BIRMINGHAM PARKS
RANGER SERVICE ANNUAL
REPORT 2019/2020
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As Ranger Service Manager please allow me to welcome you to the 2019/20 annual Ranger Report. The year had many achievements and challenges, with the Ranger Service always rising to the occasion and working hard to maintain the service our customers expect and demand. The hard work, dedication and flexibility of the Ranger Services staff has never been more ably demonstrated than their work during the Covid-19 pandemic which started in March. As with the rest of the world, our ways of working were completely changed overnight, with Visitor Centres and cafés closing, and parks suddenly being many people’s only resource for exercising, mental wellbeing and fresh air. Never has the resource of parks been more in demand than during the pandemic, with visitor numbers being over 100% more than we would normally expect at this time of year. Ranger Service staff worked exceptionally under unprecedented circumstances to keep the people of Birmingham safe, adopting new practices and taking on new responsibilities, and I am proud of the staff and the service they have delivered under very trying circumstances.

However, I don’t want Covid-19 to overshadow the year and this report, coming in as it did only at the very tail end of the year. Prior to the current difficulties the Ranger Service held many great events, worked with hundreds of volunteers and supported numerous programs and initiatives to support our disadvantaged citizens throughout 2019/2020.

As in previous years, the Ranger Service has delivered an excellent level of service to the people of Birmingham. The number of volunteer days that we delivered was on the whole maintained showing only a slight decrease compared to 18/19, however this can be attributed to having no volunteers during the majority of March due to Covid-19. Throughout the reporting year the Ranger Service has been more proactive in providing targeted work with schools across the city, predominantly focusing on PSE skills. As an example, Rangers with the Northfield Hub supported the ‘Be You’ programme, designed for children with low confidence, to have and take part in a range of experiences and boost their self-esteem. The Northfield Rangers also welcomed children from Smiths Wood Academy, who are on a Character Development Programme, into their regular Habitat Hero volunteer sessions. The children involved have low self-esteem, or are at risk of exclusion due to behavioural issues or involvement in gangs. The programs are both designed to help pupils confidence increase, enabling them to make good decisions in life. Through these different programs the Ranger Service demonstrated a dedication to supporting the most vulnerable citizens of Birmingham and creating a generation who see the benefit of their own environment to their wellbeing.

The Ranger Service continues to carry out a wide range of tasks and work helping to promote, preserve, keep safe and enhance Birmingham’s parks for the city and its citizens. 2020/2021 is looking like it may be an even more challenging year for parks and open spaces, however the Ranger Service will continue to have the best interests of Nature Conservation and of our customers at the core of everything we do, and we will strive to meet the challenges ahead.

Steve Hinton
Ranger Services Manager
Mission Statement:

Linking People and Nature

Our aim is to:

“Protect, promote and enhance the natural environment of Birmingham for the benefit of its wildlife, heritage, the local community and visitors.”

We achieve this by:

- Working in an inclusive, sustainable and professional manner
- Providing events to engage the community and encourage appreciation of the natural environment
- Meeting biodiversity, environmental and community strategy targets
- Delivering an environmental lifelong learning programme
- Working with the community and partners in public open spaces
- Continual staff development and annual service improvement plan
The true (and hidden) value of Birmingham's parks

- £11 billion
- £594 million
- £520 million
- £4.3 million
- 4,700 hectares
- 1,398 hectares of woodland
- 2,097 football pitches

The net value of council-managed natural capital assets over a 25-year period.

£1.1 billion is invested each year in nature, made possible by the council’s spend on parks and green spaces and returns more than £2.44 to society.

The annual net value of council-managed parks and green spaces to each resident of the city.
£4.1 BILLION
THE NET VALUE
of health benefits provided by the city's natural capital assets over a 25-year period.

£192 MILLION
THE NET ANNUAL VALUE
of health benefits from parks and green spaces for Birmingham’s citizens.

COUNCIL-MANAGED WOODLANDS
CAPTURE MORE THAN 350 TONNES
of pollutants each year, avoiding approx. 133 hospital admissions, 28 deaths, and adding 489 life years to the city’s population.

2.1 MILLION TONNES
OF CARBON
dioxide are stored by parks and green spaces managed by Birmingham City Council over a 25-year period.

THE CITY IS
ABOVE THE NATIONAL AVERAGE FOR TREE COVER

BIRMINGHAM HAS MORE THAN ONE MILLION TREES
equivalent to one per person in the city’s population.

