



WILD LONDON



Protecting London's wildlife for the future
SUMMER 2009 | FROM DUSK TIL DAWN

This summer we're celebrating the fact that our capital is a 24 hour city, constantly buzzing with life. From dusk til dawn, there's a huge amount of wildlife to see out and about in after hours London. Find out how, with your support, London Wildlife Trust is working to protect creatures of the night.



Above: Moth watching in north London

© Liz Barrett

Opposite: Cheeky pint after work

© Andy Holmes

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London Wildlife Trust

is the only charity dedicated solely to protecting the capital's wildlife and wild spaces, engaging London's diverse communities through access to our nature reserves, campaigning, volunteering and education.

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Summer in the city

There's something luxurious about fresh midsummer mornings and long midsummer evenings in London. As the post work rush hour sets in, people spill out of pubs and every patch of green becomes a picnic spot. This issue of *Wild London* focuses on the natural delights on offer from dusk til dawn in our great city.

It's not all about alfresco indulgence either, important conservation work is being done to protect London's nocturnal wildlife and certain environmental pressures come to the fore after sunset. Urban wildlife has adapted to the fact that London is always awake and Londoners often see and hear a lot after dark, be that foxes scavenging, bats hunting or birds singing long into the night.

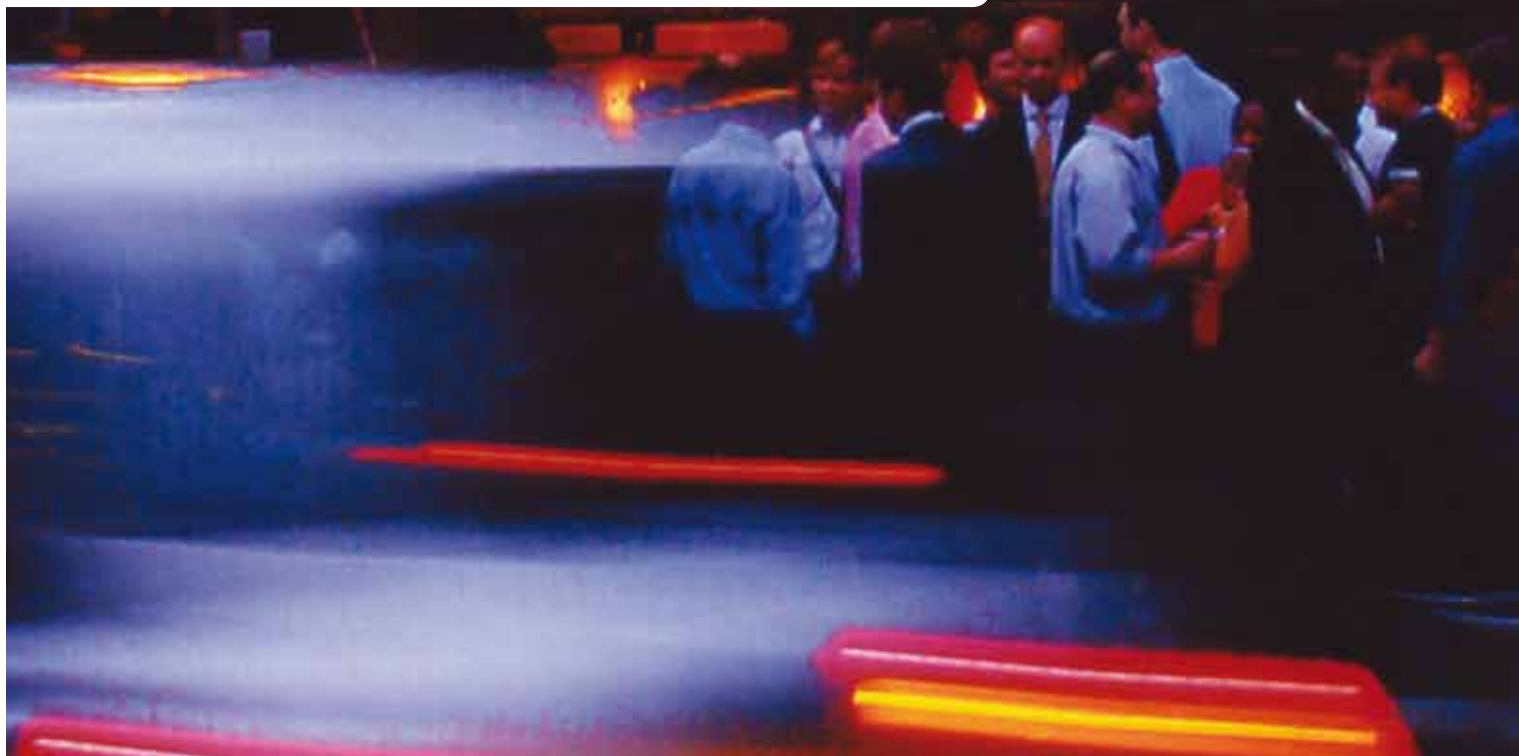
London Wildlife Trust is once again calling on city dwellers to take advantage of the good weather and light evenings to become wildlife and climate friendly growers. Our Garden for a Living London campaign has been going for a year now, thousands of people have pledged to do one thing to create a 'Living London' but much more can be done. We're taking our gardening message out to events across the capital this summer, including Hampton Court Flower Show, Festival and the Thames Festival.

