

1 HISTORY & HABITATS OF EAST MARSH

EAST MARSH is on the east bank of the Old River Lea. Like the rest of Hackney Marshes, East Marsh is Common Land and designated as Metropolitan Open Space.

Hackney Marshes used to be Lammas Lands. Owners of Lammas rights could grow crops on their land for part of the year, with the Commoners allowed to bring their animals on for the rest of the year. In 1894 the Lammas rights were purchased for £75,000 and the Marshes presented to the people of Hackney for recreational use 'in perpetuity'. At this time some of the bends in the river were straightened and trees planted (*see the maps, overleaf*).

After World War II, rubble from buildings destroyed by bombing was dumped on Hackney Marshes, including East Marsh. This raised the level of much of the Marshes, making them less liable to flooding. The rubble can be seen along the banks of the River.

The Marshes were managed for many years by GLC (Greater London Council). In 1986 GLC was abolished, and Hackney Council took over the management.

Sport and recreation on East Marsh

Like the rest of Hackney Marshes, the grassland of East Marsh is laid out for football and rugby in the winter, and cricket and athletics in the summer. It is used by local amateur teams and by schools. On Sunday mornings, East Marsh is home to Hackney and Leyton League.

Other recreational uses of East Marsh include running, walking and picnicking. For walkers and cyclists it links Leyton to the River Lea, Clapton and Hackney.



Warming up for a schools' rugby match on East Marsh, 1992.

EAST MARSH, HACKNEY MARSHES - HISTORY & HABITATS -



Gulls (in the distance) feed on the vacant sports pitches. The route from Leyton to Hackney is marked in the early morning frost.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Buses

236, 276, 308 & W15 to Homerton Rd.

242 Millfields Rd. and Cowbridge.

55, 56, 48 to Lea Bridge Rd; walk along Lee Navigation.

Trains

BR stations: Hackney Wick; Homerton.

This leaflet was prepared by Anne Woollett and Mike Trier with assistance from Ian Graham and Fried van Doorslaer. For copies of the leaflet and more information about East Marsh and Hackney Marshes and activities contact 020 8985 1256, or see

www.hackneyenvironment.org.uk

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Based on Collins mapping - www.collinsmaps.com

2

Biodiversity of East Marsh

East Marsh provides a variety of wildlife habitats:

- **Grassland** When the sports pitches are not in use, they are taken over by gulls and starlings that feed on insects and worms, woodpigeon on seeds, butterflies on flowers, and rabbits on the grass. In the winter, fieldfare and redwing (migrant thrushes) are frequent visitors.

- **Trees, shrubs and woodland** The grassland is surrounded by a fine collection of trees, including three native black poplars planted when the Marshes first came into public ownership in 1894. Since then other trees have been planted round the edge of East Marsh, including some unusual and specimen trees. Birds such as starling, green woodpecker, chaffinch, blue tit, long-tailed tit and blackbird roost and nest in the trees. Grey squirrels are now frequently seen.

The shrubs under the trees provide cover for birds such as wren and dunnock and for animals such as fox. Flowers which grow in the wooded areas include bluebell, teasel, cow parsley, meadowsweet, and dead nettle.

The combination of grassland, and trees and shrubs is valuable for birds such as song thrush and green woodpecker which feed on grassland and shelter and nest in the mature trees.



Native black poplars and grey poplars along the boundary of East Marsh by New Spitalfields Market. The black poplars tower above the Market buildings.

3 HISTORY & HABITATS OF EAST MARSH

• **Open Water of Old River Lea** As it runs along East Marsh, the Old River Lea is tidal. The water level varies considerably and flows 'upstream' when the tide comes in. Birds which feed on the river include cormorant, heron and gulls. Mallard duck, coot, moorhen, and kingfisher nest and fish along the East Marsh stretch of the Old River Lea. In the winter the River is home to many visitors including tufted duck, little grebe, gadwall, and over 50 teal.



