



**FRIENDS of
RICHMOND PARK**

*Protecting Richmond Park's peace and
natural beauty for future generations*

Newsletter Spring 2019



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Russell-Cooke Solicitors is a Putney-based top 100 law firm, working for a mix of clients, which has sponsored the Friends of Richmond Park for over 4 years.

Thames Water is the UK's largest water and wastewater services company, serving Greater London and the Home Counties.

Property Partnership is a local, award-winning estate agent representing areas spread around Richmond Park from Chiswick to Hampton.

Calling for photos for the 2020 Friends' calendar

We are now inviting photos of Richmond Park for the Friends' 2020 calendar. Please see www.bit.ly/calendar2020 for details of how and where to send them.

CLOSING DATE 18 April. We look forward to seeing your amazing images – a maximum number of 8 photos from each photographer, but not more than 4 from any one season: winter, spring, summer, autumn. The 2019 calendar was a sell out, and so raised more than ever for projects in the Park. We are very grateful to all who donated their photos.

Visit the new Friends' Website

Our new website was launched earlier this year and we hope you will agree that it looks fabulous! The previous website served us well for some 15 years, but it was time for a change, to bring up-to-date facilities and a fresh new look, including many more photos, to show off our magnificent Park. It was designed and built by a local web development company, Blue Flamingo, who were selected from a shortlist of professional website developers.

We can now accept membership applications and payments online, making it easier for people to join us and pay membership fees. There is a new 'Families' button leading to the Discoverers' special activities for children. You can catch up on previous newsletters in the 'Newsletters' section, and find interesting information and facts about the Park in the new 'Articles & Facts' section.

If you have not yet visited the new website, make a note to see it soon at www.frp.org.uk

Front cover: *Magnolia Stellata, Isabella Plantation* by Vivienne Press

Over-tourism

by Ron Crompton and Nick Coleman

'Over-tourism' is a hot topic in the travel industry and media. The Economist describes it as 'the consequences of having too many visitors'. And tourist spots are taking action against it around the world.

Venice last year erected pedestrian gates at entrances to the main attractions to regulate visitor numbers. Dubrovnik has ordered a big reduction in restaurant and café outdoor seating, to ease congestion from tourists.

Natural attractions are also suffering. The US and Canadian National Parks can't cope with the visitor numbers and there are calls for limits on visitor numbers; there's also severe criticism of the parks service for promoting tourism. In Thailand and the Philippines, islands have been closed to tourists for environmental reasons.

Global tourism doubled between 2000 and 2017, driven by greater wealth and leisure, and cheaper flights and accommodation. And it is all going to the same places, influenced by social media and its selfies, must-see's and bucket lists.

Over-tourism follows a clear pattern. Tourist numbers grow rapidly; new developments cater for them; local populations and shops give way to airbnbs and souvenir shops; and finally everything becomes dominated by tourists' needs and tastes. Natural attractions suffer large-scale damage to their ecology and wildlife.

Tourism is enjoyable and broadens the mind. It's something that most of us want to do. But too often mass tourism distorts and eventually destroys what had previously made it so attractive.

The parallels with Richmond Park are striking: visitor numbers have doubled in ten years; it's becoming a 'must see' destination; selfies with deer are widespread and the consequences of having too many visitors are becoming apparent, including erosion of the landscape and deer harassment.

Is Richmond Park already 'over-touristed'? Some would say there's still plenty of space. Others feel that the Park is already full on busy days and the Park's peace and tranquillity is rapidly being lost.

What is certain is that visitor pressure on the Park is rapidly increasing. Experience from around the world suggests that tackling this is difficult but it's good to act early (Venice is 20 years too late), not to promote tourism (social media is doing more than enough) and to limit visitor-oriented developments (which simply attract more people).

Indeed The Royal Parks and others, including the Friends, are already doing much to manage the problem. However, there is no room for complacency. If you think there are too many visitors now, you ain't seen nothing yet.

James Batten



In 1976 James Batten was studying an 18th century map of Richmond Park and saw an avenue of trees leading eastwards from King Henry's Mound. It seemed to be framing something, but what? Armed with hedge clippers, a handsaw and permission from the Park Superintendent, Batten cut a hole in the thick hedge covering the start of the avenue and lopped branches along it. To his delight, he revealed a perfect view of the dome of St Paul's ten miles away with nothing in front and nothing behind it except clear blue sky.

Soon after this discovery, James gave evidence to the inquiry into the redevelopment of Liverpool Street station, showing how it loomed large right behind St Paul's. The development was re-designed!

