



Skylarks



A Message from the Committee

Welcome to the latest edition of the Skylarks newsletter. It has been a quiet year for the Friends of the Wick Country Park but we are getting back on track and now that some normality has returned we have arranged our first event of the year.....

Autumn Walk



Sunday 10th October 2021 at 2pm

The Autumn Walk will be followed by the AGM where complementary refreshments will be available, more details about the event can be found in the newsletter.

Life for the wildlife has not changed and visitors to the Wick Country Park have been enjoying the scenic and relaxing atmosphere of the park. Good news is that the monthly wildlife walks expertly organized by Martin Singleton have resumed. On the walks the birds, butterflies and other resident wildlife at the time are recorded and a comprehensive report is downloaded onto the Friends of the Wick Country Park website. Many thanks to Martin for his continued and welcome support. The Wickford Wildlife Society also had a Moth Night and Stargazing event, a report of this is featured.

Visitors to the country park now have a new look to the entrance and access road to welcome them – newly painted gates and a resurfaced access road and car park. Details and photos are also featured.

Weather-wise our British summer has been typically inconsistent, but many visitors have still enjoyed the many aspects of the park, in particular the view at the lake!



The committee hope that you can join us for the walk and AGM, see you then.

Wick Country Park – Wildlife Sightings

The monthly wildlife walk for August took place on Wednesday 25th. Weather was fine with some sunny spells which brought out a few butterflies, including Small Heath which is a new one for the park list and Brown Argus which looks like it is breeding in the park. The Brown Argus, despite being brown is actually a member of the “blue” butterfly family. Its main habitats are chalk and limestone grasslands so this is a very good record for the park. We did see 1 in 2020 but this year saw 3 on the walk, one of which looked like it was trying to lay eggs. Having a colony of these beautiful butterflies in the park is great news. We also saw a splendid hoverfly and managed to identify this as *Helophilus pendulus* and a bit of internet research later found that it is known as the “Footballer Hoverfly” because of its stripy thorax. It is also called the “Sunfly” because it often sits on leaves out in the sun – which is exactly what it was doing when we saw it.



Small Heath Butterfly



Brown Argus Butterfly



Footballer Hoverfly

The birds were quiet but as we head into autumn things should start to liven up. However, we did see good numbers of Swallows and House Martins over the lake and what looked like a family of Great Spotted Woodpeckers in the hedgerow near the boardwalk. We did not see many dragonflies but had a nice Brown Hawker flying at the lake, which is a first record for this year and a couple of Migrant Hawkers. Surprisingly, we did not see a single damselfly.



Swallows



House Martins



Great Spotted Woodpeckers

Wick Country Park Moth Night & Star Gazing

On the evening of Saturday 21st August a Moth Night was held at the Wick Country Park with a telescope available for star gazing. We were lucky with the weather as we managed to avoid any showers and the weather was fine for the whole evening. The moth attracting light was set up at around 8.45pm and was attracting moths more or less straight away. Several species were identified with such wonderful names as Old Lady, Ruby Tiger and Flame Shoulder. The variety of moths coming to the light was fascinating being of various sizes, shapes and colours. In addition to the moths, the resident flock of Canada Geese were very active, flying around calling to each other, and we also saw/heard a couple of Foxes. A Pipistrelle Bat was also identified with a bat detector – probably feeding on the moths!



Old Lady Moth



Ruby Tiger Moth



Flame Shoulder Moth

After an hour or so, the skies started to clear and it became noticeably colder, and this reduced the moth activity to more or less zero! They obviously don't like clear cool nights. However, we were then able to do a bit of star gazing and managed to get great views of Jupiter with 3 moons and then Saturn with its rings. As discussed on the night, at the moment Jupiter is 600M km from Earth which is approx. 373,000,000 miles. Saturn is a ridiculous 1,347bn Km from Earth which is 853,000,000 miles!! This illustrates how large Saturn must be if we can see it from 850 million miles away!

By 11pm the sky was completely clear and no moths were being attracted to the light, so we decided to call it a day and head home. Overall this was a very enjoyable evening and we did manage to see quite a few moths and do some star gazing as promised.

