

WildLondon



Protecting London's wildlife for the future

Autumn/Winter 2007



Keeping the Gateway green

What the Wildlife Trusts are doing page 6
Homes for all page 8



London Wildlife Trust fights to sustain and enhance London's wildlife habitats to create a city richer in wildlife.

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**Front cover photo:
Autumn at Erith Marshes,
Bexley, Michael Pilkington**

The Thames Gateway is the biggest regeneration project in Europe. It offers tremendous opportunities and presents huge threats. At London Wildlife Trust, we dream of a Gateway that has innovative and sustainable developments, vibrant new communities and a high-quality natural environment for people and wildlife. This issue of Wild London describes what we are doing to make this dream come true.

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Shrill carder bee

Bumblebee Conservation Trust



Canvey Creek

Department of Communities and Local Government

Gateway to the future

The Thames Gateway is a vast area of London, stretching from Greenwich and Newham into Kent and Essex. It is viewed by many as the next big opportunity for growth and development. But does it have much more to offer?

The Gateway is very mixed, both topographically and socially. On the south bank, near the River Cray in Bexley, there are pristine salt marshes that should be protected at all costs. On the north bank, between the River Lea and the Essex border, there are contaminated sites that are scheduled for development but would make equally valuable nature reserves. In this issue we explain how The Wildlife Trusts are conserving wildlife in the Gateway. We focus on the Thames-side dwelling streaked bombardier beetle and bring you news of a recent translocation of this rare and charismatic insect involving London Wildlife Trust volunteers.

There is no doubt that London needs more homes. So should we go for the cheapest and lowest design specifications or should we take the braver course and demand that all new homes in the Gateway meet the highest environmental standards?

“The Gateway is very mixed, both topographically and socially”

Quality and density of building varies hugely in the Gateway. There is unattractive housing that has no value for wildlife, but the proposed development at Barking Riverside appears to have put landscape before housing so that biodiversity can be enhanced before, during and after the various building phases.

London Wildlife Trust believes that cheap housing will plague us for decades. We urge the local authorities, London Thames Gateway Development Corporation, London Development Authority and the Greater London Authority to develop this special area with an eye for the future:

- Provide the right number of homes to the right environmental specifications
- Ensure that biodiversity is enhanced not just protected
- Manage the new greenspace so that it helps us cope with the effects of climate change

If we do all this, the Gateway could show the rest of London how to be a sustainable, attractive and carbon-neutral city.

*Carlo Laurenzi OBE
Chief Executive*



Brian Aldrich

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Duck, Grebe, Heron & Wading Bird Centre, Roper Elizabeth's Walk, Barnes, SW13 9WT
Registration number: 1003861

Marshland reprieve

An important part of Erith Marshes was saved from development in September when Asda withdrew its application to build on Southmere Green. This area is ancient Thames grazing marsh, a priority wildlife habitat. It acts as a buffer between the East Thamesmead Business Park and the adjacent Site of Metropolitan Importance. The Trust has invited Bexley Council to work with it towards the long-term protection of the site.

Local people and London Wildlife Trust have long campaigned for the protection of Erith Marshes. It is an important site for national priority species, such as water vole, skylark, grass snake, slow-worm and common toad. More details: <http://wildweb.london.gov.uk>



Wyliepix

Call to the sea

In October, a 300,000 signature petition was delivered to Downing Street calling for new laws to protect Britain's marine wildlife. The petition was organised by The Wildlife Trusts, RSPB, Marine Conservation Society and WWF, which have been campaigning for a full Marine Bill to be included in the Queen's Speech this autumn. The groups say existing legislation is ineffective.

Joan Edwards, Head of Marine Policy for The Wildlife Trusts, said: "We urgently need new laws to protect the sea and marine life. The number of signatures shows how public support is growing.

"Our campaign cannot stop until there's renewed commitment from Gordon Brown to improve the protection and management of the UK's marine environment."



The Wildlife Trusts

Andrew Rosindell MP with Carlo Laurenzi and Emily Brennan at the Petition Fish reception

New priority species



Hedgehog and house sparrow

London species such as hedgehog, house sparrow, starling and grass snake have been added to the new list of priority species and habitats announced by Joan Ruddock, Minister for Biodiversity, in August.