Over the next 30 years, James was key in raising this view from obscurity to fame and in dismissing several other threats to it, and in 1991 it received statutory protection. James was also involved with an enhancement scheme for the mound that included a new illustrative viewing plaque looking west, for which he produced the artwork, a wrought-iron grill through the hedge looking east and a telescope revolving between the two.

Sadly, in 2016 a development at Stratford used a loophole in the protection and now the Manhattan Loft Gardens building is a dark presence behind St Paul's. The Friends' campaign, inspired by Batten's work, did not stop the building but it did succeed in persuading the London Mayor Sadiq Khan to tighten the protection so it cannot happen again.

James Batten died last December aged 90 knowing that the Friends will continue his work on protecting this corridor view. The Royal Parks have installed the Batten Bench on King Henry's Mound as a gesture of gratitude to James for making this such a famous attraction. And Park management have said they will keep the hedge and avenue pruned for ever.

Photo: James Batten on King Henry's Mound, by Jason Debney

Volunteer Rangers recruited



Jo Hayward, Volunteer Co-ordinator for The Royal Parks charity, says: *"There has been a fantastic response to both our first wave of recruitment, and to the initiative itself. Our training sessions are now underway and from April there will be a small number of rangers in both Bushy and Richmond Parks on weekends and other busy days. In the summer we will be conducting another round of recruitment and training. The project is part of a three-year trial, so we really hope it is a resounding success. If it works in Bushy and Richmond Parks, I am hoping we can roll it out across our other Royal Parks."*

Jo began working for The Royal Parks last year and is based in Richmond Park. She had previously worked with the Forestry Commission, as a Recreation Ranger for Wendover Woods in the Chilterns. For more information on the Rangers see www.royalparks.org.uk/rangers.

Beverley Brook clean-up

The Beverley Brook Volunteers Group, led by Stephen Russell, periodically clears litter from Beverley Brook. In its last foray before the winter, clearing the restored fenced sections of the Brook, the group gathered 83 cans, 34 bottles and 169 golf balls, part of a haul which had accumulated since the last clearance in July. Many of the golf balls were in new condition and from top brands such as Titleist and Srixon (see photo page 15).



Most of the other rubbish comprised plastic in various forms; bags, shredded bags, bottle tops and foam and all manner of other waste material including a Nokia phone, lots of dog toys, shopping bags, wheel hubs, parts of shoes, a cap, broken golf clubs, chicken wire, lengths of rope and a multi-barrelled water gun. Indeed almost anything you can think of. And there were, of course, 10 dog poo bags, presumably tossed over the fence by thoughtful dog walkers. Altogether, it was a splendid morning's work. The group will start work again in April.

Photo by Stephen Russell: left to right: David Bagott, Bill Munro, Belinda Petri, Brian McDonald

Hairstreak butterflies

By Hugh Bradshaw

Hairstreak butterflies thrived in the warm summer of 2018, when unusually 4 out of the 5 species of Hairstreaks were recorded in the Park. They are named for the thin white lines on the underside of their hind wings.



The Purple Hairstreak is the commonest and lives only on mature oaks and feeds on aphid honeydew. It is a reluctant flyer and likes to bask in the sun, high in the tree tops. Although they live in colonies, you can easily miss them on dull days when they are inactive. Warm sunny evenings in July and August are the best times to see them as they flit amongst the boughs or engage in mini dog-fights with each other. The purple sheen of the forewings is most noticeable when they first emerge, but they can look quite dark from a distance. They lay their eggs in late summer

on the buds of next year's oak leaves. The caterpillars over-winter inside the eggs before hatching in spring to feast on the young leaves.

The Green Hairstreak, Britain's only truly green butterfly, is not tied to a species of tree. Two specimens were seen in the Park last year after a long absence. It lays its eggs on gorse, bramble and numerous other plants and so could be encountered in many parts of the Park.



The Brown Hairstreak was first recorded in the Park in 2018. It is the largest of the hairstreaks and, like its purple cousin, it spends most of its time high in the canopies of tall trees, especially Ash, feeding on honeydew but lays its eggs on Blackthorn so the females will descend to lower levels at egg-laying time.



The White Letter Hairstreak was also seen last year on the few Elms on the north eastern boundary of the Park. It is hoped that the newly planted Elm Avenue will encourage the recovery of this now rare butterfly which suffered a loss of habitat following Dutch Elm Disease.

Do look out for all these delightful butterflies this summer – especially if it's a hot one!

