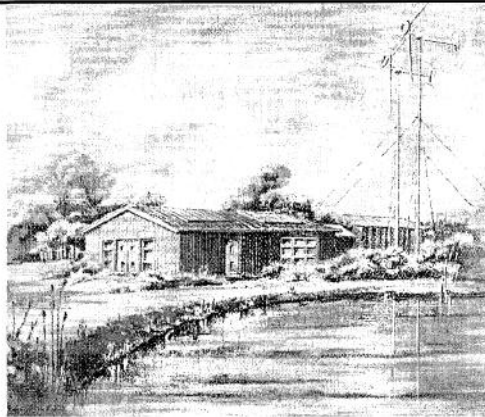


# Friends News

Friends of Rushcliffe Country Park (FORCP)

Issue 24 Spring 2004



## The Environmental Education Centre

At long last the construction of the Environmental Education Centre has begun. Work started on 15th March and will be finished towards the end of summer. The £165,080 contract for the building work has been awarded to Apex Piers Ltd, of Knottingley, and is to be funded by a partnership comprising of the Rushcliffe Borough Council and Experian plc, with a substantial contribution through Biffaward (landfill tax scheme). Further funding through the dTi's ClearSkies and Notts PSA programme will contribute towards a number of renewable energy installations included in the project, totalling £44,625.

The Centre will extend the range of school and community based environmental education activities currently able to be undertaken at the Country Park. The classroom/seminar area will seat upto 50 people for presentations. Friends will have their meetings here.

The Centre will encompass various display areas, including Bombs to Butterflies Sustainable Energy and Conservation Activities (beware Hem will display all those volunteer action shots)

We will promote sustainable development and the Centre will be constructed using the latest good practice in green architecture. It will feature solar panels for water heating and two wind turbine to generate electricity. This will be exported into the national grid.

### **Where the Money is coming from:-**

**Rushcliffe Borough Council** - £116,500 (construction, building, furnishing, equipment, security systems, fees)

**Experian** - £70,000 (for the classroom/seminar room);

**Biffaward/Landfill Tax** - £49,000 (kitchen, toilets, foyer/meeting room, security systems);

**dTi Clear Skies & Notts PSA grants** - £44,625 (sustainable energy: windpower, solar panels; photovoltaic cells, woodpellet burner)

**SEED** - £5000 (display regarding energy efficiency)

**Countryside Agency** - £4,000 (display Bombs to Butterflies, Computer)

The new building will be built next to the existing Rangers' hut. Work began in March and the centre should be open in the summer. The project has been made possible thanks to a very generous grant from Experian plc, as well as funding from Biffa, other award bodies and the Borough Council.

## AGE SHALL NOT WEARY THEM.....





With the average age of the Volunteers being somewhere 'over 21', it is with great pleasure that I announce the recent installation of six new seats around the Park. These seats, I am sure, will be much appreciated by various members of the working parties (including the Rangers), after, or most probably during, strenuous Saturday and Wednesday volunteer days.

# Going for a Grand

Over the years since the Park was created, previous Rangers and myself, with the help of volunteers and other interested parties such as moth trappers, have amassed a considerable count of species of animals and plants which inhabit the Park. Since I joined the Ranger staff 18 months ago, the number of species recorded has risen by 18.

The following table of fauna and flora numbers is a good indicator of the diversity to be found here and also to the varied types of habitat which these species inhabit.

	No of species recorded	
	Birds	117
	Mammals	18
	Reptiles/Amphibians	6
	Fish	9
	Butterflies	21
	Dragonflies	12
	Moths	39
	Other Insects	22
	Spiders	5
	<b>Total</b>	<b>249</b>
	Trees	59
	Wildflowers	196
	Grasses	21
	Mosses, Ferns	
	& Liverworts	2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>278</b>

As you can see the amount of species recorded is an amazing total of 527 and the list is not exhaustive - more are yet to be identified. Fungi, are not included (yet) but at least 11 species have been recorded, taking the total to 538. One more species of dragonfly (seen but not positively identified during summer 2003) takes us to 539 and hopefully more moths should be found this summer.

Freshwater invertebrates, found during pond-dipping sessions, add another 10 species and 2 species of earthworm known to live here take us to over 550. Ants, (2 species) aphids (at least 3 species) and various flies (found in the Rangers' cabin during hot weather) 5 species and we are at 560.

