

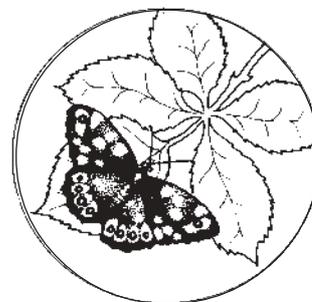
# THE ESSEX FIELD CLUB

HEADQUARTERS:

THE PASSMORE EDWARDS MUSEUM,

ROMFORD ROAD, STRATFORD,

LONDON, E15 4LZ



NEWSLETTER NO. 3

August, 1992

## EDITOR'S NOTE

It is quite some time since the last newsletter and there have been some important developments on the Rainham marshes SSSI. The original planning application to build on a huge area of the SSSI by MCA now looks increasingly unlikely to go ahead. The London Borough of Havering Unitary Development Plan has been amended by the Inspector and he has stated that the whole of Wennington marshes should remain in the green belt and of course within the SSSI.

On the down side he has rejected the conservationists' arguments over Rainham marsh proper and the silt lagoons and given the "green light" for developments in these areas.

There are two plans mooted for these areas. One based around an international exhibition centre and another much more grandiose scheme centred on a huge stadium. It has to be said that neither of these two schemes are anything other than glints in the eyes of developers at this stage.

Mark Hanson has been extremely busy working on the latest volume of *The Naturalist* which accompanies this Newsletter. I am sure you will agree it was worth waiting for. It will become a standard work on the natural history of the forest for many years to come. Our thanks go to Mark for all the time and effort he has expended on this volume.

Sadly for the Field Club Sheila and Peter Leswell have had to leave Essex and Sheila has had to give up her roles as General Secretary and Minuting Secretary after many years of service to the Club. She will be greatly missed by us all and we would like to thank her and her husband for their long service and give them both our best wishes for the future.

We are urgently seeking a volunteer to take on the role of General Secretary and any member willing to undertake this job should write to the President, Canon David Agassiz at The Glebe House, Brewers End, Takeley, Bishops Stortford, CM22 6QH.

The next issue of *The Naturalist* will be a compendium of short papers much in the style of *The Naturalist* of early years. It will be available just as soon as our bank balance has recovered from the latest expenditure.

Del Smith, Editor, 12 Tring Gardens, Harold Hill, Romford, Essex, RM3 9EP.  
Telephone Ingrebourne 75555

## THE PASSMORE EDWARDS MUSEUM

Most members will be aware that there is a connection between the Essex Field Club and the Passmore Edwards Museum in Stratford in the London Borough of Newham, but to many, like me, this link has little practical significance.

The museum houses the Club's collections and library and is still the official address of the Club. In common with other museums, however, it is currently having difficulties in obtaining adequate resources to carry out its functions properly. The Club, which is represented on the Museum's governing body, has a part to play in supporting the Museum at this time and there is scope for increasing the use made of the Museum by members.

A discussion was held at the Museum between the Curator and members of the Council of the Field Club at which the links were explored with a view to both partners playing a more active role in each others affairs. In particular it was suggested that a meeting be held at the Museum in the coming programme so that members could be made more aware of what was held at the Museum and how they could make use of it.

Jeremy Ison

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### WHITEHOUSE FARM - N. FAMBRIDGE MAY 1991 - MAY 1992

Extracts from reports by Jack Friedlein :-

May 6th '91 Turtle Dove and 6 Swallows arrive but by the end of June the Swallow count on the farm is down from the 30 pairs of previous years to 10, there are no Willow Warbler and only one pair of Blackcap whereas Swifts (30-40) are more numerous than usual. Butterfly numbers are poor excepting Speckled Wood and Orange Tip. Early September sees the departure of the Swallows, Martins and Swifts, Whimbrel are also seen heading for the coast. Large numbers of Red Admiral, Tortoiseshell and Painted Lady are to be seen. February 9th '92 sees the arrival of 8 Shelduck and the 27th the first Brimstones and Peacocks, 4 Badgers are seen on March 25th and the next day the first Chiff Chaff. By the 31st Shelduck numbers are up to 44 and the Blackcap arrives. The first Swallow comes on April 19th and the first Willow Warbler the next day. The 22nd brings the Cuckoo and before the end of the month 8 House Martins and a Turtle Dove whilst May 11th brings the first Swift - the years cycle is completed once again.

