

# Friends News

Friends of Rushcliffe Country Park (FORCP)

Issue 23

Winter 2004 *Edob*

Spring 2004



## The Downside of High Summer

After the long hot summer which was appreciated by most people, the effects of drought are beginning to leave their mark. It is obvious that the lake is very low - up to 1 foot below its normal level, (it will need at least 200,000 gallons of water just to bring the level to normal) but the implications are rather far reaching.

As the level is so low there is no water in the reed bed which means that anything roosting in the reeds is at risk from predators which could not normally gain access. Reed Bunting is a case in point - no water, no roost. This time last year there were up to 200 birds roosting, but this year a maximum of seven have been counted.

Invertebrates are also at risk as deeper water insulates against severe frosts and icing up of the lake. If low temperatures penetrated too far downwards many dragonfly larvae could be killed leading to a reduction in adult numbers next season.

Although continuing rain is pretty depressing for us, it could mean life or death for many species of plants and animals, as a reduction of population levels over winter will mean a reduction in the number available to breed next year. However, population monitoring is part of the job at the Park so with regular counts of the species we see, hopefully we'll be able to report good news by the time the next Newsletter is published. We will keep you posted.



## Wetland Management

The wet lands turned out to be dry this year. Certainly no need for thigh high waders! We will have to wait for the mat of roots to get wet before attempting to remove. This will then allow 'free water' into the t of the reeds.

— If left, seeds will root from trees etc. and nature will begin reclamation. Volunteers will be required so watch this space!

The reeds are cut into 'rides' keeping predators out and allowing a survey of birds, especially reed buntings, to take place.

*Norman Ecob*



## Rare Species Update



Recently the population of Rangers on the Park has suffered a reduction of 50%, (see previous report on population levels in Friends News Issue 18, Autumn 2002) with one Ranger migrating north and one south.

Early indications were that the remainder would not be viable and could indeed be extinct by this time next year if recruitment to the small numbers on site was not forthcoming.

A serious population study has been undertaken and it was found that there is a possibility of a new southerly migrant settling on the Park in the near future.

The rare species monitoring panel is keeping its fingers crossed.



# Just Swanning Around

As you may have noticed all the juvenile swans are now flying, but prior to attaining their 'wings' their aeronautical skills were somewhat question-



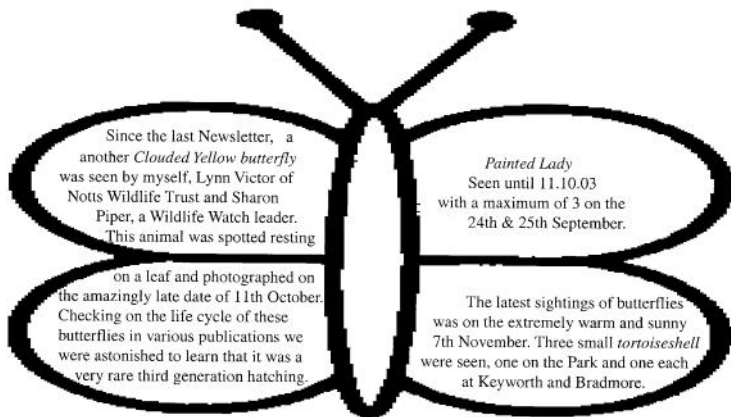
able. On 13th October three were fished out of the car park and put back on the water after a panic attack which left them landing in trees or on the tarmac.

One of the three had already been rescued from the Business Park (once) and from the car park (twice). The sponsor of this swan has already been notified of its exploits, but I will not print the ring number to spare any embarrassment.

Finally, on 23rd October, the whole family took off and did not return until 25th, prompting at least 20 queries from concerned Park users as to their whereabouts.

*Note: It's the Rangers' considered opinion that the parents, ashamed of the offspring's flying skills, took them on a two day navigational and orienteering exercise just to prove a point.*

## Recent Sightings



Since the last Newsletter, a another *Clouded Yellow butterfly* was seen by myself, Lynn Victor of Notts Wildlife Trust and Sharon Piper, a Wildlife Watch leader. This animal was spotted resting

on a leaf and photographed on the amazingly late date of 11th October. Checking on the life cycle of these butterflies in various publications we were astonished to learn that it was a very rare third generation hatching.

*Painted Lady*  
Seen until 11.10.03  
with a maximum of 3 on the  
24th & 25th September.