ACROSS THE CITY
TREE CANOPY COVER 48.81km²

Birmingham has an average of 18.6% canopy coverage, against a nationwide average of 13%.
Out and About

Out and About is the Ranger Service’s annual program of events, with 110 events delivered by the Ranger Service in 2019/20. The number of events the Ranger Service has put on has shown a decreasing trend, with 131 events in 2018/19 and 181 in 2017/18. However, the Ranger Service have dedicated themselves to putting on fewer, higher quality events and the number of attendees to events this year increased compared to the previous year.

Play Day at the Lickey Hills

The Northfield Hub Rangers hosted their 7th Annual Play Day event in August. It was a hugely successful day with an estimated 600 people attending in all. It was only thanks to collaboration and support from other Hubs and organisations that the day was possible. Sutton and Erdington Senior Ranger Danny Squire travelled across the city to lead minibeast safaris and was loved by all. Debbie Needle led Teeny Explorers on adventures with dragons, and The Active Wellbeing society bought games such as soft archery for children to try. The Rangers also helped children and families to build dens, make natural musical instruments, and create magic wands and willow crowns. The day was a joyful celebration of play and demonstrated what’s possible when people come together.

The Friends of Kings Norton Park also hosted a Play Day event (pictured left) which the Northfield Hub Rangers supported. Dave the Ranger took the cooperative games for children and families to have a go at, which are designed to encourage independent thought and problem solving.

Targeted Activities

2019/20 saw the greatest number of targeted activities delivered by the Ranger Service over the last 10 years (nb. no data for 2015/16 or 2016/17), with 60 events delivered for 621 people from disadvantaged backgrounds. While the number of volunteer sessions declined along with Active Parks sessions and the number of events delivered, this increase in targeted activities demonstrates the Ranger Service’s commitment to equality and diversity, promoting nature as a resource for everybody and reaching out to those communities least likely to engage with nature. Rangers from the Northfield Hub reported that although they didn’t have capacity to deliver as many school sessions, they wanted to commit to maintaining delivery of targeted activities and even increasing this, demonstrating a belief in the power of nature to bring people together even in difficult times.
Walking Meditation at Highbury Park

Hall Green and Selly Oak Ranger Jan Tomlinson says: “For the last few years in Highbury Park you may have been surprised to see a group of silent walkers. They are utilising walking as a form of meditation. Walking lends itself well as a form of meditation because as we walk we can get into a natural rhythm and our breathing relaxes. For the walking mediation at Highbury Park we begin our session by enjoying a short silent walk through the park together.

Then we find a space to practice a traditional method of walking meditation – this involves walking back and forth in the same spot for a focused period of time. During this time we focus on every step we take becoming more aware of the body and the environment, the breath and the bird song. People can leave behind the hustle and bustle of everyday life, here they find the time and space to reflect and be still.

During each session there is some guidance material offered and we share our own personal reflections and observations. This helps to support and encourage us in this practice and also to build a sense of community and care. The benefits from this activity are many, including increased health, calmness, creativity, environmental and self-awareness.

The walking meditation does not seek to promote or push any faith system however some shared material may draw on different traditions. It is a facilitated place and space for all those who are interested in exploring this for their own personal health and well-being.

There are different types of meditation such as sitting meditation, the body scan or the use of chant mantra. Experimenting with different forms helps people find which method works for them and when they can be useful. Sometimes when people have tried meditating they find it has not worked for them, sitting was uncomfortable, maybe chanting felt strange. Walking meditation however is a good introduction to meditating because we can move and relax as well as slow down naturally.

Committed attendance to the group is encourage but even people popping by for a taster can be of benefit. Some members of the group at Highbury Park have returned now year after year reaping the benefits of fresh air, exercise and meditative practice. People who have taken part in the walking meditation group have shared experiencing increased feelings of connectedness with nature, feeling supported in living more mindful and meaningful lives as well as generally feeling more relaxed and stress-free.”
Volunteering at Sheldon Country Park

Dave Pilmer, Senior Ranger at Sheldon Country Park, said of volunteering;

“The Ranger Service has a long history of working in partnership with volunteers and we pride ourselves on our continued commitment to welcoming volunteers from all sections of the community. We have a large, inclusive and diverse voluntary work force that assist us in all aspects of our work no matter how tough or at times dirty it may be. They really do show 100% commitment and help the Ranger Service achieve many of its positive outcomes.

Volunteering with the Ranger Service also allows people to access new opportunities, skills and experiences such as gaining confidence in an area of work they would like to pursue as a career in or learning new skills which are transferable to other careers. For others it is a good way of socializing or becoming more active, which can improve their physical and mental wellbeing.

