The newsletter of the
Friends of the Wick Country Park
www.friendsofthewickcountrypark.co.uk

ISSUE 53 MAY 2017

Skylarks

Spring is here and lots will be happening in the Wick Country Park in the coming months. Read all the latest news from the 'Friends' and we look forward to seeing you at our many future events. Come along and enjoy the fun with all the activities featured!

A Message from the Chair

Dear Friends

We had a very enjoyable Bird Song Walk last month and it raised in my mind the compromises required in managing a Country Park. The lake is so important for wildlife, dogs love to swim there and it is popular with anglers. Sadly swans have not nested there for a few years probably due to the increase in human activity. The islands and fenced off areas round the lake must be left undisturbed, as a safe haven for nesting birds and mammals. It would be really helpful if the dogs swam in the bay away from the wildlife and away from the anglers, …….and if everyone took their litter home, then peace would reign and wildlife could flourish.

Continuing the theme of care for the environment and waterfowl in particular, here is a suggestion. Instead of feeding the ducks bread, which is actually not good for them, why not bring some defrosted peas? It is a healthier option, easy for children to handle and better for them if they decide to eat some too.

I hope to see you all at Paws.

Nikki, Chairperson

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Please also do not forget our next Skylarks 3K Race on Wednesday 26th July at 7.30pm!

PLEASE COME ALONG TO THE NEXT EVENTS IN THE WICK COUNTRY PARK

PAWS IN THE PARK

a fun dog show

Sunday 11th June 2017

11am – 4pm

at Wick Country Park
Tresco Way, Wickford, SS12 9GP

stalls, refreshments, flyball demonstration, children's activities.

FREE for spectators
£2 to enter dog into show

details: www.friendsofthewickcountrypark.co.uk
or contact Nikki on 01268 734293
chair@friendsofthewickcountrypark.co.uk

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NATURE QUEST

Children - Become Nature Detectives

Sunday 11th June 2017
11am – 4pm
Crafts, Bug Hunting, Pond Dipping etc.

ALL FREE

‘The Weed & Clean’

Monday 27th February saw a small band of merry helpers descend upon the park for the big Weed and Clean 2017. After a briefing over tea and cakes (apparently it's tradition) led by Chair Nikki, teams were assigned to tasks around the park.

Loaded up with bin bags and varying lengths of 'pickers' litter was methodically collected from nearly every corner of the park and around the lake, also from the car park and play area. Finds ranged from items of clothing, fishing line, small gas cannisters, various bottles and cans, to firework casings and home furniture!!

Rebecca did an amazing job of clearing the pillbox next to the Pavilion you could almost eat your dinner off the floor.....well almost. Between the rain clouds and refreshment breaks we were able to clear most of the park to create a better habitat for wildlife and place for our visitors to enjoy.

Weeding and pruning of the garden in front of the Pavilion provided a great start for new growth for another amazing show of colour for 2017! Well-done to everyone who volunteered their time. If anyone would like to come along next year, please let us know.

(Written by Ali Riley)

‘The Skylarks 3K Race April 2017’

It was a fine evening for the good turnout of runners and supporters at the first Skylarks 3K Race of the year, a total of 64 runners taking part.

Many thanks to Peter Bates and his team for the excellent organisation, also to all the hardy runners taking part and the supporters cheering them on.

The winners of the race are listed below. Everyone enjoyed the evening and I hope you will be able to support the next Skylarks 3K event on Wednesday 26 July 2017 at 7.30 p.m. Looking forward to another great turnout, inspiring evening and fine weather.

First Man – Chris Wayman in 10:19

First Lady - Hayley Pegg in 11:35

First Boy - Freddy Taiani in 12:34

First Girl - Rebecca Omer in 14:57

Please also do not forget our next Skylarks 3K Run on Wednesday 26th July at 7.30pm!

‘The Quiz Night 2017’

Friday 3rd March and the doors opened at the Barnhall Community Centre for the eager participants of the teams taking part in the ever popular Quiz Night. It was a sell out weeks in advance with 13 teams ready to answer the questions prepared by quizmaster Michelle.

Everyone knew it was going to be very competitive and the questions would need a lot of concentration, thought and brain power - to help there was plenty of activity at the bar as it was going to be thirsty and hungry work!

As ever the raffle was extremely popular, participants clamouring for tickets to hopefully win one of the many excellent prizes on offer. It was a difficult prize choice for many of the happy winners!

Michelle started with the first of 10 rounds plus of course a Marathon round which could be the make or break of a lot of the teams.

