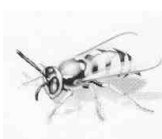


Fascinating facts and figures from the largest urban park in Europe by Alison Donaldson

Royal Parks Ecologist Nigel Reeve reeled off some amazing statistics when he gave his fascinating, richly illustrated talk at the Friends' Annual General Meeting in April. It brought home to us all what an extraordinary part Richmond Park plays in current efforts to preserve biodiversity.



There are about 160 species of **bee and wasp** in the Park.

There are more than 546 species of **butterfly and moth** in the Park, at least 21 of which are scarce.



While the decline of bees is worrying, remember that butterflies and beetles pollinate plants too.

Nigel Reeve



Each anthill in the Park has been created by thousands of **Yellow Meadow Ants**, the only species building anthills in the Park. Anthills may be several decades old, and provide important food for woodpeckers – for example, 80% of the winter diet of Green Woodpeckers.

The message for all of us: pedestrians shouldn't walk on the anthills, and cyclists should stick to roads or official cycle or shared paths.

There are 11 species of **Bat** in the Park out of about 16 in the whole country.



There are more than 1350 species of **beetle** in the Park (surveyed in 2006), representing about half of those found nationally. The same survey recorded 347 species of saproxylic beetles (those associated with dead or decaying wood) and 40% of these have conservation status.



The Park has over 100,000 **trees**, of which more than 1300 are veteran trees from 14 species – including, for example, crab apple and hawthorn as well as oak and sweet chestnut.

289 species of **fungi** were found in one year (2008), and roughly 400 species in total have been recorded in the Park). Exotic names include "Chicken of the Woods", "Yellow Brain", "Candle Snuff" and "Beefsteak Fungus".



In 2008 119 species of **bird** were seen in the Park, 57 of which are believed to have bred in the Park. Whatever we think about the parakeets who have made their home in the Park, there is no clear evidence yet that they are pushing out other bird species.

Biodiversity is not accounted for in our economy, yet it is worth money – we depend on biodiversity for food, medicine, air, water, waste processing, health and wellbeing.

The message for all of us: don't take out or put anything into the Park, and do clear up dog poo, which enriches the soil and encourages coarse grasses, thistles and nettles at the expense of rarer acid grassland species.