Many of our volunteers have learning or physical disabilities and working at Sheldon Country Park is more than just therapy, it is a chance to make a meaningful contribution in their local community and feel a great sense of achievement.

Volunteering also offers people an opportunity to take pride in their local community which helps to create ownership of our Parks, which can also encourage others to feel the same way about our Park Service.

In 2019/20 our team of 46 volunteers regularly attended to assist with activities ranging from: animal husbandry, gardening, general maintenance and nature conservation tasks.

The Ranger Service has also engaged with other volunteering organizations such as the Prince’s Trust who built a shelter in the picnic area over the summer for visitors to use and the Duke of Edinburgh volunteering programme helping young people to achieve the Duke of Edinburgh silver award through volunteering.

In 2019/20 volunteers contributed a combined total 1990.5 individual volunteer days with the Yardley Hodge Hill Ranger Hub. We are set to continue building on our successes working with volunteers.”
Sutton Park NNR

HAT—History and Archaeology Taskforce

In 2019 a new volunteer group was created with focus on preserving and recording archaeological features within Sutton Park. Taking place on the first Saturday of every month these sessions have allowed us to not only protect and preserve a number of archaeological features by removing growth that might otherwise cause damage but also to carry out a number of survey sessions to measure and record both known and new features. Clearance and recording work has taken place of a number of pit features, medieval ditch and bank features, the Roman road and associated gravel pit features, bower features, first and second world war features, as well as the recently discovered early medieval hunting lodge site. Under the watchful eye of Dr. Mike Hodder the new skills developed not only by the Rangers but also by the volunteers attending these sessions will prove invaluable in the future as more and more archaeology is uncovered across the park and wider parks spaces.

Image of ‘Roman road’ cleared by the HAT courtesy of Sutton Park NNR Facebook page

The Holloway before (above) and after (left pictured with some of the HAT team). Image courtesy of Matthew Barker
Volunteering with the Ranger Service is measured in two ways, one of which is the number of volunteer days delivered. This shows how many days’ worth of volunteers time was given, and can include regular volunteers, corporate teams, and one-off events. For 2019/20 there is a slight decrease in the total number of days delivered compared to 17/18 and 18/19. However, when looking at the breakdown of the figures over each quarter, quarter 4 of 2019/20 has the most significant decrease compared to previous years, which is when Covid-19 started impacting on the Ranger Service and volunteering activities had to be suspended. This is demonstrated in the graph (right) which does not include volunteering with Birmingham Wildlife Conservation Park.

This is what our “Friends groups” and other volunteers contribute to our parks in value in kind

Volunteers have given £5,886,348 of value in kind* to Birmingham City Council Parks
In the last 10 years

Birmingham Parks and Nature Conservation Volunteering outputs April 2019 to April 2020

External partners Volunteer hours

Based on £8.33 per hour rate of value in kind*

18 Ranger Staff in 5 hubs
Facilitate;

Volunteer hours

= £633,913

£931,127

= Of value in kind to

Birmingham City Council Parks
In the last year

= £297,214

*Based on Natural England’s volunteer value in kind rate of £8.33 per hour and Core City’s standard volunteer day of 5 hours
2019/20 saw a significant decrease in the number of Ranger-led school sessions that Rangers were able to deliver, see graph below, with the number of pupils attending Ranger-led sessions following suit. This is attributable to current staff vacancies impacting on our capacity to deliver the sessions or provide back office support. However, Rangers have continued to work with schools and students through other channels, for example Special Educational Needs (SEN) students or small groups of students chosen because they may be in some way at risk of exclusion, have low self-esteem or may be disadvantaged in another form. For this reason these are often recorded as targeted activities and not as part of our normal school figures.

Be You

In 2019 Rangers at the Northfield Hub were approached by Steve Boycott, who runs a program with schools called ‘Be You’. The program targets children who have low confidence and a lack of self-esteem, and works with them through twelve weeks of activities aimed at helping them realise their potential while broadening their skills. Activities are hugely varied, from visiting museums to art classes, and include a volunteering session at the Lickey Hills. Rangers have had groups digging out ditches, removing bramble and doing woodland management in newly planted areas. Even during the short course of the volunteering sessions it is clear that a number of the children are invigorated, becoming more open and chatty and starting to engage with the work. According to leader Steve, the transformation over the twelve weeks is even more profound. The children have a graduation ceremony where they each stand up and talk in front of a large group of people, something which many of them would never have dreamed of doing at the start. The Rangers continued to lead Be You groups in 2020, with the children clearing areas of woodland felled due to Phytophthora plant disease, so that these areas can be re-planted with native trees.
Smith’s Wood Academy Character Development Programme

