HPF Bulletin April 2021

Welcome to the Spring bulletin

There is definitely a bit more hope in the air. Daffodils and crocus are in full bloom; bird song is reaching a crescendo and there are many signs of nesting birds. There has been a lot happening on the Highbury estate since out last bulletin, so we are happy to have the opportunity to bring you up to speed

Application for SLINC (Site of Local Importance for Nature Conservation) / SINC (Site of Importance for Nature Conservation) status.

We submitted an application for the whole of the Highbury estate to be assessed for SLINC / SINC status. Ellen Pisolkar, ecologist and HPF member undertook the assessment on our behalf. She writes:

"Highbury Park was assessed against the Local Site Selection Criteria and the entire site was found to meet the threshold for designation as a Local Site. Parts of the site, including the ponds, streams, wetlands, more natural woodland areas and the Shutlock Meadows were recommended for designation as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC), while the remainder of the site, including the Highbury Hall Pleasure Grounds and Orchard were recommended for designation as a Site of Local Importance for Nature Conservation (SLINC).

This assessment was endorsed by the Birmingham and Black Country Local Site Partnership on 10/03/2021 and now Birmingham City Council will take the site forward for formal designation in their planning system. We will let you know when there is further news about our application".

A big thank you to Ellen for all the hard work that went into the report. Thanks also to Andy and Sara at Ecorecord, the Local Environmental Centre for Birmingham and the Black Country for all their help.

Picture thanks to Martin Richards

And more good news!

You may recall in our last bulletin we highlighted the on-going problem of motorists driving and parking on the grass meadows on the way up to the car park. A solution is finally at hand from Birmingham City Council who are arranging for some trunks from poplar trees that are to be felled in another park, to be placed down the drive hopefully by early summer.

Kings Heath Station

In case you missed the recent news, on March 19th West Midlands Combined Authority Leaders approved the final £20 million slice of funding need to re-open the Camphill Line. This means that Moseley, Kings Heath and Hazelwell Stations have now got full funding and are on track to re-open in 2023. Work is planned to start on Kings Heath Station in April.

News from the Chamberlain Highbury Trust

We hope you have managed to see the creation of our new paths on the estate. In spite of huge amounts of mud and churned earth, they are gradually taking shape and have transformed the landscape. One of the main advantages is that they will allow entry into the woodlands by the house for those who previously couldn't access them. This is one of a series of restorations of the estate being undertaken by the Chamberlain Highbury Trust, with the help of Heritage Lottery Funding.

Nature Notes

Birdsong. Spring is an ideal time to marvel at the birdsong in Highbury Park. With patience and before the leaves clothe the trees, you can watch and identify the birds. Last year, each day I would listen to a Blackcap singing – always in the same area of scrub. My favourite songster is the Blackbird with his varied and dulcet notes proclaiming his territory. The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds RSPB provides useful information on identifying birdsong https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/bird-songs/what-bird-is-that
The British Trust for Ornithology BTO has some excellent bird identification videos https://www.bto.org/develop-your-skills/bird-identification/videos/

The appearance of fresh green **Stinging Nettles** in the Spring provide food for a wealth of insects including many colourful butterflies. In the summer you may see a web on the plants with many blackish caterpillars feeding on the leaves – these will turn into Small Tortoiseshell or Peacock Butterflies. More than 30 other species of insect feed on the leaves including Mother of Pearl and Small Magpie. EMP.

Mother of Pearl

Small Magpie

Invertebrate Survey

Guess how many invertebrates have been spotted at Highbury? To find the answer you will need to read the excellent invertebrate survey that Andy Slater of Ecorecord has produced for us.
https://highburyparkfriends.org.uk/text/Invertibrates/HighburyPark2020InvertebrateSurvey.pdf

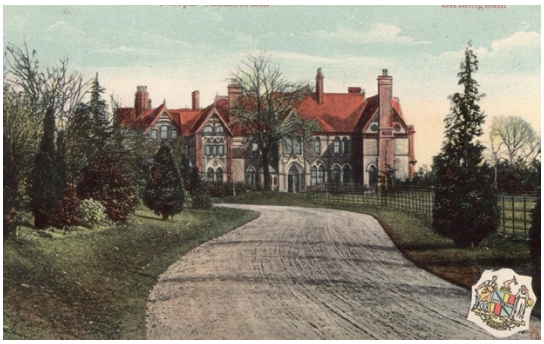
This is the first time we have had a survey of invertebrates so a big thank you to Andy for all his research.

Old Postcards of Highbury

Last bulletin we featured some old pictures of postcards from the private collection of Gail Pittaway, HPF committee member. We feature another two below. Gail writes:

1. View from Oak Tree Pool looking across meadow land towards the Lodge in the early 1900s. Later on the Shrubbery Garden and Lime tree avenue were created on the same, former meadow. The remains of this pool are located between the Italian and the Shrubbery Gardens and the remains of Joseph Chamberlain's favourite Oak Tree can still be seen today. The pool is surrounded by Rhododendrons but has long since silted up and has now become a haven for Bull Rushes and Flag Irises.

2. View of the carriageway leading to the house with the Birmingham City Council coat of arms circa 1907. The carriageway is currently undergoing restoration thanks to funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund raised by Chamberlain Highbury Trust.



Tree Management Strategy

We recently reviewed our strategy for the management of dead and felled trees. We will continue to leave as much wood as we can in the park to form part of natural eco-systems. Over 2000 invertebrates are associated with dead wood. We know many of you who visit Highbury also enjoy playing or sitting on our tree trunks that have been left in situ**!**

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