

Into the Wilds

Barking Riverside's new, art-enhanced Wildlife & Wellbeing Trail reveals the hidden ecosystems of the Thames Foreshore and Wetlands



Barking Riverside Wildlife & Wellbeing Trail. Image by Thierry Bal; courtesy of Create London.

From birds and bats to snakes and seals, a rich but rarely explored world of wildlife exists around the Thames as it flows through East London. Now, a new Wildlife & Wellbeing Trail conceived and delivered by Create London and funded by Barking Riverside Ltd is set to open up the secrets of this hidden ecosystem.

Incorporating a series of architectural, graphic and sound commissions that respond to the local landscape, the Wildlife & Wellbeing Trail invites visitors and Barking Riverside residents on a journey to discover the endangered, protected and often hidden wildlife. The trail takes them through Oystercatcher Park, home to a range of protected species, and on to the Thames Foreshore, where seals sunbathe and migrant birds travel from South Africa shores to breed.

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“The Wildlife & Wellbeing Trail embodies what Create London is all about, bringing creatives in dialogue with communities to deliver infrastructure and artistic experiences that enrich shared spaces. All the commissioned artists, architects and designers have dived deep into the Barking Riverside and demonstrated how you can create something truly imaginative with a positive impact on the environment, humans and wildlife when you bring different skill sets together through a shared sense of purpose.”

– Marie Bak Mortensen, Create London

Informed by the area’s industrial history and steered by ecologists and wildlife experts, the trail has been designed by emerging practice **Channel Projects**, led by architect Ryan Cook and graphic designer **Studio Vandling**. Following the principles of circular design, Channel Projects and fabricator Meal Deal have transformed discarded building materials from Barking Riverside construction work and derelict fencing excavated from local nature reserves into trail markers.

Although the new signs and markers are sensitively woven into the landscape, their materiality makes legible references to the area’s industrial history and the current housing development. Minimising the introduction of new material into the natural environment has been a project priority, while ensuring the designed elements are of the highest quality.

“The project’s engagement with circular principles was achieved through open conversation and engagement with the design, commissioning and site teams. Discarded elements such as granite kerb stones, salvaged site fencing and ready made bench tops were identified and adopted as our material palette from which the size, design and form of the signs came about. The selective use of salvaged and waste construction materials marks a point in the site’s current development and references its use for industry, grazing and leisure.”

– Ryan Cook, Channel Projects

From a distance, these markers blend into the landscape; up close they mimic the shape of wildlife in abstract, their forms referencing the work of artists including Charlotte Posenenske, John Hejduk and Lütjens Padmanabhan.

“Working on something that brings people outdoors, that is free and that enables people to learn more about the wildlife that surrounds us, is close to my heart. The landscape of Barking Riverside is so unique – I love the idea that if you look closer into what is quite an industrial landscape there is a lot more to discover.”

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The identity plays on the idea of a trail or a journey, not a visual representation of the actual trail but more an idea that the place offers both a mental and physical space. Let your brain or legs wander..."

– Therese Vandling, Studio Vandling

Studio Vandling worked closely with Channel Projects to create a graphic identity for the trail that challenges the visual perception of nature walks, making the design enticing for people with various pre-existing interests in the natural environment to engage with the trail.



Barking Riverside Wildlife & Wellbeing Trail. Image by Thierry Bal; courtesy of Create London.

Providing wider access to learning about the riverside's ecology and post-industrial heritage, artist **Joseph June Bond** has worked closely with the community to create two new sound artworks. 'Estuaries of Echoes: Mud' and 'Estuaries of Echoes: Marsh' are inspired by the sounds of local industries, incorporating residents' stories of Barking Riverside's past, underwater recordings and the sounds of local young people 'playing' the landscape like an instrument. Bespoke signage along the trail displays QR codes, allowing people to listen to the sound artworks while exploring local wildlife. More than 140 residents, of all ages, engaged with the development of the works through dialogues and walks with nature activists such as Friends of the Ripple Greenway and Nature Reserve. Participants included Vibe

Youth and the Barking and Dagenham Progress Project – a programme for young people with various abilities.

