

Over the next few months, you may notice some work going on around the banks of St James's Park Lake, near to 'Inn the Park' café/restaurant.

This work is designed to enhance both the natural landscape and the ecological quality of both the Park and its Lake, and is kindly supported by Reed Elsevier (UK) Ltd.

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Want to know more?

You can find more information about London Biodiversity Partnership's Reedbed Habitat Action Plan from their online library – www.lbp.org.uk

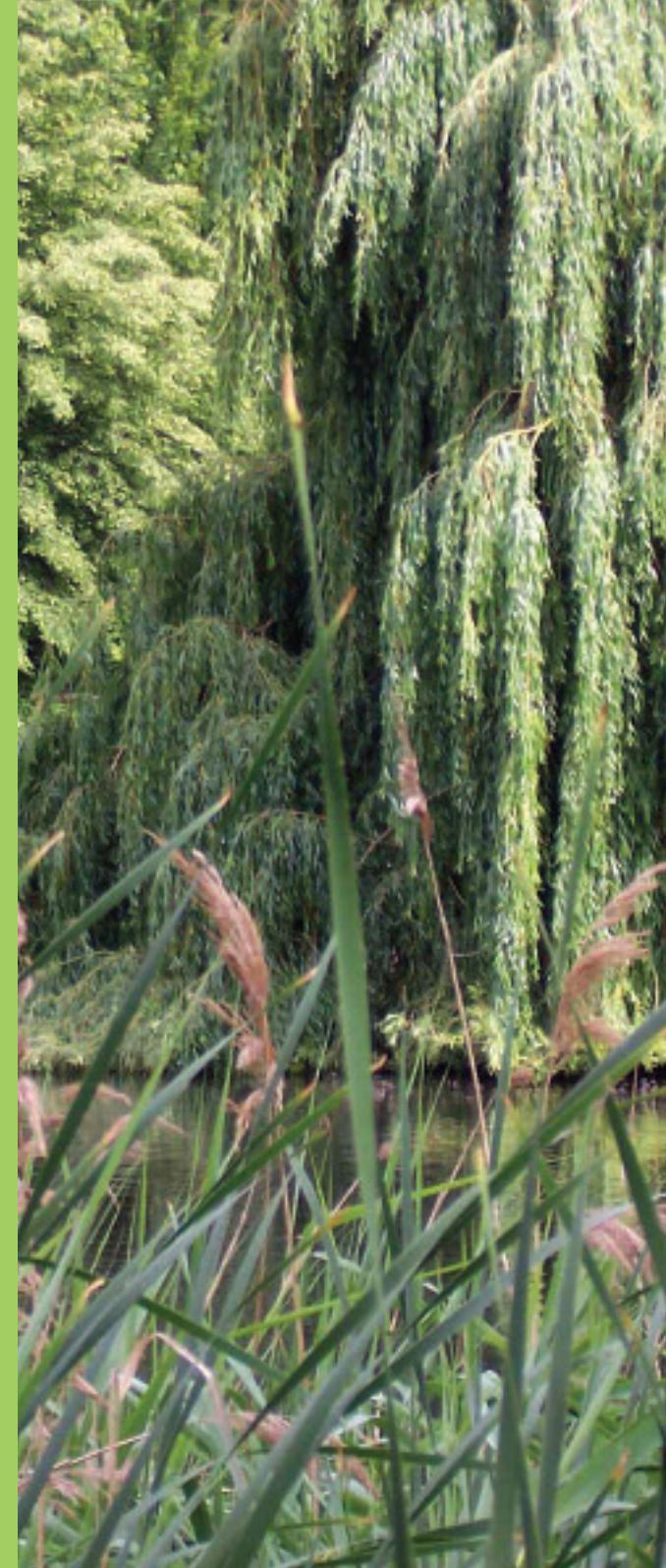
Information about St James's and the other Royal Parks can be found on our website – www.royalparks.org.uk

Information about Reed Elsevier Group plc can be found at – www.reedelsevier.com

Front cover image:
Close up of Reedbeds in St James's Park © Graham Hartley.

