

Acton Park

Seasonal Report

01/10/23 - 31/03/24

Seasonal Ranger:

Hannah Farnell



**Park
Maintenance**

Events

**School
Sessions**

Pictured: Cherry Tree in Acton Park
Taken by Hannah Farnell

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Environment Department

JOB DESCRIPTION

POST: **Seasonal Ranger, Acton Park**

JOB PURPOSE: To support the provision of countryside recreational and environmental educational opportunities in the Parks, for visitors and the local community.

Principal Accountabilities:

- | | | |
|----|--|---|
| a) | Assist in the operation, maintenance and development of the Parks and the associated visitor centre facilities (including general site and visitor supervision, practical estate maintenance work and animal husbandry), to ensure that they are accessible and safe for visitors. | Evidenced on
pages 5-6.
See "Park
Maintenance" |
| b) | Plan, organise, deliver and monitor the Parks, Countryside and Rights of Way Service events and environmental education programmes(including leading groups, writing events programmes, producing interpretative displays and developing learning materials which support the National Curriculum, eg school resource packs), to increase public knowledge and understanding of the countryside and related issues. | |
| c) | Work with the local community to develop and lead volunteers programmes, to assist in the care and management of the parks and rights of way network, eg Junior Rangers (under 16 years old), adult volunteers and other work placements. | Evidenced on
pages 7 – 13 & 16.
See "Events" and
"Acton Park
Voluntary Group" |
| d) | Support the promotion of the park facilities, through the development, production and monitoring of marketing and promotional literature, exhibitions and group talks, in order to maximise awareness of the Parks, Countryside and Rights of Way services and facilities. | Evidenced on page
17.
See "Social Media" |
| e) | Supervise information assistants, seasonal and temporary staff, volunteers, placements and contractors, in compliance with relevant personnel policy and procedures. | Evidenced on
pages 7 – 13 & 16.
See "Events" and
"Acton Park
Voluntary Group" |
| f) | To undertake any other relevant duties as directed by the Senior Parks and Countryside Officer. | |

Report Summary

The park ranger has continued work throughout the winter of 2023-2024 which involved: park maintenance, events, educational school sessions and volunteer days. Highlights include: a sweet chestnut tree in the park winning Tree Of The Year (a competition hosted by the Woodland Trust), the first ranger-led dog show, new signage and woodchip laid on a well-used, muddled footpath.

Completed Works

Park Maintenance

Paths have been blown, weeds have been cut back and fresh woodchip has been laid on muddled paths.

Four new sign posts have been placed near the edge of the lake warning visitors of the seasonal blue-green algae and best foods to feed the wild ducks.

A 480 year old sweet chestnut tree in the park won Tree of the Year, a competition hosted by the Woodland Trust.



Events

6 events have been held including:

Halloween, Christmas, Tree of the Year, A Dog show and Easter. Events continue to increase in popularity.

Educational Sessions

13 school sessions, across 3 schools and local brownies group, have been held at the park including the following topics: history, sweet chestnut tree, bug houses, birds and bird box making.



Volunteering

The Acton Park Volunteer group runs every other week. The dedicated volunteers have helped with: cleaning bins, weeding the rose garden, shrub beds by the playground and tennis courts. A "Help A Ranger" day was also hosted at the park where artificial substrate was removed from the fenced area.

Social Media

Facebook is used to post about the park and events.



Proposed work

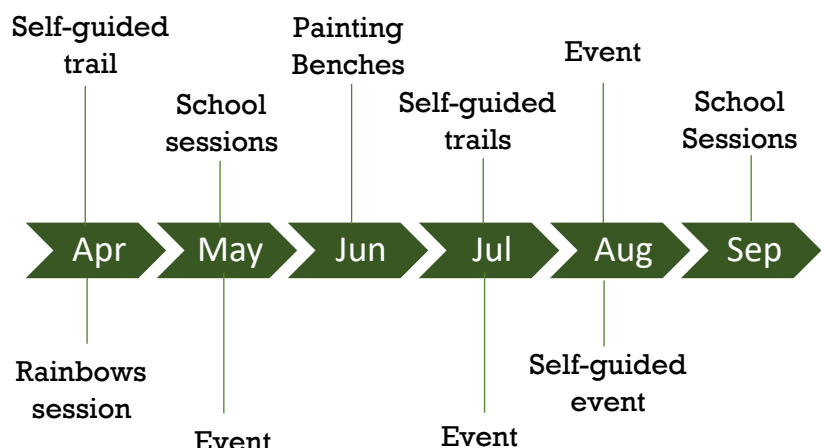
Park maintenance will be an ongoing job including blowing paths and strimming path edges to keep them clear and tidy. 7 events are planned, including a dog walk for Cinnamon Trust, half term and summer trails. This includes multiple self-guided trail downloads for visitors to complete in their own time.

