

# FRIENDS OF FOOTS CRAY MEADOWS



ISSUE 9

NEWSLETTER

September 2011

[www.footscraymeadows.org](http://www.footscraymeadows.org)

email : [ffcm06@gmail.com](mailto:ffcm06@gmail.com)

## Premises Licence for Foothills Cray Meadows.

Many of you will be aware of the application by Bexley Council for a premises licence for Foothills Cray Meadows; this is required to allow for licensable entertainment to take place.

The Friends of Foothills Cray Committee were briefed on this, agreeing such a licence was not in itself detrimental to the aims of the Friends. In acknowledging this we noted that the ultimate responsibility to allow all events (including our own) lies with Bexley Council. That all event applications (if they need this licence or not) will undergo a rigorous assessment by LBB before authorised.

There are safeguards (legal or otherwise) in place to be met before the Local Authority will grant permission. These remain unaffected by the provision of this licence.

We observed that this must not lead to an excessive increase in events and other licensable activities that would not be in keeping with the Meadows as a Natural Habitat and a Public Open Space.

The FFCM are assured and have every confidence with the current Parks team that this is not the policy of Bexley and that the other Parks in the Borough with a 'Premises Licence' have not experienced such misuse.

It is obvious to us that the nature, location and general transport links are such that Foothills Cray

Meadows is just not suitable for large scale and regular public events. This in itself is an economical safeguard against such events. However, as a public open space where appropriate Foothills Cray Meadows can and should be a venue for occasional community entertainment and that this licence will facilitate the organisers of such worthy events.

The complexity of this legislation and the application process (albeit relating to entertainment only) has caused some consternation in that this licence is not in keeping with the informal nature of the Meadows.

The committee again looked at this application against those for the other parks in the Borough and at this year's AGM passed a motion introduced by the Chair to invite Cllr. Don Massey or another Cray Meadow Ward Councillor to express at the licensing sub-committee our desire for additional conditions to be added to the licence similar to those granted to Lesnes Abbey; relating to numbers attending, notification of event applications and times.

This would provide extra protection whilst allowing proportional entertainment events.

Michael Heath, Chair  
Friends of Foothills Cray Meadows,

May 2011

# Chairs Chat Summer 2011

## Grass Snakes

### The Grass Snake

Last June was the fifth anniversary since our inaugural public meeting as the Friends of Foots Cray Meadows. We held our fourth AGM where we said a big thank you to Gill and John Burgees who have stood down from the committee and their role as Treasurer and Membership Secretary respectfully. Their hard work and commitment has played a large part in developing the Friends towards the established position we enjoy today. Their additional work with the North Cray Children's Centre was recognised with an award from the Bexley Environmental Challenge for 2009. We send them our best wishes.

The formal business of an AGM can act as a deterrent to attendance, this and the threat of rain seems to have kept numbers down this year. Attracting volunteers other than the committee is as with similar organisations a challenge for the Friends. At last the Information Centre is nearing completion and this should attract additional interest in the Friends. You should now find the doors open more often, so do pop in.

We are preparing with the Bexley Parks Team a new programme of tree planting and woodland management activities for this autumn and winter (Full details will be published on the website and sent by e mail to members). These sessions last from two to three hours they are an ideal opportunity to get involved and meet other members, it need only be for the time you have but do join in.

Remember you can contact us by e mail [ffcm06@gmail.com](mailto:ffcm06@gmail.com) and keep up to date through our website.

However most important and the key to success is your support with our activities and working sessions; so bring along family and friends. To see more people would be a real tonic for the Friends.

Michael Heath

FFCM Chairman)

Dorsal surface and flanks, olive green/green with distinct bars. May appear very dark before skin shedding (sloughing). Ventral surface, white/cream with black chequers, some individuals have an almost entirely black underside.



Some colour variation occurs, the most distinctive features of the Grass Snake are the black and yellow/cream/white crescent shaped collar on the neck and its long slender appearance.

The light part of the collar marking is occasionally missing, particularly in older females, the black crescent part of the collar is always present.

Length: The Grass Snake is a Non-Venomous Snake and the largest indigenous reptile in the UK, typically males reach 100 cm, females up to 130 cm, though larger individuals have been recorded.

We have quite a few of these snakes on the Meadows which are quite harmless and are more likely to avoid any contact with human beings. You can recognise this reptile by its distinct yellow/cream/white and black collar around neck.

