



Skylarks

Spring is here at last and lots has already happened in the Wick Country Park with even more to come. All the latest news is here to keep you up to date with all the future events and all that is happening in the park for you to join in and enjoy the fun.

A Message from the Chair

Dear Friends

Well the calendar tells me it is Spring, but it is very hard to tell! Some days we have warm sunny weather and the next, rain and bitter winds. I have never known the weather to be so unpredictable, but what you can rely on is knowing that the committee are busy organising exciting events for the rest of the year.

The February Quiz night was another huge success and raised over £500 as well as a lot of smiles. Read more in Jim's very amusing article. The Bird Song Walk flew by and the Skylarks 3K race ran smoothly.

Paws in the Park in June needs to be in every dog lovers diary as the canine social event of the year. Of course inspiring children with a love of wildlife is probably the main focus for the committee and plans for Nature Quest in July are well underway.

As well as organising events the committee work hard to raise money or procure funding so we can provide improved facilities in the Park. We are in the very early stages of a piece of work to provide an orientation board, which will provide useful information for both new and regular visitors to the park. I'll keep you informed of our progress in future editions of Skylarks. The Wick Weeders are keeping the Pavilion garden under control, but with a few more volunteers we could fulfil our dream of making it a really spectacular and colourful area. Membership numbers are at an all-time high so you never know; someone may offer to come along and join us!

Nikki Gibson, Chairperson

**PLEASE COME ALONG TO THE NEXT
EVENT IN THE WICK COUNTRY PARK**

PAWS IN THE PARK



a fun dog show

**Sunday 12th June 2016
11am – 4pm**



Wick Country Park
Tresco Way, Wickford, SS12 9GP

stalls, refreshments, flyball demonstration



FREE for spectators
£2 to enter dog into show

details:

www.friendsofthewickcountrypark.co.uk
or contact Nikki on 01268 734293
chair@friendsofthewickcountrypark.co.uk

OUR FIRST EVENT OF THE YEAR - QUIZ NIGHT 2016

Life at the sharp end of Quiz Night.....

Now, I don't know about you but quiz nights are a love it or hate it way to spend your precious down time. My wife and I were invited several years ago in the misguided belief that our combined intelligence would somehow improve the team's ranking, fools! However, we did manage fourth last year and had high expectations that this year we would beat top team "Workers and Shirkers". The quiz is organised by The Friends of the Wick Country Park committee. Michelle Latt was a brilliant Quiz Master and heavily supported by Mike and Nikki Gibson using copious amounts of IT equipment culminating in a display board that was seen from space... or was it the back of the room? Well it was big anyway.

I knew the quiz would be competitive from the start and a mark of success was to have a giant inflated silver... can't quite see from here but it looks like a giant.. no, can't be, not at a family gathering. Anyway its purpose is to float above the leading team's table. We struggled really badly on the first task, no one could agree. There were debates, arguments, mediation, conciliation but finally we finished. We had decided on our team name "The Grey Matter" (No irony intended)! Time for a drink. Two of our team breezed through the Marathon Round spotting cartoon dogs like 5 year olds. How do these people acquire this trivia, and why?

Off we go. "Gogglebox" and a good effort, unfortunately everyone in our team was too busy unpacking food to think about playing the joker. Hey ho, there's always the music round.

By the end of "Ending with the letter O" the inflatable Percy, still can't quite make it out, was bobbing gently on the far side of the room. Hmm. "Science and Nature" was followed swiftly by a call of nature and by the time "Bookish" was over (Not an easy round) inflatable Percy had bobbed his way over to the table next to us. Hang on a minute, that's not what I thought it was, it's a very large number 1! Not sure if I'm relieved or disappointed.

"Money Money Money" was not a good round for us, not least because I had been to Morocco countless times but failed to remember the local currency was the Dirham! We consoled ourselves with wine. Next, our joker round "Music" and did we do well? Yes, but where's our inflatable crown? Pipped again by the "Workers and Shirkers".



A usual part of the fundraising activities involves buying raffle tickets which our table did with enthusiasm, unaware of the catastrophe that was to befall our table. Would you believe it? All our tickets were lost on the way back to the tin resulting in not one raffle prize being won. I'm sure I saw the "Workers and Shirkers" table buckling under the weight of raffle prizes! I'll creep over there later and liberate Percy.

"Saints", what sort of a round is that to present to eight practicing atheists? Managed St. Stephen and St. Elmo's fire... Crown floating further away. Where's the wine?