Despite the last 12 months of economic and political turmoil, London's green scene is still thriving with sustainable 2012 Olympic development plans and City Hall's Capital Growth gardening campaign lead by Rosie Boycott. Public interest in green issues is strong, gardening is growing in popularity and the number of people voting in the Mayor's recent Priority Parks scheme highlighted how much Londoners value their green spaces. A Marine Lobby event at Westminster, organised by the Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts in partnership with other conservation organisations, showed the strength we can have when we work together to influence the people in power. The Marine Bill is closer than ever to becoming an Act of Parliament.

Returning to the magazine, thank you to members who wrote in to let us know what you think of the new look *Wild London*. The feedback has been really positive and we are pleased you like it. Have a great summer.

Carlo Laurenzi OBE

Chief Executive of London Wildlife Trust



News in brief

80 species in 12 hours

It's official – our capital city is a brilliant place to bird watch. During the latest Oystercatcher Bird Race, London Wildlife Trust's team managed to record 80 different species in just 12 hours. Between them, the teams involved in the race spotted over a hundred different species living in London.



*Above: Our bird racers with Alison Barnes from Natural England
© Natural England*

Our team got up at silly-o'clock in the morning, braved various night buses and started bird watching at 6am. Journeying across London to some of the city's best birding spots, they saw and heard all kinds of birdlife before reaching the finish line at the Natural History Museum. Species spotted include garganey, yellowhammer, Egyptian goose, gadwall, northern shoveler and ruddy duck.

Narrowly beaten to the 2009 title by the GLA and WWT, our team came a respectable third, happily winning a duck shaped soap from organisers Natural England.

*Right: Ian Rappel performs for the cameras at Hutchinson's Bank
© Helen Babbs*

*Top: Lapwing flock at sunset
© Iain Green*

Springwatching in the city

When Springwatch is on people go wildlife mad, which is great! London Wildlife Trust worked closely with BBC London over the recent three week nature extravaganza – holding events and telling people about our work via the evening news. This year, the BBC filmed us in action in Hackney, Croydon and Sutton, talking about everything from ethical foraging to chalk grassland conservation and river restoration.



The top 40

Greenspace Information for Greater London, the records centre hosted by London Wildlife Trust, has helped the Mayor find areas in London that are eligible for planting new street trees. Things like current tree locations, air quality, noise and temperature were all factored into the model and 40 priority areas were identified as a result. Find out more: www.london.gov.uk/streettrees

Reserve reinforcement

Saltbox Hill in Croydon has been fenced, ready for the arrival of a herd of goats charged with helping to conserve this rare chalk grassland site. The animals' grazing habits will help control scrub and encourage wildflowers.



King's Cross kingfishers

Kareem Jones and Masa Perovic, graduate volunteers at Camley Street Natural Park, are planning to build a kingfisher bank close to the Regent's Canal. They've applied for funding and will find out if they've got the go ahead in September. They want to attract new species to the King's Cross site for visitors to enjoy and learn more about.

2012 update

The Olympic section of the Greenway in Newham is a hotbed of activity at the moment, busy with machinery as 2012 building work progresses apace. However, its naturalised banks are free from disturbance and full of a different kind of life. Greenfinches, blue and great tits, sparrows, blackbirds, butterflies, bees and dragonflies are all enjoying this important slice of green space in east London.

The Trust will resume soft landscaping work in the winter but, in the meantime, we'll be roping in corporate volunteers from DEFRA, the Government Olympic Executive and Barclays to create a wildflower meadow and mini beast area, make and put up bird and bat boxes, and repaint fences and benches on the Channelsea Path, just off the Greenway.



Vegetable celebrations

"I would love to be here all the time." So says Selda Ince, a keen vegetable grower who lives near East Reservoir Community Garden in Hackney. A weekly gardening club has started for local residents at the site, in partnership with Groundwork East London. It's part of a five year 'Well London' campaign, which aims to improve healthy eating choices and access to open spaces for people in deprived areas of London.

