



## ECO-FRIENDLY EAST FINCHLEY

# Progress made over chronic flooding in Cherry Tree Wood

By Debbie Linton

*The Archer* reported earlier this year on concerns over the large areas of standing water that accumulated on the grass and around the tennis courts in Cherry Tree Wood through the winter and spring, seriously affecting access to large parts of the park.

The Friends of Cherry Tree Wood report this month that a new drainage group surveyed the wood and that Thames Water engineers came on site to clean out and unblock the drains for which they are responsible. A further meeting is scheduled with Barnet Council to discuss the flooding and to ascertain what they can do to prevent the problem returning.

### Tidy-ups

Elsewhere in the wood, monthly litter picks have continued and the gardening group have been busy brightening many areas. Barnet Council has also recently redecorated the interior of the toilet block, and agreed to the Friends painting the exterior, which was finished in August.

Earlier in the summer a new water bottle filler was installed near the Cherry Tree Wood Café, with funds from a previous grant. There had been progress with the plans to extend the wood near the High Road entrance (*The Archer*, February 2022).

Also over the summer, the Friends successfully opposed plans for a six-storey development on the old substation site on the Great North Road near the junction with The Bishops Avenue that would have overlooked the wood. They are now liaising with the developers, with the hope that something more sympathetic can be designed.

### Coming up

Upcoming community events planned in the wood include a litter pick on Sunday 13 November at 2pm (meet near the café). On Sunday 11 December there will be a workshop to make willow decorations for the festive season (between 11am-12.30pm, near the café).

Everyone is welcome to the Friends' AGM on Monday 16 January 2023 at 7.30pm (venue to be confirmed). Come along and join in, or simply listen to what has been going on in the wood. The Friends can also be contacted at [friendsofcherrytreewood@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofcherrytreewood@gmail.com)



Fragile existence: The holly blue butterfly, left, and hoverfly, right, are among our local pollinating insects. Photos Donald Lyven.

## Protecting nature starts at home

You may have noticed the lack of insects this summer, fewer butterflies and bees, and now a dearth of cobwebs decorating our shrubs, says local nature expert **Linda Dolata**. The heat and drought won't have helped but she believes a tipping point has been reached and here issues an urgent plea to change the ways we all look after our wild spaces and gardens.

I applaud the various schemes in East Finchley to help provide a 'corridor' for our pollinating insects, and improve our neighbourhood at the same time, but although they provide for the adult insects, particularly attractive ones like butterflies and bees, the situation is far more sinister.

Take our insects. They have a complex life cycle involving metamorphosis (change of form), for example from egg to larva to pupa to adult. For a population to remain stable each adult has to be replaced, and this is not happening. The earlier stages of the life cycle are not surviving.

### Food plants

For our butterflies, their eggs need to be laid on the correct food plant for the larva (caterpillar). These are usually native plants, which some erroneously term weeds, as the insects evolved alongside them. Most know that nettles help Red Admiral, Peacock, Small Tortoiseshell and Comma butterflies, but even these need to be a healthy clump in sunshine, any old nettles won't do. Other larval foodstuffs include bird's foot trefoils, clover, vetches, wild grasses and sorrel so clearing patches of poor soil where these plants might thrive spells the death knell for the insects. They will never reach adulthood to become pollinators.

### Soil sense

It gets worse. Pupae will either spend a dormant time whilst they metamorphose on the food plant or in the soil. But we add weed-killers, fertilisers and all sorts of chemicals to the soil. Even digging destroys the structure, killing the pupae. We have already lost several species of butterfly since the 1960s and the rest are all endangered. It's a similar story for all our native creatures. There are fewer insects, so the rest of the food web can't survive.

### A plea to gardeners

When you garden, leave a patch totally uncultivated or cultivate native wild flowers; not nettles, as you are unlikely to get the larvae, go for the

other prettier 'weeds'. Don't add chemicals to your soil. Also remove dog poo which over-fertilises the soil.

Remember that our native plants are also good for pollinators. One of the best is the humble dandelion. Ditto hawkbits, knap-

weeds, clover and ivy late in the season. Let them flower, you can always remove the seeds so they don't spread too much.

If we can change our cultivation habits, maybe in 2023 we will see a recovery of some of our invertebrates.

## Pollinator Project making a difference

By Kate Brown, East Finchley Pollinator Project  
The East Finchley Pollinator Project is celebrating its first year with an exhibition in the foyer of East Finchley Library as part of the Town Team's Sustainable High Road initiative. This is the first change of the foyer exhibition since the pandemic and the beautiful poster design is the work of pollinator project member and local artist **Nadia Savvopoulou**.

The posters describe the project aims, what pollinators are, what they do for us and why they are under threat. The exhibition includes pictures of some gardens developed this year such as the wildflower bank outside Monkey Puzzle Day Nursery. It also suggests ways that all of us can help ensure our pollinating insects thrive.

Both the adult and children's library have very useful books about pollinators if you want to know more about the subject.

The Pollinator Project will soon be planting more wall-flowers in the tiny ribbon garden in front of the library wall. They are delighted that the exhibition has coincided with the start of the new planting of the Leopold Road Community Garden, which will include even more plants for pollinators in N2.



On the move: The rose chafer beetle. Photo Donald Lyven

### See the exhibition

You can visit the exhibition without joining the library if you go during staffed hours: Monday 9am to 12.30pm, Wednesday 2pm to 8pm, Thursday 2pm to 5pm and Saturday 9am to 12.30pm. Library membership is free if you want to visit during self-service hours or borrow books. Application forms are available in boxes outside the library or from the desk when the library is staffed.

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67 Church Lane, N2 0TH

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Morning Prayer: Thursday @ 9.00 am - Online

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