



# Skylarks



## A Message from the Committee

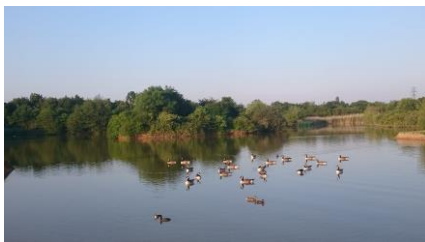
Welcome to the latest edition of the Skylarks newsletter. We hope you have been enjoying the summer despite the mixed weather conditions.

It has been a fairly busy year for the Friends of the Wick Country Park. The first event was the Bird Song Walk in May, fine weather was welcome and appreciated for the walk, this was followed by the Picnic by the Lake and then the Moth Night both in June. Reports of these events are featured in the newsletter.

The monthly wildlife walks again expertly organised by Martin Singleton have proved popular. Each month a comprehensive report is produced and also an annual summary which are uploaded onto the FOWCP website. Many thanks to Martin for his continued and welcome support.

Please do not forget if you see wildlife and you have a camera to hand please send your photos to the website [contact\\_us@friendsofthewickcountrypark.co.uk](mailto:contact_us@friendsofthewickcountrypark.co.uk)

A highlight of the Spring was the number of chicks on the lake, Canada Geese, Mallard, Coot and Moorhen. Did you see any of them on your visits to the park?



The next walk round the park will be the Autumn Walk with Apple Theme Refreshments on Sunday 1st October. We look forward to seeing you soon.

*Autumn Walk*

**Sunday 1st October 2023 at 10am**

*Please join us for an Autumn Ramble (1-1½ hours)*

*Meet at the Pavilion, Wick Country Park*

*The walk will be followed by 'Apple Themed Refreshments'*



## 'The Birdsong Walk'

The Birdsong Walk took place on Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> May. It was a day of sunny spells and pleasantly warm with the birds responding accordingly with a bumper total of 34 species identified. The main attraction in the park at this time of year are summer migrants and we managed to see/hear six of these on the walk, with four warbler species – Chiffchaff, Blackcap, Whitethroat and Reed warbler – plus Swallow and Swift. Surprisingly, Cetti's warbler is not a migrant but a resident bird but is increasing in the UK and it was very good to hear this singing during springtime. It is a skulking shy bird and heard more than seen, so confirming breeding will be virtually impossible, and all we can hope for is to hear increasing numbers in the park to assume breeding success. Another highlight for many of us, was the large number of chicks on the lake, Canada Geese, Mallard, Coot and Moorhen all have very cute and photogenic chicks at the moment, so its well worth popping over with your camera. However, the stars of the lake for me at the moment are the pair of imperious and elegant Great Crested Grebes. They just seem to glide around the lake, fishing with ease, carrying an air of lofty distain for everything else around them, including us. A good binocular view will show what fabulous birds they are but they do keep their distance and you will only get a long range photograph.



Chaffinch



Blackcap



Whitethroat



Reed Warbler



Cetti's Warbler

In addition to the birds, it was pleasing to see a few butterflies, which are finally starting to emerge from a pretty cool start to spring.

## 'Bring Your Own Picnic By The Lake'



The wildlife picnic took place on Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> June and it turned out to be a very pleasant day. We were lucky in that the weather, while hot, was cloudy and kept the blazing sun off us. Some wildlife was seen, including a single Great Crested Grebe on the lake. Is the other Grebe sat on a nest somewhere? Fingers crossed that we do get breeding grebes at the lake this year. Nice also to see a few Swifts flying around the lake and a couple of Buzzards overhead too.



Great Crested Grebe



Swift



Buzzard

(Written by Martin Singleton)

## 'Annual Moth Night'

Our annual moth night at the Wick Country Park took place on Friday 30<sup>th</sup> June. Sadly, the weather did not play ball and, although it was cloudy (good for moths) it was cool and windy with a bit of rain at times (not good for moths).



Despite the weather we identified 14 species, some of them new to the park list and it was an entertaining night out!



Pale Shouldered Brocade



Silver Y



Small Magpie



Speckled Bush Cricket

Thank you to Colin Sparkes who brings all the moth attracting equipment and identifies nearly all of what we see. We could not do this without you!

(Written by Martin Singleton)

## 'Wickford Community Showcase Event'



On Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> August the Community Showcase Event was held in Wickford High Street and the Friends of the Wick Country Park in conjunction with the Wickford Wildlife Society were provided a stall there. The event was organised as one of the first Wickford Town Council's events as part of their Summer Fest Programme offering the opportunity for groups to promote their services to a high number of residents. The objective of the event was to showcase the wealth of opportunity in the town helping to broaden experiences, develop skills and improve awareness of facilities and resources on offer, celebrating all that is good about Wickford.

It was certainly a busy day and both the Friends of the Wick Country Park and Wickford Wildlife Society had many visitors to the presentation resulting in new members joining.



A great recently taken drone photo of the lake at the Wick Country Park.

