3.2. EWR - in more detail

The following pages describe and illustrate EWR as it is today. The images in this section were all taken in spring and summer 2024. This should contrast sharply with the images utilised by the ecological surveys provided as part of the outline planning application.

EWR is an extraordinary space in our community. On hot days, the mature trees provide a cool shaded area in which to stand and enjoy urban nature at its best. EWR is often alive with the sound of birds and the buzzing of bees and other insects, including dragonflies. If you catch the right dawn and stand by the railings you will hear a dawn chorus that will blow your mind.

The sound of the wind in the trees and in the long grasses by the footpath can stimulate the senses unlike most other parts of Edgeley. The bats flying overhead as you walk past are not vampire bats. No need to be afraid. They just love those bugs which *are* the vampires.

The site is crawling with insects and serves as an important larder and link in the food chain for wildlife not just on site but on the neighbouring reservoir and Alexandra Park. A natural spring fed rivulet runs through EWR under the ground intrinsically linking this site with the reservoirs and thereafter the wider river system.

Image of EWR

3.2.1. Habitat

Ecologists have categorised the habitats at EWR as Broadleaf Woodland, Grassland and Scrub. Each type of habitat offer different ecological aspects to an area. Each sub-habitat contributes to the richness of an area as a whole. Different creatures which depend on or use whole areas will utilize aspects of each sub-system. Birds, for example, may consume berries from the scrub, insects from the woodland and use fibres from the grasses to make nests. Each part of an area's habitat is important to the ecosystem for varying reasons and each part often important to the other. Variations of habitat offer variations of food, shelter, security and nesting for a variety of wildlife.






All images are of EWR

i. Woodland

In spring, 2023, 77 trees of various types were counted across the whole area of EWR. Only mature and young established trees were counted. Apart from the Scots Pine and the Yew, saplings or trees of less than 7ft in height (of which there are many) were not counted. The TEP survey counted a total of 280 trees in EWR. Although not ancient, new or secondary woods are still important. Secondary woods and individual trees offer many species of wildlife a home and are important to people and culture in all sorts of ways.

Image of EWR

Image of EWR

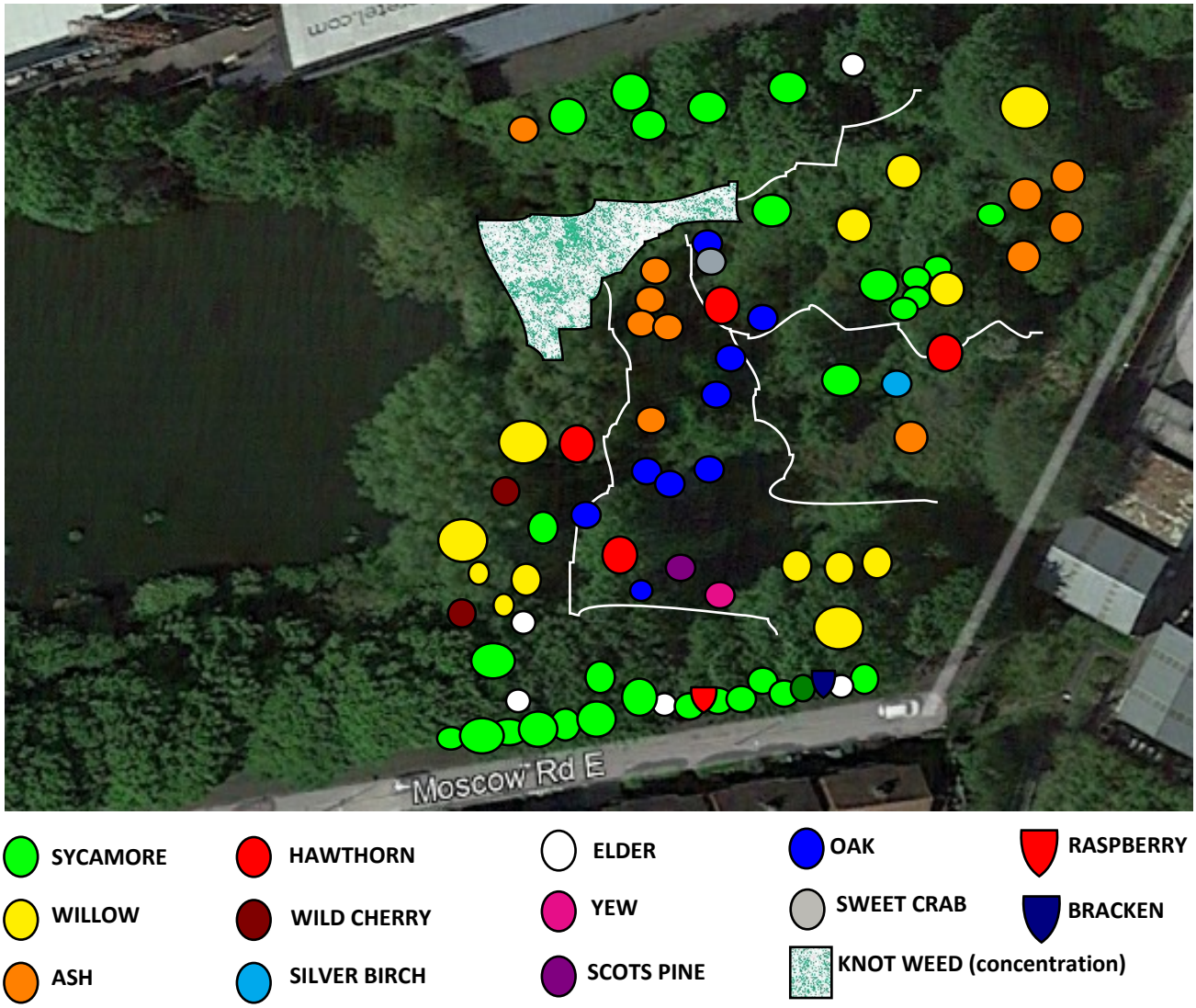
Underrated heroes, colourful comforts and spaces for people and wildlife. Urban trees and woodland are all the more valuable for their location. They support plants and animals, clean our air and boost wellbeing.