To launch the project, a zine exploring the Wildlife & Wellbeing Trail in depth is being distributed to all Barking Riverside residents, designed by Barking-born graphic designer **Rosalyn McLean**. The zine's development follows two workshops she delivered with local families diving deep into topics including the local soil, plant life, animals and insects that form the ecosystem.

"We are proud to have partnered with Create London to deliver the Wildlife & Wellbeing Trail here in Barking Riverside. Historically, attachment to the Thames in this part of London has been quite low, largely because there are so few public spaces where people can access the river. Opening our Uber Boat by Thames Clippers pier last year has certainly encouraged more people to use the river; however, it's placemaking activations such as the trail that really help encourage residents, visitors and those from Barking and Dagenham to know and love these ecological areas."

– Sarah McCready, Head of Placemaking and Communications, Barking Riverside Ltd



Sound workshop by Joseph June Bond with young people from the local community. Image courtesy of J.Lee.

For further information, images and interviews, contact sabine@zetteler.co.uk.

Notes to editors

The trail is now open to the public. Visitors can download the map ahead of time from The Wilds website at thewildsbarkingriverside.london/wildlife-wellbeing-trail, or via QR codes on site.

Credit lines

The Wildlife & Wellbeing Trail is commissioned by Create London and funded by Barking Riverside Limited. Create London is an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation.

Create London

Create London commissions socially engaged art, generous architecture and bold infrastructure that is woven into the fabric of everyday life. Our work is driven by a belief that transformative and radical ideas can derive from working long-term within local communities. Create brings world-class cultural experiences to areas where it is least expected, providing inclusive moments for individuals to expand their imaginations, foster collective action and support thriving communities. Recent projects include co-commissioning the Hackney Windrush Art Commissions with Thomas J Price and Veronica Ryan OBE, for which the latter artist won the 2022 Turner Prize; the RIBA award-winning A House for Artists by Apparata Studio, and Grayson Perry's first public sculpture Inspiration Lives Here in Barking town centre. Create London is an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation. createlondon.org

Channel Projects

Channel are an architecture practice interested in the design and construction process. They work with industry, institutions and individuals on architectural projects that explore forms of living and material constraints. Ongoing and recently completed works include the Tenun Pahang exhibition in collaboration with Judith Clark for London Craft Week (2022), a pavilion for walkers constructed from salvaged and locally sourced materials along the North Downs Way (2021) as well as low-carbon agricultural kit buildings made from re-used structural steel for Cleveland Steel & Tubes (2021). The studio was established in 2020 by Samuel Little and Ryan Cook. chndl.uk

Joseph June Bond

Joseph June Bond is a multidisciplinary artist, sound designer and community organiser based in London. Their practice explores fluid bodies, bodies of fluid and bodily fluids as porous archives of ritual, rehydration and renewal. Working through sound, moving image and performance, Joseph nurtures intergenerational knowledge sharing, collective listening and interspecies collaboration. They work predominantly across temporal spaces, peer-to-peer platforms and radio broadcasts whilst holding space for skill-sharing workshops, sounding out and open source resources. Recent collaborative work with youth clubs, ecologists, sports teams and art institutions has been supported by BBC, Collective (Edinburgh), Futura (Prague), ICA (London), Siobhan Davies Studios (London) and Site Gallery (Sheffield).

[instagram.com/josephbondstudio](https://www.instagram.com/josephbondstudio)

Studio Vandling

Therese Vandling is a London based graphic designer with 15 years experience mainly working in print and publishing designing books. The aim of the practice is to create beautiful and joyful design. The focus and main interest lies in print, storytelling, identity, colour, tactility, typography and image-making. As well as creating books for the larger publishing houses and independent artists she creates graphic identities, posters, art direction, image-making and publications for institutions and independent businesses. She's also a third of Heretic/Spectral Nation; an experimental screen-printing and design studio working on both commissions and self-initiated art projects. The playfulness, tactility and experimental nature of the print practice feeds into the design practice as a constant source of inspiration. Before setting up her own practice she worked at Thames & Hudson as a cover designer.

[vandling.co.uk](https://www.vandling.co.uk)

Rosalyn McLean

As a graphic designer and image-maker, Rosalyn McLean creatively explores subject matter through material, typesetting and print. McLean has a particular affinity for the physical object which is represented through their work, whether the outcome be tactile or digital.

