HIGHBURY PARK Friends

# AUGUST 2013

## *Park News*

### Woodland Play at Highbury Park

Forest school bases are becoming commonplace in school grounds these days, but did you know that there is a forest school base in Highbury Park? Several locations in the park can be used for forest school activities, and a base camp is tucked away within the woodland next to the orchard.

A series of Woodland Play sessions for families, managed by Highbury Orchard Community CIC and run by Forest School leaders, are taking place over the next 12 months. Highbury is an ideal setting for forest school and outdoor education because it provides naturalistic spaces, perfect for exploring. In return, the activities have a low impact on the environment, and often no sign is left at all. As for the participants, the children and their parents, there are well-researched benefits – fitness and health, fun and learning, social skills and bonding, well-being and a love of nature. The last of these, when established early on, can last a lifetime.

Woodland Play has ben funded by Awards for All till June 2014. Details of the sessions are on the HOCCIC website, www.peopleandland.org.uk with the next sessions being 29th – 31st August. **Please contact Liz on hoccic@gmail.com or 0121 628 2680 if you would like to book in as a family or help out as a volunteer.** (Liz Wright)

## *Park Nature Notes*

### Brown Flutterbys

The summer, although late, has been wonderful for butterfly spotting in Highbury Park (and a few have flown into this newsletter). We are seeing many more brown butterflies than ever before. This has much to do with the new meadow and rough edges providing food for caterpillars and nectar sources for the adults.

Meadow Browns (Maniola jurtina) lay their eggs on a variety of grasses and the adults are partial to nectar from bramble, knapweed and ragwort.

The smaller chocolate-brown Ringlet (Aphantopus hyperantus) is also more common this year. Its dark colouring enables it to warm up quickly in the sun and unlike other butterflies, it is often seen on dull days. Its larvae also feed on grasses. The female is said to lay her eggs by sitting on a grass stem and randomly ejecting them into the air!. (E.P.)

## *Recent Events*

### July Butterfly and Moth Walk, 2013

"How can you tell a butterfly from a moth?" and "What do butterflies eat?" Our wildlife guide Paul Anthony posed these questions to the 11 adults and 9 children on the July walk as we set off through the hay meadow, enjoying the glorious smell of newly cut grass in the summer sunshine. We quickly learned the answers. Paul explained that the habitat of Highbury Park is an important one for butterflies and moths, as blackberry bushes, nettles and unimproved grassland in the park provide the pollen needed for their food. Elsewhere GM crops, pesticides and herbicides damage the environments necessary for bees and butterflies to thrive.

We soon discovered how difficult it is to identify butterflies on the wing as they dance through the air at speed. Butterflies can only be seen by day whereas moths are active both day and night. Butterflies have straight antennae whereas moths have serrated ones. At rest butterflies place their wings together, whereas moths splay them open.

Out of a possible 54 British butterfly species, 7 were spotted; Meadow Brown, Gatekeeper, Small White, Large White, Speckled Wood, Ringlet and the beautiful bright orange Comma.

We learned there is no such species as the Cabbage White – this is a generic name for Large White, Small White and Green-Veined White butterflies. We also recorded two buff coloured day flying moths.

The large patch of bright pink rose bay willow herb below the old Italian garden hummed with the presence of approximately 1000 bees, insects, and hover-flies. The Henburys pond teemed with insect life, too. Electric blue damsel flies that lay their eggs in the water hovered above the pale yellow water lilies; there was a moorhen nest and a family group of lanky moorhen chicks in the water. It was the height of summer and we enjoyed a magical few hours in the park. (Anne Gilbert)

## *Future Events*

**Woodland Play Sessions (HOCCIC)**

**29 - 31 August.**

For booking and details see the first article on page one of this newsletter.

**Wild Life Walks with Paul Anthony**

**Friday walks: 6 September, 1 p.m., 1 November, 1 p.m., 3 January 1 p.m..**

**Saturday walks: 5 October, 10.30 a.m., 7 December, 10.30 a.m..**

**Meet at Highbury Park car park for all Wild Life Walks.**

Do wear shoes suitable for rough ground, and bring cameras and binoculars if you wish.

**Write in the Trees with Simon Pitt; an afternoon of inspiration and fun.**

**Saturday 15 September, 1 p.m.. Meet at Alcester Road entrance to the park.**

Former Birmingham Poet Laureate, Simon Pitt, will lead a two hour jamboree of creative writing and storytelling in the park. Here is your chance to make a poem, story or song inspired by the surroundings. If you've not written for a while don't worry, professional help will be at hand. Adults, and children welcome. (This event is supported by an Awards for All grant.)

**Honey Fun Day**

**28 September, 1.00 p.m. to 6.00 p.m.. Look for signposts near the children's play area.**

Highbury Orchard Community are holding this celebration of bees. The day will involve a lot of honey: a honey cake competition, games and crafts, information on honey and bee-keeping, honey nutritional and medicinal information, a chance to try orienteering around the park, and to sow bee-loved wildflower seeds in a foraging necklace.

**Coming Soon, a HPF Diary of Future Events for Autumn, Winter and Spring.**

## *Useful Contacts*

**General HPF Enquiries**
David Papadopoulos: (0121) 242 1845
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.