



Ecology Consultancy

Briefing

Issue 4

The Fat Walk

The Lee Valley Regional Park

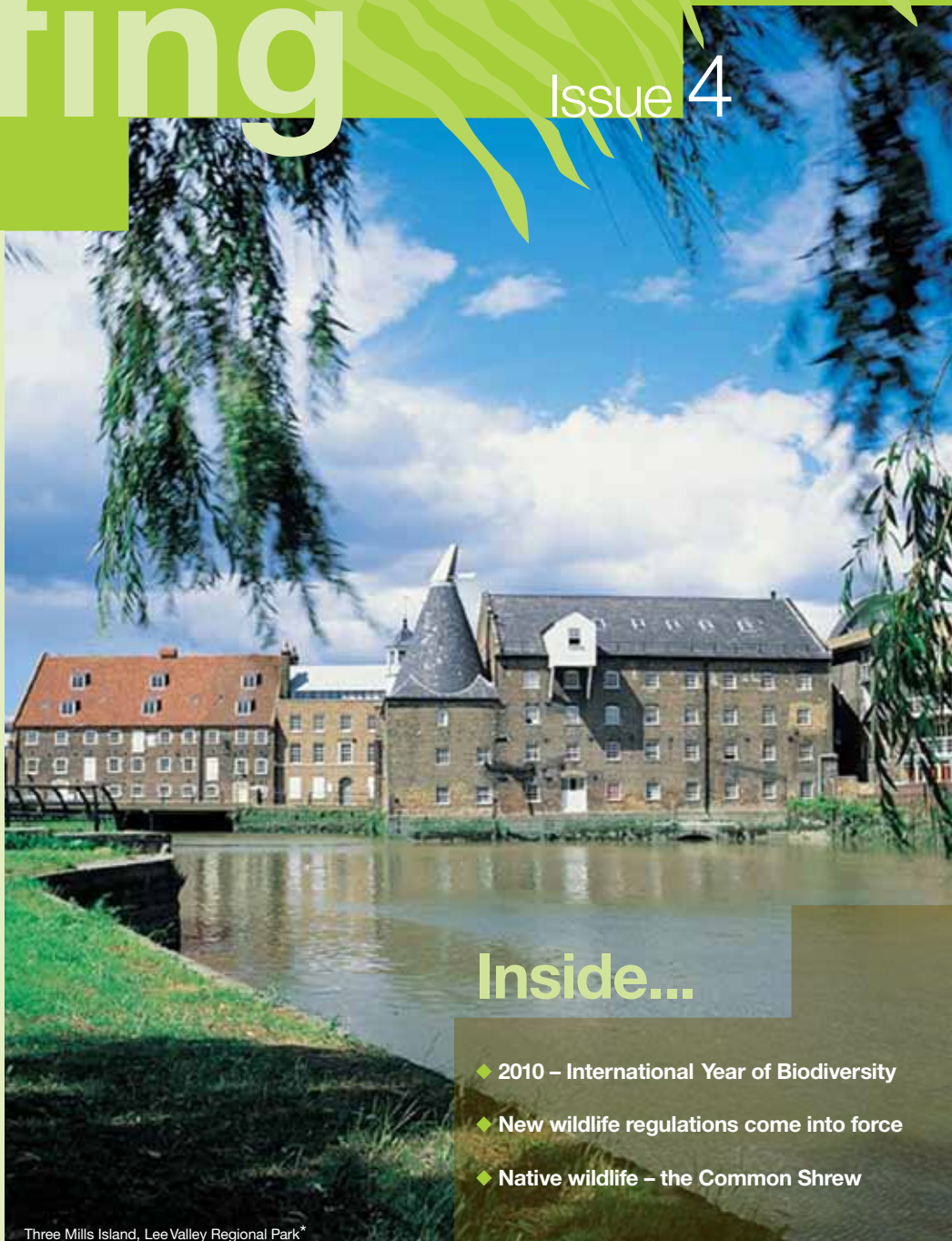
The Lee Valley Regional Park was established by an Act of Parliament in 1967 and comprises a huge 4000ha site.

