Autumn Bulletin 2026

HIGHBURY PARK Friends

Welcome to Highbury Park Friends Autumn Newsletter!

There's plenty to celebrate this autumn, with Highbury Park officially recognised as a Local Nature Site, new discoveries in our ponds and meadows, and another wonderful year for butterflies and moths. We also look back at 15 years of improvements to the park's wildlife, share opportunities to record your own sightings, and highlight a local art exhibition inspired by the park. Read on for the latest news, forthcoming events and ways to help us care for this very special place.

A big thank you to all our litter pickers, those of you who litter pick on your own and those in organised groups. The park really benefits from what you do. Thanks, too, to all of you who take your litter home when the bins are full. We really appreciate everyone's help in keeping Highbury looking good!

Thank you too to all those who attended our recent AGM on 13 October and for everyone who visited us at our stall at the Birmingham & Black Country Wildlife Trust's Fungi festival (both at Highbury Hall) and welcome to our new members who have joined us.

Orange peel fungus (Highbury Park, 2025)

It's Official! - Highbury Park Receives New Status

Highbury Park has been designated a Local Nature Site.*

Park users have long known that Highbury Park is a special place where nature provides joy, solace and peace within an urban area. The landscape has been altered by generations over hundreds of years and still retains elements of that history. Now the value of the park has been assessed against a number of criteria and has scored highly for most of them. As a result it has been awarded the designation of a Local Nature Site (which in Highbury Park is a patchwork of Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation [SINC] and Sites of Local Importance for Nature Conservation [SLINC])*

Following extensive surveys of flora and fauna within Highbury Park by numerous volunteers and with the support of Ecorecord, a detailed report was submitted to Birmingham City Council. The information was assessed according to a number of criteria, nature conservation being the most important but also history and social criteria.

Highbury Park was found to have HIGH habitat diversity (grassland, plantation, semi-natural woodland, hedgerow, scrub, tall herb, swamp, running and standing water) as well as HIGH species diversity (especially plants, invertebrates and birds). The Park is large in size at over 30 hectares and benefits from good connectivity with other nature sites. MORE FOLLOWS ON PAGE 3

Autumn Tree Walk with Birmingham Tree People

Our last event of the season is on Sat 31 October, meet 10.30am in the car park off Shutlock Lane. We hope you can join us.

When attending any of our events, please wear footwear suitable for uneven and muddy ground. If you bring a doggy friend please keep it on a lead.

I(t's Official! - Highbury Park Receives New Status continued)

In addition, Highbury Park scores HIGHLY for Historical, Cultural, Access, Aesthetic, Recorded History and Value for Learning criteria.

This information has resulted in the designation of Highbury Park as a Local Nature Site. This can provide guidance to its management and can contribute to the appreciation and management of open space in the wider context.

Many thanks to all of those who have contributed to this assessment over the years.

*** The Significance of the Categories:**

There are different categories of Nature Conservation Sites. Statutory Protection is given to the most important sites such as Special Areas of Conservation (European Importance) and Sites of Special Scientific Interest SSSI's (National Importance). However there are also Local Nature Sites which do not have statutory protection but are recognised by the planning system. These are sites that have been assessed for their High nature conservation value within either Birmingham and the Black Country (SINCs) or within Birmingham (SLINCs).

🌟 Read the **Local Assessment Report** here which you can read on the Highbury Park Friends' website.
Scan this QR code here:

Event with a Highbury Connection! organised by Nook

Highbury at Nook Gallery, Kings Heath

Two local artists are collaborating on an exhibition inspired by Highbury Park, to be held at Nook Gallery from 12th October to 1st November. Nook Gallery is in Institute Rd Kings Heath next to Kwikfit and opposite Bishop Challoner School. Do come and see their interpretations of what Highbury has to offer.

Find out more via the instagram channel here: @nook_kingsheath

Over 15 Years of Nature Improvements Achieved Through Collaboration

"***Almost every area of the park has improved in wildlife terms over the past 15 years, thanks to collaboration and the work of Highbury Park Friends, BCC Rangers, Volunteers, The Wildlife Trust for Birmingham and the Black Country, and The Chamberlain Highbury Trust. Well done."***
Alf Dimmock, Local Naturalist and ex Senior Park Ranger

Alf led a fascinating event for us on May 1st to explore various nature improvements over the years at Highbury. It was gratifying to see everything that has been achieved.

