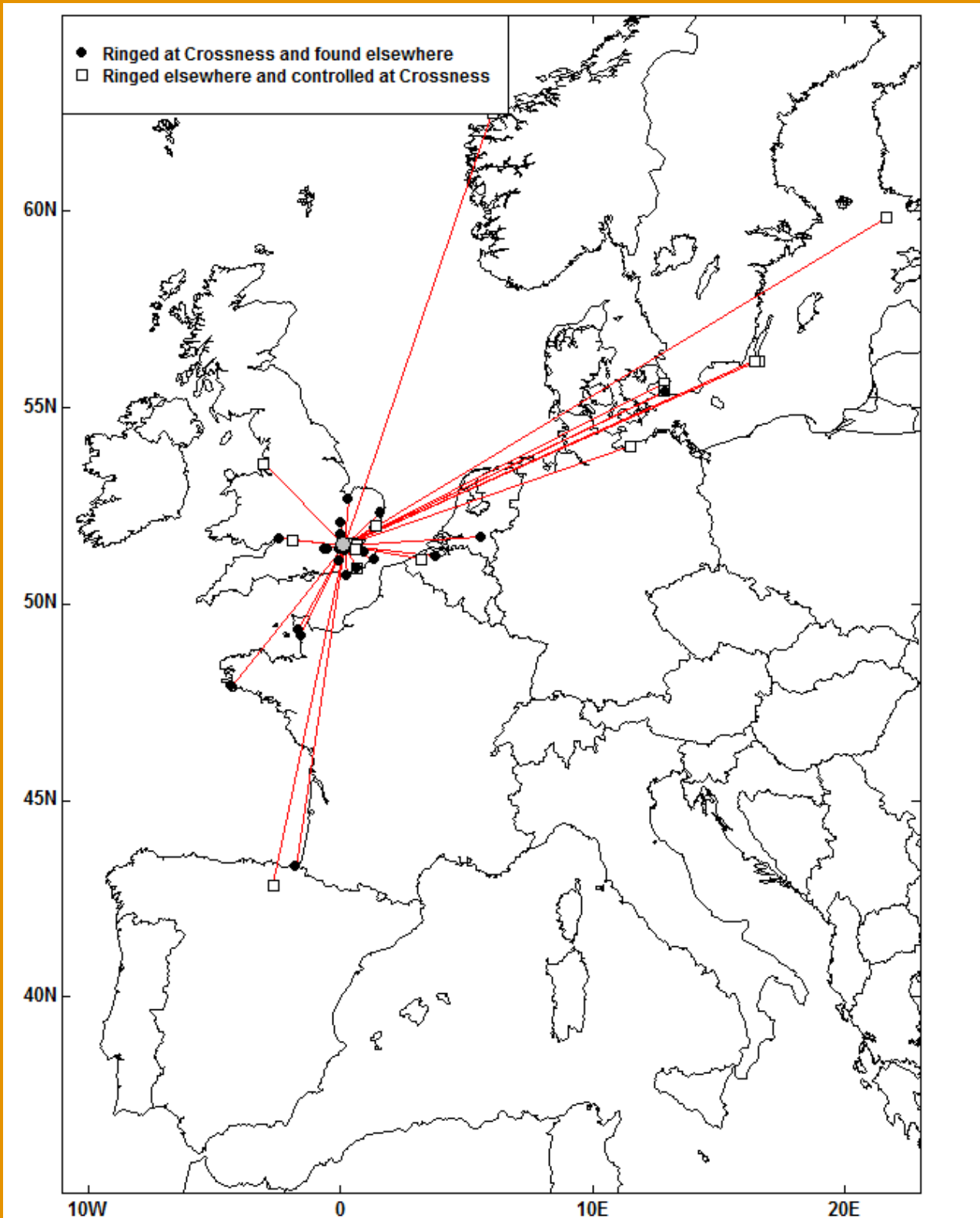
Retrapping ringed birds is an important part of our study and provides very useful data on survival and longevity. Listed below are the 2010 capture totals (to 9th November) for each species, how many of these were 'new' birds and for those already ringed, the year when they were originally caught. Even small birds can live for a number of years, with Reed Warbler holding the record so far this year, but Great Tit and Dunnock are also doing well. In many cases, we know the age and sex of these birds and with multiple recaptures we are able to fill in at least part of the picture of their lives.