As the Park matures, more species will move in to take advantage of the habitats provided but this shouldn't stop us going out to find them now. My aim is to try to find 1000 species in the next few years - that really would put Rushcliffe Country Park on the map. **Mike Thompson**

## Hedgelaying

At the time of writing this, two out of the three sections of hedge due to be layed this season have been completed. Weggie Walk was finished on 28th February and a section along the perimeter road from the A60 along Millfield was completed by a contractor on 13th February. This section had not been layed since the mid 1950's and posed certain problems - not least of which was that some of the hawthorns were nearly one foot in diameter. All of the resulting brush from these sections has been chipped and has been used in Gibbies Wood.

Only one section is now left and this will be undertaken by the BTCV team during March.

## Dogs on Leads in Areas of Rushcliffe Country Park



DOGS must be on leads in the car park, around the lake and near the children's play area at Rushcliffe Country Park in Ruddington from the beginning of April. Rangers are erecting temporary signs to warn dog owners of the impending changes.

Anyone caught without their dog on a lead could face a fine of up to £500.

Hem Headworth, Ranger said: "We've had to bring in this new rule for many reasons. We don't want to be killjoys, but there are still five miles of footpaths and plenty of open land in the Country Park where dog owners can let their dogs off the lead. Also, people can bring their dogs into the Park from other entrances, such as off Asher Lane, without them having to wear a lead.

"There have been incidents in the car park which means dogs must wear a lead - one dog got injured and one dog was killed by a car. It's obvious why dogs should be under control near the play area - dog excrement can contain toxica caris which can cause blindness in young children as well as being foul and smelly. Also dogs have frightened and jumped up at young children, as well as stealing off with people's picnics and being a general nuisance.

"Dogs are also guilty of jumping in the lake when off the lead and this frightens the wildlife. Dogs have even bitten swans and other birds resulting in costly vet bills. The Borough Council is about to start work on the construction of our new education centre near the existing Rangers' hut and this will mean even more children and groups visiting the Park throughout the year".

## Damage Management

### -The Solution - (We Hope!)

After previous attempts by the volunteers to limit the amount of erosion to the lake edge by building revetments, (with mixed success), we think we may have found a solution.

After talking to David Ford, the Environment Agency Fisheries Officer, it has been decided that we build floating islands which will be anchored off-shore to cut down the wave action which washes away the bank. The islands will also be planted with various vegetation in such a way that the roots hang down into the water and provide a haven for fish and invertebrates.



The large flat rocks which were dotted around the lake have already been moved and placed in an arc just offshore from the most affected part and can be seen to cut down on the wave frequency. The bank here has also been graded and planted with yellow Iris, some Phragmites (Reed) and Willow to consolidate the soil. More reed needs to be added to (hopefully) keep the soil in place and hopefully, help to prevent further erosion next autumn and winter.

# Gibbies Wood

## The Monies are in and we have begun the big spend

£14,000 has been successfully raised via: BTCV People's Places Award Scheme; The Lottery Awards For All; Nottingham Next Stage and Jubilee Awards.

In January members of the Wildlife Watch Group (WWG) cleared the areas for the pond and glade. Members of the Friends of Rushcliffe Country Park (FORCP) then puddled, played, lined, pebbled and witnessed the pond filled with water.

The pond was such a success the rest of the wood decided to join in and flood as soon as Dave 'The Digger' and Simon 'The Dumper' went anywhere near to cut the circular path!! The only ones who did enjoy the swamplands were the birds, finding easy pickings and probably having a good laugh at us!

The Lads valiantly soldiered on and with a little lateral thinking, the help of two large land drains, a number of small cut off drains and regular sweeping, the path was cut. It was then based with stone and initially tested by all who have ventured in since. The plan is, weather permitting, to roll and top dust in April to make the path Wheelchair accessible.

Landscaping has begun with FORCP relocating some trees from within the Park, and WWG planting Willow, near the pond and at the back of the glade. They have also put aquatic compost in the pond ready for planting and laid down habitat tubes for later 'bugs and beastie' hunts! The two land drains have taken many a bucket load of gravel to fill, courtesy of South Nottingham College and Rushcliffe Resource Centre.