An opening event lured in crowds of people with the promise of a healthy Turkish barbeque. The group is now growing lots of different veggies in preparation for a summer party.

Wandle water voles

The Trust's Water for Wildlife team has just completed a feasibility study that could see water voles reintroduced to the River Wandle. Water vole once flourished along this stream in south London but the mammal disappeared several decades ago. We've identified areas of the river that would be ideal for reintroduction and work will begin soon to make reintroduction a reality, starting with reconnecting and restoring water vole habitat.

Gardening gold

London Wildlife Trust won a gold medal at this year's RHS Hampton Court Flower Show for our Life Cycle Garden. Created by the Trust's expert gardener Elaine Hughes, with the support of a wonderful team of volunteers, our sustainable garden explored the natural cycles that are essential to successful wildlife and climate friendly gardening.

The garden supported our 'Garden for a Living London' campaign and gave people ideas for creating their own wildlife and climate friendly outdoor space.

We'll be recreating the Life Cycle Garden on a Royal Festival Hall balcony as part of the 'Pestival' celebrations. Find out more: www.pestival.org

Above: East Reservoir Community Garden © London Wildlife Trust

Left: Comma butterfly on the Greenway © Kareem Jones

SHARE YOUR STORIES

What's new in your borough? Send your local wildlife news stories to: members@wildlondon.org.uk

Urban night fliers

Discover the magic of London's moths



MOTH FACTS

- Moth numbers have declined alarmingly in the last 30 years. Climate change, pesticide use, habitat loss and even light pollution may all be to blame.
- Moths are drawn to and disorientated by artificial light and often can't escape.
- There are more species of day-flying moths in the UK than butterflies.
- Moths are closely related to butterflies, with almost 2,500 species recorded in the UK.
- Butterflies usually rest with their wings closed up like a book, whilst moths' resting positions vary greatly.

Helen Wallis has become enchanted by the feathered gothic, merveille du jour and burnished brass. No, they're not the heroes of some romantic novel, but just a few of the fascinating moths that can be found flying about London.

Everyone loves butterflies but, for many, the word 'moth' conjures up something dusty, dingy and dangerous to clothes. Yet only six of the UK's 2,500 moth species eat clothes. They come in a kaleidoscope of colours and shapes, are vital for plant pollination and an essential food source for bats and birds.

Subterfuge, poison and perfume

Moths' lowly place in the food chain and mainly nocturnal lives compel many of them to a world of subterfuge, poison and perfume. They've evolved several optical illusions to protect them from predators. The angle shades (*Phlogophora meticulosa*) is a common moth with wings that resemble dead leaves, while the buff tip (*Phalera bucephala*) is often indistinguishable from a broken birch twig.

Poison is a weapon in the armoury of many moth species including the cinnabar (*Tyria jacobaeae*). This black and red moth can be seen flying over grassland



during the day. Its stripy black and yellow caterpillars take in toxins from its food plant, ragwort, which helps to protect it (and the resulting moth) from predation.

Many female moths use pheromones for long distance seduction. The males' feathery antennae detect these sex-attracting perfumes, sometimes from miles away. In fact, females of some moth species have evolved to lose their wings completely, so they are reliant on males travelling to them.

London lovers

London can be good for moth spotting because its green spaces have a variety of plants that flower throughout the year, providing moths with a year round feast. The lime hawk (*Mimas tiliae*) is more common in London than the countryside as it thrives on our lime tree lined streets. The huge caterpillars of the elephant hawk (*Deilephila elpenor*) were once commonly found on the rosebay willowherb growing on old bomb sites. They're now more likely to be found on garden fuchsias.

You can increase the number of moths that visit your garden by planting tobacco plant, sedum and honeysuckle. Ivy and pussy willow flowers also attract moths and are useful caterpillar food plants. Moths are even lured by the boozy delights of rotting windfall fruit in autumn. If you don't have a garden, try planting night scented stock in window boxes – many moths love its vanilla perfume.

Opposite: *Merveille du jour*

© Liz Barrett

Left: *Elephant hawk*

© Liz Barrett



Muggy, moonless nights

Moths fly throughout the year, but muggy, moonless nights between April and October are often best for moth watching. Look on walls and fences near outside lights and check flowers, fallen fruit and ivy. Alternatively, hang a white sheet over a washing line or fence and shine a strong light onto it. A powerful torch or a lamp fitted with an energy-saving light bulb is good. Moths can be caught or photographed as they settle on the sheet.

