

Our Website: www.friendsofrcp.org.uk



October 2026
to
December 2026



Issue 113

Friends Newsletter



THE GREEN FLAG AWARD CEREMONY
JULY 2026

THE GREEN FLAG AWARD

The photo on the front cover shows the Management, Rangers and Friends Volunteers celebrating the Green Flag Award.

The award is given to recreational outdoor spaces who are compliant with an internationally recognised set of standards. It is only given to parks that are welcoming to the public, safe and secure, well maintained and managed. The inspectors also ensure that there is effective environmental management resulting in biodiversity but that the landscape and heritage are also valued.

An important feature during the inspection is involvement of the community in the care of the area.

This is the 20th consecutive year that the Park has achieved the required standard.

Many congratulations to the Management, Rangers and Volunteer Friends of Rushcliffe Country Park on this significant achievement.

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Wildlife Day August 25/26th 2026

To kick off this year's Wildlife Day, we started on Tuesday evening with a very successful Bat Expedition with more than 90 people turning up. The walk was led by John Parker and the Nottingham Bat Group. John started with a very interesting talk covering the life of bats, the different species, and how to use the Bat detectors. Then the detectors were distributed and groups set off around the lake area.



Going out for Bats

The groups heard and saw four species of bats: pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle, noctule and Daubenton's. The bats were feeding and flying near the trees and over the lake.

While this was happening Mick Thompson and Mike Hill had been setting up their moth traps in different parts of the park and we could see various moths attracted to the lights. Between them, they attracted 43 different species of moth of which 7 were new finds for the Park. A close inspection of some of the smaller moths revealed the

beauty of the patterns on their wings. Mick's were kept safe in the moth trap to show visitors in the morning before they were released unharmed later in the day.

On Wednesday morning we set up in the rain, then the sun shone until we were packing up when it just poured!!

Joining us this year were Neil Glenn, Notts Birders, Chris Bradbury, Dragonflies, Neil Pinder and Friends who led walks around the lake area, encouraging young and old to identify and record what they saw. One group were so interested that they stayed out for two hours.

Ever popular were the Insect pit fall trap walks led by Chris Terrell-Nield and the Meadow insect sweeps led by Ranger Chris. The pitfall traps in Gibbies Wood caught 17 species and 127 individual insects including 60 *Pterostichus madidus* (a species of black beetle), 4 were new additions to our species list. All were released after being identified.

The meadow sweep found 20 different species.

Some of the insects were bought back to the main area to be looked at under a

microscope. People also enjoyed looking at the moths caught the night before.

Ann Towle and her team kept the children busy making paper flowers and decorating flower pots as well as other activities, unfortunately the ground was too wet for Roger to set out his large wooden puzzle.



The Children's Area



Mick Reid at the Notts Amphibian and Reptile stand

Visitors could learn more about the secret lives of snakes and amphibians at the Nottingham Reptiles and Amphibians Group display, wildlife in general at the Notts Wildlife Trust stall and birds with the RSPB.

Thanks go to the Rangers and Friends who helped set up and take down in the rain, the gate team who managed the traffic and the Admin team who kept the day running smoothly. An enjoyable day was had by all.

Rosemary and Sarah

Two New Appointments for the Rushcliffe Country Park Friends

Following John Youngs sad demise, as a measure of his contribution to the Friends, the Committee have made appointments to two of the roles that he fulfilled:

A New Webmaster

Caroline Todd



I have been a member and regular Wednesday attender for the last 2 years, and thoroughly enjoy volunteering at the park. Following the sad passing away of John Youngs I have stepped in to take on management of the Friends web site. It has taken a few weeks to arrange new login accounts but that has now been sorted. I have extensive IT experience, but it has been a couple of decades since I last edited web pages! I have been working out how to edit the current site and am looking at expanding the content – I have a few initial ideas that I will be implementing. If anyone has suggestions for the development of the web site please let me know and I'll see how they can be incorporated into the site.

A New Editor/Compiler of the Friends Newsletter

Andrew Dove

I have been involved vicariously with the park for a number of years through my wife, Rosemary, who is currently Chair of the Friends. During this time I have developed a great affection for the park and admiration for the staff and volunteers who keep it in such good order.

My publishing experience is limited to producing the magazine for a specialist Philatelic Society every two months for 16 years. So, actually, a newsletter every 3 months will be quite relaxing!

Obviously, any magazine can only be as good as the contributions provided. So, I would be delighted to receive comments, criticisms, suggestions or contributions

Please contact me by email at: dove697@btinternet.com or through the FoRCP website.

A New Experience

Dorothy Martin

I've never thought of myself as a 'land' girl. Certainly not a city type, not even a townie but definitely a lover of nature and the countryside, and someone who likes nothing better than to pack up a few sandwiches and head for the hills. Being reasonably fit and enjoying the outdoors, whatever the weather, I took to the work pretty well I think.

