

Wild and Free in LBBB Calendar 2022

Barking &
Dagenham

COUNTRY
PARKS

John Hughes
Sunset over Bardag lake

Eastbrookend Country Park

“On those long sunny days you get some great views over the lake at Eastbrookend, especially where the sun goes down over the lake”

Barking & Dagenham Park Rangers Service invited local residents to share their experiences of 'Wildlife Through the Seasons' within their local parks. This calendar shows the shortlisted entries and highlights the diversity and beauty that we can find right here within the borough of Barking & Dagenham.

#WildFreeLBBB



BDParkRangers

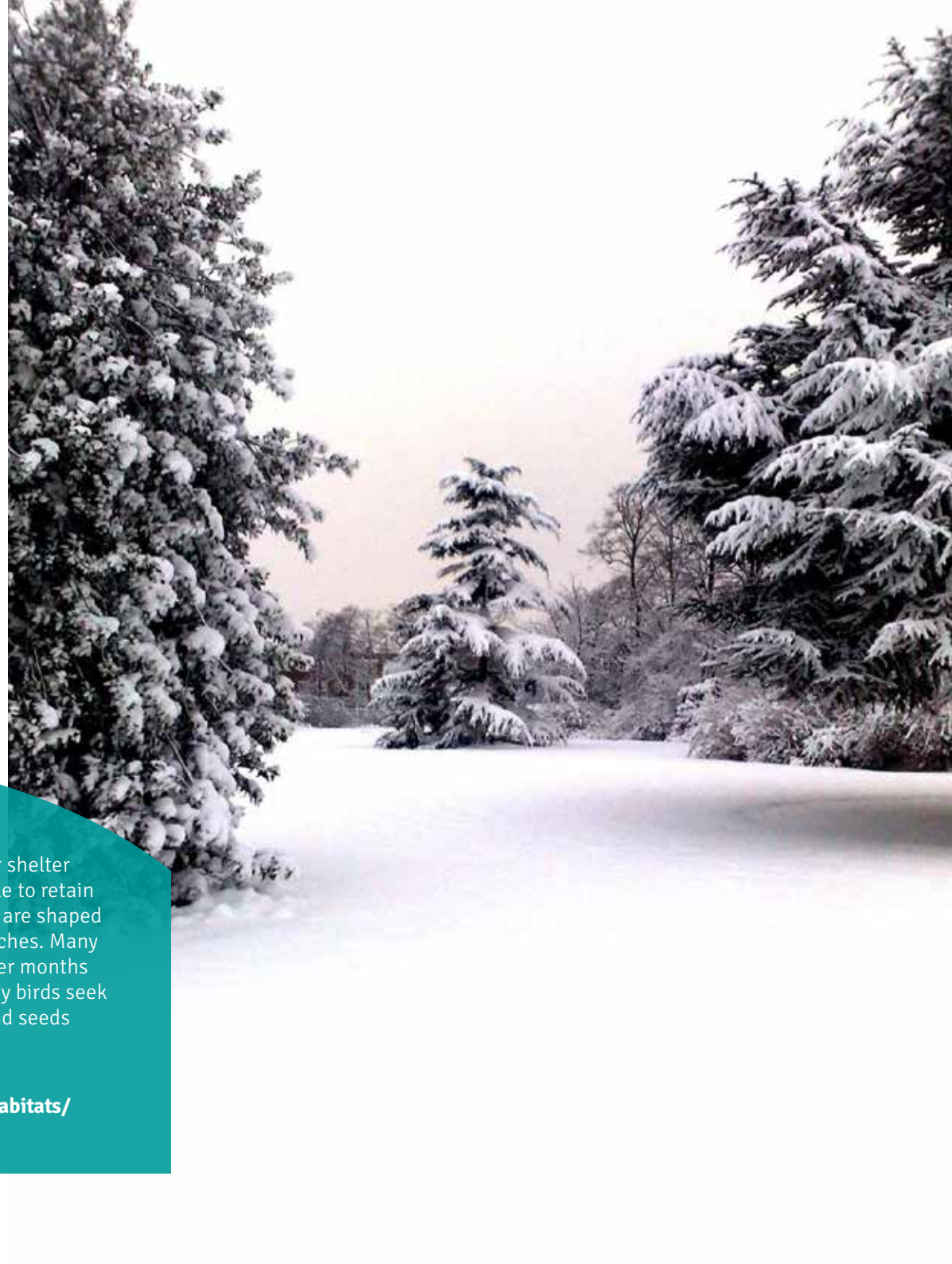
barkinganddagenhamcountryparks.com and
www.lbbd.gov.uk/parks-and-open-spaces



