

FRIENDS OF FOOTS CRAY MEADOWS

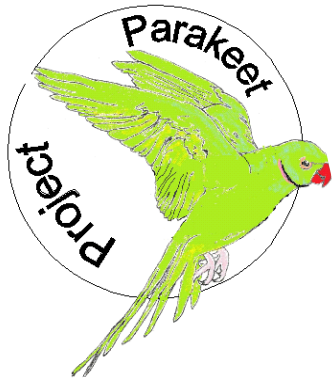


ISSUE 8

NEWSLETTER

August 2010

email : ffcm06@gmail.com



Project Parakeet was initiated in December 2009 to investigate the impacts of the population of rose-ringed parakeets in the UK on biodiversity and agriculture. Its aims are: -

- To investigate the population growth and spread.
- To measure the ecological impacts on UK native

biodiversity.

- To estimate the economic impacts on UK agri-ecosystems.
- To survey public attitudes to the population .

The location of the roost sites having been established a count of the total population of the parakeets in the UK, using quarterly simultaneous counts, took place. Thanks to a fantastic team of volunteers the January and April counts were a great success.

The January count represented the whole population as both males and females roost together but as expected the count totals fell by around 35% in April as females stayed on their nest while breeding. With the discovery of an extra roost in April they now estimate the current UK parakeet population to be around **19,000**.

A garden bird feeding behaviour experiment is underway. From May-August bird feeders are being installed in gardens in London and up to 30km outside the M25. The conditions at the feeders are alternated using a captive parakeet, a captive greater spotted woodpecker and call recordings of both to observe how the behaviour of the garden birds changes. Plans for the next 6 months include July and October

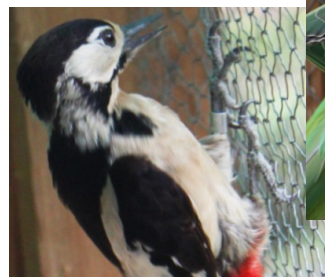
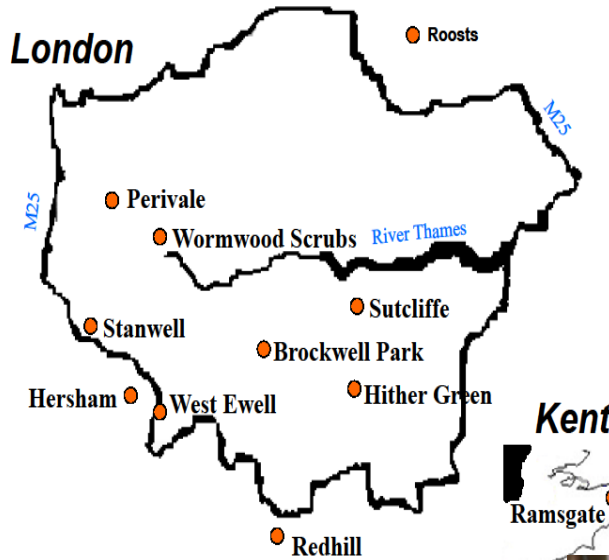
roost counts. The completion of the garden feeding experiment and conclude results. A survey of how parakeets impact on agriculture in the UK. Gardens are still needed (particularly in areas without parakeets): If you can offer your garden contact them at parakeet@imperial.ac.uk.

Found parakeet feathers? A research team at D.I.C.E., University of Kent are investigating the genetic origin of the parakeet population in the UK and the prevalence of a parrot disease PBFD . They are able to get genetic

and disease information from feathers. If you find any feathers please post them in an envelope to Project Parakeet at the following address Project Parakeet, Silwood Park, Imperial College London, Ascot, Berkshire, SL5 8PY with a note describing the location they were found (OS grid coordinates or postcode and street).

Please use separate envelopes or zip lock bags for feathers found at different locations.

Roost Sites



Article reproduced from Project Parakeet Newsletter (Editor)

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

New ponds to give threatened species a fighting chance

Froglife is set to create vital new ponds at the Foots Cray Meadows to help safeguard the rare and threatened Great Crested Newt thanks to funding and support from the Million Ponds Project and Biffa award.

The grant of £17,000 from the Pond Digging Fund will enable Froglife to dig 6 new clean water ponds. A further 3 ponds will be created from funding support from Cory Environmental Trust in Britain who have also funded Froglife staff time to develop the project in partnership with council officers and the Friends of Footh Cray Meadows .

A staggering number of ponds in the countryside are in poor or very poor condition, so it is very important that new clean water ponds such as these are created, giving the hundreds of species that depend on ponds a fighting chance. The new ponds will mean that the Great Crested Newt, and many other plants and animals, will have a better future on the meadows.

Alex Draper of Froglife said "This funding is very important as these clean water ponds will greatly enhance the ecological character of the river corridor in the meadows and provide valuable habitat for newts, frogs, dragonflies, bats and other wetland wildlife.

We found great crested newts again in the meadows this spring but in low numbers.

It is hoped that together with the other improvements planned for in the park the future of the great crested newt can be secured and that visitors to the meadows will encounter a place richer in wildlife".

The Million Ponds Project is a partnership of major landowners and land managers in England and Wales, led by Pond Conservation. The Million Pond Project aims to ensure there are once again a million ponds in the UK, reversing a century of pond loss.

The project is supported by The Tubney Charitable Trust, Natural England, the Countryside Council for Wales, and The Esmée Fairburn Foundation.

The Countryside Survey 2007 found that 80% of the 500,000 wildlife ponds in England and Wales are in a 'poor' or 'very poor' state, and that the condition of ponds has declined since an earlier study in 1996.



More information on this report is available at <http://www.pondconservation.org.uk/aboutus/News/latestnews/cspondsurveylaunch>.

