

Friends News

Friends of Rushcliffe Country Park (FORCP)

Issue 27 Spring 2005

As it was in the Beginning



Acres of mud and standing water covered most of the site. The Anglo-Saxons who lived nearby called it Fowemer (pronounced Foe-Emma or foamer), because there were four lakes within the boggy wasteland. Four meres or lakes remained throughout the Middle Ages, when the marshland acted as a buffer zone between the two large Open Fields where the villagers of Ruddington cultivated their strips. Mill Fields lay to the east and Thornditch Field to the west. In 1698 Thornditch Field was converted to grassland, and in 1776 an Enclosure Act saw the rest of the parish parcelled out into small fields with hedges. Drains, called Jury Dykes, were dug on the marsh which was still called Fowemer, and the area became water-meadows which often flooded. In 1884 a very effective Victorian drainage system, consisting of hundreds of earthenware drain pipes which carried the water into a stream crossed the area. This became known as Gibsons Dyke or Gibbies Brook. Fowemer was replaced by productive farm land, but the four lakes remained as four small ponds. The two largest were called Big Fowemer and Little Fowemer.

In 1940 the MOD Depot and bomb factory were built on the farm land, and the four ponds were filled in. Gibbies Brook was enclosed in a culvert. In 1990 the depot was demolished and the Country Park created.

As it is Now

Recently an area of the newly-opened Gibbies Wood was clear-felled, because unsuitable trees had been planted too close together, in ground that was too wet and had become diseased. It was discovered that, such is the power of nature to re-establish itself, that the ancient marsh called Fowemer had returned to this small area. Little Fowemer, one of the four lakes reduced to a pond, had re-appeared in 1997 as a water-logged hollow. This was excavated in 1998, and now forms a seasonal pond with dipping-platform on the southern boundary of the Park. It is, alas, quite dry in summer. Both features need a helping hand.



As it ever shall be?

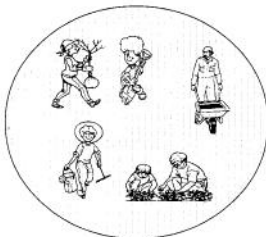
The Friends of Rushcliffe Country Park are applying for a grant which will hopefully enable them to restore this tiny fragment of Fowemer to permanently wet marshland surrounding a small pond. A really squelshy area with willow scrub will be created within the re-planted coppice trees in Gibbies Wood. The seasonal pond will hopefully be re-lined and Little Fowemer will also be restored.

The general public and local community groups will be invited to help with the planting of trees and woodland and wetland wild flowers

At the same time opportunities for exciting 'safely dangerous' play activities will be constructed, such as a maze and spiral tower.

Watch this space!

Margaret Lawson



THE TERRACOTTA POTTERERS

The pre-Christmas social took place in December with a walk to Bradmore by the more hardy members, mainly to take advantage of John Randall's invitation to coffee and mince pies. (I am told they were delicious - thank you John.) The sun shone and a pleasant stroll there and back was enjoyed by all.



It was also the morning of the Wildlife Watch group and several members stayed to supervise the activities in the new classroom.

Roger Byrne, with a life time of experience had us all enthralled with his demonstrations and stories, even a poem about a snowball. Yes, I was paying attention! Everyone was soon up to their elbows in clay and produced their own versions of the Snowman, seen above prior to firing and glazing.



Why should the kiddies have all the fun? Workshops were immediately arranged for the adults. See your Activities list.

Norman Ecob

PARK UPDATE

The first two months of the year are not normally noted for their records of bumblebee (1 unidentified *Bombus* sp. 13th January). Nor is it the time to find a new species of plant (1 Water Fern, *Azolla filiculoides*). This was seen in Gibbies Pond by Peter & Heather on or about the 7th February and identified on the 21st.



Other than Daisy and Dandelion, three other species of wildflower have been found flowering around the Park; these are White Deadnettle (30th Jan), Hogweed (6th Feb) and Germander Speedwell (11th Feb) - all very early.

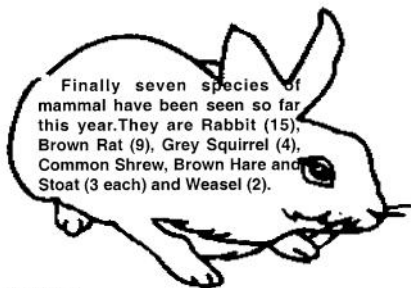


Counts of Bee Orchid rosettes have resulted in impressive numbers being found with 131 in G7 (Grassland 7), 152 in G5, 62 in G6 and 4 near the Willow Sculptures. This gives a total of 349 but more are out there.

Also on the 15th February, two Tree Sparrows were seen at the feeders in P23. Although there is a large breeding colony at Bunny, these birds seem not to want to visit the Park at all. Nest boxes and the feeders were installed to tempt them but until now none have been seen. Pellets found under the owl box at the seasonal pond gave the game away and a visit by the Barn Owl Group confirmed the presence of a bird roosting in the box.



On Tuesday 15th February two Peregrines were seen flying over the Park heading more or less North and on Saturday 26th February a female Blackcap was seen at one of the bird feeders in P23 near the Rangers but 1 tree nursery. Blackcaps are normally summer migrants but increasing numbers are now overwintering here.