We did a good job on "Connections" and, thanks to a flash of inspiration from one of our team, solved the connection question. The "Sport" round was saved from disaster by two of the team who did a sterling job completely unaided by the rest of us. Hang on! Are we near the top of the scoreboard? Yes, we're in second place, last round to go and we're in second place, we can do it!

"Prisons and Prisoners", not a bad round, now a tense wait, did we do it? Come on number 1 float this way just a little more.

The final results are in and no, we couldn't oust those "Workers and Shirkers" from the top spot, we had to be content with second place. Do we get a consolation prize? We must do, there's about a dozen bottles of wine waiting to be collected. Lemons to bottom team then, wait for the call..... What! They're getting all that wine, all of it! Next year it's ours, all ours. Love it or hate it, I love it!

(Written by Jim Schofield)

THE BIRDSONG WALK - SUNDAY 10th APRIL 2016

The annual Wick Country Park Bird Song walk took place on Sunday 10th April 2016, with a total of 19 adults and 3 children in the group plus Mark, the Ranger, as our guide. The main aim of the walk is to find and identify early spring migrants returning to breed in the UK and once again we were successful in seeing or hearing several of these migrating birds. We also had a glorious early spring morning this year, with hardly a cloud in the sky and a light breeze!

So in the sunshine, we set off from the pavilion heading east past the pond, and near the plantation we stopped to hear a **Skylark** singing its beautiful liquid warbling song, although the bird was a bit distant. We could also hear other birds singing too, a very noisy little **Wren**, a couple of **Robins** and a small flock of **Goldfinches** overhead! Then the familiar song of the **Great Tit** – “teacher, teacher” he calls if you use your imagination! Unfortunately, the birds were being rather elusive in the bushes along the path and not many of these were being seen.

As we moved on, a couple of **Crows** flew overhead and we also saw **Magpies**, **Woodpigeons** and a flock of around 8 **Herring Gulls**. It was nice to hear **House Sparrows** squabbling in the hedgerow, having suffered a huge decline in numbers recently, in Wickford they seem to be recovering. Then someone spotted what they thought was a “Budgie” – this turned out to be a splendid male **Greenfinch**, which as its name suggests, was a gorgeous green in the sun with a flash of yellow wing feathers. Sadly, another bird species which has suffered a dramatic decline in numbers due to the “Trichomonosis” parasite but they may just be starting the process of recovering from this. We also saw **Blue Tits** and **Great Tits** flying around the tops of the hedges.



Approaching the lake, we could hear **Canada Geese**, and these proved to be quite entertaining, chasing each other around the lake and constantly arguing! The lake proved to be a fruitful stop, with a pair of **Greylag Geese**, 2 males and 1 female **Mallard** resting on the island, a couple of **Moorhens** scratching around the bankside vegetation, and at least one **Coot** hiding behind the reeds. However, the stars of the lake were a pair of **Great Crested Grebes**, looking magnificent in the spring sunshine, which highlighted out the brilliant brown “crest” and chestnut “ruff” head feathers. Watching these birds fishing really close was the highlight of the day for many of us.

Not to be outdone, a pair of lovely little **Long Tailed Tits** put on a display in the hedge behind us, while a distant **Green Woodpecker** bounded along the top of the bushes, while calling its familiar “yaffle” as it flew along. The usual **Black Headed Gulls** were seen around the lake too.

Reluctantly, leaving the lake and heading towards the reed bed, we stopped to see a **Robin** belting out his song and putting on a display for all. Approaching the bridge across the brook a **Collared Dove** flew across the path and landed in the bushes. A pair of **Chaffinches** were also in the bushes and a distant **Blackcap** was heard singing. As we walked across the bridge onto the boardwalk, a pair of **Blackcaps** were seen in the trees by the reed bed. Both very close and looking great!

Emerging from the reed bed, a **Chiffchaff** was seen flitting around in the bushes near the picnic area, singing his usual “chiff chaff” song. While watching, a **Blackbird** flew out of the bushes, our first of the day.

We now headed back to the pavilion for a cup of tea, and while enjoying this and a biscuit in the spring sunshine, we saw 2 **Swallows** flying over the plantation and as we looked over the lake a **Little Egret** flew in to fish in the margins. 15 years ago this would have been headline news but this Southern Mediterranean bird has colonised much of the UK in the last 15 years and is now a common bird in Essex – it was still a great end to the morning though.

