

Notes from the Nature Reserve

Green Gym Conservation Volunteers at East Ham Nature Reserve December 2015

*Merry
Christmas*



*Happy
New Year*

The last work session for this year will be on Saturday 19th December 10am-1pm. The first session of the New Year will be on Wednesday 6th January 10am-1pm. We look forward to seeing you there.

We had a walk and talk on Saturday 28th November, to mark National Tree Week. Unfortunately it was a very cold windy day. We really needed restorative tea and cake afterwards.

This year the trees are very slow to lose their leaves because the weather has been so mild. Looking around it is hard to believe it is December. There are flower buds already on some of the clumps of daffodils.



A group of long-tailed tits seem to have taken up residence in the weeping willow by the building. They are very cute. Not so cute or so welcome are the group of ring-necked parakeets we saw flying over the other day. They compete for nest sites with our native birds.

We have been clearing ivy from the area by the way through from the church. Another group has been working on Cricket Meadow, cutting and digging out brambles, some of them 12ft (4m) long.

We have several new volunteers, which means we can split into two groups. Here Stuart and Simon are working on the path to the south of Cricket Meadow.



Animal of the month

Robin - *Erithacus rubecula*

Males and females look identical.

Young birds have no red breast and are spotted with golden brown.

Robins sing nearly all year round. They sometimes sing at night next to street lights.

Despite their cute appearance, they are aggressively territorial and will even kill intruders.

In Victorian times the postmen wore red coats and delivered the newly invented Christmas cards. The robin was associated with postmen so began to appear on the cards.



Plant of the month

Holly - *Ilex aquifolium*



Male and female flowers are carried on separate plants, so only females produce berries.

Holly was considered a 'male' plant, in contrast to the clinging, 'female' ivy, so it was assumed that the berries were produced by the males, perhaps as a sign of virility. Because of this, Golden King is an all female variety with berries, whilst Silver Queen, without berries, is actually male. Very confusing for gardeners!

The prickly leaves provide protection from grazing animals. Leaves at the top of the tree often do not have prickles.



Please contact us if you have any suggestions of things to put in the newsletter or on the website. Email newhamgg@gmail.com Phone Judi 020 8470 7680 or Frances 078 4597 3156. Check out the website www.newhamgreengym.org for more information about Green Gym, East Ham Nature Reserve Conservation Volunteers.