

Message from the Chairman

A very Happy New Year to you all! The year ahead looks promising, with huge improvements due to the end of the lake and lots of FoLM events already in the pipeline. We value the support of you all and hope that more of you will join our growing band of volunteers, when the Spring arrives.

Charles Novis

Basildon Borough Council Tea party



When Paul Brace, Basildon Manager of Leisure, Open Space and Community Facilities recently saw all the wonderful work that the Friends do in the park, he decided to invite all our volunteers to a tea party to say thank you! So just before Christmas we all enjoyed delicious finger sandwiches and cupcakes and went home with big smiles. The Friends greatly appreciated the gesture and look forward to continuing to work in close partnership with the Council and the park's team.

Members events

- **Bat and bird boxes: Saturday February 18th 10am** Families are invited to come and build a box from a kit, which will then be put up on a tree in the wood. Members free, Non-members £3. Booking essential – contact us now - see header.

Future events currently being organised for the coming year include another bat walk, as well as a tree walk, amphibian and reptile session and a dawn chorus walk. Details in our next newsletter.

New Volunteer

We are delighted to announce the safe arrival of our latest recruit! Alice Jane Sugars arrived on Sunday December 11th. Here she is with her adoring Daddy!



Her parents Helen and Grant had been FoLM volunteers since they first met on an early working party, but Jazz in the Park 2014 saw their romance blossom. Congratulations from us all! We look forward to Alice becoming a volunteer one day.

End of the Lake Project

The first phase of this huge project should be starting in the next few weeks. The rampant rubus weeds will be dug out, an earth bund formed around the lake edge and the silt from the lake deposited behind it. This part of the work has been funded by Parks as their contribution to the project.

We are delighted to announce that we have received a grant of £2,000 from Greggs Environmental Fund towards this project, which will go towards the landscaping, reed bed and information panel. The company supports local initiatives wherever they have a branch of their bakeries.

Hopefully with funding received from the Co-op, we shall be able to complete the project in the Spring. Meanwhile – take a peg with you when walking in the park during the coming months!

Carols in the Park

Despite a foggy afternoon, just before Christmas we held our most successful carol event yet, with around 200 people joining us for mulled wine, sausage rolls, and mince pies around the Christmas tree.



Great Lake Race

Date to be finalised for Spring – details coming soon. Make your own model boat from junk materials and join the race across the lake. Rules and entry form are on line or available from the secretary. Prizes for the winning boats!

Co-op Community Local Fund

In September we told you about this scheme. Our pot is gradually filling up and we should receive a large amount in the Spring towards our lake project.

But we need even more of your help! The more Co-op branded goods you buy, the more goes into the fund. **5% goes to you and 1% to us!** **Get involved now and help us raise more money.**

To become a Co-op Member apply at the Queen's Park or Stock Road stores or the Co-op funeral home in the High Street or go to <https://membership.coop.co.uk/sign-in>

Premier Bug Inn



During October half-term, a small group of children helped create this amazing insect hotel.

The first resident arrived just as the last touches were being added – a lonely frog looking for a winter home. He was joined by a ladybird and a woodlouse and hopefully more friends will join them.

Children's Corner



Q. What do you call a crate of ducks?

A. A box of quackers.

Q. What did the duck say to the shop assistant when she bought a lipstick?

A. Please put it on my bill.

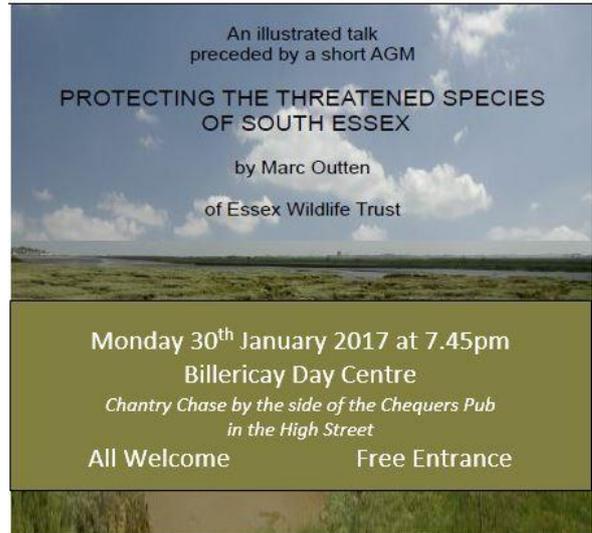
Q: Why did the duck cross the park?

A: To get to the other slide.

Perhaps you could challenge your family to a New Year's resolution to leave their mobiles at home and help you search in the park for signs of winter,

Norsey Wood Society

The next meeting of the Society:



'Protecting the threatened species of South Essex'
Speaker Marc Outten, who is Reserves Manager (south) of the Essex Wildlife Trust, and was formerly with the RSPB locally. He has appeared on Countryfile recently. FoLM members may find this meeting interesting.

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WORDSEARCH

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|-------------------|-------------|--------------|
| Bats | Fountain | Peace Tree |
| Bug hotel | Habitat | Playground |
| Cafe | Heron | Sensory Beds |
| Child in the Park | Islands | Wildflowers |
| Crazy golf | Lake | Frog |
| Dragon | Oaks | Duck |
| Duck | Outdoor gym | Wizard |
| Fish | Path | Woods |
| FoLM | | |

What to look for in Winter in the Park

Whilst walking around the park on a crisp winter's day keep your eyes open for the bright red haws on the hawthorn bush at the top of the path past the rhododendrons, which incidentally already have new flower buds forming.

Look high up in the tall maple tree in the Garden of the Child, where you may be able to spot a ball of mistletoe growing. Watch out for a charm of goldfinches feeding on seed heads in the flower meadow or keep alert for robins searching for grubs amongst the dead leaves.



Keep your eyes open for the return of goosanders to spend the winter fishing in the lake or an irruption of waxwings, occasional winter visitors, looking for winter berries. Laugh at the ducks trying to walk on the frozen lake or watch the shag diving for fish, before drying her wings in the pale winter sunshine.

Maintenance in the park

Every two months, two committee members walk around the park with one of the senior park staff members, to identify maintenance jobs that need attention. These can be anything from broken equipment, safety issues, such as trip hazards, to grass and hedge cutting. Every time, about 30 or 40 topics are usually covered and where necessary are followed up by park staff. We are impressed by how many are addressed each time and we know that the Parks' team value our eyes and experience.

Last month we raised, amongst other things, the need for repairs to lighting near Hillhouse gate, asked about the missing picnic table, discussed tree management and checked signage.

However, this walk-about is not a vehicle for making complaints, which should be directed through Streetscene, the Council's on-line system for reporting. Things reported there do get quick attention, usually!

Photography Competition



Sarah Clapton

We are delighted to launch this year's competition! Sponsorship has again generously been promised from the local service groups, which will mean good prizes again for both adult and junior classes.

Photos MUST be taken between January 1st and the closing date on August 31st and up to 4 entries are allowed per person. See our website for the rules and entry form, which will be posted this week, or contact the secretary – details at the head of this newsletter.

Gardening Group



The gardeners are on holiday over the winter, but will be ready to start again at the beginning of February. We need more help, so do join us if you can on a Tuesday morning from 9.30am by the garden area. It's great fun and we are very friendly!

Next Working Parties

We usually hold these on the third Saturday morning for most months in the year, however, our first one of this year will be on February 25th. The group undertake small maintenance jobs, which help the parks team to keep on top of non-routine tasks. If you can spare a couple of hours to help us, then do join us at 9.30am at the compound near the gardens at the Lake Avenue end of the park. Watch the website and your emails for details.
