

Houghton Hall Park

March 2018 Newsletter

The Houghton Hall Park Renaissance and Renewal Project is being managed by Central Bedfordshire Council in partnership with Houghton Regis Town Council and is supported by the National Lottery through the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Big Lottery Fund.

Easter Trail & Crafts: Good Friday 11am-2pm



With Easter right around the corner we welcome you to join us at Houghton Hall Park for some Easter fun! For £1 per child join the **educational egg hunt**, go searching in the park for little plastic eggs revealing an image of animal's eggs... your job is to match the eggs with which animal you think they belong to then return to the visitor centre to claim your reward! Create your own **natural bird nesting wreath** for your garden for £2 per child. Collect your map for the egg hunt from the foyer in the visitor centre between 11am-1pm, stay for lunch and enjoy some of our Easter goodies in the Café! There is no need to book, if you have any queries please email hnp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk.

Mother's Day Cream tea: Sunday 11th March

Need something to do on Mother's Day? Don't worry – we have you covered! Visit Houghton Hall Park for a lovely walk and then stop for a cream tea afterwards, don't forget... well behaved dogs are very much welcome to join the tea party! Please just keep your furry friends on leads at all times.



A great place to live and work.

Monthly photography themes



We would like to welcome photographers of all abilities from the age of 16 to get creative, use imagination and enter our monthly themes, March's theme is: **Textures within Houghton Hall Park**. Please send your submissions to hbp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk.

The images must be taken between 1st and 31st March 2018 and each person can submit up to 5 entries. We will not accept any overly photoshopped images that do not represent the reality the subject in the photo.

Some images will be featured on our website, social media platforms, notice boards around the visitor centre and in our monthly newsletter. Please see our website for the full terms and conditions before submitting your work: www.houghtonhallpark.org/photography.

See below some entries sent in for February's theme: Natural Colours within Houghton Hall Park:



Sally Gray: Yellow Lichen



Joe Smith
Nature 4K Photography



Keith Wallis: Fungus



Danielle Mitchell: Frost



George Wharwood:
Nature trail



Lewis Munslow: The Overseeing
Tree & Focus on what's in front of
you

Keep your eyes peeled for some of these birds!

Are you a keen birdwatcher? We have an abundance of different birds in our gardens at the moment. There has been an influx of birds from Scandinavia and Northern Europe which have included Starlings, Hawfinches, Redwings and Fieldfares. Starlings are truly stars because of what they do just before dusk, called a **Murmaration**. You may have seen it on Winter Watch or Country File - they fly around in huge flocks of hundreds creating beautiful patterns across the sky and then settling down in trees for the night.

We also have a lot of different birds in our gardens, like the beautiful little bird called a Gold Crest, it is a little bit bigger than a Wren but the male has a distinctive yellow stripe down the centre of his head. You may also see a lot of Robins at this time of the year together, this will all change in a few weeks time when they go to find a mate and start producing their young. Some other birds you might see include Fieldfares and Redwings which are often seen together in huge flocks on farmland and open grounds like a Rugby Pitch, so keep your eyes out for them.

It is the time of year when a lot of birds start building nests and are looking for nest materials to do so. If you have a dog or cat, when you brush them, I'd recommend putting the hair outside and some birds will use it to make their nests warm and cosy. Birds also need to drink water this time of year but unfortunately a lot of ponds and water baths get frozen, so it is a good idea to put a ball in the water which stops it from freezing over and allows them to get a drink.

Be careful, however, if you do have a pond because Grey Herons are looking for food to feed their young and your goldfish are an ideal target for them. Put some netting over your pond to keep your fish safe. Herons have a varied diet and will also eat your frogs as well. I did read online that if you put out a decoy Heron it will deter them, this however is not true as my mother has one by her pond, it didn't work because a Heron is quite inquisitive, my mother has had a few visits from Herons who thought her decoy was real and landed to see for themselves!