Moth catching

Catching moths is often necessary if you want to identify species that aren't immediately recognisable. Use large, clean clear containers. Put the pot over the moth, lift one side slightly and gently chivvy it in with the lid. Once the moth is inside, slide the lid on quickly. Moths are extremely fragile, so avoid handling them and release them into the undergrowth as soon as you can. Take pictures of moths you can't identify as there are several websites that you can go to for help. A good place to start is: www.ukmoths.org.uk

Take action

Survey the moths in your patch and make your records count. Enter your sightings online: www.mothscount.org

Helen Wallis is London Wildlife Trust's outreach volunteering officer and a keen moth watcher.

Above: *Angle shades*

© Liz Barrett

The night shift

Protecting London's wildlife after dark



Head out into our city's green spaces after hours and you'll spot all kinds of creatures. From habitat creation and species protection, to problems like light pollution, conservation work doesn't stop at sundown.

London's green spaces are incredible places at night. You can be in the middle of heavily lit King's Cross and yet find yourself wildlife spotting in deep darkness. Bats especially love Camley Street Natural Park, with its big insect attracting pond and close proximity to the Regent's Canal, an excellent wildlife commuting corridor.

Night watch

London Wildlife Trust carries out much work that benefits creatures of the night. We install bat boxes across the capital, create and care for numerous bat friendly ponds, and protect habitats like gardens, rivers, woodland and chalk grassland that are favoured by threatened nocturnal species like the glow worm and hedgehog. We also strive to teach Londoners about them. Summer evenings lend themselves to late night wildlife spotting, and our various bat and moth nights have to be some of the most popular events we run.

Light pollution

"Pollution is something that changes our natural environment for the worse and reduces biodiversity" explains Emily Brennan, London Wildlife Trust's director of biodiversity conservation. "Noise and light can be polluting, especially at night. Artificial lighting is important for people in cities and nobody would suggest all lights should be extinguished. However, excessive lighting is often both a waste of energy and bad for wildlife. Artificial lighting can disrupt the natural circadian rhythms of many creatures and can also attract wildlife to inhospitable areas. And the thick cloud of light polluted

smog that often gathers over the capital means Londoners rarely see the stars" says Emily.

Bats in decline

Bat numbers in London have dropped significantly and light pollution has contributed to that decline. Lights attract insects, drawing them away from unlit areas. Less common species like Daubenton's and brown long eared bat are extremely light-shy and suffer when insects are diverted to pools of artificial light.

London's green spaces are incredible places at night.

Rivers are important to bats for both food and shelter, providing safe dark stretches for them to travel along. Light spill onto rivers is disruptive, fragmenting and even destroying bat habitat. A recent bat survey of the Thames and Lee Navigation showed that increased light levels along the river resulted in a decreased level of bat activity. Where there was no light spillage, there was a greater diversity of bat species (source: Warren Footpath Consultation by Francesca Morrison, Thames Landscape Strategy 2009).



London Wildlife Trust projects are improving the capital for species affected by problems like light pollution, including the transformation of an old railway tunnel into a home for bats and ongoing work to promote wildlife friendly design and development.

Above: Brown long eared bats have been recorded in Southwark
© Hugh Clark

Opposite: An urban hedgehog in hot pursuit of a slug supper
© Hugh Clark



Above: Light pollution in the UK
© CPRE 2000

CREATURES OF THE NIGHT

Go for an evening wander and see what you can spot! You may get a glimpse of:

- Badger
- Bats – brown long eared, Daubenton's, pipistrelle, soprano
- Fox
- Glow worm
- Hedgehog
- Moths – angle shades, brimstone, elephant hawk, large emerald, large yellow underwing
- Owls – little owl, tawny owl

Submit your London wildlife records online: www.gigl.org.uk

UPCOMING EVENING EVENTS

- Bat walk: 1st August and 19th September, Camley Street Natural Park, Camden
- Moth spotting: 15th August, Totteridge Fields, Barnet

For events listings and Local Group contact details visit: www.wildlondon.org.uk/getinvolved

Wildlife friendly design

It's possible to light areas using a lot less energy and causing minimum disruption to creatures like bats. New LED technology can reduce light spill onto rivers and up into tree canopies, and specialist lighting engineers are coming up with alternatives for polluting sodium lamps all the time. Designing the built environment to be more sustainable and more wildlife friendly makes sense.

London Wildlife Trust's Design for Biodiversity project provides guidance for developers, architects, landscape designers and planners on how to integrate biodiversity features into new and existing developments. We believe that London's role as a major world city puts it in a prime position to lead on sustainable development and regeneration. The project seeks to promote biodiversity and ecologically sensitive design to ensure the protection and enhancement of the capital's ecological resources. Find out more on our dedicated Design for Biodiversity website: www.d4b.org.uk

Designing the built environment to be more sustainable and more wildlife friendly makes sense.

