



SPRING 2018

creos

Crouch End Open Space




Described as a vital green corridor in North London, the woodland and playing fields between Park Road, Shepherds Hill, Wood Vale and Cranley Gardens are protected by CREOS, a conservation charity established in 1984 and supported by members and volunteers.

GOOD FOR CREOS GOOD FOR YOU

Feeling stressed? Arguing with family or friends? Fighting off colds and flu? Uninspired in the workplace? The remedy for all of these is a soothing half hour walk in your local green space!

Countless studies have now shown that contact with nature is good for your health and well-being. One well-known study reported that post-surgical patients whose hospital windows overlooked trees, rather than a brick wall, recovered more rapidly and required less pain relief. More recent studies by researchers here in London also show how provision of green space close to home enhances our health. We humans are innately aware of the therapeutic value of a brisk walk, but now science is showing that both the mental and physical benefits can be significantly augmented if such exercise is performed within a woodland setting.

These benefits range from improved mood and sleep to slashed stress levels and — perhaps more impressively — a boost in immune system function that may even help to fight cancer.

But it's not just a walk in the woodland that we need: recent research has also shown that the higher the level of biodiversity in an environment, the more it contributes to human well-being. To take just one example: a study of 236 visitors to eight green spaces in North Wales, in 2014, established that the level of ecological diversity determines the level of people's wellness and happiness. Visitors to 

Join us for some local family fun

*Sunday
July 8th
1 to 4pm*

*PRIZES, FUN,
RAFFLE &
MUSIC*

CREOS SUMMER EVENT

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Games for children Competitions for dogs

*Bring a picnic
& food
for BBQ*

*EVERYONE
WELCOME!*

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👉 green spaces with higher plant diversity have higher levels of happiness.

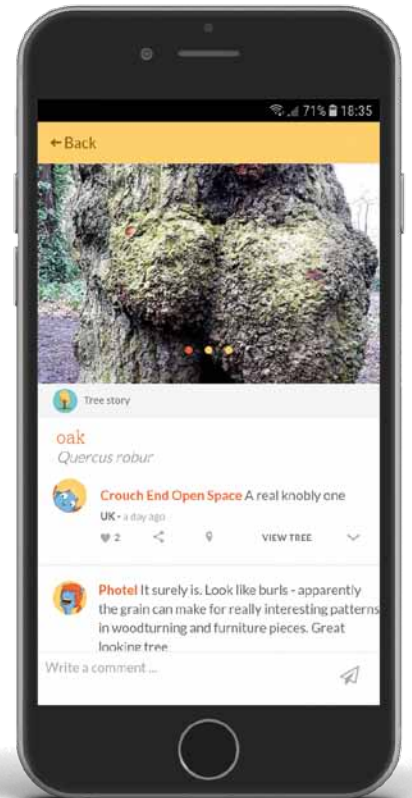
This finding is particularly relevant to recent developments at CREOS, where increasing biodiversity is the mantra of the moment. The decision to put biodiversity at the forefront of our new management plan was not because we had done research on human

health and well-being; it was because we know how important it is to increase the richness of flora and fauna for the sake of the natural world and the inter-related survival of insects, birds, bees, small mammals, etc. However it is wonderful to be able to report that, if our management plan succeeds, your walks along the CREOS paths will be even more beneficial in years to come! *Glenys Law (Chair)*

CURIO TO KNOW MORE ABOUT TREES?

We've had dogs in onesies, goat kids in pyjamas and who doesn't remember that weasel riding a green woodpecker – it seems that the cute and furry end of nature's spectrum wins hands down when it comes to holding our digital attention. But all this could be about to change with a new app called Curio XYZ. Billed as social media for trees, this new mapping and sharing app could mean the boundary oak you walk past every morning on your way to work is the next internet sensation.

Not only is this app great for conservation purposes – we're using it to map all of the native trees on the open space, data which we'll then share with the ancient tree forum so that they can give us the best advice on care and management. It's also a fantastic channel for our preservation aims: the more data that's collected and shared about an area the more difficult it becomes to suggest that it is of no value. Lots of organisations have signed up to Curio and, as well as useful tree identification guides, live maps and posts about tree-related activities around the world and near to home, you'll find a growing list of local trees to like and comment on. So, if you want to *branch* out, *leaf* the house and *embark* on something new, why not join in? It's easy to install on your phone, look for Crouch End Open Space to find our profile, get photographing and sharing and be **Curious!** You never know: we could be the source of the world's first tree meme.



BATTLING AGAINST THE ELEMENTS

CREOS suffered particularly bad luck with the snows this winter. That first massive snowfall arrived on the eve of our Christmas Party! Members woke to find that a journey up the road would require snow boots and walking poles. Hot dishes brought from our volunteers' kitchens in Crouch End took over an hour to deliver. The car carrying the cases of wine had to be pushed up the street. However CREOS members were not deterred. With true grit and determination many members managed to attend and our number, around 42 guests, was similar to last year. Thanks once again to Deborah and Paul Perlin for putting on a wonderful party and for mopping up all the muddy bootprints after everyone departed!

As though on cue, and determined to test the patience of CREOS volunteers, snow returned to scupper

our January workday and amazingly, even though we thought spring was finally here, it managed to

snow on the March workday too! With two workdays cancelled, paths were looking bad, so we had to take the unusual initiative of putting on a mini one-off workday on a Monday morning in late March. Four brave volunteers left their warm homes to patch up the muddy puddles on the paths, to keep us going until the following workday on Sunday 15th April when the weather man had promised us it definitely would not snow; it didn't! *Glenys Law (Chair)*



SPOTTED!