Educational sessions will continue to be offered to the local schools.

The metal benches will be re-painted by the volunteer group.

Park projects will be implemented with schools and volunteers such as: planting flowers, creating wildflower patches and building bird/hedgehog homes.

Future Highlights



Completed Seasonal Work

Park maintenance

The park requires year-round attention to ensure paths are clear and shrub beds are tidy. Maintenance involves hedge cutting, strimming, blowing the paths, weeding, pruning, clearing, painting and laying woodchip on muddied paths. Below is a summary of the main works completed in the park during the winter season.

Path Clearing and Wood Chipping

The paths have been cleared regularly to remove leaves, twigs and nuts off the tarmac. This keeps the park looking tidy and also prevents leaves rotting near the side and compacting, leading to the narrowing of the path. A large amount of woodchip was laid on the woodland path from the bowling club to the stone circle (pictured top right). Several locals had requested if this was possible and the task was undertaken with the help of machinery and the larger ranger team. Weeds and brambles were removed from the fence on the Jeffreys Road entrance to the park, which was a large job but a brilliant result (bottom left). Vegetation was also cut back from the tennis courts which was beginning to grow through the netting (pictured bottom right).



Park Signage

New signs have been installed in the park to alert visitors to the presence of blue-green algae in the lake during the hotter months as it is toxic to humans and dogs.

An informational sign has also be installed near the lake edge, promoting healthy foods to feed to the ducks. Feeding the wild ducks is a popular activity for visitors but unfortunately, bread isn't good for them. The hope is that the sign can help educate those who wish to bring food for the ducks and encourage a healthy diet for them.



New signage with ducking feeding information and blue green algae warning.



Duck feeding information sign

Site Checks

Regular site checks have been undertaken and any issues reported.

Community Engagement

Events/ Schools / Volunteering/ Social Media

Events

Free community events are highly valued by the local community, with attendance increasing over the past few years, seeing between 100-400 people attend each event. Event topics vary with many including a trail around the park as well as games, craft and refreshments.

Six events have been held at the park in the last six months. At each event, the ranger has had the help of several members of the Acton Park Volunteer group who work hard to keep the event running smoothly and make bigger events possible. A local coffee company, Barrington's Coffee, attend most of the events to serve refreshments, which is an excellent addition to the day.

Celebrate the Sweet Chestnut

Date: 08/10/23

Details: To celebrate the sweet chestnut tree in the park being nominated for the Tree of the Year competition hosted by the Woodland trust, an event was held. On the day visitors could enjoy exploring the tree trail which took them to notable trees in the park, crazy golf (pictured left) designed and built by the ranger, craft and refreshments. There was also a costume competition to dress from any era that the sweet chestnut has lived through. A couple of weeks after the event, the sweet chestnut tree was revealed as the Tree Of The Year winner!

People attended: 150-200 (72 through the trail)



Crazy golf



Face painting

Halloween – Haunted Acton

Date: 29/10/23

Details: This year's Halloween event was based around a spooky trail through the woods. A single track was marked out with hazard tape with spooky archway entrance. Visitors could collect a scavenger hunt leaflet where they needed to search the spooky woods and event area to find all the items. On the day, there was also creepy crazy golf, face painting, hunted lucky dip and refreshments.

People attended: 354+



Spooky woods entrance



Spooky woods decoration



Park ranger (Hannah) judging the costume competition



Spooky woods decoration

Christmas

Date: 10/12/23

Details: To celebrate Christmas there was a scavenger hunt created with wooden Christmas shapes that had been decorated by local primary schools: Borrás, Rhosddu, Acton Park Primary, Rhosnesni Beavers and Acton Rainbows. As well as collecting a handout for the scavenger hunt, visitors could also browse stalls, play games, take a photo in the snow globe, do craft, play tombola and lucky dip as well as get refreshments. For smaller children, free donkey rides were available. The event budget covered the cost for Alwood donkeys to provide rides for 2 hours during the event and it was decided to keep the activity free for the local community to enjoy rather than charge for the rides. Rhosnesni Friends also brought their Santa and sleigh along to the event for visitors to have photos with, which was very popular and a donation was made to the Friends group. Donations were collected for Hope House, which filled 2 wheelbarrows.

