

Friends News

Friends of Rushcliffe Country Park (FORCP)

Issue 25 Summer 2004

The Environmental Education Centre



The brand new Environmental Education Centre is near completion, and will be handed over to the Ranger Service in early July, and will officially open its doors to the general public and community groups in September. (Of course the Friends will get to use the building in the interim!)

The centre is as environmentally friendly as possible and we plan to make the centre energy neutral. The building will be heated by a wood pellet burner, and water heated by large solar panels on the roof. Two wind turbines are to be erected next to the education centre and the energy produced will be exported into the National Grid with the aim of producing and selling as much energy as we use. ISKRA a new Nottingham based wind turbine company has been commissioned to install its first turbines here in the East Midlands. The Iskra AT5-1 wind turbine can produce enough electricity in both high and low winds to power two typical UK sized houses.

We've also used other environment-friendly features at the centre. The building is timber-framed using wood from sustainable sources. We have fitted insulation to the highest possible specification in the walls and roof and 150mm of insulation has been added to the concrete floor to prevent heat escaping. The exterior will be protected with natural wood preservative and the paint used will be created from natural oils and colours. The rain run off will be fed into soak-aways in the park (water butts can be added later for our next project - Landscaping around the building!). We are heating the building with a wood pellet burner - and the Head Ranger is in negotiations at present to make our site more sustainable by providing willow, hazel and the other timber from the Country Park's coppicing regime for production of the wood pellets, in turn these too will be used for heating the centre.

The Education Centre will house the Rangers' Office, a small kitchenette, toilets, and wetroom for volunteers and school children to wash down in before entering the classroom/seminar room with a spectacular view over the lake. The classroom can hold 30 people around tables and seat between 50-60 people. The foyer area will feature displays on sustainability, "Bombs to Butterflies" and many temporary displays.

Hemendra Headworth - Head Ranger

Lakes and Erosion Management

This year much work has been carried out on and around the lake to not only reduce the erosion from the wave effect but to raise the level of vegetation and improve available habitats for all wildlife.

Dave the digger showed off further talents as a JCB driver by relocating the trees (from the site of the new building) to the opposite side of the lake - (thereby creating an instant windbreak); recycling the soil from the site to rebuild the eroded banks and digging out three deep channels from the reedbed and placing these reed blocks and soil offshore around the lake sides. This has made shallow banks that have shallow water behind which is especially for wading birds.



Following the successful launching of two prototypes, a further four floating islands were then constructed by FORCP, South Notts College, Skill Force and Rushcliffe Resources Centre. All but one have been planted up - we await the vacation of the Moorhen and her chicks nesting on the side of the last raft, before completing that one too. Four more floating islands will be made in June and placed at the other end of the lake.



To increase the safe nesting areas for birds, the north and west sides have been fenced. The fence line at the back of the reedbed (removed for digger access) has been replaced, this time including a gate as access for future works. The results have been pleasing - the vegetation has responded to the changes made and begun to establish itself - the birds seem to appreciate the extra nesting/resting area too.

lake itself - the quality of the water is being effected by the fact that the lake is overstocked with fish which is damaging the Biodiversity. Consultations with the Environment Agency are in progress to arrange for a sympathetic cull for the benefit of the fish colony and for the relating wildlife that inhabit the lake.

Additions to the Team

We have two new additions to the Team at the Park, Jonathan Wain who is a volunteer Ranger and Heather Dawson, our new seasonal Ranger who starts on 21st June for six months - welcome to both!



Gibbies Wood

April saw the circular path finally rolled and top dusted; the sides of the path and glade rotovated ready for planting in May; and the informal path woodchipped with a squeeze stile placed in the roadside hedge line. The wood carvings have been positioned around the pathway and by the pond. The Green Man however, has since been removed for further carving and attachment to a pedestal (which will be done during the wood carving workshops this autumn) and be re-installed in September.

The weather played fair for the Grand Opening on May 1st. Wildflowers and trees were planted and turfing of the pond edges completed. Attending were the Mayor and Mayoress, Brian Knowles, FORCP, Wildlife Watch Group, Rushcliffe Resource Centre, Dave the Digger and family and many more - thank you to everyone who turned up and helped make it a successful day.