Most of it is reclaimed land - once marsh, later used for gravel extraction and a landfill site. Today parts are being returned to nature and remnants of the old marsh remain in places.

From Three Mills Island, at Bromley by Bow in the East End of London, the River Lea meanders through a range of urban habitats and post-industrial landscapes down to the Thames, just east of East India Dock. Alongside this 8.5 mile expanse a new stretch of linear green space, known as the Fat Walk, is planned and construction will begin later this year.

The Ecology Consultancy was part of a team led by 5th Studio and Latz & Partners, commissioned by the London Thames Gateway Development Corporation. Our role was to advise on the development of a master-plan and detailed designs for this stretch of the River Lea.

One section of the development, the Fat Walk, has gone forward for planning permission. It comprises a linear park incorporating new river crossing points, from Three Mills to East India Dock Basin alongside the River Lea. The Ecology



Three Mills Island, Lee Valley Regional Park*

Inside...

- ◆ 2010 – International Year of Biodiversity
- ◆ New wildlife regulations come into force
- ◆ Native wildlife – the Common Shrew

Consultancy carried out ecological baseline surveys and an impact assessment, provided ecological input to the master-plan, and, working alongside architects, landscape architects and structural engineers, made recommendations for planting trees and shrubs, creating patches of wildflower meadow, erecting bird boxes, providing new nesting sites and enhancing habitats for bats and otters.

Our plans around the 12 Trees Crossing, south of Three Mills Island, include an increase in shrub planting to enhance

bird nesting habitat, with the innovative installation in a new lift facility of a number of swift nest-boxes, to help this Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) species. Recorded swift calls will attract the species to the site. A kingfisher and sand martin bank will be constructed overlooking the River Lea.

Further south a new bridge is to be built at Poplar Crossing, to which nest boxes

Continued over...

The Fat Walk continued...

will be attached. Black redstarts and peregrine falcons inhabit the area and undoubtedly forage along the riverside. The reed-bed and mudbanks to the north of a proposed bridge provide shelter and feeding areas for waterfowl, including teal and waders.

At Oban Street the A13 Connector will carry the Fat Walk below the A13 in a short tunnel. The most interesting habitat here is the Creek, part of the river corridor, linking upstream and downstream habitats, with reed-bed and low-tide mudflats, which provide habitat for reed warblers, waders and wildfowl. To the south of the A13, a small area of wildflower meadow will be planted and a variety of climbers will cloak the façade of the existing bridge. A sand martin bank will overlook the river, embedded with artificial nesting tunnels.

East India Dock may be small, but it is a haven for birds. This year, scaup and snipe were seen in the winter months and kingfishers can be spotted here. During the summer, sandwich and arctic terns call by, along with gulls and waders. East India Dock Basin provides the conclusion to the Fat Walk and reinforces the importance of biodiversity in this part of London.

* Three Mills Island is part of the 10,000 acre Lee Valley Regional Park and includes the Grade I listed House Mill which is believed to be the largest tidal mill in the world.

Artificial sand martin burrows

2010 International Year of Biodiversity

The United Nations named 2010 the International Year of Biodiversity to focus attention on safeguarding our natural world and enhancing biodiversity. This is a call to action and an invitation to learn more through The International Year of Biodiversity website - www.cbd.int/2010/about/ - which has co-ordinated this work.

The UN emphasises that mankind is an integral part of nature and our fate is closely linked with biodiversity - the huge variety of animals and plants, the places they live and their surrounding environments, because we rely on it to provide our food, fuel, medicine and other essentials of life. Sadly this rich diversity is being lost at a greatly accelerated rate owing to human activities, impoverishing us all and weakening the ability of the living systems on which we depend, to resist threats such as climate change.





New wildlife regulations come into force



Japanese knotweed

In April revised legislation came into force concerning non-native species. There have been many adjustments over the years since the Wildlife & Countryside Act was adopted in 1981, with new research shedding light on the behaviour of non-native animals and plants.