Inside the bat woman's lair

Southwark conservation projects officer Chantal Brown reveals how a disused railway tunnel is being transformed into a home for rare bats:

"Our SITA funded bat project is in its third year and Sydenham Hill Woods is now such a different place. 50 bat boxes hang on trees around the wood and we've started turning the site's once derelict old railway tunnel into an important bat habitat.

Six species of bat live in the woods, including Southwark's first formal record of a brown long eared bat. We've constructed two hanging walls inside the tunnel and the grills at its entrance have been turned horizontal to encourage bats to pass through more easily. The hanging walls (think of two rugby posts filled in at the top with bat boxes and bricks) will prevent draughts and provide places for bats to roost."

The woods are frequently surveyed and managed by volunteers. If you'd like to get involved, email Chantal to find out how you can help: cbrown@wildlondon.org.uk





Bioluminescent beetles

Glow worms are another species that is declining partly due to light pollution. Artificial light confuses them and reduces their reproduction rates.

The glow worm is actually a beetle. Seeing one of these firebugs feels exciting, exotic even. The light they give off is a form of bioluminescence. Only females emit light, in a bid to attract males, and their glowing life is just a few weeks long. You're most likely to spot them in unimproved grassland and the Trust is working hard to protect and maintain this habitat in London.

Angela Brennan, a London Wildlife Trust surveyor, is a something of a glow worm expert: "Glow worms are now uncommon in London, but they're reported from time to time. They tend to start displaying around an hour after sunset, when the sky is fairly dark. They look like pale green LED lights and are absolutely wonderful.

A glow worm friendly place would be pesticide free and have undisturbed areas away from lights, with long grass, hedgerows and a pond. A good way to see glow worms is to go on an organised walk, like the ones at High Elms Country Park in Bromley or Frays Valley in Hillingdon. If you spot a glow worm you should report your sighting to the UK glow worm survey and to Greenspace Information for Greater London."

Fly by night

London Wildlife Trust's Barnet Group organise moth nights on north London nature reserves. Liz Barrett from the group shares the magic:

"At the end of May, we held our first 'fly by night' event of the year in Oakhill Park Wood. It was a cool, clear night so less moths were flying than we'd have liked but we managed to attract a large hawk moth, which swooped in like a small bat as we were packing up to leave around 11pm. Other species spotted that night include the 80 moth and the large yellow underwing.

Last year we recorded a beautiful merveille du jour – a green moth that's not often seen in London, a canary shouldered thorn – a large furry yellow moth with an unusual shape, and a pink and green elephant hawk moth.

For these events we're joined by Andrew Wood, a moth expert from Butterfly Conservation. He brings with him the necessary mercury vapour lights with standalone generator and white screens that attract the moths from the surrounding trees and fields. The surveys are useful for recording which species of moth are present in our local reserves."



READ MORE

London Bat Group
www.londonbats.org.uk

Glow Worm Survey
www.glowworms.org.uk

Moths Count
www.mothscount.org

Campaign for Dark Skies
www.britastro.org/dark-skies

Above: A female glow worm shining brightly
 © Robin Scagell Galaxy
www.glowworms.org.uk

Top: North London moth watchers
 © Liz Barrett

Opposite: Work in progress – the bat tunnel at Sydenham Hill Woods
 © Adrian Venditti

From dusk til dawn

Adventures in after hours London



Ever had a wild encounter after the sun has set? Mark Pearson explores our city's dark side and discovers the nature of a London night out.

Living deep in the city, with constant traffic noise and the endless hum of human activity, late night Londoners could be forgiven for assuming the last thing on offer is any kind of connection with nature. However, with your eyes and ears fine tuned to the sights and sounds beyond the sirens and myriad contact calls of *Homo sapiens*, there's more to discover than you might think.

Ghostly encounters

As a dedicated ornithologist and long-term resident of Hackney, one of inner London's most diverse and thriving boroughs, I'm constantly aware of the presence of non human creatures after dark. Hackney, like many other boroughs, is blessed (in my opinion) with an increasingly approachable population of red foxes, a rare example of wild animals learning to co-exist successfully in one of the most demanding of British environments.

Their presence in the early hours along local streets is always a pleasure. One of my most unexpected encounters involving this species came last year. Unlocking my front door on Stoke Newington High Street, as torrential rain created fast flowing rivers along the road, a fox ran

past within two metres of where I stood, dodging night buses and revellers along the way. Nothing too unusual, except for the fact this particular fox was leucistic (leucism is a lack of pigmentation) – its ghostly appearance like a sudden, fleeting aberration from another world.