Following a number of requests two dog bins have now been placed within the wood. Gibbies appears well used and we have had many compliments about how nice it is - however, observance of its use, particularly in hot weather has necessitated netting of the pond - it appears it is thought of as a paddling pool for people and dogs alike! We needed the water to remain undisturbed for a period of time before planting - which has now been done. The netting will remain until the plants have become fully established.

The next stage will include the construction and siting of rustic seats and a three-sided hide; further wood carving and, during the summer, continuation of flora and fauna

Lovers have a Donkey Lane

Several people interviewed during the *Bombs to Butterflies* project remembered the Country Park site in the 1930's, before Ruddington Depot was built. Some had happy memories of playing there as children, while others recalled going courting with a sweetheart and strolling romantically along the footpaths and cart tracks which



crossed the area. One farm track was known as Lovers Lane, and was particularly popular with the young people of Ruddington. It began at The Green by Elms Farm, and went southwards along what is now Leys Road to Sheepfold Farm, which was on the present northern boundary of the Country Park. Then it continued in a straight line southwards, past where the Rangers' Office now stands, and on to Long Farm which still exists, and can be seen beyond the lane which encircles the southern boundary of the Park. There is a little used gate close beside Middlemarsh Pond at the exact spot where Lovers Lane crossed the Bradmore Parish boundary. Would it be appropriate to call the path from the Rangers' Office to the pond *Lovers Lane* as it follows, approximately, the path taken by the farm track from Elms Farm to Long Farm?

Donkey Lane was also a frequently used, and fondly remembered, cart track from Loughborough Road running westward between Mill Field and two small fields of permanent pasture. All of these features are still there along the path from the Avenue Gate beside the recently layed hedge, along side Loughborough Road to where there is a sharp right-angled turn in the path, which continues for about 100 metres between high hedges. This is the original Donkey Lane. In early Spring this area is particularly attractive when the blackthorn is in blossom, and the ancient wild plum tree at the end of the very overgrown hedge of Mill Field is a mass of small white flowers. Could the name *Donkey Lane* have been used again for this part of the path?



E. M. Lawson

Congratulations

to

Margaret and Kenneth Lawson on

the occasion of their Golden Wedding. An invitation is printed below to join them for a Service of thanksgiving and at *Churchside* later. This is for FORCP members only.

Margaret and Kenneth Lawson
invite Friends of Rushcliffe Country Park
to celebrate their
Golden Wedding
with them at a
Service of Thanksgiving
on Saturday 14 August 2004
at St. Peter's Church, Ruddington at 12 Noon
and/or
at "Churchside", Vicarage Lane, Ruddington
between 3.00 pm and 5.00 pm

No presents please.
Donations for
Christian Aid
welcome

RSVP to
Churchside, Vicarage Lane,
Ruddington, Notts NG11 6HA
0115 9211 545

SWAN NEWS

On Thursday 27th May seven cygnets emerged from the reed bed accompanied by the proud parents. Intolerant Dad spent most of the day chasing off Canada geese and any other coot, moorhen or mallard which came within range. Overnight on the 27th and 28th Mum took the cygnets back to the nest to brood them but on Saturday 29th it was obvious that disaster had struck. Only three cygnets were left. Sometime during Friday night four of the cygnets had disappeared. An exhaustive search of the reed bed and all around the lake failed to find anything and it is thought that some predator had taken them. This is only the second time that this has happened - one bird previously disappeared from a brood of nine.



PARK UPDATE - WILDLIFE NEWS AND NEW SPECIES

Since the last Newsletter, Spring has given way to early Summer with a corresponding change in flora and fauna. Early butterflies put in an appearance with Brimstone (25th March), small Tortoiseshell (16th March) and Orange Tip (16th April) being the 1st's for the year, whilst Redwing, 7, (8th April) were seen leaving for their breeding grounds in Northern Europe.

One new species of animal has been found on 7th June - a large red damselfly was seen over the lake. Its Latin name - just for Norman - is *Pyrhosoma Nymphula*.

The early Spring Flowers Walk during March and subsequent checks around the Car Park area provided us with eleven new species of Wildflower - too many to list and with complicated Latin names - plus one overlooked species which has been here forever but just not on the list - Primrose.

