



**MAY 2013**

## **Park News**

### **Park Rangers**

Hearing that Senior Ranger Alf Dimmock was working on a Management Plan for Highbury Park I went to meet him at the Hall Green and Selly Oak Ranger Hub, in Kings Heath Park House, to learn more about the plan and about the work of Rangers.

I learned that the Management Plan is updated every five years, but is constantly reviewed to take account of changes. The detailed document examines the site - climate, geology, topography, hydrology, archaeology, visual character and history. It provides grassland, horticultural, and arboricultural descriptions. Safety is constantly reviewed. An ecological description is included. Park facilities and users, including voluntary groups, are a key concern in the report.

Following the work of description comes prescription - coppicing to protect ancient wood land, planting new species to encourage biodiversity, conserving historical sites, for example the recent renovation of the Henburys wall, devising, running and supporting park related initiatives in the community.

Formal park maintenance is now contracted out to Quadron, under the supervision of Simon Cooper, Constituency Parks Manager, Hall Green and Selly Oak. (More on this in our next newsletter.) The dynamic and conscientious team of Rangers now focus on community, biodiversity and landscape, often combining all three concerns in one project, as in their support for voluntary groups. Alf pointed out that quite a few groups are active in Highbury Park: Highbury Park Friends, Highbury Orchard Community CIC, Kings Heath Transition, BCC Trusts and Charities Committee, Britain in Bloom, and Colmore

School Parent - Teacher Association. No other park in the Hub has so many voluntary groups. The rangers have supported each of these, carrying out feasibility studies, suggesting sources of funding, bringing in volunteers.

Alongside these are the varied and well-publicised activities initiated by the Rangers themselves, often in response to local and national concerns with health in the community and with environmental sustainability. Look in the Future Events section of this newsletter for a ranger led walking activity coming up in Highbury Park soon. Copies of the excellent booklet, Birmingham Park Rangers Events, can be found in Kings Heath Park House. This gives full details of Ranger events. See also the website [www.birmingham.gov.uk/parks](http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/parks), and of course, many HPF members will be on Alf's email list.

Rangers are faced with a lot of administration and time in front of computers but Alf voices their main wish, to "Get people out on site and involved in activity". (Christine Hardy)

## **Park Nature Notes**

### **The Nuthatch**



A popular visitor to Highbury Park, often the first indication that there is a pair of nuthatches around is the loud Chwit Chwit as they keep in touch with each other. Sporting stylish slate grey upper parts, a black eyestripe and russet beneath, these busy little birds are enchanting park users.

The nuthatch is one of the few birds with claws strong enough to enable it to run *down* trees. About the size of a great tit, the nuthatch is territorial and rather stropky as witnessed by many people when it shows a reluctance to share at garden feeders. There are many pairs in Highbury Park and indeed nationally, numbers have been increasing since the 1970's. It feeds on nuts, seeds and insects and will wedge nuts in crevices to hammer open the shells. Old woodpecker holes in trees make ideal nest sites although the nuthatch will adapt the opening to its requirements by judicious addition of some mud plaster. (E.P.)

## Cow Parsley

Cow Parsley (*Anthriscus sylvestris*) is the most abundant member of the carrot family in Highbury Park and the first to flower in April/May. Its frothy white umbel flowers grace the shadier areas of the park – particularly the wooded area by the railway line.



It grows to 1.2 m and has recently found favour in trendy gardens. Take care however, as amongst the similar looking species in this family is the deadly hemlock which killed Socrates. (E.P.)

## Recent Events

### Wild Life Walk, April 6th, 2013

Five birdwatchers met up in the car park on a crisp April morning. We were immediately treated to the sight of a buzzard displaying in a huge circle against the blue sky. Branches on the deciduous trees were bare, but some looked ready to burst into leaf. There was a promise of Spring in the air, with daffodils and yellow and purple crocus. Birds are breeding, and very active. We watched a magpie commandeering a squirrel dray to nest in. Crows flew past carrying nesting material in their beaks.

As we walked up the ancient field boundary by the Henburys pond we noted that the water level was very high after the recent snow. We checked, but found no evidence of frogspawn. There was a cacophony of bird song, including the drumming of a greater spotted woodpecker. We scanned the Scots pine trees where the ring necked parakeets roost. We didn't see them, but in the last few weeks they have been exhibiting mating behaviour, and we anticipate chicks in the near future!

The nuthatch was voted "bird of the day" as we saw three pairs. This delightful slate blue, buff and orange bird entertained us at very close quarters, alternating between preening himself and trilling 4 or 5 loud notes. Paul Anthony, our wildlife guide, informed us that if the hole in the tree it nests in is too big, it blocks the entrance with mud to deter predators.

We also shared an excellent view of a tree creeper. This elegant little brown and white bird, climbs up tree trunks, extracting insects from the bark with its curved beak.

The park was full of blue tits, great tits and long tailed tits, and we saw wrens and dunnocks. Robins were plentiful, we saw approximately 20. Paul explained that 60% of British birds breed in urban parks, and after a walk around Highbury on an April morning this was easy to believe. (Anne Gilbert)

## Future Events

### Wild Life Walks with Paul Anthony

**Friday walks: 3rd May, 1 p.m.**

**Saturday walk: 1 June, 7 p.m., to see the park at night, the evening chorus, and bats. Meet at Highbury Park car park for both walks.**

**Sunday 16th June, 9.30 a.m. - 11.30 a.m. Walking Meditation, Highbury Park. Meet at the notice board car park off Shutlock Lane**

An introduction walking as a form of meditation and relaxation. This will be a slow moving activity to help increase personal and environmental awareness. Wear sturdy foot ware, bring water to drink and sun protection maybe necessary.

## Useful Contacts

### General HPF Enquiries

David Papadopoulos: (0121) 242 1845  
[contact@highburyparkfriends.org.uk](mailto:contact@highburyparkfriends.org.uk)

### HPF Membership Secretary and HPF mail:

c/o York Supplies, 55/57 Waterloo Road, Kings Heath, Birmingham, B14 7SD.

### HPF Newsletter Christine Hardy, email

[contact@highburyparkfriends.org.uk](mailto:contact@highburyparkfriends.org.uk)

### HPF web site

<http://www.highburyparkfriends.org.uk/>

### Birmingham & District Beekeepers

Association, John Madgwick: 558 8623

**Ranger Patrol:** 454 7810 - for urgent matters.

**Birmingham City Council:** 464 8728