The Woodland Trust

Trees identified in EWR:

Ash, Bird Cherry, Elder, Hawthorn, Holly, Oak, Scots Pine, Silver Birch, Sweet Crab, Sycamore, Wild Cherry, Willow, Yew.

No positioning software was available to us and the trees are plotted below as accurately as possible.



With our woods, green spaces and the wider countryside becoming ever more fragmented, urban woods and trees support a huge range of wildlife.
The whole urban forest forms a crucial lifeline, helping birds, insects and more animals move through the landscape safely, and find food and shelter. All of those gardens, parks and playing fields with trees can act as stepping stones between larger wild places that would be isolated on their own.
Common urban wildlife includes some familiar faces, such as the blackbird and fox, but other species also flourish in built-up areas, like the sparrowhawk and hedgehog.

The Woodland Trust

About the trees in EWR:

All of the trees in EWR have significance to us culturally, as potential for community, and for the precious wildlife we cherish. Some of the trees threatened by development were planted personally by local residents to enhance the site or in memory of loved ones.

English Oak

The king of all our stately trees, English oak was the preferred timber for sailing ships, particularly warships, because of its strength and durability. The English oak tree supports more wildlife than any other tree in the UK. We counted 9 in the Wildlife area. The Oak tree hosts hundreds of insects/beetles/birds' bats and fungus. The acorns are an important food source in the autumn for mice, squirrels and badgers. The soft leaves of the Oak break down to create excellent mulch, ideal for invertebrates and continued habitat. Birds and bats nest in and under the bark of oaks and feed on the rich insect life in and around the canopy.

Ash

One of the most common trees in the UK, currently threatened because of Ash die back. They thrive in fertile soil and have a long history of medicinal and mystical properties and was burned to ward off evil spirits. Ash trees make the perfect habitat for several different species of wildlife. Bullfinches eat the seeds and woodpeckers, owls, redstarts and nuthatches use the trees for nesting. Ash trees are in the olive family and produce oil that is similar to olive oil. Very strong and flexible , wood of choice for making tools and sport handles, including hammers, axes, spades and used to produce oars, hockey sticks and snooker cues.

Bird and Wild Cherry

As its name suggests, the bird cherry is a native tree related to the wild cherry. It can be found in wet woodland or along stream edges and hedgerows. As it can tolerate greater exposure and elevation than wild cherry, it often grows in upland woodlands. Its fragrant flowers appear around April and produce black and bitter fruits. It is a useful tree for a variety of wildlife: the flowers provide nectar and pollen for insects, and the fruit are eaten by birds, badgers and small mammals. Additionally, some moth caterpillars eat the leaves.

