Dulwich Society Wildlife and Tree Group 27.1.25

Present: Peter Roseveare (Chair), Charles Newman, Steven Robinson, Glynis Williams, Sue Cope, Jeff Doodson, Harry Rutherford, Gillian Wolfe, Jeremy Prescott, Anne Stanesby, Annie McGeoch, Oliver Stutter
Apologies: Dave Clark, Emily Montague
New members to the expanded committee were welcomed and everyone introduced themselves.

Minutes of Meeting 22.10.24: Correction: Joe Arrowsmith is The Tree Planting Officer and Ecology Project Manager at Southwark Council. Minutes then agreed.

Chair's report: Peter asked that we discuss parameters for the newly constituted combined Wildlife and Trees group and then make plans for activities for the year ahead.
Venue for future meetings:
Sigrid Collins has made the decision to retire from the group and from hosting the meetings after many many years of service. Peter undertook to visit her with a token of gratitude for her much valued contribution over the years. Her participation in the meetings will be greatly missed, notably for memory of activities of the group over past years and latterly for her welcoming hosting of the meetings. Her retirement means that we now need to consider future venue(s) for our meetings. Peter recommends that the venue is rotated among homes of group members who volunteer to host. Emily Montague has already volunteered to host the next meeting. The expectation is that the maximum group size for the newly constituted group will be fourteen, although it can usually be anticipated that there will be a number of apologies. Peter will however approach Angus Hanton to explore whether meeting at Bell House might be an option that might be available at no cost if the group undertook to offer a suitable quid pro quo to Bell House such as a lecture.
Name of group:
There was discussion around the name for the newly constituted group. We considered the need to balance the interests of the Wildlife group and the Tree group in its previous iteration, the need for the group to be explicit to members of its function and to recognise the possibility of again separating into two groups at a later date. Finally It was agreed the best option is **The Wildlife and Trees Group.** Peter again explained that the groups had amalgamated because it had not been possible to identify anyone willing to take on roles of Chair and Minute taker for the Tree group.
Frequency of Meetings:
The Wildlife group met on a two- monthly basis while the Tree Group used to meet quarterly.
A strong case was made by Glynis and Jeremy for meeting every two months and it was agreed that the new integrated group will meet every two months.
Membership of the new Wildlife and Trees Committee:
The new group is made up of the existing Wildlife Group plus new members recruited following Peter's request for interest in joining the expanded group and two members who will bring continuity of culture from the Tree Group, notably Glynis who has longstanding experience of both groups and Anne S who was recently recruited to the Tree group and brought her experience of developing Tree trails in Peckham Rye Park as well as wider interest in fauna and flora. These members plus the welcome addition of Oliver Stutter, arborist, ensure there is broadening of expertise beyond the interest focus of the existing Wildlife Group.

Discussion of Plans and Ideas for the Year Ahead:
Peter will continue to write his regular articles for the Dulwich Society Magazine which he hopes encourage members of the Society to look around them and value the wildlife they see. Members regularly send Peter photographs or ask questions about observations which indicates that this has been successful. Additionally short items of advice on encouraging and protecting wildlife have become regular contributions in each e-newsletter. The Wildlife Group also functions as a mutual special interest group for the members and we have all learned a great deal from fellow members.

The group will continue to receive reports at each meeting from Dulwich Park Friends and Dulwich/Sydenham Woods.

It was agreed that this year we should plan the following walks under Dulwich Society Auspices:

Swift information walk with Steven Robinson
Tree Walk with Oliver Stutter
Moth trap opening with Harry Rutherford
Bat Walk with Sam Taylor if available
Wildflower walk with Roy Vickery if available

Dates will be set for these walk as soon as possible and publicised in the Newsletter along with any planned LWT walks.

It was agreed we should undertake at least one project of note for the year, in a similar way to having undertaken the Swift Box project last year. There was preliminary discussion around options which might involve planting saplings similar to the mini forest initiative in Belair Park. There was discussion about finding volunteers, if needed, for planting projects. Oliver has experience of projects involving volunteers and local schools were suggested as a resource. Anne S observed that people living in flats with no gardens often valued the opportunity to volunteer in gardens or park planting.
The group will continue to receive Dave Clark's bird surveys and continue to keep abreast of developments or other activities.
The possibility of organising talks during the next year was touched on as being something to discuss further. Paul Collins, a previous Dulwich resident and professional photographer, has written and suggested a lecture on Bird Photography in Dulwich, but would need a suitable venue and will require remuneration.

Reports and Sightings from members:
Sydenham Woods - information sent by Sam Taylor: Cox's Walk bridge is now open and the Oak trees have been saved. Two or three Oak saplings have been planted to make good areas that have been impacted during the work. (This is not usual LWT policy as natural regeneration is preferred). 2 Buzzards have been present in the woods this winter.

Dulwich Park: Emily reports no progress on the repair of the Boardwalk.

Harry reports Two Little Owl by the tollgate on College Road and his sister heard a Raven over Rosendale Road.