Night noises

The sounds in the city overnight can tell you a lot about wider events in the natural world. Two species commonly encountered belting out their warbling songs along our streets are robin and blackbird. Both have adapted to the pressures of urban living by singing late into the evening and well into the dead of night. One of the main reasons for their night singing is the decreased street noise, allowing territories to be defended and boundaries to be maintained.

Nocturnal navigating

Many birds undertake nocturnal migrations, an awe-inspiring phenomenon involving incredible feats of navigation, stamina and timing. Spring and autumn are the peak migration periods and night migrants are by no means just a feature of the countryside. By far the most distinctive of these after hours travellers is the redwing



– a small, strongly marked thrush from Scandinavia and other more northerly latitudes, which migrates en masse to the UK every autumn.

The sounds in the city overnight can tell you a lot about wider events in the natural world.

For a few weeks from late September each year, its unmistakable shrill ‘tsleep’ flight-calls cut through the street noise,

as squadrons speed across the London night sky. If you want to see them, picking a still, clear night away from main roads is best, but even a short walk home from the local pub will often result in a successful sighting.

Wading birds, which are otherwise extremely scarce in inner London, also migrate over our houses during the night. In one year living on a quiet street in Hackney, I heard curlew, lapwing, oystercatcher and redshank – all birds we’d be very lucky to see here in the cold light of day.

Night hunting

A dramatic and very welcome colonist to urban London in recent years is the peregrine falcon. Many Londoners are

now aware of these dashing raptors, which breed even in the noisiest, most disturbed parts of the capital. Relatively unknown, however, is their opportunistic nocturnal hunting skills. Capitalising on the dazzling lights and convenient hunting perches found on tall buildings, urban peregrines pursue their prey long after their rural counterparts have clocked off for the day.

So the next time you’re stumbling out of a bar in Soho in the early hours, that strange noise in the sky above you might just be the world’s fastest bird sinking its talons into a migrating coot...

Mark Pearson is the Cockney Sparrow Project officer for London Wildlife Trust. Mark is also a member of Hackney Wildlife group, visit www.hackneywildlife.org.uk for the latest wildlife news from his favourite borough.



Left: Fox
© Hugh Clark

Above: The East Reservoir, Hackney
© Mark Pearson

Opposite: Dawn breaks
© Simon Davis

Urban explorer

Summer interview



Helen Babbs talks about the joys of urban wildlife watching with broadcaster and birder David Lindo.

Wormwood Scrubs in west London is David Lindo's patch. He's been birding there for 17 years and talks about the site with an affection and familiarity that shows he's devoted to the place.

"I was doing some research for a bird book, the Scrubs were close to where I worked and so I decided to spend some time there. I went for seven lunchtimes in a row and didn't see a thing, but then on the eighth day I discovered a tree pipit on migration and on the ninth I spotted a pied flycatcher. It felt as if the Scrubs were suddenly opening up their secrets to me, so I became a follower and have been going there religiously ever since."

"Any good birder takes their 'bins' wherever they go"

The Urban Birder

David styles himself as the 'Urban Birder', an accessible ornithologist encouraging people to explore the middle of somewhere instead of the middle of nowhere. David's love of nature appears to have come from nowhere. Growing up in a black Irish neighbourhood in 1970s London, he says he was surrounded by people who weren't

at all interested in the natural world.

"I didn't have any peers with an interest in wildlife, my parents didn't have an interest, but for some reason I did. I used to watch birds out of the window at home and give them all my own names."

His bird naming habits led to an interest in studying field guides. Long hours spent with a book of the birds of the UK, Europe and North Africa led to a love for the ring ouzel, a type of thrush that looks similar to the blackbird but has a white crescent on its chest and is far rarer. "The ring ouzel stuck out because it epitomised total wilderness. At the time, as a kid studying a bird book, I thought I would never see one, but I was desperate to because they seemed so wild and romantic to me. And then I saw my first one in London and now every August a ring ouzel turns up at the Scrubs!"

Good birders carry bins

I ask the Urban Birder what his favourite London walks are, hoping to get some ideas for strolls this summer. He says he's still drawn to Fryant Country Park in Wembley where he used to do cross-country at school, and also likes walking from his Notting Hill home up the canal to Alperton or in Osterley and Richmond Parks. But really he doesn't have one

favourite walk, seeing every venture as a bird watching opportunity.

“Any good birder takes their ‘bins’ wherever they go, I’ve even used them in Oxford Street before.” Do people think he’s a bit strange, or suspicious even, when he pulls his binoculars out in central London?

“They’ve always thought I was strange! Once, at Brent Reservoir, I was looking through the fence of a plant nursery and a police car drove past, then screeched to a halt and reversed back at high speed. They rolled down their window and demanded to know what I was doing. I just reeled off a list of species I was looking for and they drove off! I used to get funny looks quite a lot, now it’s completely different, people are really interested. When I take people out and show them birds I try and make it as entertaining as possible.”

