

Friends News

Friends of Rushcliffe Country Park (FORCP)

Issue 17

Summer 2002

FUN AT PORTLAND PARK



On the 2nd June a group of our Wildlife Watch children, plus 4 adults, set off in a minibus for a visit to a wildlife activity day at Portland Park run by Notts Wildlife Trust.

Portland Park is close to Kirkby-in-Ashfield. It is a delightful area and contains ancient woodlands, wildflower meadows, ponds and a small stream. We were very impressed by the Visitor Centre which has been designed to harmonise with the landscape and be as environmentally friendly as possible. (Maybe one day we will have our own visitor centre of which we and Rushcliffe can be proud.)

Various activities had been provided and our group were eager to try out the pond dipping. It was a small, well-designed pond, full of life, and the children were fascinated by the assortment of wildlife that was caught. All the creatures were placed in white trays so that the children could observe them easily. The most impressive catch was a dragonfly nymph about 2 inches long. Among other things caught were mayfly nymphs, much smaller, with a three pronged forked tail, water boatmen, both lesser and greater, cased caddis fly larvae, water hog louse, shrimps and many tadpoles. The children became very adept at identifying the different invertebrates and showed us what a great educational tool a pond can be. It filled us with enthusiasm and gave us ideas for when we build our own pond in the tree nursery, for which we have a £125 grant.

We took advantage of a one hour long guided walk through the woodlands and meadows, which also incorporated a nature trail.

The children were able to make wind chimes, observe a demonstration of basket weaving and learn about this ancient craft. A willow geo dome was available to decorate with brightly coloured ribbons and provided a 'den' in which to tell stories. This proved very popular with the girls!

The weather was kind to us and a very enjoyable day was had by all

Jean Gray



COMMUNITY WOOD



In the last issue of *Friends News* we reported that a major new project was being planned by the Rangers, and that members of the public would be consulted at all stages. Well the good news is that 71% of people that participated in the original survey, said that they would like to see the wood open, although 11% had concerns about the effect to wildlife.

The project is now into stage two and three, which are planning the layout and researching funding. A Rushcliffe Borough Council, Lasting Legacy, Jubilee Grant of £500 has already been acquired by FORCP and Ruddington Parish Council, to provide an access path for people using pushchairs and wheelchairs, but more funding is needed.

The Rangers would like ideas from as many people as possible. They will be consulting other groups in the area and are particularly interested in involving young people. The project is only limited by the funds that are available, but it must fit with the aims of the country park, so come on, have your say.



Project Complete

The community tree nursery project to install raised beds and access for wheelchair users is now complete. The Rushcliffe Resource Centre horticulture group instigated the project, and they can be very proud of what they have achieved. The FORCP were on hand to lend their help and support throughout the project.



The tree nursery was officially opened on April 23rd, and it proved a great opportunity for the 'Friends' to socialise with the resource centre group, and members of DART (Disability Awareness Resource Team). As Ivy, one of the 'Friends' said of the project, "It has been a great community effort, and has enabled the 'friends' to make valuable links with local community groups".

Thanks to the project the tree nursery is now accessible to many more groups and individuals, and is a valuable educational resource.

The tree nursery project was made possible by a grant from the Action for Wildlife Scheme, which is a partnership between the Notts Biodiversity Action Group, English Nature and TXU Europe and BTCV.



- Friends -

This is the last Friends News that I will help write. Yes, after 5 years as a Ranger at RCP, I am off to pastures new. By the time you read this I will be working as a Community Liaison Officer for Nottingham City Council (and probably scratching my head, wondering what I have let myself in for).

I have far too many fond memories to write them here, but I will definitely miss working alongside the FoRCP and all the other volunteers and groups.

I'd like to take this opportunity to wish my replacement well and thank all of you for making my life as a Ranger a little bit easier and a lot more fun

My final word is that you haven't heard the last of me! I am now a fully paid up member of the FoRCP and if I can find the time I will be out on the activity days, making fun of the Rangers.

Regards, **Paul Owen**



RCP BIRD WALK

On a dry but rather cloudy evening at the end of April around twenty people met together to walk round the Country Park to identify the birds that are around there. Mick Thompson was the leader and is obviously very knowledgeable on bird identification. He only has to hear the first note and he can tell which bird it is.

Our first visit was into the reeds surrounding the lake to find the swan's nest. We could see where it was but did not see the birds. The first bird that was seen was the linnet identified by its short swooping flight. Quite a number were seen as we went along. As the walk continued chaffinches and robins were busy in the shrubs and small trees. The song of the robin is particularly recognisable and lovely to listen to and the chattering of the chaffinches is a delight. There were also some of the larger birds such as crows, rooks and black-birds.

Being a cloudy evening there were not many birds active so it was mainly a case of listening rather than watching. The various bird boxes which have been erected were seen but apparently very little use has been made of them as yet.

Towards the end of the walk as we were returning along the road back to the office, a green woodpecker was spotted in a tree and it suddenly swooped down to the ground which Mick informed us is the way to recognise it.

Although we did not see that many birds we could hear them and anyway it is a very good excuse for a pleasant walk round the Country Park. Our thanks to Mick for giving up his time to join us and hand on his knowledge.

Audrey Turner



BEES KNEES

Of the 190 plus Bee Orchids that were transplanted from the business park to the Country Park, at least 25 have flowered this year. This is great news as it means that these temperamental little flowers are happy in their new homes.

Hopefully more will flower next year.



Spring at Churchside

The Churchyard lime trees are already in full leaf and proclaiming the arrival of Spring and the Churchside garden is full of colour and wildlife.

A family of Jackdaws has been in residence in the churchyard and a nest in the louvres in the West end of the church has produced at least one fledgling Jackdaw.