(Thank you to Martin Singleton for both the Wildlife Report and Moth Night & Stargazing – full reports can be found on the website www.friendsofthewickcountrypark.co.uk detailing all sightings and numbers counted.

Planting of the Cherry Blossom Trees

In March a new look appeared as you came through the entrance gates and down the access road to the Wick Country Park - a magnificent line of 18 cherry blossom trees now awaits you! The trees were funded by the Wickford Wombles and Basildon Council and planted by a team including the Wickford Wombles, Friends of the Wickford Country Park and many others to assist Basildon Council in the planting. Many thanks to all involved, especially to the Wickford Wombles for their much-appreciated continued maintenance. Please find more details on the Wickford Wombles Facebook page.

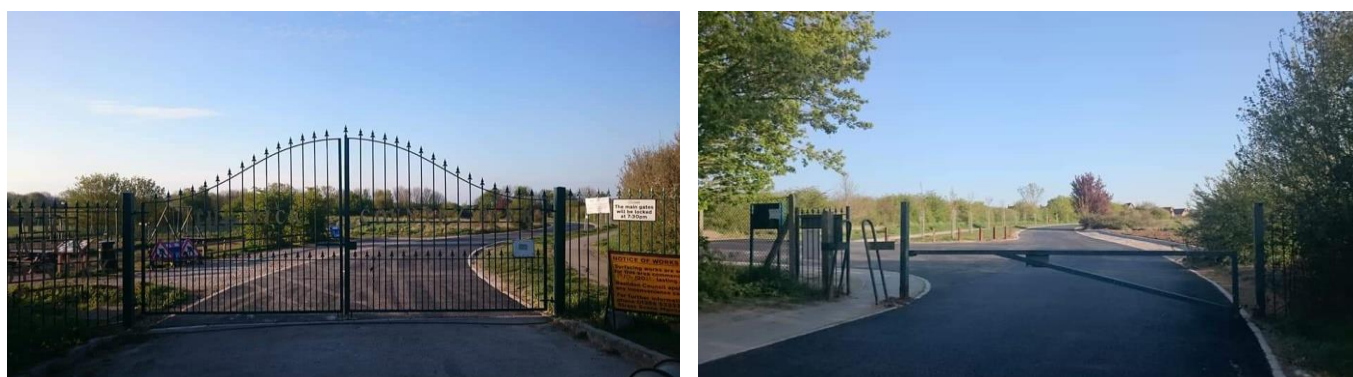
The cherry blossom trees are thriving and now have the added attraction of wild flowers round them. Each tree has been given a name tag, that is an 'adoption' by the welcome Wickford residents to keep them watered until established.



Improvements to the Wick Country Park Entrance

A team from Virgin Media came along to paint the entrance gates to the park, an excellent job and again a welcome and much-appreciated improvement to the Wick Country Park. This was a good will gesture from Virgin Media after their extensive work on The Wick was completed.

In April further improvements were made, the driveway and parking areas have now been resurfaced with the added benefit of speed bumps too.



Please do not forget our next event.....

Autumn Walk



Sunday 10th October 2021 at 2pm

*Join us for an Autumn Ramble (1-1½ hours)
Meet at the Pavilion, Wick Country Park
(If using sat nav, please use post code SS12 9GP)*

*The walk will be followed by Apple Juice, Cider and Apple Pies
Then the AGM of the Friends of the Wick Country Park
Everyone is welcome to all or part of this free event*




*For more details go to the website:
www.friendsofthewickcountrypark.co.uk*



Come along to the Wick Country Park and enjoy a walk and see the wildlife. If you do make any good wildlife sightings, please share them by sending an email to contact_us@friendsofthewickcountrypark.co.uk and we will add them to the 'Nature Notes' on the website. If you could manage a picture or two that would be even better!

Friends of the Wick Country Park Committee:

Christine Lee - Acting Chairperson, Hazel Broomfield - Treasurer, Marie Singleton - Secretary,
Hannah Cooper - Membership Secretary, Alaric Cundy - Webmaster
Peter Bates – Skylarks 3K Race Events

 Friends of the Wick Country Park

 Wickford Wombles

Neighbourhood Policing Team: Telephone 0300 333 4444 or 07875 003503

