

The magazine of the Friends of Richmond Park

Spring/Summer 2024

Park Life

In Richmond's National Nature Reserve



Richmond Park's deer - a hunting and farming history

The plant detectives

Coaxing back the kingfisher



The Friends of Richmond Park thanks its sponsor for their generous support



Fire and Rain in the Isabella Plantation



This stunning image of a tree in the Isabella Plantation was a finalist in the International Garden Photographer of the Year exhibition at Kew this year.

It was created by Jocelyn Horsfall,

a photographer who’s lived near the Park for the past 30 years and specialises in images inspired by flowers and the natural world.

She created her image with a double exposure: a sharp image of the tree was merged with one taken with intentional vertical camera movement which blurred the colours and shapes of the background foliage and plants.

Processing then changed the image further with sandy colours made bluer and a painterly effect applied, creating a fairy-tale impression with a warm red glow.

The resulting image, *Fire and Rain*, featured in the IGPOTY Abstract Views category.

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Cover photo by Adeel Khan
@adeelkhan.photography

From the Chairman

I hope you enjoy this latest edition of Park Life with its range of articles about Richmond Park and the Friends of Richmond Park.

It was a wet winter. It often felt as if there were streams and mud everywhere in the Park. As the Park's management look for ways to deal with the impact of climate change, we have an article on one measure - to slow the flow of water in the Park reducing downstream flooding and preparing for summer drought.

The Friends continue to be very active. Our 3,600 members are a community of people who love Richmond Park. Our more than 300 volunteers contribute in so many ways.

We have funded the planting of 30 trees across Richmond Park. These are stand-alone trees amongst woodland and parkland areas, complementing larger scrub and tree plantings. A mixture of species has been planted - mostly oak but also willow, alder buckthorn and sweet chestnut. The funding includes the purchase of the new fluted-style crates allowing a more natural spread of the trees' canopies.



The Friends also paid for the new kingfisher bank and our conservation volunteers built it. We are paying for the ZSL (Zoological Society of London) work on the wildlife survey while Friends volunteers took on the task of putting out and collecting the cameras.

In our last issue, I highlighted our concerns on the options being developed by Heathrow airport for flight path changes and the impact they could have on Richmond Park. We were pleased that last November the London Assembly recognised this and unanimously passed a motion highlighting its concern on the impact these flight paths would have on Richmond Park's tranquillity and biodiversity.

The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) did not approve Heathrow's plans for the development and short-listing of options because it was not satisfied that Heathrow met the requirements for stakeholder engagement. In January, the CAA told Heathrow to re-do this engagement.

Thanks to lobbying by the Friends, Heathrow has recognised that Richmond Park is an area which merits special protection. But that has still not led it to remove any of the flight paths of concern. So, our campaigning work continues.

Looking forward, it's exciting to see the plans that have been developed to replace the café and improve the facilities and the landscape at Roehampton Gate. This is a major investment by The Royal Parks. We welcome the plans especially the focus on biodiversity and sustainability.

Roger Hillyer

Royal Parks' plans for Roehampton Gate area

The Royal Parks (TRP) are planning a £5 million improvement to the Roehampton Gate café area, including a new larger café and toilets, with better circulation of pedestrians, cyclists and cars and improvements to the landscaping and biodiversity.

The present, 'temporary' café dates from 2004 when a fire destroyed the previous cricket-pavilion type building that also served as the club house for the golf course. Lack of funding has prevented its replacement and it's been patched up from time to time but it is now very definitely at the end of its life.

TRP plan to keep the existing area of the site but move the car park entrance to the back of the site beside the Park boundary, with a short spur from the existing road. The change should reduce the conflict

between cars and other users and, by reducing the traffic on the existing road in front of the café, make the café feel more 'in the Park'. The location and size of the car park will be the same as today.

There will be better access to the café for both pedestrians and cyclists, with traffic calming measures at the front of the site to allow pedestrians to cross more easily to and from the field opposite.

TRP also plan to have a new gate at the back of the site to give better access to the Park from the Alton Estate – something its residents have been requesting for years.

The new café will have seating for 80 inside and 120 outside – double that of today but similar to the café before 2004. The building will be single storey



The current café and bike hire centre at Roehampton Gate



Artist's impression of the new café and landscape at Roehampton Gate

as today, made of wood, with a canopy around it which also links to a separate block with toilets and bike hire.

There's a focus on the sustainability of the site, with a new electricity substation (the café currently uses bottled gas and a diesel generator), a green roof canopy, a swale or ditch between the café and the existing road to help water run-off, and new trees and hedgerows. Many of these will also increase the biodiversity of the site.

