

2015 London Tree and Woodland Awards

Winner of the Community Woodland Award: The Hillingdon Group of London Wildlife Trust



The Hillingdon Group of LWT receiving their award at City Hall in May 2015. From left to right: Ian Elliott, Roger Taylor, Kevin Gates, Val Borrell, Andy Willmore (LWT West Region Manager), Ray Smith, Ian Gambles (Director of Forestry Commission England) and Roger Evans (Deputy Mayor of London)

The award is for woodland planting or management projects that have been inspired, driven, and delivered by local community groups.

The award panel noted Hillingdon volunteers' tireless work to enhance nature and public enjoyment of LWT sites including woodlands.

As well as active conservation work, the group have played a pivotal role in ensuring valuable sites were designated. The work they have done has increased the biodiversity of woodland sites in Hillingdon and made them more accessible to the public.

Roger Taylor said "The volunteers who attended the Awards Ceremony were delighted to be able to accept our Award on behalf of all those who over the years have helped us to protect and improve some of Hillingdon's finest woodlands."

Introduction to the project

The Hillingdon Group of London Wildlife Trust was able to persuade landowners such as Hillingdon Council and the Greater London Council to designate new nature reserves along with a number of other reserves encompassing meadows and ponds as well as smaller parcels of woodland which would benefit from protection, management and improved access. The first of these was Ten Acre Wood, followed by Gutteridge Wood and Denham Lock Wood.



The three woodlands differ in character. Ten Acre Wood is mostly an oak plantation with hazel understorey, dating from a hundred years or so ago. Gutteridge Wood is ancient woodland of mostly oak with a hazel understorey, and a fine population of Bluebells. Denham Lock Wood is mostly Willow and Alder with planted Poplar. Denham Lock Wood has been designated a SSSI as being one of the last remnants of wet woodland which were part of the Colne Valley.

Ten Acre and Gutteridge Wood run alongside the Yeading Brook which adds to the diversity as well as the management challenges. These woods are close to housing areas. Both woods are physically difficult to access. Also, few people knew about them. Of those that did, there was uncertainty as to where they were permitted to go. So the Group set about improving access points and footpaths as well as organising high profile events to raise awareness. Few will forget the giant paper caterpillar, lit internally by candles, being carried through Gutteridge Wood.

Denham Lock Wood is notable for its network of ditches and more open fens. These areas are home to Kingcups along the ditches and lake edge, and the endangered Desmoulin's Whorl Snail which inhabits the fen areas. The Frays River which runs alongside the wood is still a stronghold for Water Voles. Although popular with walkers, the wood has access issues due to multiple ownerships making footpath designation difficult. The main users of the wood are anglers fishing the lake which is drains into the Frays River. If the outlet to the river is restricted, then the Wood is prone to flooding causing the lake path to become a quagmire.

Project Activities

With support from LWT staff, BTCV and LWT's contractors, The Hillingdon Group organised weekend volunteer task days in both Ten Acre Wood and Gutteridge Wood. In addition, National Rivers Authority carried out river control works which gave the opportunity of having a footbridge over the Brook installed. Woodland management was also improved through reintroducing hazel coppicing, Muntjac deer management, mowing and baling of the encroaching thorn scrub from the adjacent meadows.



In Denham Lock Wood, the first priority of the Group was to provide a decent lake path by building a substantial boardwalk. A key issue was to keep the fen areas open and the woodland wet. After studying the hydrology, the Environment Agency concluded the network of ditches could usefully be renovated and extended. Work was carried out by their contractors, and further ditch digging by the Group has allowed the Group to control water flow within the fen area.

Project Outcomes

Now that the footbridge is in place, Ten Acre Wood and Gutteridge Wood are better connected. This allowed Hillingdon Council to route their new long-distance footpath (the Hillingdon Trail) through the four Yeading Valley nature reserves. Now that coppice rotation has been established, the Bluebells have flourished.

The boardwalk in Denham Lock Wood has protected the muddy margins, allowing the Kingcups to spread. The ability to divert water from the lake meant that the system could overcome the effects of a lowering water-table.



Further information:

- [RE:LEAF Partnership](#)
- Forestry Commission London – www.forestry.gov.uk/london
- London Wildlife Trust: www.wildlondon.org.uk



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