

RICHMOND PARK DIARY: MAY

WOODLAND MANAGEMENT: The trees in Two Storm Wood were originally planted close together to ensure that sufficient grew. They are now large enough to undergo some initial management. Different species have been selected to form different components of the woodland structure. Tall species such as Oak, Poplar and Maple have been kept at full height and will be allowed to become the dominant canopy forming trees. Smaller shrub forming species such as Hazel and Hawthorn have been ‘coppiced’ (cutting to ground level, allowing them to re-sprout and form lower canopy scrub). The Goat Willows have been cut at about 3’, where they first fork. These will re-grow dense bushy foliage and form a middle canopy in the woodland. The over all effect is to create woodland with a balanced structure, including dense, low level scrub which is important for nesting birds and other wildlife. Outside of enclosures it is impossible to create this sort of habitat due to deer browsing all vegetation in their reach.



THE POOR MAN’S NIGHTINGALE: Nightingales may be known for their beautiful fluid song, but listen to the Blackcap as it tries to impress a mate and you’ll be pushed to choose which is the better songster. It is one of the ‘Warblers’, a group of birds that can be difficult to identify by sight. But Blackcap’s distinctive toupee (the female has a brown cap) means that this little bird is the exception the rule. A few pairs nest in the Park and some over winter here too, but most migrate for the winter.

To listen to a recording of the Blackcap, or any other British bird, look at the RSPB’s web site - www.rspb.org.uk/wildlife

DEER: As moulting is completed, the sleek chestnut summer coats of the Red Deer are revealed and the ‘common’ coated Fallow again shows spots. Antlers will not be fully-grown and clear of velvet until August. The points of the red deer’s antler, starting from the base, are named the brow, the bez and the trez tines. The antler in a single point, or group of points which form a crown. Stags with 12 points and a crown large enough to hold up a cup of wine are known as Royals. A stag with 14 points is an Imperial: more points than that he is a Monarch. The deer start to give birth to their young at the end of May and continue into June.

NEW HORSE TRACK: The horse track that runs down the steep Broomfield Hill has become so eroded that it is impassable in Winter. In addition the Beech trees that align the route are dying, due partly to the exposed roots where the track has eroded. Contractors are therefore building a new horse track around the opposite side of Prince Charles Spinney, the old track will be permanently closed off and the soil reinstated around the roots of the trees.

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