Construction work is dependent on the public engagement which took place in April, planning permission and detailed design work and tendering, so it is not expected to start for at least a year. There'll be a temporary café during the construction.

The new café is scheduled to open in late 2026. We'll update members on progress through the normal monthly bulletin.

The Friends welcome TRP's plans.

The Roehampton café area has long needed improvement and the plans are a good balance between providing an attractive facility for visitors and protecting the landscape.

The Royal Parks have consulted with the Friends at each stage of the development over the last five years. We have emphasised that the café should serve Park visitors and not be a destination in itself; that it should not expand beyond the existing area; that it should fit with the character of the Park in its design; that its height and landscaping should prevent it from intruding on the Park; and that it should improve biodiversity. We think the plans meet all of these concerns.

By Ron Crompton. Ron is a Vice President of the Friends of Richmond Park

Photo of current site by Roger Hillyer. Artist's impression of restored site is copyright of TRP

Coaxing back the kingfisher

You are in luck if you see a flash of turquoise along Beverley Brook or Pen Ponds as a kingfisher flies past. Kingfishers visit the Park regularly as we have suitable fresh water with a supply of fish but they have not bred there for 10 years.

Kingfishers are not on the endangered list (although protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981) but they are scarce as their requirements for living and breeding are particular. The Richmond Park Bird Group has long dreamed of providing a suitable nest site and has promoted it accordingly.

Under the direction of Ian McKinnon, who has experience of building kingfisher nesting banks, the Park team dug a pool next to a stream, provided timber and quantities of sieved mud. The Friends conservation volunteers provided the labour - carpentry and wheelbarrowing.

After three days, we had constructed a suitable kingfisher nest site.



You require a licence to film or take photographs of a kingfisher nesting site so the nesting bank is in an area not open to the public.

Kingfishers dig a burrow sloping upwards within a mud bank. When the young hatch, their poop is liquid and drains away down the tunnel. The parent arriving and leaving gets its breast feathers coated so on exiting the burrow the bird will dunk into the water to clean its feathers. Approaching and departing, the kingfisher also needs a clear flyway above water.

We now wait for a year while our artificial bank consolidates. A kingfisher flew by on day two of the construction work. Fingers crossed it will return with a mate to take up residence for the 2025 breeding season.

Funding for the project was provided by the Friends.

By Janet Bostock. Janet is a trustee of the Friends of Richmond Park and runs the conservation volunteers

Photos by Nigel Jackman, Chair of the Richmond Park Wildlife Group

Dealing with deluges and droughts

Last winter was one of the wettest on record, with February the wettest ever in southern England. In many places, the Park was a quagmire. But with climate change the Park's management has to plan for extremes of summer heat and drought as well as the winter deluge. Once draining and moving water out of the Park was a priority. Now, conserving precious water within the Park is vital for wildlife during the drier months.

Visitors may have noticed works from recent years including 'leaky dams' and wooden obstructions set in streams to slow down water flow, creating ponds and boggy areas such as the open areas west of Pen Ponds plantation.

The winter's works have been in two main locations: two ponds (both quite well hidden) and a stream in the northern part of Conduit Wood (a boggy area in winter) adjacent to Hawthorn Valley, and a ditch and stream, close to the Tamsin Trail, on Dark Hill near Kingston Gate car park.

Assistant Park Manager Pete Lawrence says the works had to be carried out with minimal impact; heavy digging equipment was used so access was carefully

planned and managed. Outflow structures on the Conduit Wood ponds had failed and new ones were installed. They were also badly silted (deoxygenating the water) and tons of sludgy material was dug out. Now the ponds are deeper and hold much larger volumes of water. Streams feeding into the ponds were slowed down using leaky dams made with wood from within the Park. The stream and ditch in Dark Hill was similarly improved with logs and minor excavation to hold up water and create ephemeral, seasonal ponds and improved wildlife habitats.

Suspending water for longer within the Park will help trees and other plants, particularly during dry spells, and habitats have been created for amphibians and a wide range of invertebrates and their larvae, dependent on water. Water sources also help to support small mammals and birds.

These and other biodiversity works are funded through TRP's Help Nature Thrive project, supported by players of *People's Postcode Lottery*.