This is also a really good time of year to build an insect/bug house if you fancy using a little imagination & creativity! Alternatively, you can buy one. You can also buy hedgehog houses so that when the hedgehogs come out of hibernation, they can find food easily and have somewhere to sleep during the day. You can also put food out such as tinned dog or cat food (not fish based), chopped up boiled eggs or you can find that some shops sell hedgehog food. Make sure to never give them milk because it causes them to have diarrhoea, instead - put out a shallow bowl of fresh water.



But most of all, enjoy Nature and keep your eye out, you never know what you might get in your garden. If you do get anything unusual and you want to tell us about it, we would love to hear from you, even better...get a picture of it if you can. If you love Spring, like me, we only have a few weeks left until we can all get some warm sunshine on our faces!

Written and Bird Photography by Mark Hogan

Volunteer at the park this month...

Take part in valuable conservation work at Houghton Hall Park with the Greensand Trust one Sunday a month! This month on **Sunday 18th March 10am-3pm**, the activity will be Parkland Tree Crown Lifting. Help to make management of the wildflower meadows more efficient by improving access for grass cutting machinery, and to improve the aesthetic look of trees and the meadows. If you would like to come along, please email:

hbp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk to let us know then simply show up! The meeting spot will be the Visitor Centre car park. This is open to everyone so please join us, we hope to see you there.



What happened last month?

Activities

We had 3 nature related events in February half term and didn't they go down a treat! Our scavenger hunt, birdfeeder making and map reading trails were great fun and the turnout was overwhelming considering the semi-miserable weather! Here are some images we'd like to share with you from this week. If you would like to enquire about future events or even suggest an event or activity, please email us on hbp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk.



Volunteering

Last month's Friends of Houghton Hall Park volunteers' conservation task was coppicing and fort building led by the Greensand Trust, what fun they had! This is based on



Young Rangers celebrate conservation achievements

A group of Youth Rangers, supported by local environmental charity The Greensand Trust, celebrated the completion of a six-month volunteer conservation programme they took part in at Houghton Hall Park. The scheme was made possible through the Renaissance and Renewal Project for the park. The 2017-18 sessions, which began last September, has inspired and encouraged young people to learn new skills, gain valuable work experience and receive a recognised environmental award, while having fun and making a difference to the park.

The Youth Rangers worked together with site managers taking part in planning and skills building sessions, learning about and helping wildlife while working alongside the Friends of Houghton Hall Park volunteers carrying out habitat management. Together they contributed over 160 hours' coppicing, surveying, building and erecting bird boxes, clearing vegetation and promoting the park and its new facilities.

In addition, each young volunteer attained a discovery level John Muir Award in recognition of the work they have achieved in adopting Central Bedfordshire Council's Houghton Hall Park as their special wild place. The Youth Rangers met four of the John Muir Award challenges – Discover, Explore, Conserve and Share. They received their awards from the John Muir Trust at a presentation event held on 18th February.



Keep in touch

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Website

www.houghtonhallpark.org

Email

hbp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Opening Times

November to March

Monday to Friday

10:00am - 15:00pm

Saturday and Sunday

9:00am - 15:00pm

April to October

Monday to Friday

10:00am - 17:30pm

Saturday and Sunday

9:00am - 17:30pm



Become a friend of Houghton Hall Park

Thinking of joining the Friends of Houghton Hall Park? Then get in touch with us to see what you can do to get involved. Here are some ideas below:

- Observational Surveys
- Community engagement
- Weeding and clearing
- Cleaning
- Watering
- Growing food and encourage healthy eating
- Teach younger generations (if you have a skill or qualification, let us know!)
- Become a community leader
- Support other volunteers
- Contribute to the annual park events calendar
- Volunteering assistant at events running at the park
- Curate local history talks at visitor centre
- Habitat enhancement work in the woodland and meadow

There are many opportunities to take part. If you would like to volunteer and join the Friends of Houghton Hall Park, please email hbp@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk



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