

# Friends of Inverleith Park

OUR update on YOUR Park

Issue 20 Spring 2013



Photos: Anne Rushbrook

## We are piloting a series of guided nature walks for all ages:

- Saturday, 1st June, 9am: birds
- Saturday, 13th July, 11am: flowering plants and trees
- Saturday, 3rd August, 11am: Pond dipping. (Nets and containers will be provided.)

*No need to book. Just meet in the sundial garden*

*All are free. An expert will be on hand.*

## Forthcoming events:

- Lepra - Edinburgh to St Andrews Bike Ride - 15th June
- Bark in the Park - 23rd June
- One Big Weekend - 4th August
- Foodies at the Festival 9th-11th August

## Other news:

- The Bird boxes have been repaired.
- A new crossing is being constructed from the West Gate over E. Fettes Avenue.
- More pamphlets have been printed for the tree walk (see above photograph).

**WILDLIFE** This has been the coldest Feb. and Mar. for years - and everything has been struggling to survive, let alone grow, mate or nest. However the snowdrops and crocuses have been lovely and long lasting and have been followed by daffodils, forsythia, periwinkle, primulas and the snowflake (like a large tall snowdrop on the bank above the pond- north). On the 4/4 I saw 2 blackbirds near the pond area collecting nesting material. The park has been visited most days by oyster-catchers from the Forth with their lovely fluting call. The herring, black headed and lesser black backed gulls are regulars. The 3 Canada geese come by from time to time and one wonders why one of them is marked differently about the head and neck making it look like a cross between a Greylag and a Canada goose!

Now, at the end of April the weather has suddenly warmed and there has been a flurry of nesting activity. First there was one, then two then three swan eggs in the right place .The ducks, moorhens and coots are also preparing for parenthood, while the heron surveys the scene, immobile and regal. One wonders whether he is planning to supplement his usual the diet of sticklebacks with a wading bird's egg or two. **Cathy Bell**



“Hmmm! Does she expect *me* to sit on them? “

Heron photo - Anne Rushbrook;  
Swan and duck photos - Jenny Cook

*P.S. Sadly, at the time of going to print there are no swan eggs in the nest. Read on (next page) about the Easter egg mystery. What's going on???*

**TREE PLANTING IN THE PARK** Storm damage over the past two years has left gaps that the Council has filled with a wide range of exotic trees that may be able to withstand the rigours of a changing climate. This planting policy appears to be at odds with the native conservation remit of the Edinburgh Biodiversity Action Plan 2010-2015. It does, however, reduce the dependence on the native elms and limes that have taken such a battering over recent years. **Maria and David Chamberlain**

**THE EASTER EGG MYSTERY** I have a small garden in North Park Terrace surrounded by fences and walls. On Friday 12th April I was walking past a patch of freshly dug soil when I did a double take. There nestling in a 20cm deep hole was a very large egg. I consulted my wife, as I always do when there are strange and unusual occurrences. She said she had seen it, but thought it was an egg-like stone that the grandchildren had been playing with. On close inspection I was sure it was a swan's egg. The question was, how did it get there? The following theories were suggested by a variety of experts:



1. It was a joke and not a real egg. (It is a real egg.)
2. A swan had landed in the garden scraped a hole and laid the egg. Swans do not scrape holes for nests and in any case there is no way they can take off from a small garden.
3. A late night reveller had taken the egg from the swan's nest, climbed over about three walls, dug a hole and put the egg in it. Not totally impossible, but there were no footprints and the way the hole had been scraped out looked much more like an animal's doing.
4. A predatory animal had taken the egg from the nest and attempted to bury it for later use. It seemed that the only culprit could be a fox. It would have to have carried it with great care in its mouth.

We contacted Cathy Bell and Mike Betts who is an RSPB man and our local swan expert. They came round and were as surprised as anyone. Mike confirmed it was a real swan's egg and reasoned that theory no. 4 was the only possible explanation.

I would be interested to know if there are other theories or if this type of behaviour has been observed before. **Tony Cook**

One or two other suggestions: Old swan eggs can be bought in junk shops, if you favour the joker theory. However, I prefer to think that it was one of our swans caught short, and that the wind (and it was very windy at the time) helped her to take off from a shorter than usual runway. **Maria Chamberlain**

**Drainage** The drainage work has started on the water on the pitch near the tennis courts. We understand that the council took advice from the Scottish Agricultural College which knows a lot about drainage. Drainage channels are now being dug at 6m intervals in one direction and at 2m intervals in the other. The channels are filled with gravel and angled so the water runs into a newly dug central drain which empties into the area under the tennis courts. The courts sit on a gravel bed which slows the water down and it goes into a culvert which eventually drains into the Water of Leith. The pitch will then be spiked to help the compaction and re-grassed. Let us hope this works and the pitch can be used for sport again soon! **Pam Barnes**



Drainage ditches (left) and Trachycarpus palms (right) - Anne Rushbrook

### **The (very) short history of the Trachycarpus palms in the Rose Garden**

Some people thought they were beautiful; most thought that they were out of place, particularly as the position was too windy for them to thrive. One thing was certain - at £1000 each they were expensive! After some heated correspondence between FOIP and the Council, they suddenly disappeared. I hope that they found a good home elsewhere! **Maria Chamberlain**

**New History Boards in Inverleith Park** Over the past few months, we have been researching online and in local libraries for photos and information in order to create a series of historic information panels in North Edinburgh parks.

The two existing boards in Inverleith will be replaced with two new panels. The board by the East Gate will contain general park history, sporting history, and a description of the various sculptures in the park. The second, located beside the pond, focuses more on the pond, wildlife, and the history of Inverleith Allotments. Also in the Inverleith area, we will be adding a new board for Rocheid Path, which will be located next to Tanfield Bridge.

We have had a great response and support from the local friends group and residents in Inverleith to make this project a success. We thank everyone who contributed their photos, anecdotes, and historical information for the panels, as well as those who took the time to read the text and offer helpful advice.

The final designs are currently with the manufacturer, and we will have the panels installed in the parks very soon. **Bethan Haston**