By Richard Gray. Richard is a Vice President of FRP

Photos show before, during and after dredging work in Conduit Wood



The Park's deer - a hunting and farming history

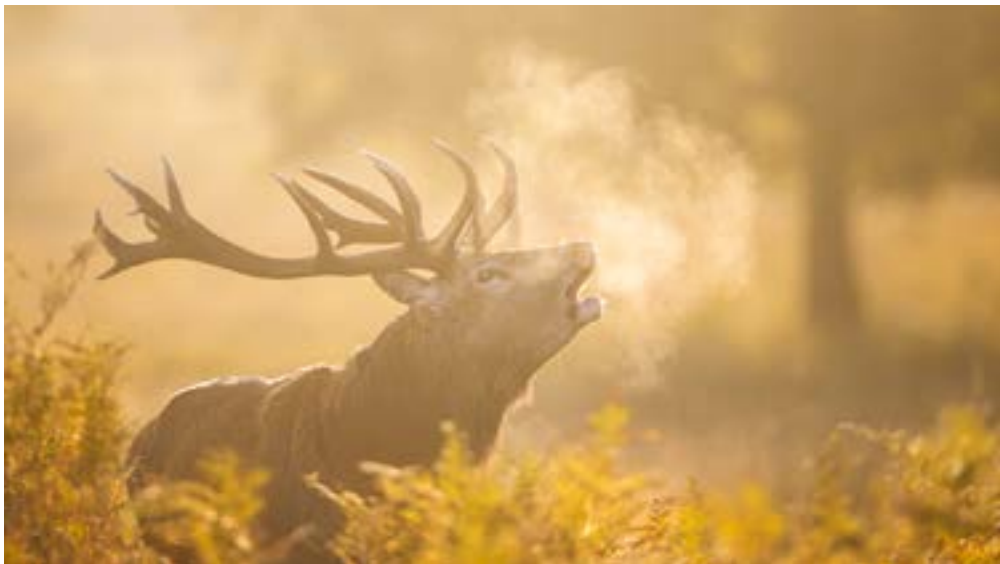


Photo by Felix Belloin @fbimages

We owe Richmond Park's existence to Charles I's passion for hunting. He had the land enclosed in 1637 and had two species of deer introduced: red and fallow. They were originally reared in the "Great Paddock" (now the golf course) on the east side of Beverley Brook, and chased on the west side.

His son Charles II shared his passion as did succeeding monarchs. Royal hunting continued for the next hundred years, reaching its zenith during the reign of George II when hunts took place as often as twice a week during the season.

They were such spectacular affairs that access to the Park was restricted to avoid large crowds gathering to watch. The ladderstile gates were removed and special passes were required to enter the Park on hunting days.

Stag hunting died out in the Park in the middle of the 18th century when it fell out of fashion with the aristocracy - their attention turned to grouse moors instead. The Royal Buckhounds met there for the last time in 1753, though a fox-hunting pack based in kennels close to Sheen Gate stayed until it was transferred to Windsor in 1782.

For the next 150 years the deer were farmed for venison. Drainage was improved in the 1850s in order to increase the quality of pasture and nine new ponds were dug as watering places for the deer. They didn't have the place to themselves: there were also about 90 cows free to roam in the Park - property of staff and residents - and over 400 sheep in what is now the golf course and was then known as King's Farm.

A watershed moment came in 1871 when government commissioners examined the cost of farming deer in the Royal Parks and found it to be uneconomic.

However, they concluded that due to *“the great addition which the herds make to the beauty of the Parks [we] are not prepared to direct they should be removed.”*

To help feed them, 3,000 sweet chestnut and 2,500 oak trees were planted in 1875 so their fruits could provide food for the deer in the autumn.

There were further significant changes early in the 20th century when Edward VII became Park Ranger. He ordered that the Park be made more accessible to the public and that the preservation of game for sport be discontinued. Red deer were no longer sent to the paddocks at

Windsor and their numbers in the Park began to increase.

Fallow deer, on the other hand, had been having a torrid time. In 1886 there was an outbreak of rabies, the first authenticated case in deer in the country. By the time it was contained, over 260 deer had died. Fortunately, the red deer were unaffected, confirming that the rabies virus was not spread by contaminated pasture. Fallow deer numbers only increased when new stock was brought in.

The deer had to contend with a new set of hazards in the 20th century. During the First World War, when the area east of Beverley Brook became a vast army camp and there were meat shortages, 50 fallow deer and 24 red deer were killed for food.

The Royal Warrant

One of the key reasons why fallow deer are in the Park was to satisfy the requirements of the Royal Venison Warrant. This was a custom dating back to Norman times entitling about 80 dignitaries of church, state and judiciary to a haunch of venison twice a year from the royal parks and forests.

Originally, the Warrant included some landowners who had either surrendered their hunting rights or had their land incorporated into the royal domains, as well as other notables.