Sean Mulqueen
Conifers in Snow

Mayesbrook Park

“The photo was taken in Mayesbrook Park on the way to Upney station when I was going to work. This was taken the last time we had a nice bit of snow, near the new flats where the college used to be.”



Deciduous trees that lose their leaves in winter offer little food or shelter for wildlife at this time of year. Conifers on the other hand are able to retain their needles all year and have downward pointing branches that are shaped to shed snow, so that the extra weight doesn't damage their branches. Many animals take advantage of these evergreens during the cold winter months since they play a special role in supporting wildlife. Non migratory birds seek shelter from the cold and wind, while the needles, twigs, bark, and seeds (inside the cones) provide nourishment for a range of wildlife.

Find out more about the UK's native coniferous trees :
<https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/trees-woods-and-wildlife/habitats/caledonian-forest-and-native-conifer-woods/>



December

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January



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Trev Bird
Canada Goose in Flight

Eastbrookend Country Park

“This image was taken at Eastbrookend which I discovered during lockdown. It’s only 5 minutes from home and I wish I’d discovered it sooner.”

As the name suggests, Canada geese (*Branta canadensis*) are not native to the UK. They were first introduced into King James II’s waterfowl collection in St. James’s Park, London in the late 17th century. Now they are a common sight in parks throughout the country as they breed successfully in both urban and cultivated habitats, which provide sufficient food and have few natural predators. Most European populations are not migratory so can be seen year round.

Find out which other wildlife you can spot in February:
<https://www.countryfile.com/wildlife/nine-wildlife-joys-of-february-you-shouldnt-miss/>



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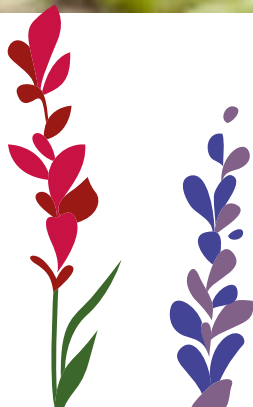


Bimal Tailor

Mallard mum and ducklings

Mayesbrook Park

“Park life. Have you started to embrace and enjoy this way of living now? Before the pandemic, I didn’t really go for a walk in my local park. Now, I go every few days and I love it. LBB Council & Park Rangers keep this park looking incredibly wild, perfect for wildlife to flourish.”



The mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*) is the commonest duck and most widespread, so can be seen wherever there is suitable wetland habitat, even in urban areas. They breed in all parts of the UK in summer and winter. Some may be resident breeders or they could be migrants, since many mallards that breed in Iceland and northern Europe spend the winter here in the UK.

While the male ‘drakes’ have beautiful coloured plumage to attract a mate, the female ‘hens’ are much more camouflaged, since they are responsible for raising the ducklings and keeping them safe from predators.

