

FORCE

Friends of the River Crane Environment

Established 2003



Welcome to the Summer 2024 Newsletter

Dear Friends,

Welcome to our Summer newsletter.

As usual there have been plenty of things going on, not least the very exciting news of the water vole release project - more details below..

As the holidays are underway, albeit with very unpredictable weather, it's fantastic to see so many out and about in our parks and open spaces. We've arranged a number of events over the holidays suitable for families, so we hope to see some of you there.

We wish you all a happy and enjoyable summer.

FORCE Trustees

July 2024

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Water Vole Release Project

We're very excited to announce that FORCE volunteers worked alongside colleagues from ZSL and LB Richmond to help release 137 water voles into the lower Crane Valley in June. This has been the culmination of several years' of hard work to survey the sites and enhance their environmental value as well as participating in a mink monitoring programme – which now extends across Greater London.

The water voles have been bred in captivity and will take a while to adjust to living in the wild and fending for themselves. We would be grateful if visitors could keep away from the soft river banks of Crane Park Island and the areas upstream and downstream over the summer and please where possible keep dogs out of the water.

We're helping to monitor how the water voles are getting on over the summer – using a network of around 75 small floating rafts. If you see one in the river please leave it in place.



Walks & Talks

Our summer season of walks is underway!

In June, to coincide with London Rivers Week, we took a stroll along the river to showcase the restoration projects along the Lower Crane - fish passes, water flow regulation, naturalisation of the river banks and more. Thanks to everyone that came along.

As the summer holidays are underway, we have a number of local events ideal for families. As part of Butterfly Conservation's [Big Butterfly Count](#) we have a guided [butterfly walk](#) on 30th July. On 16th August we are holding a [family river dipping](#) event. It would be great to see some of you there.

We also have our very popular bat walk again planned for September.

All our events are free, with tickets available shortly beforehand and can be viewed on the [Events](#) page of our website. We look forward to seeing you.



Mereway Fish Pass and River Restoration

We are delighted to say that the fish pass that provides a bypass around Mereway Road weir is finally open! The Environment Agency will be assessing its effectiveness over the coming months and we hope to have a camera in place to record any fish that use it.

Unfortunately the plans to enhance the riverside habitat at Mereway Nature Reserve are currently on hold as the project team works with the Environment Agency to ensure that there is no additional flood risk from the scheme. The funding and contractor are in place and we remain hopeful that work will start at the site later this year.



Volunteering

A big thank you as always to the volunteers that have come out in all weathers to help over the last few months.

In April and May we continued work in Little Park, in readiness for the much anticipated water vole release and in June volunteers gathered at the Reed Island at Lincoln Field for our annual Balsam Bash.

We're taking a well earned break over the summer, but planning will shortly be underway for our next Volunteer Sunday season, starting in October. We hope to see some of you there.

Some of our volunteers taking delivery of posts as part of our river restoration work at Little Park



Outfall Safari

FORCE volunteers are supporting the 3rd outfall safari across the Crane catchment, following surveys in 2016 and 2021. This work, largely carried out

by volunteers, collates evidence for pollution from over 200 surface water outfalls and uses this to prioritise investigations and interventions by Thames Water and Environment Agency staff. Repeated surveys are building a detailed picture of river condition and large scale interventions, particularly through the TW surface water outfall programme, are slowly reducing the chronic pollution loadings on the river.



Improved Pathways

A new and improved pathway has been opened through Donkey Wood, following on from improved linkages between Pevensey Nature Reserve and Brazil Mill Wood. Plans are being developed to complete the linkage through the rest of Brazil Mill Wood by the end of year alongside an investigation to improve the Staines Road crossing between these sites.

This work all links to the broader ambition by the Crane Valley Partnership to create a high valley pathway along the whole of the Crane Valley, from the source at Headstone Manor in Harrow to the Thames at Isleworth, and known as the Crane Valley Trail.

The new gates and entrance to Donkey Wood on the Staines Road



Planning Updates

You can view all of our detailed responses on the [Planning](#) pages of our website.

FORCE has made representations on a planning application for an industrial scheme on the Staines Road in Hounslow (known as Land to the South of Staines Road, North of Ascot Road and Clockhouse Road, TW14 8RX). Whilst part of the site is green belt the proposals included retaining and improving this. Our representations included suggested means to further enhance and maintain the environmental features of the scheme. The application was approved by Hounslow's committee in July.

Get in touch



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We send a newsletter to our members

Our mailing address is:

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