Chairman's Chat

Well, as he promised Sid Wilkinson worked the committee hard during the winter tree planting and management programme. We even added an additional event and took part in the BBC Breathing Spaces Tree planting record attempt in December. Somewhat, disappointing was the lack of members joining us on these days. It just requires you to turn up for a short while plant a few trees or help with the mulching. There is plenty of work to be done and Sid often returns alone to do tree nursery work to bring on local native tree species for long term woodland development.

This is a part of his dedication which makes him a worthy recipient of the individual achievement award in last year's London Tree and Woodland Awards. To consolidate last winters work we do as an active Friends group need to re mulch the young trees so watch out for more opportunities to join in.

This year's AGM marked our fourth anniversary; we can say we are now well established with a good base number of members. We displayed more detailed information on the tree work and our project with Froglife.

Editorial

FFCM recently put up its Gazebo by 5 Arches Bridge to advertise its partnership with Bexley Council in managing the site. Whilst there the opportunity to observe the many users of the Meadows was too great.

It was a hot sunny day with many people enjoying the meadows. Unfortunately we did see some irresponsible behaviour, this included: 'Dogs in the Lake, poo bags decorating trees instead of being in the bins provided, Horses being ridden outside the designated areas and young people jumping off the bridge into the lake. Many people were having picnics including using BBQs which are not allowed (especially given the very dry conditions) but clearly given the number of burn marks people paid no attention to this. One last point please don't leave your rubbish take it home with you.

Interesting to note that the Parakeet Project (see article front page) has researched roosting sites in and around London but apparently seem unaware that the birds have been nesting and rearing their young on Foots Cray Meadows for well over 30 + years.

The art work for our display panels in the Wild Life and Information Centre has been completed and the panels were in place for our AGM. This was a significant step for the Friends in support of the aims and the challenge to maintain Foots Cray Meadows as a beautiful natural area which combines being an open space for the public, part nature reserve and a treasure of biodiversity.

Michael Heath

FFCM Chairman



Committee Members

- **Chairman - Michael Heath**
- **Secretary - Karen Wheeler**
- **Vice Secretary - Margaret Dodd**
- **Events Manager “ “**
- **Treasurer - Gill Burgess**
- **Membership Secretary - John Burgess**
- **Website Manager -**
- **Newsletter Editor - Nick Grant**
- **Publicity Manager - Sally Lands**
- **Committee Members - Lesley Grant, Vera Heath,**

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

email : ffcm06@gmail.com

Aims and Objectives

- Working in partnership with Bexley Council to encourage public interest in, and the conservation of Fooths 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.

Meadows Management Update

August 2010



As the owner of the Meadows Bexley Council are responsible for the management of the site. We thank them for the following update.

Editor

Management of the Meadows

Over the last year the Council has supported the three planting days undertaken by the FFCM and followed this up with two maintenance days, where we worked with the group to weed and mulch the newly planted trees (much needed during this very dry summer)

Looking ahead to future work (particularly tree work) on the Meadows much will be a repeat of what was planned last winter, as a very early start to the wet season and the long hard winter made ground conditions unsuitable for the heavy vehicles and machinery required and therefore much of the work planned for last year was not undertaken.

The aim is to start much of this work earlier than in previous years to try to avoid the poor ground conditions.

Main items programmed for winter 2010/11:

As stated last year, many of the weeping willows along the lake are decaying and as such will in time split and be lost, therefore the first two willows will be pollarded this winter. Pollarding involves removing most of the main limbs leaving the main trunk in place.



Willows respond very positively to this treatment and historically it has been undertaken for centuries across the British Countryside. This treatment should extend the life for the trees considerably.

We aim to pollard a few of the trees each year, so that there will still be a few larger trees left in place, and by the time the last ones are treated the first will have grown back significantly.

The fourth section of coppicing will take place in North Cray Woods. Previous coppiced sections have responded well to the this management- with a dramatic increase in spring wildflowers and insects, bird activity as well as encouraging native trees and shrubs. two sections of the Alders Wood, near the River at the Royal Park end of the site will be coppiced this winter.



In November we aim to start next year's tree planting programme, once again working with the FFCM, so please keep a look out for dates and bring the family along to help plant a few new small trees.

As the second phase of work under the Froglife Project gets underway this autumn, the Council will support this exciting project as much as possible. Therefore you may see further works taking place across the Meadows in preparation for the new ponds and wetlands.

Mark Taylor
Parks Nature & Community Officer
Bexley Council



Obituary

Many of you will have read in previous issues the articles submitted by "Tuppence" in which a perspective of the Meadows from a Canine point of view was given. Sadly Tuppence is no longer with us. She developed cancer in the glands around her eyes and it was decided by Gill & John, her owners, that it wouldn't be fair to let her go on suffering.

Tuppence was a very lively dog and enjoyed her visits to the meadows each day providing Gill and John with the healthy exercise humans need. She was 7 years 7 months and 7 days old and will be sadly missed.

Editor

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 Secretary on 07874 217186

• **Saturday 25th September**
Bat Walk
7.15pm Five Arches Bridge

• **Look out for details**
of next autumn's
tree planting programme

Stop Press: Saturday 31st July saw a successful first Fun Dog Show organised by the Friends of Foots Cray Meadows with one category having 34 entries (a full report to follow in the next edition).

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 Footh 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 Footh 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 _____ Please make cheque's payable to:
Friends of Footh Cray Meadows
 and send them along with your completed form to:

_____ **John Burgess**
 _____ **FFCM Membership Secretary**
 _____ **168 North Cray Road**
 _____ **North Cray**
 _____ **Kent DA14 5EL**

Phone _____
 Email _____
 _____ *Bexley Council (unless otherwise stated).*