	Total capture	New in 2010	Retraps from						
			2009	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003
Sparrowhawk	2	2							
Kestrel	1	1							
Moorhen	1	1							
Black-headed Gull	83	83							
Common Gull	1	1							
Stock Dove	1	1							
Cuckoo	1	1							
Great Spotted Woodpecker	8	5	1	2					
Meadow Pipit	7	7							
Wren	54	45	5	3	1				
Dunnock	76	36	26	6	4	1	3		
Robin	50	42	6		2				
Blackbird	51	36	6	1	6		1	1	
Song Thrush	37	34	1	1	1				
Redwing	9	8	1						
Cetti's Warbler	5	5							
Sedge Warbler	53	49	4						
Reed Warbler	293	275	10	3	2	1		1	1
Lesser Whitethroat	15	14		1					
Whitethroat	190	165	17	4	3	1			
Garden Warbler	4	4							
Blackcap	91	86	3	1	1				
Chiffchaff	20	20							
Willow Warbler	15	15							
Firecrest	1	1							
Long-tailed Tit	30	26	4						
Blue Tit	120	88	23	4	4	1			
Great Tit	112	77	22	7	2	2	1	1	
Treecreeper	1	1							
Magpie	3	3							
Starling	2	2							
Chaffinch	33	30	1	1		1			
Greenfinch	219	191	21	5	1	1			
Goldfinch	30	30							
Linnet	13	13							
Reed Bunting	18	15	2	1					

# All Recoveries and Controls affecting Crossness – by the Dartford Ringing Group

This map shows all records of birds ringed at Crossness and found elsewhere, together with those birds ringed at other sites and recaptured at Crossness. This emphasises that even small reserves like Crossness play an important role in international bird conservation.



## Sparrowhawk rescued from site building



On 27<sup>th</sup> August, I received a phone call about a hawk that had been trapped in a transformer building on Crossness Sewage Treatment Works for a couple of days. Fortunately, the call came when Roger Taylor, licenced bird ringer for the BTO, was on site volunteering with my other regular volunteer group and he happened to have all his bird ringing paraphernalia with him.

We located the bird in a disused building with a low door obstructed by vegetation and rather high window. It seems that the hawk had probably chased a small bird in there which had subsequently escaped, and the hawk was unable to find its way out. Contractors working nearby reported having heard it repeatedly crashing into the windows in an attempt to free itself. Despite attempts by the contractors, the windows wouldn't open wide enough for the hawk to use as an escape route and although the door was left open day and night, the hawk apparently didn't recognise this as the route to freedom.

Fortunately Roger was able to safely capture the bird in a net. We then took it to the nature reserve to gather some data before ringing and releasing it.

The hawk turned out to be a female Sparrowhawk and the good news is that it

was in fine health despite its incarceration experience. It now has a ring on its leg to help future identification if captured by other bird ringing groups, or indeed the Dartford Ringing Group while working at Crossness. Hopefully, this bird will lead a long and happy life, and think twice about entering small buildings on impulse without doing a site recce first!!

## EDF high-voltage power cable

Murphy's, on behalf of EDF, have been laying a high-voltage power cable along Footpath 2. The path along the southern boundary of the nature reserve and sewage treatment works (leading to Belvedere Road) remains closed, but the path leading up to the River Thames is now open. A cable-joint bay remains open at the north end of Footpath 2 (north of the access track, alongside Great Breach Dyke North) but Murphy's are planning to pull the cables through to the new Riverside Resource Recovery Facility towards the end of November when it will be backfilled. This means that by the beginning of December, all works to the north-south part of Footpath 2 will have been completed (the Belvedere Road access unfortunately remains closed).

