

Notes from the Nature Reserve

Green Gym Conservation Volunteers at East Ham Nature Reserve March 2016

Dates for Saturday sessions are 26th March, 30th April, 28th May and 25th June 10am-1pm. Please come along if you can make it.

Our next Open Day will now be on 30th April, when we will be celebrating spring. Informal walks around the reserve and a chance to chat over tea, coffee and cake.

We have had a couple of setbacks and have had to cancel sessions, but we are now back on course and our relationship with Active Newham is much clearer. We are hoping to get a proper management plan for the Nature Reserve.

Plant of the month

Aspen - *Populus tremula*



We may have bluebells for the Open Day.



Aspen leaves and male and female catkins

- Leaf stalks are very thin so the leaf blades flutter in the slightest wind, hence the Latin name, which means 'trembling'. These trees are very pretty with their fluttering leaves.
- These trees are dioecious, which means that they have male and female catkins on different trees. They are wind pollinated and the female trees produce millions of tiny, fluffy seeds which are spread by the wind.
- They are a sort of poplar, but look very different from the well-known, upright Lombardy poplar.
- Trees grow very fast up to 25m tall and they like open, sunny spaces. Our problem is that they are growing in our grassland area, which we want to keep open for the lizards, slow worms and wildflowers.
- Like most poplars, aspens sucker, which means they grow new trees from their roots, so they can very quickly take over an area. This is why we have cut them down before they get too big.
- A crown made of aspen leaves was said to give its wearer the power to visit and return safely from the Underworld.
- The very light wood was traditionally used for shields and splints. Now it is mainly used as pulp for paper.

Animal of the month

Woodlouse - Various species



Armadillidium vulgare – Common Pill Beetle rolls into a ball to deter predators, such as toads, shrews, centipedes and spiders

- Woodlice are crustaceans like lobsters and shrimps. They have an exoskeleton of hard plates and breathe through gills.
- They are found in dark, damp places, often under or in rotting logs at the Nature Reserve.
- Woodlice moult as they grow, losing the back half of the shell first, then the front half a day or two later.
- The females carry the eggs in a brood pouch under their body. The young hatch and stay in the pouch until they are large enough to survive by themselves.
- Woodlice do not wee. They get rid of waste products as ammonia gas, which passes out through their shell. This helps them to conserve water.

Planting the meadow



We have lots of wildflower seeds provided free by Kew, as part of their Grow Wild campaign. We will be planting them soon in the meadow, which we cleared before Christmas.



Above are Judi, Jennifer and Pat (male) working on the very overgrown part of the meadow. On the right is Pat (female) working on the bit that has been cut more often.



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.