

Summer 2009



Issue 44

# Foxglove Covert

In the beginning, many years ago, the government decided that a new army base was required. After much surveying, a site was found near the village of Catterick, with a small stream that could be dammed to provide a source of fresh water for men and horses. From this small site, the Catterick Military Training Base was born, and on the site was a 10 hectare firing range.

Later, for security reasons, it was decided to fence the camp, and during the work a length of fencing was erected in the wrong place, isolating the range from the rest of the camp, and amazingly nobody noticed! So, for nearly 30 years, nobody visited the site, and not a shot was fired. The dam forming the pond collapsed, and the whole site became a wilderness.

Then, very slowly and in a very low key, a couple of naturalists received permission to have a look round and, in 1992, the site became a conservation area, right in the middle of the camp. Since then the site, now known as Foxglove Covert, has been slowly extended and now covers 36 hectares. It was to Foxglove Covert that a group of ten *Friends of Rushcliffe* went on the 17th June.

First, a security check, then a drive through the barracks, and alongside the famous fence, through a second security check, a sharp u-turn, and back down the other side of the fence; then onto a very pleasant reception building where we met our guide, Marion. It was decided to have lunch before setting out, so we sat in the classroom, looking out through picture windows, to an area with about four bird feeders. And were there birds feeding!! - finches, tits, warblers, and for me, the star of the show, a Greater Spotted Woodpecker.

We were then taken to the moth room. Once a week they put out moth traps, and then catalogue everything trapped inside - their busiest night had trapped over 340 moths, although only some 30 species were on display that day, and all would be released that afternoon.

Then there followed a two hour tour of the site. The dam has been repaired, and the pond restored. A number of small, steep sided streams run through the site, making it a good location for bank voles and, as they have successfully eradicated mink, hopefully otters in the future.

There is a wide range of habitats - a small wooded valley with stream, wetlands, open scrub, areas of willows, heath land and forest, both pine and deciduous. With more time, I am sure that a lot more wildlife could have been seen but for us, sadly, although we spent time in the hide, there was very little life on the pond or surrounding areas. Greater Spearwort, with its lovely yellow flowers, was everywhere, together with a range of orchids, heath bedstraw, and some white creeping thistles.

The site carries out regular bird ringing, and has just completed working on their latest land addition, a heath land area, in which a number of scrapes have been completed within the last six months. Already lapwings, redshank and oyster catchers have bred this spring although, again, the new hide looked out on another rather empty landscape - we saw only two lapwings.

It was interesting to compare this site with Rushcliffe; we have the general public in, and nest boxes and feeders tend to get vandalised, whereas they only have visitors who are interested in nature, and who respect these things, so their conservation efforts can be more concentrated. An enjoyable day out, that finally came to a close with the two and a half hour drive home. Thanks very much to Dorothy and Zoe for making all the arrangements. **Bill**

## Coffee and Cakes - Update in June

Our regular 'First Sunday' openings are going well with more customers enjoying the home-made cakes and shelter from our variable weather! We have more signs now, thanks to Roger, to let visitors know that 'Today we are Open', so we hope that the warmer weather will bring in even more.

Many people ask why are we not open every weekend, but it is simply a matter of staffing, so if you think you could join our growing group by helping once a month or alternative months for two hours or more, please let me know. Come and see us open on 5th July, 2nd August and 6th September and enjoy a cup of tea or coffee and a piece of cake! **Sue Jackson**

## WILDLIFE UPDATE

Since the last newsletter we have increased the species total by more than 40. A lot of these were as a result of mini-beast hunts by school parties and various moths attracted to the lights of the building, but 5 species have been added that were previously overlooked (mostly from pond dipping).

Bill has completed a wild flower survey of the Seasonal Pond and has found 29 species growing there. Another two are known from this area but are not yet in flower. You never know - there may be something new here.

On 15th of June another Waved Black moth was seen in suitable habitat so it appears that the population is still viable.

A report by Charlotte McGraw, Head of Community Shaping at R.B.C., proposes that four more nature reserves be declared within the borough, Rushcliffe Country Park being one of them. This proposal will go before a full cabinet meeting in either August or October so we could be a Local Nature Reserve before Christmas. **Mike.**

## TIMELINE IN THE CONTINUING SAGA OF THE SWANS

**Tues 18th Dec 2007** - Wilhelmina and her cygnets flew off the lake.

**Wed 26th Dec** - A new pair of swans took up residence on the lake. The male had no identification ring, but the female did. At this point no-one was able to get close enough to read it.

**Thurs 27th Dec** - Wilhelmina returned alone. The new pair drove her off and she was taken to Holme Pierrepont to prevent her being killed by the new resident pair.

**Sun 30th Dec** - The male swan was caught and ringed but the female eluded capture.

Wilhelmina returned with a male swan and a cygnet (not one of her own). The resident pair pursued them to drive them off.

**Mon 31st Dec** - The cygnet had flown away by itself, and after many hours of battle. Wilhelmina and her new partner admitted defeat and flew off the lake.

The female was finally identified as a daughter of our original pair, and Wilhelmina's sister, named Angelina. This pair defended the territory against several pairs. They constructed their nest at the front of the reed bed so that they could be seen clearly.

**22nd May 2008** - The new pair proudly displayed their new family of seven cygnets to the public.

**Dec 19th 2008** - Having successfully reared five of their young, the whole family flew off and did not return.

Within the week the lake had been reclaimed by Wilhelmina and her new partner (who we have named Wilfred or Fred to his friends). Before the breeding season several swans visited the lake (including Angelina and partner) but were soon driven off.

