



March 2012

Park News

New Arrivals

Good news, in early March I spotted a queen Tree Bee feeding from the crocus in Highbury Park. This beautiful species with a russet thorax, black abdomen with a white bottom was first recorded in England in 2001 and is now spreading and becoming common in many areas.



It is unusual in that it nests above ground and is especially partial to holes in trees. So it will join woodpeckers, bats, treecreepers, stock doves, squirrels, and nuthatches in their preference for this special habitat. (Ellen Pisolkar)



New Member

I have lived in Kings Heath for more than 25 years, with two parks within walking distance: Kings Heath Park, the interesting one with colourful flowers where I went jogging, and Highbury Park, the boring one with large green open spaces, which I rarely visited, and where nothing much seemed to happen.

One grey Sunday morning in January, I fancied a change and walked in Highbury Park. I was about to exit, near the A435, when I heard the sound - tap, tap, tap, and again, tap, tap, tap. In the pollarded poplar tree very high above me was a great spotted woodpecker. I stood entranced and watched the black, white and red bird for 10 minutes. I never knew you could see a woodpecker in a city park!

The next weekend I returned to the park, armed with my binoculars. I heard the woodpeckers calling to each other and followed two of them as they flew around the park. Over the next weeks and months I took to visiting the park regularly and observed diverse wildlife – a fox that trotted across my path in broad daylight in the wood, a heron mobbed by crows as it tried to land at the pond, flocks of colourful small birds; long tailed tits, chaffinches and goldfinches. I came to view Highbury more as a local nature reserve than a city park.

I explored all the nooks and crannies of the park and discovered secret paths hidden by brambles under the trees bordering the railway lines; carpets of purple autumn crocus amid the autumn leaves, sections of woodland I hadn't known existed and five green ring necked parakeets. Inquisitive to learn more, I downloaded a map from the internet, and discovered the Highbury Park Friends (HPF) website.

I felt really happy whenever I walked in the park and so eventually I joined HPF to better support the park's existence. The best thing about becoming a member? The opportunity to connect with other people who love the park as much as I do. (Anne Gilbert)

Park Restoration Work

You will have noticed a number of changes in the park: paths re-surfaced, laurel bushes cut back, viewing platform in process of restoration. This is part of £170,000 of work commissioned by Birmingham City Council and instigated by Councillor Mullaney. Cutting back the laurels has revealed lost garden paths and planting from the former gardens of Highbury Hall. A hidden pond has also been discovered near the Yew Tree Road entrance to the park. Sadly the north side of the park has lost its secluded feel, and the road and Chamberlain House are now in view. (C. Hardy)

Birmingham Mail Article

A recent article in *The Birmingham Mail* (1 March 2012) included misinformation which caused distress to some members of HPF. The article implied that trees were being cut down and bushes cut back to "stop sex in city park" and implied that HPF was involved in this initiative. HPF sees the value of cutting back invasive laurel in order to allow other plants to grow and to reveal paths and ponds, but were

not consulted on other aims of this clearance. HPF is composed of diverse members of the local community and wishes to promote the park as a welcoming and valuable public space for the whole community. (HPF Committee)

Highbury Estate - Options Appraisal

It was envisioned that a draft of Elizabeth Perkins' Options Appraisal on the future of the Highbury Estate would be released to key stakeholders on the 8 March but there have been further delays and a release date has not yet been agreed.

Recent Events

11 February Wild Life Walk with Paul Anthony

It was dry with occasional sunshine but the snow crunched under our feet and those who had travelled by car found the road leading to the H.P. car park was closed for resurfacing from the Shutlock Lane gate. These problems did not dampen the enthusiasm of the six who joined Paul Anthony. As we walked towards the railway we saw a large flock of redwings searching for fruit and insects in the trees and there was a flock of chaffinches doing likewise. Pairs of magpies were swooping about and a small group of longtailed tits cheeped to keep in touch with each other. We headed towards the small pond where we saw nuthatches busy searching for insects on and under the bark of the tree trunks and later we saw a tree creeper working its way spirally up a tree trunk looking for food.

This was near to Highbury Hall where we had a wonderful view of a great spotted female woodpecker with a black cap rather than the red cap of the male. We noticed that the robins were paired up. We looked at the footprints of a badger and a fox in the snow. Badgers have poor eye sight and use smell to find their way. We admired the Davidia tree in the centre of the Italian Garden. it is often referred to as the handkerchief tree because of the white bracts which hang below the small balls of flower. These trees were originally brought to England from China in Victorian times. We were pleased to see that the shrubs had been cut back to allow more light in to the nearby small pool. We were beginning to feel the cold so we dispersed after two hours of good bird watching. (Margaret Tyler)

Future Events

Wild Life Walks with Paul Anthony

Meet at the car park in Highbury Park

Saturday 14th April 10.30 a.m.
Friday 4th May 1 p.m.
Saturday 2 June 10.30 a.m.

Subscription Renewals

Our subscription year runs from September-August. Rates remain £5 or £3, and cheques, made payable to Highbury Park Friends, can be left at York Supply in Kings Heath, or posted to Highbury Park Friends c/o York Supply, 57 Waterloo Road, B14 7SD. For members who have not renewed their subscription I attach a renewal form.

Like to Get Involved?

Would any existing members and new members of HPF like to get involved in suggesting and organising events, carrying out research, writing and delivering newsletters, contributing to the website, liaising with other groups or other HPF committee activities? If you can contribute an hour or two per month do contact us at

contact@highburyparkfriends.org.uk

We'll be delighted to hear from you.

Useful Contacts

HPF Committee

David Papadopoulos: (0121) 242 1845

E-mail:

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

HPF web site

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

Birmingham & District Beekeepers Association, John Madgwick: 558 8623

Ranger Patrol: 454 7810 - for urgent matters.