A group of children from Smith’s Wood Academy have also been joining the Northfield Ranger Hub for conservation volunteering, joining the regular Tuesday Habitat Hero group. The Character Develop Programme is designed to help children with behavioural issues to do better in the classroom and also targets children at risk of losing focus due to behavioural issues or involvement in gangs. By working outdoors the idea is that when children return to the classroom they are better motivated to work, and they are also incentivised as only through good behaviour are they allowed to continue attending the volunteer sessions with the Rangers. They have got stuck into a number of tasks including woodland management, which has involved cutting back invasive laurel to allow space for bluebells to flourish, and also heathland management, removing self-set birch trees to prevent succession. They have also had a project which they have been completing as a group separate from the Habitat Heroes, which has been adding revetment works to a heavily eroded footpath to prevent further movement of the surface down the slope (pictured above right).

Science Technicians Conference

Rangers at the Northfield Hub were approached by John Booth to attend the annual Science Technicians Conference taking place at the University of Birmingham School. The conference is an opportunity for science technicians working in school labs to learn about new experiments they can do with children, see new equipment available and learn about what other science technicians are delivering. John also wanted the technicians to experience experiments they could do outside of a classroom or laboratory setting, and so the Rangers demonstrated a simple quadrat survey using the DOMIN scale. The idea was to show the technicians that even the smallest patch of grass can have a variety of different species, and that they wouldn’t have to go far to do similar surveying at their own schools. The technicians were also shown the range of citizen science resources available and other types of surveys they could do including earthworms or soil quality. Species found on the patch of amenity grass outside the UOB school included broadleaved and ribwort plantain, white clover, creeping buttercup and common birds-foot trefoil. The main feedback that the Rangers had was that it was incredibly simple to do and a really easy way to take learning outside.
Baskerville School; Corey

During January and February 2019, students from Baskerville School, a special education school, worked with Rangers at the Lickey Hills Country Park to revamp the raised beds outside the front of the Visitor Centre. The beds, which were previously planted up but had become overgrown, were newly planted in two themes. One bed was a representation of a woodland floor, with two small corkscrew hazel trees provided by the Lickey Hills Society surrounded by deadwood and native woodland ground flora. The other bed was sown as a wildflower meadow, with bee hotels provided by Urban Buzz erected next to it. One of the students, Corey, showed a particular interest in volunteering. His teachers said he changed completely when he was working outdoors compared to in the classroom; he became animated and proactive. Following on from this, Corey became a semi-regular volunteer with the Rangers. During 2019 he came out every other Tuesday and Wednesday, either joining the Habitat Heroes on a Tuesday or going out with just the Rangers on a Wednesday. He showed a great positive attitude even during tasks such as digging out ditches in the rain, and really started to show his personality. Corey’s tutor commented on the dramatic change in his demeanour compared to in the classroom, showing how working outdoors can be invigorating and inspiring for students who struggle to engage in school.

Woodgate Valley: The Westminster School

Rangers at Woodgate Valley Country Park have also been working with a group of SEN students from The Westminster School in Rowley Regis. The group are in sixth form and are working towards their silver Duke of Edinburgh award. The students have been volunteering on Wednesday afternoons undertaking conservation tasks in order to fulfil the volunteering aspect of the award. Tasks have included cutting back plants to maintain pathways around the site, footpath repairs and litter picking. Ranger Teresa Terry said that despite having mixed abilities all the students have gained new skills and confidence. The assistant head teacher from The Westminster School says;

“Thank you very much for the years of work you have done with our students. They really enjoy coming and have got an awful lot out of it”

The above examples demonstrate how the Ranger Service works across its different priorities to enhance people’s lives, using voluntary work to provide school children with life skills and unique experiences which help to prepare them for their futures.
Friends of Perry Hall Accredited Country Park

Ranger for Ladywood and Perry Barr, Jim Harrison, tells us about the history of the park and the formation of the Friends Group;

“Perry Hall Park and Playing Fields has a rich history dating back to the Tudor period. Formerly the ancestral home and estate of the Gough family, the moated Manor House was completed in 1588, one of many fine examples of Elizabethan Tudor architecture that dotted the then mainly rural landscape of what would later become the city of Birmingham. The Gough estate lay amongst a number of other wealthy family estates. As was very much the custom of these times, the Goughs aligned themselves with a neighbouring family, in this case the Calthorpes, through marriage, becoming the Gough-Calthorpes. The lineage continued in residence at Perry Hall until the late 19th/early 20th century. Once the family line vacated the Hall, it fell in to disrepair until it was taken on by Birmingham City Council in 1920. Sadly, the cost of restoring the building (whose timber framing had been very badly affected by rot) was unviable.