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### THE BIRD GROUP 91-2

The group held 9 meetings during the year with an average attendance of only 7.66 members and an aggregate of 92 different species were recorded. Magpie and Wood Pigeon were noted at 8 of the 9 meetings, House Sparrow and Blue Tit at 7 and Gt. Crested Grebe, Cormorant, Mallard, Coot, Canada Goose, Mute Swan, Black Headed Gull, Robin, Crow, Blackbird and Chaffinch at 6. Whilst there were no exceptional sightings we enjoyed seeing Sparrow Hawk and Arctic Skuas at Tilbury, Common Scoter at Brightlingsea, Ruddy Duck at Hanningfield, Gt. Spotted Woodpecker and Spotted Flycatcher at Mill Green, numerous Yellow Wagtails at Bradwell and Willow Tit at Piercing Hill. Why don't more of you come to future meetings?

John Bath Chairman

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## SPIDERS IN WALTHAMSTOW MARSH, MEETING ON 6TH JUNE 1992

Despite a very poor forecast, the weather turned out to be much better than expected, but conditions were far from ideal for finding spiders. The pretty *Theridion pictum* was found to be numerous along concrete fencing and on scrub near the river. This is a rare spider in Essex but it is also found near Enfield by the River Lea in similar circumstances and it looks as though the Lea Valley could be quite a stronghold for the species.

Various spiders characteristic of marshy and scrub habitats were found including the uncommon "money" spider *Baryphyma pratense* and orb-web spider *Zilla diodia*, but most species were widespread and common.

An abundance of Russian Comfrey on the Marshes was extraordinary and possibly of some concern. It may indicate the degree to which the area is drying out and gradually losing its marsh flora. Nevertheless Walthamstow Marshes are evidently of great interest and it is quite remarkable to walk into them from the adjacent traffic and noise and built up area of East London.

Peter Harvey

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## BEAUTIES VANISH IN THE DROUGHT (Southend Evening Echo, Friday June 19th 1992)

A lack of clean, well oxygenated water is threatening Essex's colourful dragonflies and damselflies. And when they decline, there are fears for the future of the county's other wildlife. From 33 species in the 19th century, there were only 25 in 1990. The emerald damselfly is almost extinct.

The longest drought for more than 150 years, followed by a series of hot summers, has accentuated the water shortage and increased demand for water abstraction after decades of land drainage, damage to farm and village ponds and the conversion of grazing marshes for arable crops.

There is also the problem of water pollution. Dragonflies are sensitive to pollution from chemicals, pesticides and herbicides and to enrichment caused by run-off of fertilisers and sewage.

Essex Wildlife Trust spokesman Brian Watts said: "Most dragonfly species require pollution-free, well vegetated water in which to lay their eggs. After hatching the young spend from one to four years in the water before emerging as free flying adults. Both the adults and the nymphs are ferocious predators. The nymphs take small crustaceans, water fleas, small worms, tadpoles, small fish and other insects. In turn a wide variety of birds prey upon dragonflies as well as some spiders. Consequently a site rich in dragonflies indicates a site rich in wildlife."

- 1989: The trust acquired a reserve on the Thames Marshes with a rich dragonfly fauna. The drought of 1990 dried out the marsh and few dragonflies have been seen since.
- 1989: Slurry effluent turned 10 miles of the River Roding from a clear river with dancing insects and flashing kingfishers into a sewer lined with 30,000 dying fish.

- 1990: A kerosene leak near Stansted Airport destroyed wildlife in the River Stort. A survey revealed 10 kilometres of the main river and three of its tributary streams were completely dry.
- Rainham Marsh, an important site of scientific interest, is threatened by plans for a large leisure development.

The trust's Water for Wildlife campaign called on Echo readers to treat water as a valuable resource and avoid waste. It has launched an appeal to restore Essex rivers and wetlands including Fobbing Marsh, near Basildon, and Two Tree Island, Leigh.

**Fobbing Marsh:** This previous coastal grazing marsh, has dried out due to drainage on adjoining land. The emerald damselfly has almost been lost and breeding lapwing, redshank and shelduck are also threatened. The trust needs £4,000 for a pumping system to supply clean water.