# Improvements to Thames Path

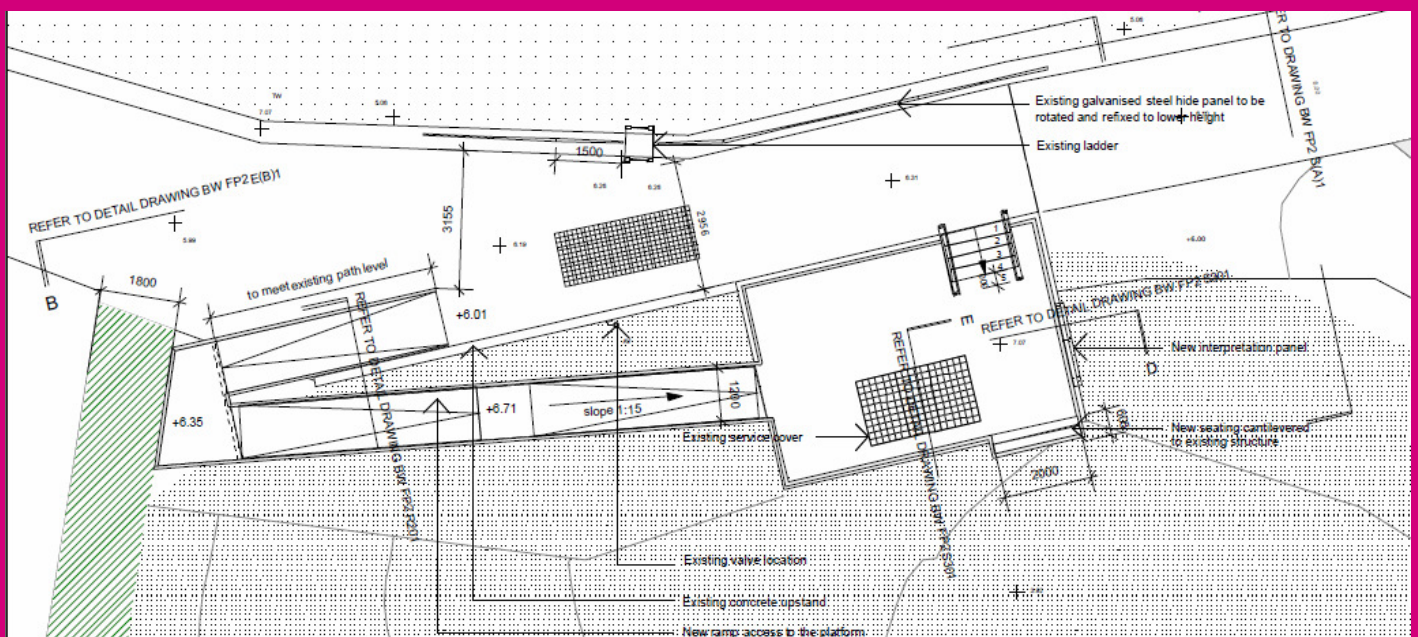
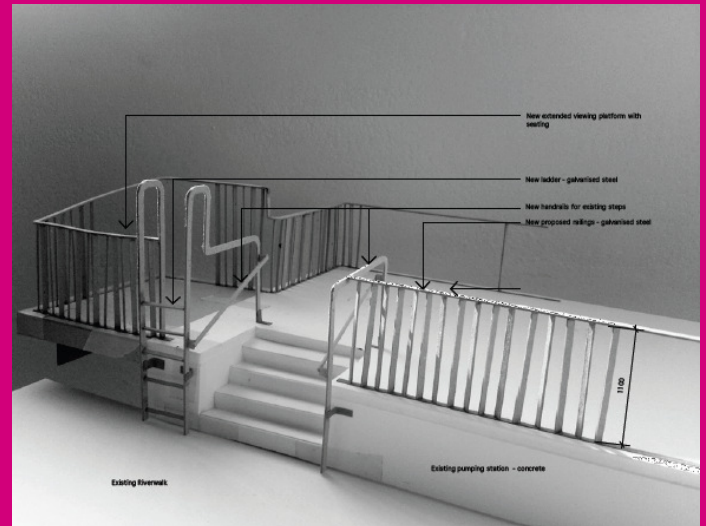
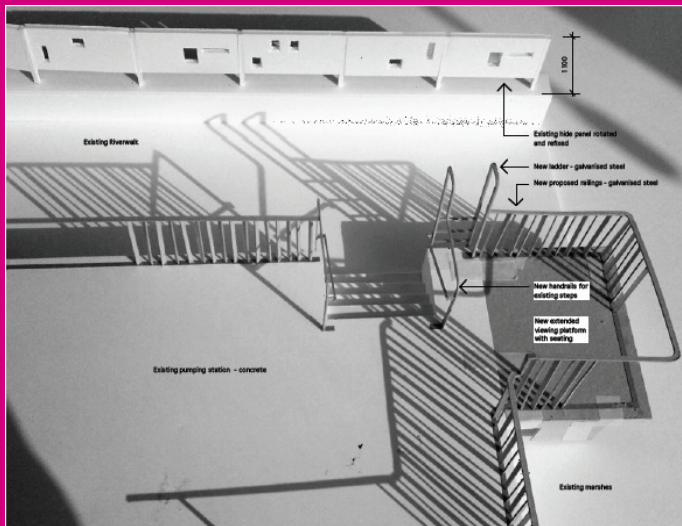
Improvements to the Thames Path are being proposed as part of London Borough of Bexley's Belvedere Green Links programme. Destination points (where existing access routes meet the Thames Path) are being enhanced and/or developed. To see details of the full programme, please visit the dedicated website: [www.belvederegreenlinks.org.uk](http://www.belvederegreenlinks.org.uk).