Elder

Elder is a shrub of woodland edges, hedgerows and grassland scrub, but can also be found on waste ground, in cemeteries and even on rubbish tips. It prefers rich, fertilised soils, so is a common sight in urban areas and on cultivated ground. Despite its reputation as a bad-smelling, opportunistic 'weed', elder is regularly used as food - the autumn berries and spring flowers can both be eaten (the latter

sometimes battered and fried), and the blossom can be used to make the popular elderflower cordial and also wine.
The flowers provide nectar for a variety of insects and the berries are eaten by birds and mammals. Small mammals, such as dormice and bank voles, eat both the berries and the flowers. Many moth caterpillars feed on elder foliage, including the white-spotted pug, swallowtail, dot moth and buff ermine.

Hawthorn

The fruit is enjoyed by wildlife and humans alike and can be used to make jellies, chutneys and wine.
Makes up a large percentage of British hedgerows. The leaves of this hedgerow staple are often the first to appear in spring, with an explosion of pretty pale-pink/white blossom. It simply teems with all types of wildlife from bugs to birds. Common hawthorn can support hundreds of species and is the foodplant for various wildlife such as caterpillars of moths, including the hawthorn, orchard ermine, pear leaf blister, rhomboid tortrix, light emerald, lackey, vapourer, fruitlet-mining tortrix, small eggar and lappet moths.
Its flowers are eaten by mammals such as dormice and provide nectar and pollen for a variety of bees and other pollinating insects. The haws are rich in antioxidants and are eaten by various migrating birds as well as small mammals.
The dense, thorny foliage makes fantastic nesting shelter for many species of bird and the gnarled wood is used to make handles and walking sticks.
The Cornovii believe that Boudicca was buried wearing a crown of thorns made of hawthorn beside a mere somewhere in Cheshire after dying en-route to North Wales seeking solice and healing with the druids. Along with a grand old willow, a spectacular specimen of Hawthorn, unusually tall and narrow is one of the centre pieces of EWR.

The spectacular specimen of Hawthorn in EWR

Holly

Holly is one of our most familiar evergreen trees, its bright red berries and glossy leaves bringing colour and life into our gardens and homes in winter, particularly at Christmas (the berries and thorny leaves are said to symbolise Jesus's blood on the crown of thorns). Our wildlife enjoys Holly, too: the berries are an important food source for many birds like Redwings and Fieldfares; indeed, Mistle thrushes guard their own berry-laden bushes with such voracity that they'll chase off any potential thieves. Holly can be found in a variety of habitats, from remote woodland to urban gardens.

Holly provides dense cover and good nesting opportunities for birds, while its deep, dry leaf litter may be used by hedgehogs and small mammals for hibernation.
The flowers provide nectar and pollen for bees and other pollinating insects. The leaves are eaten by caterpillars of the holly blue butterfly, along with those of various moths, including the yellow-barred brindle, double-striped pug and the holly tortrix. The berries are a vital source of food for birds in winter, and small mammals, such as wood mice and dormice.

Scots Pine

The Scots pine is the native pine tree in Scotland and has been widely planted elsewhere in the UK, too. During the medieval ages, a great pine forest stretched across most of the Highlands, but by the 17th century, it was disappearing as timber was used for ship-building and charcoal. Although the late 20th century saw just a fraction of the original forest left standing, regeneration has now started to occur, especially in areas fenced off from browsing deer. This is good news for wildlife as Scots pine forests provide shelter for all kinds of species, and food for threatened Red Squirrels and endemic Scottish Crossbills.
The Caledonian forest is a priority habitat under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan and is home to rare species such as the creeping lady's tresses and lesser twayblade orchids; the Scottish wood ant and Rannoch looper; and the capercaillie, crested tit and Scottish crossbill. Mammals include red squirrel, pine marten and Scottish wildcat. Scots pines in southern England are also the main caterpillar foodplant for the pine hawk-moth.

Silver Birch

The Silver birch is a familiar, small, spindly tree with thin branches and papery bark. It is found on heathland, moorland and mountainsides, as well as on dry, sandy soils. In spring, the male catkins (or 'lamb's tails') turn yellow and shed their pollen, which is carried by the wind to the short, green, female catkins that appear on the same tree. One of the first trees to recolonise the UK after the last glacial period, it is an opportunistic species; its seeds are produced in huge numbers and dispersed easily by the wind. Birch woods (which may include downy or silver birch, or both) have a light, open canopy, providing the perfect conditions for grasses, mosses, wood anemones, bluebells, wood sorrel and violets to grow.
Silver birch provides food and habitat for more than 300 insect species – the leaves attracting aphids which provide food for ladybirds and other species further up the food chain. The leaves are also a food plant for the caterpillars of many moths, including the angle-shades, buff tip, pebble hook-tip, and Kentish glory. Birch trees are particularly associated with specific fungi, including fly agaric, woolly milk cap, birch milk cap, birch brittlegill, birch knight, chanterelle and the birch polypore (razor strop).
Woodpeckers and other hole-nesting birds often nest in the trunk, while the seeds are eaten by siskins, greenfinches and redpolls.