**Two Tree Island:** The sluice system is broken and old settling beds rendered sterile by sea water. Dragonflies, redshank and warblers are at risk. The trust needs £10,000 to repair the sluices.

Details of the campaign are available from trust centres at Brentwood, Abberton and Langdon Hills and from its headquarters at Fingringhoe Wick Nature Reserve, South Green Road, Fingringhoe.

#### BUTTERFLY RARITY HAS RETURNED

(taken from the Southend Evening Echo, Thursday June 18th 1992)

A rare butterfly that disappeared from Essex is back and flourishing in a secret hideaway thanks to a unique conservation project. The scheme to re-introduce the pearl bordered fritillary to the county has been hailed as nationally significant. The butterfly disappeared from the whole of East Anglia and from many southern counties east of Somerset, and has become one of the most rapidly declining species of butterfly in Britain.

It is the first time the species has been re-established naturally anywhere in Britain. Pioneered by Essex branch of Operation Butterfly, a campaign to conserve wild butterflies, the project was set up after the Essex Wildlife Trust bought the secret site in 1987. The area had been turned from original coppiced woodland to scrub and then bought by a forestry company for conifers. Conservationists took two winters to clear the conifers and bring back a sunny clearing, complete with vital young violets for breeding. The result is a remarkable success with 39 butterflies introduced from Sussex increasing to more than 100 by May last year.

But, despite the success, the fight for life continues. Changes in modern woodland management and the loss of habitat has seen 26 of Britain's 55 resident species decline drastically.

#### REPORTS OF SPRING

12-2-92 Toad, *Bufo bufo*, on footpath at top of Elmhurst Drive, Hornchurch, junction with Hornchurch Road, (for its safety I put it into Harrow Lodge Park on a flowerbed, it kicked strongly! Many worms have come to the soil surface, following some rain.

23-2-92 Honeybee worker running around on footpath of Grosvenor Drive. Appeared drowsy - put into a front garden out of the way of feet.

27-2-92 Gnats dancing in sunlight, and 3 coltsfoot blossoms beside footpath on Havering side of River Rom, Dagenham Chase Nature Reserve. Willow buds beginning to burst.

A sign that spring is nearly here? A magpie thought so, flying around with twigs for its nest.

Ken Hill

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#### A NEW SCALE INSECT FOR ESSEX

Mark Hanson reports that he has found a scale insect new to the county on sycamore in Epping Forest. The insect has been identified by the Club's Heteroptera Recorder Dr Peter Kirby as *Pulvinaria regalis*, a recent arrival in Britain..

Dr Kirby reports that the insect has spread fairly dramatically in the south-east. He writes that it is polyphagous on trees, with bay laurel, horse chestnut, lime, sycamore and other *Acer* spp. seemingly particular favourites. It is largely an urban and suburban species, particularly fond of street and garden trees. As far as Dr Kirby knows the insect does not usually do the trees any great harm, but it would seem reasonable to expect some damage by a heavy infestation on a relatively small woody plant like bay laurel and it could be the vector of disease.

P. Harvey

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#### A NEW SITE FOR THE BEE WOLF (*Philanthus triangulum*)

I recently discovered a breeding colony of this solitary wasp near Chadwell, S. Essex. The bee wolf colony has also now been seen at a recent Field Club meeting and by the Hymenoptera expert John Felton.

The locality seems to have quite a good population of females with nesting taking place in at least two parts of the site. The bee wolf is an impressive sight flying in towards its nest hole with a honey bee slung beneath its body. The paralysed bee will be used to provision its nest cells.

The bee wolf is nationally vulnerable with a status of RDB2. It is known to have strong colonies on the Isle of Wight but the only other recent records seem to be from S. Hampshire, possibly representing vagrants from the I.O.W., two sites in Suffolk and Fingringhoe Wick Nature Reserve, N. Essex. Other British records are very old dating from the last century.

Apparently the bee wolf requires the correct type of sand for its nesting and also needs a minimum amount of warm weather during its flight period in order to maintain its population level. Presumably our recent hot summers have helped in this respect!

