

Wild Space Hackney

DEATH by TARMAC: THE SORRY FATE OF HACKNEY MARSHES IN PURSUIT OF OUR OLYMPIC DREAM

The choice of the Lower Lea Valley as the location of the proposed Olympic precinct could hardly be worse for biodiversity. The River Lea system is designated a Site of Metropolitan Importance for nature conservation. It is an important migration route for birds. Around Hackney Marshes, White Hart Field, Arena Fields and East Marsh will all be destroyed by the development of the precinct.



Hackney Marshes are valuable for wildlife because they are managed to provide a variety of habitats: short and longer grassland and meadow, waterways and river bank, trees, hedges and woodland. Some plants and animals live in one habitat but others require more than one. For example, green woodpecker and thrush roost and nest in mature trees but feed in grassland. The extensive areas of sparsely-vegetated or open ground around Hackney Marshes are especially valuable for rare and uncommon invertebrates. Other species threatened by the Olympic developments include bats, the

common lizard, the kingfisher and the nationally-scarce black redstart.

It is feared that the Olympic proposals will destroy all the existing habitat. Many species may become locally extinct. The building of a coach and car park on East Marsh will destroy a row of 25 ash trees and several 110-year-old rare native black poplar trees. Long grassland on East Marsh is also a feeding ground for birds such as gulls, starlings, green woodpeckers, thrushes and fieldfares, and all this will be lost. White Hart Field is a wildlife corridor between Hackney Marshes, Eastway circuit and Bully Point, and home to over 204 species of invertebrate including 23 nationally-scarce invertebrates, such as the brown-banded carder bee.

Key Questions

1. Highlight the term **biodiversity** in the text.
2. What does **biodiversity** mean?
3. Highlight four different habitats found at Hackney Marshes listed in the text.
4. Why do some animals need more than one habitat?
5. Explain why Hackney Marshes is important for biodiversity.
6. Why might cutting down trees in East Marsh reduce the number of birds?