

Wetlands Unravelled: the most ambitious in a series of contemporary art commissions on WWT sites

Exciting new contemporary art installations enhance the London Wetlands Centre (WWT London)

Major new works by **Claire Barber, Lizzie Cannon, Caitlin Heffernan, Sharon McElroy and Eloise Moody**
Complement commissions from **Anne Deeming, Tania Kovats, Gavin Osborn, Alec Stevens and Jonathan Wright**

On view from 22 May for 2021

In 2020, *Wetlands Unravelled* launched its initial programme of contemporary artworks exploring the paradoxes of conservation in the WWT London environment. An outstanding success, it featured **Tania Kovats, Anne Deeming, Jonathan Wright, Gavin Osborn and Alec Stevens**; and their works remain on view for 2021, by popular demand.

This year, five further new installations by artists **Claire Barber, Lizzie Cannon, Caitlin Heffernan, Sharon McElroy and Eloise Moody** are also on view.

Curated and led by Polly Harknett and Caitlin Heffernan, *Unravelled* commissions and produces site-specific projects, from contemporary fine art and craft practitioners, which explore how art can evoke histories, stories and a sense of place. *Unravelled* inspires new ways of working and gives artists, makers and the heritage sector the opportunity to discover new contexts, new challenges and new audiences. The selected artists for WWT London respond to the topography, wildlife, history and politics of this wetland environment.

London Wetlands Centre is carefully managed to support new birds and species as they come and go. It is also a microcosm of the wider world, demonstrating often difficult migratory pathways and the ripple effect of climate change. This is reflected in these new installations.

'A Sound for Every Stitch' by Claire Barber (items in cloth and thread). Location: outdoors on the West Route and in the H20 building

Claire worked in various locations across WWT London during 2019 and 2021. Each stitch records a sound heard on site: gurgles, creaks, chirrups, sharp calls, squawks, occasional quacks, murmurs, rustling close by, distant hammering, a police car siren, a bark. The sounds – and stitches – criss-cross over each other, then merge outwards to the expanse of sky with the metronomic sounds of aeroplanes providing a persistent and often overwhelming rhythm. Claire repeated this approach during lockdown in 2020, creating works when listening to the dawn chorus in her garden or at conservation sites local to her area, whilst in her car – a portable studio which filtered the sounds. <https://www.axisweb.org/p/clairebarber/#info>

'Intervention' by Lizzie Cannon (embroidery on silk). Location: window of the Peacock Tower bird hide
The laborious methods of habitat management, which maintain the grazing marsh and are visible beyond this bird hide, are explored in this installation. The word 'stitch' derives from the Germanic word to 'stab' or 'pierce', but is more concerned with mending and healing. Drawing on this paradox, Lizzie uses the process of stitch is used to represent the tensions between the wild and managed landscape. Reflecting on what might seem destructive methods of conservation such as cutting, mowing and uprooting, the needle is used to pierce and break down the fabric whilst embellishing it with thread chosen to reflect the colours and textures of the landscape. Mirroring the continual accumulation of sediment and spread of species that would eventually turn the marsh to woodland, the thread is knotted and looped as the stitches 'colonise' the view. <http://www.lizziecannon.com>

'Living Collections' by Caitlin Heffernan (waterproof fabric, child mannequins, thread, polyfibre filling). Location: Outdoors on the South Route

Caitlin considers 'imprinting', the term used when a bird or creature utilises person-made materials and sites, and adapts to these environments in order to survive. Her installation turns this term around and asks, should we be more animal and work with the environment? Caitlin has fabricated six small hybrid forms that are somewhere between bird and human. They have moved in and made the site their home, for now. With this work, she considers our relationship to the environment and more specifically to the wetlands. <https://caitlinheffernan.co.uk>

'Disturb_ance' by Sharon McElroy (video installation). Location: Indoors in the Trappers Lodge on the West Route

This video piece features the fictional characters Aqua Bird, White Poisoner, Pond Foliate, and Mussel Crab, inspired by popular culture, urban mythology, folkloric seasonal festivals and the historical and contemporary contexts of WWT London. They act out often hidden struggles for habitat, food and breeding opportunities among co-existing flora and fauna species, and the conflicts that arise. The film highlights the invasive nature of native and non-native flora and fauna, the pollution of ecosystems through our use of cleaning products and WWT London's valuable work in habitat management, breeding programmes and water filtration. <https://www.sharonmcelroy.net>

'The Drift' by Eloise Moody (shirts and wooden poles). Location: Outdoors on Pedestrian Entrance Route

This installation traces delicate parallels between human and bird migrations, and asks us to consider individuals as well as the crowd. Eloise worked with charities and organisations to find 50 refugees and migrants residing in London but originating from countries that WWT London birds travel from or to. Each participant has exchanged one of their own shirts for a beautiful new shirt supplied by Jermyn Street shirt-makers, Turnbull and Asser. <https://www.eloisemoody.com>

These major works complement *Unravelling the Wetlands* commissions from **Anne Deeming, Tania Kovats, Gavin Osborn, Alec Stevens and Jonathan Wright**, also on view throughout this year.

'Whether this changes anything. Weather – it changes everything' by Anne Deeming

Sculptural clusters, floating in ponds, amalgamate the domestic with the industrial in familiar yet unexpected hybrid forms. Responding to the weather, they change in colour and patina mimicking seasonal transformations in the plumage of migratory birds, and the textures of local plant life.

'Wetlands' by Tania Kovats

Drawing on the environmental and socio-political concerns of wetlands, this artwork is in the form of a limited-edition newspaper with trickling streams of imagery and text.

'Survival: Lines of Flight' by Gavin Osborn

CONTINUES...