A second new site for the bee wolf has just been discovered by Roger Payne at Shoebury Old Ranges, an Essex Wildlife Trust reserve. Both these sites are turning out to be important localities for invertebrates generally and give a glimpse of the sort of quality habitat that would have been much more extensive in the past. Now all too often we can only look at these tiny fragments of former glory.

Peter Harvey

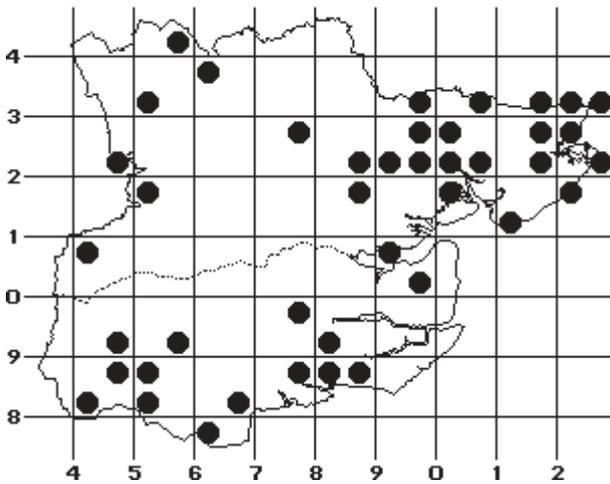
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AN APPEAL FOR HOUSE SPIDERS

Can you help in the recording of house spiders in Essex? The common house spiders are various species in the genus *Tegenaria*. The commonest seems to be *T. duellica* (= *T. gigantea*) rather than the "proper" house spider *T. domestica* which appears to be rather rare. Less common is the large "Cardinal House Spider" *T. parietina* and the species *T. agrestis*, although usually found outdoors, can also venture into houses.

A look at the maps of our present records for these

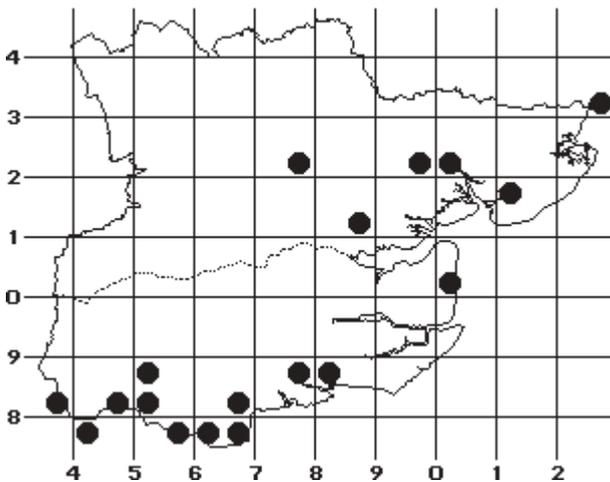
***Tegenaria duellica* Simon**



*duellica* probably occurs in every house in the county.

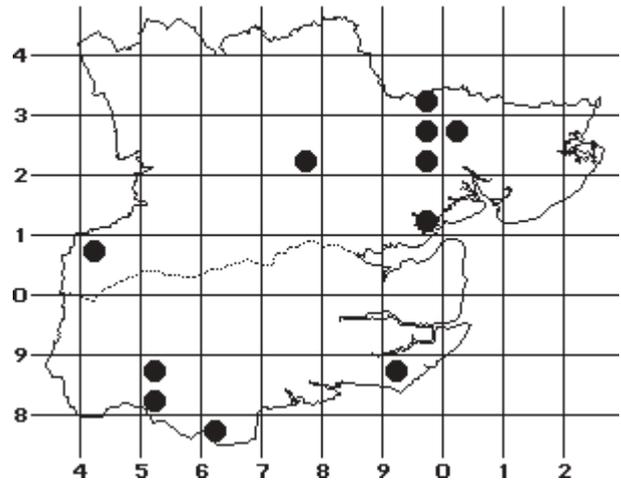
Unfortunately none of the *Tegenaria* house spiders can be identified to species with certainty unless they

