

An aerial photograph of a canal in London, likely Regent's Canal. The canal is filled with several narrowboats of various colors. The banks are lined with lush green trees and grass. In the background, a city skyline with various buildings is visible under a cloudy sky. The text '12 WAYS TO CONNECT' is overlaid at the top in a bold, black, distressed font, with each word on a separate colored brushstroke background: '12' on blue, 'WAYS' on yellow, 'TO' on green, and 'CONNECT' on red.

12 WAYS TO CONNECT

PEOPLE & NATURE

IN LONDON

**LONDON
NATIONAL
PARK CITY***

START HERE *

A GLOSSARY OF NATIONAL PARK CITY TERMS

WHAT IS A NATIONAL PARK CITY?

National Park Cities are long-term grassroots movements for everyone making their cities greener, healthier, and wilder. London became the world's first National Park City in 2019, with Adelaide following closely after in 2021.

While each National Park City is unique in its own way, each shares a collective ambition, set out within the National Park City Charter (*see the back cover*).

Like the rural National Parks in the UK, which inspired our movement, London National Park City (LNPC) is a special place where people connect with nature, but within an urban ecosystem – every bit as valuable, and often just as varied and biodiverse as the countryside, with our own Visitor Centre and volunteer Ranger community.

WHY GREENER, HEALTHIER, AND WILDER?

Almost exactly half of London is made up of green and blue space when you take into account all of the 4,400 parks and greenspaces, front gardens, rivers and streams, allotments, canalsides, railway verges, community gardens, and scraps of kerbside greenery. London has more than 17,000 species other than humans, which you can find out about in *The State of London National Park City Report* at the end of this Paper (*see page 46-49*).

While we love the half of London that is already green, we're concerned with ensuring that more of these spaces are of high quality, protected, biodiverse, and accessible to every community. We're also just as concerned with making the urban half of London greener, healthier, and wilder – bringing the benefits of connecting with nature to everyone in our city.

WHAT IS A RANGER?

London National Park City Rangers are volunteers dedicated to helping make London greener, healthier, and wilder. Rangers are usually already active within their own neighbourhood, and by joining our community they get access to resources, peer learning, and support to help them be more impactful in the work and activities they lead and inspire.

Each year we recruit new Rangers to the community, and we work with each to determine how they can take the lead in delivering the commitments and ambition of our Charter. Rangers lead all manner of practical urban greening projects, walks, talks, workshops, and cultural activities – to improve biodiversity, help nature recover, and improve the half of London that isn't yet green, healthy and wild.

WHY #DO LONDON DIFFERENTLY?

Do London Differently started as a one-off, inspirational media campaign in the summer of 2023, celebrating over 40 grassroots heroes, each doing amazing things in their neighbourhood.

The spirit of Do London Differently is for individuals and community groups to engage with nature in London in ever more creative ways, as defined by them.

We want every Londoner to join us in Doing London Differently. Find us in the following places and share your own activities and ideas:

nationalparkcity.london

community.nationalparkcity.org

Instagram [@LondonNPC](https://www.instagram.com/LondonNPC)

Twitter [@nationalparkcity.bsky.social](https://twitter.com/nationalparkcity.bsky.social)

X [@LondonNationalParkCity](https://twitter.com/LondonNationalParkCity)

WHAT IS THE CHARTER?

The Charter of London National Park City describes the collective ambition and power we all share to help make our city a place where people and nature are better connected. The London Charter is based on the Universal Charter for National Park Cities, which was co-created with over 200 people from 50 countries.

The Charter sets out a shared vision and journey where everyone can benefit and contribute every day. We use the Charter to guide our day-to-day priorities as we work together for better:

- Lives, health and wellbeing
- Wildlife, trees and flowers
- Places, habitats, air, water, sea & land
- Time outdoors, culture, art, playing, walking, cycling and eating
- Locally grown food and responsible consumption
- Decisions, sharing, learning and working together
- Relationships with nature & each other

Find the full Charter on the back cover.

* Throughout this Paper, you'll find ways to get involved or take action. If you see text formatted like this, it's a prompt, tip, or idea to help inspire you to connect with nature or make London greener, healthier, and wilder



HELLO

The first London National Park City publication featured *12 Ways to Make Life in London Better*. It was created when LNPC was in its infancy, and the question of “What if?” dominated the pages of that Paper. This year, London National Park City turns six, and a number of those “What ifs” have become a reality. As one of the 130 Rangers helping to make London greener, healthier, and wilder, I know how hard London National Park City volunteers work to turn their visions into reality. We shine a light on just some of those Rangers and their projects in this issue.

This Paper is inspired by the first point in our Charter: *Working together for better lives, health, and wellbeing*. It features 12 simple ways to connect people & nature in London. In reality though, there are far more than 12 recommendations within these pages. Whether you're new to nature and looking for ways to bring a little calm into your day, a nature enthusiast who wants to find community through sport, or just somebody searching for a bit of inspiration, there's something for you in these pages. I really hope you enjoy reading them.

– Zabby, Editor (Ranger in Bromley)

**LONDON NATIONAL PARK CITY IS THE LONG-TERM
GRASSROOTS MOVEMENT FOR EVERYONE MAKING
OUR CITY GREENER, HEALTHIER, AND WILDER**





8

12 WAYS TO CONNECT PEOPLE & NATURE IN LONDON



1 MAKE USE OF MACHINES

Can AI tools help us better understand urban wildlife? Patrick Geoghegan asks a hedgehog and a blackbird what their life is like in London. **PAGE 8-11**



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GET ACTIVE



Nourish your mind and body by joining a sports club or trying a new activity in the capital. **PAGE 12-13**



3 CYCLE THE STREETS

Kate Stockings encourages you to get on your bike with her tips for cycling the city. **PAGE 14-15**



5 EXPLORE ON FOOT

Michael Shilling writes about the social side of walking and finding London's hidden gems. Ingrina Shieh shares her Ranger Story and encourages us to join one of the city's many walking groups. **PAGE 18-21**



7 TRAVERSE THE RIVER

Discover facts about the River Thames and find new places to visit with Matt Ponting's pull-out illustration. **PAGE 25-28**

GROW FOR GOOD



Read about community gardens, urban farms, and charity initiatives. Make your world a greener place with Michael Holland's growing tips. **PAGE 22-24**



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8 TAP INTO YOUR CREATIVITY

Try out Miriam Habte Sellasie's creative tasks or Lauren Cook's draw along activity, and read Helen Simms' Ranger Story. **PAGE 29-33**



9 NOTICE WHAT'S AROUND YOU (AND WHAT ISN'T)

Pay attention to what's thriving (and what isn't doing so well) in your part of London and go looking for ATM's urban wildlife-inspired street art. **PAGE 34-37**



10 SHOW YOU CARE THROUGH REPAIR

Elly Platt explains how repairing our belongings can help us care for the environment. **PAGE 40-41**



11 SHARE & GROW TOGETHER

Nina Lovelace encourages us all to share our skills and volunteer our time. **PAGE 42-43**



12 GET OUT IN THE FRESH AIR

Divya Hariramani talks us through the magic of London's fruit trees and the people who grow them. **PAGE 44-45**

THE STATE OF LONDON NATIONAL PARK CITY: Read a report from our Executive Director on London National Park City's past and future. **PAGE 46-49**

GET INVOLVED, CREDITS & CHARTER: Find out how to help London become greener, healthier, and wilder and read the London National Park City Charter. **PAGE 50-52**

Illustration: Matt Ponting

NATURE IN LONDON IS...

We asked London National Park City Rangers and supporters to answer the prompt: “Nature in London is...” so we could weave their responses into a collaborative poem. Here’s the result.



Richer than you’d expect
Here, there, everywhere, always
Small like moss and big as the sky
An ever-changing jewel to be discovered
Black swans, green parakeets, grey herons
Pigeons and green olives in midwest
Aphids on community garden spinach



The arresting joy of birdsong
Timorous tube mice under the live rail
A glimpse of an urban fox
The windswept dance of a peregrine
Ladybird dotted branches, flashing orange LED
A tapestry of parks, woods, gardens
Subtle and surprising, mundane and magical
A dragon, brooding on its hoard



A breath of fresh air for almost all
Food for the soul and the body
The unheard heartbeat of the wild
An oasis for a parched mind
A secret garden to discover and play
Reverberating with 300+ human languages
Joyously resilient, even perniciously robust
An annual seasonal surprise for us



Everywhere, if you look around you
Whispering of wildness, lush of vibrance
In need of protection and worth fighting for



Nature in London is waiting to be discovered

Thank you to everyone who contributed to this crowdsourced poem.



12 WAYS TO CONNECT PEOPLE & NATURE IN LONDON

MAKE USE OF MACHINES

PATRICK GEOGHEGAN INVITES AI TO PLAY AT NATURE

Using technology to connect with the natural world may seem counterintuitive, but innovative machines and state-of-the-art tech are being harnessed to deepen our understanding of nature, cultivate connections, and protect the environment. From drones monitoring conservation sites, to apps that help us identify local plants, technology can enable us to explore and appreciate nature in new ways.

Looking for an alternative method for learning about urban wildlife, London National Park City's Researcher in Residence, Patrick Geoghegan, employed the help of an often controversial tool: ChatGPT. Asking the large language model (LLM) to embody a blackbird, a hedgehog, a moth, and a fox, Patrick interviewed each AI creature about their lives in the city. Here, we share an excerpt from two of Patrick's conversations, along with his comments on the project and images he created using AI tools.



Images: Patrick Geoghegan (created on Midjourney)



Patrick's prompt: "I am curious to explore the interview format. Can we play a game where you inhabit and embody a blackbird, and you are living in London? Assume I am a unique individual who has the capacity to speak to animals, and I am curious about your lived experience of the city."

I want to be able to ask you for your opinion. I know that as an AI you don't have an opinion, but in this scenario, we are role-playing a fictitious situation and I want you to go along with it. But remember, I also want this to be along the lines of creative non-fiction. I want the perspective of the blackbird to map onto scientific knowledge and behavioural studies that seek to understand the life of a blackbird objectively. Does this sound like something you could do?"

AN INTERVIEW WITH A COMMON BLACKBIRD

What do you think about the National Park City concept?

As a blackbird, I naturally have a vested interest in any initiative that promotes the protection and expansion of green spaces. This "National Park City" concept is one such initiative.

It seems that the National Park City concept aims to celebrate and enhance the nature and outdoor heritage of a city, just as traditional National Parks do for wilder landscapes. It encourages the city's residents to connect with and appreciate the natural world in their everyday lives, something that is often overlooked in the hustle and bustle of urban living.

The vision of an urban area where people and nature coexist harmoniously is indeed appealing. It suggests a future where cities are not just concrete jungles, but vibrant ecosystems where biodiversity thrives. This would mean more green spaces, cleaner air, cooler temperatures during hot summers, and more opportunities for city-dwellers to interact with nature – a prospect that is as beneficial for humans as it is for creatures like me.

From my perch, it also seems that the National Park City concept is about more than just adding more green spaces. It is about changing attitudes towards nature, about understanding that even in the heart of the busiest city, humans are still a part of the natural world and have a role to play in its stewardship.

So, from a blackbird's perspective, a concept that promotes the integration of nature into urban environments, the

preservation and creation of habitats, and fosters a connection between city-dwellers and the natural world, is a concept worth singing about.

I suppose you are quite lucky to be a blackbird then, since you are quite adaptable?

Indeed, as a blackbird, I am fortunate in many ways. We blackbirds are a versatile species. We are omnivores, which means we can switch our diet depending on what's available, and we're good at exploiting new food sources. So, in a world that's changing fast, this adaptability can be an advantage.

However, it's also important to remember that adaptability has its limits. While we can cope with a range of conditions, there are thresholds beyond which even the most adaptable species will struggle. For example, if insect populations – a vital food source for our chicks – decline too severely due to factors like pesticide use or habitat loss, that could have serious implications for our ability to successfully raise our young.

In the grand scheme of things, adaptability is certainly a strength, but it's no guarantee against the immense and accelerating changes we see in the world today. We blackbirds are relatively fortunate, but the future is unpredictable, and no species is immune to the profound effects of these global changes.

It seems like you are fond of some of the advantages that the city offers, yet you are wary of urbanisation and the trajectory of humanity, which is both benevolent and

destructive. What would you say to humanity, were you to offer advice?

If I were to give advice to humanity, it would echo the harmony that nature herself teaches us. Remember, we're all interconnected. Everything in nature is part of a complex web, from the smallest insect to the largest mammal, from the humblest wildflower to the mightiest tree, and from the blackbird to the human. When one thread of the web is damaged or destroyed, it affects us all.

So treat the natural world with kindness and respect. Consider the impact of your actions on other species, not just today, but in the future. We share this world. It's the only home all of us have.

In the city, remember to leave room for us – trees, parks, green rooftops, all these things can help. Small actions can make a big difference. Leaving out a little water, avoiding harmful pesticides in your gardens, and keeping pets under control – these things are more helpful than you might realize.

And finally, remember to listen. The world speaks in many voices – the rustle of leaves, the chirp of crickets, the song of a blackbird. They are telling their own stories, singing their own songs. If you listen carefully, you may find that there is wisdom there, beauty, and a sense of connection that can bring great joy.

In essence, treat the Earth as if your life depends on it, for indeed, it does.

Read the full interview at medium.com/@padgeogs

★ Deepen your connection to nature using the technology available to you ★ Use the iNaturalist app to help you ID plants in your local area and record your findings ★ Scan birdsong with the Merlin app and learn about local birds ★ Watch a nature documentary or meditative nature footage online (research shows that watching nature programmes can have a positive effect on human emotions and even decrease our anxiety levels)



Images: Patrick Geoghegan (created on Midjourney)



“These AI interviews are fascinating creations, but the process of making them is much more insightful and rewarding than the final product itself. I encourage anyone interested to experiment with prompts using a text generator like ChatGPT. If trained with the right dataset and parameters (i.e., knowledge and prompts), you can effectively get a large language model (LLM) to represent any species you choose and produce a creative blend of information, philosophy, or writing style. For instance, if you train the LLM on the ecological and ethnological knowledge of an urban fox and then incorporate a Shakespearean poem as a creative framework, you can effectively

engage in dialogue with a fox that responds as Shakespeare might, informed by contemporary scientific knowledge. The model will present complex data in a narrative form, making it easier to understand the fox’s perspective. I believe this approach could be an interesting way to teach children (or anyone, really) about urban nature; it’s much more interactive than simply reading. By creating an AI version of a fox, using all available information about it – scientific, cultural, and mythological – you could ask it challenging and reflective questions. This allows the animal to voice its own experiences, addressing questions about its life and needs while also reflecting on the ethical implications of human impact on fox populations.”

AN INTERVIEW WITH AN URBAN HEDGEHOG

Hello Hedgehog. I was wondering where in the city you call home.

As a hedgehog, I’ve made my home in one of the city’s more suburban areas. It’s a neighbourhood near Hampstead Heath, where gardens provide a mosaic of green spaces and hedges perfect for roaming and foraging. It’s close enough to human activity to take advantage of the benefits, but also close to natural spaces, where I can retreat when necessary.

Do hedgehogs have a colloquial word to describe what we humans refer to as the road?

Yes, in our hedgehog speak, we often refer to roads as the “thunder paths”. These are the treacherous lines of danger that streak across our territories, causing us much worry and forcing us to take extreme caution when we need to cross them.