**Grass Snakes are harmless and protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.**

**It is an offence to kill, harm or injure them sell or trade them in any way**

# Editorial

One of the many comments that have been made recently in the press is the lack of respect some of our young people have towards Adults.

I was mulling this over in my mind as I walked alongside the Lake at Five Arches Bridge with my 6 year old granddaughter and a 12 week old Beagle puppy out for his first walk when we came across a Man throwing a ball into the lake for his dog to retrieve. Politely I pointed out that the sign (see right) he was standing under asked that he didn't do this as it was a nature reserve. His response was to tell me that he had been doing this for the past 20 odd years and didn't see the problem. Trying to explain why he should not be doing it, was to say the least "pointless", as clearly he wasn't interested in hearing the reasons. It was at this stage that he decided to tell me I must be a lazy out of work oik who needed to get a \*\*\*\*\* life.

Is it any wonder with the language used in front of a 6 year old and a blatant disregard for obeying rules that some young people think they can get away with the sort of behavior we quite often hear about, when they observe a supposedly mature adult behaving in this way.

The signs are there for a reason and I will continue to point it out to those who choose to ignore them. So those who want to risk their dogs lives by encouraging them into the lake be aware you will get no sympathy if the swans attack your dog.

The same goes for the small minority of Horse Riders who don't see the need to keep to the permitted riding area and who verbally abuse those who point out that they are in an area where riding a horse is not permitted. And whilst I'm on a crusade jumping off the Five Arches Bridge into the Lake is an extremely silly and dangerous thing to do. Last year Officers from the Council spoke to the parents of a number of children pointing out the dangers and asking them to stop their children doing it. No surprise then when the supposed sensible adults retorted with "they are not doing any harm" no but if they came to harm the same idiots would blame everybody but themselves.



## Committee Members

- **Chairman - Michael Heath**
- **Secretary - Karen Wheeler**
- **Vice Secretary - Margaret Dodd**
- **Treasurer - Margaret Dodd**
- **Membership Secretary - Margaret Dodd**
- **Events Manager - Lesley Grant**
- **Publicity Manager - Sally Lands**
- **Newsletter Editor - Nick Grant**
- **Committee Members - Vera Heath, Jan Harmer**

**We need a Conservation Manager.  
Please contact us if interested.**

[www.ffcm.org.uk](http://www.ffcm.org.uk)

email : [ffcm06@gmail.com](mailto:ffcm06@gmail.com)

## Aims and Objectives

- Working in partnership with Bexley Council to encourage public interest in, and the conservation of Footh Cray Meadows (FCM).
- To protect the wildlife and its habitat within FCM.
- To provide a focus for involvement by the community and users in the open space, to volunteer and work with the Council, in the conservation of FCM and its development as a public open space.
- To advance the public's awareness of the open space by promoting FCM its plants, wildlife, landscape, sustainability and supporting appropriate recreational facilities for the benefit of community groups and the general public.
- To develop and deliver information, interpretive material and educational opportunities for FCM
- To raise funds for the purpose of achieving the above aims.



# Wildlife Garden

**H**ave you secretly been considering turning your high maintenance mixed border into a wildflower garden? It can be hard to resist.

The overgrown area of woodland next to the Information Centre on Foots Cray Meadows proved equally hard to resist for the Friends of Footh Cray Meadows Committee and seemed the ideal spot, as it ticked the box for choosing a site with full or partial sun. This expanse sits in front of the Old Dutch brick wall of the now privately owned Stable block and adjacent to the path with the Information Centre to the right.

Back in May, the Friends of Footh Cray Meadows group with other willing volunteers; spent most of a Saturday in fairly pleasant weather (remember what that is?) preparing and planting up the newly tilled earth next to the centre. What had planned to be a few hours work turned into nearly a whole day. As we know, these things often take longer than planned.



I have heard it say that many gardeners naively believe you can simply scatter some seeds and wind up with a self-sowing meadow of bluebells and lacecaps. In truth, starting a wildflower garden is often more work than putting in a perennial border and it is not necessarily

self-perpetuating.

