



# Bushy Park – December 2021 Diary

## Woodland Gardens

The volunteers have been busy behind the scenes clearing Buddleia; although this plant is good for pollinators it is very invasive and is taking over in the conservation area behind the car park at the Pheasantry. Once cleared a selection of native plants will be established. The areas cleared of Rhododendron Ponticum are being prepared for grass seeding. Rhododendron ponticum is a non-native invasive species that has to be removed from the park to improve the ecology as part of our SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest) Shrubs worth seeking out this month are: -**Viburnum x bodnantense** “Dawn” located in the secret glade opposite the cascade from the Waterhouse Pond. It has sweetly fragrant pink flowers and is a particularly fine specimen **Camellia** “Nobilissima” located in Scented Glade in the Waterhouse Garden just before the path joins the new Cherry walk. This is a historic variety bred in Belgium in 1836 and is regularly the first Camellia to flower in the Garden

## Birds

We have now reached a fairly quiet time of the year; the last of our regular winter visitors should have reached the United Kingdom's shores and be enjoying the slightly milder conditions here. With the warming effect the Gulf Stream offers, birds such as the Redwing that have travelled from either Iceland or Russia are usually able to find plenty of food. The normal plentiful supply of berries; Hawthorn, Holly and in towns and cities, Cotoneaster are normally eaten first. When this larder is bare, they then hope that the ground is soft enough for them to feed on worms and other invertebrates in the soil or under leaves. The Park normally has a few Redwings feeding in the wooded areas, they are quite nervy and not very approachable, taking to the trees if frightened. If we have a sudden cold snap then these birds could be joined by a larger member of the thrush family, the Fieldfare. This is a very attractive bird with its slate blue head and rump, chestnut back, black tail and golden chest with dark streaking. Apart from these overseas visitors there is another member of the thrush family and one that has a small resident population. This is the Mistle Thrush, and can you guess where it can be found feeding? That is right, on the Mistletoe berries. It is also the time of year when the Little Egret, a bird whose breeding range has spread up from southern Europe, arrives in the Park. Until the late 1970's it would have caused 100's of twitchers (very enthusiastic bird watchers) to come flocking to see it. We have had a bird return to winter in the Park since 2010; it was accompanied by a second bird in 2013. This bird can sometimes be found feeding on the stretch of the Longford River that exits the park at the western end of Lime Avenue or the channels in the Woodland Garden and recently by the steps in the river by the Brew House. These areas also offer you the chance of seeing the Park's Kingfishers; listen out for their piping call.

## Tree Work

The arboricultural team are undertaking their winter works programme, working through the Woodland Gardens to identify any tree works which may need to be undertaken to mitigate the risk posed by deadwood, disease, and decay in trees. Additionally willows and poplars throughout the park will be assessed and (re) pollarded if their (re) growth requires it. The winter works to declining horse chestnuts, both reductions and fells, will continue as the significant decline of the health of the species due to leaf miner and bleeding canker continues. Some of the limes on Chestnut Avenue will have their mistletoe thinned as it may compromise the trees in winter storms.

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