

Friends News

Friends of Rushcliffe Country Park (FORCP)

Issue 10

Autumn 2000

The First Lesson

We passed through the Mire Gate and stopped in our tracks as the lake came into view. Near the edge, in front of the reed bed, there was a mini Loch Ness Monster. On closer examination it transformed into the family of swans in single file, the cob (male) at the front, the pen (female) at the rear and the four cygnets at exact intervals between. Suddenly the cob began to flap his wings vigorously and took off. The pen also raised her wings, but flapped them less energetically. As the cob landed at the far end of the lake in a splendid shower of spray the cygnet in front of the pen raised its wings and gave a couple of feeble flaps. None of the others made any

response, but it was obvious we had witnessed the first flying lesson. By chance we saw a repeat performance the next day. This time all the cygnets raised their wings; the one at the front belatedly and weakly. The one at the rear, next to the pen, managed several strong flaps, but there was still a long way to go before they were all air-borne.

Human parents, we remarked are fortunate, they only have to help their young to walk - usually one at a time.

M Lawson



..... THUNDERBIRDS ARE GO

Well not exactly thunderbirds, actually the RSPCA in a speedboat, to the rescue of one of the cygnets, with fishing line caught in its mouth. A crowd gathered as the speedboat was attacked from all sides by a very angry male swan, out to protect his precious babies. After much manoeuvring and misses, the cygnet was caught hook, line and sinker; to the applause from the crowd.

To everyone's relief there was no hook, the fishing line was wrapped around the

cygnets tongue and lower jaw, very painful but relatively easy to detach.



The cygnet was put straight back in the water and except for a sore tongue is none the worse for the experience.

Fishing is not allowed on the lake and this incident shows what a danger discarded fishing line can be to unsuspecting wildlife. If you do see anyone fishing please inform the Rangers.

THAT RINGS A BELL

This year's cygets have now been ringed thanks to the Notts Bird ringers who braved the rain and completed the job in record time.

There is also news of a bird ringed in 1999. X3252 turned up at Holme Pierrepont on 22nd March 2000 and at the time of writing was still there. We will keep you informed of any other reports.





Visit to the Heart of the National Forest Visitor Centre



We set off from the Country Park at 10.00 am. There were nine of us altogether in three cars and we reached our destination, a former colliery, near Moir in Leicestershire at about 11.00 am.

We were welcomed by Helen, one of 20 staff who look after the new park at the centre of the New National Forest which reaches from Staffordshire to Nottinghamshire. We paid our entrance fees and bought coffees which we drank sitting on a terrace beside the lake. This is very attractive area and only spoiled by the wasps that seemed to be everywhere. The building housing the cafe, offices etc., was built during the last 5 years on two levels. We entered at the top from the car park and the cafe and terrace were down at water level.



After coffee we were joined by Helen again who showed us a map of the area, covering 200 square miles, to be planted with 30 million trees. They have been well supported with money from their council as well as grants from various sources, and have quite a lot of staff for such a small area - 12 acres.



We were shown the nearby workshops which are rented to local craftsmen, as well as a classroom where local groups carry out various activities. Helen then took us through a wooded walk, stopping to admire sculptures of a miner and two children, representing the past and the future of the area. The woods varied from tall, broad leaved trees, to mainly hawthorn areas and more recently planted silver birch copses. The day was very warm and we really enjoyed wandering along the trees. In a clearing in the centre there is another sculpture called "A Flame for Dunblane", which was very moving to look at.

After this we entered an area which had originally been built for the Chelsea Flower Show. It had conifers, birches, rocks, a Norwegian log cabin and a pond. It was very peaceful in here and we could hear the birds in the nearby woods.

We were shown a broad amphitheatre overlooking the lake where concerts and plays can be performed and a children's play park similar to the Ruddington one.

Some of our party visited the "Once a Tree Shop" which was very interesting.

The centre also includes a garden and plants shop and a forest products centre, selling everything from bird tables to garden sheds and gazebos.

The centre is small enough to be easy to get round and interesting enough to be worth the £2.95 entrance fee. It is the centre piece of an ambitious project to re-forest a large area and we feel it was well worth a visit.

M Burley

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No, not saffron, but a Clouded Yellow butterfly.

This is a beautiful orange/yellow butterfly with brown borders on the upper sides of the wings. They are migrants from Southern Europe, unable to survive British winters and although not rare in Britain, this year has been the first year they have been recorded on the RCP. Both males and females have been recorded but not together and only



in small numbers. They have also been seen elsewhere in Notts this year. Bestwood Country Park, for instance, has recorded clouded yellows but it is only the second year that they have been seen there.

The sightings have been noted and will be sent to the Biological Records Centre at Wollaton Hall.

If you have any interesting sightings please report them to the Rangers but do try to be sure of what you have seen, in order to keep the RCP records as accurate as possible.

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Sshh!!!

There has been a new silence in the Country Park for the last few weeks but there has also been a new noise - a high pitched whining sound. How can these two things be connected?

Well, because the Rangers have a new environmentally friendly electric buggy. It's so quiet that they can creep up on poachers, wrong doers and Friends so quietly that they can all be apprehended in their various misdemeanours. It is battery operated, which means as long as the Rangers plug into the electricity every night there should be no problems. Just as well as during the petrol shortage they would never have got to the petrol station in time to fill up!!

