



Skating in Regent's Park

Does it spoil your enjoyment of the park or not ?

The Royal Parks' Agency is allowing skating, including rollerblading, for a trial period of three months from 1 July to 30 September. During this period people will be allowed to skate

until 9.00am on the footpaths, with the exception of the Avenue Gardens and Queen Mary's Garden, where skating remains prohibited at all times, and from 4.00pm until the Park closes on the Broadwalk between North Gate and Chester Road on a

track designated and marked for the purpose. [No track has been provided] The Friends were not consulted by the Agency on this decision, and it is important that all members who are in the Park during these times and have comments report either to the

Secretary or directly to: Lee Cullen, The Royal Parks' Agency, The Old Police House, Hyde Park. London W2 2UH. If you want to report a particular incident, ring the Park Manager 486 7905 or the Royal Parks' Police 935 1259.

Lottery money ready for Readymoney Fountain

Friends will be delighted by the decisions of the Heritage Lottery Fund. Regent's Park has heard that its bid has been successful and that it will receive £404,000 towards the cost of restoring the Readymoney Fountain in the Broadwalk. The Fund did not support the building of the proposed new toilets and has insisted on an historic landscaping of the fountain surround. The fountain may have to be removed for the repair work to be accomplished. The Park still needs to raise about £150,000 to complete the work, and any Friend who would like to contribute should get in touch with David Caselton, Park Manager, Inner Circle, Regent's Park, London NW1 4NR Fax 224 1895

End of season Review

On Tuesday, 22 September, in the Danish Church Hall, St Katherine's Precinct, on the Outer Circle south of Gloucester Gate. Coffee and pastries at 6 pm. Meeting at 6.30 pm. Speaker: Judy Hillman, Urban Affairs Consultant, who was

a member of the Royal Parks' review group under Dame Jennifer Jenkins, which researched and produced the review of Regent's Park and Primrose Hill in 1993.

Picnic in the Park

Last year's summer picnic was enjoyed so much by those friends who attended that it was decided to make it an annual event.

This year's picnic is scheduled for Sunday, 9 August, from 12.30pm. Meet us on the grass, under the trees, behind the garden of St. John's Lodge. From the Primrose Hill area take the Broadwalk, and turn right on the last path before Chester Road. We shall be on your left about seventy five yards along the path. From the Inner Circle, pass The Holme on your left, take the first path on your left, then the immediate fork right, and, keeping to the right, you will find us on your right after you pass the back of St. John's Lodge.

So, pack your sandwiches or your roulade, your lemonade or your champagne, come alone, or bring your friends and relations, and join with other friends for a relaxing afternoon in the Park.

We are praying for fine weather, but if there is any doubt with regard to the elements, or you have any questions, call Margaret Elliott 0171 935 8936. Rain date in emergency will be on 16 August.

Exhibition of Park History

An excellent exhibition of the history of Regent's Park together with the Park management's future proposals, on which you are invited to comment, will be held at the Knapp Gallery, Regent College, on weekdays from 3 - 31 August 1998.

Open air Theatre

Tickets for "Gentlemen Prefer Blondes" proved so popular that we have ordered some extra ones. We now have tickets available for the evening performances on Tuesday, 25, and Saturday 29 August 1998. As before, £14 tickets are available call Margaret Elliott 0171 935 8936

A reply from a member, Pam Millard, who grew up near the Park 35 years ago, to our question about the new blue boats on the lake:

Rowing

They used to be yellow and now they're blue,
They used to be skiffs and the seats moved too.
I taught myself when I was young
And Regent's Park was the place to come.

I've been for a visit to see if I could
Remember to feather and row real good.
This year they are lighter and easier to row
And they had a small one all ready to go.

I don't mind at all if their colour is blue,
They are just like the bridges, a similar hue.
I was pleased to find that for Regent's Park Friends
The boats were half price, and their colour, well...blends!

Diary dates

see details on this page & pages 3&4

Picnic Sunday, 9 August 1998
(if rain Sunday, 16 August)

Openair Theatre
Gentlemen Prefer Blondes
25 & 29 August 1998

Exhibition - History of Regent's Park & Primrose Hill
Knapp Gallery, Regent's College
1-31 August 1998

Parkwatch Monday, 7.00pm,
14 September 1998

Visit to the Danish Church
Thursday 11am, 11 September

End of season review
Tuesday 6 for 6.30pm
22 September

Preparing for next year in the garden. Thursday 11am,
29 October 1998

Bird watching in the Regent's Park

The Regent's Park, situated in the city and away from the river, does not seem ideally positioned to attract migrating birds and you would expect to see only a few species of park and garden birds. Nothing could be further from the truth! Regent's Park boasts an annual list of over 100 species of birds. In the last seventeen years over 150 species have been recorded.