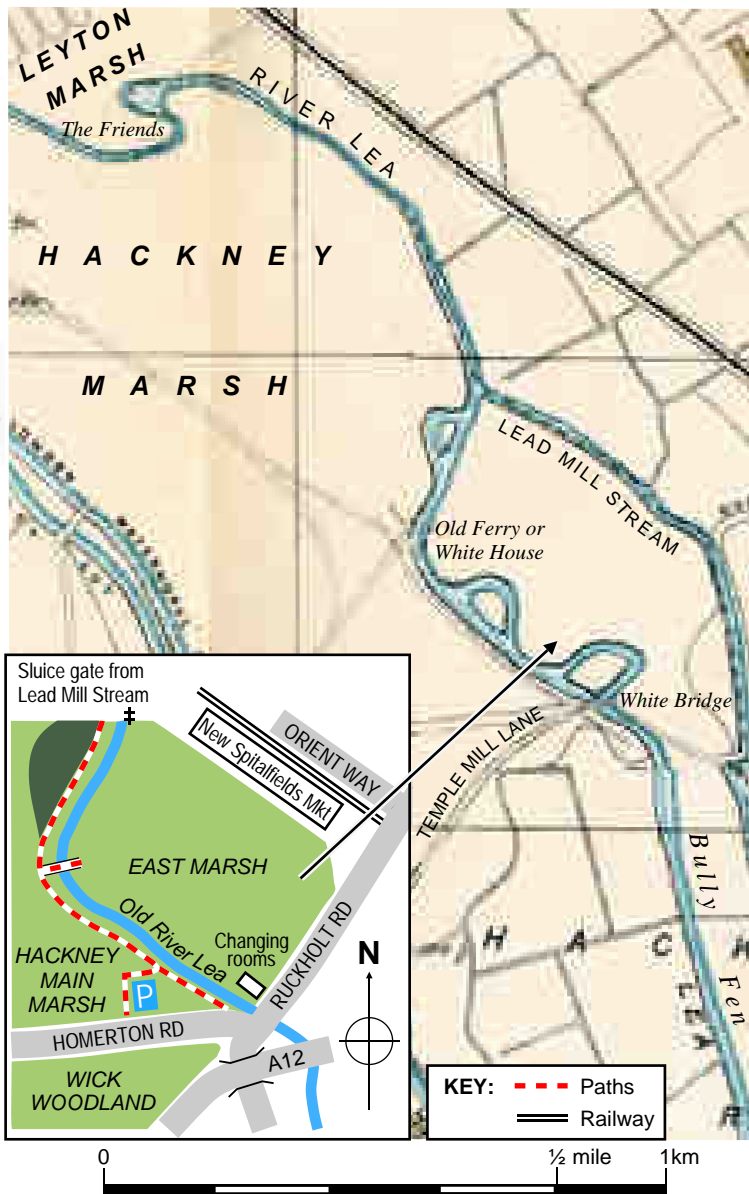
Grey Heron

• **River Bank** Trees and bushes along the river bank provide shelter for water birds on the river. Grasses and plants which grow on the banks provide feeding spots for butterflies and for birds which nest, over-winter and migrate through the Lea Valley. The grasses and flowers on the banks include teasel, white campion, meadow cranesbill, cow parsley and knapweed. Rabbits have burrows in the banks.

There is a good view of the Old River Lea and the trees along the river bank from the bridge joining East Marsh to Main Marsh (*below*). It is a good place to watch for kingfisher and other water birds.



Above: The Old River Lea forms the western boundary of East Marsh. Tufted duck (*male, left*) live on the River for part of the year.



Above: This 1896 map of Hackney Marshes shows the Old River Lea (with the three loops, before they were removed) and Lead Mill Stream. The present-day East Marsh is the area enclosed between them, as far south as 'White Bridge'. The railway line (top right on the map) runs alongside the New Spitalfields Market (see inset map). The bridge connecting East Marsh to Hackney Main Marsh is in the position of the 'Old Ferry or White House'. Both maps are at the same scale.

Nature Conservation

The river, bank and wooded areas along the river are part of Lea Valley Site of Metropolitan Importance for Nature Conservation. They contribute to the nature conservation value of the Lea Valley, especially for migrating birds.



Teasel flowers provide a source of nectar for bees in the summer, and goldfinch feed on the seedheads in winter.

EAST MARSH & OLYMPICS

East Marsh is to be used as a coach and car park for the Olympics in 2012. It will be linked to the Main Olympic Precinct by a huge land bridge. The land bridge will take a large section of the grassed area. This, and the entrance to the coach park, will involve the destruction of most of the row of ash trees along Ruckholt Road.

The coach and car park will consist of a thick layer of hard surfacing and hence will mean the loss of the grassland and sports pitches. The grass pitches should be restored after the Games.

The trees round the edge of East Marsh feature in the publicity for the Olympics. In spite of this, some are threatened with being chopped down to provide parking for cars and coaches.

The destruction of trees and grassland will result in a long-term loss of habitats for the wildlife of East Marsh; and of a leisure and recreational area for people who enjoy the wildlife and use East Marsh as a route from Leyton to Hackney.

See also EAST MARSH: TREES & SHRUBS

Please help to protect the wildlife of Hackney Marshes:

- Always put your litter in a bin or take it home.
- If you have a dog, please keep it under control.
- Respect wildlife, plants and trees.