

Friends of Jubilee Country Park

Newsletter Spring 2021



Chairman's Report by John Bruce

Everyone knows that the last year has been like no other – for us humans at least! But the trees, plants, birds and wildlife of Jubilee Country Park have had a fairly normal year. Yes, the summer was hotter, the autumn wetter, the winter a little milder and the park has had many more visitors. But the seasons turned as they always do, and the life of the natural world went on.



Jubilee Country Park- a winter wonderland. Photo courtesy of Hugh Stewart

One effect of the pandemic has been that many more people have discovered our park and visited it more often. This has resulted in more litter, and when wet, far muddier trails. The work party which usually meets on Monday mornings was only able to get together about a dozen times in early autumn, though our litter pickers have been busy, working mainly on their own, throughout the year and have done a great job.

Activity may have been limited, but we have been able to design, produce and install three new interpretation panels; one for the Woodland Trail, one on the gun site meadow and one about the butterflies and moths you might see in the park. Our special thanks to Susan Folkes, Jennie Randall and Ros Martin for their work to produce them.

While our idverde ranger, Angela Wood has been on maternity leave, Edward Burgin stood in as our conservation manager. Angela re-joins us in March, and we look forward to welcoming her back. We have built a strong relationship with Edward and our sincere thanks to him for all his help and support over the last year.

Last year, our Annual General Meeting was scheduled for the first week after the lockdown – so given the short notice, we managed it by email and letter. This year we are planning a virtual AGM via Zoom, on Wednesday evening March 31st, with guest speaker Ian Wright telling us all about the fascinating history of the countryside. We really hope you will be able to join in and full details will be sent out by email. If you don't have email, please contact me on 020 8467 0664.



The park in its covering of snow. Photo courtesy of Hugh Stewart

Exploring the Ponds in Jubilee Country Park by Mel Wright

On a mid- December afternoon, heavy rainfall arrived in bucket loads as Jennie Randall, Ros Martin and I began our visit to the ponds in the 62-acre Jubilee Country Park. Although we may not have chosen the best day weather-wise, we certainly had a good view of the ponds filling up!

This popular country park opened in 1981. It has been carefully developed by Bromley's idverde team and Friends of Jubilee Country Park volunteers, including Jennie and Ros, who have helped shape the area in the best way possible, to increase the level of biodiversity, by attracting and conserving a rich array of wildlife throughout the seasons. Footfall in Jubilee Park has significantly increased with greater numbers of the public visiting during the recent Covid lockdowns.

All of the seasonal and permanent ponds, with their wildlife, have been designated SINC status (Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation) by Bromley Council and are a fascinating and compelling wetland feature at Jubilee Park. They support a wide range of amphibians; breeding populations of common frogs, toads, newts of the smooth, palmate and the nationally scarce, great crested variants, pond snails, leeches and water boatmen.

In the warmer weather, the common darter dragonfly, damselflies, mayflies, alderflies and water beetles can be seen. Also, on summer nights, Daubenton's bats can be seen scooping up the thousands of midges which circle the ponds.

During these colder days, the quiet ponds continue to draw in migrating winter birds, for example darting field fares and red wings from Scandinavia. Pond vegetation commonly includes purple loosestrife, marsh marigold, water speedwell, water mint, yellow flag iris, water lily, and water crowfoot– a combination of oxygenating, floating, emergent and border varieties; all make for a rich source of pond life.

The Friends place great importance on pond maintenance and volunteers help to remove encroaching blanket weed and submerged vegetation where it decays and poses a threat to other important species. Sadly, they also often have to litter-pick to remove rubbish left by less considerate visitors as it is both unsightly and sometimes dangerous to wildlife. So, here are the seven ponds at Jubilee Park which we visited:

- 1) **Holly Pond**, situated in a shaded area on the edge of Thornet Wood near Thornet



Wood car park is a seasonal pond, reliant on rainwater.

Today its waterline was as high as I've ever seen it.

Holly Pond at near full capacity with winter rainwater

- 2) **Un-named Sandy Pond** near to Pond Field (thought to have originally been a bunker from the area's former West Kent Golf Course), this dug out acts as an impromptu seasonal pond, the water looking rather like mushroom soup.