## Wick Country Park - Wildlife Sightings

This month's wildlife walk took place on Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> August. It was a very warm sunny day, so pleasant for wandering around the park, albeit a bit hot at times. It is a quiet time of year for birds, breeding season is largely over, and birds can just concentrate on feeding but we did get a couple of highlights. The main one being a Kingfisher with a fish in its beak flying from the lake, over the teasel field and away! Very unexpected and probably shows that Kingfishers visit the lake more regularly than we think – there are plenty of places for them to hide! Robins were very active this month singing from all parts of the park. At this time of year they are sorting out their winter territories, so expect plenty of Robin song over the next few weeks. There are plenty of juvenile birds in the park at this time of year, all learning their songs and at times it was difficult to identify the various tweets and whistles from the hedges as they do this – a bit frustrating but all part of the fun! By the winter they will all have learned to sing from the adults, and we will again be able to identify them. There were a few Swallows and House Martins overhead, probably feeding on their slow migration south, as was a late solitary Swift. Hard to believe that Swallows travel all the way to South Africa, although a very small number do over-winter in the UK mainly in the South West!



Kingfisher



Swallow



House Martins



Swift

With the sunny weather it was a good day for butterflies, although numbers were down on last month, as this year's adults come to the end of their time. Many butterfly species seem to have had a good year, but we have not seen a Common Blue or many Skippers this year, so perhaps these species have been affected by last year's drought? Only by recording and counting as we do will show over the years what is happening to our wildlife populations in the park. We saw a few dragonflies and damselflies at the lake including a very elusive Large Red-Eyed Damselfly and a couple of Brown Hawkers. There are several Migrant Hawkers in the park at the moment and you will see them patrolling the hedgerows for insect prey. As the name suggests, traditionally these are a late summer migrant to the UK from the continent, but they do breed in the UK and the migrants join the residents at this time of year, sometimes in very large numbers. As well as seeing a squirrel we did add another mammal to the list as a Fox crossed the road as we were leaving the park.

(Written by Martin Singleton)

If you wish to read any of Martin's reports they can be found on the Friends of the Wick Country Park website [www.friendsofthewickcountrypark.co.uk](http://www.friendsofthewickcountrypark.co.uk)

## 'Wick-ed Gardeners'



The Wick-ed Gardeners have been busy throughout 2023 working to maintain the Pavilion garden. If you would like to join the valued team of volunteer gardeners please come along, all are welcome, tools are available but bring your own if you prefer along with your pair of gardening gloves. Please keep an eye on the Friends of the Wick Country Park website under Latest Headlines for the date of the next session and meeting arrangements.





# WICK COUNTRY PARK EVENTS 2023



The following events for 2023 have been organised by the Friends of the Wick Country Park.

*All these events start at or near to the **Wick Country Park Pavilion** and for most events booking is not required, please see the particular event for details. Toilets, car-parking, cycle racks, and refreshments are available at most events.*

EVENT Please click on the link for full details	DATE	DETAILS
<a href="#">Wick-ed Gardeners</a>	Next date: please see the <a href="#">News Headlines</a> page	<b>Great news!</b> The new Wick Gardening Group - the Wick-ed Gardeners - is now meeting regularly in its new guise. For the next date, please see the <a href="#">News Headlines</a> page. Meet outside the Pavilion. Please bring your own gardening gloves. Tools will be provided, but if you have your own favourite gardening tool/s please feel free to bring your own.
<a href="#">Monthly Nature Walks</a>	Dates for rest of the year: October 18th November 15th December 13 <sup>th</sup>	Starting at <b>10.30a.m.</b> Enjoy a sociable and leisurely walk of approx <b>1 - 1.5 hours</b> around the Park, led by Martin Singleton, and assisted by other experts from the Wickford Wildlife Society to watch and listen to the varied wildlife in the Park. If you come throughout the year you may be amazed at the changing patterns of sightings throughout the seasons. For further details and to confirm the next date, <a href="#">please contact Martin Singleton</a>
<a href="#">Autumn Walk with Apple Theme Refreshments</a>	Sunday 1st October	Time 10am - Autumn Walk round the park then back to the pavilion for apple theme refreshments.



Come along to the Wick Country Park and enjoy a walk and see the wildlife.


If you do make any good wildlife sightings, please share them by sending an email to [contact\\_us@friendsofthewickcountrypark.co.uk](mailto:contact_us@friendsofthewickcountrypark.co.uk) and we will add them to the 'Nature Notes' on the website. If you could manage a picture or two that would be even better!

#### Friends of the Wick Country Park Committee:

Christine Lee - Acting Chairperson, Hazel Broomfield - Treasurer, Marie Singleton - Secretary,  
Eileen Cattell - Membership Secretary, Alaric Cundy - Webmaster  
Peter Bates - Committee Member

 Friends of the Wick Country Park

Wickford Wildlife Society website: [www.wickfordwildlife.co.uk](http://www.wickfordwildlife.co.uk)

 Wickford Wildlife Society

Wickford Wombles

 Wickford Wombles

Neighbourhood Policing Team: Telephone 0300 333 4444 or 07875 003503