People attended: 220



Alwood Donkeys



Rhosnesni Friends Santa Sleigh



Stalls



Donations for Hope House



Christmas trail items decorated by local schools

Acton Park Fun Dog Show

Date: 11/02/24

Details: After the Sweet chestnut tree won Tree of the Year in October, it went through into the European Tree of the Year competition. To raise awareness and engage an audience in February, a dog show was decided upon to draw the crowds. With Acton Park being used by a high number of dog walkers, it was hoped people would enjoy an opportunity to showcase their wonderful pets, and they did! 120 dogs attended with 290 class entries, the show was a huge success and received amazing feedback with requests for another show (this was the first ranger-organised dog show at the park). There were 11 classes including: most handsome, waggiest tail, best ball catcher and best rescue, to name just a few. The Gatehouse Veterinary Centre judged the classes and winners received rosettes and prizes. There were stalls to browse, games for children, a raffle, food truck and refreshments. Class entry was £1/ per class or 4 classes for £3; a total of £252 was raised and gifted to Almost Home Dog Rescue.

People attended: 300+ (120 dogs entered, 290 class entries)



Prettiest bitch class



Best ears 1st



Cutest puppy 3rd



Best in show
winner



Scruffiest dog 2nd
/ owner and dog
most alike 2nd



Cutest puppy 1st



Cutest puppy 2nd



Best rescue 1st

Valentines – Love Your Trees

Date: 14/02/24

Details: Unfortunately it rained on this day so turnout was effected and subsequently poor. The ranger worked alongside the Wrexham Landscape Officer to host a 'Love Your Trees' walk on valentines day, in support of raising awareness and votes for the European Tree of the Year competition. The trail visited tree species in the park with a handout to fill in. There was a raffle, guess the number of sweets in the jar game and a photo booth.

People attended: 20



Valentines photo booth in front of the sweet chestnut tree.

Easter at Acton

Date: 30/03/24

Details: This Easter came early in the year and the weather had been very wet, however the day was blessed with sunshine and saw a record-breaking 511 people attend the event and take part in the Easter trail. The trail focused on a wild rabbit theme with a leaflet handout that participants had to fill in as they went round. Also available on the day was an Easter raffle and name the teddy game run by the volunteers. We had a craft stall, games and a local church group also attended to spread the word about their choir and raise money. There was also a free colouring competition to win an Easter egg, see entries pictured below.

People attended: 511



Carrot and chick photo opportunities

Wild Rabbits

Rabbits live underground in a: _____

Wild rabbits live up to: _____ Years old

Tick what rabbits eat:

Grass <input type="checkbox"/>	Meat <input type="checkbox"/>
Worms <input type="checkbox"/>	Clover <input type="checkbox"/>
Hay <input type="checkbox"/>	Cake <input type="checkbox"/>
Herbs <input type="checkbox"/>	Potatoes <input type="checkbox"/>
Insects <input type="checkbox"/>	Crops <input type="checkbox"/>

Match the terms up:

Female rabbit	Buck
Male rabbit	Cub
Baby rabbit	Kit
	Doe
	Pip

How high can rabbits jump? _____ cm

Who released rabbits into the wild? _____

Why do rabbits eat their own poo?

☐ Tastes good

☐ Get hungry

☐ To get more nutrition from their food

Do rabbits teeth stop growing? _____

How many predators do rabbits have? _____

What is the European rabbit's conservation status? _____

Circle places that rabbits live (habitats)

Meadow	Cave	Wetlands
Lake	Woodland	Mountains
Forest	Barn	Grassland

Rabbits live in groups called: _____

Are rabbits nocturnal? _____

Are rabbits clean animals? _____

Match the age with the description:

Just born	Venture out of burrow
10 days old	Weaned and independent
16 days old	Blind, deaf, hairless
30 days old	Have fur & eyes open