- 3) **Loosestrife Pond**, a permanent, lined pond which is home to frogspawn in early spring and the neighbouring long grass has an important role to play as a buffer zone in protecting emerging froglets. During the spring and summer months it also attracts a wealth of visiting dragonflies and is surrounded by the common spike rush, jointed rush and purple loosestrife.

- 4) **Marcus's Pond**, back in Thornet Wood, formerly known as the secret pond, as it is slightly hidden from view, off the track and fenced in for protection. This relatively large, woodland, seasonal pond surrounded by tall, mature oak and beech trees is open to daylight.

It's debated whether its origins were possibly a bomb crater. There was a considerable amount of wartime activity in the area, with heavy anti-aircraft gun emplacements and barracks at Thornet Wood. This pond is dedicated to a local naturalist and Friends volunteer, the late Marcus Jordan, who was an expert on reptiles and a licensed handler of protected, great crested newts, which breed in Jubilee Park.

A DNA survey of the ponds a couple of years ago identified great crested newts as occupying the majority of the ponds in the park.

5) **Jennie's Pond** is a seasonal pond which was created by the Friends, in order to manage the natural overflow of water from Bromley High School's sports field, which flooded the nearby meadow known as Bob's Land. On the day of our visit, two mallards were gently swimming around the pond.



Jennie's Pond is a seasonal pond which contains the overflow water from the neighbouring school playing fields

Uniquely, the £3000 funding for this work was donated from the sale of two books by local historian, Jennie Randall; *Jubilee Country Park - its History and Heritage* and *Not Forgotten - The Crooked Billet*. Despite Jennie's protests, the Friends felt it was only right that the pond should be named for her.

6) **Ray's Pond** is a permanent pond which is situated on the main track near to the Blackbrook Lane entrance and its name has an interesting backstory.

Ray Millard, an elderly lady living nearby, was very grateful for the welcome and support she had received from the Health Walkers in Jubilee Park, many of whom are also Friends of Jubilee Country Park. In 2009, when Ray died, her family generously donated £1000 which paid for the fencing around the pond. The pond itself was funded through Veolia, the waste management company, with landfill tax funds.

7) **Long Pond**. This is slightly off the track, hidden from view, but not far away from *Alan's Path* and is an unusual shaped, seasonal pond. It may possibly be a remnant of a tank trap dug during the Second World War. As it is surrounded by lush vegetation, this pond is very attractive to frogs. During the past year or so, volunteers under the supervision of idverde, have helped to carefully uncover the pond and open up this special secluded space.

We finally completed our pond walk feeling a great sense of fortitude against the elements and departed, looking forward to a hot drink!

The ponds in Jubilee Park are a tribute to the unsung heroes; the volunteers who help to maintain them. Every Monday morning (COVID rules allowing) a work group meets under the supervision of idverde to carry out various conservation jobs. New volunteers are always welcome! See the website for full details

<http://www.jubileecountrypark.btck.co.uk/>

Jennie and Ros have a reasonable request to visitors, to help conserve these important ponds: "Please don't let your dog go into the pond area as it will disrupt the natural wildlife and if it drinks stagnant water, it could be very harmful to your pet. Also, do not place unwanted fish or aquatic plants in the ponds as these invasive species are a danger to the natural habitat."

Rare, Brown Hairstreak Butterfly Egg Spotted in Jubilee Park by Ros Martin



The egg of the brown hairstreak butterfly is only 1mm in diameter

This photo, of what looks like a sea urchin, is in fact the egg of the rare brown hairstreak butterfly. It was spotted by Ann Russell, on a blackthorn bush in Jubilee Country Park. Ann must have excellent eyesight as the egg is only about 1mm in diameter! The egg will have been laid between August and October and it is one of the few British butterfly eggs which can survive the winter. It is affixed so firmly to the branch of the blackthorn that it can survive the worst of the winter rain, wind and snow.

The caterpillar will emerge from an indentation at the top of the egg in April or May, when the buds are breaking. It feeds at night, hiding from predators on the underside of a leaf during the day. The caterpillar of the Brown Hairstreak is very particular, feeding mainly on blackthorn leaves and occasionally on plum. The female can tell where to lay her eggs by drumming on the top of a leaf, to test if it is the right food plant for the caterpillar.