The quiz was tightly fought and the gold star balloon went from table to table to identify who was in the lead. From the start table 10 looked to be a strong contender for the winning accolade but there were two other teams also in the race for success, tables 7 and 12. However at the final count it was team 10 that was the strongest and took the winning prize - a bottle of wine for each member!

Cheers, here’s to next year’s event!

More photographs are displayed on our website *www.friendsofthewickcountrypark.co.uk* and you will see how much fun the evening was and everyone enjoying themselves.

‘The Bird Song Walk 2017’

It was a bright, hot, sunny morning when 16 of us set off, in the wake of Mark the Ranger, to see how many birds we could identify in the park.

The first bird was easy to recognise, the brightness of his red breast, identified him as a British Robin, visiting European Robins tend to be paler. Robins are very territorial so his warning call to other Robins could be clearly heard. While standing by the pond, near to the beautiful white blossom of the Hawthorn and Blackthorn hedge, we heard Blackcaps, and saw a Wren and a male Blackbird. The hedgerow which passes through parts of the park is probably a hundred years old and is invaluable to wildlife. At this spot we also saw a Cabbage White butterfly and one of the possible 24 species of bumblebee.

Close by we saw the amazing (and some thought revolting) sight of a mass of Hawthorn Webber moth larvae. Fifty or more wriggling caterpillars cocooned in layers of fine white silk webbing.

During the next part of our walk we identified by sight or sound Chiffchaff, Greenfinch, Goldfinch, Chaffinch, Wood Pigeon, Crow, Great Tit, Song Thrush, Magpie and Blue Tit.

Mark was delighted to catch the display call of his first Skylark of the year. These are ground nesting birds and one of the reasons why areas in the park are left unmown during the summer. Sadly modern farming techniques have caused a decline in the Skylark population. We looked out for the return of the White Throat that over-winters in warmer climes, but were perhaps just a little too early in the season.

In the lake we saw Moorhens, Canada Geese and Mallards, plus a few dogs! (See the Chair’s message). To our delight we were able to identify a regal looking Heron at the far side of the lake, before heading back to the Pavilion for refreshments, after a very successful bird walk. Thank you, Mark!

(Written by Nikki Gibson)

EVENTS PROGRAMME 2017

The following events for 2017 have been organised by the Friends of the Wick Country Park in consultation with the Park Ranger. ***All events start at the Wick Country Park Pavilion and, apart from the quiz night, booking is not required. Refreshments are available at all events.***

EVENT	DATE	DETAILS
Wick Weeders	***Usually the 2nd and 4th Monday of each month***	Starting at ***2pm*** (see the website & posters for confirmation of the dates). Equipment is provided. Help is always needed to maintain these gardens.
Paws in the Park	***Sunday 11th June***	***11 am to 4 pm*** Our hugely popular annual fun dog show, for dogs of all types, ages and sizes is a must for all dog lovers. Keep an eye on the 'Events' web-page for details of this year's categories and side-stalls.
Nature Quest	***Sunday 23rd July***	***11 am to 4 pm*** The whole family can come, be it for just a couple of hours, or for longer. Pond dipping, bug hunting and more. Children must be accompanied by an adult.
Skylarks 3K Race	***Wednesday 26th July***	***7.30 pm*** The second race this year organised in conjunction with the ***Pitsea Running Club***. Open to all runners and power walkers - or why not just come to support?
Kite Festival & Classic Car Display	***Sunday 17th September***	***11 am to 4 pm*** Another great family day out - held in conjunction with the ***Essex Kite Group*** and the ***South Eastern Vintage and Classic Vehicle Club***. ***Allow at least an hour.*** Learn how to make and fly a kite.

For the latest information about the Country Park, the Friends group and our events, please see our website: www.friendsofthewickcountrypark.co.uk or *contact Nikki Gibson on 01268 734293 or email chair@friendsofthewickcountrypark.co.uk,*

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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 **nikkigibson621@btinternet.com**

Friends of the Wick Country Park Committee:
Nikki Gibson - Chairperson/Membership Secretary, Richard Rowsell - Vice Chair, Dorothy Cundy - Treasurer, Marie Singleton - Secretary, Alaric Cundy - Webmaster
Committee Members: Ali Riley, Christine Lee, Peter Bates

Basildon Borough Council Countryside Services:
Mark Williams - Countryside Ranger, Telephone: 01268 562921
Rob Baker - Parks and Countryside Supervisor, Telephone: 01268 553992

Neighbourhood Policing Team: Telephone 0300 333 4444 or 07875 003503