Peter reports an influx of Redwings and migratory Blackbirds feeding on garden berries in November.
Peter received a report of a Woodcock rescued in November by a North Dulwich resident that had flown into his house while on nocturnal migration.

General Discussion:

Birds
This is the second report of a migrating Woodcock entering a Dulwich house. These are nocturnal migrants that appear to migrate at a low level which makes them vulnerable when passing through towns and encountering windows. We get sporadic reports of Woodcock most years but none this year in the woods.
Jeff has seen a charm of Goldfinch on Teasels in the garden twice recently, demonstrating the importance of Teasels in wildlife planting.
Peter observed there is a dearth of waterfowl at present in Dulwich Park, although Harry had seen a pair of Shoveler very recently. Additionally although water quality and habitat in Belair does not support many waterfowl, Harry has seen a pair of Mandarin Duck there. Glynis described some predatory or possibly murderous behaviour of a Crow upon a Pigeon stealing and removing feathers. She has seen on more than one occasion on Piermont Green.
Charles and Gillian shared experience of Parakeets and Great Spotted Woodpeckers. Charles observed that Great Spotted Woodpecker will come to feeder if only one Parakeet but if there are

more Parakeets it will not approach. Gillian agreed to provide Charles with details of Parakeet proof bird feeder.
Gillian also told us about a Sparrowhawk chasing a Parakeet into her house.
Charles suggested now is a good time of year to put up nest boxes and as an item for the next newsletter. Steven advised that Swift boxes are also ideal general purpose boxes useable by other hole nesting birds such as Sparrows and Great Tits.

Bees
Annie McG introduced herself as keeper of the Bell House Bees. After a short discussion about the need to limit the expansion of beekeeping in London to protect Solitary Bees and Bumble Bees she talked about her role as an Asian Hornet Monitor and the work she has done manning stalls at different events to inform the public about the Asian Hornet potential invasion. The spread of this insect which is an avid predator not only of Honey Bees but also other pollinators including Hoverflies across the UK is thought to be inevitable. The anticipated rate of spread has been very significantly slowed down by the Asian Hornet Watch Programme. Asian Hornet Monitors like Annie are able to make accurate identification, thus avoiding unnecessary killing of European Hornets or mimicking Hoverflies or Moths which can be mistaken for Hornets. Gard d'Apis traps are recommended.for gardeners to use to trap the Asian Hornet Queens when they are active. Information on these traps is easily found on the internet. Annie described the devastation caused to Honey Bees she had witnessed in Portugal which was very interesting for us to hear about as a warning of risks to pollinator populations.

Insects
Gillian shared a photograph of an insect she had seen that was not familiar to her. She was advised that i-naturalist is an excellent first line system for identification. Jeff and Harry were both confident that her photograph was of a Plume Moth. Sue observed that Plume Moths are one of those small creatures that are relatively common but easily overlooked, but that once you are aware of them you see them more often.
Jeff recommended two books:
Recently published is The Butterflies of London from LNHS which has fascinating detail of changes in sightings over the years.
The other is Jewel Box by Tim Blackburn which was published in 2022. In it Professor Blackburn uses his experience of trapping moths in his Camden garden to explain different Ecological Concepts of population dynamics. Glynis said there is a YouTube Lecture about this book which Tim Blackburn did for the Linnaean Society.

Amphibia
Oliver reported that the Dulwich Estate is funding construction of a Swale in Orchard Field beside Grove Walk (aka Lovers Lane). This will hopefully become a site for spawning amphibia as well as improving stormwater collection. This information led to further discussion about Frogs. Charles reported that Nunhead Cemetery are working with the Froglife Trust to improve the ponds in the cemetery. Jeff and Charles both reported they are not getting frogspawn in their ponds possibly because of increase in newts even though years ago frogs spawning in their gardens was common. Peter said he still has frogs. Several of us have in the past protected small tadpoles from Newt predation by raising frogspawn in a tank until tadpoles are larger. Glynis reported that one of the gardens that will be built upon in the proposed JAGS redevelopment is a particularly important habitat for amphibia. Fortunately it has been agreed that the new development will aim to replicate that habitat.

Trees
Jeremy P said that there are some Southwark Street Trees in need of formative pruning. Oliver S advised that there is a comprehensive three year rotating pruning programme so it is unlikely that they will be overlooked for long. If there are concerns then Joe Arrowsmith is the person to contact.

We recognised the activities of the Tree Committee in the past and the articles in the magazine, and the publication of the Tree Trail and Map produced by Stella Benwell and others, including index preparation by Glynis. The articles are available on The Society website albeit without the

accompanying photographs. There are no current plans to upgrade or review the articles or Tree maps or Trails but Oliver Stutter will be leading a Tree Walk this year. It will be worthwhile encouraging Society members to become acquainted with some of the intriguing unusual trees planted in the park and local streets.

Date of next meeting: Date in mid March to be confirmed with Emily Montague who has offered to host.