



Skylarks

Winter is fast approaching but we are already planning next year's events to keep you entertained in the Wick Country Park. All the latest news from the Friends of the Wick Country Park is here to keep you up-to-date with all that is happening in the park.

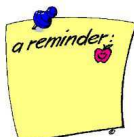
Message from the Chair

It's been another successful year with plenty of visitors to our events so many thanks to everyone who has contributed and attended. I'd also like to say a big thank you to the dedicated team of Wick Weeders who have spent many hours to make the pavilion garden look very good.

It's that time of year to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year and I hope you will join us on the 8th December for our Yuletide Ramble and AGM with mulled wine and mince pies. Look forward to seeing you all at our events in 2014.

Eileen Cattell
Chairperson





A reminder for 2014

It is that time of year again - yes all those New Year renewals. The most important one of course being the renewal of your Friends of the Wick Country membership!

Nikki our dedicated Membership Secretary is on the case. We do hope that you will continue to support the *Friends*. Please use the form enclosed to renew your membership.

PLEASE DO NOT FORGET

The Yuletide Ramble & AGM on Sunday 8th December, starting at 2pm!



Finish the year with a sociable walk around the park with the Ranger and *Friends*. Enjoy some mulled wine and mince pies, stay for the AGM, meet the committee and have your say about the park.



We look forward to seeing you there!

Our last event of 2013 but our list of events for 2014 will be published soon!!



MERRY CHRISTMAS AND SEASONS GREETINGS FROM ALL THE TEAM

Crickets & Dragonflies 2013

"The park has a secret rhinoceros, don't you know? See if you can find him". The children looked at each other in awe, their eyes screwed up against the bright sun. "Where, where?" they shouted in return. It was explained that the rhinoceros only makes an appearance if he sees his friends – Crickets and Dragonflies. This was enough to drive the children into a frenzy of net sweeping across the park on Sunday 11th August for the annual "Crickets and Dragonflies" event.

It was a beautiful hot day, as Mark the Park Ranger led the family groups into the park, accompanied by members of Friends of the Wick Country Park. Children were each given a net and bug box with attached magnifying glass – and once equipped – were left to swoop the hedgerows and long grass for any insect they could find. Techniques varied! These included flapping the nets in mid-air in the hope "something might fly in" to stealthily crawling through long grass (a la David Livingstone) and silently bringing the net down nice and gently. Whatever the method, many species were found and studied.



There were lots of beautiful Meadow Brown butterflies, with their orange and brown spotted coloured wings; Gatekeeper, Peacock, Large White and Common Blue being other varieties. A Cinnabar Moth Caterpillar was caught – but how to tell the difference between a butterfly and a moth is beyond nearly everyone! Do they just look more 'fluffy' somehow? There were lovely, long-legged Field and Meadow Grasshoppers, bright green and brown in colour. Of course, the distinctive bright red ladybirds made an appearance. A few creepy-crawlies, which instigated some bouts of mild screaming, were the Wasp Spider and Red Tailed Bumble Bee. Mark walked the group over to the side of the lake in the hope of seeing some dragonflies. Unfortunately, none were spotted which was unlucky. But to make up for their absence were stunning electric-blue coloured Blue Tailed Damselfly and Common Blue Damselfly buzzing and skimming along the hedgerows. A marvelous spectacle of flashing colour.



The children were delighted with their efforts at catching and took great joy in rushing to the Park Ranger to ask lots of interesting questions. The parents also seemingly enjoyed getting into the swing of things! All insects were released back into the wild and hopped, jumped, buzzed or flew off back into their natural habitat. The group finished their walk across the park to return to the pavilion for well-earned refreshment. Many thanks to all those who attended and helped make it such an enjoyable afternoon. A special mention to the family who made it all the way from Great Wakering! The FOWCP would like to thank Mark Williams for his knowledge and expertise.

By the way, the rhinoceros decided not make an appearance. By home time, the happy but tired bug-hunters had forgotten him anyway. Who needs a rhinoceros when you can have "Crickets and Dragonflies".