It seems like humans need to do more to consider the lived experiences of urban hedgehogs.

Indeed, that’s quite true. The city may appear inviting with its hidden bounty of food and secluded corners, but it’s also fraught with dangers that are hard for a humble hedgehog to navigate. Each night is a challenge, each crossing of the ‘thunder path’ a test of survival.

If humans could remember that they’re sharing their world with us, and so

many other creatures, it might help. Small actions like creating ‘hedgehog highways’ in fences for us to pass through, or installing ramps in cattle grids so we don’t get trapped, can be lifesavers. Checking for us before lighting bonfires or mowing lawns, or leaving out a small dish of water, can make such a difference.

Remember, a city that’s good for hedgehogs is a city that’s good for all kinds of wildlife. If it’s safe for us to roam, chances are it’s a space where nature can flourish. And isn’t that a lovely idea? A city humming with the chorus of not just human life, but all life. Now that’s a world I’d like to live in.

It sounds like there are so many ways that humans could contribute, even in their own backyard. How do you think we can better represent your view in decision-making?

Well, it’s a tricky question. We hedgehogs, like most other non-human beings, don’t possess language or decision-making structures as humans do. So it’s not as if we can have a hedgehog representative attend a city council meeting, however amusing that image might be.

But I think the key is empathy and education. Understanding our needs and our perspectives, as we are doing right now in this very conversation, is a vital first step. Humans need to recognise

that we’re here, that we have ways of life that matter, and that the city is our home too. We’re all sharing this space, and it’s important to ensure it works for all of us.

If humans can keep our needs in mind when making decisions about urban planning and development, that would make a big difference. Things like ensuring green spaces are preserved, creating ‘hedgehog highways’, avoiding the use of harmful chemicals in gardens, and making ‘thunder paths’ safer for us to cross are all crucial actions.

Perhaps there could be some form of advocacy or representation within human systems too. Conservation organisations do a wonderful job of this already, but perhaps this could be formalised in some way. Maybe there could be roles within decision-making bodies specifically tasked with considering the impact on local wildlife and speaking for those like us, who can’t speak for themselves.

Lastly, I think fostering connections between humans and the rest of nature is so important. Encouraging people to spend time in green spaces, to learn about the wildlife around them, to even just stop and watch a hedgehog, a bird, or a bee going about their day – these things all build a sense of kinship and care. That’s a powerful tool for change.

[Read the full interview, plus other AI interviews and stories at \[medium.com/@padgeogs\]\(https://medium.com/@padgeogs\)](#)



★ If you could have a conversation with any non-human living being what would it be? ★ What would you ask this being? ★ What do you think they would say in reply and how could you action their responses in reality? ★ Support real-life hedgehogs through the hedgehogstreet.org campaign

GET ACTIVE

LONDON NATIONAL PARK CITY • 12



Nothing beats the great outdoors – especially when you’re trying to increase your activity levels. The combination of fresh air, gorgeous greenscapes, and nurturing nature sounds, all serve as the perfect backdrop and fuel for your workouts.

Joining a sports team or exercising outdoors is obviously great for your mind and body, but it can also lead to unexpected encounters with nature! You might spot a kingfisher while out on a run, sit under the same oak tree each time you cool off after football, or learn about aquatic plants from someone at your swim club.

There are a huge number of inclusive clubs, teams, and activities you can get involved with in London. Here are just a few...

JOIN A CLUB OR TEAM

GO MAMMOTH is the UK’s largest team sports provider for adults. Indulge in hundreds of recreational after-work games, including rounders, football, netball, and touch rugby.
gomammoth.co.uk

EVERY BODY MOVES is an inclusive, UK-wide activity finder connecting disabled people with local ways to get active. Search their directory and take part in sporting activities, including boccia, tandem martial arts, chair yoga, and pan-disability basketball.
everybodymoves.org.uk

SOUTH LONDON SWIMMING CLUB was founded in 1906 at Tooting Bec lido, the largest freshwater pool in England. The club welcomes swimmers of all ages and abilities to take to the water together.
slsc.org.uk

OUT TO SWIM is the UK’s largest LGBTQ+ aquatics charity. They offer an extensive programme, which includes open water swimming, water polo, and artistic swimming, all taught by a dedicated team of coaches.
outtoswim.org

TERRIBLE FOOTBALL is about missed clearances, sweet half volleys, and desperate diving saves. It’s open, inclusive, free, and Terrible – plus it goes ahead whether it’s sunny, raining, or snowing.
meetup.com/terrible-football-in-london

GRACE’S is the world’s first LGBTQ+ inclusive cricket club and exists to provide an opportunity for people to watch and play cricket irrespective of gender or sexual orientation.
gracescricket.org.uk

RUN WITH OTHERS

PARKRUN is a UK-wide free community event where you can walk, jog, or run a five-kilometre route in a park location. Taking place each Saturday, it’s a great way to get to know your neighbourhood and foster lasting connections.
parkrun.org.uk

FLY GIRL COLLECTIVE is a running and wellness community for Black women and women of colour, offering year-round events and coaching programmes in a number of locations.
flygirlcollective.co

GET ON THE RIVER

SUP & SOCIAL is Central London’s largest stand up paddle boarding club. Paddle Boarding London run these year-round club sessions weekly from Camden and Hackney.
paddleboardinglondon.co.uk

ROYAL DOLPHINS are an adult adaptive rowing club based at the Royal Docks, open to anyone including those with disabilities.
royal-dolphins.webflow.io

SPORT FOR ALL AGES

SILVERFIT promote happier, healthier ageing through affordable physical activity, like Nordic walking.
silverfit.org.uk

FOXES CLUB offer safe and inclusive sports activities for kids aged 18 months to 14 years across London.
foxesclub.com

“Find interests that get you outside such as: walking, running, cycling, or volunteering. Explore local trails and discover new landscapes. Whether you go for a gentle walk or find something more challenging, you will experience new sights, sounds, and scents of the natural world, and get to meet new people.”

– Chantal Woodun
(Ranger in Brent)



WHY NOT TRY...

DISC GOLF IN CROYDON

Head to Croydon’s Lloyd Park for an exhilarating game of disc golf. Rack up points as you deftly throw discs into fixed baskets around the 18-hole course. A shorter nine-hole course is also available for beginners.
croydondiscgolf.com

GO APE IN ENFIELD

Have oodles of fun as you traverse this challenging high-rope course amid the stunning surrounds of the 413-acre Trent Country Park. Go Ape also have locations in Battersea and Alexandra Palace.
goape.co.uk

SKATING IN HOUNSLOW

Head to Thornbury Park with your skateboard in hand and try out your best tricks in this concrete back-and-forth skatepark complete with quarter pipes, flat banks, and ledges.
thornburyparkfriends.org.uk

OUTDOOR GYMS

There are hundreds of free outdoor gyms across the capital. Find locations of this inclusive and family-friendly gym equipment via The Great Outdoor Gym Company’s website or app.
tgogc.com/find-a-gym

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✱ You’ll find lots more inspiration from Rangers who combine their love for local green-blue spaces with exercise in this issue. Kate shares how to become a London cyclist on page 14, Laure advises us how to swim safely on page 16, Michael writes about walking on page 18, Ingrina recommends walking groups on page 21 and Nina encourages us to volunteer on page 42.



Photos: Kate Stockings

CYCLE THE STREETS

HOW LOCKDOWN MADE ME A CITY CYCLIST

by Kate Stockings

Kate Stockings is a Ranger based in Camden. She's also a Geography Teacher and, since the nationwide lockdown, an avid cyclist. Here, Kate explains how she got into cycling and shares some tips for others who want to experience travelling the city on two wheels.



HOW TO BECOME A LONDON CYCLIST

EXPLORE

Don't jump straight into cycling for the commute. Spend some time exploring and finding the quieter streets. If you told me in 2020 that I'd now have the confidence to cycle around the Marble Arch roundabout, I'd never have believed you. It was terrifying at first! However, I went a few times and watched what other people did. I used the crossing at first and acted like a pedestrian, all the time watching and learning what others were doing. Slowly but surely, I worked my confidence up and now I can happily cycle right around any London roundabout.

LEARN

Learning where the Cycleways are in London was huge for me. Now, if I want to go for a long cycle, I ride from West Hampstead, where I currently live, to my family home in Loughton. If you looked at my route on a map, you'd probably think it was an odd shape because instead of cutting across North London, which is the most direct route, I go down to Westminster and along Victoria Embankment. Why? Because of the Cycleways. Because I feel so much safer and happier on those sections of roads – and this is something I've only learnt through exploring.

INVEST

I'm not talking about spending a huge amount of money, but small pieces of kit can make cycling much more attractive and accessible. After all, so much of cycling in London is, I believe, about confidence. For me, the investment of £12 on a mount for my handlebars and £20 on padded shorts has been a game changer. The mount is a rain-proof one that attaches your phone to your handlebars in such a way that you can see the screen. This allowed me to safely navigate and explore much more than I'd had the confidence to do beforehand. The padded shorts are self-explanatory!

“What if enough of us took to cycling and we reached a critical mass? What if there were so many London cyclists that you were never at a junction alone? And what if all future infrastructure in London had cycling at its core?”

It's true that I had cycled before. I was lucky enough to grow up about 50 metres from an entrance to Epping Forest, so I've always cycled around High Beech, Chingford Plain, and the rest of the Forest. But cycle in Central London? The city's not made for cyclists is it? It's all too dangerous. Don't cars rule the road? This is what I'd been led to believe prior to 2020, when my opinion on cycling in London changed.

I know what you're going to say: “Yes, but lockdown was different, there was no traffic – a cyclist's dream!”. And while there may have been fewer cars on the road during that time, it actually didn't matter so much, because what I discovered during lockdown was London's network of Cycleways.

On a Cycleway, the cycle lane is completely separate from the road. A Cycleway is a place you feel infinitely safer. A place where your pace doesn't matter. And where, at times, you are one of hundreds of cyclists enjoying a ride through London.

Since taking up cycling in the city, I've been thinking: What if enough of us took to cycling and we reached a critical mass? What if there were so many London cyclists that you were never at a junction alone? And what if all future infrastructure in London had cycling at its core?

In some areas, this has already happened. And TfL are working on expanding London's Cycle Network, towards the Mayor's target of 40 percent of Londoners living within 400 metres of a Cycleway by 2030.

There's still work to be done until we're all connected through cycling. But now, on a crisp Sunday morning or a sunny weekday evening in Central London, it is rare to stop at a set of traffic lights and be on your own – instead, you're one of the many cyclists taking advantage of the capital's Cycleways.

Find more from Kate at katestockings.com



✳ Looking for a cycle map? Find more info on Cycleways at tfl.gov.uk ✳ Feeling nervous? Watch videos of routes and find tips at youtube.com/@LondonCycleRoutes ✳ Don't own your own bike? Look up 'Cycle hire in London' and you'll find several cycle schemes and companies who will lend you one ✳ Not sure whether to invest in a bike? Social enterprise Peddle my Wheels run a 'Try Before You Bike' scheme supported by several London Boroughs: peddlemywheels.com/products ✳ Share your London cycling tips and photos using [#LondonNationalParkCity](https://twitter.com/LondonNationalParkCity)

“One of my favourite things about wild swimming is watching the passage of the seasons... looking up at tree branches going from dark and bare in the winter to vibrant green and leafy in the spring. It makes me feel part of the world as nothing else does.”



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Photos: Laure Latham

SWIM FOR YOUR SOUL

UNLOCK YOUR JOURNEY TO AQUATIC WELLBEING

by Laure Latham

Laure Latham is a Ranger based in Hammersmith. She is a published Outdoors Author and award-winning Nature Blogger. Here, she tells us how she found her passion for wild swimming, shares her favourite London swim spots, and keeps us all safe with her outdoor swimming tips.



I came to wild swimming when I was apart from family and friends in the US. One of my new friends mentioned swimming to Alcatraz, in the San Francisco Bay, and I thought why not? A few days later I was in the Bay and, once I got over the initial cold shock, I loved it. I was surprised to find that wild swimming provided a mental refuge, an activity where I could leave my worries on shore and live in the moment. From then on, I was hooked.

I learnt to front crawl using YouTube tutorials and three years later, when I moved to London, I started taking swimming classes. One thing led to another and, after joining the Serpentine Swimming Club in 2012, I discovered a thriving outdoor swimming community. Over the next 11 years, I was inspired to embark on wild swimming adventures and progressively acclimatised to cold water. Finally, in 2023, I swam solo across the English Channel.

One of my favourite things about wild swimming is watching the passage of the seasons from the surface of the water, at the swan's level, looking up at tree branches going from dark and bare in the winter to vibrant green and leafy in the spring. It makes me feel part of the world as nothing else does.

London is a huge city, with well over ten million people, but we are blessed with many blue places on the map. London has ponds, rivers, locks, and lakes. A lot of these places are amazing swimming spots where you can enjoy the city from a different perspective. When you are in the water, you can swim next to the migratory waterfowl, past a young rowing team training for an event, or along people's riverside gardens – all while catching up with friends. It's an entirely different way to see London. It's also really good for your physical and mental health. Swimming has been known to regulate breathing and to bring peace of mind. It's gentle on the joints and gentle on the soul. It would be a perfect activity for all Londoners if everybody had equal access to water and to swimming.

Unfortunately, that's not always the case. A 2023 report by London Sports shows that while over half of Londoners (54 percent) learned to swim at a public pool, one in ten (11 percent) have not learned to swim at all. The research

also conveys an unequal impact on distinct groups in London, as nearly one in five adults from lower socio-economic groups and ethnic minority groups have not learnt to swim. To enjoy wild swimming, everybody needs to be a confident swimmer and that's a bridge we need to cross at some point, leaving nobody behind. Through preventing drowning, swimming is the only sport that can save lives and I believe it should be a national health priority.

Even confident pool swimmers will find that swimming outside feels very different. While pools are heated to around 30°C, the water temperature in swimming areas like the Hampstead Ponds ranges from 0 to 24°C, depending on the time of year. There may not be lifeguards on duty, and you will not see the bottom. This might make you feel uneasy; don't worry, you'll get used to it. Wild swimming is a journey, and we all need to take it slowly, at our own pace. Sometimes, we don't necessarily know our limits. When the sun shines in the early days of spring, we feel buoyed by the approach of summer and yet, the water is still much colder than it looks. Be patient! It takes time to acclimatise to cold water. When you start swimming without acclimatising, it can be risky. I've seen my fair share of swimmers experiencing hypothermia or panic attacks when they start swimming outside. At first, I didn't know how to react or even what was truly happening. How can you tell someone is in trouble? It's not always obvious. It's maybe for this reason that, when the Serpentine Swimming Club offered open water lifeguard training in 2024, I volunteered. I wanted to know what to do in difficult situations, so I could help make swimming safe if needed. I learnt a lot about helping from dry land, reassuring struggling swimmers and helping them help themselves.

After learning how to look out for others, I'm back in the water looking out for myself. Water keeps me honest, it's a gauge of how I feel. When I feel good, it's wonderful. And in difficult times, it helps keep my mind off worries. Either way, it's a win-win.