Sweet Crab

One of the ancestors of the cultivated apple (of which there are more than 6,000 varieties), it can live to up to 100 years. Mature trees grow to around 10m in height. They have an irregular, rounded shape and a wide, spreading canopy. With greyish brown, flecked bark, trees can become quite gnarled and twisted,

especially when exposed, and the twigs often develop spines. This 'crabbed' appearance may have influenced its common name, 'crab apple'. The crab apple is one of the few host trees to the parasitic mistletoe, Viscum album, and trees are often covered in lichens.

The leaves are food for the caterpillars of many moths, including the eyed hawk-moth, green pug, Chinese character and pale tussock. The flowers provide an important source of early pollen and nectar for insects, particularly bees, and the fruit is eaten by birds, including blackbirds, thrushes and crows. Mammals, such as mice, voles, foxes and badgers, also eat crab apple fruit.

Sycamore

With its familiar helicopter fruit known as SAMARAS we used to throw into the air and watch as they spun to the earth. Traditionally not valued by planners because they're not indigenous having been introduced by the Romans nearly 2,000 years ago. Since then, they've colonised woodland becoming a source of food and shelter for numerous wildlife.
Sycamore is particularly attractive to aphids and therefore a variety of their predators, such as ladybirds, hoverflies, birds and other insects.
The leaves are eaten by numerous wildlife including the sycamore moth, plumed prominent and maple prominent. The flowers provide a good source of pollen and nectar for bees and other insects and the seeds are eaten by a variety of birds and small mammals.
Sycamore timber is hard and strong, pale cream and with a fine grain, and is excellent for carving. It is used to make furniture and kitchenware, such as ladles and wooden spoons as the wood does not taint or stain the food. Very tolerant of pollution and are ideal street trees good for filtering and cleaning the air.

Willow

Silvery leaved, waterside and fenland dweller. Willow feeds and shelters numerous native wildlife and have been a source of natural remedies for centuries.
Various caterpillars and moths feed on the leaves, (such as the ones on the slide). The catkins are an important source of early nectar and pollen for bees and other insects, and the branches make good nesting and roosting sites for birds.

Used to produce Aspirin, derived from salicin, a glucoside found in the bark. In medieval times, in many parts of Europe, used to be chewed for pain relief. The bark was also boiled in water and drunk to relieve diarrhoea, reduce joint inflammation in arthritis and as a gargle for sore throats. The liquor was also used to stop bleeding, clean wounds and to treat general aches and pains.
Did you know willow is used to make cricket bats.

Yew

Mature yew trees can grow to 20m. The bark is reddish-brown with purple tones, and peeling. The yew is probably the most long-lived tree in northern Europe. Yew hedges are incredibly dense, offering protection and nesting opportunities for many birds. The goldcrest and firecrest nest in broadleaf

woodland with yew understoreys. Yew timber is incredibly strong and durable. Traditionally, the wood was used in turnery and to make long bows and tool handles. One of the World's oldest surviving wooden artefacts is a yew spear head estimated to be around 450,000 years old.

Anti-cancer compounds are harvested from the foliage of Taxus baccata and used in modern medicine.

The fruit is eaten by birds, such as the blackbird, mistle thrush, song thrush and fieldfare; and small mammals, including squirrels and dormice. The leaves are eaten by caterpillars of the satin beauty moth.