The new order updates Schedule 9 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act (http://www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2010/uksi_20100609_en_1) which lists species that may not be released or introduced without a licence, allowed to escape into the wild, or caused to be spread in the wild. Most accidental or deliberate introductions have a benign effect on native wildlife, but a minority of non-native species exhibit invasive qualities and have a negative impact on native wildlife.

Japanese knotweed can take over a river bank with alarming speed, displacing native species which cannot compete for light and nutrients, and it remains on Schedule 9. New to the Schedule are a number of plants including the rampant Himalayan Balsam, for which it is an offence, as with Japanese Knotweed, to plant or cause it to spread in the wild. Interestingly, the Coypu, a dog-sized rodent that rapidly established itself in East Anglia in the 1950s, has been removed from the Schedule following its successful eradication.

Other inclusions in the new Variation of Schedule 9 are native bird species for which special licences must be sought before the release of captive-bred birds. Species such as red kite, northern goshawk and corncrake appear in this list. There will be more on the subject of invasive species in the next Ecology Consultancy Briefing.

...And New Responsibilities for Landowners...

Other legislative changes this spring place greater responsibility on European Protected Species licence-holders. The new Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (SI 2010/490) consolidate the many changes that have been made to the 1994 Regulations and their transposition into UK law, in implementing the Habitats Directive. (https://www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2010/uksi_20100490_en_1).

Little has changed, but there is now an increased responsibility on the part of EPS licence-holders to fully comply with protocols and greater sanction against those who breach an EPS licence condition.

Native wildlife

The Common Shrew

The second most numerous mammal in Britain is the common shrew, which lives in a wide range of habitats, such as woodlands, hedgerows, scrub and grassland, sniffing out small slugs and worms to eat. All British shrew species have legal protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) making all killing or taking of individuals illegal, unless carried out under licence.

Unlike many of our small mammals, the common shrew does not hibernate. They are highly territorial animals and only socialise during the mating season. Females have one litter of 5-7 pups from May to September. Young shrews are sometimes seen following their mother in a 'caravan', joined mouth to tail, often in response to their nest having been disturbed.

The Ecology Consultancy advises that wildlife surveys should be undertaken before planning permission is sought, so that the development can be designed to avoid impacts on the habitats of protected species. If impacts remain unavoidable mitigation proposals must be designed and new habitat created, to replace what is destroyed, and irrespective of whether development impacts on protected species, development always offers the potential for enhancement of wildlife habitat.



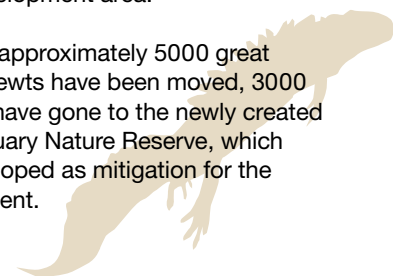
5000

Great Crested Newts found new homes in Newhaven

The Ecology Consultancy is currently involved in a protected species mitigation project within an area subject to the phased development of Eastside Business Park in Newhaven, East Sussex. The work has been ongoing since 2000.

To facilitate the initial works for the business park, a five-year great crested newt translocation was carried out and further translocation is continuing within land located immediately north of the initial development area.

A total of approximately 5000 great crested newts have been moved, 3000 of which have gone to the newly created Ouse Estuary Nature Reserve, which was developed as mitigation for the development.



Crowhurst Corner



Adonis Blue

A biodiverse corner of Sussex has been achieved after seven years of practical conservation tasks by The Ecology Consultancy. On an industrial estate that was demolished in the 1980s, Crowhurst Corner belongs to Brighton and Hove City Council and has seen phased development for business use by developers Linkwood Property and Selits. It lies on the northern edge of Brighton's urban fringe and includes part of a Local Nature Reserve (SNCI). To compensate for the small loss of part of the SNCI, the Council required extensive habitat creation and the implementation of a long-term management plan.