The high pitched whining tells you that the buggy is going backwards so that you may get out of its way, but there is no sound to warn of the forward passage. So Beware!!!!

FROM LITTLE ACORNS

Rushcliffe Country Park held its first environment day on Sunday 18th June. The idea behind the event was to raise the awareness of environmental issues, provide information and activities for all the family.

Eighteen local groups attended, including the Rushcliffe Borough Council Agenda 21 team, the Ramblers Association, CPRE, Notts Badger Group, WWF, and RSPB. Children had the opportunity to take part in pond dipping with Notts. Wildlife Trust and wildlife art with the Greater Nottingham Groundwork Trust. They could visit 'Speedy', the barn owl at the Barn Owl stand and be entertained by Teatro Da Dog, a comic, canine inspired street theatre.

Adults and children were fascinated by Bestwood Country Park's mini charcoal kiln and could buy charcoal produced at the park; a far superior charcoal to the shop bought variety, we're reliably informed.

This years event was relatively low key, but we felt that with better publicity and more activities the Environment Day had the potential to be a successful annual event to add to the Rushcliffe Borough Council calendar. We will let you know the details of next year's event in good time.



Project

GATES OF HISTORY

Mire gate -

In 1699 when the Thornditch Open Field to the south west of Ruddington was enclosed and converted to pasture, Gervase Lovatt, the village blacksmith, was paid 3/3d (about 16p) "for Iron Work for the gates". He presumably made hinges and latches for an unknown number of gates. When the Mire Gate was 'setup' the accounts record an expenditure of 6d (2p). This was probably for weak ale in celebration of the event. The whole project was punctuated by social events to mark successive stages reaching completion. The expenditure on ale and tobacco on these occasions was often about 2/- (10p) so this was only a minor incident on the way. It is not known where the Mire Gate was situated, but its name suggests it led to the boggy area adjoining the new pasture land. It was decided to give the ancient name to the gate to the east of the Rangers Office since it gives access to the lake and the area beyond which is still prone to flooding in wet weather.

M Lawson.

Editor - It is also very close to the access road, Mere Way.

FRIENDS

FORCP is a registered charity.

We aim to help improve Rushcliffe Country Park for the benefit of visitors and wildlife.

To continue to be successful we need your support. We are constantly looking for people of all ages, with different skills to offer: from letter writing to hole digging.

To join the Friends there is a minimum subscription of £1 to help with production of the Newsletter but you need only give the time you can spare.

Contact the Rangers, address and phone number on back page.

Any articles for the next edition of the Friends News can be sent to 6 Peacock Close, Ruddington NG11 6JF, left at the Rangers Office or email JLMuy@aol.com



Rushcliffe Country Park




VOLUNTEER DATES

Unless otherwise stated, all volunteer events are free and open to members of FORCP and non-members.





OCTOBER


Thurs 5th	FORCP Meeting	St Peter's Rooms, Ruddington. Eyes down, look in for a wildlife quiz.	7.30 pm
Sat 7th	History Trail	Its been a year since the trail markers were put in. Now's the time to carry out any minor repairs and review the text.	
Wed 11th	 Hay Rake and Glade Management	Come and learn about glade and meadow management.	
Sat 21st	 Scrub Clearance	Goat willow provides shelter for other slower growing trees, such as oak - but if left unattended, will suppress them. Help us redress the balance.	
Wed 25th	 Collecting Seedlings	Moving invading hawthorn seedlings to a new home in the tree nursery ready to be planted in our hedgerows.	
Thurs 26th	50+ Banner Making	Create colourful banners to brighten up events at the Country Park. For more details and to book a place ring the Rangers Office. Meet at St Peter's Rooms. 1.00 - 4.00 pm	
Fri 27th	50+ Walk with Friends	3 1/2 mile walk taking in some of the nooks and crannies around Ruddington and the Country Park. A chance to find out how Weggie Walk got its name. Meet at St Peter's Rooms.	2.30 pm

NOVEMBER

Thurs 2nd	FORCP Meeting	St Peter's Rooms, Ruddington.	7.30 pm
Sat 4th	 Woodland Management	A chance to build hedgehog homes that won't go up in smoke.	
Wed 8th	Community Garden	Giving the carvings some TLC and a winter tidy for the garden.	
Sat 18th	 Hedging	Coppicing field maple to allow hawthorn to grow thicker. A chance to find out what we have planned for our hedges over the next 10 years.	
Wed 22nd	 Tree Nursery	Celebrate National Tree Week by helping to grow native trees from seed.	

DECEMBER

Sat 2nd	 Tree Planting	More Tree Week activities around the Country Park.	
Wed 6th	 Woodland Management	Help improve RCP and glimpse areas of the park not normally open to the public.	
Sat 16th	 Coppicing	Help care for our woods and produce stakes and binders for next year's hedgelaying.	
Wed 20th	 Hedging	Has another year nearly past already? Celebrate the year's commitment to RCP with a mince pie and glass of punch.	

 This symbol denotes the activity is working towards the Notts Biodiversity Action Plan.

Meet at the Rangers Office at 10.15 am.
Unless stated all events run from 10.30 am - 3.30 pm.
Don't forget some lunch, sturdy boots and waterproofs.
For more information contact the Ranger's Office
0115 921 5865.

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