Romanesque spectaculars

Urban wildlife watching isn’t restricted to London – there’s lots to see in other world cities in the most extraordinary places, especially at night.

“I was in Rome recently watching the football. It was twilight and there were absolutely loads of moths about – when I sat down a huge moth flew out of my chair. And there were swifts flying about the stadium, hawking the moths. As it got darker I looked up and saw tonnes and tonnes of moths flying around above the flood lights and loads of gulls above them. It was fantastic to watch. While everyone was watching the game, there was a wildlife spectacle going on above them and they had no idea.”

David’s enthusiasm for urban exploration is infectious. I even found myself trying to do a bit of novice bird watching from the top of the bus on my way home from meeting him. So, fellow Londoners, what have you spotted today?

Top right David Lindo aka the Urban Birder
© Nadia Attura

Opposite: Richmond Park
© Dawn Newton

Below: Sunset over the Scrubs
© David Lindo



ABOUT DAVID LINDO

David Lindo is a writer and broadcaster. He runs www.theurbanbirder.com and writes for publications like BBC Wildlife and Birdwatching magazine. His next article in the August issue of BBC Wildlife magazine is all about London. Recent TV projects include wildlife slots on ‘The One Show’ on BBC One.



Your wild London



Ideas for an alfresco summer

Night time tales from wild Londoners

“London’s gardens are magical places at night. As dusk rolls in and day colours wash out, other shades become more prominent. Sculptural shadows stretch across lawns and up walls. Pale leaved plants and white flowers begin to glow in the twilight. Heavy scents grow strong and hang thick in the air, drawing in moths to drink night nectar. Bats dart about in hungry pursuit of insects that have been drawn out by the approaching gloom. Later, perhaps a hedgehog will wander through and Hoover up some slugs” says a midnight gardener.

“I’m walking home from Whitechapel at 5.30am and the sun is rising. Green Lanes hasn’t woken up as I walk past the White House pub by Clissold Park. Suddenly I see a flash of black, red and white, then another. The flash disappears into a hole in a willow tree overhanging the road. Then out pops the fluffy red head of a baby great spotted woodpecker,

chirping with joy at the bounty his mum and dad have brought home for him. It’s definitely a baby boy woodpecker, I can tell because he’s shouting a lot. I love London and so do those woodies” writes an early hours wanderer.

Get out in wild London

Have a flick through your Going Wild guide for ideas how to enjoy London’s green spaces this summer – you should have received your annual events guide in the spring. Contact us if you would like to be sent another one.

Visit www.wildlondon.org.uk/getinvolved for our most up to date events listings and to find out about volunteering opportunities and Local Groups.

WIN A ‘WILD ABOUT LONDON’S PARKS’ BOOK

‘Wild about London’s Parks’ by Simon Rees is a series of fun wildlife walks for families. They’re designed so children become the guide and lead their families on urban adventures through some of London’s loveliest parks. We have six signed copies to give away.

Just tell us the answer to this question: Which bird of prey is making the most of extended hunting hours in the city?

Email your answers to members@wildlondon.org.uk by 1st September 2009.



Left: Wild about London's Parks by Simon Rees

My Wild London

Each issue, a London Wildlife Trust member shares their wild London secrets.



Name: Mandy Timpson

Lives: Hounslow

The best green spaces in my borough are: Gunnersbury Park for its feeling of freedom in an otherwise very built-up area. And Isleworth Ait nature reserve – the combination of season, tide and river means the island is always changing.

My favourite walk in Hounslow is: from Osterley Park through Long Wood along the Grand Union Canal to Hanwell Locks, then back along the canal to Brentford. I'm also very fond of walking in Donkey Wood in Feltham, bordering the River Crane.

What I love most about London is: the rivers, reservoirs, lakes and canals. I'm always happy to spend time watching water birds or hoping for a glimpse of a kingfisher or water vole. I enjoy the way that water changes its mood with the weather and time of day.

Find out more: Mandy is a member of the Isleworth Ait Local Group. They maintain London Wildlife Trust's idyllic Isleworth Ait reserve – a tiny island in the middle of the Thames. Volunteering sessions take place on the second Saturday of each month.

Find out more about volunteering at: www.wildlondon.org.uk/getinvolved

Share your wild London secrets and be our next featured member, contact us at: members@wildlondon.org.uk



Thanks to you

Raj Misra ran his first marathon just one week after moving to London from Scotland, and raised a stunning £1,580 for London Wildlife Trust. After deciding to make London his home, Raj thought he'd do something to help the city's wildlife and wild spaces. "The best thing on the day was the fantastic public support – it was a great psychological tonic and encouraged me to finish the marathon. The selflessness of my fellow runners, who were all raising money for noble charitable causes, was amazing. I still feel a huge sense of achievement to have completed 26 miles for the Trust."