For the first time, the list includes rivers and ponds and the open mosaic habitats of previously-developed land, which can support rare wildlife such as shrill carder bee and black redstart.



Steve Whitbread, Conservation Manager at London Wildlife Trust, said: "We are pleased that the revised lists set a framework for future action. We now need to make sure that action is taken and is properly resourced. The UK government has signed an international agreement to halt biodiversity loss by 2010 and there are statutory obligations on all public bodies to have regard to biodiversity conservation."

Royal commission



Hyde Park, Serpentine road from lake

London Wildlife Trust was delighted to be commissioned by The Royal Parks to carry out botanical surveys of Greenwich Park, Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens.

Greenwich Park lived up to its designation as a Site of Metropolitan Importance for Nature Conservation with high-quality areas of lowland dry acid grassland and good examples of semi-natural habitat. The survey recorded notable plant species such as early hair-grass, thyme-leaved sandwort, little mouse-ear, spotted

medick and buck's-horn plantain. The park will host the Olympic equestrian events in 2012 and our data will influence the design of the course.

Kensington Gardens and Hyde Park also have areas of valuable acid grassland. The survey found the first record of common cudweed in Middlesex since 1970. Other notable species included early hair-grass, common stork's-bill, small-flowered crane's-bill, purple loosestrife, giant butterbur and squirrel-tail fescue.

London 2100

Leading urban conservationists came together to discuss London's future at the London Wildlife Trust conference in the Palestra building in November.

From population expansion and climate change to development and virtual nature, experts set out possible future scenarios and examined what we could do now to make future London a better place for wildlife and people.



Sarah Parkin of Forum for the Future at our conference

Speakers included our vice president Charles Secrett; Allan Jones, chief executive of the London Climate Change Agency and Kevin House of the Environment Agency's Thames Estuary 2100 project.

A conference report will be available later this year. For more information go to www.wildlondon.org.uk.



Sarah Wilshaw and Emily Brennan

Two new senior posts recruited

We welcome Emily Brennan, our new Director of Biodiversity Conservation, who has come to us from the Zoological Society of London and Sarah Wilshaw, our new Head of Fundraising and Marketing, previously at WWF-UK.



Lifeinthegetto; Bumblebee Conservation Trust

Guardians of the Gateway

Mudflats in the Gateway and shrill carder bee

Steve Whitbread explains why the Thames Gateway is so important for biodiversity and what The Wildlife Trusts are doing to protect it

Since 1959, the London, Essex and Kent Wildlife Trusts have been the main conservation organisations and custodians of important wildlife areas in the Thames Gateway. Together, we manage more than 900 hectares as nature reserves. Many are Sites of Special Scientific Interest and all are immensely important to people and to wildlife.