***Tegenaria agrestis* (Walckenaer)**



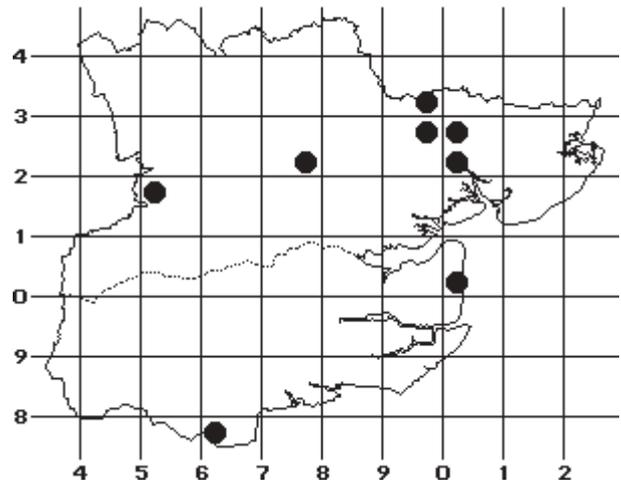
very tough and should have no problem surviving the postal service e.g. inside a matchbox!

***Tegenaria domestica* (Clerck)**



spiders in Essex shows the difficulty in recording spiders that live in houses where we cannot easily hold field meetings! All the *Tegenaria* species are undoubtedly much more widespread than shown here. Indeed *T.*

***Tegenaria parietina* (Fourcroy)**



are mature and examined under a microscope. *Tegenaria* species mature mainly in the autumn and winter.

If members send me specimens by post I will gladly refund postage and tell them what species they have in their house. *Tegenaria* spiders are

## A VERY RARE SPIDER IN EPPING FOREST

In June this year I collected two males of an attractive spider *Theridion pinastri* from Leyton Flats. I returned for another visit about two weeks later and found another male together with two females, one of which later laid an egg sac in captivity. David Carr, a very active member of the Essex Spider Group then sent me a male that he had collected at another site in Epping Forest further north at Lippitts Hill.

The spider is extremely rare in Britain, known previously only from a male taken at Chobham Common, Surrey in 1977, a female at the same locality in 1984 and then a male taken at Headley Heath, Surrey and a female at Burnham Beeches both in 1991. The six Epping Forest specimens therefore represent a total number more than all the previous finds put together and are a clear indication of an established population in the area.

It is of considerable interest that all our specimens were taken from the lower branches of oak since it has previously been assumed that the spider's main habitat could turn out to be pine trees, which do not seem to be present in the vicinity. Although parts of Epping Forest have been reasonably well recorded for spiders, this does not to my knowledge include Leyton Flats or Lippitts Hill. However it is possible that the recent consecutive hot summers and mild winters have enabled the species to increase its population levels so that we have now been able to detect its presence, but I doubt whether the spider will turn out to be common in the county as a whole. Oak trees in many parts of the county and at the right time of year have been investigated for their spider fauna, and other species such as the crab spider *Philodromus praedatus*, formerly thought to be very rare in Britain, have been found to be widespread in Essex.

Peter Harvey

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## ANOTHER RARE SPIDER - CAN YOU HELP?

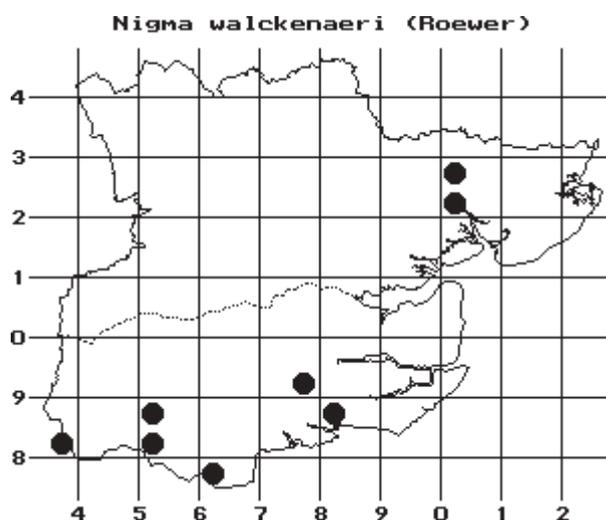
In the autumn a small (about 5mm) green spider called *Nigma walckenaeri* is mature. In Britain it is apparently more or less confined to the Thames Valley area. It has been found in a number of places in the London area, but is also found commonly in Grays and as far east as Southend-on-Sea and Battlesbridge. It has also been found in Colchester and this suggests that the spider could be much more widespread in the county.