Birds that are flying over London like to follow rivers or canals as they; can then stop off and feed to replenish their body fats. Reservoirs are another area that birds are attracted to. A high percentage of bird movement over the park consists of birds flying either north-east in the spring or south-west in the autumn. Looking at a map of the London area you can see this would link up Barn Elms, Queen Mary's and Staines reservoirs in the south-west and the valley chain of reservoirs and gravel pits in the north-east.

Bird watching at any time of year can be rewarding, although as you would expect the middle of summer can be quiet as also can winter months. However, if a period of severe cold weather occurs, then it is possible to get large movements of redwings, fieldfare and lapwings. Skylarks used to be fairly numerous at these times but, due to today's farming methods, sightings have been much reduced.

The park contains a wide range of habitats. There are two man-made lakes. On the largest, of twenty two acres, boating is allowed on part and there are six wooded islands that attract migrant birds as well as breeding species including stock dove, heron and blackcap. Rowing is restricted to the central part of the lake to reduce disturbance to the parks waterfowl and heronry, which reached twenty eight pairs in 1992 and is expanding away from the island the birds first used in 1965. Each arm of the lake is fenced off and the areas in the north-west hold a splendid collection of ornamental waterfowl of more than eighty species. This enables any bird watcher the chance to check on difficult species, especially when the birds are in eclipse plumage. The small pond in Queen Mary's

Garden, one of the most cultivated areas of the park also holds a small collection of waterfowl.

The park contains many areas that are excellent for spotting birds and to walk around the whole park would take a few hours. Here is a short walk to some of the key locations:-

We will start our walk at Clarence Gate at the northern end of Baker Street. From here we cross the bridge, turning left, walking on to the grass by the bandstand and to our first viewing point. Standing here during the morning allows good views over the lake and to the island as the sun is behind you. The island to your right holds

you are very lucky, firecrest, as well as four species of tit and the occasional roosting tawny owl. We continue along the path, entering the park at the next gate and heading down the hill to Longbridge. The paddocks on the right allow the waterfowl to graze undisturbed and give you the chance to test your knowledge of grey geese including pink footed, bean, common and lesser whitefronted geese.

We have now reached viewpoint number two. Standing on the bridge provides the opportunity to observe some of the park's collection of waterfowl on the northern side. The other side may look quiet by

You can obtain good views of great spotted woodpeckers and various tits and chaffinches.

Carry on walking until you come to a fork in the path, keep to the right and midway round the bend you have reached our third stop. With the plantation on one side and the wooded island on the other, this area can be very rewarding during migration and throughout the year. Birds that have occurred here are kingfisher (usually juveniles), redstart whinchat, chiffchaff, wood, willow, garden and reed warbler, common and lesser whitethroat, pied and spotted flycatcher and sometimes the once common turtle dove. During October small groups of redwings, blackbirds and song thrushes from the continent can be seen feeding on the hawthorns. It is worth walking all the way around the plantation for as the trees mature the birds can be harder to locate, this is an area not to be rushed.

Once you have walked around the plantation, head out on to the open spaces to the area where the sports pitches are situated. As you go towards the sports pavilion it is worth checking the bushes to the north-east for migrants.

Area four is relatively undisturbed by the public during the early hours of the morning. For this reason it attracts common wheatears in spring and, from mid May, they can be joined by a close relative, the Greenland wheatear. Lapwing also put in short appearances in this area as well as snipe, yellow and white wagtails, meadow and tree pipits. The area's main attraction, however, is that you can observe the skies without any obstructions, allowing you the chance to see daytime migration over London which can last from dawn until 11am.. Sometimes birds can stream through all day long. This usually involves swallows, house martins, fieldfares, redwings, chaffinches, greenfinches and in slightly less numbers meadow pipits. Rare birds that have been seen flying over the park are: goshawk, kite, whimbrel, osprey, hen harrier, greenshank, sandwich tern, honey buzzard, merlin, oystercatcher, kittiwake.