Photos: Top, Purple Hairstreak by Nigel Jackman. Green Hairstreak by Bob Eade, Brown Hairstreak by Iain H Leach both courtesy of Butterfly Conservation.

Aliens in the Park!

by Paula Redmond

The Sabre wasp (*Rhyssa persuasoria*) may have a scary appearance but it is totally harmless to humans. It is a Giant Ichneumon Wasp. Ichneumon means 'one who follows footsteps' and refers to the way they stalk their victims.

The females are the longest wasp species in Britain and one of the largest in Europe. The long 'sting' is actually an ovipositor (a tube for injecting eggs), which more than doubles their overall length to around 8cms. As adults, they feed on nectar and honeydew. However, Sabre wasps are parasitoids – their larvae develop inside other insects such as the larvae of Horntails, Wood wasps or Longhorn beetles. This behaviour led to Ichneumons being the inspiration for "Alien" the movie!



The female Sabre wasp uses her antennae to detect vibrations from larvae under tree bark (see photo) or in dead wood. Once a suitable host larva is detected, she uses her ovipositor to drill down several centimetres through the wood to the larva – the delicate looking ovipositor is actually extremely strong, consisting of 5%-10% metal (usually zinc or manganese). She then paralyses the larva with a sting and lays an egg inside it that later hatches and grows by feeding off the live host. No fun at all for the host species!

Photo: female Sabre wasp by Paula Redmond

Cormorants galore

For several weeks last autumn, there was an unprecedented influx of birds at Pen Ponds with up to 67 Cormorants, 10 Great Crested Grebes and a rare Great White Egret. They were drawn there by a glut of fish, presumably the result of a good breeding season. At times, there were feeding frenzies in the shallows at the corners of the upper pond next to the causeway. The Great White Egret stayed on the pond for four weeks and eventually the numbers of Cormorants and Grebes returned to the usual few. A Barn Owl and a Short-Eared Owl also appeared in the centre of the Park and attracted several photographers, but moved on after a few days – maybe because of the attention they were getting.



Dusk in Richmond Park

By Nigel Jackman

It's 5.15pm in early March. I've arrived in the Park to look for woodcock at dusk, but it's still a cloudless blue sky, and I have some time to wait.

Slowly the light begins to fade and the first shadows deepen. I expect the Park to be wrapping itself up in a slumber, but if it ever sleeps

Unlike waders though, woodcock spend the day roosting in secluded woodland and other spaces where they conceal themselves amongst leaves, bracken or undergrowth. Shortly after sunset they emerge from cover, flying fast and low to the damp open spaces where they will feed in the darkness on worms and other insects.



it's not yet. A blackbird turns up from nowhere, disappearing into the wood to roost. At the same time there are other distant stirrings – little owls calling, and then the unmistakable cries of two tawny owls hooting from different directions.

I'm confused by a sudden clattering coming from the top of the slope on which I'm standing, then realise that a line of red deer is processing slowly from left to right. Even at this time of day a pair of stags are clashing with loosely-locked antlers. The sight of these deer silhouetted against the skyline is both exciting and surreal.

Already I'm distracted again – this time by a flock of Canada geese trumpeting loudly as they fly through the gloom. They have left Richmond Park Golf Course and are heading up Spankers Hill and on to the safety of the Pen Ponds, where they will roost until dawn.



Sure enough, a woodcock bursts silently out of the wood where I am standing, showing briefly against the skyline and then disappearing before I can truly focus on it. Another clattering of antlers pinpoints the progress of the deer before a second woodcock streaks past like a phantom. At this point a vixen adds an eerie soundtrack to the scene, screaming loudly from the depths of a spinney.

My attention now turns to a third woodcock – this time heard but not seen as it flies out behind me. A fourth and fifth follow in quick succession, and then all is quiet.

Walking out of the Park I look up at the sky and marvel at how clear the stars appear, despite London's light pollution. A few minutes later I have passed through Robin Hood Gate and as I look out on the procession of vehicles, the



By now more than half an hour has passed since sunset and I'm hoping to see a woodcock, one of our most elusive and enigmatic birds. Our small Park population arrives each autumn or winter from as far away as Russia. They have a cryptic (camouflaging), brown plumage, and a stiletto-like bill, and are related and similar in appearance to snipe.

street lights and buildings, I wonder if the past two hours were just a dream.

Photos: Little owl by Maria Kula; stags silhouette by Nigel Jackman; stags locking antlers and Canada geese over Pen Ponds by Maria Kula; woodcock by Paula Redmond. Also see back cover photo.