A school uniform never bothered me (no difficult decisions to make about the right outfit for the day!) so wearing the same as everyone else was fine. It was practical, comfortable and when I glanced around, I realised that we all blended into the surroundings. It was also free, hooray!



The raking was actually quite hard work and I soon realised that, although I consider myself to be reasonably fit, my arms and shoulders don't usually get so much repetitive exercise. We all took a rake off the back of the truck and I drew the short straw to begin with, well, the short rake actually, because it had lost some of its handle. I thought it would suit me fine, being not very tall myself, but I soon realised I was

bending over more than I needed to. As soon as there was an opportunity I swapped it, which was much better. I hadn't realised that there is a technique for raking! There is a technique for learning to use any type of implement, I suppose and this will be the first of many. Anyway, I soon got used to it and there was a satisfying rhythm to rolling the cut reeds into bundles ready to be pitchforked onto the trailer.

The two men in charge were very pleasant fellows, each with a well behaved dog. I am not used to dogs, but I was reassured to see that these were calm and quiet, keeping eyes and ears alert to everything going on around them. Like us, they soon picked up the sound of a plane coming over, but it was just a familiar transport plane heading for the nearest airstrip. One of ours.

Despite being late September, the weather was still warm, the vestiges of a long, hot, too dry summer had not yet faded into chilly Autumn. I was pleased to find that we didn't work in silence and several of the others were discussing the Equinox and trying to recall the names of the old pagan festivals. I pricked up my ears and listened in, recognising references to Lammas, Beltane and Druids. Fascinating!

Someone spotted an interesting toadstool, which several of us were near enough to see. Someone knew the Latin name and very quickly pronounced it to be poisonous, so that one won't be turning up on a breakfast plate! A dead bird with a broken wing was unearthed from the reeds, probably trapped and unable to get out, poor thing.

At several points during the morning, I remembered to pause, stretch and admire my surroundings; not a dwelling in sight, beautiful, mature trees framing open land, with a glow of late summer green and the promise of gold. I took some deep breaths of the fresh country air and felt lucky to be alive, healthy and in the company of like minded people.

There was a very welcome break for a mug of tea and I sat back, glad of a rest, and listened to some of the others chatting and exchanging news. Someone had had a birthday and brought the remains of a delicious cake. Cake! An unexpected treat. I learned a few names, which I hope to remember. My name led to talk of The Wizard of Oz; no red shoes here, only stout black and brown boots!

We soon set to work again and it was surprising to see how much progress we had made – and how much more there was to do. Still, our combined efforts were certainly paying off and it felt good to be making a positive difference. The next break would be for lunch, which I was already looking forward to. One of the men found a reed bunting's nest, the most perfect little structure, still suspended on the reeds around which it had been woven, providing a safe, camouflaged nursery for the chicks. It was one of the most beautiful natural things I have ever seen, so I whipped out my mobile phone and took a quick photo to show my husband later.

So ended my first morning volunteering with the Friends of Rushcliffe Country Park;
I'll be back next week!

2026 Nature Diary

Janet Crowe

July:

July was hot, hot, hot and has gone down as one of the hottest, driest Julys in history in England and Wales. Barely 0.5mm rain fell in nearby Keyworth, the previous year managed 49mm.

Trees and shrubs wilted and started shedding leaves, grass became straw-like and the lake level dropped significantly.

On the Odonata front this month, Small Red-eyed Damselflies were recorded on the lake for the first time, these are recent colonists in the UK (Essex coast 1999) and have been rapidly spreading since then. Sarah spotted the first Willow Emerald Damselfly of the year in the Tree Trail and a Male Banded Demoiselle was seen on lake reed foliage.



Willow Emerald Damselfly
(Photo: Sarah)



Small Red-eyed Damselflies



Male Banded Demoiselle

Various fruits started ripening this month, ahead of time, very tasty Blackberries and Bullace (a type of small plum) – birds and insects enjoy them too.



Blackberries and Bullace



Clouded Yellow Butterfly

A Clouded Yellow butterfly was spotted in the meadow mid-month, a migratory butterfly from North Africa and Southern Europe. They have cropped up in various places this summer.

Whilst Butterflies enjoy the sunshine (they are cold-blooded so bask in the sun to warm up), their eggs and caterpillars may struggle with the exceptional heat and shrivelling of their food plants due to lack of rain.



Magpie



Little Grebe

This Magpie was busy tucking into a windfall apple and the Little Grebe bit off more than it could chew, having caught a fish which was too big to swallow whole. I watched it for some time while it dealt with its catch, bit by bit.....

Have you ever wondered why Swans and their cygnets sometimes have one leg up on their back in the hot weather?



Well, apparently it is all to do with thermoregulation, their vascular rich legs/feet can dissipate heat on warm days (and absorb heat on cool days). It is also a form of relaxation, a bit like us crossing our legs.