The spider is often found in gardens and parks where it chooses leaves with a concave upper surface across which it makes a small web. It then sits between the top of the leaf and the underneath the web. Leaves of lilac, forsythia and holly are particularly favoured but any leaf with a suitable architecture will be used.

If you see a small green spider in the autumn I would be very grateful if you would send it to me with details of where it was found. The spider could be sent with its leaf inside e.g. a matchbox or small plastic container. I will gladly refund postage and let you know if the spider is indeed the rare *Nigma walckenaeri*.

Peter Harvey 9 Kent Road, Grays, Essex, RM17 6DE

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## WHATS ON

## ESSEXFIELD CLUB

- Sun. 23rd Aug. **Bird Group.** Lion Creek Reserve, Canewdon. Meet TQ 923947 at 10.30 am.  
Phone 0277 651890 for details.
- Sat. 12th Sept. **General Meeting 1369.** Natural History at Howland's Marsh, St. Osyth. A look at plants, birds and insects in a new reserve. Meet in lay-by on west side of B1027 near entrance to reserve TM 115169 at 10.30 am.  
Leader Tony Boniface. Phone 0245 266316
- Sat. 19th Sept. **Geology Group.** "Essex in the Geological Past and Future". Talk by Ian Mercer commencing at 3.00 pm. at Merrymeade Conference Centre, Sawyers Hall Lane, Brentwood.
- Sun. 20th Sept. **Bird Group.** Cudmore Grove Country Park, East Mersea. Meet at car park TM 065147 at 10.30 am. Phone 081-989 2783 for details.
- Sun. 27th Sept. **Mammal Group.** Small Mammal Trapping in the Danbury Reserves. Contact John Dobson for details. Danbury 4408.
- Sun. 11th Oct. **General Meeting 1370.** Fungus Foray. Meet Epping Forest Conservation Centre at 10.00 am. Leader Martin Gregory. Phone Danbury 3300 for details.
- Sat. 17th Oct. **Mammal Group.** Deer Meeting in North Essex. Phone Brian Eastcott for details. Saffron Waldon 22680.
- Sun. 18th Oct. **Bird Group.** Tollesbury Marshes. Meet at car park TL 964107 at 11.00 am.  
Phone 0277 651890 for details.
- Sat. 31st Oct. **General Meeting 1371.** "Wildlife in Essex Churchyards". Talk by Graham Feldwick commencing at 3.00 pm. at Merrymeade Conference Centre, Sawyers Hall Lane, Brentwood.

## HAVERING COUNTRY PARKS

For booking and further details phone: 0708 766999 ext 4610

- Thurs. 6th Aug. **Nature reserve conservation task** making a new path and building bird boxes at Havering Country Park. Suitable for children 7 and over.
- Sat. 8th Aug. **Creatures of the night.** Come to Country Park at nightfall to find the wildlife that comes out in the dark. Bring torches if you can and meet at Albyns Farm, Hornchurch Country Park, signed off South End Road, South Hornchurch, starts at 8 p.m. return by 10 p.m.
- Tues. 11th Aug. **Bedfords Park Nature Trail.** Explore the nature trail and discover wildflowers, pond creatures and mini-beasts. Children 7-12.

