

# Skylarks

A new year, new 'Chairpeople' and first of the 2010 editions of Skylarks to keep you up-to-date with all the news from the Wick Country Park.

## Message from the new Chair

Hello everyone and a Happy New Year. This year we have a new 'regime' on the Committee - due to Allison Tanner leaving the post of Chairperson to take over as Secretary, it was such a hard act to follow we now need two committee members to fill this position. This has resulted in the creation of two Joint Chairpersons or 'Chairpeople' to handle the business in this transition period. We would like to introduce ourselves, Christine Lee and Eileen Cattell. Christine was last year Allison's deputy as vice-chair and Eileen was on the committee turning her hand to all things and helping out admirably in all the events. Firstly we would like to thank Allison for all the hard work she has done as Chair for the FOWCP in 2009. Also many thanks to Tricia Marshall who was our secretary for many years who resigned at the end of last year. The committee has also unfortunately lost Deborah, she has moved to Suffolk for ventures new but we are sure she will be on hand for welcome help and advice. We would also like to introduce our new member to the committee, Peter Bates. Peter will be helping us on all matters and events concerning the park. We are looking forward to 2010 and all the planned events to take place in the Wick Country Park. Hopefully you will all be able to attend and we will welcome you there to have an enjoyable time. We wish you all a happy and successful 2010.

**Christine Lee & Eileen Cattell**  
**'Chairpeople'**

## Message from the Membership Secretary

Thank you to all of you who have renewed your membership for 2010. Your interest in the park is very important to us. This year we hope to increase our membership and promote a wider interest in the Wick Country Park. Do you have a friend or relative who you could encourage to join? Do you know a club or society who would enjoy our facilities? The park has a lot to offer whether you want to bird watch or walk the dog, picnic or jog, help the warden or fish, paint or just quietly watch the changing seasons. If your interests are not catered for why not drop me a line, contact details on the last page. We welcome all new ideas and suggestions.

**Nikki**  
**Membership Secretary**



**Join the Ranger**  
on a Bird Walk at the Wick Country Park  
on Sunday 18 April 2010  
Starting at 10.30am  
Admission free  
Meet outside the Pavilion

Tea and coffee will be available in the Pavilion after the walk.

## January 2010 – Sightings in the Park

There is never an abundance of birds or animals generally during January but if you remain alert and vigilant you may be very fortunate to see one of the migrant visitors or even one of the many mammals not normally seen but due to the cold weather have been more visible searching for food.

During January there have been large numbers of both Fieldfares and Redwings visiting the park in search of food and stocking up on fuel for their long flight back to Scandinavia. Their usual source of food is berries and the birds can normally be seen gorging on the red berries of the hawthorn bush. They also have a liking for soft fruit, especially fallen apples. When the weather is better and the ground is neither hard nor covered in snow, they will feed on insects, worms, snails and slugs but in the trees and bushes they will be most noticed.



**Fieldfare**



**Redwing**

Also spotted at dusk one evening was a pygmy shrew which is the smallest mammal found in the UK. It is in fact smaller than some of our insects, and can sometimes be found sleeping in the burrows of some beetles. In size it is approximately 60mms from tip of nose to base of tail, with the tail being around 40mms long. As you will agree, in size it is very small.

Having such a tiny body, the pygmy shrew needs to consume food at regular intervals in order to maintain its body temperature. In fact it needs to eat every two hours otherwise it may die. For this reason, when you see one they are usually frantically searching for their next meal. They generally eat woodlice, spiders and insects and can normally be found around the hedgerows.

A fully grown pygmy shrew is about a quarter of the size of a house mouse. The average weight is around 4 grams - about the same as a penny coin. In the autumn they put on a thicker coat of fur, but this is no guarantee of surviving the cold winter months. They are often referred to as "annuals" since their life span, at best, is around 15 months.



**Pygmy Shrew**

**The Friends' Committee has arranged the following events with the Wick Country Park Ranger. Some events are organised by the Friends of the Wick Country Park (FOWCP) and others by Basildon District Council (BDC). For all events please meet at the Wick Pavilion.**

**Wick Weeders (FOWCP)** 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Monday of each month, Starting at 1.30pm

**Work Parties (BDC)** These are bi-monthly on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of each month, 10am – 12noon (the dates for the rest of this year are 21<sup>st</sup> March, 16<sup>th</sup> May, 18<sup>th</sup> July and 21<sup>st</sup> November) **Come and have fun and help the Ranger with improvements to the park.**

**Bird Song Walk (BDC)**  Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> April, Starting at 10.30am

Join the Ranger and Friends of the Wick Country Park in a spring stroll and try to spot and identify birds in a wide variety of habitats.

**Paws in the Park (FOWCP)**  Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> June, 11am to 4pm

All dogs and responsible owners are invited to this very popular annual event. Fun dog show, display of dog obedience and agility, stalls, refreshments, games and children's quiz.

**Crickets & Dragonflies (BDC)**  Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> July, , Starting at 10.30am

Come and search for these fascinating creatures. Children must be accompanied by an adult. Dogs welcome on a lead.

**Nature Quest (FOWCP)**  Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> August, 11am to 4pm

Be a nature detective and discover some of the wild wonders of the Wick. A fun day for all the family. Explore the park and investigate the underwater world of the dipping pond. Parental supervision required.

**Kite Festival (BDC)**  Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> September, 1pm to 4pm

Join in the kite making competition and pick up some top flying tips. Children must be accompanied by an adult.

**Yule Ramble & AGM (FOWCP)**  Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> December, Starting at 2pm

Finish the year with a sociable walk round the park with the Ranger and Friends. Enjoy some mulled wine and mince pies, stay for the AGM, meet the committee and have your say about the park.

## 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](mailto:mikenikki@supanet.com)

## The Friends of the Wick Country Park Committee:

Christine Lee – Joint Chairperson  
Eileen Cattell – Joint Chairperson  
Nikki Gibson – Treasurer  
Allison Tanner - Secretary  
Peter Bates – Committee Member

## Basildon District Council Countryside Services:

Marcus Hotten  
Countryside Officer  
Telephone: 01268 550088

Mark Williams  
Countryside Ranger  
Telephone: 01268 562921