With the retrenchment of the Royal deer herds to Bushy, Greenwich,

Hampton Court and Richmond it proved more difficult to meet the requirements of the Warrant. Deer were not specially killed; the Warrant was honoured when the herds were culled to limit their numbers.

At first the Warrant was for whole deer - 756 were required in 1839 - but by 1975 the list contained an allocation of 103 quarters only, with all members of the Cabinet entitled to a quarter as they were “accustomed to [the] royal favour”.

Since 1997, when a ban on fox hunting was being debated, it has not been actioned, although it has not been officially ended.

The Park's deer (cont'd)

There was even more disruption in the Second World War when a military encampment was built in the Park, land was ploughed for food production and Pen Ponds were drained. Bombing raids left huge amounts of exploded ordnance in the Park which took a toll on the deer population.

Early on in the war, it was decided to reduce the deer numbers to 150 but by 1943 there were fewer than 100 left. They also had to share what remained of the grazing acreage with 350 sheep and 50 cattle. But once the war was over, the herds recovered remarkably quickly.

A sudden increase in the mortality rate of fallow deer occurred in the winter of 1985-6 when 120 died. Scientists concluded this was due to a combination of factors leading to stress including dog harassment, adverse weather conditions and the poor quality of winter feed.

They made a number of recommendations including reducing deer numbers to ease pressure on grazing, creating deer sanctuaries with

plenty of cover and keeping dogs on leads throughout the Park.

The Royal Parks have to balance the needs of the deer with those of the public and so not all the recommendations have been implemented in full. But significant progress has been made in the protection of the deer.

The greatest peril they face was (and still is!) traffic. But closing the Park to vehicles at night and reducing the speed limit to 20mph, both campaigned for by the Friends of Richmond Park, have sharply reduced casualty rates.

Over the centuries, their numbers have fluctuated from a peak of about 2,000 in the 1830s to fewer than 100 during the Second World War.

There are now around 600 and continue, in the words of the 19th-century commissioners, to make a great addition to the beauty of the Park.

By John Coxon. John is a member of the Friends of Richmond Park

Photo of fallow deer by David Llewellyn-Jones



Launch of the Park's wildlife survey

The long-planned wildlife ecology survey of the Park has now begun, with 70 volunteers setting out 150 camera traps across the whole of the Park in April to run for three weeks recording all nearby wildlife.



We hope to find some species that have not been seen in the Park before, as well as discovering how wildlife interacts with people. This will provide a rich source of data for the Royal Parks to use for future planning, as well as a research resource for ZSL (Zoological Society of London), who provided the cameras and who have been looking at similar data sets across green spaces in London.

The images recorded by the cameras will be analysed by ZSL in the coming months and then made available to the Friends. We will be looking for volunteers to review the expected 2-3 million pictures to identify species and their activities. This can be done from home, so look out for further details later this year.

By Hugh Deighton, who is leading the Friends' work on the survey

Photo shows volunteers Charlie Edwards and Nigel Robinson setting up one of the cameras

Look out for...

The Gatekeeper Butterfly

One of our commonest summer butterflies is the gatekeeper. This pretty butterfly can be seen from June to August, peaking in July. It's found around woodland and grassland edges, but more commonly on flowering bramble and ragwort. You may also find them in the flower borders at Pembroke Lodge.

As they sun themselves, note their bright amber upper wings, bordered with chocolate brown.

Also note the two distinguishing white pupils on the eyespots of their forewings. The smaller males have a distinct diagonal brown 'sex brand' across their upper forewings.



The plant detectives



If you happen to see some people in the Park kneeling or even lying on the ground, peering intently at something, the chances are they are members of the Richmond Park Flora Group.

The Flora Group, a mix of experienced botanists and enthusiastic amateurs, carry out regular spot checks on specific areas, looking for particular plants which tell them something about the health of the Park and its acid grasslands.

Acid grasslands are a relatively rare habitat in and around London – many areas have been built over, quarried for aggregates or turned into farmland.

The expanse of the acid grasslands in Richmond Park has contributed to the Park's designation as a Site of Special Scientific Interest - the largest SSSI in London. It's the job of the Flora Group to keep a check on this habitat by regularly monitoring wild flowers and grasses such as tormentil, upright chickweed, heath speedwell or sheep's sorrel - some of the many key indicator species.

This can be easier said than done.

One of those species, upright chickweed, is not only tiny and often hidden by taller grasses, it also flowers for barely a couple of weeks a year. And those two weeks are dependent on the weather over the previous few months. So blink (or wait for a few days) and you might miss it.

Sometimes the Flora Group monitor and survey a particular area, sometimes they'll hunt for a particular species. The group members are like plant detectives, gathering evidence and feeding their findings into a digital database kept by The Royal Parks.



