

WELCOME

to the Friends of The Wick Country Park
from Karen McKay, Chairperson.



Skylarks

This is the first newsletter that we have produced since the group was formed in July. It's fitting that we are launching ourselves on the eve of the official opening of this wonderful facility for the people of The Wick and Wickford generally. Basildon District Council's Countryside Services are responsible for the park and have been very supportive in the establishment of the group.



Dont worry, well make it fit! Volunteers laying planks across the recycled electricity poles to form a rustic foot bridge. The bridges carry the Easy Access Trail across the brook and ditches along its 2000 metre length.

The Friends are a group of local people who are working with the Council to make the country park a real community resource developed by local people for local people. It's exciting being in on the action right from the start and a lot has been achieved by our members already.

Alder trees have been planted in the carr - a wet woodland. All we need to do now is build the raised walkway across the carr. Quite a challenge. Reeds have been planted in the lake and the reedbed, once established, will attract lots of interesting wildlife. Planting in the water was a precarious job, using a boat and some careful balancing on the steep banks! The reeds were attracting wildlife even as they were being planted, damselflies settled on them immediately and began laying eggs whilst clinging to the stems! Unfortunately, there are less welcome creatures that regard the reeds as just a tasty snack - Canada geese. They have

nibbled many of the new shoots right down, but we are confident that they'll be growing again, come spring.

As well as planting things, we have been building too. Two footbridges, one across the brook that runs through the park, and another over a large ditch now make it possible for future visitors to access more of the site.

Let's not forget the work done to record the changes in the wildlife that have already started to take place. As the park matures new species will arrive, so it's important to know what is present from the beginning and monitor the changes. Armed with a selection of identification books the group, led by the Countryside Ranger, Paul Bown, walked the hedgerows and field, recording as many trees, flowers, insects and birds as we could. We will publish the list of species we've found from time to time, then readers can see how the changes in the park are affecting the wildlife. The mayweed, teasel and thistle, so common on the bare disturbed ground will give way to other species as the conditions change. The lake, too, will attract more wildlife as the surrounding vegetation matures to provide food and shelter for species as diverse as kingfisher, reed warbler, frogs, toads, and lots of dragonflies and damselflies.

These are the sorts of things that you, too, can get involved in. But if you're too busy, tired or unable to physically help there's something else you can support. Over to you, Dawn.....

A message from Dawn Penn, Meetings Organiser:-

I see the events programme as an opportunity for members to meet each other and listen to an interesting and informative talk on a topic relevant to The Country Park. There will be an event for members every second month and the programme so far is as follows: -

8th December 2002 @ 11.00am

The official opening of The Country Park. An opportunity for members to plant a tree in the park. Watch your tree grow as the park develops. Other activities include displays and guided walks, not forgetting welcome, winter refreshments!

January 2003 @ 7.30pm

A timely opportunity to hear Will Farmer talk about the SKYLARK, a singing resident of The Wick Country Park. The rough grassland provides important nesting and feeding for this most popular of our birds.

March 2003 @ 7.30pm

Liz Appleton, Countryside Ranger has been studying the dormouse for some time now. This nocturnal creature emerges from hibernation in spring, so her talk will be timely. This beautiful and uncommon species is just about our most lovable mammal, and has a fascinating life story.

Details of more events will follow in due course.

Work Parties

Throughout the summer surveys of the flowers in the park have been undertaken. Small teams of volunteers armed with identification sheets and field guides have listed the common and not so common species found in the large meadow. Among the common varieties clover, mallow and teasel are plentiful. Other identified species include scented mayweed and scarlet pimpernel.

Weather conditions on the days of survey were noted and all identified species have now been entered on a database that can be amended and extended as necessary.

Other work has included a preliminary survey of the wildlife of the lake and dam. Apart from the troublesome Canadian geese, moorhens and a kingfisher have been spotted. In the water itself, greater and lesser water boatmen, diving beetles and good numbers of water fleas are all encouraging signs that will lead to an increase in biodiversity.

Reed planting in the lake took place on the 16th and 17th July. In all, nearly 2000 plants had to be loaded into a small boat (a few at a time, of course) and then dropped into place in the shallow water around the southern edge. A good effort by the Ranger and a small team of volunteers ensured the job was done by mid afternoon on the second day.

Work parties normally take place on the last Wednesday of the month. Anyone interested in volunteering can contact a member of the committee or the Ranger, Paul Bown, on 01277 624553. A job that is scheduled for the near future is the construction of a raised walkway across one of the ponds, so if anyone fancies getting stuck in with hammers, drills and saws let Paul know soon.

We need your money!

An appeal from Dave Mullender, Treasurer.

Obviously, a group like the Friends of The Wick Country Park cannot survive on enthusiasm alone! There are meetings to arrange, a hall to book, speakers to pay, equipment to purchase, refreshments, stationery - the list goes on. Please join, and support us in our work with Basildon Council to make this country park the very best it can be, for local people and wildlife. The rates are very reasonable, and you can always challenge the value for money at the Annual General Meeting, held on my yacht in St. Tropez!!

Please fill in the Membership Application contained in this newsletter and return it to me, with your payment. Thank you.

And finally - who are we again:-

The Friends of The Wick Country Park Committee:

Karen McKay *Chair*.
Dawn Penn *Meetings Organiser*.
Dave Mullender *Treasurer*.
Deborah Belverstone.
Gary Baker.
Barbara Chapman.
Reg Hartley.

Basildon Council, Countryside Services officers:

Steve Prewer, Manager of Countryside Services (01268 550088).
Paul Bown, Countryside Ranger (01277 624553).

Membership Application

FRIENDS OF THE WICK COUNTRY PARK

(PLEASE USE BLOCK
CAPITALS THROUGHOUT)

If taking a household membership,
please list all those to which it applies.

Full name: _____

Address: _____

Full name: _____

Age, if under 18: _____

Full name: _____

Age, if under 18: _____

Full name: _____

Age, if under 18: _____

Full name: _____

Age, if under 18: _____

Type of Membership requested
(please tick):

New:

Renewal:

Membership fees:
£3 per household £1.50 individual.

I hereby apply for membership to the
Friends of The Wick Country Park, and
agree to be bound by its constitution.
(Copy available on request.)

Signature: _____

Date: _____

OFFICE USE ONLY
Please return to:
D. Mullender,
31 Tresco Way, Wickford, SS12 9GP.

Membership No: _____

Renewal Date: _____