

Skylarks

Spring has arrived and all the latest news from the Friends of the Wick Country park is here to keep you up-to-date with current and future events.

Message from the Chair

Hello everyone and hope this Spring edition of Skylarks finds you all in good health and looking forward to the season ahead of us.

The first event of the year in the Wick Country Park, The Bird Song Walk was a great success and the walk is wonderfully described with pictures in this edition by Paul Clarke.

Our next event, Paws in the Park 2010 is rapidly approaching and all expectations are high that it will be the best ever, so please put in your diaries the date of Sunday 6th June to come and join in all the activities and fun. A new feature this year is 'Go Walkies'. This will raise vital money for the Guide Dogs, for further details please visit their website www.guidedogs.org.uk.

On a sad note though, we have to report that there has been some vandalism recently in the park. We would therefore request if you see anything untoward happening, could you please report this to the Ranger on site or to Basildon District Council, Countryside Services. Alternatively please contact the Neighbourhood Policing Team. All telephone numbers are on the final page of Skylarks.

Christine & Eileen
'Chairpeople'

Paws in the Park 2009 was a great success and achievement considering the weather conditions preceding it, so fingers crossed for a lovely sunny day this year. It was an eventful day and everyone enjoyed themselves.



So please do not forget to put this year's date in your diaries.....



Paws in the Park
Sunday 6th 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. Tea, coffee, squash and biscuits will be available in the Pavilion throughout the day.



A walk in the Park - spring 2010

It doesn't seem so long ago that we had finished the spring bird walk for 2009 but on a warm and bright Sunday morning we set off with Ranger Mark to improve our recognition of the birds to be found in the hedgerows and trees, first by their song and hopefully spot the songster as well.

We headed off past the pond leading towards the hill and pill box. We soon stopped as we were treated to the calling of both the Chaffinch and Greenfinch with an occasional interjection of a Blackcap. Having tuned into where the song was coming from, by good use of our binoculars we quickly managed to spot males singing in their full glory. This was interspersed by the less exciting call of the farmer's friend, the Wood Pigeon. We started to move off and were quickly stopped in our tracks by the distinctive vibrant call of the Wren although the small brown bird proved somewhat elusive to spot! We carried on moving along the pathway, passing a number of Collard Doves and appeared to be followed by Blue Tits & Great Tits making their distinctive warning sounds that strangers were about. We also caught a glimpse of a long tailed tit as it flitted from bush to bush seeking small insects.



Our next stop was the lake, taking in the Mute Swan sitting serenely upon her nest. On the water were Coot & Moorhen with the silence being broken by the Canada Geese flying in noisily overhead before making a splash landing. A solitary Great Crested Grebe was in the middle of the lake, constantly diving for fish. Whilst standing quietly by the reed bed on the south side of the lake, up popped a male Reed Bunting, a brilliant close up view, albeit not for very long before seeking the protection and seclusion of the reeds.

In the Hawthorn behind us as we moved slightly round, we could hear the constant chatter of the Chiffchaff, which proved difficult to spot with its muted colours blending in well with the surrounding trees and bushes, along with the light not being in the most favourable direction. Similar in size and colour and proving to be equally elusive was a Garden Warbler, singing high in the trees.

We then took the lower path in the upper field but now as the morning progressed the birds singing or being seen became less, so any positive spot or song was a bonus. High on an Oak tree was a single Linnet and as we moved to a more bushy area where there is a large blackberry bush, a Whitethroat was heard but could not be seen. Having stood still for what appeared an age to some, the male suddenly appeared on top of the bush before moving upwards into the trees to carry on singing. At the end of this path we were in Robin territory, where males were clearly letting their rivals know what their territory was and not to enter it, sitting high and clear, fully resplendent with their red breast puffed out.



Chiffchaff



Robin

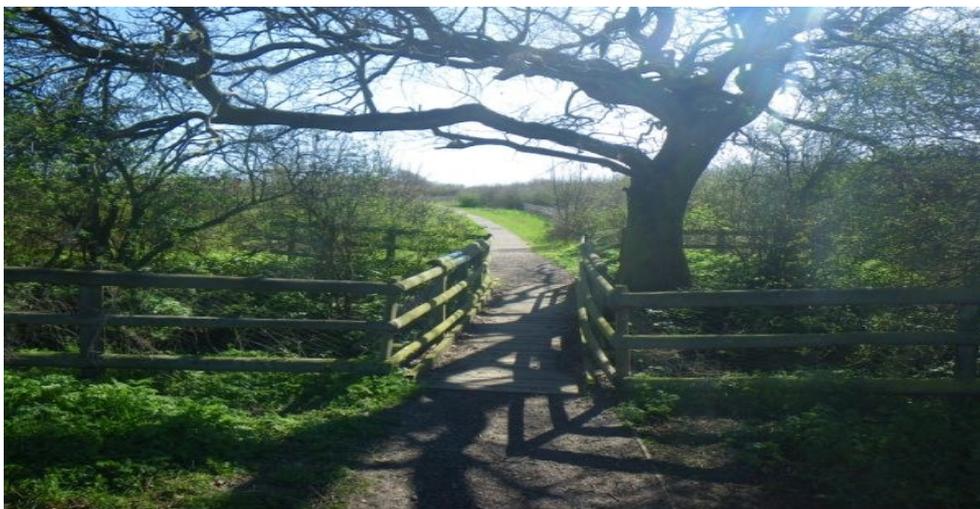
Turning right we moved up the hill and could hear the distinctive laugh in the distance of the Green Woodpecker but no confirmed sighting, only the Blue & Great Tits appearing to follow us again and the occasional Magpie was flying across the field. We then took a small detour around the lake where Mark lifted some mats put on the side in a secluded area. These had been placed there after translocation of some lizards following excavation work on a road building project. We saw a small common lizard before it shot off into the undergrowth for safety and the skin of a Grass Snake stuck on the underside of the mat, which was probably shed last year.

A brisk walk towards the hill saw us stop to spot the occasional Skylark before back to the pavilion for refreshments after a successful and thoroughly enjoyable morning.

As the spring progresses many more birds will be seen in the park, so take time to stop and listen, you will be amazed at the different sounds that can be heard. Also, by taking a pair of binoculars will help you to place the bird with the song, providing it is not well camouflaged and hiding.

Written by Paul Clarke, FOWCP

We always welcome input from all "our friends" and in this edition we would like to include photographs from Phil Honour. I think you will agree the first is very atmospheric and captures the atmosphere of the park perfectly.



Phil has also captured our nesting swan.



Thank you Phil!

Events for 2010

The Friends' Committee has arranged the following events with the Wick Country Park Ranger. *For all events please meet at the Wick Pavilion.*

Wick Weeders

*2nd & 4th Monday of each month
Starting at 1.30pm*

Work Parties

*These are bi-monthly on the 3rd
Sunday of each month, 10am –
12noon*

Come and have fun and help the Ranger with improvements to the park.

Paws in the Park

*Sunday 6th June
11am to 4pm*

All dogs and responsible owners are invited to this very popular annual event.

Crickets & Dragonflies

*Sunday 25th July
2pm to 4pm*

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

Nature Quest

*Sunday 15th August
11am to 4pm*

Be a nature detective and discover some of the wild wonders of the Wick.

Yuletide Ramble

*Sunday 5th 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

The Friends of the Wick Country Park Committee:

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

Basildon District Council Countryside Services:

Marcus Hotten
Countryside Officer
Telephone: 01268 550088

Mark Williams
Countryside Ranger
Telephone: 01268 562921

Neighbourhood Policing Team:

Telephone: 0300 333 4444 or 07875 003503