

# Skylarks

The committee is busy planning for two main events this year – 'Nature Quest' in May and 'Paws in the Park' in June. Please do try to come along and support these events.

## Chairperson's Report 2006

Another year has passed and it's time to take a look back at what we have achieved and to think about our plans for the coming year.

We have held a range of events and tried out some new ideas and I think we have learned a thing or two along the way. We had the Open House event in March providing people with the chance to find out more about the Friends and hopefully attract a few new members. I think that taught us not to hold an event like that on Mothering Sunday again!

There have been the wildlife events led by Mark looking at birds, grasshoppers and damselflies and crickets and dragonflies. We also helped with the council's kite festival held at the park last September. Knowing that the park is popular with dog walkers we put together a dog awareness day in June. We can thank Tricia and Nikki for much of the work that went into organising that event and it was such a success that they have already put in a lot of effort to start planning a similar event for June this year.

Another new idea was to encourage local photographic societies and members to put on a display of their work and in July we had an exhibition by local photographers Darren Chaplin and Peter Park. Committee members were on hand throughout the weekend to welcome visitors and to offer refreshments. We should again thank Nikki who organised, and gave up most of her weekend for, that event.

Work parties have continued on every third Sunday of the month but volunteers have been a bit thin on the ground. It would be nice to see a few more members taking part. There is absolutely no pressure to attend every month and you don't have to spend the whole day helping. Just an hour or two would make a difference. We would also be glad of extra help with events. Please let us know if you would be willing to lend a hand occasionally. This might include helping with refreshments or setting up equipment. Other ways that you can help include joining the committee (it really isn't as bad as it sounds).

Plans for this year's events are underway. As well as a

day called 'Nature Quest' for 20 May and another dog day called 'Paws in the Park' for 10 June. This should be even bigger and better than last year's event. If anyone has ideas for future events we would be pleased to hear them.

Last year our newsletter Skylarks saw the arrival of Phil the Pill box and more recently his friend Ernest and I'd like to thank everyone who has contributed to the newsletter. If any members have any comments, ideas or contributions for future issues please let us know.

I would like to thank all our members, particularly those that have attended or helped at events and work parties. Please continue to support the park by renewing your membership and do consider getting more involved. I would also like to thank Mark and the other members of the committee for their time and enthusiasm and in particular Maurice and Alison Sweetland who have now stood down as committee members.

**Deborah Belverstone**  
Chairperson

## Nature Quest

The first of our main events this year is 'Nature Quest' a fun family day on Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> May between 11am and 4pm.

Starting beside the Pavilion the first part of the quest will be a quiz taking you around the park and testing your knowledge of the natural world. The quiz will lead you back to the Pavilion ready for your next challenge.



You may have noticed the pond next to the Pavilion. This is the dipping pond which you are usually only allowed access to if you are on an educational visit (or helping at a work party). However as part of 'Nature Quest' young and old alike will be able to investigate the underwater world by taking part in some pond dipping.

Further activities will also be available in the Pavilion as well as refreshments.

Don't miss out. Tell your friends and come and join us for a fun day at the park.



## Canine Ramble

The early morning rain had stopped by 10am and the park started to look highly suitable for the dog walking group. By 10.30am a large number of visitors had assembled ready to take their charges for a figure of eight walk. The skies remained overcast, but for the walkers, many who hadn't been to the park before, there was plenty of interest. The trees were still holding on to their leaves and a few autumn tints remained.

After enjoying their excursions, which lasted for a little over an hour, the dogs and their owners arrived back at the pavilion. Now was the time for refreshments. Coffee, tea, biscuits and mince pies were the order of the day. Soon everyone was seated and a great noise ensued, not from the dogs but from their owners who seemed to have enjoyed our park and had much to talk about.

It seems that this group meets every month and goes to different locations for their 'doggy walks'. Perhaps the canine ramble will become an annual event and we can continue to show off our park and gain more new members.

### Mike Craig Friend of the Wick Country Park

The committee would like to thank Mike and Norma Craig for their help serving the refreshments at the Canine Ramble.

For more information about the Canine Ramblers only please contact Gill Beck on 01268 459675.



Off for walks!



Enjoying refreshments in the pavilion

### Natural Nibbles

Hi! Phil here!



Have you looked outside the window lately? Are your bird tables and feeders full of birds and bird food? Good!

Now what do you think the birds would eat if you didn't feed them? What do you think the birds eat in the park cos we haven't got any bird tables here?

Have a think – then in the next issues of 'Skylarks' I'll tell you some fascinating facts about what some of the birds in your garden eat in the park.

Phil the Pill Box

### Did you know....

... what sort of bird is pictured in the 'Friends' logo? Well it is also the name of this newsletter. So what exactly is so special about the Skylark and why was it chosen as our symbol?

The Skylark, *Alauda arvensis*, is a small brown bird, a bit smaller than a starling. You may not have noticed it in the park but you have probably heard its flight call. This is when the male bird rises vertically from the ground high into the air where it remains for several minutes on fluttering wings before parachuting back down to the ground. All the time it is in the air the bird continuously sings its liquid warbling song called a liquid 'chirrup'.

Skylarks breed on meadows, salt marshes, heaths and farmland. In the park they nest on the meadow in front of the Pavilion. The nest is a cup on the ground made from grass and hair.

In recent years the population has fallen so that today it is about one-third what it was 30 years ago. This is thought to be due to changes in farming practices and the use of pesticides. It is on the Red List as a bird of high conservation concern. Listen out for the Skylark when you are next in the park.

## Events

### Basildon District Health Walks

Tuesdays 10.15am for 30 to 40 minutes. Meet in the car park. For info. call 01268 568528

The Friends' committee has arranged the following events with the Wick Country Park ranger. For all events please meet at the Wick Pavilion.

### Work Parties

Third Sunday of each month  
10am – 12noon and/or 1pm – 3pm  
Come and have fun and help the ranger with improvements to the park.

### Bird Watch

Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> March  
10am – 12noon  
Bring your binoculars and join the ranger to look and listen for the



### Nature Quest

Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> May  
11am – 4pm

A fun day for all the family. Be a nature detective, explore the park and investigate the underwater world of the dipping pond. Parental supervision required.



### Paws in the Park

Sunday 10th June  
11am – 4pm

Calling all dogs! Bring your owners for some canine capers. Fun dog show, agility display, children's quiz, stalls, exhibits and more.



### 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@sunanet.cym

## The Friends of the Wick Country Park Committee:

Deborah Belverstone - Chairperson  
Nikki Gibson - Treasurer  
Tricia Marshall - Secretary  
Allison Tanner  
Gill Clarke  
Maureen Bradford

Contact Deborah on 01268 572732 or email [dbelverstone@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:dbelverstone@yahoo.co.uk)

## Basildon District Council Countryside Services:

Marcus Hotten  
Countryside Officer  
Telephone: 01268 550088

Mark Williams  
Countryside Ranger