New Orchard at Holly Lodge

By Jo Scrivener

As part of the 'Mission Invertebrate' project to increase pollinator habitats in the Park, work has started on a new orchard in the grounds of Holly Lodge, the Park management building. The half-acre site was cleared last autumn and fruit trees planted in January and February. There are six varieties of apple tree (including 'Reverend W. Wilks', 'Howgate Wonder', 'Sunset', 'Lane's Prince Albert' and 'Arthur Turner'), all heritage cultivars which originated in south-east England, and heritage varieties of pears ('Beth' and 'Conference'), plums ('Marjorie's Seedling' and 'Victoria') and damson ('Farleigh').

A perennial wildflower meadow has been sown with varieties that are sympathetic to the range of wildflowers in the rest of the Park, and a native hedgerow will be planted to surround the orchard. Established traditional orchards are often of very high ecological value and significantly benefit wildlife diversity so it is hoped the orchard will attract a diverse range of invertebrates, birds, small mammals, fungi, lichen and flora.

Highly valued gorse gets greater protection

"When gorse is out of blossom, kissing's out of fashion" goes an old country saying about how this spiky, evergreen shrub is as perennial as romance, almost always flowering, whatever the time of year.

Although common in rocky and heathland environments, gorse is quite rare in Richmond Park and three large clumps, located between Conduit Wood and Holly Lodge, are especially important for their wildlife value. Gorse's long-flowering habit provides year-round nectar for bees, butterflies, moths and other invertebrates, and its dense structure is ideal as a refuge and nesting site for birds, including Dartford Warblers, Stonechats, Whinchats, Linnets and Yellowhammers.

A conservation project to help protect and strengthen the Park's three clumps (one of mixed gorse and thorns) has recently been completed. The gorse has been pruned to encourage vigorous new growth, and the chestnut paling surrounding each clump, which was collapsing, has been replaced with iron estate fencing (to be painted dark green in spring). This will provide greater protection from deer, who would potentially eat it to the ground.

Endorsed by Richmond Park Wildlife Group, the £40,000 project was funded by contributions from Friends of Richmond Park, the Visitor Centre and The Royal Parks.

Now we are Seven...

By Teresa Grafton

Discoverers, FRP's family activities programme, is seven years old! Over the years, our families have engaged enthusiastically in identifying bats, birds and butterflies or observing (from a safe distance) the behaviour of our red and fallow deer. They've grubbed around under trees to identify fungi and even held their noses and rolled up their sleeves to dissect owl pellets.

Some events, like the autumn bat watch and fungi workshop, have become popular perennials, but we are always looking for new ways to interest and attract families. The aim is to catch them young and keep them hooked!

Many young people are very environmentally clued-up. They want to have fun, but as they get older and become more aware of our impact on the ecology of the Park, they want to do something that makes a difference. Climbing trees and building dens are fun, but many of the Park's trees are ancient and fragile, providing habitats for birds, fungi and insects. Building dens reduces the amount of wood left on the ground for wildlife.

Knowing and understanding such things turns people into active conservationists, and our young people soon realise that they can make a difference and have fun at the same time. They might even teach their parents a thing or two...

The 2019 programme will encourage families to become practically involved in the life and preservation of our Park. This could be by joining the team of butterfly surveyors in the coming season, or studying the Park's moth population one weekend in June.

In February, they could take part in the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) 'Star Count' to study light pollution. This is something that increasingly affects us all, blighting our view of the night

sky. It is believed that the loss of darkness affects wildlife behaviour, and even our own. Joining in this 'Star Count' could start the process of learning more about this in relation to the Park, and what could

be more fun than wrapping up warm on a cold winter evening and gazing at the stars in the night skies above Richmond!

A project like Discoverers welcomes new ideas, and needs enthusiastic people willing to share their skills or passions, be it for photography, storytelling or something else. We need to be able to draw on a pool of volunteers to help the existing team run events. Any FRP member can volunteer; under 18s need to be accompanied by a parent or guardian who is a member. So if you fancy sharing your enthusiasms and having a lot of fun at the same time, why not come and join us?



Visitor Centre Managers

We're very sad to report that Mary Davies and Liz Hunt have stepped down from running the Visitor Centre. Mary has been in the role for 9 years and Liz for 6 years. During their time visitor numbers have doubled to 55,000 and income more than doubled. One of their great achievements has been expanding the variety of products for sale, while keeping to the theme of the Park and the natural world; last year also saw the introduction of card payments.