The Elizabethan Manor House was demolished in 1927 and the remaining 158 acres of estate land opened as a park and playing fields in 1929. The moat present today is not original but rather a folly as the original moat was backfilled at the time of demolition.

The Friends of Perry Hall Park was started in 2007 by a group of local residents who had been volunteering by way of maintaining the flower beds. The group was constituted and formalised with Birmingham City Council and led by the Chair, Hazel Busby, and Secretary, Helen Banks, the group have stayed on target to their original ambitions. Their desire was, and remains, to improve the structure of the park, not only with regard to facilities but also ecologically and as a valuable, sociable, community asset. Since 2007 the group have tirelessly raised funds through numerous grant applications and funding bids for improvements and community projects. They have achieved well beyond their initial remit. 2012 saw Perry Hall recognised with Green Flag Status. 2016 saw the park gain Accredited Country Park status.
2007: The Group starts work

2017: What a difference a decade makes

Under the direction of the Friends group, the site has also received recognition from Britain in Bloom (It’s Your Neighbourhood Award Level 4 – Thriving; awarded three years consecutively) and also gained “Queen Elizabeth Fields in Trust” protection status. These accolades are merely scratching the surface of the group’s full achievements.

Ecologically, the park has gone from strength to strength. In collaboration with Birmingham Trees for Life, the site has had thousands of trees planted over the last ten years. Hedgerow improvements continue. The establishment of not one but two thriving wildflower meadows with at least four separate orchid species has been a great triumph.

The Friends Group regularly put on community events. With open days, coffee mornings, craft activities and a variety of nature walks and seasonal events, the local community has really become invested in Perry Hall Park. Park Run has recently celebrated its 5th anniversary of use of Perry Hall as a main site for their weekly runs. With 15 match standard cricket pitches, Birmingham Cricket League gladly call the playing fields home. The Birmingham Monarchs cycle team have been a resident of the site for many years.

I could continue but I shall conclude by way of thanking someone who has risen as somewhat of a local legend, the King of Park Keepers, Mr David “Dave” Hetherington (pictured above right).

In the summer of 2019 Rangers from the Ladywood and Perry Barr hub undertook surveying in the meadows at Perry Hall Park, alongside Natural Prospects trainee Jack Rosa and a work experience student. Perry Hall Park contains a mixture of diverse grassland areas including wildflower meadows where orchids can be found. The survey in July found species including bee orchid *Ophrys apifera*, ox-eye daisy *Leucanthemum vulgare*, yellow rattle *Rhinanthus minor*, lady’s bedstraw *Galium verum* and tufted vetch *Vicia cracca*.

Surveying at Perry Hall Park. Photo credit: Holly King
The Wildlife Trust for Birmingham and the Black Country

After a hugely successful initial year, the Natural Prospects traineeship entered into a second year and a new trainee was placed with the Rangers at the Lickey Hills Country Park. The first round of trainees have almost all gained employment in the environmental sector, with some staying at the Wildlife Trust and Jack Rosa, the first trainee at the Lickey Hills, successfully getting a job as Ranger Warden at the Lickey Hills. The new trainee for 2019/20, Mike Allen, was a civil servant but was looking for a complete change in career.

Partnership working with the Wildlife Trust continues in other aspects, with Rangers in the Ladywood and Perry Barr Hub supporting conservation officers from the Centre of the Earth in their efforts to improve some parks local to them in the Winson Green area. Staff and volunteers from the Wildlife Trust cleared an area in All Saints Park which was then strewn with hay from one of the Trust’s SSSI sites to create a wildflower meadow. They also did some supplementary planting along borders in Norman Street and litter picked in Summerfield Park. Their work continues throughout 2020 with more improvements in Norman Street, and woodland thinning and coppicing in Summerfield Park.

The Trust’s work also continues in the Edgbaston constituency with the Natural Rivers project. The project, which also includes partners the Environment Agency, will improve the habitat value of 150 hectares of public open space and associated watercourses. Senior Conservation Officer Tom Hartland-Smith has been leading volunteer sessions in Woodgate Valley Country Park, with support from the Ranger Service, and hopes to create wetland habitats to encourage species such as jack snipe within the Country Park.