[instagram.com/ros.mclean](https://www.instagram.com/ros.mclean)

Barking Riverside Ltd

Barking Riverside is one of Europe's largest and most exciting residential developments, providing East London with thousands of new homes. The development is delivered by master developer Barking Riverside Limited, a joint venture between the Mayor of London and L&Q housing association. Benefitting

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from a unique location directly on the banks of the River Thames, Barking Riverside comprises 443 hectares of land – an area as large as Hyde Park – on a brownfield site formerly occupied by Barking Power Station. Barking Riverside is already home to a diverse and active community of more than 7,500 residents. Existing amenities include a London Overground Station, an Uber Boat by Thames Clippers Pier, five schools, one of which is an Ofsted Outstanding secondary school; two community hubs; cycling and walking routes; 80 hectares of designated ecology habitat; state-of-the-art recycling and waste management facilities.

barkingriverside.london

Arts Council England

Arts Council England is the national development agency for creativity and culture. It has set out its strategic vision in 'Let's Create' that by 2030 it wants England to be a country in which the creativity of each of us is valued and given the chance to flourish and where every one of us has access to a remarkable range of high-quality cultural experiences. It invests public money from the Government and the National Lottery to help support the sector and to deliver this vision.

artscouncil.org.uk



Image credit: Barking Riverside Wildlife and Wellbeing trail. Image by Thierry Bal, courtesy Create London.

Getting there

Overground Barking Riverside

Underground Barking (Hammersmith & City line, District line, and the c2c service from Essex to Fenchurch Street)

River Uber Boat by Thames Clippers delivers a river bus service from the new Barking Riverside pier

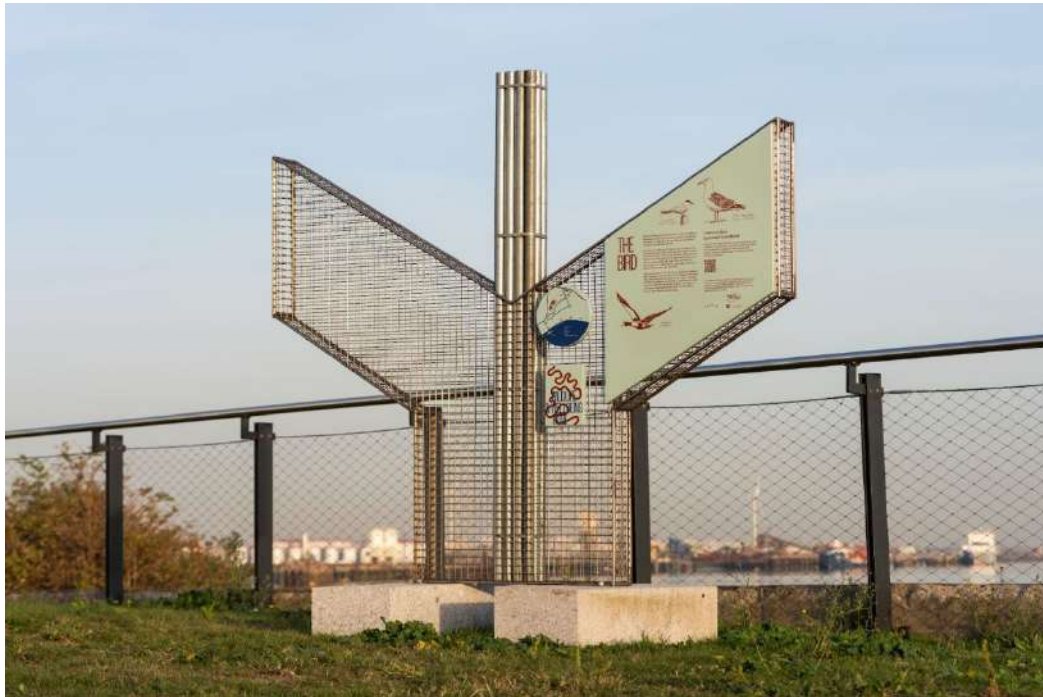
GROUNDÉD Café

Monday: Closed

Tuesday – Saturday: 9:30am to 4:00pm

Sunday: 12:00pm to 3:00pm

thewildsbarkingriverside.london/grounded



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