

FRIENDS OF GEDLING COUNTRY PARK ENVIRONMENT REPORT 2019

Firstly, a great many thanks to all our volunteers, the Gedling Country Park (GCP) cannot function without your assistance and hard work and you should all be proud of the work completed during 2019. We always require more volunteers and we will appreciate any help offered no matter how small, if you are interested contact The Friends of Gedling Country Park (FGCP) website.

Again, this year turned out to be unpredictable weather wise, the highest ever rainfall records during November, causing delays to many of our projects. We are now desperately trying to complete tree/shrub planting before the Christmas break resulting in mid-week volunteer days as well as our usual Sunday operations. Volunteer days left for 2019 are December 4th, 8th, 11th, and 15th, 10.30 am onwards, come and go as you please and contribute something to your park.

The Gedling Access Road (GAR) project commenced this year and has resulted in some disturbances and some small loss of parkland in the lower regions of the Park. Land compensation will be implemented as of a result of these works. The GAR was requested by the inhabitants of Gedling as a means of relieving the traffic through the village. Due to the route of the road we as a group will need to fell some of the trees surrounding the lower lagoons to enable a suitable flight path for swans and larger aquatic birds. Two new lagoons will be created outside the southern boundary of the park and no runoff from the roads will enter our lagoons. As a result of our negotiations we will be allowed access to the lagoons for comparative environment studies.

A new environmental recording scheme, Bird Ringing, has been introduced to GCP during 2019 with the records being provided to the FGCP, Nottinghamshire Birders and the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO). Demonstration ringing sessions will be held during 2020 with preferential places for volunteers, schools and members of the Friends group. As a result of the first short recording session in November the following species were ringed – Redwing, Blackbird, Bullfinch, Great Tit, Blue Tit and Wren. An interesting problem arose regarding the recording, the BTO require named areas with a known boundary for their records and unfortunately few if any small habitat areas within the park are named, probably due to the recent creation of the land area and usage. As a result the volunteers decided on the title of Spring Lane Copse for their recording area, this is an area of the woodland running from the Park entrance east alongside Spring Lane, specifically the area where the coppice woodland is being created, and we will keep this title for future records. Naming areas of the Park, as well as grid references, is important for recording purposes and we are suggesting you send in sample names for such, for example currently the lagoons are labelled simply 1,2,3,4,5, and 6 and would be better with titles. Consultations are in progress with Nottinghamshire Birders as to the most suitable sites for Owl boxes within the park and they will ring and record any occupants when we install the boxes - training and licences are required for these activities.

The improvements to the lagoons carried out in 2018 has resulted in mixed success. In all the lagoons water levels have been high throughout the year due to extraordinary rainfall levels and this has definitely resulted in far less Bulrush *Typha latifolia* growth within all the sites. The western lower lagoon (lagoon 3) currently has a leak which we, and numerous advisors, cannot source and we can only find a little of the leakage. During 2020 we will endeavour to resolve this problem. Unfortunately, no nesting birds occupied the Tern raft on lagoon 3 during 2019. It has been suggested we add decoy birds to the raft to encourage occupancy and we are analysing this as a possible solution to zero nesting. The floating nesting rafts on lagoons 3 and 4 have been highly successful with many Ducks raising offspring throughout the year, one pair with a brood of eight through to maturity. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said of the pole nets as these collapsed due to the fact, we used too flexible wire support, these will be rebuilt with more suitable materials during 2020. However, the poles were of some use as the Herons regularly used them as perching stations. The island created in lagoon 4 during 2018 was used regularly as a retreat by wildfowl throughout the year but resulted in no nests, probably due to lack of cover at this early stage. Due to workings for the GAR the island was temporarily flooded during Autumn 2019 and as a result the contractors

have kindly promised to excavate the lagoon further and create a larger, higher island during 2020. We are hoping that the Swans occupying this lagoon will nest on the island. During this autumn GBC employed registered contractors to excavate and remove reeds from the Central Lagoon (Lagoon 1) to make available a clear open water habitat within the lagoon as required by the Park Management Plans. This is the first of the required lagoons dredging operations and will be continued at suitable times during 2020. The removed excavated material has, by law, to remain on site and the pile will be spread along the Lagoon's eastern bank and possibly act as a nesting site for grass snakes.

The Badgers and Rabbit populations within the park have suffered from illegal baiting during 2019 and we are carrying out the utmost vigilance to prevent such activity. Should you observe or have information of any such suspicious activity please immediately call the Police who are aware of this activity, all information will remain confidential. The decrease in the rabbit population has definitely detrimentally affected some floral habitats within the park leading to a decrease in Orchid populations and affecting our Butterfly species. We are in negotiations with Hedgehog Rescue and hopefully will receive some animals to release into the park during 2020, we will inform the FGCP as and when.