Above: Dr Raj Misra running for wildlife
© Sarah Wilshaw

Opposite: Great spotted woodpecker in flight
© Hugh Clark

London's wildlife needs you!

"There are many ways to volunteer for London Wildlife Trust and not all of them involve wearing wellies" enthuses trustee Dianne Murphy. The Trust is looking for people to join its board of trustees – why not consider giving it a go? You'll find the paperwork enclosed with this summer's magazine.

"Council is made up of people from all walks of life, each bringing something different to the table. As a trustee I get great satisfaction from being able to use the knowledge and experience I've gained at work to influence the direction the Trust takes" says Dianne.

This year's members' conference and AGM will be held on Saturday 14th November.

GOT A PHOTO FOR WILD LONDON?

Would you like to see your pictures in print? Every issue, *Wild London* magazine features stunning photography taken by urban nature enthusiasts. Email your images to: pictures@wildlondon.org.uk

20 years' growth

Reserve focus on the Centre for Wildlife Gardening



DID YOU KNOW?

- The Centre for Wildlife Gardening has a Green Pennant Award for providing a high quality open space for the community.
- Southwark residents can claim a free native tree, shrub or climber through the Southwark Tree Scheme from December to March each year.
- The Happy Flower Project offers gardening work experience for adults with learning disabilities. Participants are responsible for maintaining raised beds of vegetables and flowers.
- There are two onsite beehives and you can pick up a pot of Peckham Honey for a £4 donation from our visitor centre.
- Turner Prize winning sculptor Antony Gormley has a workshop on nearby Bellenden Road and designed the bollards in the area around the Centre.

20 years old this year, the Centre for Wildlife Gardening has established itself as a model of wildlife friendly growing. Southwark area manager, Celia Hammond shares her excitement at taking on the running of the site.

I started my new job in the snowiest week of February 2009. The whole site was a magical secret, hidden by a gleaming white blanket of snow. The garden has sprung to life over the past few months and always provides a new sense of awe.

Visitors are often amazed by the peacefulness of the Centre and surprised to find out that we've recorded 15 species of butterfly and over 30 species of bird here. We also provide a refuge for threatened creatures like the house sparrow and stag beetle.

The Centre for Wildlife Gardening has a stormy past. It was originally set up as a tree and wildflower nursery after damage caused by a destructive hurricane in 1987. The ex-council depot site was transformed in 1989 and has since developed into a wildlife garden. It now plays an important role in promoting sustainable gardening practises, as well as being valued enormously by local people and surrounding schools.

Involving the community is at the heart of our work. Much of the project depends

on the help of committed volunteers who maintain and develop the garden, grow flowers for the plant stall and help us run education sessions and events.

We have lots of examples of habitats that can be created to encourage wildlife into gardens, balconies and window boxes. These include hedgerow, chalk bank, meadow, brownfield habitat and a living roof. We also have a pond that's supporting thriving populations of common frog, common toad and smooth newt, as well as several species of dragonfly and damselfly.

Our 20th birthday year has been lovely so far. A fantastic new nature trail opened at the Centre this spring and we celebrated 20 years with a delicious strawberry tea in June. Outreach and community engagement will continue to be central to our work over the next year and we'll be looking at new ways of working with local community groups.

You can find out about events and volunteering opportunities at the Centre by visiting:

www.wildlondon.org.uk/getinvolved



Above: Celia Hammond

Below: Young visitors celebrate our birthday with style

© Celia Hammond

Opposite: The Centre looking beautiful this summer

© Ashley White

CREATE A FRAGRANT NIGHT GARDEN

An area designed for nocturnal wildlife and planted with night loving flowers is an enchanting, sensual place. Choose plants that bloom at night, have potent night fragrances or have silvery foliage that glows in the moonlight.

Top ten plants for a midsummer's night garden:

- Evening primrose
- Honeysuckle
- Jasmine
- Lavender
- Mint
- Night scented stocks
- Sedum
- Soapwort
- Tobacco plant
- Verbena

Visit www.wildlondon.org.uk/gardening for invaluable, free gardening advice and to find out more about our Garden for a Living London campaign.



COMMON PIPISTRELLE BAT

“A grounded, undernourished juvenile bat was brought into the bat hospital that my wife Jenny runs. Test flying is an essential component of rehabilitation and this photograph was taken in my studio during one of these exercises” says photographer and bat enthusiast Hugh Clark.

