



Friends of Gedling Country Park

Registered Charity Number 1167205

ENVIRONMENT REPORT FOR 2018

I have adopted a slightly different format for our third yearly report and would like to commence with a request for help. We have received help from new volunteers for 2018, mainly in the recording of the Park Butterflies and many thanks are offered to them, however we desperately require assistance for the recording and management of the Environmental Aspects of the Park. Please volunteer if you can assist with the collating of data, observational work, recording, monitoring etc.

Unfortunately, the Trustees work is more and more taken up with various issues facing the Park's environment and continuously monitoring any threats to habitats requires help. No previous knowledge is required just a commitment to the Country Parks varied wildlife habitats. If you can help in any manner, please contact The Friends of Gedling Country Park Website.

Well what a year 2018 has been, completely out of synchronization with normal seasonality and changes to a more Mediterranean like climate from late spring onwards. This has resulted in some interesting observations and potential changes to the Country Parks flora and fauna. Thanks to Gedling Borough Council the Country Park at last received Local Nature Reserve (LNR) status. LNR's are places with wildlife or geological reserves that are of special interest locally and offer people opportunities to observe, study and enjoy wildlife whilst at the same time protecting it from damage or disturbance. Restricted public access can be applied to areas if visitors could cause damage to the environment. Hopefully this will make people more aware of the environmental value of our Country Park.

THE LAGOONS

Survey work on the Parks Lagoons by Nottingham Trent University and The Friends Group Volunteers has now been collated and written up as a student dissertation. Some interesting information was collected, and a summary will be made available to the members in early 2019.

Work commenced on the refurbishment of the Country Park's lagoons during 2018 and as to date the majority of the planned works have been successfully completed. Water is critically important to wildlife within the Country Park and this has been markedly obvious during the drought periods of this year, with many areas completely drying. Gedling Country Park (GCP) contains six lagoons of various sizes and water holding capacity. Currently the nomenclature for these lagoons is as follows:- Lagoon 1 is situated at the centre of the park and north of the stone recording the paths opening. Lagoon 2 is west of the Memorial Garden and at present only has water during short, mainly winter, periods. Lagoon 3 is the western of the two lagoons alongside the southern boundary. Lagoon 4 is the eastern of the two lagoons alongside the southern and the largest by area. Lagoon 5 is in the main valley near to the parks western end and regularly dries during the summer. Lagoon 6 is in the north –eastern corner of the park, quite small and very steep sided and dangerous! The Friends Group have surveyed and monitored lagoons 1 – 5 and have formulated plans for their

preservation and for improvements for wildlife preservation. Aside from the invasion of the New Zealand Pigmy Weed (*Crassula helmsii*) and seasonal drying the major threat to all the lagoons is the Common Reed *Phragmites australis* and Bulrush *Typha latifolia* both of these are quite aggressive plants that invade shallow water causing it to silt up. Whilst both are important aspects of the environment if they are not managed all the lagoons will silt up, and contain little if any water, within the next five years. With GBC we experimented with a trial in 2017 to control the spread of both species by raising water levels. This was registered successful and this year we have installed weirs to raise the levels of Lagoons 3 & 4. These at first appeared simple projects but became set with problems and difficulties ranging from seeking permissions, negotiating with the Gedling Access Road constructors, finding an unrecorded drainage pipe leaking water from Lagoon 4 and having to seal and secure this and then no rain for months to fill them both and test the works success. An island was also created within Lagoon 4 and its total, hopefully permanent, water area increased by approximately 50%. The purpose of the island is to provide more protected nesting sites for the aquatic birds. We have also purchased two Tern Rafts for lagoons 3 & 4, these will be installed early 2019 and hopefully will encourage these birds to nest within GCP. Rafts for Ducks/Moorhens/Coots etc and duck pole nests will also be installed during early 2019. At present (14th December) Lagoon 4 has filled, the island now showing, and Lagoon 3 is nearing total planned levels. More reed removal needs to be carried out this winter in Lagoon 1 and we have to find the cause of leakage from Lagoon 2 and seal it to prevent water loss. Lagoon 5 is a shallow temporary Lagoon and of interest as it acts as a major Smooth Newt *Triturus vulgaris* breeding site. In 2017 it dried completely during the summer, however small newts and larvae were recorded at all times when water was present leading to the question did they bury in the mud or were they part of an unusually late breeding? During 2018 the lagoon dried for over 4 months and we will be carrying out some pond sweeps this winter to record any fauna present (results will be forwarded to Members). Also during 2018, due to drying out, we were able to remove all the invasive Bullrushes *Typha latifolia* from this lagoon. For the future we are currently costing and asking advice regarding suitable locations to construct a Sand Martin *Riparia riparia* nesting site with viewing hide near the Lagoons within the Country Park.