Total bird species seen – 27

(Written by Marie Singleton)

SKYLARKS 3K RACE ON 20th APRIL 2016

The first Skylarks 3K Race of the 2016 season took place on a rather chilly April evening but we had a great turnout of 78 runners of all ages with many enthusiastic supporters to cheer them on. Excellent times as always with Crispin again taking that top spot. Bravo to all those who took part!



Many thanks to Peter Bates and his team for the excellent organisation, also to all the hardy runners taking part and the supporters cheering them on.

The results for the race are set out below. Everyone enjoyed the evening and I hope you will be able support the next Skylarks 3k event on Wednesday 20 July 2016 at 7.30 p.m. Looking forward to another great turnout and inspiring evening.

First Man - Crispin Bloomfield in 9:51

First Lady - Hayley Pegg in 12:21

First Boy - Freddy Taiani in 12:43

First Girl - Rebecca Omer in 16:25

'THE GREAT SPRING CLEAN'

Our grateful thanks to all who came along to help and support our 'Spring Clean' at the park on Tuesday 22nd March. It was a splendid and warm Spring day and the results of the day can be seen by the bags and bags of rubbish collected, mostly from the lake or the inside of bushes that line the pathway. Hopefully we can keep the park a litter-free environment!



Thanks to all the hardy volunteers that came along we can now enjoy the spring foliage and blossom.

As Nikki said in her message from the Chair - the Wick Weeders are keeping the Pavilion garden under control, but with a few more volunteers we could fulfil our dream of making the park really spectacular and colourful as viewed below.





WICK COUNTRY PARK EVENTS 2016



The following events have been organised by the Friends of the Wick Country Park in consultation with the Park Ranger.
With the exception of the quiz night, all events start at the Wick Country Park Pavilion and booking is not required. Refreshments are available at all events.

EVENT	DATE	DETAILS
Wick Weeders	Usually the 2 nd and 4 th Monday of each month	Starting at 1.30 pm (see the website & posters for confirmation of the dates). Equipment is provided. Help is always needed to maintain these gardens.
Paws in the Park	Sunday 12 th June	11 am to 4 pm Our hugely popular annual fun dog show, for dogs of all types, ages and sizes is a must for all dog lovers. Keep an eye on the 'Events' web-page for details of this year's categories and side-stalls.
Skylarks 3K Race	Wednesday 20 th July	7.30 pm Another race organised in conjunction with the Pitsea Running Club . Open to all runners and power walkers. Supporters welcome.
Nature Quest	Sunday 24 th July	11 am to 4 pm The whole family can come, be it for just a couple of hours, or for longer. Pond dipping, bug hunting and more. Children must be accompanied by an adult.
Crickets & Dragonflies	Sunday 7 th August	Starting at 2 pm (two hours) Led by the Park Ranger, catch and identify insects found in the park, and observe the beautiful dragonflies. Children must be accompanied by an adult. Dogs are welcome, but must be on a lead.
Kite Festival & Classic Car Display	Sunday 11 th September	11 am to 4 pm Another great family day out. Allow at least an hour. Learn how to make and fly a kite; This event is held in conjunction with the Essex Kite Group and the South Eastern Vintage and Classic Vehicle Club
Yule Ramble & AGM	Sunday 11 th December	Starting at 2 pm Finish the year with a sociable and leisurely walk of approx 1 – 1.5 hours around the Park, led by the Park Ranger. Dogs are welcome, but must be on a lead. Afterwards, enjoy some mulled wine and mince pies. Everyone is then invited to the AGM.

For the latest information, please contact Nikki Gibson on 01268 734293 or email chair@friendsofthewickcountrypark.co.uk, or see our website: www.friendsofthewickcountrypark.co.uk

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 nikkigibson621@btinternet.com

The Friends of the Wick Country Park Committee:

Nikki Gibson - Chairperson/Membership Secretary, Richard Rowsell - Vice Chair, Dorothy Cundy - Treasurer, Marie Singleton - Secretary, Alaric Cundy - Webmaster
 Committee Members: Peter Bates, Christine Lee

Basildon Borough Council Countryside Services:

Mark Williams - Countryside Ranger, Telephone: 01268 562921
 Steve Prewer - Manager of Countryside Operations and Development, Telephone 01268 465380

Neighbourhood Policing Team: Telephone 0300 333 4444 or 07875 003503