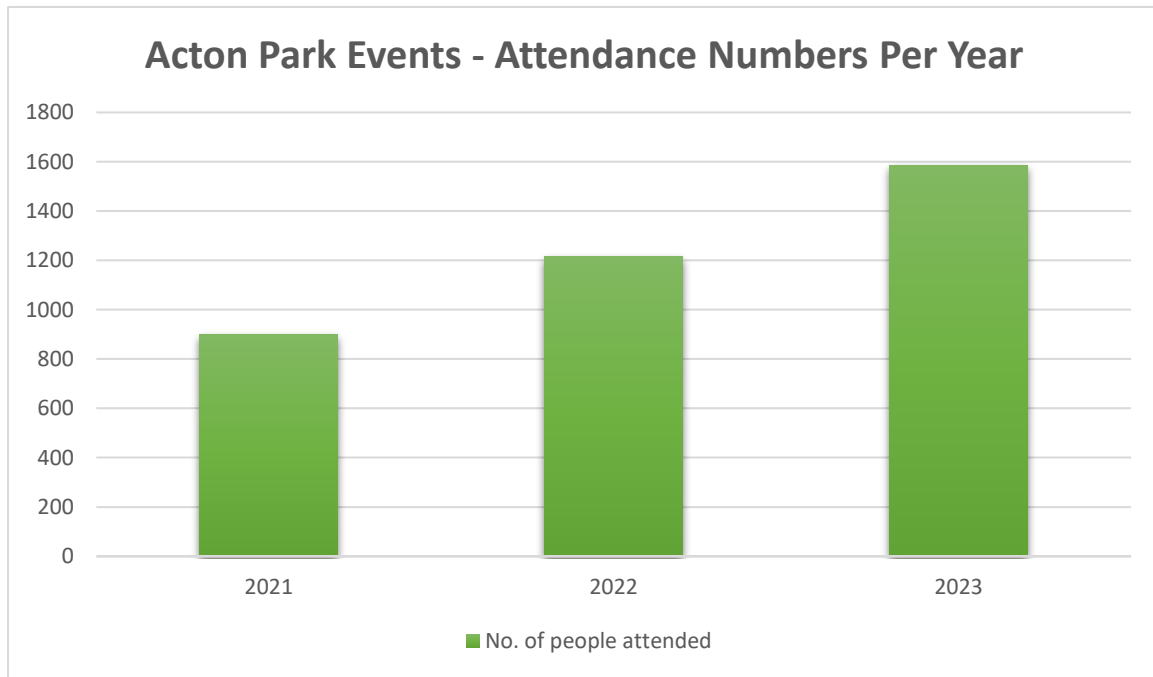
Trail leaflet



Two of the five winners of the colouring competition



Event Attendance Statistics



As the chart above shows, there has been an increase in the number of people attending the events each year. This is in part due to the fact that more events have been hosted each year, with 6 in 2021, 8 in 2022 and 10 in 2023.

However, the average number of people attending each event is increasing, with an average of 149 people attending each event in 2021, 151 in 2022 and 158 in 2023. From this we can see that events are becoming more popular and people are attending the increased number of events hosted throughout the year.

This highlights the popularity of these free park events for families within the local community over the school holidays.

School Sessions

The park ranger hosts one-hour educational sessions at the park, which are popular with the local schools and brownie clubs. The sessions aim to engage children via a mix of written and practical work. They will fill in handouts, often by exploring the surrounding area for hidden information and will then take part in a practical/craft activity. The goal is to encourage the kids to get active in the park and have a hands-on, fun experience out in nature. Learning outside can be hugely beneficial to children, often increasing information retention.

A total of thirteen school sessions were held over the summer period, involving two local primary schools, a secondary school and rainbows club.

Two classes from Borrass Park Primary attended sessions on the sweet chestnut tree where the children measured the height of the tree, found information in the nearby area to fill in a fact file on the tree and completed a craft activity of using natural items found on the floor to create a picture of a tree.

Five classes from Wats Dyke attended history sessions that looked at a range of history in the park from Judge Jeffreys and Acton Hall to Ginkgo trees and grey squirrels. The session involves moving round to different areas of the park and looking at the human and natural history the park has to offer.

Two sessions on bug houses and camouflage were attended by Borrass Park Primary. The children learn how and why animals disguise themselves with an active game of finding hidden caterpillars in the park, followed by decorating and stuffing their very own bughouse to take home.

Borrass Park Primary also attended two sessions focusing on birds in the park. The hour is spent discussing how best to identify different species and then putting ID skills to the test in the park to see how many species they can find, followed by making bird feeders from pine cones.