Read **'Between the Oaks'** - Written by Alf Dimmock, this report highlights major biodiversity gains and habitat management efforts across Highbury Park since 2010. Find out more about the positive developments across the park's woodlands, wetlands, and meadows through a combination of active maintenance and non-intervention strategies. Scan the QR code, to read the article is on our website.

And read this article, also written by Alf, **'Hedgerow Information'** which includes the tour around the park that we undertook in May. Scan the QR code, the article is on our website.

The New Scrape

At the end of 2024 when Birmingham City Council undertook flood management works at Highbury they created two new seasonal scrapes for us. The idea of a seasonal scrape is that it fills with and holds extra water when the weather is particularly wet, usually over the winter and this helps prevent flooding elsewhere. The largest of the two scrapes near the Shutlock Lane entrance has held water permanently since its creation due to an underground spring. It's important for Highbury because it is our only pool that is in full sunlight and it has buzzed with life this summer including dragonflies, damsel flies and butterflies. A variety of wild flowers seeded around the margins.

New inhabitants included the Broad Bodied Chaser, a type of dragon fly and the Scarce Blue-Tailed Damsel Fly, which was first recorded by HPF member Des Jennings in 2025. These damsel flies are very rare and gravitate towards newly created ponds and stretches of water. We have consulted with Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust about the management of the scrape to ensure the continuation of the species at Highbury (ours is only the third record of them anywhere in the West Midlands). BBCWT has suggested removing the bulrushes from the scrape will help, so we hope to either remove some of them, cut back their seed heads or cut back stems to a lower level. The aim is to ensure minimal disturbance to other wildlife in the pool. We'll keep you updated on progress.

Pictured here: Scarce Blue-Tailed Damsel Fly, Broad Bodied Chaser and the scrape

SHARE YOUR SIGHTINGS OF PLANTS AND WILDLIFE:
Send photos and details to EcoRecord and by email to:
info@highburyparkfriends.org.uk
These records all provide valuable information about the biodiversity within the park.

Nature News: butterflies and Moths

It's been a fantastic year for butterflies all over the UK and Highbury is no exception. You might expect to see 24 butterflies in the the West Midlands. 21 of them have been recorded at Highbury in past years and we also had a rare sighting of the White Letter Hairstreak butterfly, giving us a total of 22 butterfly species spotted.

Unbelievably, this year we had a second sighting of the rare White Letter Hairstreak butterfly (looking a bit tattered but definitely alive!). They usually fly high around the top of Elm trees so it was amazing luck to record one at ground level twice.

There was another new sighting in the Hay Meadow - a Small Heath butterfly. And Small Copper butterfly, which had only been seen once previously in the park was witnessed on a number of occasions this year.

We also noted some interesting moths. Warmer temperatures brought an invasion of the amazing Hummingbird Hawk moth from Southern Europe to the UK and they were spotted a number of times at Highbury. There was also a Scarlet Tiger moth in the meadow

Top:
Hummingbird Hawk moth
Scarlet Tiger moth

Bottom:
L: White Letter Hairstreak butterfly
R:Small Copper butterfly

Join the Friends!

Highbury Park Friends is volunteer group that cares for and celebrates Highbury Park, Birmingham. We welcome anyone who would like to help protect, improve, and enjoy this special green space. If you'd like to become a member, send an email to:

info@highburyparkfriends

Membership is £6 per household or £3 low waged.

If you are interested in volunteering with Highbury Park Friends please email: info@highburyparkfriends.org.uk

Contributors to our Autumn Bulletin: Anne Gilbert, Angela Crawshaw, Sarah Hill-Daniel, Sarah Tomlinson and Ellen Pisolkar. Our next issue is out : Winter 2027.

www.highburyparkfriends.org.uk

Share your Park experiences!

Here at Highbury Park Friends, we use social media as an additional way to share information about the park, news, wildlife, conservation updates, events and photos. You can also use these platforms to share your park experiences and photos.

@Highburyparkfriendsbrum **@Highbury Park Friends** **@highburyprkfriends.bsky.com**