Mark Taylor from the Parks and Open Spaces Department of Bexley Council was on-hand with his flower planting plan and 'top-notch' organisation skills to get the Friends and volunteers organised into preparation of the earth and the planting of an abundance of plants we had sourced. Even a 'wild' look requires some planning and effort. The good news is that most of the effort was in getting it started. With the plants delivered and Sid Wilkinson on-hand with the spades, forks, rakes and water bowser, the group dug in. The plants sourced included shrubs, annuals and herbaceous plants all picked to benefit birds and insects

as well as being in-keeping with the Friends Group aims to promote Footh Cray Meadows plants, wildlife, landscape and sustainability. Specimens ranged from hydrangeas, lavender, geraniums, and asters to Echinacea, ilex aquifolia and pyracantha Mohave. A few spaces near to the front of the flower garden and adjacent to the path have been deliberately left empty, this is by no means an oversight or a mix up with Mark's planting plan, but more so that local school children can also get the feel for planting a wildflower garden on one of the planned Friend's Groups future school liaison projects.

Of course, then came the mulching, as these plants needed to be bedded in! As any good gardener knows, mulching can provide nutrients for plants as well as forming a barrier against weeds and to lock-in moisture. With our rather unpredictable weather of late, mulching can also help to insulate the roots of vulnerable plants from a late frost. With more hands on deck, as the afternoon progressed and a quick break for lunch, the Friends group were on time to finish the whole Garden Planting day from preparation to planting, mulching and watering!



Thank you to all those concerned with the Wildflower garden. With the new fence quickly erected by

Sid and his team, the garden is absolutely blooming.

Even the somewhat wet June and July have helped us with the watering... now of course, comes the really fun bit, the weeding! Any takers??? If you are interested finding out more about the Friends of Footh Cray Meadows or are interested in joining the Friends on one of their many planned events on the Meadows, please see our website for more information [www.footscraymeadows.org](http://www.footscraymeadows.org).

Sally Lands

# Dates for your Diary: Future Events

We hope you are interested in joining in the many events we will be hosting in the coming months. At all the events listed there will be Committee Members attending. Dates (where known) and a brief description are below; look out for publicity in the weeks leading up to each date. For further information please contact the Events Manager on 020 8300 2804

- Saturday 3 September Bat Walk
- Saturday 22 October 2011 1.00 pm Mulching and Tree Nursery Work
- Tuesday 25th October Seed Planting at the Information Centre 11.30 to 1.30pm.
- Saturday 19 November 2011 Tree Planting 2 hr Session starting 11am
- Saturday 3 December Tree Planting 2 hr session starting 10am
- Sunday 15 January 2012, Winter Woodland Walk 1.00pm  
An opportunity to re-view Planting, Coppicing and locate the best sights for the Bluebells in the spring.
- Saturday 11 February 2012 end of winter mulching around new trees 10am.
- Saturday 24th March 2012 end of winter mulching 1 pm
- Spring 2012 early morning Bluebell Walk with the Friends of Foots Cray Meadows (date to be arranged)
- Saturday 23rd June 2012 The second Friends of Foots Cray Meadows Fun (Olympic) Dog Show

## Join Today **Membership costs just £4 per household annually**

The Friends of Foots Cray Meadows is a voluntary group funded by its membership & fund raising activities.

### Membership will grant you

- Seasonal Newsletters that will include updates on projects.
- Reduced admission on any talks or events that we are not able to host for free.
- Additional Meadows related contacts, whether you would like help with
- Getting an event off the ground or simply would like to share some ideas or concerns regarding Foots Cray Meadows.
- Early notification of meetings, events and talks.

### Money raised will help to:

- Fund projects that will both protect and benefit The Meadows.
- Encourage interest & enthusiasm in the area.
- Organise outdoor events & talks.
- Improve facilities (initially the Wildlife and Information Centre).

*Any names and contact information gathered by The Friends of Foots Cray Meadows will only be used by themselves or Bexley Council on their behalf and not passed onto any third parties.*

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Enclosed is my/our subscription. £4

Children's Names (if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_ Enclosed is a donation to The Friends. £ \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ **Friends of Foots Cray Meadows**  
and send them along with your completed form to:

\_\_\_\_\_ **Margaret Dodd**  
\_\_\_\_\_ **FFCM Membership Secretary**  
\_\_\_\_\_ **32 Riverside Road**  
\_\_\_\_\_ **Sidcup**  
\_\_\_\_\_ **Kent DA14 4PU**

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

*Views expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of the Committee or Bexley Council (unless otherwise stated).*