Find out more: <https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/advice/how-you-can-help-birds/where-do-ducks-nest/>



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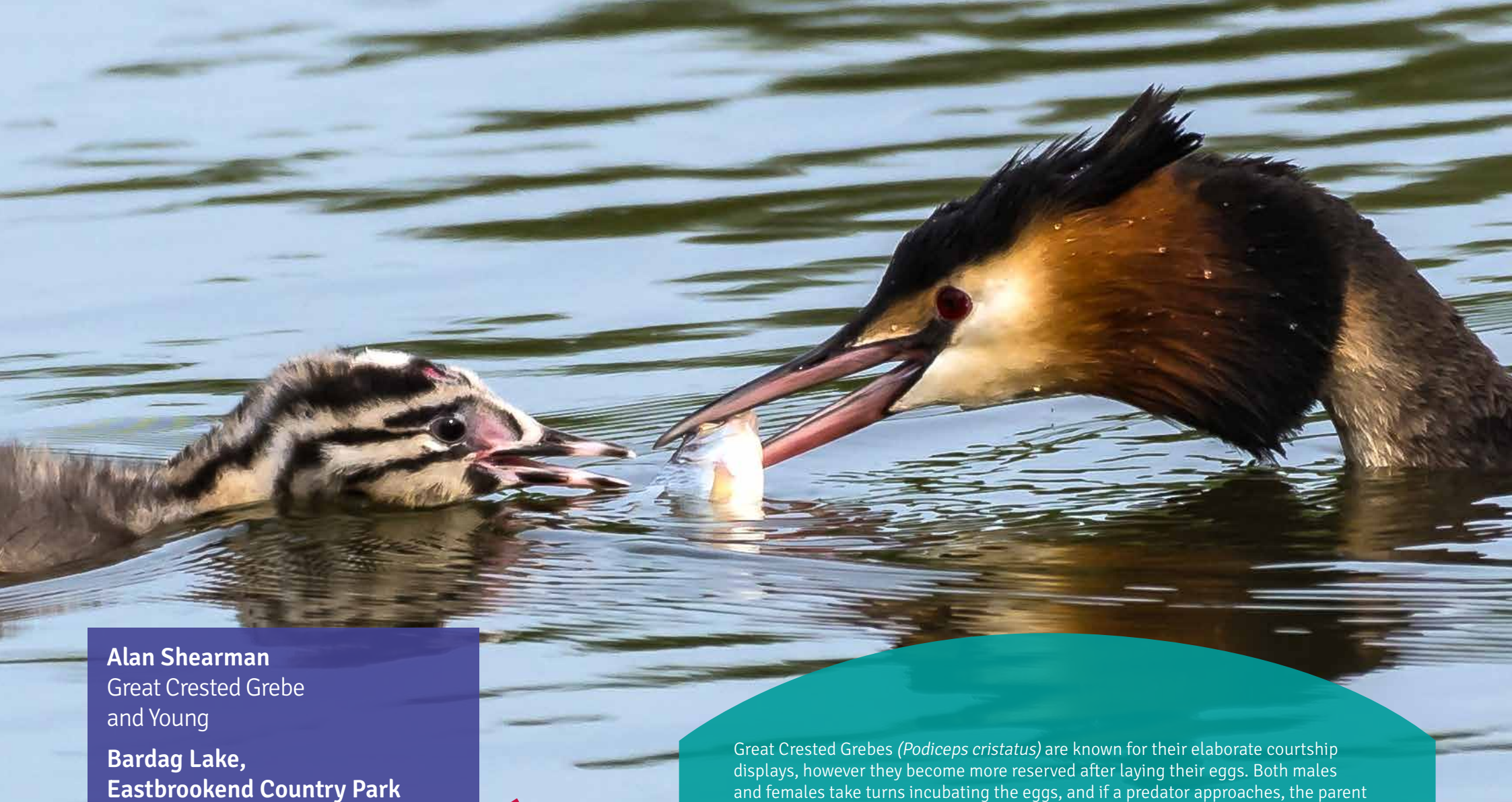
March



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Alan Shearman
Great Crested Grebe
and Young

**Bardag Lake,
Eastbrookend Country Park**

"I live in Dagenham and regularly visit Eastbrookend & The Chase Nature Reserve and have done for at least the last 15 years.

