



# Skylarks

Spring is here at last and we look forward to seeing you soon at our events. All the latest news from the Friends of the Wick Country Park is here to keep you up-to-date with all that is happening in the park.

## Message from the Chair

Another busy time for the Friends and Committee - our main event of the year 'PAWS IN THE PARK' is on Sunday June 10<sup>th</sup>. Hopefully the weather will be kinder to us this year. Again we have many stalls and craft events for the younger visitors. If anybody is willing to help we would be grateful, please contact Nikki Gibson, contact details are at the end of the newsletter. The second Skylarks 3K race is in July, Nature Quest is on the horizon in August and the Kite festival in September. Please check details on our updated website. Hopefully we will see you at our events.

In this edition of Skylarks we also have reports on our recent events, again all written by our very own reporter Trudie Crow.

Eileen Cattell  
Chairperson

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## Olympic 'Petathlon'



We need two/three people to help oversee the running of the "Olympic Petathlon" at our Paws in the Park event, every dog receiving a certificate. It is not a competition and is intended just for fun, however it needs to be run by someone who is confident with dogs. The dogs always remain the responsibility of their owners but taking the entry fee of 50p and explaining the game will entail close contact with dogs. If you are able to assist or want more details please let us know.

## Please come along to our next event - the ever popular Paws in the Park on Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> June!



Fun dog show with many categories- best bitch, cutest puppy, and scruffiest dog etc – registration from 11.00am. Register your dog early as classes get booked fast.

Also there is a new event for this year, the "Dog Olympic Petathlon" throughout the afternoon.

Display by the Billericay Dog Training School at 1.30pm

Plus children's quiz, stalls, tombola, exhibits & children's craft activities

Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> June 2012, 11.00am to 4.00pm  
The Wick Country Park, Tresco Way Wickford  
SS12 9GP

Admission Free

Refreshments available

For full details see our website

[www.friendsofthewickcountrypark.co.uk](http://www.friendsofthewickcountrypark.co.uk)



## **OUR FIRST EVENT OF 2012 - THE QUIZ NIGHT**

There was a very busy weekend for The Friends of The Wick Country Park (FOWCP) in February. The annual quiz night was held at The Barnhall Community Centre on Friday 17<sup>th</sup> followed by another successful tree planting at the park on Sunday 19<sup>th</sup>. The excitement!

The quiz night was a complete sell out! Tickets went fast and apparently there were 82.5 people who attended (the .5 person remains a mystery...). Thirteen eager beaver teams revved up to win first prize. Master of Ceremonies was Michelle who did a great job of asking the questions while maintaining crowd control. Rounds included, amongst many, "Famous Film Quotes", "Oh no...not Science" and of course "The Olympics". Did you know that horror film actor Christopher Lee's famous literary cousin was...Ian Fleming? No, neither did we so it just goes to show there is always something to be learnt at a quiz night. Well done to winning team Oddballs captained by FOWCP member Peter Bates. First prize was a bottle of wine for each contestant. Commiserations may go to team Topshop for coming last but FOWCP prefer to congratulate them for taking part. They each won a lemon for their gallant effort. The raffle was also a great success and raised funds which will be used to enhance and develop the Wick Country Park.

FOWCP would like to thank everyone who came – we hope you had an enjoyable and fun evening. Thanks also to the Barnhall Community Centre staff for their generosity, Mike for his efficient scoring system and help with table and chairs, Michelle for being a top rate compere, and Lee who collected all the answer sheets. See you all next year if not before.

## **THE TREE PLANTING EVENT**

Sunday could not have been more different to the glamour and glitz of the quiz night. The heavens must have anticipated the tree planting event as a heavy downpour the day before had considerably helped soften the ground - which means mud! The volunteers met in the car park and waited for Gary and Mark, the Park Rangers, to drive in with the trees in tow. The volunteers were split into two work parties - planting 6 trees each – at the back and top fields. The earth at the park contains a lot of clay which made digging holes 2 ft by 2 ft and at least 2 ft deep rather a sticky task! However, the teams were in agreement – rather mud than back breaking rock hard ground. The holes were half filled with a generous helping of compost and posts were used to help keep the trees growing upright. Sympathies to those who dug large holes but received a sapling on the small side – you can't win 'em all – and trees are well earned whatever their size!



Afterwards tea and biscuits were served at the Pavilion – sitting in the warmth of the early spring sun it was easy to survey the beauty of the park and hope the trees have a long and happy life.

Many thanks to the Basildon and Wickford Lions Club who donated the trees. FOWCP greatly appreciate their kind and generous donation. Thanks to all volunteers for their time and assistance.



## **SKYLARKS 3K RACE**

The Skylarks 3k race kicked off at 7pm on Wednesday 18 April. Another cold and blustery evening did not stop 37 runners from competing in the competition – which is fast growing in popularity. A good turnout of runners from various Essex running clubs helps ensure that the word spreads about this bi-annual race. Members of Friends of the Wick Country Park acted as Marshalls, helped with registration and ensured the tea and coffee was in constant supply. The course covers approximately one and a half circuits of The Wick Country Park. The runners lined up on time just as it started to rain....and finished just as it stopped raining! Times ranged from an extremely speedy 11 minutes through to a more sedate 29 minutes. Well done to all those who took part. Here are the results:

First Man – Tony Pecorado in 11:10

First Lady – Jacqui Watson in 12:17

First Girl – Sinead Clark in 12:38

First Boy – Aaron Gourlay in 14:58.

