

Summer Bulletin 2022

Welcome to our new bulletin and hope you are enjoying the Summer! We are delighted that our events programme has been going so well this year; it has been great to meet up with both HPF members and other visitors to share aspects of the park from different perspectives. After such a busy time, we will be having a short break during August returning on Sunday 11th September with a stall at the Highbury Open Day (part of the national Heritage Open Days Festival) followed by a Fungi Walk led by Lukas Large on Friday 28th October at 10.30am. Do join us if you can!

A Summer of Flowers; News from two of our most recent events.

How does a Common Spotted Orchid get its name? From the spots on its leaves! We learned this and many other facts about wildflowers on the walk around our hay meadow led by Jake Williams, Senior Reserves Officer, Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust on 12th June. We were blessed with a sunny day and the meadow was a tapestry of white, yellow and green wild flowers and grasses. We observed too many species to list but they included; Birds Foot Trefoil, Yellow Rattle, Meadow Cranesbill and Ox-eye Daisy. The stars of the show were the pink spikes of the Common Spotted Orchid. Our meadow was created by strewing bales of hay



from a Worcestershire Wildlife Trust nature reserve, Eades Meadow, where there are a lot of orchids, but they are slow to propagate. Last year, after 5 years, was the first year we witnessed a display of orchids and the number of spikes has increased this year. We care for the meadow by mowing once a year and removing the hay at the end of the summer. The meadow changes from yellow / white to purple as the season progresses, so check it out next time you're in the park. Thanks to Jake and all the participants for making this such an enjoyable event.

Any records taken from any of our events or surveys undertaken in the park are sent to EcoRecord, an invaluable and comprehensive ecological database for Birmingham and the Black Country. Find out more at ecorecord.org.uk.

Launch of our new leaflet; Discover Wildflowers and Grasses

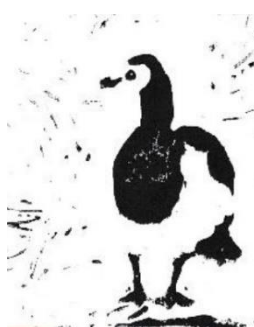


Coffee, cake, a sunny evening and the scene was perfectly set for our annual AGM followed by the launch of the newest edition to our *Discover Highbury* series of leaflets. Around forty HPF members plus the current committee gathered together in the beautiful surroundings of the Drawing Room in Highbury. Once the business part of the evening concluded Ellen and Catharine, co-creators of the leaflet, described their working process and choices of plants selected.

On display in the drawing room, Catharine brought in some of her original watercolour illustrations for members to view, which were mostly completed from specimens in flower in the park during the Summer months of 2020. Ellen then led a gentle stroll out into the wonderful evening light around Lower Shutlock Meadow. Here members saw a wide range of plants including Ladies Bedstraw, Cocksfoot and Perennial Rye Grass and our rather special rayed form of Black Knapweed.

Paper copies of our new leaflet will be available at all our events or from York Supplies, Kings Heath. You can also download a digital copy from our website via the Habitat and Wildlife Section.

<https://highburyparkfriends.org.uk/wp/wildflowers/>



Nature Notes
by E.M.P



Although superficially like a wasp, on the left is a hoverfly – one of many insects that mimic wasps in coloration but do not sting. This particular species is sometimes known as the ‘Batman hoverfly’ (*Myathropa florea*) because of the pattern on its thorax. Its larvae live in stagnant water in hollow trees and other places. On the right is a Soldier Beetle (*Rhagonycha fulva*.) A predator, it hunts insects on flowers. The larvae are also predatory but live on the ground in the leaf litter.

Honeybees are busy on a variety of flowers at the moment – Bramble, Sweet Chestnut and Himalayan Balsam. In June there was a bit of a gap in the nectar supply and we had to give supplementary sugar and water to the bees but then the bramble started flowering and they were making honey again.

Butterflies abound in the park in the summer. Small Skippers, Meadow Browns and Gatekeepers all need grass for their larvae to feed on. A White-letter Hairstreak butterfly was recently spotted wildly spiralling around but then landing in front of our feet, it crawled onto my finger and allowed a few quick photos before charging off again. The larvae require Elm as their foodplant and the park supports a number of small elms near the allotments and along the Railway Wood.