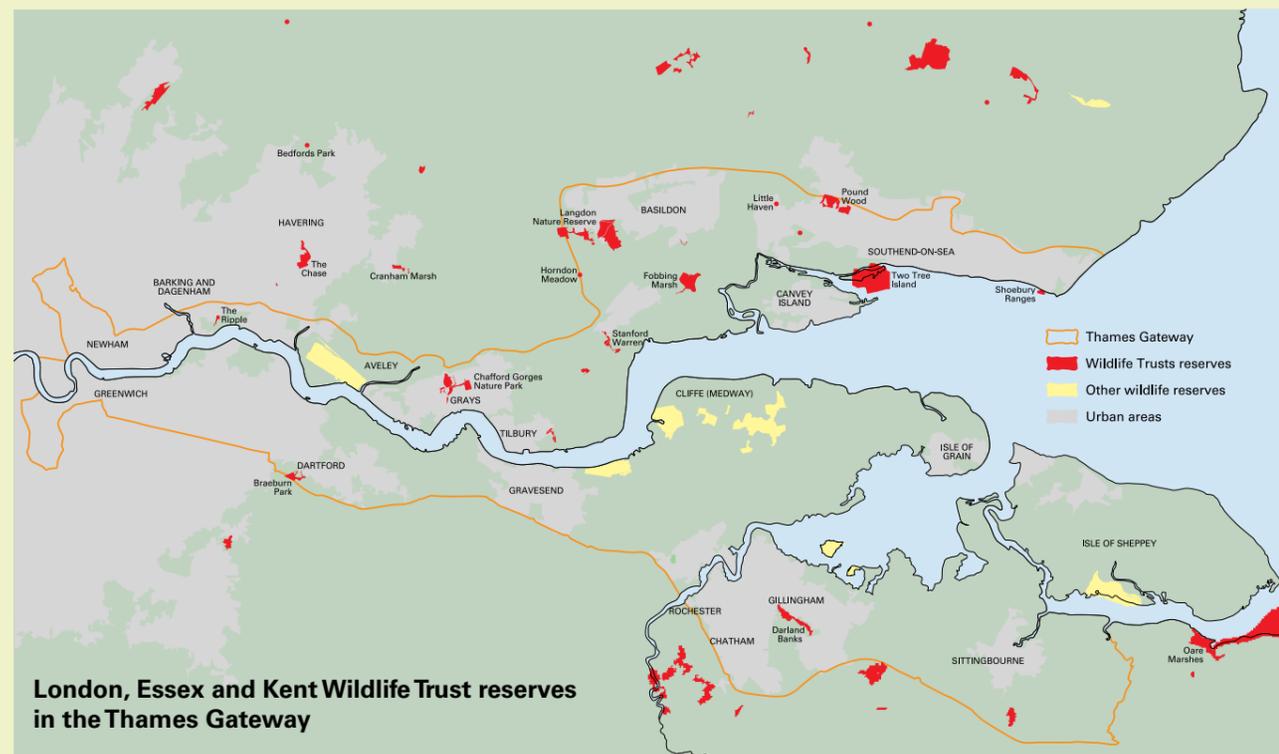
But these sites are just a fraction of the Gateway's total area, which

stretches 60 km from Westferry in Tower Hamlets to the Isle of Sheppey. So the three Wildlife Trusts must influence how development proceeds over the next 30 years, as well as protect and manage important greenspace.

We think the Gateway should be seen as a vital national stepping stone for wildlife helping species to move and adapt to climate change. This could be achieved using 'A Living Landscape' approach in the

Gateway. That means creating large scale landscapes, creating connections between fragmented habitats and ensuring a green matrix exists in urban areas. London, Essex and Kent Wildlife Trusts want to work with developers to create opportunities for wildlife in the Gateway. This includes adaptation on the buildings themselves, further discussed by Emily Brennan on page 8.

To download 'A Living Landscape' report go to www.wildlifetrusts.org



Essex Wildlife Trust

Wildlife in the Gateway

The River Thames is once more a haven for wildlife and a vital fish nursery, thanks to ecological restoration. Its tributaries are at the heart of many accessible nature reserves and other greenspace. They are fed by rivers and ditches which support plants, invertebrates and the water vole, the UK's fastest declining mammal.

The Thames grazing marshes and estuary habitats are internationally important for birds. They are a refuelling point for migrating birds from Europe and Africa. They provide food and shelter for over-wintering wildfowl and breeding habitat for waders, including lapwing and curlew.

The wasteland habitats and previously developed land often support an amazing array of invertebrates which, in turn, encourages foraging and nesting birds. These include the rare linnet and skylark and scarce goldfinch and kestrel. Buglife's *All A Buzz In The Gateway* survey showed that a quarter of the area's brownfield sites were of high importance for rare invertebrates, such as the weevil wasp and shrill carder bee.

Formal and country parks are important wildlife habitats and accessible places where people can enjoy nature.

Telling the world

The three Wildlife Trusts working in the Gateway have established a website to provide accessible guidance for the regeneration sector. www.wildlifegateway.org.uk offers the best practical information on design for biodiversity in the Gateway and provides developers with the opportunity to showcase examples of their work.

The three Trusts have set out a vision for biodiversity conservation in the Gateway in the report *Natural Regeneration*.

Our current work is described in the leaflet *Thames Gateway for Wildlife and People*.