**May 18th 2009** - The new family of five cygnets were proudly presented to the world.

**The Saga Continues!**

**Heather**

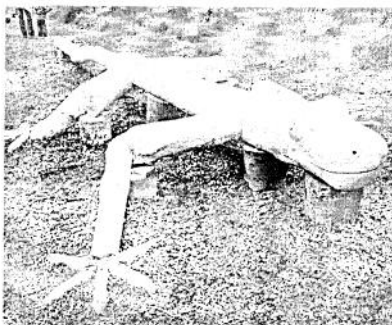
## New Sculptures in Gibbies Wood

The *Friends* have been busy in recent months and have replaced both the snake and lizard sculptures in Gibbies Wood. The timber for both has come from the Sycamore trees felled near Loughborough Road. The snake's head was fashioned from a forked trunk and received two large fangs tipped in blood! Unfortunately these vanished due to vandals and were replaced with fangs with metal rods and metal brackets. We hope they will last a little longer. We have witnessed so many children enjoying climbing along the snake's body and they have also loved being photographed in the snake's mouth. The *Friends* all had a hand in texturing the snake's body with our wood carving tools.



The lizard started as just a head and we are pleased how his eyes make use of the heartwood from two branches. Children have commented how kind he looks! The body was made from sycamore logs all skilfully cut by our chainsaw expert Zoe. Many of the *Friends* have spent hours carving the surfaces and treating it with decking oil, we hope it keeps its fresh looks. Thanks to all concerned, once again *Friends* and Rangers working well together! Be sure to come and visit it when you can.

**Roger**



# Log Maze

We have all on occasions discussed the repair and maintenance of the log maze. The general opinion was to repair as necessary with the same design and materials.

On Monday morning I spent some time walking round inspecting and weeding the maze. It will take an enormous amount of time and effort to get it into its former glory even if we had the logs!!! Zoe has confirmed that there is not enough cut wood available to complete repairs and no other source.

Other materials have been mentioned to replace the wood. I would like everyone to please reconsider the possibility of tyres because:-

**Recycling:** it costs garages £1-£4 to recycle used tyres, therefore we could obtain them free

**Durability:** they would NEVER need replacing

**Design:** 1 tyre buried in the ground replaces approx 3 logs

**Rebuilding:** Friends could hire a mini digger for the day: (made £140 from Teas on the 10k run)

Rangers are now qualified to use this machine so WORK FOR US WOULD BE COLLECTING UP LOGS AND TAKING AWAY, BACK FILLING TYRES.

*Other ideas courtesy of Zoe:*

If we were to use tyres an additional game - maze could be marked on the top of the tyres - ideas?

They could be painted different colours.

Left with the tread.

As far as I am aware there are no health and safety issues! *Jill*



Work in progress clearing the logs.



New maze with tyres

## Membership

Over the past few months there has been a very welcome increase in our active workforce which has included young and the not so young. Although we do not have a Project linked to grant money at the present time there is still plenty of help needed to maintain various structures from past projects and help with new ideas that are put forward by the Friends. The willow structures are an example as they are always in need of care and attention. It is time consuming but very therapeutic! Subs became due in April and unfortunately I forgot to ask to have the slip printed in the April issue, hence the late appearance. *Jean*

---

**Subscriptions for the year 2009 - 2010 are now due** - minimum £2.00. If you wish to continue receiving your quarterly newsletter please fill in the form below and return it, with your payment, 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 - Minimum £2. Please return form to the Rangers' Office.

Name.....

Address.....

Phone Number.....

E.mail address.....

# Rushcliffe Country Park

## WORK DAYS

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

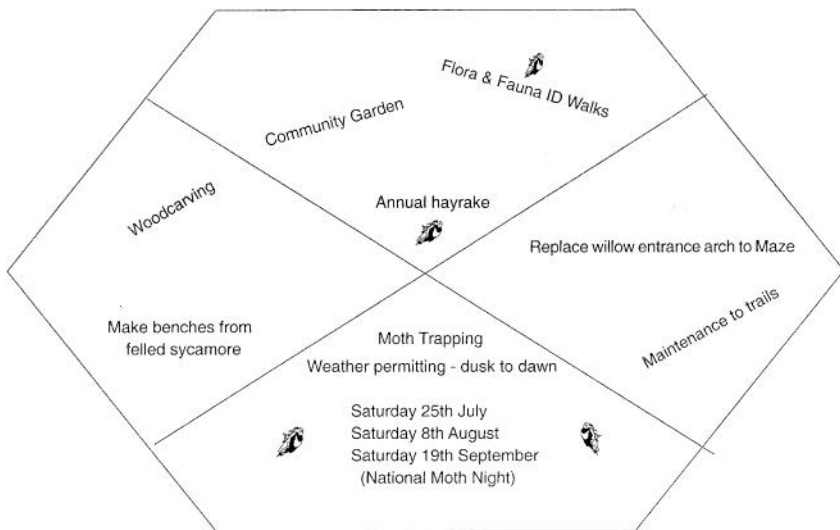
The Friends' Work Days will be held every **Wednesday and Saturday** from **Wednesday 1st July 2009 - Saturday 30th September 2009**  
New Volunteers and Members always welcome. See tasks below.

### Notable Dates

FORCP Meeting - Wed 2nd September 2009 - 1.30pm RCP

Summer Social @ Gordon's - Thursday 30th July - FORCP Members only

### Tasks



*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  
Website: [www.friends-of-rcp.co.uk](http://www.friends-of-rcp.co.uk)  
Registered Charity No 1079665



Supported by



An independent group associated with  
BTCV  
a registered charity