With the assistance of GBC, we have spent a considerable amount of volunteer time restoring and creating habitat for the locally rare Dingy Skipper butterfly and will do similar works this winter on the only recorded site of the Silver-washed Fritillary within the park. Due to illness and pressure of other activities no formal butterfly/moth survey work was carried out in 2019. We desperately require volunteers for this work during 2020, please contact via our website. The creation of the Coppiced area within the Spring Lane Copse has considerably improved the butterfly habitat in this area, particularly for woodland species.

During this year we have raised a considerable sum of money from the local CO-OP's for a new nature walk. This has been designed as a Tree Trail through two routes within the park, one shorter easy route and one longer with more challenging pathways, both routes will support the same trees but only the longer one will contain the demonstration coppiced area. A guide to the trees within the trails and a more comprehensive booklet on the trees of GCP will be published. The creation of the Tree Trails has involved considerable research and physical work by the Trustees and our volunteers and hopefully upon completion will contain growing examples of every native British tree. This list has been researched and compiled by the Trustees from all available up to date data on British tree species. Thanks also must be made for the considerable help from GBC for funding for trees and assistance in their planting during this Autumn (this work is still ongoing and we would appreciate any assistance you could provide on volunteer days)The FGCP have from the outset adhered to a strictly native only planting scheme for GCP and with sourcing from as locally grown as possible plants have religiously kept to this policy. It is interesting to note that it is now the adopted policy of the majority of Environmental Organisations within the UK and also by a group of cross-party politicians. During 2020 we will be attempting to convert as many Nottingham Councils and organisations as possible to a similar policy to protect our threatened environment. As yet we have been unable to identify any park or arboretum containing all the registered native British trees and although this is our intention, making GCP a first in the field, we still have a way to go to obtain specimens of known provenance of the last few rare species. Hopefully 2020 should see us succeed, providing Gedling, Nottingham and the East Midlands with a valuable leisure and teaching asset.

We have been creating a coppice area within the park over the last two years and this is continuing into 2020. The idea is to provide examples of woodland management from the past and to provide material for woodland crafts in the future. Coppicing is a fascinating woodland management technique and is carbon neutral in its practice. Examples of suitable native coppicing species have been planted as well as woodland habitat plants and bulbs. Unfortunately, the one major coppice craft of charcoal burning cannot be carried out due to fire risk from methane escaping from the coal

waste tip. As previously stated, this area will be included in the longer Tree Trail and a full description of coppicing and its benefits will be included in the Park Tree Guide.

During the late summer GBC organised scrub clearance and eradication from areas of the southern grassland an extremely important volunteer project which will continue over the next few years.

We have assisted GBC in planting an avenue of Hornbeam trees down the western side of the lower lagoon access road, hopefully this will shield the park from proposed developments within this area and they are important trees for native wildlife (155 species of plant feeding invertebrates use the species).

GBC's provision of a new lower carpark, now under construction, will ease the blockages and illegal parking on Spring Lane. This is on an area of minimal environmental value and extra tree planting and habitat amelioration will take place throughout the area. Important trees growing in this area have been protected.

During this year we raised funding to move the bee apiary from the summit of the park, the solar farm, to a secure site in a warmer more sheltered spot on the northern park boundary. We hope this will improve bee survival during the winter months and assist in increasing pollination and honey production within the Park. A storage shed for spare hives has also been funded and erected on site.

More planting has taken place in the Miners Memorial Garden, decorative native trees, shrubs and flowers and improvements will be continued through into 2020.

The Bee Garden, from Tatton Park Flower Show, has undergone some improvements and these will continue with more decorative bee friendly plants during 2020.

Mark Tyler and Brian Clough have generously continued their very popular nature walks held on the first Saturday of each month. Very many thanks for both Mark and Brian's efforts as well as Jenny and Rod, your Trustees who oversee the walks for safety and insurance purposes.

The list of people to thank for their efforts for sustaining and improving the Parks environment and wildlife habitats is numerous, however the following must be mentioned for their help this year: -

Gedling Borough Council for the provision of materials and manpower for the projects to improve the Park especially for work on the Tree Trails and the Lagoons.

Nottingham Trent University for advice and assistance with environmental issues, monitoring and student volunteers.

Mark Tyler for his unstinting efforts to record wildlife in the park and his provision of records for our use and for the better management of the park.

Ian and his family for the use of their cattle to graze the park grassland with no charges.

Chris Pike of Branch nurseries for his advice and help in supplying locally grown trees.

The Environment Agency for advice and guidance.

Via for help and advice regarding the new GAR.

Local Scout, Guide and Duke of Edinburgh's Award volunteers for assisting us with projects in the park.

Boots' and L'Oréal's volunteers for work projects in the park.

Nottinghamshire Birders for ringing and recording in the park

And finally, again thanks to our weekly volunteers who provide unstinting support for our projects and without who's help GCP would not be such a wonderful wildlife haven and leisure facility for all - keep up the good work!