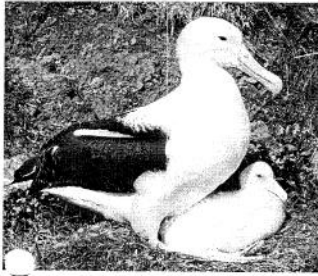
The latest sightings of butterflies was on the extremely warm and sunny 7th November. Three small *tortoiseshell* were seen, one on the Park and one each at Keyworth and Bradmore.

*Cormorant* are now putting in an appearance with the regular three being seen on the floating platform on most days.

Only 2 more waders have been seen on the Park since the last Newsletter, a *Green Sandpiper* on the 13th October and a *Woodcock* on 19th November. However, 40+ *Golden Plover* overflowed the Park on 22nd October heading southwest.

# The Royal Albatross

On a recent visit to New Zealand I was lucky enough to be in the area where the Royal Albatross nests and breeds in October, the only nesting site on an inhabited mainland. The albatross is the largest flying bird with a wing span of 3 metres. After a very picturesque drive along the coast road of the peninsula, near to Dunedin on the South Island, we boarded a small boat that was to take us to the tip of the peninsula to view the birds high up on the grassy slopes of the cliffs.



We could see several birds flapping their wings and were told that the 8 month old chicks were in the process of leaving on their long journey and testing out their wings. Several chicks had already left the previous 2 days and we hoped we might be lucky enough to see this rare sight. The chicks get quite heavy as they become ready to fledge and as they only get one chance to become airborne the parents put them on 'a diet' and feed them less and less regurgitated squid and fish to make it easier for them to take off.



Nothing much seemed to be happening and so, with a promise that the boat would return to check on their progress, we sailed further along the coast to view the blue penguins, the smallest of the species, spotted shag in full breeding plumage - double curled crest, white stripes on

head and neck and beautiful turquoise markings on their face. Large fur seals were resting on the rocks. We returned to watch the albatross, everyone urging them to leave. One adult flew off and then a few minutes later one chick decided the time was right and flew across in front of the boat and then skimmed the surface of the sea until it was out of sight. A sigh of relief went up from everyone.

The albatross mates for life and breeds only every 2 years when they are 8 or 9 years old. Young birds return to the nesting site when they are about 4 years old and hold 'teenage parties'. We were told an amusing story that one 42 year old female had returned one year without her mate and went along to one of these parties and found herself a 'toy-boy'. A great idea!!

A fantastic and rare sight.

*Jean Gray*

## Hedgelaying

The hedgelaying season is upon us again and 10 metres of Weggie Walk have to be completed by us before March. Four volunteer days have been spent at the site, one of which was so wet that snorkels and flippers would have been appropriate dress.

Other hedgerows to be laid this season are 150 metres of H2 (along the Perimeter Road from the A60 by Millfield) and 175 metres of H6 (behind Plantation P21 on the south side of the Park overlooking the farmland).

H2 will be completed by a private contractor but H6 has been allocated to B.T.C.V. to use as training days. All those wishing to participate will be most welcome - dates to be announced.

All the local Photographs in this issue have been taken by Norman Ecob.

## New Species

Only one new species has been found on the site since the last Newsletter.

This is **Caper Spurge, Euphorbia Lathyris** and is rare in Britain as a native plant.

## Welcome to 2004



*The Rangers' would like to wish everyone a*



*Very Happy New Year*

*and look forward to seeing you at as many diary events as you can manage. Thank you for all your help over the past successful year.*





Any articles for the next edition of the Friends News can be sent to 11 Peacock Close, Ruddington, NG11 6JF, left at the Rangers' Office or e.mail LMculjim@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

Sat 3rd 	Hedgelaying	Along Weggie Walk
Wed 7th 	Hedgelaying	
Thurs 8th	FORCP Meeting	St. Peter's Rooms, Ruddington. New Members Welcome <span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">7.30pm</span>
Wed 14th 	Hedgelaying	
Sat 17th 	Hedgelaying	

### FEBRUARY

Wed 4th 	Coppicing	Continuing programme of management
Sat 7th 	Hedgelaying, if not completed, or Coppicing	to improve the woodland areas of the Park
Sat 14th 	Thinning and Coppicing	
Wed 18th 	Thinning	

### MARCH

Thurs 4th	FORCP Meeting	St. Peter's Rooms, Ruddington. New Members Welcome <span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">7.30pm</span>
Sat 6th 	Tree Planting	Transplanting saplings from the tree nursery to gap-up in hedgerows and replace casualties in the plantations
Wed 10th	Willow Weaving	Repairs to the willow sculptures
Wed 17th <sup>1/24</sup>	Community Garden	Early Spring pruning <i>Safe building</i>
Sat 27th 	Spring Flowers	Leisurely walk to record early Spring wild flowers (and anything else about)



*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.**