Birmingham Trees for Life

The partnership working between Birmingham City Council and Birmingham Trees for Life (BTfL) continued into 2019/20. The charity have now planted 80,000 trees since 2006, and in 2019/20 the charity continued to plant trees with schools, corporate groups and volunteer groups. Notable events include the Family & Friends planting at the Lickey Hills Country Park, with BTfL inundated with requests to sponsor a tree and attend the planting (see photo, right). Another great event was the James Watt Bicentenary planting at Handsworth Park, when 10 standard trees were planted with the help of 42 volunteers, some of whom came from far and wide on a dreary morning and did a wonderful job at digging holes in some tough ground and creating a legacy for people to enjoy for years to come (see photo, below).

Photo above: Family and Friends Planting at the Lickey Hills Country Park, courtesy of BTfL
Photo left: James Watt Bicentenary Planting at Handsworth Park, courtesy of BTfL
Future Parks Accelerator Project

In 2019, Birmingham was successful in applying for funding from the Parks Accelerator Fund, formed by Heritage Lottery and the National Trust. The bid, for up to £1 million, will help Birmingham create a sustainable future for its parks and green spaces. The bid seeks to redefine parks as assets that connect directly with the people of Birmingham whilst also supporting the five strategic priorities of the Council. There is a challenge to help other parts of the Council not directly responsible for parks and green spaces to realise these benefits and reconsider how they currently value these assets for the good of local residents.

The FPA programme runs for 2 years starting from April 2019 and the aims to produce the following key outputs:

- A more positive perception and attitude towards green spaces in the community, within BCC departments and across the senior leadership team
- A change in the employment and skills offer to BCC residents with a focus on green spaces
- A clear approach to how housing can embed green spaces as part of future housing developments
- Having an approach within children’s education and wider support that embeds the use of green spaces
- Making green spaces a key offer as part of current social prescribing models through a good understanding of changes to health and wellbeing
- Identifying alternative funding sources for sustaining parks
- A 25-year green spaces strategy

The voice of the community is paramount to achieving success and all plans for the pilots will be co-developed and tested with local residents to ensure this is achieved and tied back to the evidence so that we can be confident of sustainable impact on citizen’s lives.

With human resource being the main factor preventing the Council from creating a more sustainable model for parks management, this fund will deliver the necessary resource to create the capacity for change to occur. The project also includes expertise and advice from the National Trust, and so in January a parks challenge week took place with the team from National Trust giving an assessment of key green spaces in our City. Assisted by Parks Senior Managers including Ranger Services Manager Steve Hinton, National Trust visited over 25 public open spaces and parks (including opportunities to meet local residents) to understand where we can maximise good practice. The feedback will highlight both good practice and areas for opportunity including better management and use of volunteers, marketing and commercialisation to further feed into plans for the four pilot areas.
Throughout 2019 Rangers based at Sutton Park NNR continued with existing biodiversity partnerships and developed new relationships to improve knowledge of the site and enable staff to engage with peers across a variety of interests.

The Urban Bat Project has worked across Birmingham and the Black Country and we have been fortunate to be involved with surveying and trapping bat species in selected areas of the site and have enabled endoscope training through the winter period. Over a series of evenings staff assisted licenced bat workers to trap and record bat species near Keepers Pool. The records helped to increase the known species to 9 with multiple records of some species increased across the site, in particular, Myotis species, including whiskered and Brandt’s bats, which are difficult to tell apart using only detectors can be identified in the hand increasing the accuracy of records for the site. Use of endoscopes, another licenced activity, has revealed that a variety of bats are roosting in our woodlands across the winter.

The Birmingham and Black Country Reptile and Amphibian group began to survey within Sutton Park using an array of existing tins and mats and introducing more to focus areas across the site. One the aims is to record reptile species which may have been lost from the site for some time. There will be further work to survey the site and map further focus areas to target monitoring efforts.

2019 saw the second active year of surveying and collection of specimens for a two year entomological survey led by Steven Falk. The final report due in 2020 will cover over 1,700 individual species recorded including many nationally rare and habitat specialists. The results will also feed into the next NNR management plan for the site which is being prepared through the Ranger Service.

During the early part of 2019 a cohort of third year students from University of Birmingham took part in placements to deliver individual projects, bolstering the information needed to manage the site. Topics included a woodland survey and gorse mapping. This collaborative partnership is a valuable way of giving work experience in a practical manner to the students and helps the Rangers develop studies that enhance their understanding of the site. The programme is due to continue in 2020.

Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) continues to fund conservation management works taking place across the non-woodland habitats of Sutton Park. The original scheme ended in spring 2019 after 10 years and will be extended on an annual basis during the period around Brexit. This funded work is invaluable alongside the traditional method of grazing to conserve the important habitats of Sutton Park NNR and is delivered through site staff, volunteers and the internal service providers in particular the Woodland Management Team who take on the bulk of work involving machinery.

The rotational clearance of trees along the Longmoor Brook continued revealing further views of the landscape across the valley. This work also helps re-wet sensitive areas of the site to encourage specialist plants and animals. The results so far have been encouraging with more regular sightings of bird species including stonechat, grasshopper warbler and little grebe. The move from restoration into maintenance of the heathland has also continued with smaller areas being cut to provide a range of habitat suitable for different plants and animals. This work will continue although there is no let up from invasive species such as birch which requires constant management.
Site Management; Ranger Patrol

An interview with Patrol Sergeant Roger Mullings

How long have you been with Ranger Patrol?
I have been a patrol officer for about 18 years

Can you explain your role?
Our role is to patrol the parks and deal with any issues that might occur. We also have keys to many of the park houses and alarm codes in case alarms go off or there is a break in at any time. We also have keys for the cemeteries and lock up parks and cemeteries.

What do you enjoy most about the job?
The most enjoyable part of the job is being outside patrolling the parks and the freedom.

Is there anything you would change?
I would like more patrol officers so we could be more flexible with the rota. Like much of the parks department we are sometimes working with minimum staff levels.

Have you seen or heard any interesting wildlife late at night?
I have seen badgers, bats, foxes and owls while patrolling at night.

Which is your favourite park and why?
This is a hard one to answer because all parks have good and bad points. If I have to pick one I like Highbury Park; it’s quiet and peaceful, it’s like being in the countryside sometimes and I like how its laid out.

What is your proudest moment as a patrolman?
My proudest moment was in 2013 when I got a special recognition award during the Chamberlain Awards.

Sutton Park Bioblitz

The 7th Annual BioBlitz took place over two days with 200 local pupils taking part as well as members of the public.

The school sessions saw a small army of Rangers supported by officers from ECORECORD taking year 6 pupils on a range of biological recording activities which included pond dipping, sweep netting and tree beating. Running alongside these activities were a number of development activities which included orienteering and for the first time this year an outdoor drama session delivered by staff from Sutton Coldfield Grammar School for Girls. As the school sessions ended the rangers settled into the night and delivered a number of public activities with help from the Birmingham and Black Country Bat Group. The following day saw more public recording sessions delivered in association with the RSPB, the Birmingham and Black Country Reptile and Amphibian Group, the Friends of Sutton Park, and the Sutton Coldfield Beekeepers Association. In total 154 species were recorded over 36 hours which included 5 new site records.

Left: Ant Beetle *Thanasimus formicarius* and below: Black Sexton Beetle *Nicrophorus humator*. Photos courtesy of Matthew Barker
To encourage a variety of plants, animals and habitats in Birmingham, the Ranger Service seeks to protect and enhance local habitats and ecosystems through the following funded habitat management schemes:

**Higher Level Stewardship (HLS)**

**£126,000** per year received from Natural England in Higher Level Stewardship Grants.

This money supports:

- **850 Hectares** of Heathland restoration at Sutton Park and Lickey Hills Country Park
- **85 Hectares** of meadow enhancement at Woodgate Valley Country Park (including Pinewoods), Hilltop, Sheldon Country Park, Newhall Valley Country Park and the Dingles in the Shire Country Park.

**£15,000** - a one off payment from the Forestry Commission as part of the Woodland Grant Scheme to create new woodland within the city.

**National Indicator on Biodiversity Management—Single Data List Indicator 160-00**

There are 186 Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) and Sites of Local Importance for Nature Conservation (SLINC) within Birmingham managed under NI 160-00. 61% of all sites in positive management (public and private)*. 100% of the 95 sites managed by Birmingham City Council are in positive management, 43 of which are SINCs and 52 SLINCs. The total area of SINC and SLINC managed by BCC is 821.1 hectares, and management can include heathland work, grassland management, forestry and much more.
Outcomes 2019/20

**Partnership Working – Environmental Targets**
- Maintain 100% of NI-160 sites in positive management ✓
- Retain all 15 current Green Flags ✓
- Continue to implement Heathland HLS across two identified sites ✓
- Continue to implement Grasslands HLS across six identified sites ✓

