

Dulwich Society Wildlife Group

16.1.24

Present: Peter Roseveare (Chair), Dave Clark, Sigrid Collins, Harry Rutherford, Glynis Williams, Sue Cope, Jeff Doodson

In attendance: Laurie Johnston

Apologies: Emily Montague, Charles Newman, Angela Wilkes, Steven Robinson

Minutes of Meeting 16.11.23: National decline in bird species is greatest in farmland species not woodland.

Matters Arising:

Greendale: Currently the development is on hold. GW did attend the Friends of Greendale AGM and confirms that the two fields adjacent are confirmed to both belong to St Olave and St Saviours.

Swifts: PR confirmed that it is possible to apply for funds from the Dulwich Society to fund a Swift box project. SR has made contact with John Welton to discuss options for putting up boxes. It was proposed requesting that Dulwich Estate consider promoting incorporation of Swift boxes in any developments on the Estate. It was also suggested requesting that SR writes up the details of the proposals that have been discussed at previous meetings.

Guided walks for 2024: PR has discussed with the Chairs of the Garden and Tree Committees walks on bats, birds, fungi and wildflowers. DC stressed urgency of making arrangements to find available dates with suitable walk leaders. There was discussion about best location for a local bat walk. PR will discuss options with both Sam Taylor and Bridget Furst. DC suggested that Dulwich Park is probably a better site for bats than the Woods but said that of relatively nearby locations South Norwood lake is the best place for seeing bats.

Discussion with Laurie Johnston:

Laurie Johnston, Chair of the Dulwich Society Environment subcommittee was welcomed to the meeting.

Laurie introduced herself and gave an outline of the establishment of the Environment committee. Laurie has been active for over twenty years in local environmental issues with a special interest in Active Travel and Healthy Streets. The Chair of The Dulwich Society James Thompson is himself keen to keep abreast of sustainable energy development and asked Laurie to develop a sub-committee focussing on a wide remit of environmental topics pertaining to the whole of the Dulwich Society area. Laurie explained that the ten strong committee is composed only of individuals who can bring specific expertise or experience of environmental issues to the group. Laurie presented the Environment sub-committee Terms of Reference. Our discussion then focussed on topics of mutual interest, specifically increasing biodiversity and increasing green spaces in the neighbourhood and also climate emergency mitigation and adaptation. The Wildlife Group and the Environment Group appeared to be in full agreement in terms of approach on these issues. No areas of conflict arose in the discussion and we went on to discuss communication between the two committees and shared objectives. The Environment Committee explicitly include creating and maintaining appropriate links with Southwark and Lambeth Council in its Terms of Reference. The Wildlife group told Laurie about some of the links with the Local Authorities that the Wildlife group has worked with and Laurie shared some of her experience and made suggestions for us to consider taking forward both as individuals and as a group. Here are some the specific topics we discussed around local authority links: There is now an Ecology Officer, Liam Nash, in place replacing Jon Best at Southwark. The Streets for People consultation process is ongoing and online consultation suggestions are seriously considered in policy development. There are other online consultations involving potential for recommending improvements in planting and consideration of biodiversity which warrant being completed. There is a need to find out how the councils planning departments intend to achieve and monitor the forthcoming requirements to increase biodiversity by 10%. We went on to talk about the concept of biodiversity corridors and the developments taking place to create more 'parklets'. We considered that these initiatives could be seen as 'habitat creation' and that the idea of habitat creation is indeed a goal that the Wildlife group would wish to enthusiastically endorse. The work done by the Southwark Nature Action Volunteers (based in Burgess Park) aiming to connect existing green spaces was referenced. Further discussion moved onto engaging local residents in environmental matters. It was suggested that the Environment group have a regular slot in the e-newsletter equivalent to the Wildlife slot where

an interesting fact or message or suggestion for action might encourage more awareness. Dave, as a bird expert, advised Laurie that as well as members of the Wildlife committee we are able to put the environment committee in touch with professional local wildlife experts as well as access to local wildlife data . It was agreed that the each committee will be able to use the other as a source of expertise in future endeavours.

Chair's Report: Covered under matters arising

Bird Report: (DC) 4 Redpoll seen in Dulwich Park on Silver Birch near the Rhododendrons. Reports and sightings. Siskins seen in Dulwich Park. The recent sighting of a Raven over Sydenham Hill Woods is potentially very exciting as Ravens were seen at same time of the year last year. Hopefully in due course they may breed in the area. A Buzzard was seen in Sydenham Hill Woods. The extreme cold in northern Sweden is one factor in this being a good year for Waxwing sightings. Sadly none have been seen in our immediate vicinity. Some stopped in Balham and some in Tufnell Park. A group can still be seen in Enfield. Dave suggested there is still some possibility of a sighting. It is worthwhile particularly keeping an eye out on Rowan and Sorbus trees. The group had a discussion about Ring Necked Parakeets. Dave is writing an article about these birds and summarised current knowledge available. Ring Necked Parakeets have been on the BTO bird list of British Birds since 1983. They are the most successful parrot in the world in terms of range. A plausible theory for their origin in the UK is that there may have been widespread release of caged parrot species when psittacosis became a cause for concern and the keeping of caged birds went out of favour. The Ring Necked Parakeet has been able to survive in the wild while other cage bird species could not. They may well have found a habitat niche available to them allowing them to thrive so successfully. There is no evidence that they displace other hole nesting birds. Locally their numbers have stabilised possibly because of competition from Jackdaws which have increased in numbers in this area. They are also preyed upon by both squirrels and raptors. Dave said that the jury is out whether at a national level they are considered a good or a bad thing to have among our bird population.

Sydenham Hill Woods: (from Sam Taylor in absentia)

Christmas storms brought down a number of mature Oak trees as well as many other smaller trees. The mature Oaks may be of similar age and reaching end of natural lives at the same time. The policy is to encourage natural regeneration of Oak although Oak Mildew is a problem for saplings. Sam updated information on the three surveys done as part of Reuniting Dulwich and Sydenham Hill Woods. This included providing a list of some of the rarer and not previously recorded on site invertebrates from among the 177 species recorded and reported on at the last meeting. An assessment made on the potential invertebrate interest of the site is ranked 'high' on a national scale. The bat survey was reported on previously. A total of eight species were recorded over three summer visits. The fungi survey has now finished. 82 species were recorded from 146 records in Sydenham Hill Woods and 54 species were recorded from 97 records in Dulwich Wood. Most of the genera were typical of the habitat but in SHW a few species were rare and only occasionally recorded in the Greater London Area. Three such examples being *Amanita pantherina*, *Pluteus lutosus*, and *Flammulaster grannulosus*. Cox's walk is now closed for pedestrians as the repairs on the footbridge continue. Provisional reopening date is March 5th.

AOB

Vandalism in the Woods: DC reported that a particular individual has been damaging fences in Sydenham Hill and Dulwich Woods under the auspices of advocating right to roam. Sam will be putting notices in the Woods explaining why there are barriers to protect wildlife and that acts of vandalism are criminal offences. We discussed need to ensure that this man does not persuade other people to join him in this vandalism. Hopefully he will be apprehended in the near future. Dead fox removal: JD described watching some atypical fox behaviour in the garden over a period of a few days. This culminated in discovering the fox dead. The council service to remove the body was very efficient and the fox was collected within an hour of reporting online. There is a fee for removal from private property of £61.

Field Study Council Fungi sheets: In connection with recent fungi walk and SHW survey, SueC recommended two fold out identity guides to Fungi which are new publications in the Field Studies Council identification guide series.

Date of next meeting: Tuesday 19.3.24