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Bricks, mortar and homes for wildlife

Emily Brennan reports on how building in the Thames Gateway can be adapted to help wildlife

Canvey Creek

Development in the Thames Gateway is undoubtedly a threat to London's biodiversity. There are huge pressures to build on sites that are rich in wildlife and, as a result, species and habitats will be put at risk.

But the Thames Gateway project also offers great opportunities. Buildings can be very important for biodiversity in urban areas, where natural and semi-natural areas of habitat are in short supply and are often patchily distributed.

The London Biodiversity Partnership has identified the built environment as a priority for conservation in the region. The Mayor of London highlights the importance of buildings for biodiversity in several strategies and guidance notes. And the biodiversity strategy for England specifically refers to the need to incorporate more biodiversity elements into green buildings.

Built structures often provide suitable roosting and nesting places for birds

and can also incorporate foraging habitat for wildlife. Many species have adapted well to living in the built environment and some species are now almost completely dependent upon built structures. Examples of species which frequently use built structures in London are swift, house sparrow, black redstart, and some lichens, bats and bees. Other species such as sand martin and peregrine falcon are welcome visitors and perform important functions, such as pest control.

Building with wildlife in mind

The needs of wildlife can be incorporated into the built environment by either enhancing or adapting existing buildings or by building appropriate features into new developments. Incorporating the needs of wildlife into a development at the outset is much more effective than simply adding a few features as an afterthought!

There are familiar cheap and easy ways to enhance our own homes for wildlife. These include putting up bat and bird boxes or growing climbing plants up walls and fences to create shelter and breeding habitat for birds and invertebrates.

Other enhancements are on a grander scale, such as creating buildings with living roofs or building green bridges over roads to create safe corridors for wildlife. Biodiversity can be incorporated into new developments through wildlife-friendly landscaping, sustainable drainage systems and features such as nesting bricks and boxes. Growing concern over climate change is giving us more opportunities to encourage developers and government to adopt sustainable building practices, many of which also benefit wildlife.

Emily Brennan is Director of Conservation at London Wildlife Trust



Greenwich Millennium Village includes an ecology park with habitat for estuarine birds and migrating species.

London Wildlife Trust's wildlife consultancy is London Conservation Services. Offering a broad range of wildlife surveys, ecological assessments and practical management, our experienced consultants are keen to work with more developers in the Gateway for the benefit of wildlife and people. Contact Adam Smith, asmith@wildlondon.org.uk, for more information.

Department of Communities and Local Government

Department of Communities and Local Government



Our Chair Justin Dillon on Barclays' green roof at Canary Wharf

Building for Wildlife

Life in the sky

The living roof on Barclays' headquarters in the Isle of Dogs is the highest in England. It is one of several living roofs designed for biodiversity in the area. There are three habitats: sedum matting (which will eventually turn into grassland), shingle areas for heat-loving invertebrates, and a calcareous grassland mix to provide structured vegetation for other invertebrates. The roof is near a black redstart nesting habitat and it is hoped that black redstarts will use the roof to nest and breed.

Testing techniques

Our successful bid to SITA's Enriching Nature Fund on behalf of the Design for Biodiversity project will test ways of enhancing living roofs for invertebrates. Specially-designed sandboxes, sand posts and timber cavity blocks will provide nesting and hibernation opportunities for mining bees, solitary wasps and other invertebrates. These simple techniques can easily be adopted by developers on a small or large scale and have the potential to make a real difference. More details: www.d4b.org.uk

Building understanding

The close proximity of people and wildlife in urban areas means that problems and conflicts sometimes arise. London Wildlife Trust helps people understand the benefits of having wildlife and green spaces in their local area and gives them more opportunities to experience these benefits. We will work closely with architects, landscape designers and developers to ensure the best possible deal for biodiversity.

We encourage developers to:

- Incorporate suitable habitat for locally threatened and important species
- Create green corridors through developments and into the wider landscape
- Adopt sustainable building practices.
- Include features to reduce the threats posed by climate change, such as living roofs to absorb floodwater
- Provide residents with easy access to green spaces

Chris Wood

Save our seas!

