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Friends of Rushcliffe Country Park

Green Flag Award

Rangers Office
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Our website
www.friendsofrcp.org.uk

Jan 2025
to
Mar 2025

Issue 106

Friends Newsletter



Planting Willow Cuttings Photo by Steve B.

Paddy's Patch

Native Berry Trees Project

November saw the planting of a small woodland of UK native berry-bearing trees and shrubs, including Hawthorn, Crab Apple, Rowan, Spindle, Guelder Rose, Holly and Dog Rose on the triangle of land near the level crossing entrance to the park.



Photo by Alastair G

The planting plots had been pre-dug during the summer when we had a digger on site so that stones and rubble could be removed by hand in order to make the eventual planting job a little easier and give the bare root plants the best chance of survival

Tiny saplings at the moment, they will hopefully put down their roots during the winter and in years to come provide not only a valuable winter food source for both resident birds, winter migrants (Redwing, Fieldfare, possibly Waxwings) and small mammals, but also flowers, nectar and pollen for insects, and leaves for caterpillars.

This mix of native trees and shrubs will offer varied habitats, making them popular with wildlife, giving food, shelter and protection from predators.

The planting has been distributed within the chosen area to allow unimpeded growth to maturity of each tree/shrub type, thus allowing the best fruiting potential.

All the plants are initially being protected by a tree guard and stake.

It will be interesting to see this area develop over the years and my thanks go to all who helped to bring this project to fruition.

Janet C.



Coppicing

A team have been coppicing to produce hedging stakes and maintain copse woodland. They have been too preoccupied with the task to take photos. Those of us hedge laying are very grateful for their efforts. Janet C, in passing, got one picture of Jan T preparing stakes. John Y Ed.







Thank you everyone who helped and supported our Christmas Craft Sale. Ann



Poster by Sue. Photos John Y

Controlling the Reeds

We began October by finishing the reed control which we had begun in the previous quarter.





Gardening

Janet has continued to maintain the garden in front of the main building.

Janet redesigned this in 2022 and it is the first feature that many visitors see as they enter the park from the car park.

John Y



Sensory Trail

A new addition to the sensory trail has just been installed. It encourages children to use their sense of touch to count hidden objects. These are fixed to the rear side of each board of this old pallet. You can see some of them in the second photo. Thanks go to Jill for helping the installation.







Another fun activity on the sensory trail

This activity is about having fun with expressions to show emotions. Children can hold up different masks to their faces and look in the mirror.

Dog Bowls for the Café



Following a request from Alistair, I set about the project using two purchased bowls. A log was sourced and I started the huge task of carving out the required hollows. The bowls are screwed in to prevent theft and the footprints routed and painted. Hope our visitors and their dogs approve.

All photos on this page by Roger B

Roger B.

John's Jottings

Winter is now here, with some very cold days interspersed with some much milder days. As usual, this brings in winter birds, although on my few visits to the Park recently (other than work party days) I perhaps haven't seen the diversity of previous years. A few Shoveler have been occupying the lake, along with a good number of Black-headed Gulls and the usual residents. On occasions there have also been the odd Common Gull and Lesser Black-backed Gull. However, the most notable find on the lake was a Water Rail, seen by a few people and even photographed. Although I heard it "squeal" one morning a few weeks ago, so far I have failed to see it. This resident species is notoriously secretive, spending most of its time hidden among reeds, but occasionally, particularly in winter, coming out to forage or to cross to another reeded area.



Shoveler Pair



Water Rail (Slimbridge)

I have unsuccessfully searched for "winter" finches on a couple of occasions recently. Normally at this time of year it is possible to find Redpolls and Siskins up in the canopy, Alder being particularly favoured. Even a favoured clump of Alder