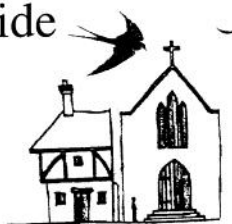
Our bird box is occupied by Blue Tits which are now busily feeding their young. One newly fledged Blue Tit has been seen but we are not sure where it came from.

Other frequently seen birds include a Carrion Crow, Magpies, a pair of Mistle Thrushes and a pair of Robins. A rare visit was made by a pair of House Sparrows and small groups of now rare Starlings passed through. It seems strange that such once common species have declined in recent years.

A pair of adult foxes have been taking donated food to two cubs who have been observed beyond the garden fence. A female Grey Squirrel feeds regularly at the bird table and one offspring has been seen with her.

Our garden pond sustains abundant plant life but frog spawn rots away and hatched tadpoles even when reared in containers seem to suffer the same fate when introduced into the pond. However Smooth Newts seem to thrive and two in good condition were netted by accident when weed clearing was being undertaken.

K.H. Lawson



A PLACE FOR PICASSOS



If you know of anyone between the ages of 8 and 13, who may be looking for something to do during the summer holiday, get them to come along to the Wildlife Watch Art Workshops.

Learn how to draw and paint landscapes and wildlife, including Speedy the barn owl, with Clive James from the Rushcliffe Barn Owl project.

Please ring the Rangers' office to book a place, as numbers are limited.

The Workshops will take place on the following
Wednesdays
from 2.00pm - 4.30pm

Wednesday 7th August
Wednesday 14th August
Wednesday 21st August
Wednesday 28th August



WETLAND MANAGEMENT - SAT & SUN 6 - 7 JUNE 2002

Well, this sounded a quite interesting sort of weekend. Really, I had not much idea what to expect but time in the fresh air in good company at the Country Park is always enjoyable. Perhaps I should have realised, there was quite a lot of messing about in water one way or another.

We started to pick up early on a lot of interesting information from the experts who were involved with the course, including Paul, our Ranger. The lake is subject to erosion, which is exposing the liner whose job is to prevent the water draining away. There is also the risk of algae forming at the margins which has been a problem elsewhere.

The green solution proposed for both problems was to put straw, in netting for convenience, at the water edges to inhibit the algae, and take the opportunity at the same time to deflect the water flow from sensitive areas of the bank, re-cover parts of the lining,

and build up some defences with stone, logs, soil and planting.

This meant breaking up bales of straw, and stuffing it into long thin netting bolsters, at which some of our group got quite expert, digging up irises out of the lake - surprisingly hard I discovered to free the corms from the clumps in the lake-bed, shifting soil and general fetching and carrying.

It was lovely to see when we came back on Sunday morning that a family of mallards had already taken over one of our new bankside features and were sitting on the straw sunning themselves - we even found an egg had already been laid there.

We tried our hand, or more exactly our feet, at paddling. The naturally occurring dipping pond in the Park has its base reinforced with clay and it is quite an art to tread about in that to firm this layer and make it more impervious. Actually, the treading is not

too difficult, the trick is then lifting your leg out of the clay, complete with Wellington, to do the next bit!

The final part of the course was an introduction to dipping and its uses. It was interesting to hear that it is one of the standard tests of water quality in lakes and rivers to see what creatures are supported, and a grading can then be given which takes account of significant species found. Of more personal interest, when we looked at what was found in the Country Park lake, was to see that leeches were included, but no one seemed to have been harmed by so much paddling about in it over the weekend.

All in all, not just a pleasant but a rewarding and informative weekend, and those responsible deserve our thanks for putting on this course.

Morris Turner

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Subscriptions for the season 2002 - 2003 are now due - minimum £1.00. If you wish to continue receiving your quarterly newsletter, please fill in the form below and return it 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.....

Rushcliffe Country Park

ACTIVITY DAYS

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






JULY

- Thurs 4th **FORCP Meeting** St Peter's Rooms, Ruddington 7.30pm
- Sat 6th **FORCP Day Out** Foremark Reservoir in Leicestershire. **Please ring to book a place.** *Wan.*
- Wed 17th **Willow Weaving** Help weave the growing willow back into the sculptures to keep them looking good.
- Sat 20th  **Wildflower Survey** Last chance to get out into the Meadows to identify the flowers and hopefully get a tan! Beginners welcome.

AUGUST

- Thurs 8th **Summer Social** Guided Walk Through Clifton Woods and Holme Pit Pond with Paul. Followed by a picnic tea on the banks of the River Trent, and a chance to say an official goodbye to Paul and to wish him well in the new job. **Meet at the Rangers' Office at 6.00pm. (FORCP only)** *Bring Picnic food!*

SEPTEMBER

- Wed 4th  **Hay Rake** Make hay while the sun shines, and help us manage the woodland glades
- Thurs 5th  **FORCP Meeting** St. Peter's Rooms plus Bat talk with Lynn Victor from the South Notts Bat Group 7.30pm
- Sat 7th  **Wetland Management** Monitoring our wetland habitats, looking at water quality and invertebrates.
- Wed 18th  **Community Garden/Tree Nurseries** Late Summer Tidy.
- Sat 21st  **Reedbed Management** The reed bed is one of the best habitats in the park, a home for birds such as reed warbler and smaller creatures such as dragonflies. Join us for a fun (smelly) day and find out how we conserve this prime habitat.

 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 Rangers' Office **0115 921 5865.**

Don't forget to renew your Subscription

Produced by the Friends of Rushcliffe Country Park
Registered Charity No 1079665



Supported by



An independent group associated with
BAP
a registered charity