We carry on by heading to the one area of woodland in the



Owl mobbed by bird words

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the bulk of the herons nests, although birds are now beginning to use the island on the left. These islands can hold some interesting birds during spring and autumn, chiffchaffs, willow wood and garden warblers, blackcaps, lesser whitethroats and sedge warblers. The banks of these provide common sandpipers a chance for a brief stop during May and August. The posts with connecting chains permit excellent views of cormorant during the winter months. The lake to the right of these chains give wild waterfowl a chance to feed away from public disturbance e.g. ruddy duck, widgeon, teal, shoveller and little grebe. We move on from here by going up the hill, turning left onto the Inner Circle where the gardens of The Holme also attract migrant birds, warblers, flycatchers, goldcrests, and, if

comparison but from here you have another chance to scan the lake and the sky. If the wind is blowing from a favourable direction, southerly or south easterly, you can expect to see house martins and swallows popping in to have a drink on their way north. With these sometimes comes a bird that preys on them called the hobby. This is a very exciting bird and worth keeping an eye open for on a warm day during April and May, or August and September. The willow trees either end of the bridge can hold chiffchaff, willow, sedge and reed warbler. During the winter months it is worth checking the alder and birch trees for that charming little finch, the siskin. Once across the bridge, turn right and, after fifty yards, look across the lake to the island where there is a wild bird feeding station.

park. Though not very large, it gives the birds a chance to breed undisturbed as it is closed to the public. This, our fifth area, lies just beyond the golf and tennis school. It is worth checking out the trees just in front of the woodland (mountain ash, hawthorn) as they bear fruit that attract birds such as fieldfare, redwing, song and mistle thrush, blackbird and a bird that is more at home on the moors, ring ouzel (although these are extremely rare). The tall line of limes running along the slope acts as a wind break and keeps the area fairly sheltered giving insectivorous birds such as spotted flycatcher, chiffchaff and warbler a chance to feed. Where limes meet the fence there is an area of scrub and a small drinking pool, which acts as a magnet on warm summer and autumn days, making it possible to obtain good views of the more skulking type of birds including lesser and common whitethroat, blackcap and garden warbler. It is also where parties of long tailed tits can be seen.

We leave heading due south until we come to the tall fence that separates Winfield House from the park. Follow the path to the left until you reach a tall coniferous hedge. We have now reached our sixth and final

viewpoint. Standing looking through the gap in the hedge is an area sheltered from the winds that blow from a southerly direction. It is best watched before 11.00 a.m. on a sunny morning during autumn when a tall hawthorn that lies behind the taller security fence attracts all manner of warblers, flycatchers, goldcrests and tits.

Continue along the path, turning right across two short bridges which again give you the chance to view another selection of the park's waterfowl. From here it is also possible to see kingfishers at the far end of the lake as well as siskins and great spotted woodpeckers. Soaring high overhead, it is sometimes possible to see the park's pair of sparrowhawks that nest in the protected grounds of Winfield House. Once across the bridge follow the path along the lakeside and back to our starting point, always keeping an eye out over the lake for birds that use it as a feeding station. Common terns can be seen fishing here in July and taking their food back to their young at Brent reservoir, three miles away.

The park can be very rewarding, although you do need to be lucky to see some of the birds that have been mentioned. We hope you have enjoyed your tour.

Parkland planning and management - a biogeographer's view with particular reference to Regent's Park

Talk given by Professor John Poynton to a joint meeting of The Friends of Regent's Park and the St Marylebone Society, in the Crypt, St Marylebone Parish Church, 27 May 1998.

Prof. Poynton started with an outline of what a biogeographer aims to do. Beginning with the mapping of species' distributions, a search is made for common distribution patterns, and an explanation for these general patterns is sought on the basis of past geographical and climatic history.

Although Prof. Poynton's particular interest is African biogeography, he is interested in seeing whether the procedures used there can be applied to the

Marylebone area.

He noted that although railway tracks might seem unpromising corridors for indigenous species, foxes did use the tracks leading into the Marylebone Station, and foxes did appear at night on the Blandford Square estate next to the station. The route travelled by these animals had not yet been identified; there is no direct corridor between the railway and the estate. He pointed out that a more obvious corridor for wildlife could be the Grand Union Canal, which leads east and west out of Regent's Park. Unfortunately, closer inspection shows that there are complete blocks where the canal leaves the Park. The canalside walk was itself a very sterile zone of paving and concrete; a narrow embankment on at least one side would allow animals to take shelter and to escape from the canal (drowned foxes had been seen), and could allow the development of a fringing reedbed which would soften the landscape and offer habitat for a variety of creatures.