Black Headed Gull


Lesser Black Backed Gull

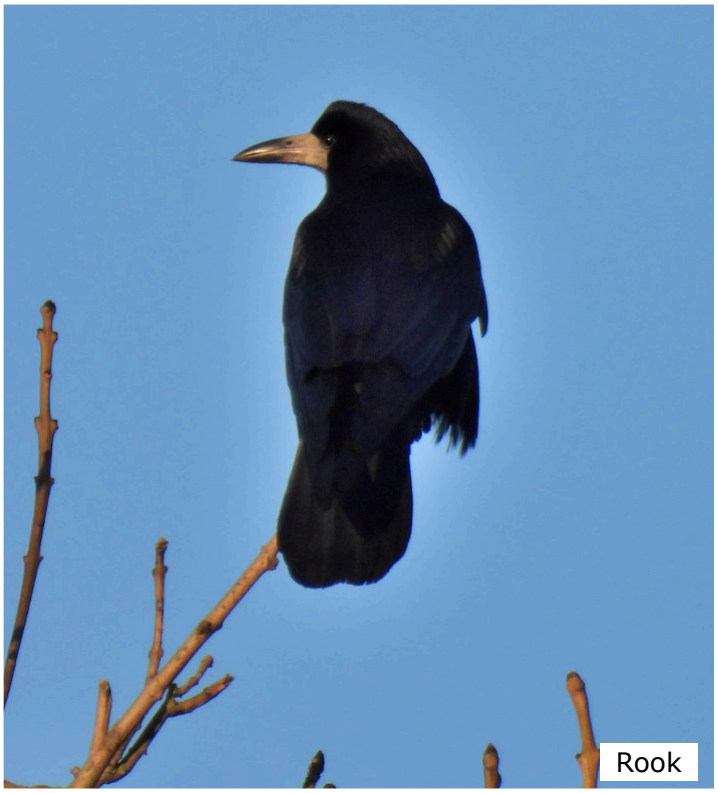
opposite Bradmore gate held nothing more than a flock of Goldfinch. You may notice that I use the species name Redpoll, whereas in the past I have called them Lesser Redpoll. This is because the International Ornithological Committee (IOC) has recently "lumped" a number of redpoll species into a single species Redpoll Acanthis flammea, and the British Ornithologists' Union (BOU) is expected to follow suit. The former Lesser Redpoll (by far the most abundant in Britain), Common Redpoll and Hornemann's Arctic Redpoll species are now just sub-species of Redpoll (A.f. cabaret, A.f. flammea and A.f. hornemanni respectively). This merger is based on scientific evidence that shows that chromosomal inversion that determines external traits such as size, bill shape and paleness of plumage is governed by external factors such as latitude and habitat. The three former species were always tricky to separate in the field, and I won't pretend to be able to separate Common from Lesser. Interestingly, the species were split only a decade or two ago!


Kestrel


Stock Dove

I do wonder whether things happening a few miles away are having an impact on our seed-eating birds. A field adjacent to the Grantham canal near Bassingfield has had a crop of sunflowers and other wild flowers this year, and this probably accounts for the mixed finch/bunting flocks regularly seen along there during the last few months. I like to think that this partly accounts for a shortage of finches in my garden, and it might also be affecting the Park.

Another family that seems rather scarce at the Park this winter is the thrush family. Whilst Song Thrush has been seen and heard in recent weeks, so far I have not encountered our winter visitors: Redwing and Fieldfare. Hopefully our berry tree project will help in years to come.


Rook

Finally, an often-overlooked bird species is perhaps worthy of a brief mention. While walking through Gibbies wood the other day, there was a cacophony of noise from the rookery. These birds breed early, egg-laying beginning any time from early March. So they might already be sprucing up their old nests.

Happy 2025 to all our readers, and enjoy the increasing singing of our resident birds over the coming months.

John E.

Carving Continued


Photo by Dave B.




Photo by Jon B.



This long running project continues. Many carved bench backs have been installed by Chris and Steve, our park rangers. New carvings have been started.