The tiny delicate upright chickweed

The Flora Group don't only look for indicator species. They also keep an eye out for invasive species so they can be dealt with by the Park's staff.



Harebells



Tormential

The acid grasslands haven't always been nurtured and protected in the way they are now. In the 1960s, sewage was spread over the area to the east of Holly Lodge as a fertiliser. That may have helped some plants but introducing so much nutrient to the soil put this important habitat at risk. Dog mess in the Park has a similar impact.

The group are like plant detectives, gathering evidence and feeding their findings into a digital database

Dogs aren't the only problem. Gwen Hewitt, who helps run the Flora Group, recalls a new member coming across an adder's tongue fern near the Isabella Plantation. It hadn't been recorded in that location in the Park for 50 years and she was determined to see it for herself.

"I was so excited that we'd found something that hadn't been seen for so long," she says. "But by the time I got to the site a couple of days later, it had disappeared, probably eaten by the deer. It was very frustrating."

Wildflowers and grasses, of course, aren't the only indicator species for the

acid grassland habitat. So are fungi and butterflies and there's a close relationship between the three monitoring groups.

The wildflower surveys run from now until September, with the fungi walks taking place later in the late autumn. If you'd like to get involved, you can contact Gwen by emailing gwen@the2hewitts.plus.com.



The rare adder's tongue fern

By Joanna Mills

Photos by Gwen Hewitt & Nigel Reeve from the Richmond Park Flora Group

Horse riding in the Park - a dwindling sight

Ever since its enclosure in 1637 the Park has been used for riding horses. They have been ridden for hunting by kings and their retinues, for leisure and for helping maintain the Park.

Historically Richmond Park was surrounded by stables affording access to its beautiful open spaces, and entry has been readily available in modern times. Parliamentary Acts have included how the Royal Parks should be used by horse riders.

By 1931 there were 29 stables within the vicinity of the Park, and regulations were put forward to restrict riders to horse-riding tracks in order to limit the damage the Park authorities said was being caused and introduce an annual charge for horses.

The restrictions weren't universally

welcomed, particularly the proposal to charge riders. MPs and peers raised the issue in Parliament several times in the 1930s, arguing that the regulations would hamper the use of the Park for horse riders and prevent horse exercise, and charging riders would be discriminatory.

In early 1939, the House of Lords debated a motion to scrap the regulations altogether on the grounds that they amounted to persecution of riders. The government minister was having none of it, arguing that the number of riding establishments had practically doubled during the previous eight years and the number of riders in the Park on a Sunday had increased from 300 to roughly 750.

The speech from Earl Stanhope gives a sense of the House of Lords at that time.



“Those of your Lordships who follow hounds know what damage is caused by a pack and a full field, and you will realise that it is a huge field if there are as many as 300. But here you have over 700 riders. Imagine what that means in the way of cutting up the grass.”

Fast forward to the present and much has changed. Many stables have been lost, and modern developments and traffic have discouraged riding into the Park from outlying stables. It is hard now to imagine that there could once have been more horses than deer at times. Once there was a stable close to every gate. Only Stag Lodge by Robin Hood Gate remains.

The Lodge dates back to 1790 when the A3 was a busy coach road linking London and Portsmouth. There are 23 horses stabled there from small Shetland ponies to 16-hand hunters.

For the past 24 years, Stag Lodge has been a family-owned business which Melanie Gatt took over from her parents. With the closure of so many other stables around the Park, she says it sometimes feels as if she's the last one standing.

She's seen a steady decline in horse-riding in the Park, accelerated by the loss of the riding stables near Kingston Gate which were redeveloped for housing in the past few years.

Where once there were hundreds of riders using the Park, now she says Stag Lodge operates about 30 rides a day, most of them for young children. It's a challenging time for the business with the price of feed going up and the cost of living keeping some would-be riders away. But she seems determined to keep going.

Her favourite time to ride in the Park? The early morning in the late spring and early summer, when dogs are on leads because

of the deer birthing season and riders can leave the horse tracks and, weather permitting, ride anywhere within the Park.



Stag Lodge stables

At Holly Lodge is Operation Centaur, the leading centre of equine-assisted psychotherapy. Most of this work involves no riding, but the ten therapy horses stabled there are regularly exercised by a team of experienced riders. Previously Royal Parks mounted police horses were stabled at Holly Lodge.

Today's Royal Parks' Regulations address horse riding and there is a 'Recommended Code of Practice for Equestrians' including off-track permissions. The length of surfaced riding tracks has been increased to almost ten miles, half of which has been restored in the last two years, and riders and/or stables make a contribution to their upkeep.