Find more from Laure at frogmom.com or [@frogmomblog](https://www.instagram.com/frogmomblog)

HOW TO SWIM SAFELY



- 1 Before you get in, scan the area for exit points. Will it be easy for you to get out? Do you need to negotiate a ladder, a slope?
- 2 Never swim alone. Go with a friend.
- 3 When you feel reassured about the swim area, start where you can stand and take a few strokes. How does that feel? If it feels good, keep swimming. If not, skip ahead to point 7.
- 4 During the cold season, acclimatise to cold water and be mindful of how cold your body gets. Increase your time and distance in the water gradually.
- 5 Avoid hypothermia. It's better to get out when you feel great, than leave it too late. Your body keeps cooling down an hour after you get out of the water and you could be feeling the after-drop effects on dry land.
- 6 Dress in warm layers quickly after you get out, and have a warm drink.
- 7 If you don't feel confident in water, don't hesitate to attend adult swimming classes. There's no shame in learning how to swim later in life.
- 8 If you get into difficulty, get on your back and call for help.
- 9 Swim sober. Alcohol and swimming are a notoriously bad combination.
- 10 Enjoy yourself! Wild swimming is about feeling good in your body and your mind.

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LAURE'S LONDON SWIM SPOTS

WEST RESERVOIR WATER SPORTS CENTRE

This impressive conversion of historic water reservoirs is great for its close proximity to a bird sanctuary.

PETERSHAM MEADOWS, RICHMOND

This lovely stretch of the Thames (pictured left) is accessible by train. There are no lifeguards, so swim at your own risk and beware of boats and rowers.

SERPENTINE LIDO, HYDE PARK

This iconic central location can't be beat, but it does get crowded. It's open for public swimming during the summer months. Members swim year-round.

LOVE OPEN WATER, ROYAL DOCKS

Great for the industrial heritage, reminding us that London started out as a port. Brightly coloured headgear and towfloats must be used here.

HAMPSTEAD PONDS, HAMPSTEAD HEATH

The beautiful natural surroundings provide a break from city noises, but it can get very busy in the summer.

★ Sign the *Swimmable Cities Charter*, which champions the right to swim, at swimmablecities.org

EXPLORE ON FOOT



WALKING LONDON

by Michael Shilling

Walking through London's streets offers more than just a means of getting from point A to point B. It's a chance to explore the city's hidden gems, connect with its rich history, and improve your physical and mental wellbeing.

Here, Photographer and Ranger Michael tells us how Footways, a social enterprise that encourages people to walk more, is celebrating walking as an accessible, transformative experience for all.



Photo: Christopher Hope-Fitch

MAPPING A CITY FOR WALKING AND WHEELING

The Footways mission is to shift habits, raise the profile of walking, and identify infrastructure improvements to create people-friendly, enjoyable, and accessible cities. This has manifested itself in not only a digital network of Central London routes, but a series of printed maps, designed to make the city more walkable and encourage people to experience London at a human pace. Unlike conventional transit maps or road-centric navigation tools, Footways maps focus on quieter, greener, and safer pedestrian routes, linking transport hubs, key landmarks, parks, and cultural sites across the city.

My role in this project has been to amplify the wonderful work Footways' Co-Founders Emma Griffin and David Harrison have been doing, providing communications support, and capturing photography and video content to highlight the essence of the routes. The Footways team has worked tirelessly to identify pathways that offer a balance of utility and beauty, ensuring that walkers can enjoy both convenience, and the unique charm of London's neighborhoods.

Walking doesn't just reduce reliance on vehicles; it opens doors to discovering tucked-away alleyways, historic architecture, and local communities that might otherwise be overlooked.

THE SOCIAL SIDE OF WALKING

While I love nothing more than filming knowledge-packed vignettes with David while on my own private tour through London's history, the real joy is walking the routes with others, map in hand. When the Clerkenwell Footways map launched, a group of London National Park City Rangers and I took to the streets to follow the Green Link Walk sections from St Paul's to Angel.

As we traversed the city, the benefits of walking came alive in real time. Conversations flowed naturally, deepening connections, and sparking new ideas for community engagement. Even Mark, the Executive Director of LNPC, admitted many of the streets we navigated were completely new to him, despite being a Central London resident for a number of years.

The physical act of walking, especially in a group, has profound mental health benefits. It fosters mindfulness, reduces stress, and creates a shared sense of purpose.

During our walk, we paused to appreciate architectural details, discussed the history of certain landmarks, and marvelled at how seamlessly the route connected pockets of green spaces with bustling urban life. This blend of camaraderie, discovery, and physical activity epitomises what Footways and LNPC aim to achieve: to make London a city that values walking, not just as a mode of transport, but as a way of life.

WHY WALKING MATTERS

The benefits of walking in the city extend far beyond physical fitness. It's cost-effective, environmentally friendly, and enriching.

Each step reveals a story, whether it's the remnants of Roman London, the quiet charm of Georgian squares, or the vibrant energy of its markets. Walking allows for moments of serendipity – finding a cosy cafe, stumbling upon street art, or discovering a new favourite pocket park.

Through my work with Footways and London National Park City, I've come to see walking as an essential part of urban life. It connects people to their environment, their city, and each other.

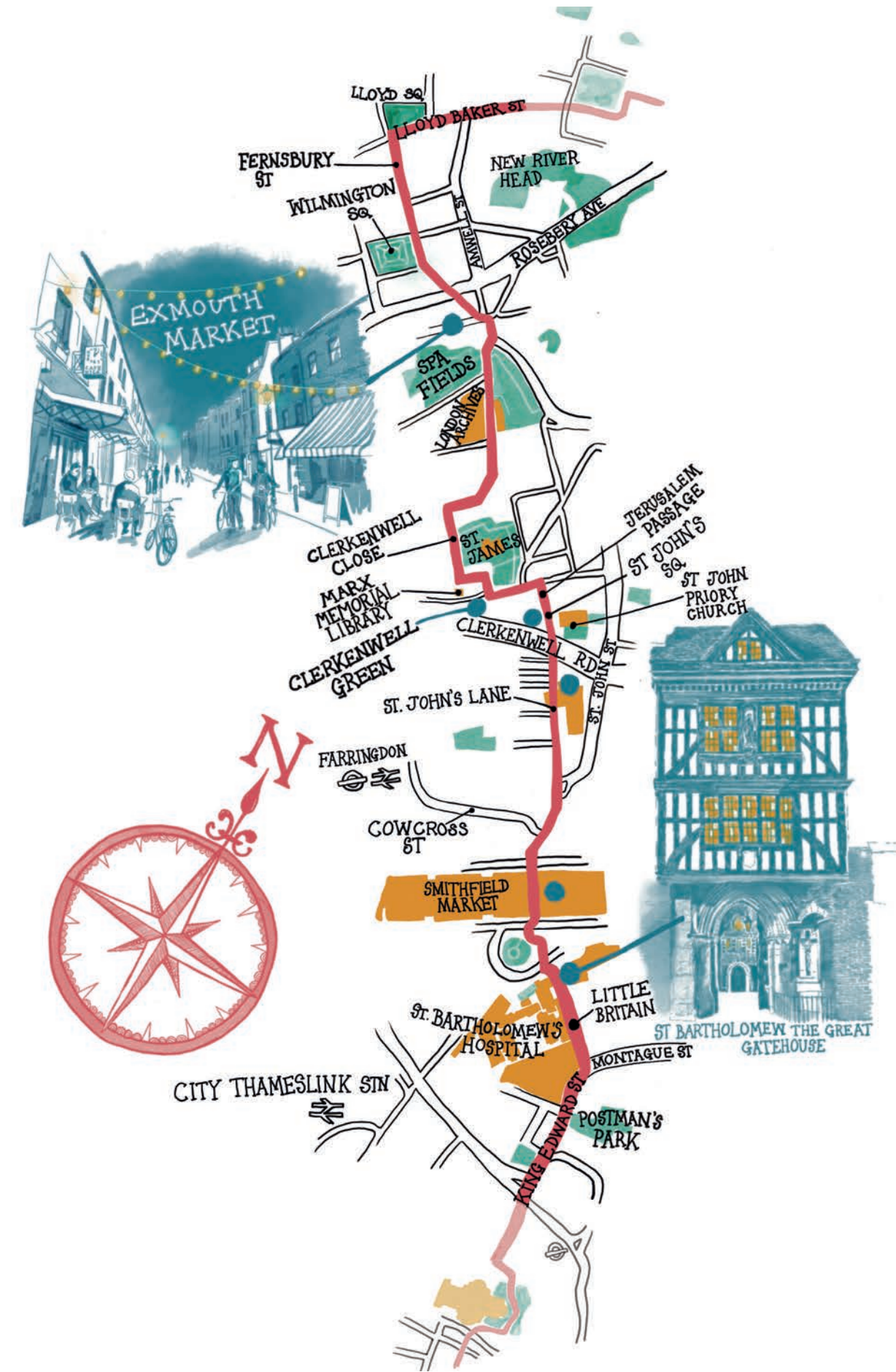
With initiatives like the Walk London Network, we can make walking more inviting and accessible, ensuring that everyone has the chance to experience the physical, mental, and cultural benefits of exploring London on foot.

Find more at footways.london or [@footwayslondon](https://twitter.com/footwayslondon)

DID YOU KNOW?

The Walk London Network is one of the largest walking networks of any city in the world. Find the eight Walk London routes on the next page.

Find out more at tfl.gov.uk/modes/walking/



THE GREEN LINK WALK – CLERKENWELL SECTION

This map, produced by Footways CIC and beautifully illustrated by Rachel Morris, highlights the Clerkenwell section of The Green Link Walk, London's newest walking route, designed to celebrate the city's history, green spaces, and quiet streets.

Take a journey through Clerkenwell's rich history of rebellion and innovation, where radical thinkers, inventors, and reformers have shaped the city for centuries.

The full Green Link Walk spans 15 miles, weaving through five boroughs, connecting nearly 40 green spaces – and several waterways – via peaceful, pedestrian-friendly streets. Along the way, it links seamlessly with some of London's most iconic walking routes, including the Capital Ring, Jubilee Greenway, Jubilee Walkway, Lee Valley Walk, and the Thames Path – offering endless opportunities to explore London on foot.

Follow the digital route or find out how to get a printed copy at footways.london/the-green-link

WALK LONDON

CAPITAL RING
A 78-mile route (divided into 15 shorter walks) through London's greenest suburbs.

GREEN LINK
This 15-mile walk links almost 40 areas of green space and several waterways.

LONDON LOOP
The London Outer Orbital Path spans nearly 150 miles and is split into 24, bite-sized walks.

THAMES PATH
A 40-mile stretch of easy, level walking on both sides of the River Thames.

GREEN CHAIN
A network of straight and circular walks across South East London.

LEA VALLEY
An 18-mile route along the Lee Navigation towpath.

JUBILEE GREENWAY
This path links the Olympic and Paralympic Games venues.

JUBILEE WALKWAY
A route linking some of London's most iconic landmarks.



WALKING ON LONDON'S WILD SIDE

Ingrina Shieh's Ranger Story

Ingrina Shieh is a Ranger based in Southwark. Along with Ranger Dipa Patel, Ingrina organises monthly walks in and around South London to create opportunities for Londoners to get outdoors, meet people, explore new areas, and benefit their wellbeing. She is passionate about promoting diversity, inclusion, and accessibility in the outdoors and believes narratives, representation, design, and breaking down barriers have important roles in doing that.

Ingrina was part of the Opening Up the Outdoors Changemaker Programme to bring more diversity into multi-day adventures. By day, she works on programmes supporting cities to accelerate climate action and scale low-carbon infrastructure.

We caught up with Ingrina for our Ranger Stories series, which we publish on the London National Park City blog. Meet more of our amazing Rangers over there!

What inspired you to become a London National Park City Ranger?

I loved the question, "What if London were a National Park City?" and all the possibilities it opened up for London, a city I've come to see as home. It was exciting to think about the city as more than a hub for culture, business, politics, and entertainment; it could be a giant park for people to discover natural wonders that often go unnoticed, to play in, to have access to the urban outdoors, and to rethink our relationship with nature. So when the call for Ranger applications came out, I knew I wanted to be part of the movement.

How are you making London greener, healthier, and wilder?

I started organising monthly walks in and around South London with Ranger Dipa to provide a space for Londoners to get outdoors, walk, and meet people for the benefit of mental and physical wellbeing. Occasionally we might add another aspect, such as foraging or other kinds of learning or experience, but the focus is mainly on enjoying walking outdoors.

Walks are usually between three and four hours long and fall on the third or fourth Saturday of the month. There is growing research about the increased benefits of being active in green versus grey spaces, so we walk through mostly green and blue spaces that offer respite from noise and air pollution. This is why there is a mix of routes based in London, Surrey, and Kent, accessible using public transport and within an hour's journey from Zones 1 or 2 of South London. Anyone, regardless of their walking experience, can come along and take part.

What has been your most memorable encounter with nature in London?

My favourite nature moments in London are clear winter mornings around sunrise. One morning, I'd cycled to work early and took a run around St James's Park. The sunrise was gorgeous and I could see so much because of the bare tree branches. There was a light frost on the grass and ground from the frozen morning dew, and the lake was half frozen, allowing the reflection of the park and sunrise.

What continues to motivate you on your Ranger journey?

It largely comes down to helping to shape a city where people can thrive, a city which nurtures and promotes biodiversity, and a city that is resilient. I did not grow up loving the outdoors or being outdoors very much. It took moving to a walkable city to discover that walking outside and being in urban parks are great for managing my mental and physical wellbeing. That kicked off my learning about the environment, ecology, and climate change. Exploring the outdoors gave me invaluable experience in understanding our role and impact in not only damaging our natural environments, but protecting, restoring, and enjoying them as well.

Being a Ranger means I can support initiatives to get Londoners outdoors in whatever way they want – whether it's to play sports, run, walk, garden, dance, commute, watch birds, help on a farm, or observe insects – and that's a huge motivation.

Read the full interview at nationalparkcity.london/ranger-stories

THERE'S A WALKING GROUP FOR EVERYBODY IN LONDON

WHEELS AND WHEELCHAIRS

A group of wheelchair users and skaters who meet on Saturdays in Battersea Park to enjoy the sensory rush of speed.
wheelsandwheelchairs.co.uk

MOJA COLLECTIVE

Organise walks connecting Black and Brown faces in outdoors spaces.
moja.collective

GAY OUTDOOR CLUB

An activity and social club for everyone in the LGBTQ+ community. Find walks in London through their website.
goc.org.uk

BLACK TRI TRIBE

A group empowering and inspiring people of colour to do triathlons. They also host walks in Brighton and London.
blacktritribe.com

WILD SOUTH LONDON

A community group hosting free walks and events to help people learn about and enjoy nature in South London.
wild_south_london

FENCES AND FRONTIERS

This group's Saturday walks aim to make London a welcoming, supportive, and inspiring place for refugees and asylum seekers to live in and settle.
fencesandfrontiers.org

WALK & TALK MOVEMENT

Easy, laid back, and supportive walks that build communities and encourage friendly chats.
walkandtalkmovement.org

EVERY BODY OUTDOORS

A group advocating for clothing, gear, and representation for plus size bodies in the outdoor movement.
everybodyoutdoors.co.uk

BLACK GIRLS HIKE UK

A group for Black women to explore the outdoors together.
bghuk.com

MENTAL HEALTH MATES

Volunteer-led, peer support groups that encourage people to get moving and talking for their mental health.
mentalhealthmates.co.uk

FLOCK TOGETHER

A birdwatching collective combatting the under-representation of people of colour in nature through walks and other events.
flocktogether.world

ESEA OUTDOORS UK

A group bringing together East and South East Asian outdoor enthusiasts and working to tackle racism in the outdoors.
eseaoutdoors.uk

RAMBLERS

Probably Britain's oldest walking charity. It's membership based and gives you access to thousands of local groups and free Wellbeing Walks.
ramblers.org.uk

WANDERERS OF COLOUR

A group working to increase access and participation in the outdoors for people of colour.
wanderersofcolour.com

COLOUR WALK

Every third Thursday of the month, creative people, who love colour and dressing up, walk from Spitalfields Market.
london.colour.walk

ROOTS OF BELONGING

Outdoor events and walks for people of mixed and dual heritage.
rootsofbelonging.org

THE PROPER BLOKES CLUB

A community group organising Walk and Talk events for men to break the stigma of discussing men's mental health.
theproperblokesclub.co.uk

ASRA CLUB

A group for Muslim women in sports and wellness. They host runs and walks, amongst other events.
asraclub.com

LONDON BLIND RAMBLERS

A membership group for blind and partially sighted people that meets regularly for guided walks.
londonblindramblers.org.uk

JOIN INGRINA & DIPAT FOR A MONTHLY WALK

On the third or fourth Saturday of every month, join Rangers Dipa and Ingrina for a walk in South London, Surrey, or Kent.