Work began back in 2003 with reptile surveys for slow worms and common lizards. Reptile refugia were created from wood and brick piles. We then created calcareous grassland on landscaped terraces formed from the excavated chalk, mimicking the shapes of the South Downs.

The bespoke chalk grassland seed-mix was of UK provenance and included a higher proportion of horseshoe-vetch to encourage one of the flagship species of the South Downs, the Adonis Blue butterfly, which had been previously recorded on the site. A rich meadow has resulted, containing a wide range of native species alongside plants that indicate the site's brownfield history: flowering species such as dame's violet,

sulphur cinquefoil, goldenrod, opium poppy and tansy.

Rough grass banks are managed for the benefit of small mammals and invertebrates and we hope to attract rabbits. A green wall is currently in the design stage to cover a steep cutting which will provide foraging and nesting habitat for insects, birds and bats.

A small block of Scots Pine woodland was systematically thinned over the last three years to encourage natural growth of mixed woodland. An 8m hedgerow containing berry-forming shrubs such as wayfaring tree and guelder rose was also planted. On this tiny 1.4ha of land there have been huge gains for biodiversity in a short period of time with over 180 plant species having been recorded, but we await the return of a very special inhabitant - the Adonis Blue.



Pride of Sussex in tall meadow

Tye Green Wimbish

Ecohomes in Essex

The Ecology Consultancy's Norwich office has been involved with a small Passivhaus scheme in Essex, where the project is on course for success. Chris Parsons, Director of Parsons and Whittleby Ltd., contractors for the site, sent us this message, "It was a challenging application to get everything up and running in less than six months and I am grateful for all your assistance. The challenge now is to deliver this genuinely low energy housing for the benefit of the tenants".

The Ecology Consultancy made a number of recommendations to Hastoe Housing Association and all were adopted by the contractors. Following Phase I surveys on the site, we recommended enhancing natural habitats on areas used for housing or lawns, as follows:

- providing habitats for species such as stag-beetle by creating log and brash piles.
- introducing native tree species to the public open space, such as wild cherry, aspen and silver birch.
- creating new hedgerows of hawthorn, blackthorn, field maple, buckthorn, hazel and elder, with climbers such as old man's beard and honeysuckle.
- bulb-planting of wild daffodil, wood anemone and English bluebell.
- shrub planting of 19 new species, including crab-apple.
- placing bird and bat boxes in trees and on walls, and artificial bat roosts in buildings.

Batty discovery

In April *The Guardian* reported that a tiny, rare, bat had crossed the channel and could be found in caves in Sussex and Yorkshire.

Like our Pipistrelle, Alcathoe's bat is only the size of a thumbprint, being the smallest of the 'whiskered bats'. The new colonies of Alcathoe's bat will receive the same stringent protection afforded to other British bats.

The Alcathoe's bat was previously thought to be too small and weak to cross the Channel but a European survey, conducted by Leeds and Sheffield Universities, suggests that the British population could be quite large.

"The discovery of Alcathoe's bat takes the number of British species to 17, making bats the most diverse of the country's wild animals", said *Guardian* correspondent, Martin Wainwright.



Alcathoe's bat: Cyril Schönbacher

Staff News

The London Team invited colleagues and clients to our office-warming party, which featured an exhibition of original artwork by Rowan Newton.



Alan Scott (left) John Newton (right)

The Ecology Consultancy welcomed two new members of staff in May to our new London office in Borough. Sabrina Bremner, an IEEM graduate and Phil Saunders, MIEEM, both have survey and mitigation experience. Sabrina comes from WhiteYoung Green and she will be conducting Phase I surveys as well as specialised surveys for wild plants, bats, reptiles and small mammals. Phil spent the previous six years with Mouchel, and describes himself as a generalist with a special knowledge of birds, reptiles and small mammals. The London office also welcomed Jackie Watson, who is working towards her bat licence.



Wendy McFarlane (left) Naomi Forbes (centre) Rachel Saunders (right)

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