No other corridors leave the

Visit to the Danish Church

The new minister of the Danish Church, Pastor Brun, has agreed to show a group of members round the church and surroundings. We will meet there at 11am 11 September 1998. Tickets £2

Preparing for next year in the garden

PJ the training officer of the Services Team in Regent's Park will take a party of members round the gardens, mainly the

herbaceous borders and talk about planting and preparing for spring bulbs and bedding plants and caring for the borders. Thursday, 11am 29 October 1998. Tickets are £2

For tickets for the above events please contact Ann Müller Tel/fax 0171 935 3498

Open Air Theatre lottery bid

Unfortunately the Arts Lottery Fund has again deferred its response to the application made by the Open Air Theatre a year ago for renovation and new landscaping.



The Friends of Regent's Park & Primrose Hill

The society is a non-political body. Our aims are to help conserve, defend and, where necessary, urge the improvement of all the area within the Park boundary and the adjoining Primrose Hill

Annual subscription £10 To join please contact the Treasurer

traffic-encircled Park, and as things stand there seems to be no possibility of putting any of the ideas and procedures of reticular biogeography into effect in the Marylebone area.

Prof. Poynton expressed the view that this places more emphasis on the potential of Regent's Park itself as a diversified and self-perpetuating representative of the local indigenous flora and fauna. This would require setting aside areas where meadowland and forest would be encouraged. [Such areas do exist - see 'wild flowers' page 4] Such a view runs counter to the traditional view of urban parks as manicured green deserts. A shift in philosophy would nevertheless carry many benefits in being educational, in favouring a conservationist interest, and also in reducing maintenance costs in the long term.

Even though open spaces in the Marylebone area seemingly cannot be integrated into an open space system, Prof. Poynton suggested that the shift in philosophy advocated for Regent's Park could also be encouraged in

smaller areas, such as on the estates. For example, at least a portion of the lawn areas could be converted to meadow-land, which would provide habitat for a variety of wildlife.

In the discussion that followed, there was some disagreement in the audience about the value of having truly 'wild' areas in urban parks; the view was put that picnickers and ball-game players needed a 'tamed' environment, and that wild creatures such as foxes and snakes could be worrisome.

Prof. Poynton suggested that there was sufficient space in an area the size of Regent's Park to accommodate those with urban tastes as well as those with a taste for the wild, such as allowing some groups of trees to function as true forest rather than be a collection of manicured ornaments from which leaf litter and dead wood was systematically removed and with it a diversity of wildlife. He noted that a preference for a 'wild' or a 'tamed' environment had a strong cultural component.

Park Watch

7 July

Inspector Derek Pollock, who replaced Inspector Humphrey in May, welcomed us and introduced himself. He has been with the Royal Parks' Constabulary for 23 years, and for the last four years has run the Operations Office in Hyde Park. He admitted that it was he who has been responsible for taking manpower from Regent's Park to police events elsewhere! The meeting was then chaired by Ps Neil Alder. It was observed by police representatives from Bushey, who want to launch a similar Park Watch there.

There are currently 20 PCs, 2 part-time and 2 probationers, and 3 sergeants at Regent's Park, though sickness and other responsibilities often reduce this figure. A total of 87 crimes had been reported to the RPC in the period 1 April to 30 June. The theft figures seemed high but 17 of these occurred at Regent College where security is slack. There has been some criminal damage at the boathouse, and youths have been taking boats without authority. A routine night patrol discovered two youths in the Park near Winfield House. The officers gave chase when the boys ran off, but lost them near the Mosque. They eventually found a boat, complete with oars, hidden in the heather garden near Charlbert Street Gate. The boys had dragged it several hundred yards from the boating lake. This problem has been tackled by keeping most of the boats in the middle of the Lake, but the Police ask you to ring if you do see young people hanging around the boathouse after it has closed.