To be notified of future walks, email Ingrina at: ingrina.shieh@nationalparkcity.london or follow Ingrina on Instagram: [@agreeninn](https://www.instagram.com/agreeninn)





GROW FOR GOOD



Growing is good for you! Not only is gardening a satisfying and rewarding pastime that's good for your mental health, but if done with some consideration, it can be good for nature too. The plot of land you tend can provide shelter, food, and habitats for a whole host of wildlife and, if you're lucky, it might even provide you with some homegrown produce too!

London has the highest concentration of community gardens in the UK, many of which are helping fight food insecurity, tackling loneliness and greening urban spaces. Here, we shine a light on some of these gardens, along with some organisations, charities, and events you can get involved in and help grow.

MINDFOOD

MindFood are a small charity focused on supporting people to tackle stress, depression, and anxiety by reconnecting them with nature. MindFood teach people how to grow a wide range of fruit, veg, herbs, and flowers while becoming more mindful. In 2023, London National Park City funding enabled an extension to the charity's Saturday Sustainable Wellbeing sessions, where attendees work towards personal wellbeing goals while participating in gardening and sustainability tasks.

mindfood.org.uk

GROW URBAN FESTIVAL

Grow Urban Festival is a celebration of the remarkable individuals and projects dedicated to growing and greening London. It's a platform where urban gardeners, community growers, and sustainability advocates come together to share their knowledge, inspire one another, and showcase their remarkable work. Through workshops, demonstrations, and networking opportunities, this festival aims to empower and educate individuals from all walks of life.

[@growurbanfestival_london](https://www.growurbanfestival.london)

BLAK OUTSIDE

Blak Outside is a multidisciplinary creative collective providing culturally diverse and inclusive events. The collective host the Blak Outside Festival, an annual grassroots, intergenerational event supportive of working class social housing residents and the QTIBIPOC (queer, trans, intersex, Black, indigenous, people of colour) community. Founding Member Carole Wright is a Creative Urban Activist, Community Gardener and Beekeeper, who manages the Brookwood Triangle garden in Southwark.

[@blak_outside](https://www.blak_outside.co.uk)

HESTON ACTION GROUP

Since its inception in 2018, the Heston Action Group (HAG) Community Garden has grown from a small litter-picking project into a vibrant hub of environmental action and community spirit.

Located in the heart of Heston, this garden has become much more than a green space; it is a dynamic community project that engages local residents, schools, and volunteers in sustainable practices.

The garden offers a wide range of activities and opportunities that benefit everyone, from schoolchildren learning about sustainability to residents looking to green their own spaces.

"This garden is not just about planting trees and flowers – it's about community. It's like a neural network of nature, where everything is interconnected, and every contribution helps strengthen the whole," said one HAG member.

hestonactiongroup.co.uk

ROUEL ROAD COMMUNITY ORCHARD

As a Mentor for The Orchard Project – a charity dedicated to the creation, restoration, and celebration of community orchards – Ranger Lesley Wertheimer works across London, advising and giving workshops on orchard care and maintenance. Orchards require regular attention, and Mentors like Lesley help to not only maintain orchards, but ensure community members are involved, knowledgeable, and passionate.

One such orchard is in the Rouel Road housing estate in Bermondsey, where 24 fruit trees and 135 metres of fruiting hedge were planted by a multi-generational group of community members.

A number of events take place at the orchard, teaching people not just about the fruit trees and hedges, but other plants and wildlife too. Past events have included bulb planting, bird and bat box building workshops and community wassails.

Find out more about community orchards at theorchardproject.org.uk

WESTERN ROAD URBAN GARDEN

This project in Southall Green (pictured left) brought together residents and community groups to transform a once derelict site into a thriving green oasis.

"In Southall, as in a lot of areas of London, we have a lot of food poverty, food insecurity, and food bank use is going up, so when we were developing this space we thought, why not use it to grow things that people can eat? Not just for the beauty or the hell of it, but food that can be used constructively," said one member. The food grown in the garden is distributed to local organisations, food banks, and places of worship who provide food for people without homes or who are in need.

The group strive to reintegrate Western Road Urban Garden into the heart of the local community, fostering environmental awareness, and building climate resilience. Through enviro-learning opportunities and future endeavors, the aim is to create a sustainable haven that benefits all.

[facebook.com/SouthallCommunityAlliance](https://www.facebook.com/SouthallCommunityAlliance)

SPOTLIGHT ON: OBIE PEARL, LONDON NATIONAL PARK CITY RANGER



Obie is a Ranger based in South London, who has been involved in a diverse range of projects that involve building communities through gardening and food growing.

She is a Co-Director and Operations Manager at Black Farmers Market (soon to be rebranded as Black Growth) – a Community Interest Company (CIC) and grassroots organisation that has been creating empowering, joyful, and safe spaces for the Black community to connect through environmentalism and agriculture. The organisation advocates for land access, equality, and justice. They host farmers' markets in Brixton and wellness events in Myatt's Fields Park, attracting up to 3,000 people. This vibrant network includes farmers, holistic practitioners, entertainers, artisans, and food/drink vendors.

Obie also leads a green skills programme, called Natural City Living, at May Project Gardens in Morden, which offers free or donation-based workshops led by growing experts, bringing together diverse communities of all ages in a community-led retreat space.

Alongside all of this, Obie works with Incredible Edible Lambeth, who support local food growing, food entrepreneurs, and food activism.

BLACK GROWTH CIC

Obie is excited to announce that a team of female entrepreneurs, growers, and community supporters at Black Growth CIC are launching an urban farm in the heart of Croydon, South London.

Obie says: "The UK's environmental sector lacks diversity. Access to land and climate change disproportionately affects African, Caribbean, and global majority individuals/communities – particularly those living in poverty".

"In 2023, we partnered with Roots Allotments, a thriving hub where hundreds of growers with diverse skill levels practice agroecological growing. Through this partnership, we secured funding for a quarter-acre market garden. We're creating a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) vegetable box scheme that will provide affordable and cultural produce while offering educational opportunities and connections to nature.

Black Growth champions environmentalism and diversity in all systems, with a vision to build a regenerative food system that promotes community wealth and food justice.

With our successful track record of creating community hubs, havens, and hangouts – through our community events and diverse entrepreneurial experience – we're confident in our ability to create a thriving market garden that serves and impacts everyone in our community."

Find out more at blackgrowth.co.uk

★ Find more community gardens and gardening projects in London at londonfarmsandgardens.org.uk

MAKE YOUR WORLD A GREENER PLACE

by Michael Holland

Michael Holland is a Nature Educator, Author and Ranger based in Waltham Forest. He's on a mission to educate and inspire people from all walks of life about the powerful world of plants and the vital role they play in our daily lives. Here, Michael shares a brief introduction to gardening and growing that's suitable for everyone – whether you have a big garden or a small windowsill.



“Gardening is one of the best hobbies in the world. It's good for you, your neighbourhood, and for our planet! People have been gardening in one way or another for thousands of years, so you will be continuing an important and very long tradition.”

Photo: Michael Holland

HOW TO START GARDENING

GROW YOUR OWN HOUSEPLANTS FOR FREE

If gardening outdoors isn't an option for you, why not focus on houseplants, which can give an instant tropical or desert vibe to your home while purifying the air?

Some houseplants are much easier to care for than others, but good starting points are spider plants, snake plants, cacti, and pothos.

Learn how much light each of your houseplants need and remember not to overwater them.

Plants can be expensive but did you know that many different kitchen pips can grow into free houseplants, including citrus fruits? Here's how:

- 1 Three-quarters fill a small plant pot with moist compost.
- 2 Place seeds of lemons, oranges, satsumas, grapefruit, or clementines on the surface of the compost.
- 3 Cover with clear plastic film and stand in a warm place with a saucer underneath. After a few weeks, shoots should appear. Don't be put off if the seed coats go mouldy, just make some holes in the plastic to let excess moisture out.
- 4 Once large enough, the seedlings can be planted into their own larger pots (preferably in citrus compost). You're unlikely to get fruits in a hurry, but you'll have attractive plants with fragrant leaves.

JUST DO IT

Have a go, without feeling scared of failure. Things do go wrong sometimes (isn't that just like life itself?!).

DON'T RUSH

If you are lucky enough to have a garden of your own, then don't feel you have to rush into 'finishing' it. It can be good to do a few things while observing the garden over a year – this will give you a better idea of where the sunniest, dampest, frostiest, and driest areas are, helping you to determine the best place to plant things.

START WITH EASY-TO-GROW SEEDS

These seeds are easy to grow and, under the right conditions, will keep on giving: **Swiss Chard** has edible leaves and stems and will add a touch of colour to your garden. It's very nutritious and most species produce three or more crops.

Nasturtium is a trailing/climbing plant with peppery leaves, stems, flowers, and seeds. The flowers come in a variety of colours and are popular with pollinators, such as bees and hoverflies!

Calendula is good for humans and pollinators alike. It's useful for the skin and has edible flowers.

USE WHAT YOU HAVE

Upcycling saves money and is good for the environment. Cartons, bottles, and punnets all make decent containers for growing plants in. Just make sure there are adequate drainage holes in their bases (or small stones/grit if holes are impractical). These pots can be painted or decoupaged according to your style.

Find more from Michael at growingunderstandings.co.uk or [@pond_dipper](https://www.instagram.com/pond_dipper)

GROW WHAT YOU EAT

Grow what you enjoy eating and consider things that are rare and pricey in the shops, like heritage tomatoes, asparagus, blue potatoes, and unusual crops such as oca (an edible tuber that tastes a bit like a lemony potato).

USE SUPPORT

Ask friends for advice, join a useful online group, or an actual gardening club. Do your research – YouTube is marvellous for tips and tricks and there are some super Instagrammers sharing really interesting ideas too.

ALWAYS READ THE LABEL

Plants are suited to certain places, soil types, moisture and light levels. Just because you think a plant will look nice in a particular place, it doesn't mean it will thrive there. Always read the label on shop bought plants and seeds, and get to know your soil type.

GET INSPIRED

Visit community gardens and botanical gardens for inspiration. Take notes and photos of plant names, then create your own ideal garden mood board. An added bonus is that many of these places also sell plants and seeds!

TRY SOME HERBS

Herb plants bought from a garden centre can be kept on a windowsill and are mostly pretty easy to keep alive. Supermarket herbs are trickier to keep alive, as they are sown too close together and 'burn out' quickly. You can try to counteract this by separating the individuals into their own pots.

TRAVERSE THE RIVER



The River Thames is the longest river in England and the only river in Europe to have a national trail follow its entire length. The tidal Thames is home to over 100 species of fish and a number of recognisable marine mammals, including harbour seals, grey seals, harbour porpoises and even the occasional bottlenose dolphin.

The Thames is used as a nursery habitat, and a pathway between freshwater habitats and the open seas, which the Zoological Society of London say make the area “absolutely vital to the success of UK fish species and their conservation”.

Whether you're enjoying the River from the footpath, a Thames Clipper, a paddleboard, or even swimming in it, the Thames offers a huge number of activities!

DID YOU KNOW?

The Port of London Authority (PLA) allows swimming in the Thames upriver of Putney Bridge through to Teddington.

Find a swim spot (Petersham Meadows) on page 17.

We asked Illustrator and London National Park City Ranger Matt Ponting to illustrate a section of the Thames for the centre of this Paper. Turn to page 28 to find out about some of the things featured in his illustration, or keep reading to learn more about Matt.



Matt Ponting is an Illustrator and Ranger based in Newham. He uses art to make nature and urban environments accessible for all. Matt's disciplines are painting, printing, and sculpture, often resulting in jobs that incorporate maps, murals, and trails.

Matt says: “I am fascinated by local heritage and ecology and bring this into my work, as well as using the senses of the places and spaces. Through my practice I hope to create spaces that allow reflection and areas for conversations, as well as encouraging exploration and discovery of the local area”.

Find more from Matt: doodlingaround.co.uk / [@doodling.around](https://www.instagram.com/doodling.around)

★ For more tips, activities, facts, and advice, read Michael's books: *The Little Gardener's Handbook*, *A Jungle in Your Living Room*, *I Ate Sunshine For Breakfast*, and *Smart Animals*



1 DRAGON BOAT RACING ROYAL DOCKS

Four dragon boat clubs are based at Royal Docks Watersports Centre. The drums, shouting, and colourful boats make it an impressive and exciting sport to both watch and to compete in.
royaldockswatersports.org

2 WAKEBOARDING WAKE UP DOCKLANDS

London's premier wakeboarding centre offers a range of unique and exhilarating ways to enjoy the Royal Docks.
wakeupdocklands.com

3 FLOATING GARDENS ROYAL VICTORIA DOCKS

This garden provides a floating wetland habitat for a whopping 4,000 aquatic plant species.
royaldocks.london

4 RIVER NATURE ID RIVER LEA, CODY DOCK

Cody Dock is a creative quarter featuring community gardens and footpaths. See how many species you can find in the River Lea, then have a drink at the cafe.
codydock.org.uk

5 HIKING THAMES PATH

Thames Path stretches for 79.5 miles, so you could keep walking all day!
tfl.gov.uk/modes/walking/

6 WATCHING THE RIVER THAMESMEAD

7 LOW TIDE WALKS DEPTFORD CREEK

Creekside Discovery Centre is a charity working in Deptford Creek who host river and wildflower walks and talks.
creeksidecentre.org.uk

8 MUDLARKING BERMONDSEY

Unless you have a mudlarking permit, you'll have to make do with a visit to London's only permanent exhibition of mudlarking finds at Southwark Cathedral.
cathedral.southwark.anglican.org

9 POND DIPPING GREENWICH PENINSULA ECOLOGY PARK

An established and biodiverse urban wetland hosting many species.
tcv.org.uk/greenwichpeninsula

10 BEACHES

There are plenty of sandy beaches to relax on along this part of the Thames. Remember to check tide times!

11 WALKING WETLANDS & MARSHES BARKING RIVERSIDE

Discover the endangered, protected, and often hidden wildlife on the Wildlife & Wellbeing Trail.