When fully grown, the caterpillar descends to the ground where it forms itself into a pupa, or chrysalis, in crevices or in leaf debris. It emerges as a butterfly from late July, one of the final species of British butterfly to appear. The adult butterfly tends to be active between 11am and 3pm, spending most of its time out of sight in the tops of tall shrubs and trees, usually ash, where it feeds on aphid honeydew. Other plants such as brambles and thistles can also be used as sources of nectar.

Butterflies mate in the tree canopy, the female descending on warm sunny days to lay her eggs on blackthorn bushes in sunny sheltered spots and the cycle starts over again.

This photo of a female brown hairstreak was taken by Peter Eeles of UK Butterflies, in Thatcham, Berkshire. The butterfly has not yet been recorded in Jubilee Country Park, but we hope that the eggs laid in the park last year will survive to become butterflies so we can add this species to the 26 already recorded.



The adult female brown hairstreak

Could you spare a little time to become an active Friend?

Despite the current restrictions and our events programme being on hold, your committee have still been working hard behind the scenes. We hope you have found the monthly email updates and notices in the park helpful and we're delighted to be able to bring you a full edition of the newsletter again this spring.

We really need some extra help and if you can spare just a couple of hours a month to be an active volunteer and support the work of your committee, please do get in touch. We particularly need help with arranging events and carrying out wildlife surveys. Also, if you have good IT skills and could help to update our website, we would love to hear from you. Whatever your skills or interests, it's a great way to get involved, support your Friends group and enhance your CV. Please call John Bruce on 0208 8467 0664 or email john_bruce@ntlworld.com (john underscore bruce).

Jubilee Country Park- Explore it, love it, support it

A Chance to Have your Say on Road Verges by Dr Judy John

When Bromley's road verges were cut in May 2020, following the first Covid-19 lockdown, many residents contacted Bromley Biodiversity Partnership, devastated at the loss of wildflowers. We kept a list of these verges and the reasons why people were so upset. Many missed them simply because they thought them beautiful, others were worried because it meant there was no nectar for pollinators, some felt the flowering verges provided a gateway to their area, that they linked areas of greenspace, enabling species to move between them and that it was more interesting to look at for children going to school.

Bromley Biodiversity Partnership have been promoting more wildlife-friendly verge management following Plantlife Road Verge Management Guidelines (see [Plantlife: Managing Grassland Road Verges](#)) for several years, but there are worries that some people perceive uncut verges as being untidy and uncared for. However, the problems of biodiversity loss and climate change are becoming ever more acute and managing road verges for wildlife can help: native grasses and wildflowers provide food (foliage, nectar and pollen) and shelter for invertebrates, including pollinators, and can link areas of greenspace so wildflowers can spread and butterflies, bees and other pollinators can move more easily between green areas. Grassland also stores carbon in the soil below.



An uncut verge with wildflowers

Verges uncut during spring and summer, as proposed, can be highlighted for their positive impacts. For example, an initiative called the Blue Campaign ([partnered with Keep Britain Tidy and Eco-Schools England](#)) encourages installing a small blue heart on a wooden post in road verges and other grassland newly managed as meadow, see <https://bluecampaignhub.com>. Cutting a narrow strip along the edge of road verges can also help.

If you live near grass verges around Jubilee Country Park, or elsewhere, and you think they might be worth managing for wildlife (where safe to do so), please let us know, with the reason that you value the verge.

Suggestions received so far include Southborough Lane, Blackbrook Lane, Hawthorn Road, Oldfield Road, Springfield Close and Springfield Gardens, Homemead Road, The Fairway, Waldegrave Road, Claremont Road, Park Hill, Parkside and Highfield Road. Please contact bromleybiodiversity@gmail.com with your ideas, talk to other residents and residents associations and email your local councillors to let them know.

Looking forward to hearing from you,
Dr Judith John for Bromley Biodiversity Partnership

Plants and Flowers found in Jubilee Country Park by John Bruce

Blackthorn (Prunus spinosa) One of the first blossoms of the year, in early spring, are those of the blackthorn, whose flowers appear before the leaves. Much later in the year come the small, blackish, bitter fruits called sloes, which can be steeped in gin and sugar to make sloe gin.