- Tues. 13th Aug. **Farm Bike Ride.** A day's outing, by bike, from Havering Country Park to see the farm animals at Hainault Forest Country Park. 5 miles round trip on bridleways (no roads). Bring a picnic. Suitable for children but must be accompanied by an adult.
- Frid. 14th Aug. **Mini-Beast Safari.** Search for the many different small creatures that can be found in the Country Park. Starting from and returning to the Squadrons Approach Car Park, in Hornchurch Country Park, signed off Suttons Lane/Airfield Way.
- Sun. 16th Aug. **Turn Up and Go Walk.** A 10 mile walk from Hornchurch to Half Way House. Meet 8.30 am at the car park (Panel Craft) next to Little Chef, Southend Arterial Road, A127 Westbound. Return transport provided.
- Wed. 19th & 20th Aug. **Fun Days at Duck Wood.** Treasure hunts, pond dipping, bird box making, Thurs. mini-beast safaris and badge making in this woodland nature reserve. Children 7-12. Phone 0708 746040 ext 2208.
- Thurs. 20th Aug. 2.30 pm **"The Seashell"**. Kazzum Arts Project present their new "green" theatre show for children, about the sea and pollution. Free, at Bedfords Park (near the cafe). No need to book. Children 4-7.
- Frid. 21st Aug. **Go bats at the Chase Nature Reserve.** An evening guided walk with the London Wildlife Trust. Phone 081-593 8096
- Wed. 26th Aug. 2 pm **"Free Fall" Puppet Show in Havering Country Park.** Parachute Puppet Company create a delightful concoction of the wierd, wacky and wonderful. Children 5 and over. Free, no need to book, but if you would like to come to a barbecue with games beforehand, please phone.
- Frid. 28th Aug. 2 pm to 4 pm **Have a Wild Time.** Find the wild side of Hornchurch Country Park, with pond dipping, mini-beasting and exploring the old Airfield. Starting a finishing at Albyns Farm signed off South End Road, South Hornchurch.
- Sun. 6th Sept. **Royal Liberty Walk.** A 5 mile guided circular walk on footpaths in north Havering, ending with a cream tea on the green, Havering-Atte-Bower. Cost £1 per person. Book by phoning 0708 746040 ext 2208
- Sun. 6th Sept. **Bike Ride in the Country.** A bike ride in the countryside along bridleways from Havering Country Park to Hainault Forest Country Park and beyond. Children must be accompanied by an adult.
- Sun. 6th Sept. **Airfield Tour, Hornchurch Country Park.** Explore the historic site of RAF Hornchurch and discover what remains of the airfield. Starts and finishes at the Squadrons Approach car park, signed off Suttons Lane, Airfield Way. Meet 2.30 pm return 4 pm.
- Sun. 13th Sept. **People's Country Fair.** An afternoon of music, events, competitions and craft displays at Hornchurch Country Park. Starts at 12 noon at Albyns Farm, signed off South End Farm, South Hornchurch. No need to book.
- Sun. 27th Sept. **Bagshot Hills Ramble.** A 4 mile circular walk in the Tylers Common and Warley area, visiting Warley Place and stopping for a pub lunch. Phone 0708 746040 ext 2208
- Sun. 4th Oct. **Sponsored Walk.** An 8 mile sponsored circular walk with Havering Ramblers. Uses country footpaths in the North Ockendon and Cranham area. Starting at Belhus Country Park with a refreshment stop at Bush Farm. Phone 0708 746040 ext 2208

- Sun. 11th Oct.     **Beating the Bounds.** Sponsered walk around the boundary of Thames Chase, the community forest. Choose your distance. Organised with the Muscular Dystrophy Group. Phone 0277 374516.
- Sun. 11th Oct.     **Fairy Ring Folklore.** Find out about the folklore about mushrooms and toadstools during this guided walk through Havering Country Park. Led by Gordon Rutter of the Epping Forest Conservation Centre.
- Sun. 18th Oct.     **Bird Migration Hornchurch Country Park.** See the last summer migrants and the first winter visitors. Starts and finishes at the Squadrons Approach car park, signed off Suttons Lane/Airfield Way. Meet at 2 pm return 4 pm.
- Sun. 1st Nov.       **Autumn Fruits.** Help the Ranger collect tree seeds, to be raised at the park's tree nursery. Starts and finishes at Albyn's Farm, Hornchurch Country Park, signed off South End Road, South Hornchurch.
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#### NEW MEMBERS

Since the last Newsletter we welcome the following new members to the club:-

Mr R. Breeze	Chelmsford
Mr P. Luke	Maldon
Mrs S. Van Maanen	Buckhurst Hill
Mr D. Winlo	Gt. Bardfield
Mr J. Hall	Fingringhoe
Mr C.A. Rawlings	Hatfield Peverel

John Bath Membership Secretary

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#### SUBSCRIPTIONS

Despite the item in the last Newsletter subscription reminders have had to be sent to 24 individual members. I hope they will respond quickly and consider arranging future payments by completing the Bankers Order on Page 7 of the last Newsletter. Send payments and/or Orders to John Bath, 34 Chestnut Avenue, Billericay, Essex, CM12 9JF

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Enquiries to Mr Del Smith, 12 Tring Gardens, Harold Hill, Romford, RM3 9EP.  
Telephone Ingrebourne 75555.