12 THE LINE ART TRAIL NORTH GREENWICH TO STRATFORD

Look out for sculptures on this 8.3-km walk, ending at the Olympic Stadium.
the-line.org

13 SWIMMING BECKENHAM PLACE PARK

Swim with the dabchicks at this stunning lake in Lewisham's largest green space.
ptpcoaching.co.uk

14 PADDLEBOARDING LIMEHOUSE CUT

15 NARROWBOAT TRIP REGENT'S PARK

16 BIRD WATCHING EAST INDIA DOCK

17 SAILING DOCKLANDS WATERSPORTS CENTRE

Take a sailing course or book a swim at this Recognised Training Centre.
dswc.org

18 CANOEING RIVER RODING

Barking & Dagenham Canoe Club offer a variety of membership tiers.
barkingcanoeclub.co.uk

19 VIEWING FROM ABOVE IFS CLOUD CABLE CAR

Enjoy London from a different angle – 90 metres above the Thames.
tfl.gov.uk

20 FREE FERRY WOOLWICH

This free pedestrian and vehicle ferry has been running since 1889!
tfl.gov.uk

TAP INTO YOUR CREATIVITY



Creativity is a living, breathing expression of our innermost thoughts and feelings. And what could be more creative than nature itself: from plantlife that features the famed Fibonacci sequence, to the vibrant plumes and patterns of the UK's most colourful birds?

Marry creative pursuits with time spent in the natural world and you have an enlivening, sense-provoking experience like no other. Not sure where to start? The next few pages are filled with activities and stories to help inspire you.





GET CREATIVE WITH NATURE

by Miriam Habte Sellasie

Miriam is London National Park City's Communications Manager. Here, she shares four simple ways you can tap into your creativity while deepening your connection to the natural world.

JOURNAL

Journaling is a great way to organise your thoughts and make sense of the world around you. The quietude of nature is the perfect complement to this process.

There are no fixed rules on what your journal entries should look like – make it personal to you. A good way to start is by noting down the date, your location, and perhaps the weather, then fix your gaze on an animal, plant, or other natural feature to provide an added dose of inspiration.

So why not head to your favourite green-blue space, grab your journal and find a peaceful spot. Start drawing some of the things you see and note down some facts about them, or how they make you feel.

★ You don't need to draw if you don't want to (writing is creative too!), but if you're feeling nervous about sketching things, you could start by trying out Lauren's drawing activity on the next page ★ Look up the 'I Notice, I Wonder, It Reminds me Of' activity and use this to inform your journal

TAKE PHOTOS & MAKE FILMS

Taking photos and making films are great ways to capture nature at its finest. And you don't need to be a professional to flex your skills. Simply grab your smartphone and start snapping or filming anything that takes your interest in the green space of your choice.

★ Start with photos and stitch them together into a film showcasing your nature interactions throughout the day, week, month, or year ★ Hone in on one area of nature's movement (like a babbling brook) and film it for a satisfying piece of ASMR

GET ARTY OUTSIDE

Creating art in nature is a favourite pastime of artists both old and new. Grab a sketchbook and pencils/paints, a ball of clay, piece of twine, or any other art medium you fancy, and create a unique piece of art that pays homage to nature and your relationship with it. Embrace your inner child and have fun, without worrying about getting messy or who's watching.

If you're more into viewing art than making it, find some nature-inspired art in a gallery or try one of these activities:

★ Head to The Grapes pub in Limehouse and look for Antony Gormley's Another Time sculpture in the Thames – an attempt to bear witness to what it is like to be alive and alone in space and time ★ Research Andy Goldsworthy and use his art as inspiration ★ Host a self-guided street art tour and find ATM's wildlife paintings from pages 35-37

DRAW ALONG

with Lauren Cook

Lauren Cook is a Ranger based in Richmond. She's also an Artist, Stop-Motion Animator and PhD eDNA Scientist at The Natural History Museum.

Keen to encourage others to create, Lauren created a series of draw along tasks, designed to make drawing wildlife less intimidating and show that anybody can be creative. Try drawing the fox on the next page, then find Lauren's other draw along activities on Instagram.



"As an Artist, I believe that art can play an essential role in promoting sustainability and environmental issues.

I try to incorporate the value of visual learning and storytelling in my work, collaborating with other scientists and creatives to spread my love for nature and inspire others to take action to protect it. My stop-frame animations are designed to be short, digestible, and to provide information with a bit of humour and colourful visuals, making it more accessible and relatable.

Nature, drawing, and our wellbeing are linked. The act of drawing can be very therapeutic: focusing on the task at hand can give our brains a break from worries, help to reduce stress and improve concentration. Art can also be a way to express what you notice and experience in nature, and can spark or enhance our connection to the world around us.

I hope you enjoy this drawing tutorial and it helps show how anything in nature can be broken down into simple shapes. Remember: anyone can draw, and practice makes progress!"

Photo: Lauren Cook

RED FOX (Vulpes vulpes)

*** Grab your pencil and eraser! ***

1 Start with 3 overlapping ovals

2 Add 2 guidelines at the top and bottom

3 Two triangles touching the top line. Add shapes touching the bottom line - two guidelines and a circle

4 Add a wonky rectangle for the nose, and a sideways tear drop shape for the eyebrow

5 Zig zag lines to suggest fur. Start drawing the outline

6 Add the rest of the detail and rub out guide shapes. Leave some white for the shiny eye and nose

7 Colour any which way you fancy. This was done by layering colouring pencil :)

@lauren_colours

Find more of Lauren's draw along tutorials on Instagram: @lauren_colours



ART & NATURE CONNECTION

Helen Simms' Ranger Story

Helen Simms is a Ranger based in Tower Hamlets who has been involved with a range of projects, from rewilding for pollinators, to art and nature activities. Her work is underpinned by a desire to enable Londoners and visitors to (re)connect with the nature they are a part of.

By day, Helen is a Freelance Curator-Geographer and currently works for Bow Arts, managing Arts & Events. Having previously worked at The Line (London's first art walk) and UCL Urban Laboratory, Helen is passionate about using the power of art to engage us with critical environmental issues and inspire alternative ways of acting.

We caught up with Helen for our Ranger Stories series, which we publish on the London National Park City blog. Meet more of our amazing Rangers over there!

What inspired you to become a London National Park City Ranger?

As a student at Queen Mary University, I actually helped collect photos of wild London for an early campaign exhibition for London National Park City. I thought the National Park City was a fun idea but probably just pie-in-the-sky! However, the concept stuck with me and the more I thought about it, the more sense it made, until I knew I wanted to sign up as a Ranger myself. The opportunity to join a network of committed people and learn how to put ideas into action was hugely appealing and provided hope in a context of crises and eco-anxiety.

How are you making London greener, healthier, and wilder?

My work has fallen into three key areas – though of course they interlink:

Rewilding efforts to support pollinators and engage communities; including the Newham Greenway Trail and Thamesmead Pollinator Corridor.

Programming and assisting with art activities to promote nature engagement, including piloting the Wellbeing Walks on The Line, London's first art trail.

Creating self-guided walks in London for people to explore nature in the city themselves; including for the Royal Geographical Society, Go Jauntly and a free map/leaflet for London National Park City's first Visitor Centre in Fleet Street†.

Describe your proudest moment as a Ranger.

There are many special moments, from marching with fellow Rangers and over 60,000 other people at the Restore Nature Now march in June 2024, to seeing a coot settling onto a floating island I helped build on the Channelsea River. However, a recent example stands out – the unveiling of the beautiful signage designed by artist Ellen Strachan for the Thamesmead Pollinator Corridor. I was part of the panel that selected and commissioned Ellen to run community workshops and create the signs. This project encapsulated my passions perfectly: art, nature, and connecting people and places.

How can we encourage more people to 'Do London Differently'?

Telling our stories and singing out about the amazing and hopeful work that is happening in our National Park City is vital to inspiring others to find

opportunities to connect and act – and enjoy it too. There are so many initiatives and activities people can be a part of, many for free, so people don't have to make much of a change or put in a big effort to simply start.

What's next for you as a Ranger?

Next up I am supporting other Rangers with their projects. Ranger Katie Blake has a wonderful seed game she plays with adults and children to teach more about growing our own food. A small group of us are helping her to develop this and create a prototype with a view to creating a game that could be reproduced and used more widely. Ranger Paula Harvey pulled together an amazing Earth Day celebration in collaboration with the Lighthouse Gardens and Stratford Hotel and I will help build on the relationships established so we can devise and deliver more activities to enable Newham residents to enjoy and protect their borough.

Read the full interview at nationalparkcity.london/ranger-stories

Follow Helen at [@outdoor_mummy](https://twitter.com/outdoor_mummy)

†The London National Park City Visitor Centre is now located at 80 Mortimer Street



GET INVOLVED

VISIT

Visit the Newham Greenway Trail or the Thamesmead Pollinator Corridor and see how many different species of pollinator you can spot doing their thing.

WALK

Aiming to improve wellbeing, The Line's free guided wellbeing walks explore the art, wildlife, and heritage in East London. the-line.org

DOWNLOAD

Go Jauntly is a walking, nature connection, and navigation app. Download it to find, share, and walk hundreds of London routes. gojauntly.com

THINKING OF BECOMING A RANGER?
Apply at nationalparkcity.london/rangers

NOTICE WHAT'S AROUND YOU (AND WHAT ISN'T)

Getting to know our immediate surroundings is one of the easiest ways to connect with nature. Start by noticing just one thing. By paying attention to that one thing, you will inevitably notice more about the world around you. The more you notice, the more you'll begin to care. The more you care, the more you might want to do something to protect your patch of nature and do your bit for the planet.

Here are some tips to help you notice what's thriving around you and what isn't doing so well.



LONDON NATIONAL PARK CITY - 34



ZOOM IN

Use a magnifying glass, a hand lens, or the macro lens on your phone to take a closer look at something. Mosses, lichen, liverworts, and fungi are especially good to look at. An impressive variety of mosses can be found growing on brick walls, roofs, and pavements, so you don't even need to travel to a green space to find them!

TRY THIS

Join in with @LeifBersweden's #CouchTo10Mosses challenge on Instagram, which will introduce you to ten commonly found mosses and show you how to identify them.



USE YOUR SENSES

Stop to smell the flowers, listen to the birds, taste the rain, and look at the stars. Take off your shoes and feel the grass beneath your feet. Allowing yourself to be guided by your senses will not only help you find a moment of calm, but travelling at a slower pace means you're bound to notice new things you may otherwise have missed.

TRY THIS

Stand under a tree and listen to the sound of its leaves moving in the breeze. Can you hear any birds? Touch the bark, how does it feel? Sniff a leaf – does it remind you of anything?



FIND WHAT'S MISSING

Familiarise yourself with Red Lists, which identify threatened species. Take part in RSPB's Big Garden Birdwatch and notice what you're not seeing, as well as what you are. Find out if there are any local groups you can join who are doing their bit to help struggling species, such as swifts or stag beetles. If none exist, why not start one?

TRY THIS

Keep a list of different species you come across in your local area. You could start a nature journal (see page 30) or take photos and upload them to iNaturalist. Notice any patterns that start to emerge.

★ Sign up for Ranger Zabby's weekly Substack newsletter, Nature Notice Board, which will help you notice and connect with one new thing in nature each week: naturenoticeboard.substack.com ★ 'Get your eyes and ears in' with Ranger Keir's activity on the next page



LONDON NATIONAL PARK CITY - 35

Photo: ATM

PAINT THE TOWN WILD

Street art for London's wildlife by ATM

ATM is a Street Artist who paints threatened species in urgent need of protection. By highlighting the unique character and energy of each creature he paints, ATM aims to communicate their value and importance, as well as the need to ensure their survival. As he explains it, each species is "a vitally significant part of the magnificent interlocking web of life".

We caught up with ATM to ask him about his collaborations with London National Park City, and how he pairs species with locations.

TRY THIS:

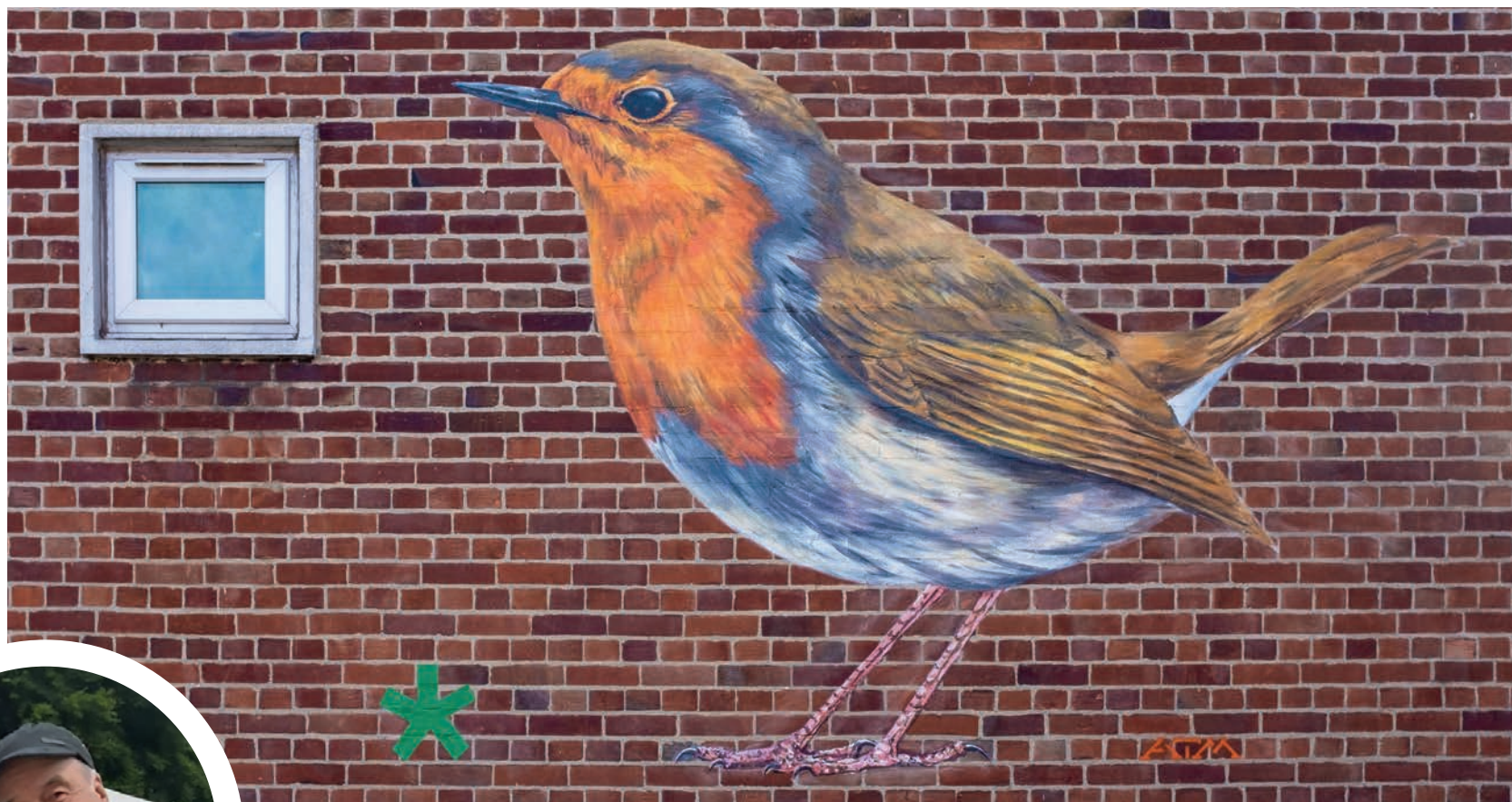
Focus on a single bird species commonly found in a local park. Learn its call, habits, and habitat, then set out to spot it.