August:

August continued with exceptional heat during the first half of the month, then very welcome and much needed rain came during the latter half, 74.5mm in nearby Keyworth (17mm in 2025).

Migrant Hawker Dragonflies started to appear (photo shown was taken at Skylarks Nature Reserve as it was clearer than my park shot) and numbers of Willow Emerald Damselflies increased, while other Damselfly species and numbers decreased or disappeared.



Migrant Hawker Dragonfly

Common Banded Hoverfly

The Common Banded Hoverfly feeds on the nectar of flowers, in this case Field Bindweed, whilst its larvae predate aphids.



Painted Lady and Common Blue Butterflies continued to be seen on sunny days.



Painted Lady Butterfly



Common Blue Butterfly

Rowan berries started to ripen and Elderberries hung heavy on their branches.

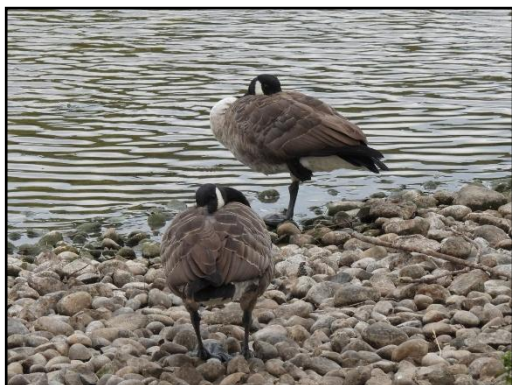


Toad



Elderberries ready to pick

A young Toad pictured was seen at the bird feeder viewing point. Toads are amphibians that breed in lakes and ponds in the spring, their tadpoles contain toxins which make them unpalatable to predators like fish. They feed on slugs, snails and other invertebrates in woodland, rough grassland and hedgerows, then hibernate through winter under the safety of log piles, stones and suchlike.



Canada Geese

Three Canada Geese were present at the side of the lake one Wednesday near the end of the month, but they were soon gone, no doubt chased off by our territorial Mute Swans.



Our Family of Mute Swans



September:

September brought changeable weather though still quite warm. Nearby rainfall for the month was 25mm as compared to 75mm in 2025.



Geranium Rozanne and Cyclamen

It was amazing how quickly grass recovered with the rain, greening up and growing fast, along with fresh foliage and flowers on withered plants such as the Geranium Rozanne in the front garden. Beautiful Cyclamen flowers also appeared – these in the Bee garden.



The warm damp conditions and cooler nights were ideal for the emergence of more fungi too.



Autumn Fungi- Awaiting identification by the Experts



Rosehips and Hawthorn berries are abundant this year and birds have already started to eat them – they will hopefully continue to provide food over the winter months for resident and visiting birds.



Rosehips
and
Hawthorn Berries



Activity noticed in the reeds at the northern end of the lake early in the month revealed both a Reed Warbler and a Sedge Warbler, both of which are summer visitors to the UK, returning to sub-Saharan Africa late August to mid-September.

They were busy feeding on insects and larvae, fattening themselves up before their long flights.



Reed Warbler



Sedge Warbler



American Pekin Duck

Cormorants and Grey Herons have been around through the month and a white duck has been present for a few weeks that seems content to spend time with the Mallard. Typically these white ducks are domestic ducks such as the American Pekin.



Cormorants and a Heron on the Island in the Lake

Common Darter Dragonflies continued to be seen along with Migrant Hawkers and Willow Emerald Damselflies. Butterflies noted were Red Admirals (this individual has a small white dot in the red band of the forewings and is most likely to be a female) and Speckled Woods.



Common Darter Dragonfly



Red Admiral Butterfly



Speckled Wood Butterfly



Silver Y Moth

There were plenty of moths around too including this beautifully disguised Silver Y, a frequent day-flying moth immigrant from Europe.

Current Activity in the Park – RAKING



Raking and the tools used

As Dorothy mentioned in her article earlier in this newsletter, the annual clearing of the lakeside vegetation is underway.

This is essential to prevent the reeds, dogwood, willow, brambles and any other vigorous plants from taking over. Clearing the area also allows the flowering plants such as the southern marsh orchids, mimulus and purple loosestrife space to deliver the colourful display that we enjoy in the summer.

The cut material, called 'risings', is left for a few days to dry before being rolled and removed to the brash heap.

Although it is hard work, experience has shown that the easiest way to roll the risings is using traditional agricultural tools: a large wooden rake and pitchfork!

COMING EVENTS

There will be an Open Meeting of the Friends on Wednesday 14 October 2026 starting at 13.00.

WORK DAYS

The Friend's Work Days will be held every Wednesday

Meet at 09.30 at the Education Centre for a Briefing

New Volunteers are always welcome

This newsletter is published by Friends of Rushcliffe Country Park. Registered Charity No 1079665.

Please contact the Editor at dove697@btinternet.com with comments and suggestions