One rider described the benefit as enjoying a wonderful green space on our doorstep where both riders and horses find freedom. Long may it continue.

By Nigel Jackman and Joanna Mills

Photos by Nigel Jackman

Warblers, deer and brash barriers

In February, a work party made up of members of the Park's Bird Group, the Friends Conservation Volunteers and Park staff refurbished the brash barrier within the Angler's Enclosure.

The Angler's Enclosure, also known as the Fishing Swims, is a narrow strip of ground on the western shore of Upper Pen Pond. It contains a few trees, such as alders, oaks and willows, and some hawthorn bushes. There is also a small area of open ground with a clump of reeds and bramble bushes.

Given its location and habitat, it has proved attractive to several species of birds including several warblers, such as blackcap, chiffchaff, whitethroat and reed warbler.

Unfortunately, the Enclosure also attracted red deer which would gain access by walking along the shoreline or by swimming across from the other side of the Upper Pen Pond. They would then browse the bushes, brambles and reed clump and disturb any birds nesting there.

Several years ago, a few members of the Bird Group built a brash barrier to protect some of the habitat from the deer. The barrier consisted of fallen branches from trees as well as cuttings from rhododendron and tree-pruning. After a couple of seasons bramble shoots grew, intertwining with the brash.

The barrier proved effective allowing a planted hawthorn to grow as well as brambles and the clump of reeds. As a

result of the increase in cover and lack of disturbance, more birds used the protected habitat for nesting: single pairs of whitethroats, reed warblers and long-tailed tits among others. Other species were seen on migration, such as lesser whitethroat, garden, sedge and willow warblers. One summer a family of stonechats took up residence.

Over the years, thanks to windy weather and the attention of the deer, the brash barrier became dilapidated but was easily repaired using additional sticks and branches. But in recent months, the deer have broken through again and ravaged the habitat within.



The main component of the refurbished barrier is now gorse branches, pruned from the overgrown gorse clumps on Sawyer's Hill and transported to the Angler's Enclosure.

It is hoped the new barrier will prove effective against the deer and allow the habitat within to develop once again. The shoreline of the Enclosure remains accessible to anglers, and the deer!

By Jan Wilczur. Jan is a longstanding member of the Richmond Park Bird Group

Dogs, ticks and nature-friendly walking

There's a mixed relationship between dogs and wildlife in the Park, mostly around the deer. But I wanted to know if dogs had an impact on less visible wildlife, in particular the tiny aquatic creatures in the Park's ponds and streams. So I went to a lecture in Kingston entitled Dogs and Wildlife to find out.

The speakers were Elliot Newton, biodiversity officer for Kingston Council, and Dr Peter Higgins, a local vet. I asked them whether it is OK for dogs to swim in ponds and rivers.

First, how might dogs affect water quality?

If dogs are treated for fleas and ticks, the products are toxic. They have to be to kill the fleas and ticks. Flea collars and the spot on the dog's neck release toxins into ponds and streams if a dog goes into the water. The released toxins kill aquatic invertebrates.

The treatments are so potent that a study published in February 2024 by researchers at Sussex University and Imperial College London found that pet owners using flea treatments on their cats and dogs risk contaminating their hands with pesticide for 28 days after the treatment has been applied.

Two chemicals, fipronil and imidacloprid, which are banned from use in agriculture, are still routinely used in 430 brands of flea products on the market today. Fipronil has been detected in 98% of water supplies and imidacloprid in 66%.

A product marketed as "safe", Billy No Mates, contains neem and scented herbals but swarming locusts, which eat all vegetation in their path, do not eat the

leaves of the neem tree because they sense the danger of toxins which are the tree's protection. The chemical azadirachtin in neem leaves is a natural pesticide.

So how can pet owners minimise the impact on wildlife?

The researchers advise that flea treatments should only be used when a pet has fleas or ticks – the same way we only use antibiotics when needed.

We can better protect Richmond Park's wildlife if we recognise the impact we and our pets are having on it.

Secondly, how does swimming or drinking from streams and puddles affect dogs?

Dogs can be infected by bacteria, especially in standing water, causing gastric upsets. There is giardia in water courses which, if your pet is infected, requires urgent veterinary treatment. Blue green algae blooms are toxic to dogs. After heavy rain it's best to keep your dog out of rivers as sewage overflows contain bacteria and protozoa which can be harmful. Dogs' faeces can be washed into water too.

We are lucky to have access to a national nature reserve which we share with wildlife. We can better protect it if we recognise the impact we and our pets are having on it.