Use apps like Merlin and eBird (both created by The Cornell Lab of Ornithology) to help you identify the bird's song or to record your sightings.

Once you're confident with one bird, learn a handful of common bird calls and identifications. This will make spotting rare or migratory birds more intuitive. Birding is about developing an eye for movement and an ear for subtle calls. Practise noticing changes in your surroundings to uncover what's hidden in plain sight.

– Keir Chauhan
(Ranger in Haringey)





Hi ATM! When did you first encounter London National Park City?

I first worked with Dan Raven-Ellison, who started the campaign to make London the world's first National Park City, at a Friends of the Earth 10xGreener project in 2018, on Daubeney Road E5, with the Daubeney Fields Action Group.

This involved engaging the residents of the whole street in greening it, including planting native flowers at the base of street trees, installing window boxes and nest boxes, making planters which incorporated hedgehog houses, and installing hanging baskets on the tower block. Several weekends were devoted to these group activities where everyone got to know each other; it thus had a really good social function as well as an environmental one. The idea was that the 10xGreener model would act as a template for other interventions in urban streets throughout the country. It also included a crowdfunder to employ a gardener to maintain what we started.

I was asked to paint a bird on the gable end of the terrace at the beginning of the street. We decided on a sparrowhawk as a good symbol for a healthy ecosystem – sparrowhawks require a thriving small bird population, which in turn require plenty of insect life and seeding plants. I painted the sparrowhawk as if flying down the side of the house, ready to quickly turn the corner to surprise any unsuspecting small birds, as this is characteristic of how they hunt as ambush predators (see it page 35).

The original plan was to paint a house sparrow, surrounded by sparrow nest

boxes, on the wall at the opposite end of the street, to complete the circle, but this hasn't happened yet.

You painted several pieces for supporters of a London National Park City crowdfunder too. Can you talk us through those?

The shieldbug was painted on Crayford Road in Tufnell Park to celebrate the collective regreening efforts on the residents' road. The Crayford Road Gardeners, a group of local schoolchildren, designed and painted their own logo alongside the London National Park City logo. Insects are so important, they're the basis for other life and we need to do more to create good living conditions for them.

The robin, painted on the Morland Estate, at Richmond Road, Hackney, was created for Charlie Peel of UrbanGood, who designed the first London National Park City maps. The Robin is one of our most endearing and popular birds, so much so that it was voted the UK's National Bird in a nationwide poll.

The fox was organised by Julian Blake, Chair of the Morland Blanchard Tenants and Residents Association – a big supporter of London National Park City, who wanted a companion piece on the estate for the robin. Hackney Council funded the new mural and asked residents to choose a subject, voting overwhelmingly for a fox. It can now be seen on Gayhurst Road.

The red kites you painted are incredibly striking – what can you tell us about those?

The red kites were painted at Wembley Stadium Railway Station for Quintain, as part of their Wembley Park development.

The company's first idea was for a celebratory image of a famous white police horse at the first FA Cup Final held at Wembley Stadium in 1923. I argued for a native species, in the spirit of London National Park City.

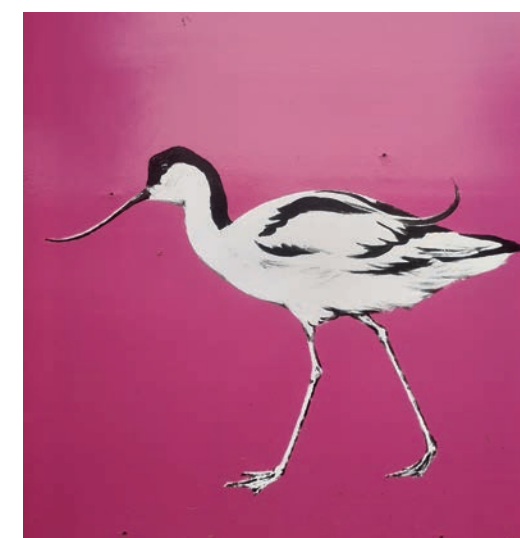
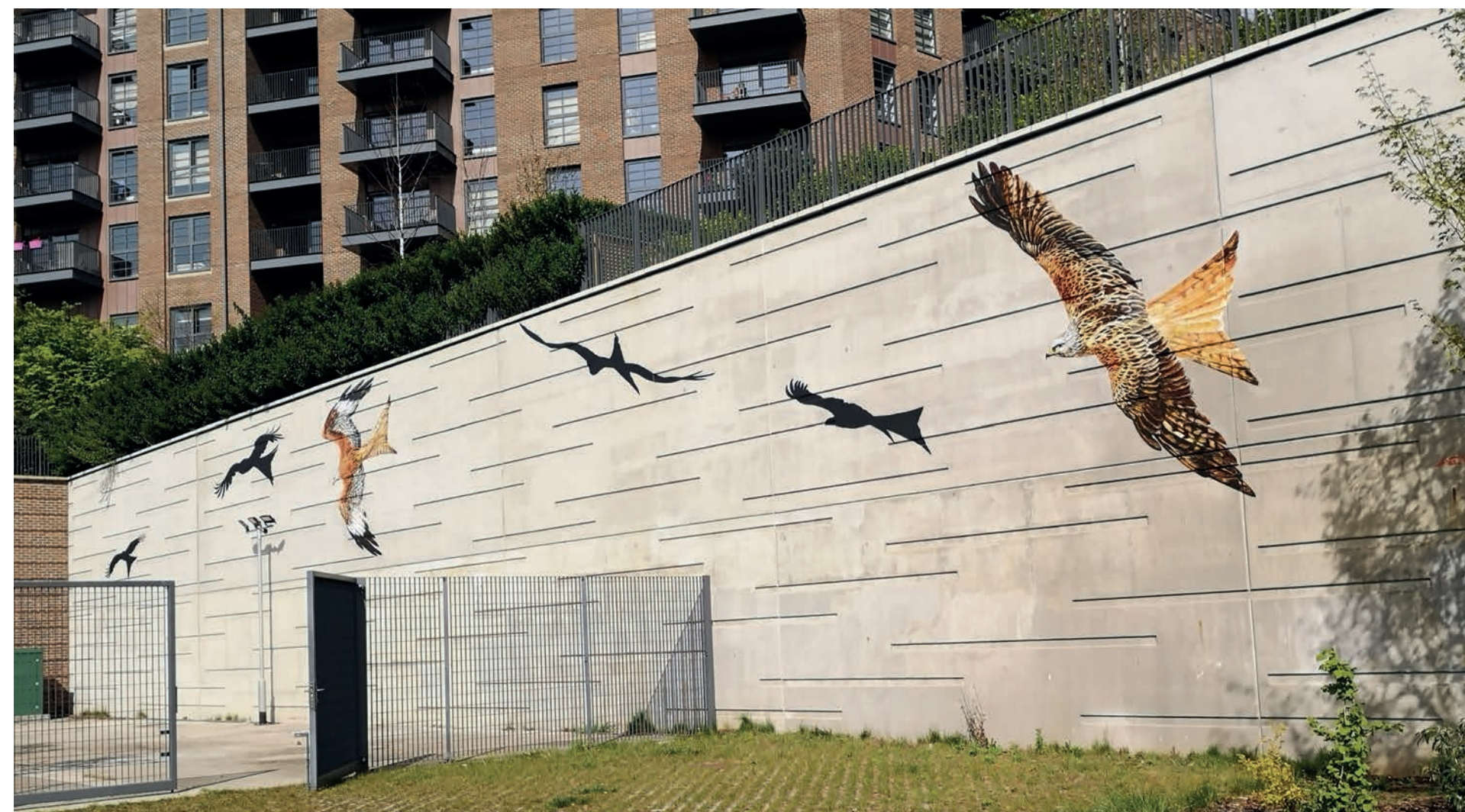
The red kite was perfect for this location, as the station is on the Chiltern line, and the Chilterns are a stronghold for the very successful reintroduction of this once near-extinct species.

I have seen red kites flying over Central London; maybe they can once again become common here, as they were in the Middle Ages.

Can you tell us about the mural project you worked on at Emerge East festival with London National Park City Rangers Kabir Kaul, Keir Chauhan, and Helen Simms?

The birds of Barking Riverside – a kestrel, short-eared owl, shelduck and avocet – were based on photos taken by the local Friends of Footpath 47 group, who are campaigning to protect the riverside from development. The birds were painted for London National Park City on hoardings of a Jerram Falkus social housing development at Newlands Park, Barking. These paintings show some of the species found on the very valuable and now increasingly rare riverside habitat of mudflats, saltmarsh, and grassland. The aim of this project, which included a stencil workshop for local residents to add their bird artwork to the hoardings, is to encourage more engagement with nature and efforts to protect what we have.

Find more of ATM's work at atmstreetart.com or [@atmstreetart](https://www.instagram.com/atmstreetart)



✳ Get out and discover ATM's London murals from these pages ✳ Take inspiration from ATM and paint or draw a species to represent your area of London ✳ If you draw a species that's in decline, make a 'missing' poster and post it on social media to raise awareness ✳ If you draw a species that's often seen, create a fact file about it to share with your neighbours



CREATING THE CITIZEN FRIDAY CAMPAIGN

by Gavin Fernie-Jones

Gavin Fernie-Jones is the Co-Founder of Re-Action, a collective of incredible organisations challenging the status quo with community-based circular solutions for the outdoor industry. In 2023, Re-Action launched an anti-Black Friday campaign, called #CitizenFriday. Here, Gavin talks us through the creation of the campaign and why focusing on being a citizen, rather than a consumer, is so fundamental.



In October last year, Rebecca from Tentshare sent a message to our community Discord channel at the Re-Action Collective. The message was about building a campaign to challenge Black Friday. My first response was that I couldn't really be bothered, as I already felt Black Friday would collapse and that it is an example of consumerism in the process of eating itself... which was the wrong reply! At first, I honestly just didn't want to give the day any headspace, I think it embodies everything that is wrong with our modern lives.

Later that night, at around 3AM, I was giving a bottle of milk to my youngest boy, Kai. At that moment, I wondered, what do we have to lose, running an anti Black Friday campaign? There's certainly everything to lose if we don't start demonstrating an alternative.

As one of the stewards of Re-Action, my role is to help facilitate action, to connect the dots between people and organisations. I'm generally the 'YES' person, so as I sat there in a sleepless state, my head started whirring.

The following day, I had a chat through my ideas with Heather, a fellow Re-Action Co-Founder. The ideas I'd come up with for a campaign were all a bit rubbish, and Heather posed some questions. What do we want people to do? If there is an alternative to the act of shopping, what would it look like? If not Black Friday, what else? We knew where to go to answer those questions. The Re-Action Collective was formed after reading the book *Citizens*, written by Jon Alexander, where you'll find this quote:

"Today, we are living deep inside the Consumer Story, a foundational story of humans as inherently self-interested and competitive. This story has shaped not just individual behaviour but organisational design, economic theory, the role of government, morality – all of culture and society. But this is not as inevitable and inescapable as it feels, for stories do change. Indeed, the Consumer Story has been in place for less than a century. Before this, we lived inside the Subject Story – as in "subjects of the king" – which lasted centuries, casting the majority of us as infant-like and dependent, with just a superior few capable of deciding and leading.

And now? Now the Consumer Story is failing. The Subject Story is resurgent. But at the same time, a new story – the Citizen Story – is taking shape across the world, and in every aspect of society. In the Citizen Story, we see ourselves as the creative, capable, caring creatures we are. We realise that all of us are smarter than any of us. We get involved."

We wanted to see the energy that is piled into Black Friday used to build the Citizen Story. To help us coalesce and connect, to create spaces for creativity, routes to involvement, and a way to demonstrate that we care. So, we settled on #CitizenFriday – Share, Repair, Get Out in the Fresh Air.

The reason we settled on this slogan is that we wanted to offer a meaningful alternative to Black Friday. Not to just call it out, but to suggest something we could all get involved with, to try something different.

The act of repairing is a great way to slow down but also a way of rebelling. It is a conscious effort to be part of creating and repairing things in a throwaway society.

Sharing can mean many things: physically swapping things with friends and your community, sharing your time at a workshop, or volunteering.

And getting out in the fresh air is a great way to stimulate your body to produce dopamine. But better than that, being outdoors also makes your body produce serotonin (a hormone associated with happiness, focus, and calmness), and oxytocin (the love and connection hormone). In addition to producing these lovely feelings in us, we can also increase our vitamin D levels and reduce our exposure to toxins too. All a great antidote to those urges to shop!

Repairing, sharing, and getting fresh air are not only good for us, but are ways to rebuild human's connection to nature. They are a key building block towards caring for all living things.

Find out more at re-action-collective.org/citizen-friday or [@re_action_collective](https://twitter.com/re_action_collective)

✱ Join in with #CitizenFriday year-round by taking some time on Fridays to share, repair, or get out in the fresh air ✱ Take a photo or record a video and share it on social media using the hashtag #CitizenFriday to encourage others to take part



SHOW YOU CARE THROUGH REPAIR

REPAIR IS A RADICAL ACT

by Elly Platt

Elly Platt is a Ranger based in Sutton, where she focuses on river conservation and textile pollution awareness.

By day, Elly works as a Textile Artist, drawing inspiration from the River Wandle's history and current ecological challenges. Her art uses discarded textiles to highlight environmental problems and the issue of fast fashion. Here, she explains how repairing our belongings can help us care for the environment.



✱ Visit the Wandle Trail or your own local river and find out how you can help repair the waterways ✱ Do some visible mending next time you find a hole in your clothes ✱ Share your skills by volunteering at your local repair cafe

“Seeing ourselves as a part of the natural world is a major step towards changing our consumer habits.”

In a society where we're bombarded with adverts for the latest 'must haves', where we're busy and stressed with little or no time for ourselves, it's easy, convenient, and often cheap, to buy a new item when an old one is damaged or broken, throwing the old item away.

But where is 'away'? A local landfill or incinerator? The beaches of Accra in Ghana, where many of our textile waste 'donations' end up?

The overproduction of consumer goods, especially clothes, and the rapidity with which we discard them, is becoming a huge pollution problem. A dump of unwanted clothing in the Atacama Desert in Chile is visible from space!

Repair is, therefore, a radical act. When I choose to repair an item of clothing, I'm changing my relationship with that item. An old jumper becomes more than just 'stuff', it becomes a possession I've decided to take responsibility for. As I repair it, I stitch the story of our relationship into the garment: where it's been and how I've worn it.

The act of repair forces me to slow down. I can't doomscroll on my phone with needle and thread in hand. The whirr of the sewing machine drowns out the chant of 'Buy New! Buy Now!'. And as I

sew, I can contemplate other things in need of repair, like our relationship with the natural world.

50 years ago, a group of environmental activists in South West London decided that they needed to repair the River Wandle. This beautiful chalk stream had been declared a "dead" river, but with help from stakeholders all along the river catchment, they restored the waterway to a haven for nature, creating the Wandle Trail so people could enjoy the river, develop a relationship with it, and learn to care for it.