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The Royal Parks Reedbeds In St James's Park





Great crested newt:
© Peter Wakely, English Nature

What are reedbeds?

You may not have come across reedbeds before – they are areas of shallow water that provide just the right conditions for the UK's largest native grass, the common reed (*Phragmites australis*).



Looking across to 'Inn the Park' & site of the new reedbed



Established six year old reedbeds - both pics © Graham Hartley



Azure Damselfly © Dr Nigel Reeve

Why are reedbeds important?

They are a natural habitat that supports a range of plants, which in turn provide shelter, nest-sites and food for a huge variety of wildlife, including some of the UK's rarest species. They encourage a rich mixture of life – biodiversity at its very best.

The roots of reedbeds help prevent erosion at the water's edges by binding the loose soil. These roots are also very good at absorbing pollutants such as excess phosphates, nitrates and heavy metals. In fact, they are often used as natural filter systems to help clean up polluted waters.

Reedbeds can also make an important contribution towards flood defence systems because they are able to hold large amounts of water:

What lives in them?

London's reedbeds are home to some interesting wildlife which is unusual to local areas. Many of the different kinds of animal are dependent on the dense cover they provide. Kingfisher, water rail and reed warbler are amongst the many birds that can be found in and around reedbeds. The bittern, one of Europe's rarest and most threatened birds, is now becoming a regular winter visitor to London's reedbeds.

Dragonflies, including the aptly-named ruddy darter, can be seen weaving in and out of waterside vegetation throughout the city. Slower fliers, such as the twin-spotted wainscot moth, can be seen too. Reedbeds also attract a number of other animals that are highly threatened throughout the UK - great crested newts, water voles, harvest mice and rare rove beetles.

Why St James's Park?

Areas of reedbed were once widespread in London. However, over the years many have been destroyed. Land drainage, pollution, urban development and excessive extraction of water have all taken their toll. Reedbeds are now considered priority habitats that require careful conservation.

Land is scarce in London so there are very few places where reedbeds can develop naturally. The Royal Parks is an active member of the London Biodiversity Partnership's Habitat Action Plan for Reedbeds. This group identifies opportunities in the capital where new reedbeds can be created to replace those that have been lost.

The small reedbeds that we have previously created around the lake in St James's Park are already successfully established. Reed warbler,

sedge warbler and water rail are among the species that have already been attracted to these small reedbeds. We are now seeking to build on this success and attract a greater diversity of wildlife by creating a much larger reedbed.

On top of all this, reedbeds are excellent fish spawning grounds and we expect the fish and invertebrate population to flourish as a result of this project.

You will be able to view the reedbed at close quarters from the terrace of the café/restaurant 'Inn the Park' and from the lakeside path. There will also be an interpretation panel about the reedbed and its inhabitants and we are planning guided visits to enable you to get even closer to the reedbed's wildlife from the banks of the lake.

What happens next?

We will select a mixture of native plant species, aimed at improving the visual appearance of the area, especially whilst the reedbed is first being established.

This will contribute to the ecological improvement of the Lake by attracting a huge variety of wildlife (birds, dragonflies, moths, invertebrates, bats and fishes), and by improving the quality of the water and helping to prevent the excessive growth of algae.

It takes several years for a reedbed to fully establish. After that it then requires regular management and maintenance. This can sometimes involve some fairly drastic cutting-back of the reeds to prevent them from becoming too dominant.

This newly created reedbed will also become a useful education resource, a public showcase for the value of this type of habitat and something of great beauty for all to enjoy.

Supporters

Reed Elsevier has provided generous financial support, and extremely useful volunteer effort, which has enabled us to undertake this project. As one of the world's largest media companies, Reed Elsevier believes in setting values and standards throughout its operations and measuring its performance against them. Reed Elsevier is dedicated to playing a positive role in its local and global communities, primarily through employee involvement. With a central focus on education for disadvantaged young people and community initiatives of importance to local employees, the reedbed project will provide a unique opportunity for Reed Elsevier employees to help create a new and exciting educational resource for school children and visitors to the Park.