



Tower Habitats Newsflash

Latest news on nature conservation and wildlife in Tower Hamlets

September 2017

New reed bed installed in Bow – Thames21 has installed a new floating reed bed at the junction of the Limehouse Cut and Lea Navigation, beside Navigation Road in Bow. This was one of the winners in the online poll to decide where Thames21's Community Reedbeds would be placed, as reported in previous *Newsflashes*. [Read more about the new reed bed and see photos.](#)

New column for Swifts and bats – Swift Conservation has designed a new column that incorporates nest boxes for Swifts and bat boxes. The column, which resembles a small mobile phone mast, would be suitable for installation on housing estates and in new developments. [Read more about the new swift and bat column.](#)

Have we lost all our Hedgehogs? – the Biodiversity Officer undertook a hedgehog survey at Mudchute in June, using footprint tunnels promoted by the Mammal Society. The survey recorded plenty of small rodents and cats (apologies to anyone living close to Mudchute whose cat walked inky footprints into the house!), but there were no signs of Hedgehogs. This suggests that hedgehogs may now be extinct in the south of the Isle of Dogs, previously considered their last stronghold in Tower Hamlets. [Read more about the Hedgehog survey.](#) There have now been no confirmed records of wild Hedgehogs in Tower Hamlets since 2012, and they may be extinct in the borough. If you've seen a hedgehog in Tower Hamlets since 2012, or if you see one in the future, please [e-mail the Biodiversity Officer.](#)

Mudchute sheep graze in Royal Park – rare breed sheep from Mudchute made a trip to central London in late August to assist with a conservation grazing trial in Green Park. This was part of the Royal Parks' "Mission: Invertebrate" project, which seeks to improve invertebrate habitats in the parks. [Read more about Mudchute's sheep in Green Park.](#)

Poplar HARCA plants sunflowers for bees and birds – Poplar HARCA planted 6000 sunflower seeds around its estates this spring. They didn't all grow successfully, but there are some great displays of bright yellow flowers in planters and tree pits on several estates, including Fern Street and Brion Place. These have been a real hit with the bees, and it is hoped to leave some through the winter to provide seeds for birds. [Read more about Poplar HARCA's spectacular sunflowers.](#)

Another Small Blue at Cemetery Park – another individual of the nationally-rare Small Blue butterfly was seen and photographed at Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park in June, in almost exactly the same place that one was found in 2011. This raises the intriguing possibility that a small population of this tiny butterfly has persisted unnoticed for several years. [Read more about this exciting record.](#) There have also been several sightings of Silver-washed Fritillaries in Cemetery Park this year, indicating a small population of this woodland butterfly is still surviving, probably the only one in inner London.

No breeding terns again – for the second year running, no Common Terns nested in Tower Hamlets this year. The birds from East India Dock Basin appear to have moved across the river to Greenwich Ecology Park. [Read more about our disappearing terns.](#)

Good news for grebes – on a more positive note, Great Crested Grebes have nested successfully in Victoria Park for the first time in many years. Having made an unsuccessful attempt last year, a pair of Great Crested Grebes fledged two young on West Lake, and have two well-grown chicks from a second brood at the time of writing in early September. Little Grebes also bred successfully.

For more information on these and other stories, see www.towerhabitats.org

If you have news on wildlife or biodiversity conservation in Tower Hamlets, please e-mail the Biodiversity Officer john.archer@towerhamlets.gov.uk or phone 020 7364 7478