

Green London fieldwork 2015

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with Dr Simon Carr, Dr Alex Henshaw and Dr Kathryn Yusoff

This project was a week long programme of **fieldwork** for our full cohort of new level 4 geography and environmental science students which took place instead of scheduled teaching in week 1 of Semester A in 2015. The project was designed as an enhanced induction programme, thematically focused on theme of **nature in the city** and involved students working in small groups addressing the character and use of green space in the **City of London and Tower Hamlets**.

The project was based on the **pedagogic and social value of collective fieldwork** and our desire to realizing this value early in our students' experience through a coherent, well-organised and strongly thematic programme of activities. The theme of nature in the city ideally integrated issues and perspectives in human and physical geography and provided an accessible, imaginative and stimulating way to foster a strong collective identity, build on their existing knowledge and introduce them to new ideas and approaches.

The week included:

- students working in small groups undertaking self-guided walking tours on the theme green space in the City of London
- guest presentations from John Archer, Tower Hamlets Biodiversity Officer and Daniel Raven-Ellison of the Greater London National Park campaign group
- site visits in Tower Hamlets including a guided walk through residential green space and biodiversity initiative by Eastend Homes with Paul Wilson in Shadwell, where the students undertook voluntary work weeding planted areas
- small project workshops and student presentations to pool knowledge in preparation for a project report (assessed within the GEG4002 tutorial module)

Outcomes: The most direct outcome of the project was the successful delivery of a carefully organized, well-structured, stimulating and enjoyable week of fieldwork for our new undergraduate intake. The project was successful in helping our new students:

- feel integrated into the school of geography
- orientate themselves within east London and within the city more widely and have confidence in exploring and engaging with the city
- get to know each other and many of the academic staff;
- develop a strong collective identity within their cohort and as geographers
- see the connections between human and physical geography
- feel confident in their ability to build on their existing knowledge and skills and be open to new ideas and perspectives.

Students were very positive in their evaluation of the project and it is now fully embedded into our level 4 teaching.



The **two borough comparative dimension** worked particularly well. It allowed students to engage with the immediate geography of the College and address the differences and similarities of the two adjacent boroughs in terms of the social, economic, cultural and environmental character of these urban areas and the processes underway within them. The students were asked to reflect on the London context broadly and then on the two boroughs through these questions:

What sort of green and blue spaces and forms of biodiversity exist in London? • What is the value of 'nature' in the city? • What city-wide, borough and local initiatives to protect and enhance urban nature and natural environments exist in London? • What current legislation exists in relation to biodiversity in London? • What are the challenges to protecting and enhancing green and blue space and biodiversity in London? • How do green spaces and forms of biodiversity vary in different boroughs? • How do the environmental, economic and social possibilities and challenges of enhancing and protecting urban nature vary in different parts of the city and why? • How are people differently affected by the different quality of natural environments in different parts of the city?

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