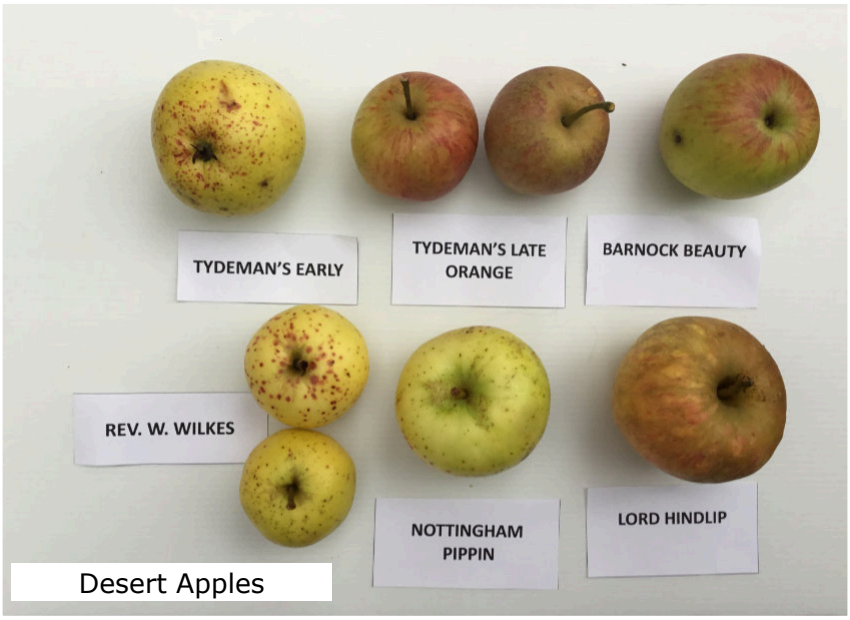
John Y.

Apple Orchard





Tydeman's Late Orange



Desert Apples

Many of you will have enjoyed eating apples from the orchard this autumn. My favourites were Lord Hindlip and Tydeman's Late Orange.

The orchard was planned in 2011 and planted up over the next couple of years. Twenty varieties of desert and culinary apples of historical and local interest were selected taking into consideration their pollination requirements. A total of fifty-two trees were planted and labelled. Also, nine varieties of cider apples were planted along the hedge line as they flower for longer, and are good additional cross pollinators. Most apple trees need other varieties of apple close by to ensure successful pollination by bees and other insects, only a few are self-fertile.





Over the eleven years since the orchard was planted, some varieties have flourished, others struggled and one tree has not survived. The quality of the soil is variable across the site, especially the western end, this may be due to rubble being deposited in some areas when the nearby staff residences for the munitions factory were demolished. Nevertheless, an excellent range have survived well to give a handsome crop each year.

The oldest variety is Golden Pippin first recorded by Parkinson in 1629 originally grown in Parham Park near Arundel. It has a lemon tang, and if picked in October will keep to January. The next oldest is Joaneting which is first recorded in 1665, of unknown origin, a tasty early fruiter that does not keep well.

The most recent variety is Tydeman's Late Orange, a cross between Cox's Orange and Laxton Superb, which was introduced in 1930 by East Malling Research Station. Ripening late in October/November it has an excellent flavour and keeps well. Usually it crops well alternate years: this season produced an excellent crop.

A few of the other interesting, less known apples we have enjoyed this autumn these are: -

Ashmead's Kernal, an excellent late, but low yield, traditional English russet from Gloucester grown from a seed by William Ashmead, a lawyer, in 1782.

Nottingham Pippin known to be in existence in 1815, the fruits are fine, tender, and white with a vinous flavour.

Baron Ward, a sweet/ sharp cooker 1850 raised by Samuel Bradley at Elton Manor, Nottingham, raised from a Dumelow's seedling, first exhibited in 1859.

Lord Hindlip, grown by Mr Watkins of Hereford in 1896 and named after Sir Henry Hindlip, 1st Baron of Hindlip Hall, in Worcester, is a high-quality apple that keeps well.

All Photos by Rosemary D.

Rosemary D.

Hedge Laying









We started this season's hedge laying on the young hedge which surrounds the dog activity area. We were asked to lay this lower than the normal park boundary hedges.

Just before Christmas we started the park boundary hedge to the right of the one next to the seasonal pond

Article and photos by John Y.

Clearing Dog Wood and Other Scrub Near the Park Entrance







The area near the bus stop and park entrance was becoming overgrown mainly with dog wood. We have cut back the the dogwood and weeds to ground level. The dog wood will grow back to a modest height in one season and produce colourful stems by next winter.

John Y.

Willow Project

Steve B wrote and sent photographs "Thank you to all the volunteers who helped with this project. Hope you enjoyed playing with willow!

They are currently pig-tailed off for the rods to establish some roots and hopefully they will start to green up in the spring. Chris and I will be watering in the summer and there will be annual trimming back required, which the Rangers are happy to do. "








Dates

Winter Social Wednesday 26th February

AGM Wednesday 9th April at 1.30

There will be a nature day likely to be 27th August

Work Days

The Friend's work days will be held every Wednesday.
Meet at the Education Centre at 9.30 am.
New volunteers are always welcome.

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