I spent quite a few hours with this pair of grebes in Spring. It was a pleasure to watch them, from courtship through nest building to the fantastic moment that their young appeared."

Great Crested Grebes (*Podiceps cristatus*) are known for their elaborate courtship displays, however they become more reserved after laying their eggs. Both males and females take turns incubating the eggs, and if a predator approaches, the parent might leave the nest and hide the eggs with plant material, reducing the chance of the predator eating them.

The chicks would also be at risk if they spent long periods in the nest, so within a few hours of hatching the chicks leave with their parents. You might see the stripey heads of the small chicks peering out from the parent's back as they get a piggy back ride.

Find out more:

<https://www.bto.org/understanding-birds/species-focus/great-crested-grebe>



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Trev Bird

Goldfinch in Willow

The Chase Local Nature Reserve

"This photo was taken during a lockdown walk on 1st May. The peace and tranquillity of Eastbrookend & The Chase really helped me during a tough period."



This beautiful Goldfinch (*Carduelis carduelis*) is perching on a branch of willow tree. Fairly unusual for plants, willows are 'dioecious', meaning each plant is either male or female. So the male tree's flowers (called catkins) need to fertilise the female tree in order to produce seeds, which are then dispersed by the wind. Willows usually begin this process before many other tree species have come out of their winter dormancy.

Catkins flowering is one of 69 wildlife events that are used to record seasonal changes and track the effects of weather and climate change on wildlife across the UK. The Woodland Trust's Nature's Calendar project has been recording such events since 1736!

Find out more: <https://naturescalendar.woodlandtrust.org.uk/>



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Alan Shearman
Tawny Owlet

The Chase Local Nature Reserve

"It is so relaxing either walking in the park or, as I often do, just sit soaking up the sights and sounds particularly around Crowfoot Marsh and The Slack.

I was delighted to spot this owlet in June last year."



Tawny owls are the UK's most common owl species, with approx. 50,000 pairs. However they are amber listed as a Species of Conservation Concern because of recent declines in their range, and breeding and winter populations.

Tawny owl chicks or 'owlets' often leave the nest before they can actually fly. They go through a phase called 'branching', when they walk, hop, climb, and flutter about in the trees. The adults locate them using contact calls and will feed them anywhere, even on the ground. During this period it is fairly common for tawny owlets to spend some time on the ground and they are surprisingly good at climbing back up to the nest again.

Find out more: <https://www.barnowltrust.org.uk/barn-owl-facts/uk-owl-species/tawny-owl-facts/>



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Martin Buckley
Kestrel catching
dragonfly



**Overall
Winner**

Eastbrookend Country Park

"A warm July morning was brought to life when I noticed this Kestrel sitting on a sign post. It then suddenly shot up in front of me and swooped down to catch it's Dragonfly prey. A moment I won't forget from Eastbrookend Country Park. What a place!"



All wildlife within a particular ecosystem forms a food web, including predators (who hunt) and prey (who are eaten). This 'circle of life' is nature's way of transferring energy from the sun, via plants, to all other creatures.

The Kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*) mainly feeds on voles and other small mammals but will take invertebrates too. Their amazing eyesight allows them to spot a beetle from 50 metres away! They can also see ultraviolet light (which is invisible to humans) which shows up the urine trails left by rodents on the ground.

After emerging as an adult, a dragonfly's first 'maiden' flight is weak and may only cover a few metres. They are especially vulnerable to predation by birds at this time.

Find out more: <https://www.khanacademy.org/science/biology/ecology/community-ecosystem-ecology/a/predation-herbivory>



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August

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A close-up photograph of three dragonflies perched on a large, vibrant green leaf. The dragonflies are positioned diagonally across the frame, from the top left towards the bottom right. They have reddish-brown bodies and transparent wings. The background is a soft-focus green, suggesting a natural outdoor setting.