Finally seven species of mammal have been seen so far this year. They are Rabbit (15), Brown Rat (9), Grey Squirrel (4), Common Shrew, Brown Hare and Stoat (3 each) and Weasel (2).

CLAY WORKSHOP

In January the Friends met in the classroom for a clay workshop. The project involved making tiles in the shape of birds - which fitted together to form a decorative plaque. The design was adapted from artwork by MC Escher a Dutch artist.

A second workshop then glazed these tiles and a third involved mounting them on a plywood board. All these sessions generated plenty of interest and enjoyment. The finished piece now hangs proudly on the outer wall of the Foyer.

Alongside these workshops the Wildlife Watch Group embarked upon a similar project, this time making tiles in the shape of fish. Again based on an Escher design the finished plaque also hangs on the outer wall balancing the Friends' work.

Further future group projects are now being considered.

Results of the Natural History Quiz
from last quarter's Friends News



- | | |
|--|-------------------|
| 1 This is not an old black Ford | Newt |
| 2 This bovine should watch her footing if she doesn't want to fall over | Cowslip |
| 3 I wouldn't want to eat this for Christmas, even if it came with maple syrup | Canada Goose |
| 4 The cat wouldn't but maybe the... | Dogwood |
| 5 He could have been a dapper dresser in <i>The Wizard of Oz</i> but he was more of a coward really | Dandelion |
| 6 Mr Atkinson visits the high hill to search for embers | Mountain Ash |
| 7 Churchill was one; Nelson was; Guy Gibson and Douglas Bader were but don't forget to put an N on the end | Heron |
| 8 A female's embroidered frock | Lady's Smock |
| 9 A female's footwear | Lady's Slipper |
| 10 This bird has such bad habits, it's best kept in the house and only seen 24 times a day | Cuckoo |
| 11 The two main characters in <i>Great Expectations</i> said very quickly together, may give you a clue to this furry fly by night | Pipistrelle Bat |
| 12 A book by G.P. Taylor. Forget the wood | Worm |
| 13 Has this little fellow come from a high position in China? When he opens his mouth he sounds like a fake doctor. | Mandarin Duck |
| 14 Some sort of bog jump jet maybe? | Marsh Harrier |
| 15 This flower may ring to stop the boxing match | Harebell |
| 16 This flier is a colourful member of the navy | Red Admiral |
| 17 A regal sportsman on the river bank | Kingfisher |
| 18 In the field there's part of a tall bird | Meadow Cranesbill |
| 19 Maybe it's a hunting one and Scotty will bring you up if you ask him properly | Hornbeam |
| 20 At this time of the year it proudly bears its crown in the woods | Holly |

WILDLIFE AT CHURCHSIDE, RUDDINGTON
1ST JANUARY - 31ST DECEMBER 2004

The list consists of sightings either within the garden of Churchside, Vicarage Lane or seen from the garden. They are listed in order of sighting.

Blackbirds

Blue Tits

Great Tits

Long Tailed Tits

Magpies

Rooks

Swifts

Bullfinches

Kestrels

Sparrow Hawks (which nested in the trees behind the house)

Wrens

Crows

Brimstone Butterflies

Painted Lady Butterflies

Red Admiral Butterflies

Humming Bird Hawk Moth

Green and Bronze Shield Bug

Frogs (up to 40 at one time)

Smooth Newts

Foxes and Cubs



We all know the Country Park is rich in wild-life, but it can be found anywhere, even in the heart of a built-up area. Keep your eyes open and listen and you will be surprised by the living creatures all around you.

Kenneth Laswon

Subscriptions for the year 2005 - 2006 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, Nottingham 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.


APRIL

Sat 2nd	Gibbies Wood Log Maze
Wed 6th	Pottery Workshop - Swan & Reflection Murals Plus planning for Summer workshops
Wed 13th	Gibbies Wood Woodchip Path
Wed 20th	Gibbies Wood Log Maze
Sat 23rd	Gibbies Wood Woodchip Path
Sat 30th 	Early Spring Walk - Wildflower id.

MAY

Wed 4th	Pottery Workshop - Glaze Swan & Reflections Murals
Wed 11th	Build a Sensory Trail (Woodland near New Building)
Thurs 12th	FORCP Meeting 7.30pm - RCP Classroom. New members welcome
Sat 14th	Gibbies Wood Log Maze
Wed 18th 	Bird ringing (weather permitting)
Wed 25th	Gibbies Wood Log Maze
Sat 28th 	Wildflower id Walk

JUNE

Wed 1st	Complete Sensory Trail
Wed 8th	Pottery Workshop - Mount both Murals
Wed 15th	Maintain Willow Structures / Floating Islands
Sat 18th	Gibbies Wood Log Maze
Wed 22nd 	Wildflower id Walk / Butterfly & Dragonfly Survey
Sat 25th 	Remove invasive species P25a



This symbol denotes the activity is working towards the Notts Biodiversity Action Plan.

Meet at the Rangers' Office at 9.30 am.

Unless stated all events run from 10.00 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
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