Field recordings and interviews, interwoven with specially created texts and sound design, are immersed in the wetland landscape, investigating the re-purposing of the site from Victorian reservoir to managed space for wetland 'wild' things.

'That Sinking Feeling' by Alec Stevens

This series of sculptural installations protrude from the water at varying heights, alluding to water level rises predicted to engulf UK and global communities.

'Gilded Floating Manor House' by Jonathan Wright

This gold-leafed floating sculptural work relates to Barn Elms Manor House, which once stood on this site, a meeting place for the 18th century Kit Kat Club. Exposing a multi-layered history, which now leaves no trace, the installation considers the contemporary wetland site that has returned to nature through artificial means and reflects on its future significance.

Wetlands Unravelled is made possible by funding from Arts Council England and the Greater London Area of the Arts Society and supported by Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust.

NOTES TO EDITORS

For information on installations by **Tania Kovats, Anne Deeming, Jonathan Wright, Gavin Osborn and Alec Stevens**, and **Unravelled**, visit www.unravelled.org.uk

Wetlands Unravelled, is at **WWT London Wetland Centre**, Queen Elizabeth's Walk, Barnes, London SW13 9WT. Opening times: until 31 October, 9.30am to 5.30pm. 1 November – 1 February, 9.30am to 4.30pm.

Changes have been made to keep visitors safe during the coronavirus epidemic. All visits must be booked online in advance, (including WWT members and under 4s). Admission: Adult, from £13.00; Child 4-16 years, from £7.90; concs, from £11.04; family ticket from £35.54; children under 4-years and essential helpers assisting disabled visitors, free.

For further information and to book: www.wwt.org.uk/wetland-centres/london/

Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust

Wetlands are essential for all life. The Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust (WWT) conserves, restores and creates wetlands, saving wetland wildlife around the world and in the UK. It aims to inspire us to value the amazing things healthy wetlands achieve for humankind and nature.

UK wetland centres welcome million visitors and 50,000 schoolchildren a year. One of London's greatest projects for the 21st century, the London Wetland Centre is a 105-acre award-winning nature reserve and London's first large-scale, man-made, inner city wetland reserve. www.wwt.org.uk



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CONTINUES WITH EVENTS...

Unravelling the Wetlands: Special Events

MAY

Saturday 22nd, 12pm, in The Observatory

Gavin Osborn's sound work, *Survival: Lines of Flight* brings together natural and artificial sounds found at the London Wetland Centre (London WWT) in one recording. He presents a performance of this work with an introduction explaining his research methods, followed by a Q&A. Free with ticket entry, to comply with Covid restrictions a maximum 30 people will be allowed into The Observatory for the performance.

JULY

Saturday 3rd, 10 - 11:30am or 2-3:30pm, outdoors around the site

Join artist Claire Barber for an onsite workshop experimenting with stitch techniques that respond to sounds at the London WWT. Please wear suitable clothing and footwear for outdoor sewing! Each participant will receive an embroidery kit with materials and tools needed. Free with ticket entry, booking essential.

Thursday 22nd, 6 - 7:30pm, Indoors in the H2O Building

Join us for Sharon McElroy's film *Disturb_ance* on the large screen in the H2O building, followed by a Q&A with Sharon McElroy and *Unravalled* curators Caitlin Heffernan and Polly Harknett. Free with ticket entry, booking essential.

Saturday 31st, 2-4pm, Outdoors around the site

Join Gavin Osborn on a journey of discovery across the site to refocus your ears on hearing what's really there, with the help of up-close microphones and underwater hydrophones. (Maximum 10 participants). Free with ticket entry, booking essential.

AUGUST

Sunday 8th, 2-3pm, outdoors around the site

Meet Eloise Moody, the artist who has created *The Drift*, who talks about the research and construction of her shirt windsocks. (Maximum 30 participants). Free with ticket entry, booking essential.

SEPTEMBER

Wednesday 1st, 10 - 11:30am or 2-3:30pm, outdoors around the site

Join artist Claire Barber for an onsite workshop experimenting with stitch techniques that respond to sounds at the London WWT. Please wear suitable clothing and footwear for outdoor sewing! Each participant will receive an embroidery kit with materials and tools needed. (Maximum 10 participants). Free with ticket entry, booking essential.

Thursday 23rd, 7 – 9pm, Indoors in the Kingfisher Cafe

The Barn Elms Manor Banquet: Join artist Jonathan Wright and Ophelia Field, author of 'The Kit Cat Club', for a contemporary take on the 18th century Mutton Pie Banquet. In the 1700s, Barn Elms Manor stood on the London WWT site. It was home to publisher Jacob Tonson, founder and secretary of the Kit Cat Club, whose members were influential writers and politicians. Enjoy a vegan 'mutton pie' and a drink in a specially engraved toasting glass whilst Ophelia and Jonathan discuss the Kit-Cat Club Banquets and their infamous toasts to the beauties of the day. (Maximum 40 tickets). For more information and to purchase tickets go to wwt.org.uk/london/wetlands-unravalled

OCTOBER

Thursday 21st, 5-7pm, online event

Wetlands Unravalled challenged artists to research and think through conflicts existing on a conservation site such as London WWT. In response, they produced artworks that question our understanding of the concepts of conservation and the roles we assume to play within it. Speakers include *Wetlands Unravalled* artists and scientists from London WWT, followed by a Q&A. Free online event, booking essential.

NOVEMBER

Saturday 13th, 2 - 4pm, indoors in the H2O Building

Using a mixture of sound recordings and materials found on site, you can gather and record sounds to build an imaginative collaborative sound piece inspired by London WWT, guided by Gavin Osborn. All equipment provided. (Maximum 10 participants). Free with ticket entry, booking essential