Sparrowhawk (*Accipiter nisus*)

A flash of dark feathers hugging the line of a hedge? A sudden tangible becalming of the song birds around you? These are the thrilling signs that you are likely to be in the presence of a sparrowhawk. Spotted hunting across the CREOS meadow last month, these fierce predators are now a fairly regular garden spot in Crouch End and Highgate. Although they prey on small birds – don't worry! Having them around actually indicates that our garden and woodland bird populations are healthy. If you're eager to spot one it's worth looking up – they use perches on parapet walls and exposed branches to surveil their prey. If you can get a close up view, you'll enjoy their wonderfully striped front and bright yellow eyes, legs and cere (base of the beak).

WHERE THE WILD THINGS AREN'T (AND HOW TO FIX THAT)

At CREOS we are often asked “What can I do at home to help wildlife?” and, as if by magic, a local resident sent us some ideas. Thank you Will Maclean.

A few years ago, I noticed that at the rear of our property, close to CREOS on Coolhurst Road, there was a small area of unclaimed communal land, previously used as a rubbish tip. Now, although I'm not an expert in gardening or British wildlife, I thought how worthwhile it would be to make this neglected spot a more enticing prospect for a variety of creatures, so I decided to plan a wildlife garden and set about clearing the rubbish so I could see what habitats I could create and encourage in the space.

If you too would like to improve the lot of garden wildlife, all you need to do is create a space in which creatures can live undisturbed. This will almost certainly mean surrendering a part of your garden to become semi-wild, so think carefully about where you want to do this. Ivy is an excellent start for a habitat, as it houses a variety of insects and provides essential autumn nourishment for bees. Additionally, an “Insect Hotel” (see photo) is a quiet, dry place for all manner of invertebrates, so consider building one of those, if you have the room. These can be constructed from old pallets, or sections of pallets, filled with bamboo, twigs, cardboard and paper but if you're pushed for space, (or time) most garden centres sell small shoebox-sized ones which can be nailed to trees or fences. Similarly, a log-pile or stumpery is a wonderful way to encourage invertebrates, particularly if you half-bury the stumps to encourage decomposition. This may sound unappealing to humans, but the locally-rare stag beetle spends three to seven (!) years in its larval form, feeding on nothing but rotting wood, and will



view it as an ideal home. And even if there's no space in your garden for any of these specialist environments, you can still incorporate insect-friendly plants such as lavender and rosemary - which will, in summer, prove irresistible to bees – into your planting scheme.

A healthy population of insects means that larger fauna will be drawn to the garden, and you can take steps to accommodate those too. Bird feeders are a must, although be sure they are put somewhere where they don't make feeding birds easy prey for cats. Bird and bat boxes can also be made or bought and what about a home for a hedgehog – we have them in Crouch End!

Lastly, if you're really super-keen on introducing wildlife to your garden, consider installing a pond. As well as providing a water source, the pond provides a home for aquatic insects and plants, as well as frogs, toads and newts. Our garden doesn't have one but our next-door neighbour's does, and it's always slightly magical to see a large iridescent dragonfly buzz around the garden as if this were the most natural thing in the world. Which of course, it is – or could be. All you need is a little time, and some imagination!

ISN'T GIFT AID WONDERFUL?

As a registered charity CREOS can claim Gift Aid from HMRC on subscriptions from our members. This increases our income by an additional 25%.

As the claim process is quite detailed, we make our application every two or three years. This year we have received £1,203 for members' subs since 2015 and for the first time £127 from the Gift Aid Small Donations Scheme – this is for donations made at the Summer and Christmas parties.

Many thanks for returning your Gift Aid declaration forms. Without these we cannot make a claim.

Julian Sherwood



Planting of alder buckthorn at CREOS has successfully attracted Brimstone butterflies this year!

FROM THE ARCHIVES – CELEBRATING AN EARLY SUCCESS

In a previous article I mentioned that one of the earliest campaigns fought by CREOS concerned the extension of Highgate Wood School. The school was originally established in 1973 by means of a compulsory purchase of part of the Crouch End Playing Fields.

In 1984 the school announced its intention to build a new science block, but rather than build within its existing footprint it wanted to extend the school boundary by taking a further triangle of Metropolitan Open Land. This was in direct contravention to earlier promises made by the Council that there would be no more school building on adjacent land, and for this reason CREOS swung into action to object to the further encroachment.

Despite a strong campaign and petition, the school pressed ahead and in November 1985 the Council granted permission for the new building and proceeded to take, compulsorily, further MOL to build on. Nevertheless the campaign had some success – CREOS persuaded the Council to alter the position of the building slightly in order to save two ancient boundary oak trees from destruction. Those trees can still be seen today next to the science block.

This episode highlights that promises made by the Council cannot be relied on, and that we need to be ever vigilant in trying to protect the open space as best we can. *Rob Jackson*

HELP GROW CREOS'S MEMBERSHIP

CREOS always needs a larger core of active members to support its continuing efforts to maintain the character of the local area. So when you've read this edition, do pass it on to anyone you think may be interested in joining CREOS to help preserve the local 'rural' areas as a nature haven for wildlife and walkers. **Please return this completed form with your subscription to CREOS's Membership Secretary: Alys Elphick c/o 6 Barrington Road, London N8 8QS**

If you pay UK income tax, CREOS can claim Gift Aid. This is 25% of your subscription. When you send your membership form we will ask you to complete a Gift Aid form.

I wish to join CREOS I wish to renew my membership

I enclose payment for: Family membership £12 Individual membership £9 Unwaged or Senior Citizen £3

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I consent to my data being stored by CREOS so that I can be kept informed about CREOS-related activities only, including an annual request for membership renewal. I understand that my data will be safely stored and will not be shared with, or passed to, any third party