Ian Cridland

Ruddy & Common Darters

Eastbrookend Country Park

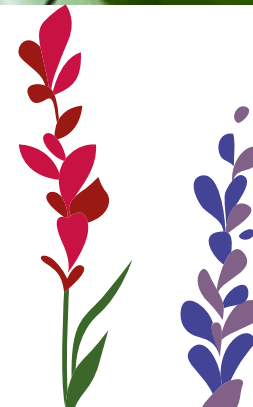
"I am just getting into photography and often visit the country park due to a plethora of amazing photo opportunities, as the park supports such diverse wildlife. The park is a place of great beauty and a tranquil setting in amongst an extremely busy area - a fine place to find solitude."

The dragonfly life cycle has three stages: egg, larva/nymph and adult. Dragonflies spend most of their lives underwater in the larval stage, which typically lasts 1-2 years, but can range from a just few months to over five years depending on species.

Unlike butterflies and moths, dragonflies do not have a pupal stage (chrysalis/cocoon), instead they change straight from larva to adult. This metamorphosis takes place out of water and is triggered by day length and temperature.

The life expectancy of adult dragonflies is short, usually just a week or two, but can sometimes last 6-8 weeks, so enjoy seeing them while they fly throughout the summer months.

Find out more: <https://british-dragonflies.org.uk/odonata/life-cycle-and-biology/>



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August



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Phil Heudebourck
Swallow in flight

Eastbrookend Country Park

"I visit Eastbrookend Country Park & The Chase Nature Reserve most Sundays and love the variety of wildlife, plus it's local and well maintained."