The blackthorn is a member of the rose and plum family and has very sharp spines which makes it ideal for hedging – it can grow up to 7 metres high and has been known to live for 100 years.

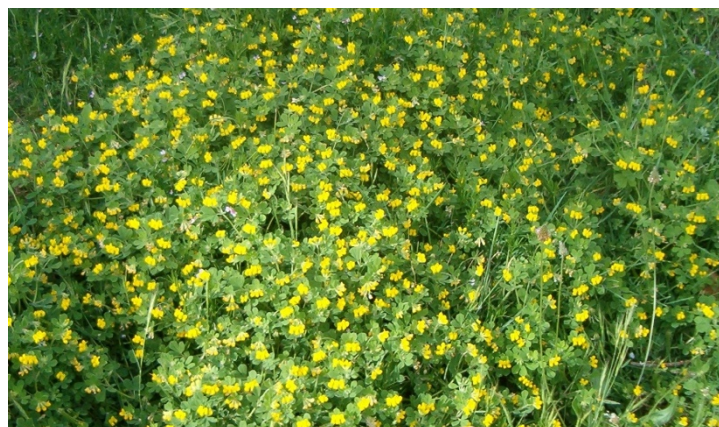
In olden times, the flowers were used to make a laxative and the sloes were used to cure diarrhoea.



The beautiful blossoms of the blackthorn

The wood was said to be used for witches' wands, walking sticks and the Irish shillelaghs. In parliament, Black Rod's staff is made of blackthorn.

Common Bird's-foot trefoil (Lotus corniculatus)



The yellow flowers of the common bird's foot trefoil

Eggs and bacon is probably the best-known name for the common bird's-foot trefoil, which flowers from June in the meadows of Jubilee Park. Some less attractive names are Granny's toenails, Devil's fingers and, surprisingly, Our Lady's fingers. They all reference the black, claw-like seed pods which follow the flowers.

The name *eggs and bacon* comes from the bright yellow, slipper-like flowers, often tinged with red, which appear in small clusters and provide pollen for bees and other insects. It is the food plant of caterpillars of the common blue butterfly and the six-spot burnet moth. In the language of flowers, it represents revenge and retribution.

Financial Summary for the year to 31st December 2020

Although we haven't been able to hold most of our fundraising events over the last year, thanks to your ongoing support and generous donations, and a couple of very successful plant sales, we have managed to balance the books.

Current project plans include the replacement of the last remaining old picnic bench, upgrading of the London Loop signs, to replace those which are damaged or missing and the purchase of some new litter pickers which will also pick up broken glass.

Please join us for our AGM on Wednesday 31st March via Zoom for a full update.

**Friends of Jubilee Country Park
Financial Accounts 2020**

Balance as at 1st Jan 2020 **£5,774.16**

Money In:

Subscriptions

2021:	£390.00	
2020:	£730.00	£1,120.00

Donations

General Donations	£1,462.38	
		£1,462.38

Grants / Awards

Environment Bromley		
Friends Forum	£400.00	£400.00

Income from Events

Methodist Church Coffee Mornings	£62.05	
Orangutang Talk	£133.59	
Quiz Takings	£759.87	£955.51

Sales

Books	£218.48	
Postcards & Notelets	£7.00	
Merchandise	£42.75	
Plants	£704.00	£972.23

Total Money in: **£4,910.12**

Money Out:

Park Projects

Alan's Path Sign	£600.00	
Picnic Benches	£497.87	
Notice Boards etc	£2,021.80	
Magnets , Storage & Cables etc	£133.30	£3,252.97

Events

Speakers incl Donations	£62.00	
May Fayre		
Quiz Night		
Meadows Day		
Crofton Fayre		
Hall Hire	£105.50	£167.50

Work Party

Provisions	£85.00	
Tools+Equipment	£23.96	£108.96

Cost of Sales

Books		
Plants		
Postcards & Notelets		
Merchandise	£68.92	£68.92

Administration

Insurance of Equipment	£140.00	
Printing & Newsletters	£133.00	
AGM Expenses		
Stationery Telephone etc		£273.00

Total Money Out: **-£3,871.35**

Balance as at 31st December 2020 **£6,812.93**

Prepared by Peter Runacres Treasurer

Checked to the Vouchers and Bank records by Donald Wilson