Seventeen further plants were imported for use in Gibbies Wood; nine were introduced prior to the opening on 1st May and eight further species are in reserve for planting in the wetter areas. All these species are native and live around our area.

On the 14th June, Zoe found a Common Spotted Orchid. This is only the second type of Orchid found on the Park and there is just one on the site.

Stop Press: an apology. On Wednesday 2nd June whilst on the Volunteer Day for the Wildflower/Butterfly Survey a certain plant which I had identified earlier as *Montbretia* turned out to be *Stinking Iris*. Sorry, Paddy - you were right. However, *Montbretia* DOES appear, but down near the old Commandant's House, so all is O.K. species-wise in the end.

POLAND IN SPRING

For several years we had thought of visiting the last remaining primeval forest in Europe, the famous Bialowieza forest in Eastern Poland, close to the Belorussian border. With Poland joining the E.U. this could lead to major changes in the method of farming and so it seemed the right time to visit.

A journey through the peaceful rural landscape in Eastern Poland is truly a step back into the past. Farmers still cultivate their land in strips, tend their fields with horse drawn ploughs, and women use sickles to cut the grass, [no lawn mowers to be seen,] as they have done for generations.

We began our tour in the Biebrza Marshes. This area, a vast mosaic of marshes, ponds, reed beds, and wet meadows, with the sight and sound of cows wading in deep water, makes up the largest continuous expanse of riverine marshland in Europe. It was here that we experienced a 'cruise' by punt. Picture 16 bodies of assorted shapes and sizes wandering down a Polish village street to meet the 'handsome' local farm workers who were to guide us through the reed fringed backwaters in their punts. They were obviously enjoying themselves. Comments, which we unfortunately couldn't understand, passed back and forth and the joker of the group gave Margaret's knee a good squeeze as he overtook our punt. Beaver lodges, booming Bitterns, Cuckoos calling, Hobbies feeding on the wing and newly emerged Club-tailed dragonflies made for a tranquil and interesting afternoon.

The Bialowieza Forest with its swampy alder woods, old limes, oaks and hornbeams was very impressive. Part of the forest is a strict reserve, entry without a guide is forbidden. We met our guide at 5 a.m. to begin our tour. The forest was alive with the sound of drumming *Apeckers*, eight species in this area, and the songs of a variety of other birds. When the national park was established in 1932 trees have been allowed to lie where they fell, except across tracks and paths where they are hand-sawn and dragged clear by horses. No powered machinery is allowed. A dead tree soon acquires a wonderful hanging garden of mosses, soft woodland grasses, small flowers and fungi. A fairy tale forest!

A more sinister aspect of the history of the forest was related to us by our guide. During World War 2, the Gestapo headquarters was in the village, and the villagers were taken into the forest and shot. It is now the local Post Office, complete with bullet holes.

Sadly we now hear that there are plans to build a motorway from the Baltic down through the National Park in Eastern Poland. Surprise, surprise!
Margaret Heatherley and Jean Gray

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Subscriptions for the season 2004-2005 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

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

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 8th	FORCP Meeting	St. Peter's Rooms, Ruddington. New Members welcome. 7.30pm
Sat 17th	Outing	Visit to Colgrave Country Park - Call into Rose & Crown afterwards. Meet 11.00am at Hollygate Lane car park (next to the Canal Bridge)

Wed 28th Woodcarving

Sat 31st Woodcarving

AUGUST

Wed 4th Woodcarving

Sat 7th Woodcarving

Sat 14th Woodcarving Golden Wedding Celebrations See page 2 for details. FORCP members only

Wed 18th Woodcarving

Thurs 19th FORCP Meeting Summer Social - Meet at Paddy's House FORCP Members only. **6.00pm**

Sat 21st Woodcarving

Wed 25th Woodcarving

Sat 28th Woodcarving

SEPTEMBER

Wed 1st Installation of Woodcarvings

Thurs 9th FORCP Meeting To be held in new building if finished, otherwise at St. Peter's Rooms. New Members welcome. **7.30pm**

Sat 11th  Hayrake

Wed 15th Construct & install finger sign posts

Wed 22nd Construct a 3 sided Hide in Gibbles Wood

Sat 25th Complete construction of 3 sided Hide

 *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.

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



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