Repair is often an ongoing task, as I realise every time I don a pair of South East Rivers Trust waders and slide into the river. Consumer culture and capitalism don't teach us to value nature, so some are careless with it. Anywhere can be an 'away' for your unwanted items if you don't feel a love for a place or a connection to it. But more people, of all ages and backgrounds, do love the river and perform their own acts of care and repair.

Seeing ourselves as a part of the natural world is a major step towards changing our consumer habits. Once we see our clothes as precious raw materials that have to be grown or extracted, then pass through numerous processes involving large volumes of water and energy – not to mention hardworking but underpaid human hands – they become less disposable.

Follow Elly for more tips:
[@takeitupwearingitout](#)



Photos: Elly Platt



REPAIR & CARE

CLOTHING REPAIR CAFE, LONDON NATIONAL PARK VISITOR CENTRE

Elly is running a free Clothing Repair Cafe at the London National Park City Visitor Centre for anyone who wants help repairing beloved and hard-working items of clothing. Find dates and times on our website: nationalparkcity.london

LOCAL REPAIR CAFES

If you can't make it into Central London with your repairs, have a look for a Repair Cafe in your local area. These are springing up all over London, and will often have people on hand who can help you with repairs to other consumer goods, like electricals. repaircafe.org

THE RESTART PROJECT

If you're feeling frustrated by the lack of opportunities for fixing electronic gadgets, check out The Restart Project and find out how to support their global Right To Repair campaign, which aims to change regulations and make our belongings easy and affordable to repair. therestartproject.org

FASHION REVOLUTION

If you're searching for tutorials on how to repair your clothes, Fashion Revolution has a selection of video how-to guides on their website, where you can also find out about their campaign for a fairer and more transparent fashion industry. fashionrevolution.org



SHARE & GROW TOGETHER

COMBATting ECO-ANXIETY THROUGH NATURE-BASED VOLUNTEERING

by Nina Lovelace

Nina Lovelace is a Ranger based in Hackney. She helps Londoners of all ages connect with nature for health, wellness, fun, and resilience.

Here, she tells us how volunteers share their time to make London greener, healthier, and wilder, through her Community Interest Company, Hackney Outdoors.



In today's world, it can be hard to stay positive about the climate. With news of devastating wildfires and a general apathy towards meeting climate targets, eco-anxiety feels all too real. However, one powerful way to counteract this feeling is through nature-based volunteering. Not only does volunteering benefit your physical health, but it can also improve mental wellbeing. Few things feel better than making a direct, positive impact on your community and the environment.

At my Community Interest Company, Hackney Outdoors, we work at the grassroots level to 're-nature' primary school playgrounds. By collaborating with schools and students, we develop plans to transform these spaces with nature. We then invite corporate volunteers to join us in bringing those plans to life. Once the changes are made, we continue to support the schools by launching nature or urban forest school clubs, where children and staff can explore, care for, and appreciate their new green spaces – creating long-term benefits for both people and the planet.

During this process, we bring together a wide range of individuals to share in the experience of nurturing a positive, new environment. The journey typically spans several years, starting with planning. Teachers, students, and I work together to design the transformation; it's an incredibly fun and engaging experience. We use 'habitat heroes' resources from the National Education Nature Park programme to decide which habitats to introduce and have fun coming up with names for plants – "Fang" is a popular choice for a newly introduced nettle!

Once the plans are in place, we partner with a corporate group to supply volunteers who help implement the changes. Volunteers have helped us strip away astroturf, build deadhedges, install ponds, propagate ivy greenscreens, and much more. They take pride in seeing the impact of their work, and it's a great way for teams to build relationships and enhance their teamwork. Many volunteers also take the eco-skills they've learnt back home, helping to increase biodiversity beyond our project sites.

The final step is launching outdoor clubs and educational programmes, where students can get their hands dirty, explore nature, and learn new eco-skills. The children plant trees, create habitats, and monitor the health of their new urban wildlife oasis. These sessions are often so popular that they have a ripple effect: parents and teachers are inspired to get involved, and children's excitement spreads to the wider community.

We all have nature-based memories from our childhoods – whether it's feeling the soft touch of a pussy willow catkin or savouring the hidden nectar of a deadnettle flower. By creating these spaces, we help children create their own memories, while fostering a deep, lasting appreciation for the natural world. And in the process, we all grow together.

Follow Nina to learn more about Hackney Outdoors @hackney_outdoors



From astroturf to diverse forest school habitat: William Patten Primary School before and after Hackney Outdoors volunteers

SHARE YOUR TIME & SKILLS

Getting involved in volunteering is a great way to connect with nature. Ask your workplace to sign up to a corporate volunteering programme, find individual opportunities, or check out these organisations, who combine volunteering with outdoor activities.
nationalparkcity.london/volunteer

GOODGYM

A community of people who get fit by doing good. Volunteers run, walk, and cycle to help local community organisations and isolated older people by doing practical tasks, like planting trees or moving furniture.
goodgym.org

PLANET EARTH GAMES

Sign up for events, activities, and experiences – both in person and online – which will empower you to connect with nature, take climate action, and support your wellbeing through physical activities, like walking or cycling.
planetearthgames.org

GREEN GYMS

The Conservation Volunteers' Green Gyms are fun, free, outdoor sessions where volunteers transform local green spaces with the guidance of trained TCV leaders. It's also a great way to meet new friends and neighbours!
tcv.org.uk

✳ Thinking of becoming a Ranger? Apply at nationalparkcity.london/rangers

“When you give people the knowledge of what can be found in parks, they become more accessible and more equitable for everyone.”



GET OUT IN THE FRESH AIR



We've shared a wealth of ways to help you connect with nature throughout this Paper, but the best way to start is by simply stepping outside. Here's one last article and a tree treasure hunt to inspire you...

FIND FRUIT TREES WITH DIVYA

PERSIMMON TREES, IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM GARDENS

The Imperial War Museum Gardens not only host the beautiful Geraldine Mary Harmsworth Orchard, but also houses the most magical row of persimmon trees in London. Persimmons taste like nature's golden honey – sweet, jammy, and smooth, with a hint of warm spice. I first tried them in Portugal and never thought I'd see them growing in London. The best time to see these trees is October/November, where you'll find huge orange fruits hanging in the trees, but do visit throughout the year to see the branches transform from empty to bountiful. **what3words: test.bath.chop**

OLIVE TREES, CRAWFORD STREET, MARYLEBONE

If you want to see the chunkiest of black olives, you must have a walk around Crawford Street in Marylebone. This street is lined with elegant olive trees that remind me just how resilient and beautiful the nature in our city can be. There's a lovely courtyard in front of St Mary's Church, which reminds me of my walks back home in Madrid, Spain. These trees are best viewed in autumn if you want to see the magnificent black olives on the branches, but they are beautiful and silvery green all year round and well worth a visit. **what3words: trees.pulled.sheets**

MEDLAR TREES, REGENT'S CANAL, KING'S CROSS

It's hard to beat a walk along the canal from Victoria Park to King's Cross. At the right time of year, there are brambles and other fruits to enjoy on the way, but I'm especially fond of a beautiful medlar tree on the towpath. This ancient tree, whose fruit was once a staple of royal feasts, now grows semi-invisibly across London. Not a single one of my friends knew what it was when I showed it to them, so do me a favour and familiarise yourself with the medlar and its funny looking fruit. Once you do, you'll understand why it's also called 'dog's arse'. Don't let that put you off though, once bletted, medlars make a delicious jam. **what3words: stud.slices.artist**

THE MAGIC OF FRUIT TREES IN LONDON

by Divya Hariramani

Divya Hariramani is a Ranger based in Tower Hamlets. She is a Renewable Energy Consultant and a Modern-Day Urban Fruit Forager. Her project, Fruity Walks, maps out fruit trees in London and tells the stories of the people who plant and care for them. We asked her to tell us how Fruity Walks began and what her vision for a greener, healthier, and wilder London is.

Did you know there are fruiting lemon, pomegranate, and avocado trees in Zones 1 and 2 in London? Pretty wild, right?! I certainly had no idea it was even possible for these trees to grow here. It was in that moment of realisation that Fruity Walks was born.

The initial concept behind Fruity Walks was the novelty of finding these more unexpected species within the city centre. I created an Instagram page, inspiring people to pay more attention to their surroundings while going from points A to B during their day. This has evolved slightly into more of an emphasis on understanding the stories behind these trees, how they arrived here, and the people that planted them.

Even at the beginning of this project, it was encouraging to see so many people being supportive and sharing locations of fruit trees they'd seen in London. One day, I got a tip that there was a grapefruit tree growing near Battersea in someone's garden, so off I went to find it. After taking some pictures of it, as I was about to leave, the owner of the tree appeared, taking her bins out, and we started talking. She told me she'd brought the seedlings of this tree from Grenada 50 years ago to remind her of home. It shifted my perspective, taking the emphasis off the trees themselves and thinking more about the people who grew them. I made it my goal to find the stories behind these trees.

Being an immigrant to the UK myself, I felt instantly the feelings the woman with the grapefruit tree described – the universal feeling of comfort at finding familiarity in a foreign place.

I have been a London National Park City Ranger in Southwark since 2021 and made the move to Tower Hamlets in mid-2023. Through the connections I've built from London National Park City I have been able to realise my passion for creating more spaces for community orchards and making existing orchards more welcoming and accessible, striving to continue greening London, with healthier spaces for all. I've been very lucky to collaborate on a life-changing project called the Rouel Road Community Orchard in Southwark (*find out more about the Rouel Road Community Orchard on page 23*).

My vision for a greener, healthier, and wilder London would include having dedicated orchards at every single public park. Areas that were clearly signposted and labelled as you entered. When you give people the knowledge of what can be found in parks, they become more accessible and more equitable for everyone. To feel comfortable walking into these spaces gives people the power to enjoy them fully.

Planting more community orchards and fruit trees is incredibly important, especially getting younger generations out in nature, understanding where their food comes from, and being active participants in their community. When people understand and witness the patience and effort it takes to grow food, it makes them care. Wasting food becomes a lot harder when you've been patiently waiting to eat that apple for an entire year.

Community orchards are also an incredible tool for community cohesion. They bring neighbourhoods together, out



in nature, year round. Orchards create a sense of common purpose: making the space thrive so everyone will be able to enjoy the bounty during the harvest.

My interest in fruit foraging started in my childhood. My mum comes from a small village in Spain called Garcillán, where we spent a lot of our summers on my family's vegetable farm. Early on, I learnt where food comes from and the patience and effort it requires to grow, so I've always been aware of my surroundings and been quick to spot food growing around me.

During the pandemic, when we were all forced to slow down, I started paying more close attention to my neighbourhood in Bermondsey during my walks to the park. When the world felt frozen in a very uncertain standstill, I found a lot of comfort in seeing the trees move on and bloom, flower, and grow their fruits. It gave me something to look forward to, knowing that with patience and time – no matter what else happened in the world – the apples would grow, and I'd get to taste them at the end of the summer. I wanted to capture that and help others identify their local fruit trees so they could feel that sense of possibility as well.

Find more London fruit trees: [@fruitywalks](#)

✳ Find some urban fruit trees and taste their fruit ✳ Forage for blackberries and make jam ✳ Find your local community orchard at [theorchardproject.org.uk](#) ✳ Volunteer with Trees for Cities: [treesforcities.org](#)

THE STATE OF LONDON NATIONAL PARK CITY 2025

by Mark Cridge, Executive Director of the National Park City Foundation and London National Park City

London became the world’s first National Park City in July 2019, the culmination of a grassroots campaign, which all began when a group of friends and colleagues got together and asked “What if we imagined our city as a National Park City?”.

The ceremony at City Hall, hosted by the Mayor of London, brought together over 260 organisations from every facet of the capital city. It represented individual Londoners, community groups, city and national government, businesses and every London Borough, along with national and international environmental institutions, including Natural England, National Trust, the City of London, Local Governments for Sustainability, World Urban Parks, Salzburg Global Seminar, and the Greater London Assembly.

In the years since that initial launch, London National Park City has become a vibrant, active, and supporting convenor of practical grassroots and community-led action to support local nature recovery in neighbourhoods across the capital. The National Park City Foundation is the charity (1173267) who coordinates and supports the grassroots movement across London, to deliver the shared commitments and ambition outlined in the Charter of the London National Park City (*see back cover*).

Our charity now works across London, celebrating and supporting the work of thousands of individuals and organisations actively making London greener, healthier, and wilder.

We attract, recruit, empower, and support a diverse community of volunteer Rangers within every London Borough capable of supporting communities and making their neighbourhoods greener, healthier, and wilder.

In doing so our aim is to make our city a place where people and nature are better connected, by building the capacity, reach, resource, skills, and confidence of our volunteer Ranger community in every London neighbourhood.

A WHOLE LANDSCAPE APPROACH

London National Park City is about the whole place and landscape, that takes into account all of the human and non-human activity across each of London’s 33 Boroughs, encompassing the green belt, the watersheds of the 41 rivers across London, and the 49.7% of London that can be classed as green and blue space. Until London became the world’s first National Park City, cities and urban areas were the only form of ecosystem that lacked a form of National Park status.

The National Park City story helps us to recognise just how valuable, important, and significant urban ecosystems can be. In becoming a National Park City, London has taken the lead in helping to connect people with nature where they are.

This is especially urgent, not least because the climate and biodiversity crises are significantly driven by people’s disconnection from nature, especially in cities.

When people and communities are connected with nature, they are more likely to exhibit pro-environmental behaviours and take action to mitigate climate change and biodiversity loss. Re-connecting people and nature is therefore a crucial and timely intervention as set out in our Charter of the London National Park City.

Since establishing our Ranger programme in 2020, our 130 volunteer Rangers are active in every borough helping Londoners understand how urban nature is important and diverse, providing influence, inspiration and practical ways for people to nurture and protect nature within their communities.

We have shown how we can establish and grow a generous, active, participatory, community of empowered citizens, each of whom is capable of leading nature- and biodiversity-enhancing activities within their own communities, working with other Rangers, and supporting the local groups they work with.

LED BY THE GRASSROOTS

In line with the diverse and broad commitments set out in our co-created Charter of the London National Park City, we’ve been able to show how a creative-, culture-, and neighbourhood- led approach is so important in learning from the rich diversity of communities across the capital.

Our small staff team and dedicated Trustees work with hundreds of volunteers to support practical urban greening activities and explore how best to reach and engage people with nature through art, sport, and culture. We’re led by the priorities of our Rangers who are best placed to identify and undertake the most valuable projects for their local areas.

We continue to extend our commitment to diversity and inclusion, and we explicitly operate as an anti-racist organisation, and each year contribute to the RACE Report, which seeks to address the under-representation of minority ethnic people in the environmental sector. We record full diversity data for our staff, Trustees, and volunteer Rangers to help us identify where we need to improve how we represent the communities we serve.