Part of the proposal at Crossness includes reorienting the metal wildlife viewing screens on the Thames Wall, north of the reserve. The purpose of these screens when they were installed was to minimise disturbance to birds feeding on the mudflats at low-tide. It was felt that when people step up onto the adjacent viewing platform overlooking the nature reserve, the silhouettes created could cause disturbance to the wildlife on the river. Thoughts now are that the screens are higher than necessary to function as intended, and they may be more aesthetically pleasing if lowered. It is also thought that in lowering the screens, views across the river to the north shore could be gained from the platform.

The viewing platform itself may also be getting a facelift. Proposals include providing an access ramp suitable for people with mobility difficulties; extending the platform to provide a seating area is also desirable. However, the latter is proving challenging with access to the Environment Agency's inspection chamber being a design requirement; this element of the design may subsequently not be possible.

Currently the London Borough of Bexley and landscape architects, East, are developing proposals for these and other improvements along the Thames Path.

The images below show proposals to improve the Thames Path viewing platform, north of Crossness Nature Reserve.



Draft plans by East Architecture, Landscape and Urban Design. Ladder feature in top drawings have since been removed

## Entry to Island Field reedbed



Photo by David Pressland, used with kind permission

While we have this fabulous new reedbed and open water habitat in Island Field as ecological mitigation for the Crossness expansion, unfortunately due to contractual issues, we are unable to formally open it to the public until a handover from the contractor has been made.

This handover date has yet to be determined. It is supposed to be at completion of the entire project in 2014, but we are trying to negotiate a more realistic handover for this part of the contract which might be when the water voles are released next Spring.