Mammals:- No new mammal species have been recorded within the Park during 2018. Unfortunately the Rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus* population has shown symptoms of Mixomatosis a highly contagious and usually fatal disease. Luckily the species can show a resistance to the virus as they are a major food source to buzzards *Buteo buteo*, foxes *Vulpes vulpes*, stoats *Mustela erminea* (all present within the Park) and other predators.

Butterflies and Moths:- Luckily we have had some new volunteers to carry out butterfly surveys for 2018 the results of which have yet to be analysed but indications are of a strong sustained Country Park population. We have lost one small Dingy Skipper *Erynnis tages* site, at the extreme south-eastern corner of the Park, due to work on the Gedling Access Road. Hopefully we will have a reclaimed larger site available for this species at the road's completion. Nationally it has been reported that the Speckled Wood *Pararge aegeria* has decreased throughout the UK during 2018, the Country Park shows no significant decline in this species.

Birds:- Mark Tyler has thankfully kept records of bird sighting throughout the Country Park during 2018. Hopefully we are reaching the stage where we can analyse these records for the last few years and determine more accurately the state of the Avifauna within the Park on a yearly basis. It was pleasing to note a return of the Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus* during this year. With the co-operation of GBC, it has been arranged for scrub clearance to be initiated throughout the grassland during 2019 this will considerably enhance the environment for ground nesting birds.

Trees: - A very stressful year! Due to the un-predictable summer dry spell we lost some of the trees we planted along the Northern Country Park boundary in early Spring, as a result we now have adopted the policy of only planting trees in the Autumn months (November, December). Many species, notably Silver Birch *Betula pendula* and Alder *Alnus glutinosa* showed signs of extreme

stress during the summer and looked to be dying in many cases. These however are extremely resilient species and almost certainly will recover with few if any dying, in fact many showed leaf re-emergence later in the Autumn. We have successfully planted some Hornbeam *Carpinus betulus* throughout the Country Park during 2018 including some fastigiated forms of the species. More plantings of the shrubs Purging Buckthorn *Rhamnus cathartica* an excellent food for Brimstone *Gonepteryx rhamni* butterflies and Common Hazel *Corylus avellana* food for many mammals (including humans) and birds.

Amphibians and Reptiles:- Common Frogs *Rana temporaria* and Common Toads *Bufo bufo* reproduced in great numbers in 2018 it will be interesting to record any indications of the survival rate due to the long dry Summer. We have left piles of rotting vegetation at waterside sites within the Country Park to encourage Grass Snake *Natrix Helvetica* to breed.

Bees:- The current policy on beekeeping within the Country Park is to create a more sheltered secure site as hives within the Solar Farm suffer from detrimental weather conditions. Hopefully a solution will be found for 2019.

We would like to thank Councillors John Clarke, Leader of the Council; Michael Payne, Deputy Leader; Gary Gregory, Responsible for Community Development and Jenny Hollingsworth, Responsible for Growth and Regeneration for their support throughout the year.

In conclusion we wish to thank all our volunteers from 2018 and hopefully wish you will continue to support us in 2019. Thanks to both L'Oréal and Price Waterhouse for arranging company work days. We really value your contribution and hope your staff will visit us this winter to see the now visible results of their work. We wish everyone a very merry and enjoyable Christmas, a happy New Year and all health, happiness and fitness for more work in 2019!

Brian Osborne
Trustee
Friends of Gedling Country Park