The Thames Estuary is a thriving marine ecosystem. But, as The Wildlife Trusts' Jolyon Chesworth explains, massive developments like the Thames Gateway are a serious threat.

Stretching from Margate in Kent to Teddington west of London, the Thames Estuary is one of the largest in the country and hosts a complex array of habitats. It acts as a wildlife corridor, allowing a great variety of marine species to live and migrate throughout its 95 mile length.

In the outer estuary, extensive mudflats and saltmarsh are home to burrowing marine worms and snails, which can number several million per cubic meter. These humble creatures feed over 150,000 wildfowl and wading birds, including a quarter of all Britain's avocets.

For the same reasons, many fish species are attracted to the Thames. For Dover sole, the estuary is now the largest and most important nursery ground in the country. Eels continue to migrate along the Thames to spawn at sea, perhaps as far away as the Bermuda Triangle.

The Thames hasn't always been such a haven for wildlife. In 1957 the river was so polluted it was declared biologically dead and a huge clean up began. This was very successful and pollution-sensitive species like salmon, dolphin and seal are now spotted in the estuary. But could this good work now be undone?

Massive developments like the Thames Gateway could have an enormous effect on the estuary and cause its decline again. Habitat loss and species displacement could be one of the biggest impacts but there are others that are less obvious, such as the increased demand for aggregates. It takes approximately 50 tonnes of sand and gravel to build an average house so the demand created by the Thames Gateway will run in to millions of tonnes. Much of this would be mined from the seabed, including that in the Thames Estuary.



Margaret the novice

Avocet

Action for the sea

London Wildlife Trust has joined forces with the other Wildlife Trusts to call for better protection of the marine environment in the Thames Estuary and elsewhere. For the past two years the Government has been consulting on a Marine Bill, which could overhaul the piecemeal way our marine environment is currently managed. Crucially, it also contains a provision to designate Highly Protected Marine Reserves where all damaging activities would be prohibited.

We were disappointed when the government did not make an immediate commitment to a long awaited Marine Bill in the Queen's Speech in November. The Wildlife Trusts will continue campaigning for a Marine Bill.

More details on the Marine Bill and the work going on in your region at: www.southeastmarine.org.uk

Dawn Watson and Rob Spray



Conger eel

Water voles in the Gateway

By Louise Wells, Water Vole Project Manager

Michael Pilkington

Rainham, Wennington and Aveley Marshes are one of fifteen key sites for water vole in Britain. They're part of a system of grazing marshes and dykes that extends through the Thames Gateway into north Kent and south Essex. Other important locations for water voles in the Gateway region include the Ingrebourne, Rom and Beam rivers in Havering and Barking & Dagenham and the river Cray, south of the Thames in Bexley.

Since 2001, there's been extensive work to conserve water voles in the Gateway by London Wildlife Trust's Water Vole project. The project has been funded through a partnership of London Wildlife Trust, Environment Agency, Lee Valley Park Authority and British Waterways London. The project has provided advice to landowners, including the RSPB at Rainham, and to development consultants. It has also carried out surveys and monitoring to help improve conditions for water voles along the waterways.



Michael Pilkington



London Wildlife Trust

Top and above: Historic Thames-side grazing marshes and dykes offer ideal water vole habitat like here at Erith

Above right: Water vole

Right: Community engagement at Rainham Marshes



RSPB



Rainham Marshes and The Chase

Marvels in the marshes

Tim Webb visits a Thames Gateway reserve that was saved for nature with the help of a London Wildlife Trust campaign

The freshwater marshes between Rainham and Purfleet are superb habitats full of flora, fauna and birds. In winter, they come alive when thousands of wintering ducks, wading birds, finches and birds of prey use the site. But every season has something unique and astounding. Summer brings dragonflies, lapwings and redshanks. Migrating birds dominate autumn and spring brings wildflowers and grasses. Rainham Marshes also has one of the country's best water vole populations.

Sitting next to the Thames, this Site of Special Scientific Interest is run by the RSPB. The award-winning visitor centre gives breathtaking views across the river and the marshes. There are three miles of nature trail, a state-of-the-art classroom, iconic areas, regular events and, in spring 2008, there'll be an adventure area.

