

Friends News

Friends of Rushcliffe Country Park (FORCP)

Issue 15

Winter 2001/2

One Project Ends.....

"Hip, Hip, Hurray" cheered the Friends of Rushcliffe Country Park as the Mayor of Rushcliffe declared the new Wildlife Trail open at 3.00 pm on 10th November 2001.



It was a bleak, grey day and breezy down by the lake, but the drink of hot punch which greeted everyone cast a cheerful glow over the opening ceremony.

The wildlife interpretation project came to a very satisfactory conclusion after two years of delay and frustration, caused mainly by repeated grant applications which were unsuccessful. The initial grant of £500 from PowerGen, via Agenda 21, was eventually supplemented by £1,000 from the Greater Nottingham Co-operative Society Community Dividend Fund and a £2,000 grant from The Department of the Environment, Farming and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) under the Countryside Stewardship Scheme. The Friends are grateful to all three bodies for their generosity.

The Rangers led the assembled company round the new trail, which links together five new interpretation boards, and extends for about 1 mile. There was much friendly conversation, and not a little laughter, as invited guests and members who had taken part in the project walked along and admired the new boards, which have a bold text, clear illustrations and an attractive background. A project which had demanded much patience and persistence ended on a high note.

EM Lawson



.....And Another One Begins

A new community project began in November with a joint venture by the Ruddington Local History Society and the Friends of Rushcliffe Country Park.

Volunteers will research the history of Ruddington Ordnance and Supply Depot, which was demolished in 1990, and has now become Rushcliffe Country Park. Volunteers will study official documents; scan copies of local newspapers from 1940 - 1985; interview former workers at the depot and publish their findings in a book, provisionally called 'Bombs to Butterflies'.

They will also design a temporary travelling exhibition and a permanent exhibition about the depot. In addition an audio-visual C.D. Rom will be compiled so that the research findings will be widely distributed using modern media.

The project is funded by a Local Heritage Initiative Award from the Countryside Agency. The Local Heritage Initiative is a partnership between the Heritage Lottery Fund, Nationwide Building Society and the Countryside Agency. The total cost of the project will be about £20,000, of which £12,000 will be met by this award.



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THE DONNA NOOK SEALS

The magazine 'Natural World' says that seals have terrific halitosis and that they are essentially big tubs of lard. Nevertheless they are attractive creatures and their annual breeding migration to Donna Nook on the Lincolnshire coast has become one of Britain's major wildlife attractions.

More than 2000 or 1.8% of the British seal population are estimated to live on the North East Lincolnshire coast and about 500 breed each year at Donna Nook. Towards the end of November more than 300 adults and upwards of 400 pups were to be seen and for Margaret and myself this was an unforgettable experience.

We had expected distant views but in the event we had pups at our feet and adults only a few yards away. A 2ft high wire fence provided a safety barrier (because seals can bite) but visitors have a strong sense of being right among them (and we did not smell their breath.)

One unforgettable experience was the mournful singing of the adults which led to the sailors ancient myth that they were mermaids singing.

Our first pup had only just been born and it was still blood stained and partly covered by the placenta. Nearby other adults were in labour and we only missed a birth by minutes.

As always the adults were very protective of their young and they snapped at other adults

encroaching on their territory. Overall the colony occupied a wide area of wet beach extending right up to the sand dunes, to which humans were confined. Volunteer wardens are on duty throughout the breeding season.

During the breeding season the adults do not feed but they suckle their young for about 21 days on a fat rich milk. The pups increase their birth weight of about 14.5 kg to 40 or 45 kg. Meanwhile the mothers lose about 40% of their body weight.

The pups take themselves to the sea where up to 60% are thought to die in their first year. A successful Bull however can grow to 2.5 metres and weigh up to 310 kg.

One oddity about the site is that it is also an RAF practice bombing range and on most clear days screaming jets fly low overhead and release their bombs on the edge of the seal colony. The seals appear to be undisturbed by this and the RAF personnel play a considerable part in wardening the reserve in their spare time.

It is a wonderful experience to visit Donna Nook in November or early December but although a day excursion from Nottingham is possible an overnight stay is preferable.

R H Lawson

Footnote: Acknowledgment for statistical details is made to 'Natural World' No 62, 2001, the magazine of the Wildlife Trust.



.....And Another One Begins contd

The project was launched at a fund-raising event on Saturday 24th November 2001 at St Peters Rooms, Ruddington, and was opened by Mary Owen of the Countryside Agency East Midlands Region.

Several stalls were set up and were ably run by Representatives of The Ruddington Women's Institute, The Friends of the Country Park, The Ruddington Local History & Amenity Society, Ruddington Information Technology Association, Ruddington Ladies' Probus, Ruddington Men's Probus, Ruddington Choral Society and The Western Front Association. We also had several displays. One of 'The Site', one of the Country Park and Bernard Slack's 1940 Memorabilia. A quilt made by Mrs Jean Walker was displayed and raffled.