(Written by Trudie Crow)

Kite Festival 2013 – A Knotty Problem

Having arrived an hour before the official start time, volunteers from the “Friends” committee sat down, ready for an intensive hour of training on how to construct a kite with the Essex Kite Group, in anticipation of many children needing help with the kite they would make.

Now with only six pieces to put together nothing could be simpler or so we thought! For a group of bright adults never has a so called simple task proved to be so problematic, not aided by each person appearing to have nine thumbs, and with the off time looming, panic and despair started to set in.

The initial task was to fix the two spars on the sled (the face of the kite) by use of 25mm masking tape at the top, bottom and the middle, easy so far but then attaching the bridle by use of special twine with a bow line knot was the complete opposite. Vernon, Maurice & Glenda showed the proverbial patience of a saint as time and time again we appeared incapable of completing a bow line knot. We had to follow the simplistic instructions of having threaded the twine through the corner of the sled, we had to make a loop of a fairly small size (the rabbit hole) and then put the other end (the rabbit) through the hole and then go behind the tree (the remaining length of twine), back through the rabbit hole and pull. A simple task on paper, reality no. The winder with the flying line then had to be fitted onto the kite by use of another knot, a Larkshhead and having already fixed the tail of the kite onto the sled, it was ready to be decorated.

By the time the kite festival started, we had a small modicum of what our task was for the remainder of the day and with the rudiments being grasped, Vernon, Maurice & Glenda sat back to watch our efforts, however, it was not long before help was required! From 11.00am onwards, we saw a steady stream of enthusiastic children keen to make a kite, with a wide range of kites being made, with the recommended size of the “rabbit hole” varying from mouse hole to badger size. However, we got there in the end with the knotty problem not being such an issue.



Whilst the Essex Kite Group continued throughout the day to fly their magnificent kites, they were joined by a number that were hand made by the children (and the odd parent), carrying their own individual and unique designs. Most of these flew quite well in a strong wind and only the odd one needing additional tape or a more extensive repair after crash landing.

The Friends gave out spot prizes during the day for either best flyer or best designed. A great time was had by all with more kites than ever being made by the children. A special thanks go to the Essex Kite Society for their kind support of the event and for their patience in passing on their experience in kite making.



(Written by Paul Clarke)



Events for 2013

The Friends' Committee has arranged the following events with the Wick Country Park Ranger. Some events are organised by the Friends of the Wick Country Park (FOWCP) and others by Basildon Council (BC). For all events meet at the Wick Country Park Pavilion.

Wick Weeders (FOWCP) Usually the 2nd and 4th Monday of each month, starting at 1.30pm (see website & posters)

Yule Ramble & AGM (FOWCP) Sunday 8th December, Starting at 2pm

Finish the year with a sociable walk round the park with the Ranger and *Friends*. Enjoy some mulled wine and mince pies, stay for the AGM, meet the committee and have your say about the park.

For any more info on the above please contact Nikki Gibson on 01268 734293, email mikenikki@supanet.com or Christine Lee on 01268 571302, email clee@btinternet.com

Latest information on events throughout the year can be found on our website: www.friendsofthewickcountrypark.co.uk

Membership

If you are not a member but would like to join the *Friends of the Wick Country Park* please contact Nikki on 01268 734293 or email mikenikki@supanet.com

The Friends of the Wick Country Park Committee:

Eileen Cattell - Chairperson, Nikki Gibson - Vice Chair/Membership Secretary, Dorothy Cundy - Treasurer, Christine Lee - Secretary

Committee Members: Trudie Crow, Maxine Crow, Hilary Sim, Marie Singleton, Peter Bates, Paul Clarke, Alaric Cundy

Basildon District Council Countryside Services:

Mark Williams - Countryside Ranger, Telephone: 01268 562921

Steve Prewer - Manager of Countryside Operations and Development, Telephone 01268 465380

Neighbourhood Policing Team: Telephone 0300 333 4444 or 07875 003503

Some dates already for your 2014 calendars and diaries!

The Quiz of the Year - The Friends of the Wick Country Park Quiz Night on Friday 28th March 2014

The Dog Event of the Year - Paws in the Park on Sunday 8th June 2014

Further details will be published in next year's editions of the Skylarks newsletters.