creos
Crouch End Open Space

Autumn 2018

NEWS

NEVER MIND THE AUROCHS

HERE'S THE MANAGEMENT PLAN

What's the difference between an ancient and a secondary woodland? Well, if you were to enter CREOS from Queens Wood via the Woodland Walk the answer to that question is – about a metre, but in biodiversity terms the difference is vast.

The ancient oak and hornbeam of Queens Wood houses great biodiversity because it is structurally varied with trees of all ages making lots of different habitats for a huge variety of species. Large breaks in the mature oak canopy encourage a rich understory and ground flora, which in turn forms a nursery area for the mature trees of tomorrow. Contrast this to the secondary woodland of CREOS – woodland that has developed on previously cleared ground – here we have a closed out canopy formed by evenly-aged trees that are, in places, very densely packed and tall because they have shot up together competing for sunlight, and beneath them, in the virtual perma-shade – very little variety.

So what's the big deal? Secondary woodland is what we have and it'll be ancient woodland *eventually* – right? No, unfortunately, not. Often secondary woodland fails. Trees of uniform age can all die off or get blown over together leaving a huge clearing which – you've guessed it, gradually becomes colonised in the exact same way as before. It may surprise you to learn that the major player in the creation of biodiverse ancient woodland has actually been human and animal activities. Back in the day, woodlands were a vital resource which were heavily used for multiple purposes: timber for building and fuel; vegetation and fodder for large herbivores (for fun look up the Auroch or super cow) and grazing animals. Over centuries the effect of all this disturbance and

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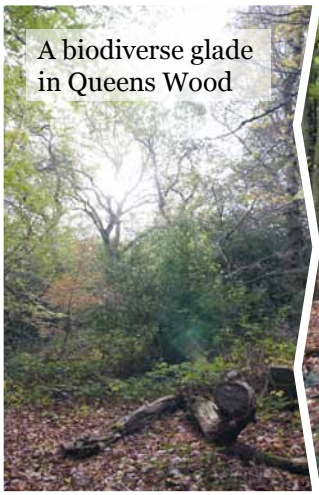

A biodiverse glade in Queens Wood

Densely packed, very tall trees at CREOS

Conservation Management Plan Launch
Open meeting with London Wildlife Trust
Thursday 22 November
details on page 2

Christmas party invite inside!

activity was *huge variation*. Many woods today, like ours at CREOS, are untouched because the general perception of natural spaces is that they should be left alone. However, managing secondary woodland is actually a way of ensuring the woodland survives and, in a happy coincidence, it also increases biodiversity. Whether it's careful selective thinning to create significant gaps in the canopy promoting natural regeneration, or coppicing hazel (most usually) on a two to four year cycle to produce fantastic variation, woodland management techniques create mixed woodland with a varied structure and tree age, which positively affects biodiversity surprisingly quickly. As an example, the recent reintroduction of coppicing practices in nearby Coldfall Woods increased the number of ground flora species present from 48 to 156 *in just one year*.

With the UN reporting staggering losses in global biodiversity, the consequence of which is curtains *for us all*, there really is no time like the present to turn this around. At CREOS we are on the case! Our summer of surveying together with the expertise of the ecologists at London Wildlife Trust has resulted in a new Management Plan for increased biodiversity.

The plan will be unveiled at a presentation by the Director of Conservation at LWT, Mathew Frith and their Conservation Ecologist, Mike Waller at an open meeting on Thursday 22 November at 20:00 sharp in Hanley Tennis Club.

The plan will contain an easy to use calendar of conservation and management activities, most of which we can all get involved with, some of which will require professional tree work and all of which will improve biodiversity across CREOS.

So, when you hear depressing news about dramatic declines in biodiversity and think 'well I can't do anything about that' – think again! Being a CREOS member, making a donation, or turning up to volunteer on a work day, means more woodland management tasks can be done. Spreading the word about the benefits of woodland management, especially for improving biodiversity in secondary woodland, means that more local people will get to understand that a spot of pruning can bring woodland wildlife flooding in – a very positive thing for us all.

