

Friends News

Friends of Rushcliffe Country Park (FORCP)

Issue 13

Summer 2001

CO-OPERATION PAYS DIVIDENDS

On Thursday 10th May 2001, Norman and Audrey Ecob and Angie Forman attended The Moat House, Mansfield Road to receive a cheque for £1000:00, kindly donated by the Co-op, out of their Co-op Dividend Scheme.

This was a donation towards the cost of Information Boards for the Nature Trail.

Money for the scheme is raised by Co-op Dividend Card Holders donating "spare pence" to the Community Fund. Obviously the more people who use the Dividend cards the more money becomes available.

There were a high number of applicants but the Committee felt that our application met the criteria for funding, i.e. accent on Community and Environment.

The enclosed photo shows Angie and Norman being presented the cheque by Derek Tracy the Chairman of the Eastern Branch Divisional Committee.

Norman Ecob



GOOD NEWS BAD NEWS

The bad news is that the history interpretation board along Weggie Walk has been vandalised, much to the disgust of many visitors, and will have to be replaced.

The good news is that at least as far as the residents of Ruddington are concerned, the Country Park is rated very highly as a local amenity, according to a recent consultation event organised by the Rural Community Council.

Of course problems were highlighted and the Rangers will be doing their best to address them over the coming year. More surveys will be taking place soon, so let us know what you think.

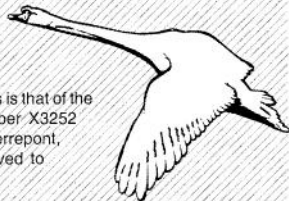
CYGNETS GALORE

On the May Day Bank Holiday Monday eight new cygnets emerged from the reed-bed with their parents. This is the sixth brood the resident pair of swans have produced since 1996, bringing their grand total of off-spring to no less than 49. (Birthdays must be a nightmare!)

For the record the numbers are:-

1996	8 cygnets
1997	10 cygnets
1998	9 cygnets
1999	8 cygnets
2000	5 cygnets
2001	8 cygnets

Unfortunately, the bad news is that of the cygnets ringed in 1999, number X3252 was found dead at Holme Pierrepont, earlier this year. It was believed to have died of natural causes.



BOX REPORTS

Three of the seven owl boxes have been used for nesting, by three different species of bird.

Stock Dove, Little owl and Kestrel

Unfortunately the little owl abandoned her eggs, surprising, as she raised three young last year. The good news is that the kestrels and stock doves have successfully hatched their young, 2 stock doves and 5 kestrels.

Notts Bird Ringers have ringed all the surviving chicks, so hopefully we will have some reports of where they choose to make a home in the near future.



FOOT & MOUTH

Not surprisingly, the Foot and Mouth out-break dominated the front page of the last issue; indeed, it was the first time since the official opening, nearly seven years ago, that the country park had ever been closed to the public. Fortunately the closure only lasted a few weeks, Rushcliffe being one of the first Country Parks to be re-opened in the county. As it happened Nottinghamshire didn't have a single confirmed case, (although at the time of writing, cases were still being recorded in other parts of the country). As usual the Borough Council received equal amounts of praise and criticism for its actions. However one thing that emerged in the weeks following the reopening, was just how happy people were to be back using the facilities.

During the month of May, Notts County Council kept most of the Rights of Way around Ruddington closed off. Therefore most of the entrances to the Country Park from Asher Lane were closed in order to keep people away from neighbouring farms. Unfortunately a handful of people decided that they didn't agree with this and continuously destroyed signs and barrier tape.

All this aside, the Rangers wish to pass on their gratitude to the majority of people who displayed patience and restraint.



RUDDINGTON'S MINIATURE NATURE RESERVE

For those who do not know it, 'Churchside' is a 17th century home in the centre of Ruddington adjacent to St Peter's Church. The site occupies about 1/2 of an acre. At the rear it overlooks the belt of mature beech, horse chestnut, ash, sycamore and yew trees which line the southern boundary of the grounds of the County Council's residential home. The church yard is surrounded by a number of magnificent lime trees.

This area forms a miniature nature reserve only yards from the nearest shops and car parking areas.

Visiting mammals include grey squirrels, hedgehogs, voles, field mice, usually seen only when brought in by cats; foxes are regular visitors to our feeding station. Over the past ten years or so, it is estimated that at least 40 fox cubs have used the front lawn as a playground. Sightings are usually at dusk but early morning and mid-day sightings are fairly common.

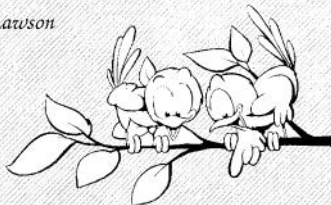
There have been fewer small birds in recent years and they appear to have been driven out by crows and magpies although it has been suggested that the squirrels might be responsible. Nevertheless we still have a variety and at breakfast on a day in January, 12 species were seen from the kitchen window. Sadly, the house sparrow is a rarity but we see blue tits, great and little tits, chaffinch, coal tits, blackbird, pied wagtails, robins, greater spotted woodpecker, and the occasional starling which also used to be present in large numbers. A blackcap was also sighted in January.

During the summer an occasional warbler may be heard and tawny owls are heard but only rarely seen. High overhead are swifts and sparrowhawks.