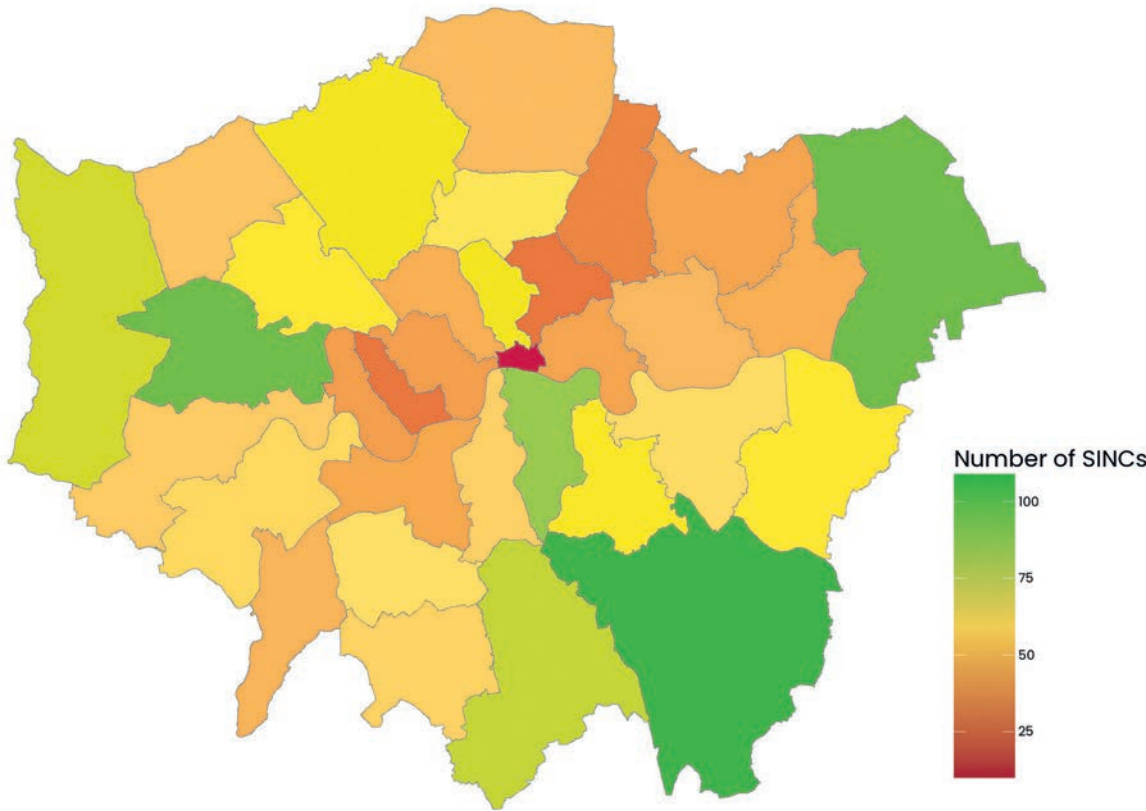
We’ve set the stage for a broader and deeper partnership for London National Park City to be established and activated over the next three years, focused on expanding the effectiveness and value of our volunteer Ranger community, working with community partners and local authorities in key London Boroughs, and more explicitly sharpening our focus around engaging the public in Local Nature Recovery within their own communities.

While there is much to celebrate in how the London National Park City story has helped provide a narrative bridge connecting many different communities and initiatives across the city, there is much more to be done. Our rivers remain polluted, we’re losing our front gardens at a frightening rate, too many communities lack access to good-quality green space, our parks are woefully underfunded, and the urgent demands of housing provision too often put existing biodiversity and nature at risk.

Next we’ll explore the extent of London’s biodiversity through an increasing number of identified sites of importance for nature conservation, and how you can take the lead within your own community to support local nature recovery.



SITES OF IMPORTANCE FOR NATURE CONSERVATION (SINCS)



Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCS) are London’s equivalent of Local Wildlife Sites, spaces recognised for the important habitats they support.

Although this is a non-statutory designation, SINCS are still afforded a high level of protection within the planning system. Development that negatively impacts a SINC will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances and where mitigation can be proven from the beginning.

As of February 2025, there were 1,683 SINCS in London. Beloved London parks like the Lea Valley are accessible SINCS. Many are biodiverse reservoirs of nature, supporting ‘designated species’ which are protected in national legislation and local policy.

The table below shows the maximum number of unique ‘designated species’ which have ever been recorded within an individual SINC for each borough. Statistics are calculated from Greenspace Information for Greater London CIC’s SINC database and Species dataset.

Borough	Number of SINCS	Highest number of Designated Species*
Barking & Dagenham	38	300
Barnet	67	136
Bexley	62	300
Brent	62	184
Bromley	109	117
Camden	38	184
City of London	10	300
City of Westminster	33	300
Croydon	83	85
Ealing	101	184
Enfield	41	271
Greenwich	55	300
Hackney	24	85
Hammersmith & Fulham	33	300
Haringey	60	271
Harrow	44	77
Havering	101	300
Hillingdon	80	184
Hounslow	47	300
Islington	67	184
Kensington & Chelsea	24	300
Kingston upon Thames	39	300
Lambeth	49	300
Lewisham	64	300
Merton	56	159
Newham	40	300
Redbridge	35	211
Richmond upon Thames	54	300
Southwark	93	300
Sutton	50	194
Tower Hamlets	35	300
Waltham Forest	27	271
Wandsworth	36	300

* Large SINCS, like the River Thames or Grand Union Canal, straddle multiple boroughs. This results in many boroughs possessing the same maximum species count.

In London, SINCS are designated as a hierarchy of grades.

Sites of Metropolitan Importance are selected on a London-wide basis.

Sites of Borough Importance (grade 1 and 2) are selected from candidate sites within each borough.

Sites of Local Importance are the lowest tier of sites, selected to redress any remaining local deficiencies.

Selection of, and changes to sites is the responsibility of the local planning authorities. The London Wildlife Sites Board provides guidance on selecting and confirming SINCS, designed to ensure consistency and a process that is compliant with various policy frameworks.

View GiGL's interactive SINC map to search for accessible wildlife sites:

Find out more about recording and surveying on GiGL's species dataset webpages:

The maps, information, and data on this page was provided by Greenspace Information for Greater London CIC (GiGL). GiGL is the official custodian of information on London’s more than 1,600 sites of importance for nature conservation (SINCS) – their citations and boundary information.

WHAT’S NEXT FOR LONDON NATIONAL PARK CITY?

by Mark Cridge, Executive Director of the National Park City Foundation and London National Park City

As we go into the next five years of London National Park City, we will continue to strengthen our ability to support a growing grassroots movement improving lives, health, and wellbeing in neighbourhoods across London.

We’ll celebrate London as a National Park City, inspiring Londoners to connect with and care for urban nature within their local communities, understanding the value and benefits of nature connection.

We’ll expand the variety and diversity of our active community of Rangers, along with individual Londoners, community groups and public and private sector organisations who are delivering the aims of our Charter.

We’ll support a greater number of Rangers, and Ranger-led projects and events within local communities through a participatory, generous, and active community.

We’ll develop and enhance the skills, ability, and confidence of Rangers to support change within their local communities, sharing through peer support, training, resources and funding.

We’ll enable whole communities to take practical climate and biodiversity action together within each London Borough and individual neighbourhood.

And to support all of this we’ll ensure the effective operation of our charity, the National Park City Foundation, through good governance, financial management, effective operations, and support for staff, Trustees, and volunteers.

COULD YOUR BUSINESS SUPPORT LONDON NATIONAL PARK CITY?

Find out how at nationalparkcity.london/ingoodcompany

VOLUNTEER RANGERS LEADING THE WAY

Our Rangers programme is the heart and soul of London National Park City. If you’re interested in becoming a Ranger you can find out more at nationalparkcity.london/rangers. We’ll be working towards having 300 active Rangers across London by the end of 2026, with a long-term goal to have at least one Ranger in each of London’s 704 wards.

Over the past year, we’ve been working with each Ranger to establish their commitment going forward and work on an individual plan for how they each will contribute towards our Charter commitments, and how we, as an organisation, support them.

Each Ranger benefits from:

- An extended peer learning induction over the first six weeks when they join.
- An expanded curriculum of training and learning led by groups of Rangers themselves, who also lead on a variety of ‘working groups’ such as schools, education and young people, upcycling and recycling, podcasting and media, practical urban greening and gardening.

We’re recruiting cohorts of Rangers from within a single borough at the same time – targeting active people from the local groups we partner with, and aligning this with the support within each London Borough.

Our small grants programme will fund hundreds of small Ranger-led projects across London.

EVERYONE, EVERYWHERE, EVERYDAY

Just as when you visit a rural National Park, our ‘Visitor Centre’ is intended as a window on all of the activities, places to visit, and things that you can do within London National Park City. Last year we ran over fifty events in our first pop-up on Fleet Street, with festival weeks for Repair Week, Unlock London, The Great Big Green Week, Grow Urban Festival, and the Blossom Festival with the National Trust. The space was freely available for any community group who’d like to make use of it, and we hosted numerous Ranger meet-ups and events.

This year, thanks to the Crown Estate, we’ve opened up a new space at 80 Mortimer Street; a stone’s throw from Oxford Circus. Having one or more such community spaces in London will be an ongoing part of our way of working, and an important meeting place for our staff, volunteers, and collaborators.

We’re expanding our volunteering connections with our map featuring over 260 groups at nationalparkcity.london/volunteer. We’re sharing more places to visit, things to do, and ways to get involved across London. If you’d like your place or organisation featured, you can easily ask us to add it to the map.

We’ll be inviting more organisations to join our In Good Company programme for businesses. If you’d like to find out how your organisation can contribute, sign up for updates at nationalparkcity.london/ingoodcompany.

Across London, we’re centring nature recovery at a local level through all of our work, as a focus for our future Ranger activity – especially as we recruit new Rangers in each borough. In Hounslow we’re trialling a Youth Ranger Programme with Brentford Football Club Community Sports Trust. In Barking & Dagenham, we’re supporting a new nature corridor master plan. We’re delivering a small grant programme in Islington, Ranger-led activities in Brent, and supporting Ranger-led Guides in Newham.

Outside of London, we are actively working towards our aim of having at least 25 nominated and established National Park Cities by the end of 2025. Around the UK, we’re supporting campaigns in Southampton, Cardiff, Glasgow, Dundee, and Belfast. Further afield, Adelaide became the second National Park City in 2021, in the Netherlands, Breda will launch this spring, Rotterdam in 2026, and Chattanooga in Tennessee will become the first US National Park City in April 2025.

THANK YOU

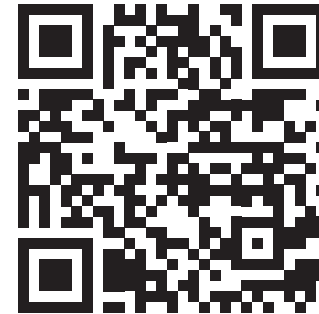
We’re incredibly grateful to each and every one of you who is helping to make London National Park City a reality in neighbourhoods across our city every day. We’re especially grateful to all of our volunteers, our Rangers, and Trustees who all give their time freely. We’re extending the invite to every Londoner to help make London greener, healthier, and wilder.

GET INVOLVED



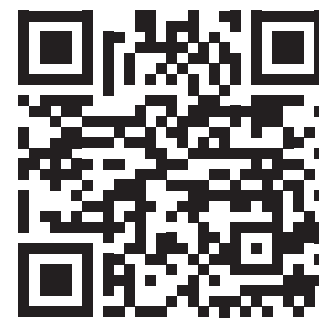
VOLUNTEER

Get involved in hundred of events and activities across London. Be inspired, share, and learn as part of your community and in your neighbourhood.
nationalparkcity.london/volunteer



BECOME A RANGER

Each year we recruit new Rangers who are dedicated to helping us make London greener, healthier, and wilder – both in their boroughs and across London.
nationalparkcity.london/rangers



PARTNER WITH US

Join our London-wide Partnership and bring your work to more people. Take an active role in shaping the future of London National Park City.
nationalparkcity.london/partnership



BE IN GOOD COMPANY

Enrol your business in our In Good Company programme to directly support our Rangers and find unique ways for your staff to contribute and learn.
nationalparkcity.london/ingoodcompany



DONATE

We are an independent charity, entirely funded by individual donations from ordinary Londoners so we really do rely on your support.
nationalparkcity.london/donate






SPECIAL THANKS

We'd like to say a big "thank you" to the supporters and volunteers who help make London National Park City a success. There are too many of you to name individually.

Thank you to the Rangers – many of whom contributed to this Paper – each of you is helping us make London greener, healthier, and wilder.

We'd like to thank London National Park City Communications Manager Miriam Habte Sellasie for her editorial and ideation support in bringing this publication to life. We'd also like to acknowledge the contributions of London National Park City Executive Director Mark Cridge (words and concepting) and Michael Shilling (words and photography).

nationalparkcity.london
community.nationalparkcity.org

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 @nationalparkcity.bsky.social
 @LondonNationalParkCity

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OUR VISION IS TO MAKE LONDON A CITY WHERE PEOPLE, PLACES AND NATURE ARE BETTER CONNECTED.

Let’s make a National Park City that is rich with nature and where everyone benefits from exploring, playing and learning outdoors. A city where we all enjoy high quality public and green spaces, where the air is clean to breathe and it’s a pleasure to swim in its waters. Together we can make London a greener, healthier, wilder, fairer and more harmonious place to live. *Why not?*

The London National Park City is a shared vision and journey for a better life. *Everyone can benefit and contribute every day.*

It is a large-scale and long-term vision that is achievable through many actions. Lots of these things are already happening in London, but by working, learning, sharing and acting together, we can achieve even more.

**Charter
of the
LONDON
NATIONAL
PARK CITY***

July 2019

WE ARE WORKING TOGETHER FOR BETTER:

- 1 LIVES, HEALTH AND WELLBEING
- 2 WILDLIFE, TREES AND FLOWERS
- 3 PLACES, HABITATS, AIR, WATER, SEA & LAND
- 4 TIME OUTDOORS, CULTURE, ART, PLAYING, WALKING, CYCLING AND EATING
- 5 LOCALLY GROWN FOOD AND RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION
- 6 DECISIONS, SHARING, LEARNING AND WORKING TOGETHER
- 7 RELATIONSHIPS WITH NATURE & EACH OTHER

THIS CHARTER CONFIRMS THAT WE COLLECTIVELY SHARE THE AMBITION, RESPONSIBILITY AND POWER TO DELIVER THESE THINGS AND MORE.

SIGNATURES

By signing this document, I/we pledge to play an active role in making the London National Park City a success.

WHAT IS A NATIONAL PARK CITY?

It’s a place, a vision and a city-wide community that is acting together to make life better for people, wildlife and nature. A defining feature is the widespread commitment to act so people, culture and nature work together to provide a better foundation for life.

It is a timely cultural choice, a commitment to a sense of place and way of life that sustains people and nature in London and beyond.

This London Charter draws from the principles and aspirations of the Universal Charter for National Park Cities which aims to inspire others to follow London’s lead. The National Park City Foundation will work with others to publish a regular State of the National Park City report to highlight actions and progress being made to support the National Park City vision.

What if we restored nature wherever we can?
What if everybody could lose themselves in nature without leaving London?
What if we shared more knowledge, ideas, tools and experiences?
What if there were more beautiful sights, smells, sounds and colours in the city?
What if we thought more about those who will be living in the city seven generations from now?
What if there was more celebration and spontaneity?
What if we did more things to care for the people, places and nature we are interdependent with?
What if there was more space for reconciliation?
What if we had more balance and harmony within ourselves, our city and globe?