We hope you can attend the meeting and become an ambassador for biodiversity, it should take no more than an hour. If you think you can join us please email info@crouchendopenspace.org so we know how many biscuits to buy.

Spotted!

Comma (*Polygonia c-album*)

Now a conservation success story these ragged-winged butterflies were in serious decline just 20 years ago. Seen this year on the edge of the school field where there is an abundance of their favourite foods: nettles, willow and elm. Their unusual name comes from the tiny white marking seen here on their underwing. Thanks to members Daniel and Fiona Hackett for the spot and the photo.

CREOS Survives Bombing and a Housing Boom

We are fortunate to have the memories of some local residents to remind us of the long history of the Crouch End Playing Fields. One such resident was the late Mrs Thyrza Meacock of Cranley Gardens, who, writing down her memories in 2006, noted that *'Kelly's 1937 directory listed 21 sports clubs in the Fields, sadly few remain. Weekends saw young men sporting their blazers and white flannels and girls in attractive white tennis dresses all enjoying the long hot summers of those halcyon days.'* But she also noted that Hornsey suffered bomb damage during the Second World War, which resulted in the Playing Fields being used as a dumping ground for debris from damaged houses. *'Gradually a mini mountain of bricks, plaster, glass, shattered doors and window frames, broken basins and toilet pans accumulated along the bank of the stream near the Montenotte entrance, a pathetic sight.'*

Mrs Meacock also remembered other streams which have since disappeared or gone underground. One such stream *'ran down the length of the Fields from Wood Vale to Park Road along what was referred to as the cinder path. It was lined with willow trees whose branches spread over the path making it a pleasant green shaded walk. The trees died when the stream was piped underground.'* This of course is the Moselle River, and in fact one of the willow trees can still be seen at the corner of the Crouch End Cricket Club.

We are lucky that the playing fields were not turned into a housing estate at the end of the 19th Century. The present day cul-de-sacs of Montenotte and Tivoli Roads remind us how close we came to such a development – those roads would have been extended across the fields if economic recession at the time had not deterred the house builders. The creation of Crouch End Playing Fields Ltd in the 1890s effectively removed the risk allowing the sports clubs to flourish, although many amalgamated and only seven remain today. **Rob Jackson**

CREOS NEWSLETTER AUTUMN 2018

SMALL MAMMALS IN THE CROUCH END OPEN SPACE

Small mammals sound rather cuddly and cute, don't they? But as soon as someone mention squirrels, foxes and rats, our reactions can be very different. What is it about these small urban mammals that can be so upsetting? Some people love squirrels and foxes, but others consider them a pest. Rats are almost universally considered to be dirty and repulsive. So what is the difference between a cute wild animal and a pest?

Photo by Taton Moïse

It is of course when they invade our territory and when their interests conflict with ours. It is especially the fear of damage to our property and the fear of their potential for spreading disease.

We all know that small mammals like squirrels, foxes and rats are an integral part of the natural world and that we should welcome their presence in a site of interest for nature conservation like CREOS. So what should we do when they invade our gardens and homes?

First it is important to understand your enemy: the brown rat is a native species living in both rural and urban areas and, like the urban fox, is highly attracted to the foods we leave around. So make sure not to leave traces of your lunch on the patio or a trail of barbecue droppings leading to your bin, put all food waste in bins with lids and don't throw bread on the lawn for birds!

Secondly it is important not to panic: it is widely believed that the rat population is increasing but there is no evidence to substantiate this. Also, just because rats are associated with the transmission of some diseases, it does not necessarily mean that the rats at the bottom of your garden are carrying any. Nor are you likely to catch anything from them – this on Haringey council's website: *"It is important to realise that in the absence of direct contact between humans and rats, disease transmission is unlikely to occur. Therefore an active rodent population in a garden poses little risk to human health."*

The one thing NOT to do is buy large quantities of rat poison and leave it around your home and garden! If you are lucky enough to be living next to a nature reserve this is especially important, but no one wants to be responsible for poisoning the neighbour's cat! We strongly recommend trying the humane traps available online that make it easy to catch the rat alive and take it to a far away place. But if all else fails, the sensible thing to do is call 020 8489 1335 to speak to Haringey's Pest Control Officer and get professional help. More information on pest control can be found at www.haringey.gov.uk/rats. **Glenys Law**

To All CREOS Members

You are cordially invited to the 2018

CREOS CHRISTMAS PARTY

Kindly hosted by Deborah and Paul Perlin
at 105 Wood Vale N10 3DL.
(front door immediately adjoins Queens Wood)

The party is on Sunday 9 December 2018 from 12:30 to 15:30.
Buffet lunch, with wine and soft drinks.