The Committee would like to thank all those people who donated items for the tombola or for sale and those that came along to help on the stalls and refreshments. The total amount raised on the day was £630.31.

Volunteers are still required for a wide variety of tasks. To find out more ring 921 1545. No commitment is entered into by doing this. All enquiries welcome.

Norman Ecob





ACCESS ALL AREAS

For the past year, Rushcliffe Resource Centre Horticulture Group has been hard at work, helping the Rangers with different projects around the Country Park. A number of the group have limited mobility, and manoeuvring around some areas of the park, has proved quite problematic.

However, with the help of their facilitator, Rob Polkey, this enthusiastic and enterprising group has found a solution to one area, by applying for, and being awarded, a grant from Action for Wildlife. The grant will enable the group to design and construct a new area next to the tree nursery, which will be accessible for wheelchair users, with level access paths and a wheelchair friendly gate. On completion the new tree nursery will allow many more groups and individuals to become involved in growing native trees, to be planted in the park and in the local community. Watch this space for an update on the project's progress.



The Action for Wildlife Grant Scheme is a partnership between the Nottinghamshire Biodiversity Action Group, English Nature and TXU Europe Power. The scheme is administered by BTCV and aims to support practical projects which help achieve targets within 'Action for Wildlife' - Nottinghamshire's Local Biodiversity Action Plan.

Hedgerow-a-go-go

Last year's hedgelaying activities around the Country Park were a great success. Not only have we secured the future of these excellent features, but there is no doubt that wildlife will have already benefited from denser, more solid green corridors. So to celebrate we are doing it all over again - but in a different part of the park.

We need your help, because we have 200m of boundary to rejuvenate before spring arrives. Don't worry if you don't know your pleachers from your peaches because all the training you require is on hand, courtesy of those Rangers.

The hedgelaying at RCP is supported by The Countryside Stewardship Scheme, a Department of Food and Rural Affairs initiative which makes payment to farmers and landowners to improve the natural beauty and diversity of the countryside.

DEFRA
Department for
Environment
Food & Rural Affairs



EARTHWATCH MILLENNIUM AWARD UPDATE

It is now nine months since I returned from my trip to South Africa helping with research on termites.



My community based project for Earthwatch has come to an end but my work with the Wildlife Watch group at the Country Park continues. I have become a registered Wildlife Watch leader and work alongside the Rangers, in particular Angie, working with children. Over the last few months the group seems to have stabilised and membership has increased. [It only started up in January of last year.]

A wide variety of topics have been covered. Wildflower Wonderland; Songs of Summer, using binoculars to look at birds in the park; Tiny Trees, collecting seeds and berries to plant; Beautiful Barn Owls. Clive James, from Rushcliffe Barn Owl Project, brought Speedy the barn owl along and gave a talk. We then dissected owl pellets that Clive had collected from the owl boxes in Rushcliffe. Two full day events took place during the school holidays - Minibeast Safari and Wild about Woodlands - and were a great success.

Notts Wildlife Watch had it's 30th birthday party in June and was celebrated on the Country Park along with groups from other parts of Nottinghamshire. The main activity was pond dipping in our new pond. We were told that the pond had a good selection of species to say that it is only about two years old.

A grant of £200 to help fund my project has enabled me to provide 10 pond dipping nets, a binocular vision microscope suitable for children to use, identification charts and art and craft materials.

Fortunately for most of the activities we were blessed with good weather and did not have to use the railway carriage at the Heritage Centre very often. We look forward to having our own educational room on the Country Park.

Jean Gray








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 JMuy@aol.com

Rushcliffe Country Park





ACTIVITY DAYS

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






JANUARY

Thurs 10th	 FORCP Meeting	St Peter's Rooms, Ruddington. Clive James from the Rushcliffe Barn Owl Project.	7.30 pm
Sat 12th	 Hedge laying	Help rejuvenate the park boundaries.	
Wed 16th	 Hedge laying	Learn all about an ancient craft.	
Sat 26th	 Hedge laying	As above.	
Wed 30th	 Woodland Management	Come along and be part of conserving your local woodlands for the future.	

FEBRUARY

Sat 9th	 Woodland Management	More woodland conservation.	
Wed 13th	 Mystery Conservation Activity	Contact us nearer the time to find out what is happening.	
Sat 23rd	 Hedge laying	As above.	
Wed 27th	 Tree Nursery and Community Garden	Winter green fingered antics in your beautiful local Country Park.	

MARCH

Thurs 7th	 FORCP Meeting	AGM St Peter's Rooms, Ruddington.	7.30 pm
Sat 9th	 Coppicing	Help improve woodland edge habitats within the Country Park.	
Wed 13th	 Coppicing	Coppicing is a technique whereby trees are cut down to the base and allowed to grow back. The result is straight poles which can be used around the park.	
Sat 23rd	 Willow Weaving	Have some fun with willow and create living art.	
Wed 27th	 Tree Nursery	It is now time to plant out the seeds collected last year and the year before. Also a chance to see the new look, accessible nursery.	



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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