Testimonies:

> I've been a resident of Edgeley for over 20 years and before that, just down the road in Cheadle. I was the Parky on Alex Park for over 5 years and a Park Ranger based at Alex Park for over 10. I'm therefore very familiar with the park, the reservoirs and the wildlife reserve we're talking about. I'm also very familiar with all the parks, open spaces and river valleys in Stockport having inspected them routinely on a weekly basis, so I know how rare and important this wildlife area is in Stockport.
>
> **Edgeley resident / Member of EWRG**

> I grew up in Edgeley facing a tiny wood that's now gone for flats. Edgeley Wildlife Reserve on Moscow Road East is so nice for the nature, all the insects in there feed everything else. The greenery of it all looks beautiful in spring and summer, and the wild flowers. The creatures have to live somewhere. They're already there so don't move them. They've got nowhere else left to go. School outings could take children to see the butterflies and flowers. There's nothing left in Edgeley anymore. No wonder everyone round here is depressed.
>
> **Edgeley resident / Member of EWRG**

ii. Scrub

A great deal of undergrowth (mainly brambles) which offers immense protection to insects, birds and mammals is situated central to the area.


Image of EWR


Image of EWR

Bramble flowers are a food source for honey bees and bumblebees and other wild animals. Leaves are eaten by certain caterpillars as well as some grazing mammals, especially deer. Ripe berries are eaten and their seeds dispersed by several mammals such as fox and badger, and small birds. Bramble is also a habitat for some animals, including grass snakes.

Scrub, Indigenous Culture and Bioservice:

The pastime of blackberry picking (blackberrying) goes back thousands of years and is still popular. Ripe juicy blackberries have high vitamin C content and can be eaten raw or cooked. You can add them to pies, crumbles, wines, jams, jellies and vinegar. Strong ale brewed from blackberries, malt and hops was popular in the 18th and 19th centuries.

It's been widely been used in traditional medicine for its healing and detoxifying properties and fibres from its stems have even been used to make string.

Blackberry bushes can prevent soil erosion on infertile, disturbed sites and the ancient Britons used thorny stems as a boundary or barrier in the way we use barbed wire.

The Woodland Trust

Scrub and Wildlife:

Brambles protect the nesting birds we love to see and hear, including thrushes, robins, long-tailed tits, finches and warblers. They also provide shelter for shy or threatened species found in quiet places, such as the woodcock, which hides at ground level, and dormice, which climb and nest among the stems.

Although blackberry plants swamp other species, they are a part of successional woodland growth, protecting saplings from grazing animals so they can grow up and succeed them. If you have enough land to grow woodland, this might be useful to know.

Bramble flowers are open, prolific and generous suppliers of pollen and nectar for insects – from bees, wasps and hoverflies to beetles and butterflies. Meadow Brown, Speckled Wood, Comma, Silver-washed Fritillary, Gatekeeper, Ringlet and Small Skipper are among the butterflies I've seen amongst bramble.

The berries form an important food for creatures great and small – from foxes, badgers and small mammals like wood mice and rare dormice to birds and insects. A few days ago I noticed a horse delicately picking blackberries with its lips, and dogs do this too.
The leaves are food for wildlife as well. Buff Arches, Peach Blossom and Fox moth (cuckoo food) caterpillars are amongst the many moth larvae that eat them, not to mention many fly and beetle larvae. You will see many spiders on brambles catching flies. I often wonder how they know to make their webs above the juiciest berries.

We can use the youngest leaves in salads, apparently, as well as using the fruits in delicious jams and puddings. Brambles are used in traditional medicines, too.
We can use the whole plant as a protective fence or hedge component to keep large animal and human intruders out.

Rowena Millar, The Wildlife Trusts


Image of EWR

iii. Grassland

On the eastern edge, parallel to the footpath and either side of where the spring fed rivulet runs underground (seen in the image below where the track is), grassland offers tall grasses and a variety of pollen and nectar rich wildflowers at various times of the year. Sometimes full of colour and the buzzing of bees and hoverflies.

From woodland glades and wildflower meadows, to pasture and sports fields, grassland covers large areas of the UK. They can be diverse wildlife havens and many have developed from human activities.

The Woodland Trust

What grassland can offer:

Grasslands are areas dominated by grass cover, but they can also contain lots of other plants. Grasslands cover large areas of the UK, but most are highly modified by land management and agricultural 'improvement'. Semi-natural grasslands **are very scarce**, and some wooded areas contain important pockets of semi-natural grasslands within glades, rides, wood-meadows and clearings.


Image of EWR

Mini-Meadow (an aim of EWRG)

Rich grasslands can have as many as 30 species of wildflower within a quarter of a square metre. Wild flowers, such as orchid, cowslip and red clover blanket may be seen in unimproved grassland in the spring and summer.

The Woodland Trust


Image of EWR

3.2.2. Flora

The following plants have all been identified on EWR in the year 2023 and 2024. Many of them exist in the grassland habitat (mini-meadow) through which (the now underground) spring fed rivulet runs.