Up to the time of writing a few interesting insects have been seen. The first Peacock and Brimstone butterflies appeared on 1st April; but as late as October last year, Red Admirals and Tortoiseshells were still active. In the previous May a Lime Hawk moth was photographed on a litter bin at Church Street. Other varieties seen at intervals over the past three years include, Holly Blue, Speckled Wood and a Humming Bird Hawk Moth. A vaporous moth caterpillar has also been seen on the wisteria.

The garden pond usually produces several varieties of dragonflies and frogs are usually prolific. For the past two years however despite having an estimated 50 pairs of mating frogs, late frosts have destroyed most if not all of the spawn. At the present time, a family of Smooth Newts is active in the pond.

K H Lawson



The dark and depressing winter began in November when a fierce gale tore off great branches from some trees and up rooted others. The stormy weather continued and heavy rain poured down day after day from leaden skies. There was a brief respite between Christmas and the New Year where there was a prolonged frost and a good fall of powder snow. The sun shone brightly from a blue sky, although it was very cold. Sledging became a favourite activity for three days until the thaw came and the rain returned. Soon the ground became saturated and there was widespread flooding. On the Country Park large puddles replaced the 'Cresta Run' for toboggans and for weeks wellies and hiking boots were needed to splash and squelch along or beside the footpath. Some visitors brought along a scrapper and scrapped off the mud in the car park before returning home.

The Friends of Rushcliffe Country Park proposed visit to Plumtree for lunch was postponed because the route was impassable. Worse was to come. The out-break of foot and moth disease

AFTER THE WRETCHED WINTER

meant the closure of all local footpaths and the Country Park. Fortunately the Barleylands route between Asher Lane and Loughborough Road was soon reopened, but it was not until just before Easter that visitors were allowed to return and then only on certain conditions.

It was a delight to walk around the lake again, and make for the view-point on Fowermer Hill to enjoy the vibrant green of the surrounding countryside and the trees bursting into leaf. Middlemarsh pond had overflowed, and the birds sang loudly everywhere. Spring had arrived and in a short time flowering shrubs and trees were laden with record amounts of blossom. The

hawthorn hedgerows were covered with such dense may-blossom they appeared to be covered in snow. Heavy rainfall had produced abundant foliage and flowers, and vigorous growth of fresh green grass. Isolation and the absence of disturbance for many weeks meant a good breeding season for many birds.

Toward the end of May a visit to Bunny Wood revealed blue-bells which were knee-high and stinging nettles up to the shoulders. The under-growth had encroached on the paths, but most striking of all was the size of the leaves on many of the trees. Some of the wych-elm had leaves twice their usual size. This is also true of the tall lime trees in Ruddington churchyard, where some leaves have measured not less than 5 1/2 ins by 4 1/2 ins. The downpours and restriction of the dismal winter have produced amazing growth and brought some benefits to wildlife. The dark clouds undoubtedly had a silver lining although it was hard to believe at times.

Margaret Lawson

"THE BIRTHDAY PARTY"

On June 9th Wildlife Watch celebrated its 30th birthday. To mark the occasion Rushcliffe Country Park held a birthday party for all the Watch groups in Nottinghamshire.

The main activity during the party was the pond dipping at the seasonal pond. We found an abundance of aquatic life, including baby newts, frogs, water boatmen and whirligig beetles. The

pond dipping event took place countrywide, and all the information provided will be collated to show the different water qualities in the ponds surveyed.

Lynn Victor, the education officer for Notts Wildlife Trust, and the co-ordinator of Notts Wildlife Watch, brought along a birthday cake that was beautifully decorated with wildlife; so we celebrated in style.



SUBSCRIPTIONS

Anyone who has not yet renewed their subs and wishes to continue to receive their quarterly newsletter, please fill in the form below and return to the Rangers Office, Rushcliffe Country Park, Mere Way, Ruddington, Notts NG11 6JS.

* Delete as applicable.

*I/We wish to renew *my/our subscription to the Friends of Rushcliffe Country Park.

Name

Address

Phone Number





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

Rushcliffe Country Park

VOLUNTEER DATES

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




July

- Thurs 5th FORCP Meeting** A short meeting followed by an illustrated talk by Mick Thompson of Notts Birdrangers. St Peter's Rooms, Ruddington. 7.30 pm
- Sat 14th  Community Garden and Tree Nursery** Green fingered antics in the morning followed by bench construction in the afternoon.
- Wed 25th Visitor Count** Help us gather important information. Please let us know if you can attend this event.
- Sat 28th  Wildflower Survey** This will be a fun day, gathering vital data for managing our conservation areas - no experience necessary.

August

- Thurs 2nd Summer Celebration** Open to members of FORCP and all who have assisted with projects over the last year. Phone nearer the time to find out what is happening and to let us know you will be attending.

September

- Thurs 6th FORCP Meeting** St Peter's Rooms, Ruddington. 7.30 pm
- Sat 8th  Hay Rake** A great chance to get some exercise and manage some of our smaller glade habitats.
- Wed 12th  Community Garden and Tree Nursery** More green fingered antics.
- Sat 22nd Stile building** Help improve access for weary walkers and learn a new skill at the same time.
- Wed 26th  Transplanting aquatics** A great chance to get dirty (but only if you want to) whilst improving your local wetland habitats.



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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