

Welcome to the latest edition of the Save Lea Marshes Newsletter

Autumn arrived late this year, so as we head into winter, some of the leaves of the trees are only just beginning to turn. A few clear blue-sky days have been very welcome amongst the rainy ones. We hope you got out on the marshes whilst the weather was good!

Hope on Hackney Marshes!



In just ten months a team of dedicated 'eco-activists' have transformed Hackney North Marsh by planting three hundred trees, digging a wildlife pond, building hedgehog and grass snake boxes, sowing limestone wildflower gardens and installing solitary bee towers.

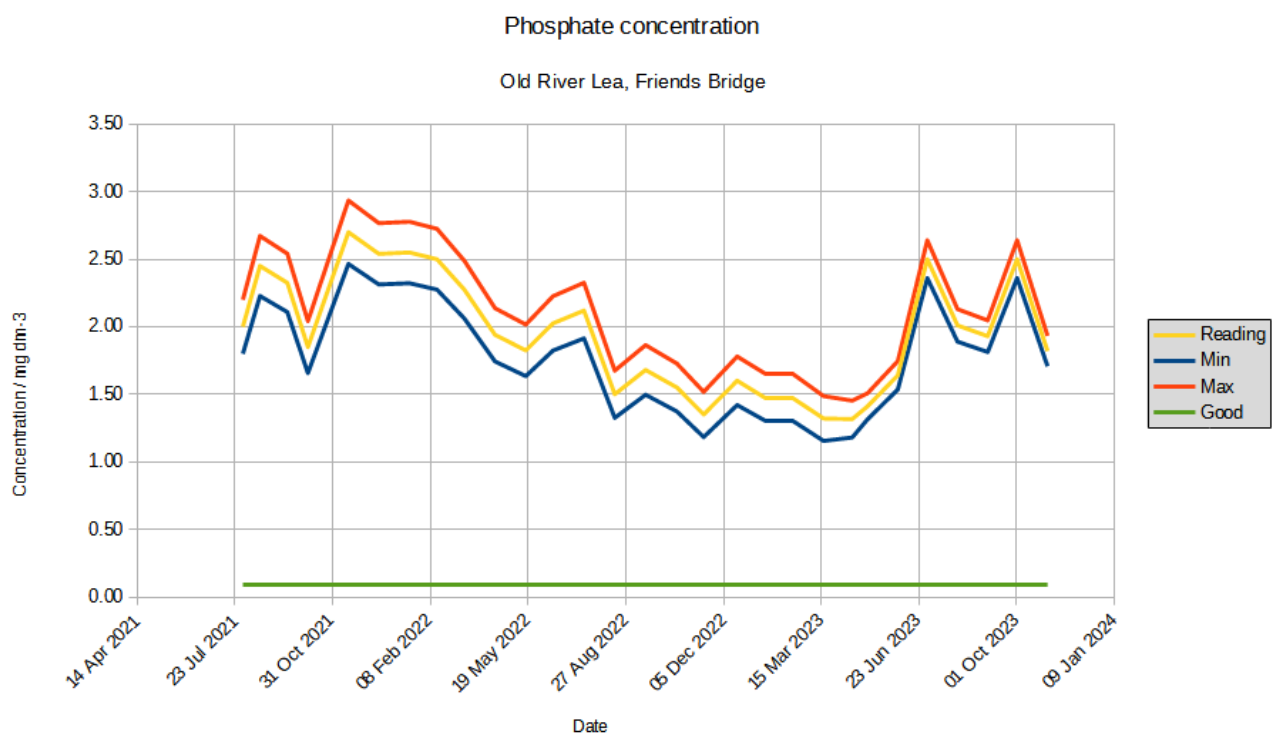
Now you have the chance to join a guided tour of these new habitats, as well as the continuing Old River Lea restoration project, on Sunday 12 November. The walk begins at 2pm and ends at 4pm. You can book your ticket on [Eventbrite](#). It will be a real inspiration for anyone who is interested in Nature restoration, we're sure!

Lee Valley Ice Centre engagement

We are pleased to report a constructive meeting with the Lee Valley Ice Centre staff and management last month. Whilst we still mourn for the part of Leyton Marsh and its wildlife that was lost for the construction of the new ice centre, we were positively surprised by some of the thought that had been given to the environment. We are hoping that our continuous lobbying to ensure that the promised ecological mitigations were put in place has paid off.

The cafe is reasonably affordable and the staff realise reducing waste is more important than recycling; they seemed open to the idea of dispensing with disposable cups altogether. There are some low carbon features of the building works we were not previously aware of; toilets are flushed with ice melt, for example, and a lot of the flooring is made from recycled tyres. One neat thing we spotted were all the lockers: they have put lockers everywhere, which people can rent so they can leave their equipment at the ice centre and travel to and fro by bike or on public transport. In an unusually astute move, they managed the contract with the developer really well, holding back money that they can now use to finish the snagging given the developer has gone into administration. Whilst modest in size, the ponds looked really rather lovely, and from a quick look a lot of the promised plants are there. There are also - gasps from the audience - plants growing into the gabions! Perhaps because they are being drip watered with a proper irrigation system, unlike the still bare gabions placed all over the Olympic Park. Leaving on an ambiguous note, a grass snake had been spotted slithering into the new facility; is this a sign of the success of the new habitat creation, or a lost snake looking for its previous home, now under concrete? Time will tell whether the local wildlife populations will recover, but there are reasons to be more hopeful than we were previously.

Not washed away!



We have been seeing an interesting picture develop of pollution on the Old River Lea by taking monthly samples there. It seems that during heavy rain, phosphate levels increase. This is despite the fact that more water should entail more dilution of pollutants. Citizen scientist Izzy Bishop has postulated that there could be many causes of this; agricultural and road run-off from further upstream, re-suspension of phosphate loaded sediments, combined sewage overflows, most markedly at Pymmes Brook, or a combination of all these factors. What we do know is that the slight improvement in pollution levels we saw earlier in the year has not lasted, and the state of the river remains very poor.

Is your pet toxic?

Another cause of river pollution could be coming from an unlikely source - your pet! Twenty-four environmental and veterinary organisations, including Buglife, Soil Association, Froglife and Bumblebee Trust have written an open letter calling on the UK Government to ban five toxic pesticides from being included in medicines for cats and dogs. These pesticides are deemed too harmful for use on crops, yet are leaching into the environment from pet tick and flea treatments. They're highly bee-toxic and threaten aquatic species. Is your pet contributing to river pollution and bee declines? Find out more by reading this [open letter](#). If you discover you have unwittingly used a poison on your pet, there are over three hundred alternative products to choose from.

Photo of the Month



We'll leave with you a capture from a sunny day, a Stonechat on Walthamstow Marshes by Sam O'Donnell.