Bindweed, Bluebells, Bracken, Bramble, Buddleia, Buttercup, Camomile, Cocksfoot, Coltsfoot, Common Plantain, Daffodils, Dandelion, Dock, False Oat Grass, Fern, Field Clover, Forget-Me-Nots, Foxglove, Gooseberry, Greater Willowherb, Hemp Agrimony, Ivy, Lesser Willow Herb, Nettle, Nipplewort, Ragwort, Raspberry, Red Shank, Sedge Grasses, Spear Thistle, Sticky Willy, Sweet White Clover, Sweet Yellow Clover, Thistle (various), Tufted Vetch, Welsh Poppy, Yorkshire Fog.


Image of EWR


Image of EWR


Image of EWR

3.2.3. Fauna

EWR is a rare green jewel offering sanctuary to wildlife amongst many acres of urban built-up land. This 1.5 acre parcel of land is special because for over 50 years it has been left virtually shut off from human disturbance and interference and as a result nature has very successfully reclaimed it for herself.

Managed Parks or Human Recreational Areas like Alexandra Park and Edgeley Park, whilst beautiful and immensely helpful for human mental health and well-being, cannot be categorised as sanctuaries for wildlife in the same way as EWR. In percentage terms, less than 4% of the entire surface area of Edgeley is capable of supporting wildlife habitat to any consistent, self-sustainable or meaningful degree and here it is.

Now covered in years' worth of soil build-up, brambles, woodland and grassland, EWR provides fantastic habitat. The whole site is teeming with invertebrates (worms, slugs, beetles, insects, spiders, butterflies, moths, centipedes and millipedes) it has them all in unprecedented numbers. The security afforded by being fenced off, and the brambles and shrubs, along with all the invertebrates and trees, has made EWR special to Edgeley.

The fenced off nature of EWR has provided a constant safe refuge to foxes who have their den there and raise fox cubs to the delight of Edgeley residents when the cubs stumble through the fence and totter off down Moscow Road East or play in neighbourhood gardens.

Foxes, toads, hedgehogs, rats, birds, an occasional badger, moths, butterflies and a myriad of insects including dragonflies have and still can be experienced in EWR. Bats, both Pipistrelle and Noctule can be seen feeding above EWR late in the evening. Local people remember newts and a badger which used the railway premises as a corridor. Foxes are a regular sight, having a number of dens against the northern bank within EWR and help to control the local rat population.

One of our foxes

Imagine if the area were developed, where would the rats go? What if there were no foxes there to hunt them? We all remember the swarms of rats (in broad daylight) disturbed during the construction of the Cheadle End. One local lady on Finland Road recalls seeing swarms of them running through local streets. They got into the walls of her house and ate the electric wires, causing thousands of pounds of damage.

Birds

The area is home to many birds and attracts others - some that nest there and others that fly in-and-out looking for invertebrates to macerate to feed their young or for materials from among the many grasses and wildflowers to line their nests.

A Bird Survey conducted looking over EWR perimeter fence over 10 days (45 mins every morning) in March 2023, revealed by sight or assisted with binoculars that at that time 14 different species either lived there or were foraging for food or nest materials.

Regularly spotted, were: Blackbirds, Blue tits, Collared Doves, Crows, Great tits, House Sparrows, Long-tailed tits, Magpies , Robins, Woodpigeons and Wren.

House sparrows are of particular interest as they are listed on the Red List in the Birds of Conservation Concern 5 (2021). *i.e.* of most concern. Worryingly, the Red List now accounts for more than one-quarter (29%) of UK species, more than ever before. Amongst the new additions to the Red List is the Swift. A swift was seen flying directly over EWR in July 2024.

The robins, blackbirds, great tits, long tailed tits, woodpigeons and wrens are always most visible, appearing to have generations nesting there every year. Of wonder in spring was the daily sighting of the long-tailed tits gathering spiders' cobwebs off the car wing mirrors along Moscow Road East and flying back up high into the trees in EWR to make their cobweb pouch nests suspended against the tree bark.

Two other birds spotted are of particular interest in as much as they are listed as Section 41 in the Birds of Conservation Concern 5 (2021). Namely: Dunnock and Bullfinches.