Unfortunately, until then, this area is under control of the contractors who request that access has to be tightly controlled and will require a site health and safety induction, the provision of PPE (personal protective equipment) and escort to this part of the site by myself. With this in mind, until further notice please contact me if you require access. We will incorporate this new area during the Winter Bird Walk event on 4<sup>th</sup> December, so please be prepared to sign some paperwork and bring a change of footwear as it is incredibly muddy down there following recent heavy plant movement.

# Forthcoming events 2010/11

## Crossness Nature Reserve

Date	Event	Meeting details
Sat 4 <sup>th</sup> Dec	<b>WINTER BIRD WALK</b> with Ralph and Brenda Todd. A walk around the nature reserve looking at the winter waders and wildfowl, as well as resident and migrant passerines. We will head straight up to the river to see what is feeding on the exposed mudflats, and then explore the reserve (including the new Island Field reedbed/lagoons) around midday to see what birds are coming in during high tide (11:59am). Refreshments provided.	10am at the entrance to the protected area. Parking will be available on the main access track or within the protected area.
Wed 12 <sup>th</sup> Jan	<b>PRACTICAL CONSERVATION DAY – POST CHRISTMAS VEGETATION CLEARANCE</b> Work off some of those mince pies with a spot of raking and clearing of vegetation around the wader scrape area. Please dress appropriately for the weather and a change of footwear is recommended. Refreshments provided.	10am at the entrance to the protected area. Parking will be available on the main access track or within the protected area.
Wed 2 <sup>nd</sup> Feb	<b>PRACTICAL CONSERVATION DAY – SCRUB AND VEGETATION CLEARANCE</b> Winter's a busy time for habitat work. While flora and fauna is dormant, hibernating or less active over this period, we are at our busiest and most productive. If you would like to help us clear scrub and other vegetation, please wear old clothes and sturdy footwear. Refreshments provided.	10am at the entrance to the protected area. Parking will be available on the main access track or within the protected area.
Weds 23 <sup>rd</sup> Feb	<b>PRACTICAL CONSERVATION DAY – THE GREAT BIG LITTER PICK</b> The path along the bottom of the nature reserve (that runs parallel with Eastern Way) gets heavily littered from the road. Access to do a deep litter pick is far easier when the trees have shed their leaves, so if you fancy a bit of grime busting with instant results, please come along and help us free the trees of rubbish. It is advisable to wear old clothes because of potential snagging on trees and a change of footwear as the access track is very muddy. Refreshments provided.	10am at the entrance to the protected area. Parking will be available on the main access track or within the protected area.

## Crossness Southern Marshes

Date	Event	Meeting details
Wed 15 <sup>th</sup> Dec	<b>PRACTICAL CONSERVATION DAY – BANKSIDE CLEARANCE</b> We have been cutting alternate sections of vegetation along the ditch banks as part of our ongoing site management, and desperately need your help with raking and collecting. Please wear wellies if you have them. We will be working at the top of ditch banks (not in water) but the vegetation is likely to be wet. Refreshments (including mince pies!) provided	10am at CSM vehicle access gate (under red Eastern Way flyover) on Belvedere Road. Parking available on Belvedere Road, or park at Southmere Lake and walk up to meeting point.
Wed 19 <sup>th</sup> Jan	<b>PRACTICAL CONSERVATION DAY – CSM REEDBED CUTTING AND RAKING</b> We are going to undertake rotational reedbed cutting of the Crossness Southern Marsh reedbed in Wetland Field. If you would like to help us cut and clear the vegetation, please wear wellies or similar footwear, as the reedbed will be wet and muddy. Refreshments provided.	10am at CSM vehicle access gate (under red Eastern Way flyover) on Belvedere Road. Parking available on Belvedere Road, or park at Southmere Lake and walk up to meeting point.

### 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,  
 Crossness Nature Reserve Office, Belvedere Road, Abbey Wood, London SE2 9AQ  
 Email: karen.sutton@thameswater.co.uk

Previous newsletters are available to download on the 'community and recreation' section of our website: [www.thameswater.co.uk](http://www.thameswater.co.uk)