The ranger visited Acton Rainbows to provide a session on how animals survive winter in the park. The session looked at the tactic different species use to cope with the cold weather e.g. hibernation, migration, growing thick fur etc. After the session they decorated an animal for the Christmas trail.

A small group from Rhosnesni High School came to the park to learn about garden birds that frequent the park and built bird boxes for different species which they took back to hang in their school grounds.



Borrass
Park



Borrass
Park



Wats
Dyke



Acton
Rainbows

Acton Park Voluntary Group

The volunteer group continues to provide essential help for the upkeep of several areas of the park. The group meets every other Tuesday for a two-hour practical session followed by a well-earned cup of tea and biscuits. This winter they have worked on several areas of the park including the Japanese garden, former rose garden, shrub beds, tennis courts, the fenced area (former playground), bins and the paths.

Acton Park has hosted a “help a ranger day” volunteer session in conjunction with Wrexham Council staff. The aim is to provide opportunities for people to come and volunteer in the parks across Wrexham. Unfortunately we didn’t have any new helpers that day, but the regular volunteer group came along and worked on removing exposed artificial substrate from the fenced area (former playground). It was a successful day and the volunteers have had park users comment on the great work they’ve done removing the substrate, improving the area.

Multiple volunteers also help at park events with trail handouts, games and refreshments, as well as the event set up and take-down.

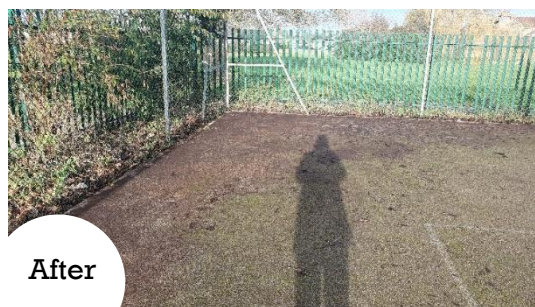
Help a ranger day, removing artificial substrate from the fenced area (former playground). (Right)



Tennis court tidy up (right).



Before



After



Bin Cleaning



Before



After

Large puddle removed. Volunteer, Martin pictured.

Social Media

Engaging and educational information continues to be posted on the Acton Community Council's Facebook page, covering a range of topics relating to the park such as: wildlife and plant life in the park, progress pictures including ranger work, voluntary work completed by the Friends group and event advertising. Facebook is an excellent tool for: educating the public park ecology, providing updates on maintenance works that are completed by both the ranger and volunteers, as well as advertising park events.

Post examples:



Acton Community Council

Published by Hannah Farnell · 13 November 2023 ·

Did you know many different animals were used in the wars? Remembering the men and animals that lost their lives during the first and second world war. Horses, dogs, cats, pigeons, canaries and camels were all used to complete different tasks. Horses, donkeys, mules and camels carried food, water, ammunition and medical supplies to the men on the front line. Dogs and pigeons carried messages across the battlefield. Canaries were used to detect poisonous gases and dogs and ca... See more



Acton Community Council

Published by Hannah Farnell · 30 March at 10:21 ·



Acton Community Council

Reels · 30 Mar ·

THE SUNSHINE IS OUT FOR
ACTON PARK'S EASTER
EVENT

TODAY 1-3PM

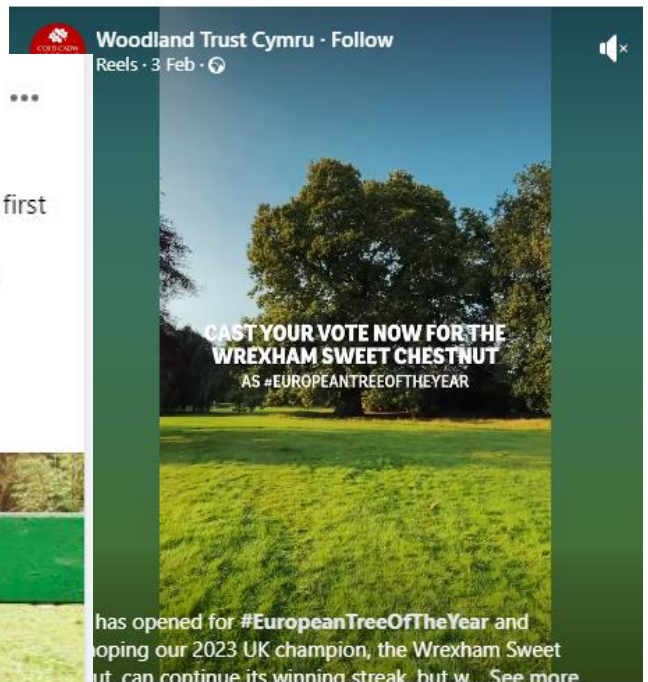
TRAIL
GAMES
CRAFT
AND MORE!