The research is available at imperial.ac.uk/news/243875/toxic-flea-tick-treatments-polluting-uk/

By Janet Bostock. Janet is a trustee of FRP and runs the conservation volunteers.

New life in old wood

It's safe to say that there is a lot of wood in Richmond Park. Not surprising, given that the Park is home to more than 130,000 trees including several hundred ancient trees. Some of the oaks (which make up over 40% of the trees in the Park) are over 500 years old.

But trees are not immortal. Sometimes they succumb to disease, or are blown over when a storm called Elin or Henk comes along (these are genuine storm names, not Ikea furniture as you might imagine). And trees sometimes have to be pruned when overhanging limbs are looking a bit dangerous.

What happens to all this wood?

Some of it is left where it lies providing valuable habitats for flora, fauna and fungi before going back, literally, to its roots. Some is used to make benches where we can sit and admire ... well, the trees really. Or used for fencing or tree crates.

But a very small proportion of this wood has been transformed by two different enthusiasts.

Richard Anderson doesn't live near the Park, but when he got chatting to a member of the Friends about his passion for wood turning, it was suggested that he might use some of the spare wood from Richmond Park. Eventually he obtained permission from the then Park manager Simon Richards to visit the sawmill and take some seasoned oak.

Seasoning of timber is a long process so Richard was delighted to be able to acquire some that was ready to be used. He was also given some oak burrs with distinctive swirls and knots and made

beautiful, shiny fruit such as apples and pears, honey dippers, spinning tops and, very appropriately, acorns.

Richard has been turning wood as a hobby for 20 years or more and in his time has made things as diverse as conductors' batons and dolls' house furniture. His oak fruit is on sale in the Visitor Centre.



Some of Richard's wood-turned apples

But he likes to work with many different woods, particularly recycling exotic timber, taking commissions for bespoke pieces.

Only one problem – he's run out of Richmond Park wood! He's hoping to get permission to obtain some more so that he can restock the Visitor Centre with more of his exquisite artefacts.

A very special camera

If you happen to see a man walking round Richmond Park with a big wooden camera, the chances are it's Max Rush.

I have to confess that I had never heard of a wood camera but apparently this is how cameras used to be – wood is a good sturdy material and is relatively lightweight.

It was during Covid that Max came across some old oak floorboards that he used to make his prototype camera and this got him thinking about where the wood had come from.

The opportunity to obtain the wood from Richmond Park came when Max's wife was in Kingston Hospital having twins and Max became entranced with the Park. He was taking some pictures with his prototype camera when Assistant Park Manager Jo Scrivener asked him where the wood had come from and then allowed him to take some oak and cherry wood from the sawmill for a new camera.

People who are attracted by this imposing wooden equipment often think that it's an old plate camera.

Max loves the circularity of this project, taking a photo of a tree using the wood from that same tree. One of his favourites is an old oak in Conduit Wood and one day he hopes to use part of this tree in his camera, making the connection complete.

People who are attracted by this imposing wooden equipment often think that it's an old plate camera. In fact it's a unique digital large format camera which is one of the highest resolution cameras available, capturing the natural world in more detail than any other model. You can see some of the images Max has captured on his website, www.maxarush.com.

You might see Max in the Park with his distinctive camera and you can see Richard's work in the Visitor Centre.



Max Rush in the Park with his camera

But if you fancy trying your hand at putting new life into old wood, please remember that Max and Richard have special permission to take the wood – we lesser mortals must abide by the rules and take nothing from the Park!

By Alison Glasier. Alison is a member of the Friends of Richmond Park

Photos by Richard Anderson and Max Rush

Friends of Richmond Park Discoverers

Who stole the biscuits?

That was the mystery that the Discoverers had to solve at an event held at Holly Lodge. And it wasn't just biscuits that had been nicked – the keys to Holly Lodge had gone too.

Our young detectives were introduced to forensic techniques that the police use to investigate crime – forensic botany, chromatography (look it up) and key observations from found items, all helping to lead them to discover the culprit (teeth marks on a paper cup were a key clue).

The event was organised by the Discoverers leaders in partnership with the Parks Police and with the participation of Sgt Pete Sturgess and his team.

Discoverers events are for school age children and their families and since they started about 12 years ago have gone from strength to strength with this event being a first for the Park. Apart from identifying felons, the children were able to learn more about the role of the police, not just in the Park but in society in general.

They were shown how observation, deduction and precision play an integral part in investigating crime and were given the opportunity to examine some of the key items that the Police use such as evidence bags, tags, tape, radios and even a cylinder to collect weapons. They also learnt about the reasons for Park rules and why it's important to respect them.