Bullfinches are thinly distributed across the UK and are rarely spotted as there are only 265,000 breeding pairs in the country. They enjoy scrubby areas of bramble undergrowth near woodland edge, orchards, hedgerows and even parks and gardens. They feed on buds, berries, seeds, and particularly enjoy macerated insects to feed their young. There is a strong possibility that bullfinches might nest in the brambles in EWR as they have been spotted numerous times by residents of Moscow Road East since March 2023. The dunnock may also nest here as its preferred habit is vegetated areas with scrub and likes to nest close to the ground in hawthorn or brambles. The wren likes to feed in the brambles on the plentiful insects and spiders. The house sparrows were incredibly busy in March 2023 flying in and out of EWR with beaks full of grasses, returning to the rafters of our terrace houses to build their nests. They similarly need to fee their young on macerated invertebrates.

Unusually, in 2010/11 a tribe of magpies numbering over thirty gathered in two of the maturer trees along the edge of EWR before dispersing suddenly in the winter of 2012. A family of pied wagtails used the area for years but have not been seen for the last three or four. In 2023 a Nuthatch was spotted walking upside down clinging to a thick stem of a large tree and since the introduction of the Merlin App (on mobile phones) that recognises bird song Blackcaps and Chiffchaffs have been recorded in EWR. In fact, it is obvious (by their calls) that chiffchaffs have moved into nest there this year (2024).

It is clear that many birds live in EWR whilst others just pop in and out to use it as a larder to supplement their dietary intake also finding it a useful wild place to source nesting material in the

spring. How wonderful it is for residents of Edgeley to live in such close proximity to this beautiful oasis in an urban sprawl. The unique combination of having the parks alongside three bodies of water and a rewilded fenced-off parcel of land (EWR) bursting with insect life and berries and other resources combines to directly enhance and support all the wildlife activity we see.

The reservoirs also support a lot of other bird life as well as Mallards, Coots, Moorhens and Canada Geese. We often have Cormorants and Herons too. In the summertime Kingfishers visit and every November approximately 20 Goosanders fly in from Scandinavia making their home on the reservoir for five months before flying back in the springtime.

Whilst these aquatic birds do not generally frequent EWR, neither to forage nor nest (with the exception of the herons who have nested high up in EWR trees and the occasional lone Canada Goose looking for lost chicks) we fully understand to what extent the impact of loosing EWR's part in the local ecosystem will have on the biodiversity of all the reservoirs.

Pipistrelle Bats are commonly seen at dusk flying up and down Moscow Road and Moscow Road East, as well as flying low across the reservoirs and around EWR. This is the ideal habitat for them as they consume up to 3,000 insects per night consisting of: aquatic-flies, mosquitos, midges and other invertebrates such as moths. The reservoirs provide the aquatic-flies and EWR the invertebrates in plentiful amounts. Pipistrelle Bats enjoy urban areas and like to roost in trees, and also in between old roof tiles of the 120 year old terrace houses in the conservation area around the reservoirs.

Noctule Bats are the UK's largest bats. They can be seen flying higher than the Pipistrelles over the Edgeley Reservoirs and EWR. The Noctule Bats can be seen earlier than dusk in the summer months. They enjoy a diet of moths, beetles, mayflies and flying ants. Sadly, populations of Noctule Bats have declined greatly in the last few decades, due to a loss of habitat. This is a consequence of urban development which has resulted in the loss of mature trees used for nesting and hibernation. The Noctule bat is a priority species in the UK's Biodiversity Action Plan. It is also protected in the UK under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Foxes

Not only is it a joy to see the fox cubs in the summer and hear the vixens calling for a mate, telling you it's nearing the end of the winter, but they also provide a great service in the ecology of the reservoirs helping to keep a natural balance. With so little natural wild habitat urban foxes primarily scavenge for food but given the chance they will hunt for small mammals such as rats and mice, helping to keep rodent numbers under control. At times there are many rats around the reservoirs and given that expert ecologists are undecided for sure whether we in urban areas

One of our foxes in a garden at the east end of Moscow Road East

live 6ft, 10ft or 15ft away from a rat, it can only be a good thing to have resident foxes in EWR that patrol up and down the streets and around the reservoirs most nights. Not only do they assist in keeping rat populations down but foxes will take the opportunity to seize Canada Goose eggs and young, keeping in check their rapidly breeding numbers.

This 1.5 acres parcel of land is acting as a vital lifeline to many urban wildlife creatures. To needlessly take it away to create yet another carpark in such a large urban area will deny foxes a home. They have lived amongst us for so long and played their part around the reservoirs in keeping rat populations down and given such delight. To partially take some land and leave a bit will still render the whole site almost useless as foxes will not want to live so close to human disturbance. EWR provides security to raise cubs and gaining access to the Rail Line embankment opens-up miles of green corridors for the foxes to forage in and keep their population healthy.