The RSPB's work in the region has been a collective effort with support from companies, regeneration agencies, charities, local authorities and government organisations.



The Chase pond

The Chase

Close by to Rainham and Purfleet marshes is The Chase, London Wildlife Trust's largest site. Here you can find shallow wetlands, reedbeds, horse-grazed pasture, scrub and woodland. These harbour an impressive range of animals and plants including the rare black poplar tree. This site is a haven for birds, with around 200 different species recorded here over the years - from teal and shoveler in winter, woodpeckers and kingfisher all year, to a range of

scarce and rare birds especially during migration. The Chase is popular with winter bird watchers but has plenty of all-year-round wildlife to interest visitors.

London Wildlife Trust's Volunteer Warden programme in Barking and Dagenham, funded by the Big Lottery Fund, has been operating at the site. This successful project aims to support disadvantaged individuals and young offenders to become volunteer wardens.

RSPB Rainham Marshes Visitor's Centre is at New Tank Hill Road, Purfleet, Essex RM19 1SZ.

Purfleet railway station is a short walk away.

Sustrans National Cycle Route 13 runs alongside the reserve. More details: www.rspb.org.uk/rainham, or phone 01708 899 840.

The Chase: Entrance on Dagenham Road, Dagenham and Upper Rainham Road, Elm Park.

A moving story

Richard Jones describes how a rare beetle got a new home in the Thames Gateway

Anyone who has read Simon Barnes's *How to be a bad birdwatcher* will remember his dumbstruck excitement at seeing his first avocet. I don't do birds but when, on the 8th of June 2005, I peeled up a piece of old roofing felt on some derelict land near the Thames Barrier and saw a lone specimen of *Brachinus sclopeta* crawling across it — that was my avocet moment.

'The last confirmed sighting was at Margate in 1830 and it was regarded as missing presumed extinct, until 20 years ago'

The streaked bombardier beetle, as it is now known, has a long but rather tenuous history in Britain. The last confirmed sighting was at Margate in 1830 and it was regarded as missing presumed extinct, until 20 years ago when a specimen was unearthed in a Cardiff museum labelled Beachy Head, 1928. This was accepted as the beetle's last credible occurrence in Britain.

Throughout the rest of 2005 and into 2006 I kept returning to the Thames Barrier and the beetle was always there, in small numbers. This was the only colony in Britain but as far as I was concerned it was a strong colony. My interest was more than just academic because, like so many Thames-side brownfields, this site was about to be built on.

Luckily, with its pink and blue livery, this is a pretty and charismatic beast. And, like its close relative the common bombardier beetle *Brachinus crepitans* (which is not really common at all), it has the fascinating defence mechanism of shooting out a boiling chemical mixture of noxious hydroquinones



Streaked bombardier beetle

and hydrogen peroxide from its flexible and multidirectional anus with an audible "pfut".

The developers were persuaded to set aside another part of the site and to create a landscaped brownfield nature reserve especially for it. All that was now needed was a way of finding and translocating the secretive and evasive striped bombardiers. Enter volunteers from London Wildlife Trust and Natural History Museum.

Monday 1st October 2007 was a dismal damp day and by the lunchtime we had but a single beetle to release. Friday the 5th looked brighter and more encouraging and, yes, there they were at last. Twelve pairs of hands, finger-tip searching in the loose soil, eventually scooped up 61 of them. It may take months or even years before we know how successful the colony is in its new heap of rubble, but this was as a good start as we could have expected.

Richard Jones is an entomologist and freelance writer on wildlife and environmental issues

Brachinus sclopeta is now a BAP priority species.

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Catherine Harris

Our wildlife garden in a skip at Hampton Court Flower Show

Fundraising update

Summer success

This summer more than 400 new members joined the Trust, thanks to the success of our *Wildlife Garden in a Skip* project and our presence at high-profile events, including the BBC's Springwatch event, Hampton Court Flower Show and many green fairs. All our members provide essential income for our work and strengthen our campaigning voice to save London's wildlife. A big welcome to all our new members.