Although there will be no charge, donations towards the cost of CREOS activities will be much appreciated.

CREOS NEWSLETTER AUTUMN 2018

Meet The Ultimate Recyclers

Trametes ochracea

Auricularia auricula-judae

Chicken of the woods

You might think you've got it all sorted with your green and brown bins and your compost caddy, but when it comes to recycling – nature rules supreme.

You've probably been walking past the planet's ultimate recyclers without paying them much attention for most of your life, and if you have noticed them you might even be one of the many people who find them indescribably loathsome, but this group of organisms really do deserve to be looked at anew and given kudos for their great, life-giving work.

A sudden cluster of glistening ink caps (*Coprinellus micaceus*) bubbling up on a fallen log, or the stacked arcs of jelly ear (*Auricularia auricular-judae*) emerging from an elder branch like a small, brown, rubbery Sydney Opera House are the visible signs that some serious recycling is underway nearby. These are the fruiting bodies, the 'mushroom' or 'toadstool' part of the fungus, and they're its reproductive phase, producing spores which disperse and germinate elsewhere. However, it's the part of the fungus you can't see that's doing all the work. Breaking down all that is dead and releasing the valuable nutrients locked inside – making them available for other plants to carry on growing – is a series of thread-like filaments massed together into mycelium. This is the main body of the fungus, they are long-lived and they can be enormous. Recent research has revealed something rather amazing about mycelium and the individual strands of hyphae that form them: not only do they spread through the soil, forming an interconnected structure, but we now know that this network of hyphae actually connects trees and plants in an underground Wood Wide Web, transporting nutrients and sharing distress signals. Not only can a tree benefit from the nutrients released by the fungal hyphae's recycling but they can also use the structure to collaborate – a dying tree can release its stores of sugars and minerals into the web to make them available for others, a plant that has become infested can use the web to alert its neighbours into raising their defences. Pretty incredible and worthy of some awe surely?

So here's to the curious, cumulus clouds of *Trametes ochracea*, the wonderful, white-tipped whirls of *Bjerkandera adusta* and the crispy crinkles of the very edible *Laetiporus sulphureus* known commonly as Chicken of the Woods. All of these fantastic fungi are busy creating life from death, tidying up and keeping our trees connected all across CREOS. This autumn, why not look out for these hard-working members of our local woodland, 'look out' in both senses – search for them and also chose to care about them because without these recycling dynamos there would be no circle of life at all.

Our Summer Event

On a lovely day in early July the annual CREOS Summer Picnic was held in the meadow. Following our happy tradition, Gregor Grant and his band played music and songs throughout the afternoon. We had Steve Hooper's popular dog races and the barbecuing was very ably done by David Abram. The raffle helped raise some much appreciated funds, thanks to the very generous donations, which included three bottles of champagne!

Real community spirit was boosted by the sharing of food: we were very grateful to Esta Gosal for the generous provision of two large platters of onion bhajis and delicious tandoori chicken. She had worked all morning in her kitchen and we would like to say a big thank you on everyone's behalf.

Remember to keep an eye on the CREOS notice board, or the Spring CREOS Newsletter, for the announcement of next year's date. **Ros Abrams**

Help Grow Our Membership

CREOS always needs a larger core of active members. So when you've read this edition, do pass it on to anyone you think may be interested in helping preserve our open space as a nature haven for wildlife and walkers. To join, make a donation, or volunteer please contact our Membership Secretary: Alys Elphick on info@crouchendopenspace.org. For more information about CREOS visit crouchendopenspace.org