Edgeley Reservoirs were placed here because there are natural fine white sand springs with rivulets under EWR making it an ideal home for city wildlife. This rare green jewel with rivulets of water, mature trees, grasses, scrub and beautiful flora, acts as a haven and place of shelter to wildlife. The plentiful invertebrates and blackberry brambles make it like a fantastic larder for nature and a secure home for many birds, mammals and amphibians. It is a **RARITY** in the grey dull urban sprawl! It is a green jewel, a true treasure of Edgeley.

Birds known to have utilized EWR directly (including outside of survey period March 2023):

Black Headed Gull, Blackbird, Blackcap, Blue tit, Bullfinch, Canada Goose, Chiffchaff, Coal tit, Collared Dove, Crow, Dunnock, Gold Crest, Goldfinch, Great tit, Grey Wagtail, House sparrow, Little Owl, Long tailed tit, Magpie, Meadow Pipit, Nuthatch, Pied wagtail, Robin, Rock Dove, Song Thrush, Sparrow-hawk, Swifts, Woodpigeon, Wren

Kingfisher (not in EWR but within 20m)
It is also beleieved Starlings use the grassland area in winter to feed.

<u>Most Threatened</u>

In England many of our rarest and most threatened species are listed under Section 41 (S41) of the 2006 Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act. Outcome 3 of the Government's Biodiversity 2020 strategy contains an ambition to ensure that 'By 2020, we will see an overall improvement in the status of our wildlife and will have prevented further human-induced extinctions of known threatened species.' Protecting and enhancing England's S41 species is key to delivering this outcome.

Bullfinch, Dunnock, House Sparrow, Herring Gull, Song Thrush

3.2.4. Water

Also see Part 5: *Water, Drainage & Flooding*

According to historical record, a natural spring fed rivulet runs through EWR. It is now piped underground through EWR and is joined by rainwater runoff from the railway premises. The rivulet emerges again as it enters the reservoir area. This little stream is essential to the ecosystem of the reservoirs and the wider river system. The pressure created by its piped state during heavy rainfall could even be contributing to flooding further along on Dale Street. A local man connected with Gosjaks remembers when the spring fed stream ran openly through EWR.

Water Table:

Historical record suggests that the whole site (possibly including the stadium itself) exists upon fine white sand springs. The presence of fine sand springs would also suggest that there is a deep clay bed below upon which the water table sits. Houses south of EWR suffer flooding to the cellars due to the water table. Imagine how glorious for nature (reed beds, newts, dragonflies and numerous creatures) it would be if the stream within EWR was opened up again. The relief on pressures caused by a piped system might even help to alleviate flooding in the area. A car park sloping downward toward the run of the stream certainly won't help, especially with all those water quenching roots removed.

The position of the track in the image below roughly charts the run of the spring fed rivulet. The view looks south, following the course of the stream which bends west (to the right in the image) and on to the the reservoir.

Image of EWR

3.2.5. Potential

EWR is so much already. It is a rich habitat of woodland, grassland and scrub and has a natural spring water system. It has a fair number of residents and visitors from the natural world. All of which depend upon it in one way or another at different times of the year. Owls and woodpeckers have not been heard from recently, but have been in the past, and we may well hear from them again. We have generations of foxes which control the rats. Some members of the local community may remember Half Tail. Her descendents live in EWR. Some local residents have told us how they regret, as children, hunting newts on EWR - that was decades ago when nature was just seeding the change on EWR - imagine the potential now. The capacity of EWR to restore nature and contribute toward improving biodiversity and stemming the decline of species abundance in the UK is huge.

EWR has the opportunity to offer so much to the local community too. Taking part in enhancing EWR itself would be an outdoor activity many would appreciate. A gated nature reserve enhanced by local people for their wildlife and their children could offer ecoservice opportunities for generations to come. Educational groups (including local primary schools), therapy and wellbeing groups, respite visits for the elderly, community group growing beds, all lead to a more cohesive society, all have long term benefits on economy via sustainability and prevention.

EWR has space for woodland footpaths, bird boxes, bat boxes, deadwood areas, insect hotels, hedgehog houses, scratch ponds, reed beds, benches, tables, growing beds, bird watching hides, additional tree species, further meadow creation, bulb glades, wild herb beds, and bee hives. It is a potential ecoservice wonderland.

Image of EWR