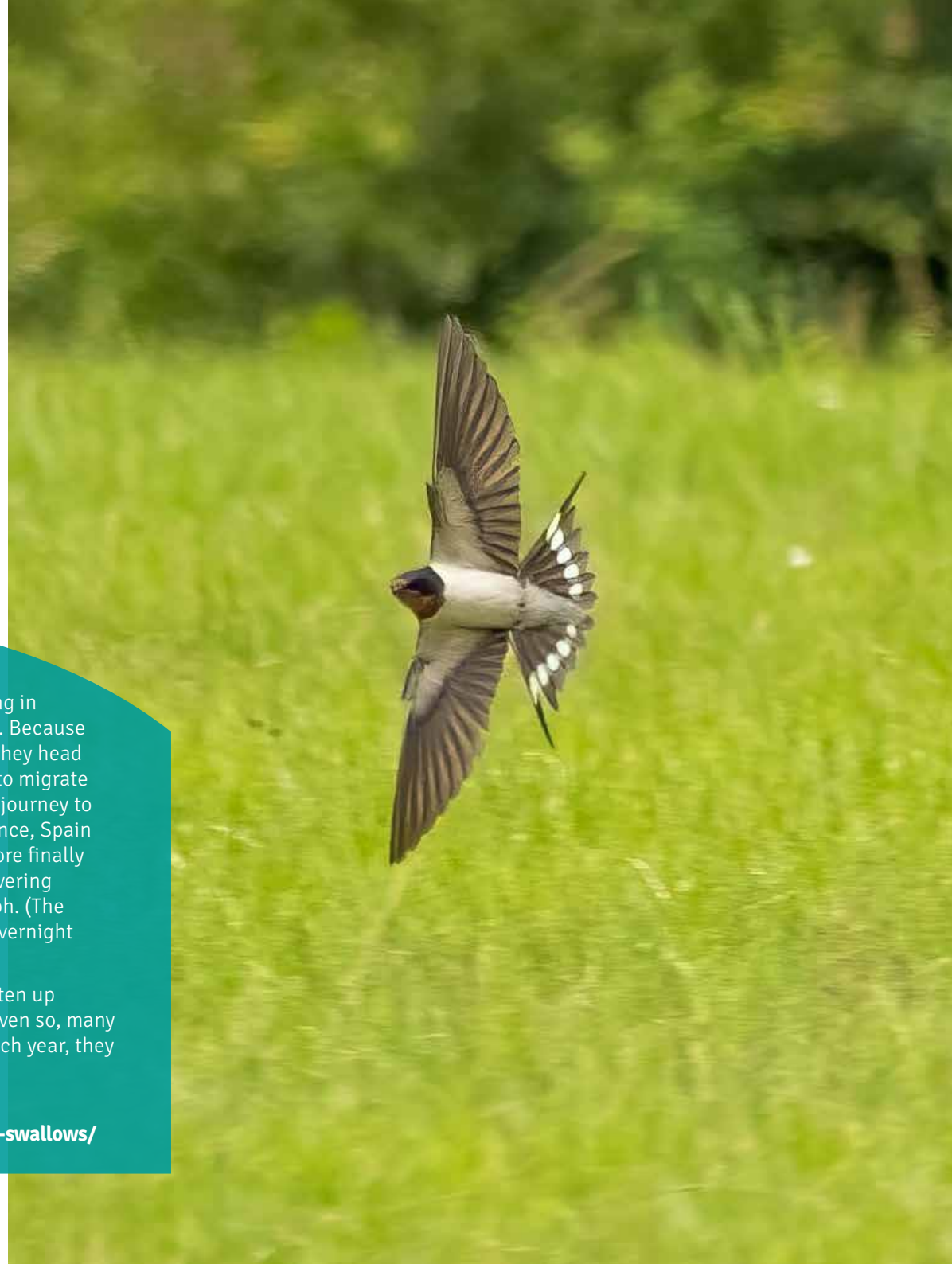


Swallows (*Hirundo rustica*) are seasonal visitors to the UK, arriving in April as the weather warms up and nesting here through summer. Because the supply of aerial insects they feed upon decreases in autumn they head south for the winter. By September most swallows are preparing to migrate the 6000 miles back to South Africa in search of food. The return journey to Africa takes about six weeks. Swallows from the UK travel via France, Spain and Morocco, across the Sahara Desert and Congo rainforest before finally arriving in South Africa and Namibia. They fly during daylight, covering approx. 200 miles per day, travelling at an average speed of 20mph. (The maximum recorded flight speed was 35mph!) Huge flocks roost overnight in reed beds at traditional stopover locations.

Swallows feed entirely on flying insects, so they don't need to fatten up before the journey, since they can eat along the way as they fly. Even so, many die of starvation. If they survive this gruelling migration, twice each year, they can live for up to sixteen years.

Find out more:

<https://www.discoverwildlife.com/animal-facts/birds/facts-about-swallows/>



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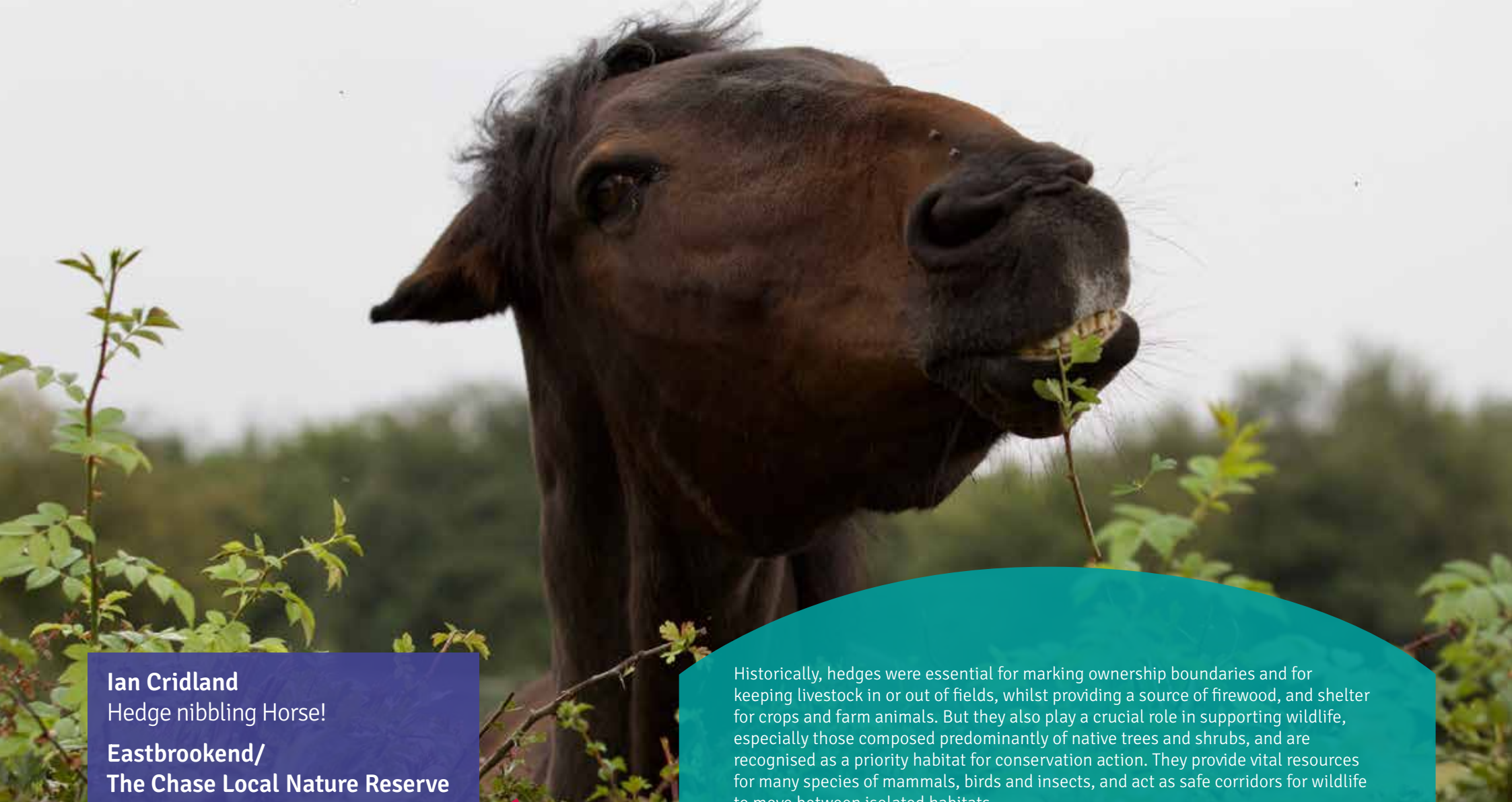
September



October

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Ian Cridland
Hedge nibbling Horse!

**Eastbrookend/
The Chase Local Nature Reserve**

"You don't have to be human to appreciate the beauty around you and just smile."



Historically, hedges were essential for marking ownership boundaries and for keeping livestock in or out of fields, whilst providing a source of firewood, and shelter for crops and farm animals. But they also play a crucial role in supporting wildlife, especially those composed predominantly of native trees and shrubs, and are recognised as a priority habitat for conservation action. They provide vital resources for many species of mammals, birds and insects, and act as safe corridors for wildlife to move between isolated habitats.

A large number of rare or threatened species are closely associated with hedgerows, including the brown hairstreak butterfly, birds like the curlew and mammals like the dormouse, most species of bat and the great crested newt.

Hedgerows also help prevent soil loss, reduce pollution, and have the potential to regulate water supply and reduce flooding.

Find out more: <https://hedgelink.org.uk/hedgerows/>



September

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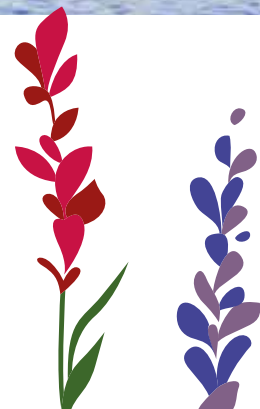


Ian Cridland

White Hart Lake in Autumn

Eastbrookend Country Park

“As the season changes to Autumn, nature shows us her most beautiful colour palette. Truly a pleasure to walk through Eastbrookend Country Park and enjoy all of nature’s lovely colours.”



