HIGHBURY PARK Friends

AUGUST 2011

Park News

Wildflowers in the park

HPF member Ellen Pisolkar, has been leading wildflower surveys in Highbury Park, this is what she found.

In 2005 we recorded 100 plant species in the park – we know that there are many more so we started another wildflower survey in April this year and here are the plants recorded at the Hay Meadow opposite the car park.

Common Name	**Latin name**
Cocksfoot	*Dactylis glomerata*
Sweet Vernal Grass	*Anthoxanthum odoratum*
Red Fescue	*Festuca rubra*
False Oat-grass	*Arrhenatherum elatius*
Yorkshire Fog	*Holcus lanatus*
Black Bent	*Agrostis gigantea*
Common Bent-grass	*Agrostis capillaris*
Meadow fox-tail	*Alopecurus pratensis*
Perennial rye-grass	*Lolium perenne*
Timothy grass	*Phleum pratense*
Dandelion	*Taraxacum officinale*
Cuckoo flower	*Cardamine pratensis*
Meadow buttercup	*Ranunculus acris*
Creeping buttercup	*Ranunculus repens*
Common Knapweed	*Centaurea nigra*
Cow parsley	*Anthriscus sylvestris*
Common Mouse-ear	*Cerastium fontanum*

The first to flower were Sweet Vernal Grass and Cuckoo flower early in the year. They were followed by buttercups and now, at the height of summer, sheets of purple and grey Yorkshire Fog and a delicate red mist of Common Bent-grass delight park visitors.

By the end of the second survey, in July, and some extra surveying by myself we had recorded 152 plant species in Highbury Park. We included trees that have seeded, but not planted trees. There are probably many more species but this really is a good start. The list begins with Annual Meadow-grass, Ash, Autumn Hawkbit, Beech, Black Bent-grass. We will put the full results up on the website and noticeboard.

If you have found any unusual plants or indeed want to know the name of any plant please let us know.

The meadow needs to be cut in July or August, retaining a few uncut areas for the butterflies and other insects. Importantly the cuttings need to be removed from the site so that they don't turn into compost, fertilising the grass. This ensures that the meadow won't become dominated by a few species of nutrient-tolerant grasses. Interestingly the most nutrient-poor grasslands have the greatest diversity of plants.

By the way some stunning photographs of Highbury Park have been used to make greetings cards – for sale in Armadillo, Poplar Road in Kings Heath. (Ellen Pisolkar)

Highbury Park and the Kings Heath Floral Trail

The floral trail passes through Highbury Park providing a green and peaceful contrast to the busy High Street. Why not try walking the length of the trail and visit Kings Heath Park as well? This year the judges admired the newly restored Henburys Wall, the new play area, plans for the Community Orchard and the stunning expanse of grasses in the hay meadow. (Ellen Pisolkar.)

Community Projects Progress

Orchard and Pathwork

The 'orchard' and 'pathwork' projects are proceeding on a daily or weekly basis. The orchard project aims to re-establish an orchard next to the former Highbury farm buildings, alongside the newly cleared Queensbridge footpath. Maps and family records indicate an orchard and a kitchen garden in that area, plus a variety of farm buildings, including a grand thatched-roof dairy. Most of the work to date has focused on clearing the overgrowth, laying woodchip on the path, and building boundaries to designate areas for bees, wildlife, wildflowers, paths, and event space. What began as an idea for a community orchard has expanded when we discovered a brick floor and other remains. We are now to considering a community events space. Drop by at any time to enjoy the space, and for more information contact the volunteers on site normally the first and third Sunday of each month.

This Highbury Orchard Community project is being managed by a team of volunteers from Highbury Community Partnerships and Kings Heath Transition Initiative, with input from the park Rangers (Alf & Penny mainly), and representatives of the Highbury Trust.

Near the orchard we've opened up the woodlands that were once formal gardens. This work may expand into a full garden restoration project if the city goes ahead with a Heritage Lottery bid. We've discovered the alignment of old paths and laid woodchip and log bridges along them. Pond dredging by hand has begun with Ranger supervision and teams of corporate volunteers. In all, we've been working to make the area more welcoming, and are glad to see so many people making use of the area in their walks.

Highbury Trust Update

Progress on improving the charitable use of Highbury continues at a steady pace with two milestones on the near horizon. First, we expect to see a draft copy of the options appraisal within a month. Secondly, a public consultation is being scheduled for later in the year. If you have questions or would like to take a role in the process, please contact us. (David Papadopoulos)

Future Events

Bird Walk led by Paul Anthony
Friday 5 August, 2 p.m. Meet at the car park

Scything Demonstration and Haymaking Sunday 7 August, 10.30 a.m. to 2 p.m. Meet at the car park.

Art Walk led by Catherine Clarke
Sunday 18th September 11 a.m. Meet at the car park.

Join our local botanical artist to walk, talk and take inspiration from Highbury Park. Bring along sketch books and cameras if you wish.

Orchard Work Parties, 2 p.m. onwards, every first and third Sunday.
See http:hicopa.org for more details.

Useful Contacts

HPF Committee
David Papadopoulos: (0121) 242 1845
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HPF Membership Secretary and HPF mail:
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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.