Check out pictures of the prize giving on the Friends website.

The next race will be held on Wednesday 18 July at 7pm. The Friends of the Wick Country Park look forward to seeing you – even if you don't fancy taking part come along to cheer and have a cuppa in the Pavilion.

## THE SPRING BIRD WALK

The Friends of the Wick Country Park 2012 Spring Bird Walk was held on Sunday April 15<sup>th</sup>. It was a bright but blustery day. A great turnout of 27 people arrived at the Pavilion to start the gentle walk around the park led by Mark the Park Ranger.

To get us "twitchers" in the mood Mark played some recordings of various bird song to listen out for. He was particularly keen to spot a Blackcap which is a distinctive greyish warbler, the male having a black cap, and the female a chestnut one. It has a delightful fluting song which has earned it the name 'northern nightingale' and is increasingly spending the winter in the UK.

As we took to the path around the park we saw a pair of linnets bobbing about overhead. According to the bird book their flight is described as "undulating". They are members of the Finch family and are attracted to heathland and farmland hedges – obviously the Wick Country Park fits the bill as an attractive environment.



Next spotted were two beautiful Goldfinches. These birds are distinctive by their red face, bright yellow wing patch and their lovely twittering song and call. Apparently, they are increasingly visiting bird tables and feeders so be sure to put out some seed and you might be lucky to receive a flying visit. They obligingly put on a fantastic display for us jumping from branch to branch and we coo-ed with delight.

Suddenly Mark heard the Blackcap!! – all of us strained both ears and eyes – but it was nowhere to be spotted. We sighed and carried on walking – the infamous Blackcap – come out, come out wherever you are.....

As we carried on walking we saw Magpies in abundance. Their loud chattering and arrogant walk show just what confident birds they are. Then, perched on the top branch of a tall tree was a single Carrion Crow – swaying and cawing against the breeze – solitary and fearless he was quite a poetic sight.



At the lake the most royal of birds were swimming - two stunning swans enjoying the morning sunshine. Mark told us they had arrived as a pair and had been at the park for about a month. He hopes, as we all do, that they stay and breed – fingers crossed! Go down and pay them a visit as they are well worth seeing in such close proximity.

At our final turn we saw a lonesome blue tit. A wonderful palette of blue, green, white and yellow it has got to be everyone's favourite and a recognisable garden visitor.

The final part of our walk took us up over the middle hill where a skylark - renowned for its display flight vertically up in the air – hovered overhead. Often inconspicuous on the ground, it is easy to see when in its distinctive song flight.

We returned to the pavilion fresh faced from the bracing wind for tea and biscuits. A cry was heard from inside "There's the Blackcap"! We raced in and lo and behold – through the Pavilion window - we could see the 'brown cap' of the female flitting from branch to branch in a hedgerow next to the building.

What a fantastic finish to an enjoyable and busy bird walk.



## Events for 2012

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 Council (BC). *For all events meet at the Wick Country Park Pavilion.*

**Wick Weeders (FOWCP)** 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Monday of each month, starting at 1.30pm (see website & posters)

**Work Parties (BC)** These are bi-monthly on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of the month, 10am – 12noon, the next one is on Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> June. **Come and have fun and help the Ranger with improvements to the park.**



**Paws in the Park (FOWCP)** Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> June, 11am to 4pm

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



**Skylarks 3K Race (FOWCP)** Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> July, Starting at 7pm

The Friends of the Wick Country Park in conjunction with Pitsea Running Club present the second Skylarks 3K Race of the season. Come along and give it a try, cheer on a friend, come along for the cup of tea!



**Crickets & Dragonflies (BC)** Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> July, Starting at 2pm

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



**Nature Quest (FOWCP)** Sunday 12<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 (FOWCP)** Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> September, 1pm to 4pm

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



**Yule Ramble & AGM (FOWCP)** Sunday 9<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.

For any more info on the above please contact Nikki Gibson on 01268 734293 or email [mikenikki@supanet.com](mailto:mikenikki@supanet.com)

Latest information on events throughout the year can be found on our website:

[www.friendsofthewickcountrypark.co.uk](http://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 [mikenikki@supanet.com](mailto:mikenikki@supanet.com)

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

Eileen Cattell – Chairperson, Nikki Gibson – Treasurer, Christine Lee - Secretary  
Committee Members: Peter Bates, Paul Clarke, Maxine Crow, Trudie Crow, Hilary Sim

### **Basildon District Council Countryside Services:**

Mark Williams - Countryside Ranger, Telephone: 01268 562921  
Steve Prewer - Countryside Officer, Telephone 01268 550088

**Neighbourhood Policing Team:** Telephone 0300 333 4444 or 07875 00350