The Centre has funded many conservation projects, from Beverley Brook to fencing of the gorse enclosures. Most important, Mary and Liz have kept the band of Centre volunteers (generally!) happy and motivated; all the volunteers are very sorry to see them go. Mary also thanks FRP members whose "patronage is terrific; they have often let us know they are Friends and give us so many kind remarks about the Centre".



Diane Peake, the third member of the management team, is staying on and she is joined by Marilyn Watkinson (left) and Gillian de Beaumont (centre) who will be managing all the stock and William Arnold who will be managing the volunteers and linking between the Friends and the Royal Parks.

Another record year for the Visitor Centre

Bucking the trend of many shops over the Christmas period, the Visitor Information Centre (VC) at Pembroke Lodge saw December sales reach an all-time high, topping £10,000. This is an incredible achievement given the small amount of space allocated to mostly low-value merchandise, and especially gratifying for the volunteer team who manage and staff the VC so enthusiastically.

The primary function of the VC is responding to queries from over 50,000 visitors a year. However, it still generated a total of £66,000 (gross sales) for the year, an 11.5% increase over 2017 and another all-time high. A number of items, most notably the highly successful calendar, are designed and sourced by the Friends and surplus from all sales go to projects in the Park, a very important revenue source.

Over the last five years, the Visitor Centre has contributed £77,500 to conservation projects, including the Friends' conservation film presented by Sir David Attenborough.

Why Spanker's Hill?

By Michael Davison

It's one of the Park's enduring mysteries: How did Spanker's Hill get its name? Even Max Lankester, in his otherwise comprehensive list of the stories behind place names in the Park (What's in a Name?), is unable to answer this one.

Some place names on early maps reflect the original ownership of a piece of land, such as Hill Farme, Henrie White Owner and others. Could there have been a farmer named Spanker who had a lease on this before its enclosure by Charles I? Unfortunately, the name of Spanker's Hill does not appear on any early map, but seems to have been introduced long after the Park's enclosure.



A nautical origin for the name is suggested by Alister Hayes, an ecology officer for the Royal Parks. He relates the name Spanker to the 'spanker' defined in the Concise Oxford Dictionary as 'fore-and-aft sail set on the after side of the mizzen mast' – perhaps the forerunner of 'spinnaker' raised by today's racing yachts. Alister suggests that the trees that existed there before the new plantations 'were seen as resembling ship's sails or the sloping masts that supported them'. An interesting possibility, and trees in the Park may well have supplied timber for ship-building; however, it is hard to see why trees in this particular spot should have looked more like ships' sails than trees anywhere else in the Park.

May I suggest another possibility? Wikipedia shows the name Spanker as belonging to a famous thoroughbred racehorse foaled in 1678. He went on to sire further racehorses, one named Young Spanker. At this time the western slope of Spanker's Hill was the site of Hartleton Farm, the weekend lodge of Sir Robert Walpole, Britain's first Prime Minister. Walpole renovated the building – later 'Old Lodge' to distinguish it from White Lodge – and used it as a retreat from state affairs and a base for horseback hunting forays with George II.

The renown of the Spanker horses would have been familiar to Walpole, so what is more natural than that he should have referred devotedly to his favourite mount as his own 'Spanker', and named the slope adjoining his Lodge, where doubtless his groom would have exercised the horse, as 'Spanker's Hill'?

Too fanciful? Maybe – but is it any more fanciful than any other theory?

Photo: Could this be Spanker? Sir Robert Walpole, with his hunter and groom, painted by John Wootton. Courtesy of Houghton Hall archives.

Enquiries

Friends: see www.frp.org.uk. If your query is not answered here, please email secretary@frp.org.uk

Park management: contact Park Manager Simon Richards, 0300 061 2200 or email Richmond@royalparks.org.uk

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Friends' Talks with Walks

Talks with Walks begin at 10.15 am and are typically a 1-hour talk at Pembroke Lodge followed by a 1.5 to 2-hour walk in the Park. These are all for members of the Friends only and do not need to be booked – just turn up. There is no charge and coffee and tea are provided. Please check on our website for more details of these and dates of other talks throughout the year: www.frp.org.uk

11 May	Richmond Park Flora by Mary Clare Sheanan
15 June	Pembroke Gardens by Jo Scrivener
6 July	Butterflies by Nigel Jackman

Membership and Subscriptions

Membership renewals for those paying by cash were due on 1 January 2019.