25 out of the 29 major offences were for drugs, but 2 were for indecent exposure and the Police would like help in tracing an Arab male, about 5' 11" tall, with a well-kept beard, who has been seen near the Canal bank. There

have also been several thefts from cars, especially during performances at the Open Air Theatre. Look out for a white male, about 5' 11" with red hair, aged 17-20, who rides a green motor bike and let the Police know if you see him. The teenage boy who was badly beaten in the Park in June is now off life support; his injuries were sustained as a result of gang warfare, which occasionally erupts into the Park.

During the same period 87 cyclists were reported and 38 received warnings. Police dealt with 13 road traffic accidents, seven of which involved personal injury. They also administered 27 breath tests, of which 5 motorists proved positive and were arrested. Officers also dealt with 4 other accidents in the Park.

During a tree-planting ceremony at the start of a Candlelit Walk on 24 June a man acting suspiciously near Emma Noble, the fiancée of James Major, was arrested under the provisions of the Mental Health Act. Two officers were assaulted by the man during this incident.

Hanging baskets and containers

Friends of Greenwich Park, where Regent's Park and Primrose Hill Assistant Manager Mark Wasilewski previously worked, had already told us what an entertaining and informative lecturer he was. Those Friends who attended his talk and demonstration of planting techniques and care of hanging baskets and containers would certainly concur.

On a perfect early summer day, Mr Wasilewski inspired us all to greater efforts in our own gardens and balconies. He passed on all sorts of useful tips (make sure the basket has wide enough holes through which to insert plants: buy plants early enough to get the pick of the crop, but don't be tempted to plant out too soon) and answered our many questions, while demonstrating how best to fill a hanging basket, a pot and a trough. We saw some new and some less usual plants to use,

and different varieties and their uses were discussed, as well as techniques to keep them looking good throughout the summer months.

Our thanks to Mr Wasilewski for imparting so much information in such an entertaining way. I'm sure we shall all have impressive displays this summer as a result of his efforts!

66 = 807

Since April, sixty-six new members have joined the Friends, bringing our total membership to 807. It is good to see that 6% signed as life members and 25% signed standing orders. This reduces costs to the Friends in collecting subscriptions. Please note partners are included in membership at no extra cost.



Forget Giverny, and hurry instead to the wild flower bank (twixt the camels and the elephants) at the far side of the sports field.

Here you will find a veritable cornucopia equal to any summer alpine meadow. Delicate scarlet poppies, the bluest of corn-flowers and the whitest of daisies, plus every other species in the book.

Congratulations, and a big thank you to all those involved in its conception and upkeep. PS. It has been reported that some people are picking these flowers. If you see any one doing this please reprimand them!

Building a new boathouse

Park Café, the refreshment provider in the café in Queen Mary's Gardens and the café at the Tennis Centre, near York Bridge, is making steady progress with its plans for building a new Boathouse on Regent's Park lake.

Detailed discussions with the Royal Park's Agency continue and Park Café is conferring with

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English Heritage to ensure the new building is compatible with the sensitivity of the landscape around the lake. (*We too look forward to seeing these plans*).

Park Café managing director, Karim Lalani, said: "I very much hope the new boathouse will be put up in time for next summer. It will be the focus for the simple pleasure of boating which can be enjoyed by the whole family in the beautiful and unspoilt central London amenity of Regent's Park."

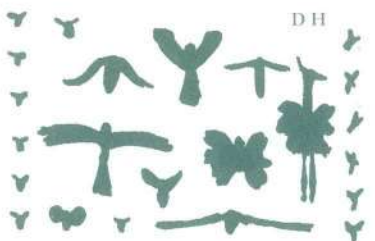
Park Café are pleased to offer Friends 25% off the price of food & beverages. Please show your badge.

Helicopters above the Park

A reply to our letter of complaint to National Air Traffic Services proved a disappointment. Unfortunately the Civil Aviation Authority has no legal powers to place restrictions on aerial activity for environmental reasons, over any particular area or at any particular time. We are now approaching the Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions which has overall responsibility for aircraft noise in the UK.

Unwelcome guests

Up to a hundred Canada geese are flying in at a time to use Regent's Park as a stop-over. They moult here and then become flightless for between 6 to 8 weeks before moving on. They are not the cleanest of visitors. The Park staff already have to hose down the



path by the Lake once a day.

The Birds of Regent's Park

The Friends are going to finance a book on the birds of Regent's Park by Rolfe Green. It tells the story of wild birds in the Park over the last 100 years, including which species have moved in and which have disappeared. It will provide a valuable record for Park users.

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