

## **Bushy Park – July 2017 Diary**

### **Bird News**

This is normally the quietest month of the year with all species busy either feeding young or teaching them how to survive in what for them can be a hostile environment. Danger is never too far away, coming from either the resident Sparrowhawk, Hobby or anyone of the corvid family. They will take advantage of any youngster that strays too far from his family group. If you are looking for elegance then keep an eye on the Diana Fountain. This is where 2 or more Common Terns can be found dipping down and picking insects or fish fry from the surface of the water. Towards the end of the month it is worth checking the roaming mixed tit flocks for leaf warblers. The local Chiffchaffs will join them but so will Willow Warblers and even the rarer Wood Warbler.

### **The Skylark in Bushy Park**

In Bushy Park we are lucky that from late February through to the end of September we are able to see and hear this once very common farmland bird. Its song is heard either from the ground on one of the Park's numerous Ant hills but typically in the air on bright sunny days when actually pinpointing where the song is coming from can be very hard. This species loves to breed in areas of acid grassland, a habitat that the Park has some reasonably rich areas of. There are 2 main areas where Skylarks breed or attempt to; one to the south of Upper Lodge Road is good quality acid grassland and could be very productive. The other runs adjacent to the Royal Paddocks and has been gradually been covered by Bracken. In the summer of 2013 large sections of this were sprayed with the hope of restoring the area back to acid grassland. This has been successful so far. The Skylarks have been slowly squeezed into an area in the SE corner near to Church Grove Passage, meaning they are more vulnerable to disturbance from dogs. This area has signage erected for period late March through to August. This asks people to put their dogs on a lead and to keep to the tracks. Small birds eggs can chill very quickly so flushing an incubating bird can have disastrous consequences. The population has remained fairly stable with up to 14 pairs present although it is hard to prove how productive they are. Hopefully these grassland improvements and interpretation outlining the problems these birds are going through will allow their numbers to increase.

### **The Woodland Gardens**

The Woodland plants are struggling in the dry weather; the gardeners are irrigating beds with water drawn from the Longford. Work is being carried out by the volunteers pulling out Himalayan balsam before it goes to seed, this is a highly invasive plant that outcompetes native flora in wet areas. Beds are being weeded and some pruning of deciduous Azaleas will be taking place to encourage lower growth so that the sweet fragrance of the flowers can be enjoyed at a sensible height. July is also the time to take cuttings of evergreen Azaleas and Camellias. The tree contractors will be removing Oak Processionary Moth caterpillar nests from trees in the woodland gardens, the numbers are relatively small and none have been found in areas that have been sprayed.

Further information can be found on The Royal Parks web site or via email [bushy@royalparks.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:bushy@royalparks.gsi.gov.uk)