Ever wondered why leaves change colour in Autumn?

Most of the year leaves look green thanks to a pigment called chlorophyll, which is used to convert energy from the sun into food through ‘photosynthesis’. The trigger for autumn colour to develop is a combination of shorter day length and colder night time temperature. With less sunlight in Autumn, the tree produces less chlorophyll and, before it sheds its leaves for winter, some of the other chemicals in the leaves are revealed including yellow flavonols, orange carotenoids and red or purple anthocyanins. This can create a spectacularly colourful display.

Find out more: <https://www.kew.org/read-and-watch/why-do-leaves-change-colour>



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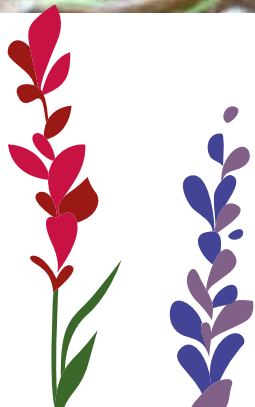
Colin Page
Robin Redbreast
St Chad's Park

"Because of the lockdown I had to stay local, taking pictures of wildlife in and around Dagenham. I try to make use of the local parks when I can. This Robin was taken at St Chad's Park in Chadwell Heath. When I see a robin it cheers me up and they seem to be as inquisitive of me as I am of them."

The UK's favourite bird! Easily recognised by its bright red breast, the Robin (*Erithacus rubecula*) was declared Britain's national bird on December 15th, 1960. The lovely mellow whistles and warbles of this familiar garden visitor can be heard year round, but in autumn their songs can turn more melancholy, as they use their song to defend their territories from one another during autumn and winter.

Robins have featured on many festive postage stamps and the strong association with Christmas probably arises from the fact that postmen in Victorian Britain wore red jackets and were nicknamed "Robins"; So the robin featured on the Christmas card is an emblem of the postman delivering the card.

Find out more: <https://birdfact.com/birds/robin>



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Forward Planner for 2023:

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17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

October

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

November

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

December

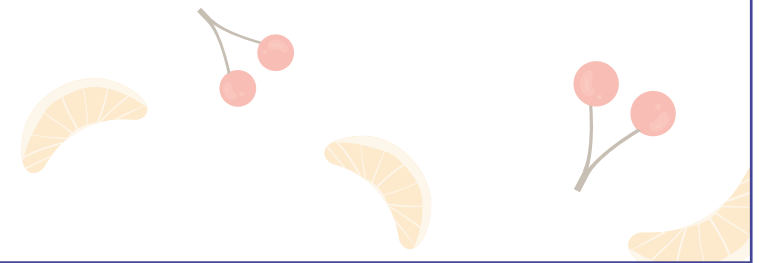
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

Seasonal Notes:

Spring



Summer



Autumn



Winter





There are two water lilies native to the British Isles *Nymphaea alba* (white water lily) and *Nymphaea lutea* (yellow water lily). The scientific name comes from the Greek word 'nymph', meaning a feminine spirit that inhabits bodies of water.

Throughout the world water lilies represent purity, wellness and peace. They are often thought to symbolise rebirth and the circle of life.

Find out more: <https://www.pansymaiden.com/flowers/waterlilies/>

Victoria Hartley
Water Lilies

The Chase LNR

"Beautiful water lilies taken on a summers day in June. I love taking photographs of all the wildlife in The Chase throughout the year.

I also took some great dragonfly photos around that pond on the same day. The lilies caught my attention because of their stunning reflection and the dragonflies buzzing around them."



#WildFreeLBDD