If you wish to become a Friend, membership forms can be downloaded from our website: www.frp.org.uk/friends/get-involved, or picked up from the Visitor Centre at Pembroke Lodge or by emailing me at membership@frp.org.uk. Individual membership is £10 and household membership is £15.

If you are a member and don't receive the monthly Friends' bulletin by email and wish to do so, please email bulletins@frp.org.uk with the subject 'Add to bulletin'. Please also include the first line of your address and post code. You can easily stop it at any time.

If you change your email or home address then please let me know by emailing membership@frp.org.uk and include your previous address.

With thanks
Chris Mason, Membership Secretary
(Post applications to: 38 Chesham Rd, Kingston, Surrey KT1 3AQ)



Discoverers is the Friends' activities programme for families. Join our mailing list for early notification of events. For full details visit:

www.discoverers.frp.org.uk/ or

[f /thefriendsofrichmondpark](https://www.facebook.com/thefriendsofrichmondpark)

Photo of Discoverers by Brendan Blake

Friends' AGM

The AGM will be on Saturday 13 April at 10.30am at Kings House School, 68 Kings Road, Richmond TW10 6ES. The guest speaker will be Tom Jarvis, TRP's new Director of Parks, who previously ran Windsor Great Park. Simon Richards, the Manager of Richmond Park will also be present.



Stephen Russell with golf balls, see page 5

Friends' Walks

All are welcome. Friends' Walks are free, last about two hours and start from a car park. All except Bird Walks are on Saturdays unless otherwise stated.

If you need more information or special support or help with the walk, please phone Ian McKenzie on 020 8943 0632 or email walks@frp.org.uk in advance, or 07464 150656 only on the walk day itself. Also see our website: www.frp.org.uk

Please keep dogs under control.

Date	Starting at 10am from
6 April	Sheen Gate car park (+ Walk the Wall)
4 May	Broomfield Hill car park
1 June	Pen Ponds car park
6 July	Robin Hood car park

Plus Informal Bird Walks

Every Friday at 9.30am from Pen Ponds coffee kiosk.



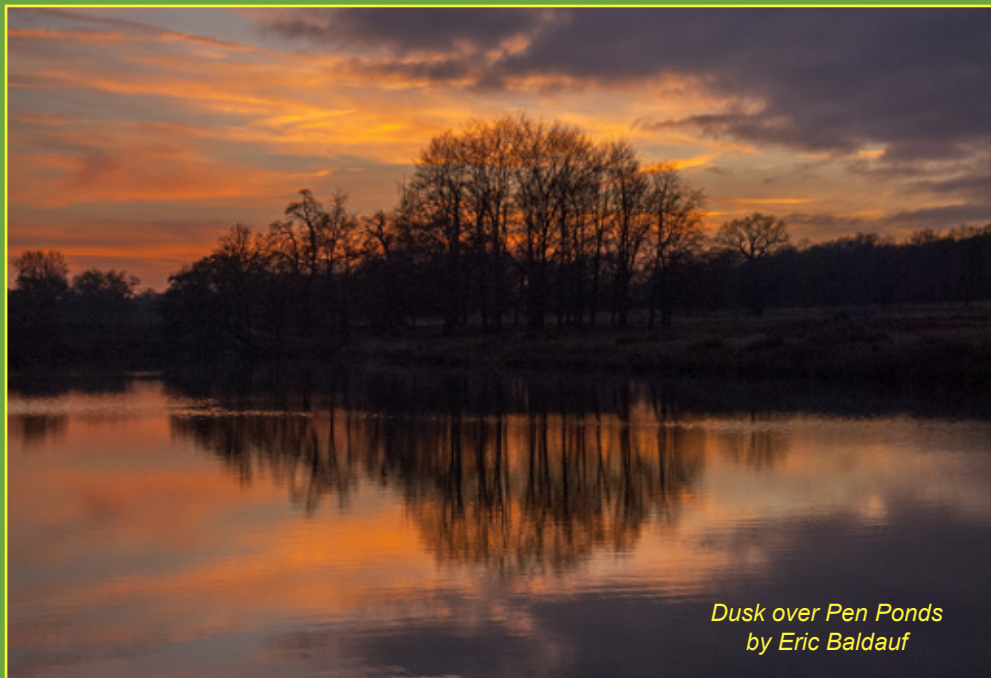
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*Dusk over Pen Ponds
by Eric Baldauf*

Richmond Park is a National Nature Reserve, a Site of Special Scientific Interest and a Special Area of Conservation

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