The April "whodunnit" was just one of the events that have captivated the Discoverers over the past year. In





make their own birds out of paper plates and wooden cutlery. It was attended by about 120 children, many of whom were returnees.

February some of FRP's top birdwatchers turned up to help at a birdwatching event, delighting the children with binoculars and telescopes set up in Pembroke Lodge Gardens. Very obligingly, someone had ordered clear, sunny weather and half a dozen buzzards decided to turn up (maybe in the hope of spotting an interesting variety of human child).

The event was organised with the kind support of Pembroke Lodge which let the Discoverers use the Belvedere room to



For further information about the Discoverers group, please contact discoverers@frp.org.uk. All events are free of charge and hosted by volunteers.

So who did eat all the biscuits? Unfortunately this is now sub judice and no further information can be revealed at this time...

By Alison Glasier

Photos by Monique Sarkany. Monique runs the Discoverers programme for FRP and is a trustee



Friends' Information

Patrons, Officers, Trustees & Vice-Presidents

Patrons: Sir David Attenborough, Clare Balding, Baroness Kramer of Richmond Park

Chairman: Roger Hillyer

Secretary: Judith Pearson

Treasurer: Hugh Deighton

Other trustees: Peter Allnutt, Janet Bostock, Nick Coleman, Helene Feger, Chris Mason, Vivienne Press, Monique Sarkany, Nigel Sherwin, Lucy Tarleton

Vice-Presidents: Ron Crompton, Richard Gray, Max Lankester, Richard Polson

Friends' Walks

All are welcome to come on these free guided walks. Each walk lasts about two hours and starts from one of the car parks at 10 am on the first Saturday of each month. We show the gates that those arriving by motor vehicle will need to come through to reach each car park.

Dogs must be kept on leads during all walks.

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 phone 07340 766573 only on the day of the walk.

1st June	Pen Ponds Car Park (Vehicle access via Roehampton Gate)
6th July	Robin Hood Gate Car Park (Vehicle access via Roehampton Gate)
3rd August	Kingston Gate Car Park (Vehicle access via Kingston, Ham or Richmond Gates)
7th September	Roehampton Gate car Park (Vehicle access via Roehampton Gate)
5th October	Sheen Gate Car Park + Deer + Walk-the-Wall (Vehicle access via Sheen Gate)
2nd November	Pembroke Lodge Car Park + Fungi (Vehicle access via Kingston, Ham or Richmond Gates)

Magazine People

Editor: Joanna Mills

Picture editor: Vivienne Press

Proof reader: Sally Wood

Editorial advisors: Roger Hillyer,
Ron Crompton, Monique Sarkany

Contact: editor@frp.org.uk

Enquiries

Friends: see www.frp.org.uk.

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

Park management:

richmond@royalparks.org.uk

Police non-emergency: Phone 101

Friends' Information

The Friends – Who we are and what we do

The Friends of Richmond Park is a charity founded in 1961 and dedicated to the conservation and protection of Richmond Park, its peace and natural beauty for the benefit of the public and future generations.

The Friends fund conservation and interpretation projects, organise the Discoverers programme for families, monitor events in the Park, and offer guided walks.

Our more than 300 volunteers staff the Visitor Centre, carry out conservation work, monitor sporting events in the Park and pick litter as part of our Adopt-an-Area scheme.

We lobby and campaign on issues such as the ecology and wildlife of the Park, policing, car access to the Park, cycling, flight paths and local planning issues. We also publish books, leaflets, the Richmond Park calendar, Park Life magazine for members and provide a monthly email bulletin.

You can find out more about the work of the Friends on our website (frp.org.uk), Facebook, Instagram and on Twitter.

New members are always welcome so please join us. You can do so via our website or pick up a form from our Visitor Centre, or email membership@frp.org.uk

Membership – Joining and rewards

Please note that membership renewals for those paying by cash or cheque only is 1 January. Individual membership is £10 and household membership is £15. Please send payment to Chris Mason – details below.

It's easy to become a member: you can sign up online at www.frp.org.uk/membership/ using your credit card. Alternatively you can obtain a form from the website, from the Visitor Centre at Pembroke Lodge or by emailing me at: membership@frp.org.uk.

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 this at any time using the unsubscribe button.

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

If you wish to receive Park Life as a pdf instead of as a printed booklet, then email membership@frp.org.uk with the subject as 'Park Life as pdf' using the email address registered with us.

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



Kingfisher by Ham Gate Pond, photo by Nigel Jackman

The Friends of Richmond Park work to protect the Park's peace and natural beauty for future generations.

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



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