HIGHBURY PARK Friends

APRIL 2011

Park News

Playbuilder Scheme for Highbury Park

As you will know from our January newsletter a small budget from the Central Government Playbuilder Project was allocated to Highbury Park. Birmingham City Council designers proposed "an amenity space instead of a play area, with a group of natural landscape features put together to allow young children to use their imagination".

The play space has been warmly welcomed by park users with young children. In this recent sunny spell children have been playing there throughout the day. Early evening, people walk through the park and stop and sit for a while on the benches and mounds. These are some comments from parents, "I wish it had been there when my children were younger. For older children it would be nice to have some swings in the car park area". "Looks lovely, very calm, the instruments encourage creativity". " I think this play area it is just right for this park, it does not offend. It's really good to have the music aspect. If it was extended I would like to see things that fit into the landscape of this park". "It's a really good addition to the park, sensory, using natural materials."

Two long time users of the park also gave me their opinion. They were pleased to see the play area and noticed how popular it was. However, they were distressed by the metal musical instruments which could be heard throughout the park making it hard to to enjoy the natural sounds of rustling trees, running water, insects and birds.

If further funding becomes available it may be possible to extend the area. Would you send us your views, on the existing amenities, and on what you might like to see added (or removed)? You might have seen examples elsewhere which fit their environment, stimulate imagination, provide education, enjoyment, fun. Let us know. (Christine Hardy)

Uffculme School and Chamberlain House

In response to growing demand for the services this school offers to autistic children Uffculme School hoped for a new building. As funding for this has been withdrawn they would now like to move into Chamberlain House. That site would suit their needs more closely than the current one, and would allow them so stay in the same area. The School has held a number of open meetings to discuss their proposals. These discussions continue and the school welcomes views from interested parties. (Christine Hardy)

Recent Events

Wildly Delicious - A Foraging Walk and Picnic Alys Fowler and Birgit Kehrer

On a sunny Sunday morning early April we were treated to a fascinating tour of the park with Alys sharing her knowledge of edible plants. Starting in the Community Orchard area, Alys showed us tasty young bramble leaves, raspberry leaves (good for women's ailments when made into a tea), dandelion leaves (apparently a dish from heaven when combined with smoked fish and creamy sauce), cloveroot (*Geum urbanum*) which gives a clove flavour to cooked apples and Japanese knotweed – edible when young but

a pest species and best avoided. The wet areas sloping down to the long pool have patches of Greater Reedmace (*Typha latifolia*). These have edible shoots and Birgit said that they were so delicious that she still dreams about eating them. We found masses of pignut in the hazel coppice near the railway and these have edible 'nuts' under ground but Alys advised us not to eat these as doing so would reduce the population of this pretty fern-like flower.

To to prove how tasty these plants can be Birgit made us a risotto with stinging nettles and cleavers with a multi-leaf salad - a wildly delicious finale to a fab walk. (Ellen Pisolkar)

Bird Walks in Highbury Park

Wild life observer, Paul Anthony, is leading a series of bird walks in Highbury Park and opening eyes to the rich variety of wild life there. You will find on the HPF website Paul 's report of the March walk. Our HPF Membership Secretary took part in the April walk and expresses her delight.

As a group of us met Paul Anthony at the car park the great tits were piping 'teacher teacher', three jays flew past and a carrion crow croaked at us from a nearby tree. As we set off towards the Henburys Wall we saw more crows with a stock dove looking for worms and leather jackets in the grass. Stock doves are smaller and darker than wood pigeons and have no white on their wings or neck. We saw numerous nuthatches moving up and down tree trunks using their powerful beaks to prise out nuts that have been wedged into the bark. Long-tailed tits flew in groups from tree to tree. At the small pool where there was a moorhen and Paul recommended a visit in August to see the dragon and damsel flies that gather. there.

Paul is an expert at recognising bird song which makes it so much easier to spot birds when you are with him. However we did not see the great spotted woodpecker even though we were aware of its presence. We did see the parakeets flying swiftly about with their tails streaming behind them. On the slope where a lot of clearing has been done we saw a wren disappear into a wood stack and then a chiff-chaff called its name and was spotted just as we saw and heard a black cap. These were the first summer migrants most of us had seen this year. We also saw robins, a mistle-thrush, mallards and blackbirds. See Future Events below for the dates of May, June and July walks. (Margaret Tyler)

Future Events

Wildflower Survey led by Ellen Pisolkar Friday, 29 April, 10 a.m., meet at the Alcester Road entrance to the Park.

Highbury Park is home to a range of habitats, all supporting different wild plants. We will be visiting the park on a number of occasions this year to record the plants and would be very grateful for any help you can give. No prior knowledge is necessary, all welcome.

'What's Going On?' Open Day Sunday 1 May, from 1 p.m. HIghbury Park.

Organised by Park Rangers to showcase the work done on Trust land above the park including the orchard and path clearing. Project tours, talks about wildlife, plus craft demonstrations.

Bird Walks

Friday 6 May, 10.30 a.m., meet at the car park in Highbury Park This walk will extend to Holders Lane Wood.
Friday 3rd June,and Friday 1 July meet at 7 p.m., car park for both birds and bats.

Orchard Work Parties, 2 p.m. onwards, every first and third Sunday.
See http:hicopa.org for more details.
Ranger-led Woodland Conservation. Most Wednesdays from 11 a.m. Ring David, (0121) 242 1845, or Rangers Services, to check times.

Useful Contacts

HPF Committee
David Papadopoulos: (0121) 242 1845
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HPF Membership Secretary and HPF mail:
c/o York Supplies, 55/57 Waterloo Road, Kings Heath, Birmingham, B14 7SD.

HPF web site
http://www.highburyparkfriends.org.uk/

Birmingham & District Beekeepers Association, John Madgwick: 558 8623

Ranger Patrol:454 7810 - for urgent matters.