

## Bushy Park – April 2017 Diary

### **Oak Processionary Moth pesticide spraying**

In early April the eggs of the invasive insect, Oak Processionary Moth, start hatching. The eggs over-winter on the twigs of oak trees and the young caterpillars emerge as the weather gets warmer and the leaves on which they feed unfurl. The caterpillars may cause extensive defoliation of the host tree and also carry toxic hairs which can pose a serious threat to human and animal health. Early season management of this challenging pest includes targeted pesticide spraying in certain areas of the park. Some of this takes place at night to minimise inconvenience to park users. However, day-time spraying is sometimes necessary, particularly where ground conditions are unsuitable for night-time working. Please avoid the proximity of the spraying operation and follow any instructions given by the ground crew accompanying the spraying rigs.

### **Deer - Advisory Note**

The Park deer herds have come through the winter in good health. Many of the Stags have cast their antlers and the Bucks will follow shortly. The deer look a bit scruffy as they lose their winter coats over the next few weeks.

It is important to recognise that deer are wild animals and every day, despite signs warning of the dangers, visitors put themselves and their children at risk by approaching and feeding the deer. Extreme examples of foolishness are parents lifting their children onto the backs of deer. Please remember: Don't feed them, don't approach them and we hope you enjoy the experience of seeing them in a wonderful parkland setting.

### **Bird News**

By the first days of April there are sounds that spring is well and truly here, Blackcaps and Chiffchaffs will be singing from areas that they think are suitable to breed in. The first broods of Egyptian Geese will also have hatched and can be found by the parks ponds. The aggressive nature of this species makes them not everyone's cup of tea. A bird associated more with our mountainous areas or the Breckland's of East Anglia; the Northern Wheatear (the males are stunning little birds) annually stop off here. They have travelled all the way from sub-Saharan Africa and can often be found in either of the Skylark areas. The Skylarks in the south-east corner of the park have been gradually squeezed into a smaller and smaller area by the spread of the Bracken. In the last couple of years we have taken measures to control it, this has worked well and now the birds are reclaiming old nesting sites. We are doing this because this species is in decline nationally and within the park, so needs your help. Please follow the instruction on the signs and put your dog on a lead. The other Skylark area is to the south of Upper Lodge Road, here the grassland is much healthier and is what the birds require. However we would still appreciate your help here by just keeping your dog under control.

A species that I always forget to look out for, until many have reached their breeding grounds in the Highlands of Scotland is the Osprey. This species also migrates from below the Sahara, though now some are deciding that the marshes along the Mediterranean coast have enough to sustain them through the winter. Those using this strategy are able to get to their breeding grounds in the United Kingdom first and are fitter and stronger because of the shorter distance flown. It is not until the middle of month or a little later that the bird that really means that spring is well and truly here arrives. That bird is the Swallow, a species that Bushy Park is really privileged to have breed here. At least 8 pairs bred in various stables by White Lodge and the paddocks last year. Watching them hunt over the grasslands of the park is something that I never tire of.

We have recently cleaned out the Scrape in the Brew House meadow because it had become completely covered in aquatic vegetation. This kind of maintenance regime is a feature of Scrapes. If you use Dukes Head Passage it will be worth keeping an eye on this area to see what species are attracted to it. In the last 5 years it has attracted Garganey, Green Sandpiper, Jack and Common Snipe.

For more bird news check out [www.regentsparkbirds.blogspot.com](http://www.regentsparkbirds.blogspot.com) it also covers Bushy Park  
By Tony Duckett

Bushy Park Office – 10<sup>th</sup> April 2017

## Woodland Gardens Diary

The *Camellia* flowering season is nearly over, however *Magnolia*, *Rhododendrons* and *Azaleas* continue the spring flowering season. *Rhododendron augustinii* is worth looking out for with its lavender blue flowers.

In the Bog Garden you can see *Lysichiton americanus* the American Skunk Cabbage with its large yellow flower bracts – so named due to its unattractive fragrance, the pink flowers of *Darmera peltata* which stand out before the foliage emerges and the architectural leaves and flowers of *Gunnera manicata* unfurling (Giant Rhubarb).

The hard working volunteers have been weeding around Fishers Pond and are now moving towards the beds at Waterhouse Pond, The beds in Canada Glade are getting their second thorough weed of the year to try and remove the deep rooted perennial weeds. The stream sides down from Camellia Walk are still being cleared and have revealed a small amount of Japanese Knotweed which will need to be eradicated before replanting can take place. A native whip hedge has been planted along the fence line at Ash Walk to provide some protection to the garden and cover for wildlife.

The Garden team have been lifting and dividing *Primulas* in the Bog Garden, The first cut of grass is underway but the areas with bulbs will be left for a while to let them die back naturally.

Further information can be found on The Royal Parks web site or via email [bushy@royalparks.qsi.gov.uk](mailto:bushy@royalparks.qsi.gov.uk)