Garden campaign update

A huge thank you to everyone that helped to make our 'Save London's Gardens' campaign such a success during the summer. Thanks to the efforts of our members, volunteers and partners, the Trust was able to raise public awareness of the value of gardens for wildlife in the city and the serious threats they face. Initiatives such as our award-winning 'Wildlife Garden in a Skip' received an unprecedented amount of press coverage and through the generosity of our

members we have raised over £7,000 towards the campaign. We plan to continue this valuable work in spring 2008.

Run for wildlife

London Wildlife Trust has 12 places available for runners in the British 10k London Run on Sunday 6th July 2008. The route takes runners past many of London's iconic landmarks and along the River Thames. If you would like to run to raise funds for us please contact Roxanne on 020 7803 4274 or email rcullen@wildlondon.org.uk

cleaned up LESSA Pond to help its threatened toad population, we filled two skips with rubbish that included thirteen supermarket trolleys, a water tank and a motorbike.

"One of the biggest threats to London's wildlife is the loss of gardens, particularly the paving over of front gardens. However, people's awareness of wildlife is certainly better than it ever has been, helped by programmes such as Springwatch, with more people taking simple action at home, such as putting up a bird box. I continue to support the work of the Trust as a volunteer in Greenwich and one day a week at the central office."

Member focus



Jamie Grier

Mary O'Sullivan

Mary O'Sullivan attended the first meeting of London Wildlife Trust in 1982 at Stoke Newington and she's been a member ever since. She explains how that meeting inspired her to take action.

"My interest in wildlife developed from childhood and as a science teacher at Addey and Stanhope School in Deptford. After that initial meeting, a group of us returned to Greenwich and set up the Greenwich Nature Conservation Society (which later became the Trust's Greenwich Borough Group) to protect wildlife in our area. I remember how, when we

Natural inspiration

Environmental campaigner, Susan Buckingham, is passionate about London's parks, waterways and vegetable plots



Women's Environmental Network

Susan Buckingham (pictured left)

I grew up in south London and Sunday afternoon outings were to Streatham Common and Norwood Grange, graduating to Richmond Park when my family acquired a car. The extravagant spring display of azaleas in the Isabella Plantation and the fabulous views of the Thames Valley upstream from Pembroke Lodge are deeply ingrained in my childhood memories. Now that I live in south west London, Richmond Park is a great resource for exercise and contemplation. Whilst not exactly wild, these are well-managed, well-used spaces in which I feel some connection with nature but also feel safe.

"One of my fantasies is to live in a Thames houseboat with a vegetable garden on deck!"

It's not always easy for women to enjoy remoter or wilder forms of nature because they can feel insecure and threatened in places which are quiet and densely vegetated. While the risk is probably minimal, we tend to avoid quiet and overgrown spaces and discourage our children from using them too. My sisters and I grew up in a time when we could escape to the local 'rec' and its overgrown bushes, which we made wild with our imaginary explorations.

These days my imagination is fired up most by the River Thames: its tidal flow represents continuity and connection to the water cycle, the world's oceans and far off places. Walking or cycling along the river gives me a great feeling of peace and optimism and is my best source of inspiration. I love canals too: the mix of industry, warehousing, somewhat abandoned nature and houseboat communities found in Brentford, Paddington and East London. One of my fantasies is to live in a Thames houseboat with a vegetable garden on deck!

For the time being, I plant herbs and vegetables in my front garden (the sunny side of the house) and get inspiration from London's allotments and community gardens. Great havens of biodiversity and inspiring

melting pots of cultures and classes, these are precious open spaces which desperately need protecting against the development boom.

The Women's Environmental Network has great projects which support groups of marginalized women to grow their own food. The Coriander Club in Tower Hamlets, for example, is a wonderfully exotic space in which plants native to Bangladesh are grown and shared. If we could all do some of this the carbon footprint of London would shrink a little.

Susan Buckingham is Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Women's Environmental Network

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Thank you to everyone who has supported us in 2007, best wishes for the New Year from all at London Wildlife Trust



Deer in Bushey Park, Jamie Grier