The 'designer gateway' was then erected by FORCP as the 'posh' entrance, the tradesman's entrance i.e..for the Buggy, will be the inner gate near Asher Lane.

An informal/natural pathway has also been graded from the roadside further down Asher Lane (where there is a bridge across the ditch) to go through the woods and join the circular path. A stile is due to be put in to access this path from the road and surfaced using our very own home grown woodchips. (Hope you're ready for that one Vols.!)



Much excitement ensued on the discovery that the Barn Owl box had been recently occupied by - wait for it - an Owl. We wait with anticipation to see if it will be used by a breeding pair this year.

The Sculptures made last year which sit patiently in the garage, are to be put in place within the wood this April. Next will be the grading of the path sides, rotovation of the glade, sowing and planting with a variety of wildflowers, and plants for the pond.

We also plan for groups to design and build some rustic seats and construct a 3-sided hide. We then might just have time to fit in some woodland management!

Thanks to all for your hard work so far and to the successful completion of the project. We hope you enjoy the results.

## New Species



Two new species were recorded on the Park during January - both birds.

On Wednesday 14th after a volunteer day working in Gibbies Wood, five Egyptian Geese were seen on the lake by most of the working party, and on Tuesday 27th a Firecrest was seen in the conifer plantation adjacent to the footbridge over the railway.

One species has also been added to the Flora list - Montbretia, Crocosmia X Crocosmiiflora, a man-made hybrid which is widely established in Britain and France. This plant has been present on the Park for a long time but was overlooked and not included on the list of species.



## PARK UPDATE

**Education** - From this year certain areas of plantation on the Park will be co-managed by parties from South Notts College, Skill Force and possible Wildlife Watch with the aim of long term conservation and educational projects. This, we feel, will give these groups a sense of ownership and provide an ongoing resource for educational purposes. With the new building being installed this will provide the groups with an area to display their results over the coming school terms.

**Recent Records including Swan News** - One new species was seen feeding on the bird table on the 21st February - a rook. This takes the total number seen feeding here to 20, including brown rat!

Coltsfoot has been found flowering already (2nd March), and after snowdrop (Feb 9th), dandelion (Feb 12th) and blackthorn (Feb 21st) is only the fourth species to flower this year.

On Saturday 28th February more than one member of the public came to the cabin to report a mass of feathers near one of the seats adjacent to the Lake. They were concerned that as the majority of juvenile swans had left, one may have fallen foul of a predator. On closer inspection the victim was identified as a wood pigeon. Brer Fox is high on the list of suspects.

As mentioned, seven out of eight juvenile swans left on the 27th February after almost two weeks of continual harassment by Dad.

Lastly, on 20th February, a chiffchaff was heard singing near the main gate. These birds are normally summer migrants but this individual was almost certainly one that had overwintered.



# Rushcliffe Country Park

## ACTIVITY DAYS

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

### APRIL

Sat 3rd	Gibbies Wood		Grade circular path sides and prepare glade area for planting
Wed 7th	Lakeside		Fencing West-side perimeter
Wed 14th	Lake	EASTER	Remove and make new Barley Straw Sausages (despite what the EU say!)
Wed 21st	Lakeside		Fencing West-side perimeter
Sat 24th	Gibbies Wood		Woodcarving installation & Pre-Opening Prep

### MAY

Sat 1st	Gibbies Wood		GRAND OPENING plus Planting Wildflowers and Pond Plants Plus Wildlife Watch Group
Wed 5th	Mystery Task?		Any suggestions?
Sat 8th	Community Garden		Sprucing up for the summer
Thurs 13th	FORCP Meeting		St. Peter's Rooms, Ruddington. New Members Welcome Talk/Slides on Attenborough NR by Bill Wheatley <span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">7.30pm</span>
Wed 19th	Lake		Top up planting on Floating Islands plus Reed bed relocation

### JUNE

Wed 2nd	Wildflower/Butterfly Survey		
SUN 6th	Wilwell Cutting		Open Day
Wed 9th	Gibbies Wood		Construct and erect Rustic Seats
Wed 16th	Lake		Construct and launch a floating island
Sat 19th	Lake		Construct and launch a floating island
Sat 26th	Wildflower Survey		



*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.***

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