☀ The sun is shining for our Easter Event at Acton Park today 1-3pm. Free trail, colouring competition, games, craft and more!



Acton Community Council

Published by Hannah Farnell · 11 February ·



Acton Community Council

Published by Hannah Farnell · 1 October 2023 ·

The Wrexham Sweet Chestnut is ancient! This veteran tree has stood the test of time and has been aged at 484 years old meaning it started growing around 1539, when King Henry VIII still lived!

Have you voted for it yet? It takes 2 seconds, just click here: <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/.../tree-of-the-year/> or visit the woodland trust website

Join us at our free event Sunday 8th Oct 12-4pm at Acton Park. There will be: nature craft, c... See more



Park Flora and Fauna

The park is host to an array of plant species and animals, from fungi to bluebells and beetles to buzzards, it is a valuable place not just for visitors but also wildlife. Surveys have been undertaken over the years, recording wild flowers, bats and more. This winter the following has been recorded.

Flora



Shaggy parasol

*Chlorophyllum
rhacodes*



Turkey Tail

Trametes versicolor



Marsh-marigold

Caltha palustris



Crocus

Crocus sativus



Cherry tree
blossom

Prunus subgenus

Fauna

Bird species seen on the lake:

(Images from google)

Coot

(Fulica atra)

Widespread and common in UK. Seen all year round



Moorhen

(Gallinula chloropus)

Widespread and common in UK. Seen all year round



Canada Goose

(Branta canadensis)

Widespread and common in UK. Seen all year round but numbers decrease during winter. This is likely due to less food availability on the lake, so some birds will fly elsewhere.



Mallard

(Anas platyrhynchos)

UK's most common duck but classed as amber conservation status. Seen all year round at Acton but numbers decrease slightly in the winter. This is likely due to less food availability on the lake, so some birds will fly elsewhere.



Goosander

(Mergus merganser)

Not a common bird but not threatened, this fishing bird overwinters on lakes and reservoirs. Small groups (6-14) will occasionally inhabit Acton lake for a couple of weeks before moving on.



Tufted Duck

(Aythya fuligula)

Not a common bird but not threatened. Will occasionally inhabit Acton lake for periods of time in small numbers (2-6).



Grey Heron

(Ardea cinerea)

Common UK bird. Occasionally seen at Acton throughout the year.



Great Crested Grebe

(Podiceps cristatus)

Not a common bird but not threatened. occasionally 1-2 are spotted on the lake but doesn't appear to be a common visitor.



Bird species seen in the park:

(Images from google)

Wood Pigeon

(*Ardea cinerea*)

Widespread across UK but amber conservation status. Regularly seen in the park but not as common on the grassy areas as magpies and blackbirds.



Carrion Crow

(*Corvus corone*)

Common bird in UK and frequently seen at the park all year.

Magpie

(*Pica pica*)

Common bird in UK and frequently seen at the park all year.



Blackbird

(*Turdus merula*)

Common and widespread bird in UK and frequently seen at the park all year.

House Sparrow

(*Passer domesticus*)

Classified as red conservation status, Opportunistic feeders. Often seen at the park.



Robin

(*Erithacus rubecula*)

Common bird in UK and frequently seen at the park all year. Often seen during weeding sessions with volunteers.

Blue tit

(*Cyanistes caeruleus*)

Common bird in UK and common to see at the park.



Black Headed Gull

(*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*)

Widespread in the UK but listed as amber conservation status. Commonly seen near the lake at Acton park with fewer numbers in winter which may be due to food availability.

Projected work

Park Maintenance

Park Maintenance

General park maintenance will continue, including hedge cutting, path clearing and strimming to keep weeds on path edges back.

Park Signage

The Friends volunteer group had two notice boards that are missing, with a third notice board being vandalised recently, which has now been removed. This leaves one notice board (of four) remaining near the Japanese Garden. There are plans to have new notice boards installed via funding from another department.