**Partnership Working – Community Strategy Targets**
- Maintain volunteering levels of 2018/19 (7364 volunteer days delivered in 18/19) ✗ (7136 volunteer days achieved)
- Continue to support Friends of groups and Birmingham Open Spaces Forum ✓

**Annual Events Programme**
- Provide 48 published events for the public ✓
- Achieve attendance of 11,650 people at published events ✗ (9723 attendees achieved)
- Increase number of social media likes/ followers ✓

**Lifelong Learning**
- Provide events targeted at individuals and groups that are underrepresented in parks participation ✓
- Provide a diverse range of lifelong learning opportunities to individuals, school and community groups ✓
- Provide 110 Ranger-led school visits to 3,300 pupils ✓

**Continual Staff Development**
- Maintain 100% risk assessment completion rate within compliance period ✓
- Ensure 100% ‘My Appraisal’ processes are undertaken ✓
- Involve Hub Teams in Service development and planning sessions ✓
Partnership Working – Environmental Targets
Maintain 100% of NI-160 sites in positive management
Retain all 15 current Green Flags
Continue to implement Heathland HLS across two identified sites
Continue to implement Grasslands HLS across six identified sites

Partnership Working – Community Strategy Targets
Maintain volunteering levels of 2019/ 20 (7136 volunteer days, 35,680 volunteer hours)
Continue to support Friends of groups and Birmingham Open Spaces Forum
Deliver more Targeted Activities

Annual Events Programme
Provide 48 published events for the public
Achieve attendance of 11,650 people at published events
Increase number of social media likes/ followers

Lifelong Learning
Provide events targeted at individuals and groups that are underrepresented in parks participation
Provide a diverse range of lifelong learning opportunities to individuals, school and community groups
Provide 110 Ranger-led school visits to 3,300 pupils

Continual Staff Development
Maintain 100% risk assessment completion rate within compliance period
Ensure 100% ‘My Appraisal’ processes are undertaken
Involve Hub Teams in Service development and planning sessions
Birmingham Ranger Service 2019/2020
facts and figures at a glance

3989
Individual Volunteers
Working with the Ranger Service creating added value to our parks.

7136
Volunteer days

35680
Volunteer hours
Given by volunteers working with the Ranger Service

£297214
Value in kind*
Is the monetary value of the work carried out by volunteers working with the Ranger Service

175
School bookings
Educational visits and pupils working with the Ranger Service.

5280
Number of pupils

110
Events
And activities put on by the Ranger Service for the citizens of Birmingham.

9723
Participants

60
Targeted activities
Activities supporting citizens who may find accessing parks difficult.

621
Attendees
Across all Ranger Service activities, 10,833 adults have participated in more than 30 minutes of physical activity (National Indicator 18) and 9,908 children have participated in over 1hr of physical activity (National Indicator 57).

10,833
adults
have participated in more than 30 minutes of physical activity

9,908
children
have participated in over 1hr of physical activity

*Value in Kind Based on the Natural England volunteer rate of £8.33 per hour
Edgbaston, Ladywood and Perry Barr
Woodgate Valley Visitor Centre
Clapgate Lane
B32 3DS
@WoodgateRanger
/WoodgateValleyCountryPark

Hall Green and Selly Oak
Kings Heath Park House
Vicarage Road
B14 7TQ
@KingsHeathRanger
/HallGreenSellyOakRangerService

Hodge Hill and Yardley
Sheldon Country Park
Old Rectory Farm
Ragley Drive
Church Road
B26 3TU
/SheldonCountryParkRangers

Northfield
Licney Hills Country Park
Visitor Centre
Warren Lane
Rednal
B45 8ER
@LicneyHills
/thelickeyhills

Sutton Coldfield and Erdington
Sutton Park Visitor Centre
Park Road
B74 2YT
@SuttonParkNNR
/suttonparknnr

For information on strategies and plans mentioned within this document please visit the following website www.birmingham.gov.uk/parks and follow the link to standards and policies
Graph 1. Out and About events run by the Ranger Service from years through 2010/11 to 2019/20, showing number of attendees to events.

Graph 2. Number of volunteer days delivered by volunteers with the Ranger Service. From years through 2012/13 to 2019/20. Volunteers include regular volunteers and one-off volunteers such as corporate teams.
Appendix

Graph 3. Number of volunteer days delivered in 2019/20 showing numbers across each quarter.

Graph 4. Number of pupils attending Ranger-Led education sessions in parks from years through 2010/11 to 2019/20.
Our Partners