Tree of the month: July 2022



Silver Pendent Lime (*Tilia tomentosa* 'Petiolaris')

Family: *Malvaceae*



If you descend the steps from the Henbury Pond on a warm, breezy day in July, and emerge back out in to the sunlight, you may become aware of a sweet, heady fragrance in the air. A complex aroma, which is reminiscent of honey and quince fruit. Look straight ahead and there you will see its source; the flowers of our solitary but statuesque Silver Pendent Lime. Also known as Weeping Silver Lime its multitude of flowers emerge later in the year than those of the Common Lime, providing a valuable nectar source for an amazing array of insects including honey bees and hoverflies. Stand beneath the trees arching branches and it won't be long before you will be able to observe the diversity of visitors. Once the flowers fade the ridged fruit develop, hanging in clusters, distinguishable (as in all limes) by the papery wing, botanically known as a *bract*, that remains attached above. Part of its botanical name, *tomentosa* is derived from New Latin, *tomentosus* meaning 'having a mass of hairs'. If the wind should move through its canopy, the contrast between the dark green upper side of the leaves compared with the silver underside become apparent. The silver sheen is created by a dense cover of tiny hairs, which are also visible on the fruits.



The Plight of the Bumblebee

Some years, bumblebees can be seen crawling at the bases of lime trees. It was widely believed that the nectar from lime flowers was toxic to bumble bees acting as a narcotic and eventually causing their death. However recent research indicates this phenomenon may be in part attributable to bumblebee behaviour. Lime trees produce a lot of nectar but as the nectar source begins to dwindle, bumblebees continue trying to feed, whilst other insects will have moved on to alternative sources. The bumble bees expound a huge amount of energy by doing this, eventually becoming lethargic and resulting in some deaths. To find out more about these species and current research check out The Bumblebee Conservation Trust. (www.bumblebeeconservation.org)



Find out more about trees in Highbury Park by visiting our website and download our illustrated *Discover Trees in Highbury Park* leaflet

Highbury's History - Joseph Chamberlain (1836 - 1914)

Business man, Politician, Education Reformer



Joseph Chamberlain, Mary and guests gathered outside Highbury for a photograph opportunity. (This photograph looks like it may have been taken early on in their marriage. Note, Joseph is wearing a bowler aka a coke hat and not his trademark top hat. Both styles were fashionable from the mid 1800s.)



Joseph Chamberlain, when Chancellor of the University of Birmingham.

Joseph's radical political career began within civic affairs and he was elected mayor of Birmingham in 1873. During this time his interests in education reform began and he became a supporter of free public education for school aged children. His national political career began in 1876 when he was elected to Parliament as an MP and he later rose to the position of president of the Board of Trade. He was supported during his political career by his third wife Mary Endicott, daughter of William E. Endicott a member of the U.S. cabinet and Secretary of War. She was from a political family and helped ease Chamberlain's acceptance into the upper echelons of society into which he had neither been born nor brought up.

Joseph proposed the establishment of the University of Birmingham to complete his vision for the city to provide " a place of universal instruction to enable the most important work of original research to be carried out under the most favourable circumstances." He then went on to become its first chancellor. Earlier in his political career he helped to found the Birmingham Education League, which soon became the National Education League. It held its first conference in Birmingham in 1869. The league proposed a school system funded by government grants, managed by local authorities and subject to government inspection. Chamberlain favoured free compulsory non-secular education stating "It is as much the duty of the State to see that the children are educated as to see that they are fed."

(The first part of this article was published in our Spring 2022 bulletin.)

In other news...

Work continues apace with the **Chamberlain Highbury Trust** and their plans for the continued restoration of the building and gardens of the former Chamberlain estate, with newly appointed Project Managers, Fundraiser and Administration Support joining the team. Want to find out more? Then why not go along to one of their regular monthly Open Days (First Monday of the month) where you can join one of their knowledgeable volunteer guides on a tour of the building followed by refreshments in the Highbury bar. Info at www.chamberlainhighburytrust.co.uk

Ground investigation works have started, close to the Alcester Road entrance to the park, in preparation for the development of the new **Kings Heath Train Station**, due to open in 2023. (Work will run from 16th July - 11th September 2022). Find out more at wmre.org.uk/camphill

There was a typo in the Spring bulletin in the poem by HPF member Ann Flynn regarding her visit to Highbury. We are really sorry for the error. The first line should have read,
"On the birth of December
I stood with the so-called living"



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