It would be aesthetically pleasing and informative to have a plaque made for the new orchard area, establishing what tree species have been planted and who by. It would offer recognition to those that came to help as well as information for park visitors.

There are many interesting and ancient tree species at Acton Park which could have permanent name plaques installed for visitors to identify and learn about them. With the sweet chestnut tree winning “tree of the year” with the Woodland Trust an information board would be a great addition to highlight the ancient tree and its achievement.

Community Engagement

Events

Events continue to be well attended and this year’s summer events expect to be as popular as the last. There will be multiple events over the warmer period, focusing on themed trails during the school holidays. This summer’s events will offer a mix of nature-based and fun-based themes, with the aims to educate and get people outside enjoying the wonderful space that Acton Park has to offer.

Proposed event dates:

- Self Guided Trail – Easter scavenger hunt – 31st March – 9th April.
- Cinnamon Trust Dog Walk – 6th May
- Half term event – Sunday 2nd June
- Summer Event – July (date TBC)
- Self guided trail – July (date TBC)
- Summer Event – August (date TBC)
- Self guided trail - August(date TBC)

Self-Guided Trails

As well as the one-off trail events, self-guided trails will also be planned for the first time. A simple trail will be laid out around the park and participants will be able to print the trail handout at home and attend the park at their own convenience to complete the trail. The plan is to have a self-guided trail available throughout the school holidays, providing a free activity for families out in nature.

Downloadable trails could also be designed for adults who want to explore Acton Park in greater detail and learn about the nature and history the park has to offer.

School sessions

Each term an email is sent to all of the local primary schools offering session topics and dates. Each time there is always a positive response from schools.

Each school is given a list of educational sessions to pick between (listed below) as well as the offer for the ranger to develop a session linked to their current topic of study.

- Ducks
- Birds
- Trees
- History
- Food chains and bug house making
- Orienteering

After the success of planting up a flower bed with Acton Park Primary School, there is scope for further projects in the park that could make excellent activities for the children, such as: making/decorating bird houses that can then be installed in the park. This will also benefit the wildlife in the park by providing habitats as the old bird houses have now fallen down or are in disrepair.

Long term, the ranger would like to assemble a complete list of educational sessions that cover each season in the park, as well as the plant and animal species. The goal would be to have seasonally appropriate sessions available for schools at any time through the year, relevant to the ecological status of the park during that session.

Acton Park Volunteers

The Acton Park Volunteers group will continue to meet up every other week, as well as assist at events. An effort will also continue to be made to encourage new volunteers to join.

It is likely that another help a ranger day will also be held at the park, which is great for completing larger projects.

Ranger Projects

Potential Project Ideas:

- Mapping: creating comprehensive maps of the park as well as creating new infographics for the Acton Park information signs, with updated information on the facilities as there are elements on the current signs that no longer apply.
- Making and installing Bird Boxes.
- Making and installing hedgehog homes.
- Planting pollinator friendly flowers in flower beds with school groups and/or volunteers.
- Planting wildflower areas to encourage more biodiversity at the park. As well as create visually beautiful patches of wildflowers, these areas would greatly benefit the wildlife. A huge range of species rely on wildflower meadows as they provide vital habitat for resting, nesting and foraging.
- Planting bulbs: it would be visually appealing to complete a large-scale planting of daffodils by the side of each bench throughout the park and/or bordering the entrances to the park.

Collaborative Projects

Edging on Paths

Some paths in the park would greatly benefit from some edging to prevent mud washing down onto the path and compacting which causes the path to become narrower and slippery in the wet. Installing edging at the worst affected areas would also reduce the labour that is needed regularly to scrape the paths; scraping is intensive work and not always suitable for Friends volunteers nor for long periods through the day. The mud is currently so compacted that the street sweeper vehicle will not remove it hence the recommendation for path edging as a solution.

A path leading from the Cunliffe Bowling Club to the stone circle, through the woods is a very well-used route which would benefit from a limestone path being laid. Limestone is cheaper than tarmac and would offer a more permanent solution for improving this path, compared with laying woodchip, which rots away within 6 months.

Designated off-lead dog area

The fenced area which used to surround the old playground is regularly used by locals as an off-lead dog exercise area; whilst this area isn't designed for this use, the concept of building a specialised off-lead dog area may benefit the local community. The duty ranger would be able to offer advice to such a project due to prior experience as a dog trainer/behaviourist.