

Skylarks

Here are just some of the things that have been happening in the park recently. But don't just read about it. Make sure you go along and take a look for yourself and enjoy your local park.

Dog Awareness Day

Dog lovers flocked to the park on 4th June to find out all about responsible dog ownership. As the park is so popular with dog walkers the committee organised a Dog Awareness Day. Dog owners entering the park were given bags, to encourage them to clean up after their dogs, as well as information on the parasite toxicara which is present in dog faeces and can lead to blindness.



Retriever!

There was also a variety of information available in the Pavilion and children received certificates for taking part in a quiz, all about staying safe with dogs, whilst exploring the park.



Peter with Lottie the lurcher

Visitors were able to make friends with four retired greyhounds who were brought along by volunteers from the local branch of the Retired Greyhound Trust. A display of photos of a large number of retired greyhounds encouraged people to consider re-homing one of these gentle and intelligent animals.

The highlight of the day was the Dog Obedience and Agility Display by members of the Billericay Dog Training School.

A number of dogs were put through their paces impressively completing a range of tasks.

The event was a great success and planning is already underway for next year's event. Watch this space!

Deborah Belverstone
Chairperson



Jessica Tanner meets Ben the greyhound



Photographic Exhibition

To attract new and more diverse groups of people to the park a free photographic exhibition took place in the pavilion on 15th and 16th July. As well as exhibits from local photographers Darren Chaplin and Peter Park there was also a digital slide show of a year in the Wick Country Park through the eyes of Emma, a Border Collie. Committee members were on hand throughout the weekend to welcome visitors and to offer refreshments. People who attended were delighted with the skill and quality of the pictures and one or two purchases were made. Some pictures had beautiful natural wildlife themes while others were intriguing for their humour and 'trick' photography. The large 3D-effect picture was fascinating, as was the explanation of how it was done! We would like to thank the exhibitors for giving so much of their time and it was just unfortunate that there were not more visitors to the park.

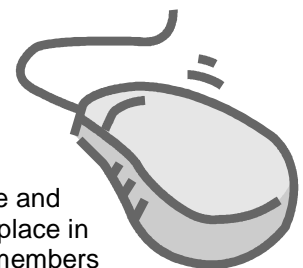
If you have other ideas or suggestions for promoting the park and encouraging local people to make use of this wonderful facility please let me know.

Nikki Gibson
01268 734293

E-mail Updates

To keep members up to date and fully aware of events taking place in the park, we plan to e-mail members about forthcoming events, interesting sightings and other matters of interest. It is expected that e-mails will be sent approximately every six weeks, depending on the time of year. Any member who does not wish to be included on the mailing list, please let me know. If you have not provided me with your e-mail address but would like to receive these updates please contact me on mikenikki@supanet.com

Nikki Gibson
Membership Secretary



Name that plant!

A botanical survey was carried out in July by a regional expert and over 120 species of plants were identified in the park. Some of the more interesting species included grass vetchling (*Lathyrus nissolia*), fine-leaved water dropwort (*Oenanthe aquatica*), hairlike pondweed (*Potamogeton trichoides*) and brooklime (*Veronica beccabunga*).

One of the plants on the list that was of interest to me was salsify (*Tragopogon porrifolius*). I had seen this plant growing on a small patch of land near to where I live and then again in the park during the grasshoppers and damselflies event in June. I thought it seemed unusual and quite attractive but despite searching through my wildflower books was unable to identify it. When I saw the survey list I knew it had to be there so I went through the names eliminating those that I knew. I eventually searched on the internet for salsify and bingo!

It turns out to be quite an interesting plant too. It's a perennial member of the daisy family, native to the Mediterranean and naturalized here. It has a flat head of mauve petals which then becomes a seed 'clock'. The flowers close up at midday inside long pointed bracts. It is sometimes called purple goatsbeard because it is similar to yellow goatsbeard (*Tragopogon pratensis*) which also goes by the name Jack-go-to-bed-at-noon. This you can find in wildflower books and they mention salsify in the text (no picture).

It is also known as oyster plant or vegetable oyster because its parsnip-shaped root is edible and tastes like oysters. Its name comes from the Latin "solsequium" - sol (sun) and sequens (following) = flower that follows the course of the sun. It is a food plant of the marbled fritillary butterfly.

Unfortunately I didn't take any photos of it but if you can access the internet and want to find out what it looks like I recommend visiting the website www.floralimages.co.uk

Deborah Belverstone
Chairperson



Environmental Birthday Parties at The Wick Country Park

Parties last for two hours and can be run on weekdays (between 10am and 5pm) or during the summer evenings (up to 6.30pm).

Bookings include an experienced activity leader and a fully decorated party room (with banners and balloons). Parents need to provide the birthday party food and refreshments for each child as well as paper cups and plates, etc.

Activities to choose from are:

Kite-making, Footprint frenzy, Pond dipping, Creepy Crawly Hunt and Earth walk.

Prices: £4.00 per child. (Minimum charge £40).

Contact **Basildon District Council Countryside Services** on **01268 550088**

Mud, mud, glorious mud!

There's nothing quite like it – when you're stuck in it.

There were three persons, 'A', 'B' and 'C' *, in the work party that day, clearing debris in the brook, removing branches and rubbish which had jammed across the stream and caused blockages like miniature beaver dams.

All three were struggling from time to time; the worst spot was under the vehicle bridge. 'A' got stuck and I mean **STUCK**, hanging on to the underside of the bridge, trying to extricate the right foot. 'B' and 'C' came to the rescue to pull out the leg. It was not easy; it seemed for a while that 'A' would have to crawl out of the waders like a snake shedding its old skin.

I suppose we can look back and laugh about it now. I would not have believed that mud could be so tenacious.

BEWARE THE MUD!

M.C.S.

*Names have been omitted to protect the embarrassed.



Events

Basildon District Health Walks

Tuesdays 10.15am for 30 to 40 minutes. Meet in the car park.

For info. call **01268 568528**

A Countryside Services event

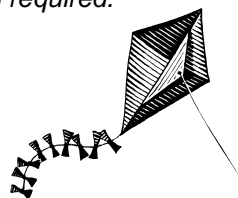
Kite Festival

Sunday 17 September

1pm – 4pm

Choose from a proven design using recycled materials or design your own. Join in the kite flyers' competition and pick up some top flying tips. Parental supervision required.

Booking essential
Tel: 01268 550088



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.

Yuletide Ramble & AGM

Sunday 10 December

2.30pm – 4.30pm

Take a wintry walk around the park and then warm up with mulled wine and mince pies in the Pavilion.

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:

Deborah Belverstone - Chairperson
Maureen Bradford - Vice Chairperson
Nikki Gibson – Treasurer
Tricia Marshall - Secretary
Alison Sweetland
Maurice Sweetland
Allison Tanner

Contact Deborah on 01268 572732 or email dbelverstone@yahoo.co.uk

Basildon District Council Countryside Services:

Steve Prewer
Countryside Services Manager
Telephone: 01268 550088

Mark Williams
Countryside Ranger
Telephone: 01268 562921