



Friends of Farnham Park

Regd. Charity No. 285383

Newsletter October 2011

COMING SOON:

'Surrey Safari' by Geoff Lunn

A FoFP Talk at **Rowhill Field Centre, Cranmore Lane**, on
Wednesday 26th October

Enjoy a light-hearted illustrated tour of the wildlife found in local woods and gardens with Geoff Lunn, the acclaimed local nature photographer and enthusiast from the Sands.

*Free entry for Members; non-Members £2.
Refreshments from 7pm for 7.30 start.*

NOTICE OF AGM

The FoFP Annual General Meeting

will be held on

Tues. 15th November 2011

at **Rowhill Field Centre,
Cranmore Lane, GU11 3BD**

Refreshments from 7pm for a 7.30 start to the formalities, followed by the main attraction, the annual **illustrated Rangers Report**, and informal discussion.

If you've any interesting photos of the Park or your garden wildlife which you'd like displayed, please email Robin in advance.

All Members are welcome. Agenda papers will be available at the meeting and from the Secretary a week in advance.



^ Castle courtyard

BBQ >

< Yo-Yo Pond



RANGER'S REPORT

As ever, there's plenty going on. The summer season has seen our volunteers tackling a range of obscure tasks including oak translocation, dead hedging ponds, digging out concrete posts, painting signs, installing bollards and benches, pulling Balsam and ragwort, path trimming and hay-cutting.

The boundary of the Park has remained virtually unchanged for over 600 years, and to ensure it remains that way we are cutting and maintaining a 2-3m boundary strip. This should make it easier to ensure our boundary trees are safe and monitor encroachment and fly-tipping. We've already removed large amounts of garden waste from the northern boundary, and are working our way round.

Royal and Deer ponds are being fenced with chestnut post and rail to help prevent dog access, and contractors are clearing scrub along the eastern side of the Park where it hasn't been grazed for over 20 years and is losing its Parkland nature. Felling selected young trees will give space and light for self-seeded oaks to grow into future veterans and recreates linked glades for a range of sun-loving species.

Yo-Yo Pond has been drained to remove sticklebacks and dredged a third of it to remove built up leaf litter. Although the works may look somewhat destructive, the long term effect will be beneficial to many aquatic species, including the great crested newt. Monitoring of the Park's newt population over the past 15 years shows a significant decline. To achieve the targets of the species action plan we are carrying out planned habitat improvement works under the advice and guidance of Surrey Amphibian and Reptile Group. The male great crested newt needs stretches of open, deeper water to display for females in the Spring, let's hope they appreciate the effort! The dredged material is contained by an earth bung to prevent nutrients washing back into the pond, so please keep out of this area until it has had time to dry out properly.

Of course it's not all dirty work. We've hosted numerous group visits and events too, including an Open Day, the Scouts, the Folly Hill, Potter's Gate & St Polycarp's Schools, Farnham in Bloom, Greenways Nursery, Sandy Hill single parents, and the Heritage walk. It's been a busy summer.

As autumn approaches we extend a warm welcome to the new Chief Executive at Farnham Castle, Phil Hackett, and we're looking forward to working closely with the Castle as their plans for restoration of the Castle Ditch are developed.

– Robin Crowther

GONG HILL?



Warmest congratulations go to our friends at Rowhill Nature Reserve Society for receiving the prestigious Queen's Award for Voluntary Service – the equivalent of an MBE for community organisations – in recognition of four decades of dedication to creating the 55 acre nature reserve. Rowhill's committee representatives enjoyed a Royal Garden Party at Buckingham Palace in the summer, and the Award was presented in September by the Lord-Lieutenant of Hampshire, Dame Mary Fagan.

Kathy Spink from the RNRS said: "We are proud to receive this award, not only for all the current volunteers and members of the very strong team here at Rowhill, but also on behalf of all our supporters in the past who have helped make the Rowhill Nature Reserve Society what it is today".

(L to R: Roy Champion, Don Wakefield, David Searchfield; Carol Roberts, Sheila Brooks, Kathy Spink, Jackie De La Haye, Debbie Brown)

THE COMFY CHAIR

It feels almost complacent to say so, but everything's pretty much hunky dory. The challenges of habitat management will always be with us but with Robin's conscientious leadership the Park is looking great, the volunteer group is thriving, we're honoured to welcome a host of recent new members, and I'm over the moon with the wonderful FoFP webpages that Sharon has created – check it out, just Google 'FOFP'. On top of that we've been delighted by the turnouts and successes of Roy Kingston's guided tour of the Bishops' Palace and Martin Woolner's tree walk, and our social/barbecue seems to get better every year, even if the weather doesn't!



Thanks to everyone for your support, and indeed to all that 'do their bit' to help to maintain and appreciate Farnham Park.

PS - Don't forget to contact Robin if you've surplus antique furniture etc to contribute to the Guy's bonfire.
– Jerry Hyman

The FoFP Committee – Officers' Contact Details:

Chairman: Jerry Hyman:
jerryhyman@tiscali.co.uk 724664
Secretary: Martin Clegg:
martin_clegg@btinternet.com 821977
Treasurer: David Havenhand:
d.havenhand1@ntlworld.com 404983
Membership: Judy Sauter: 668813
Ranger's Office 717047



BUTTERFLY SURVEY 2011

It seems to be my perpetual moan that each year's butterfly count is down on the previous year, and I'm sorry to say "here we go again". This year's total of 448 is considerably lower than the 519 in 2010 and 559 in 2009. Butterfly Conservation, in a report following the Big Butterfly Count 2011, confirms that butterfly counts are down country-wide, and attributes this to the long spell of cold, snowy weather, followed by a record breaking warm, dry Spring, then chilly temperatures and prolonged heavy rain.

Our Park transect is still the same – from the bottom of Hampton Road, diagonally across the Park to end at St. James' Avenue, for 26 weeks from the beginning of April to the end of September. On the face of it, the weather here might seem to have been ideal for butterflies – on 17 of the 26 walks completed, the temperature was 19 C (66 F) or above and sunny days (50% or more blue sky) totalled 21. However the wind has certainly been a major factor. On 15 occasions, I recorded wind speeds between 3 and 5, and on only 4 occasions was it as low as 1!

As is to be expected, the most prolific months for sightings were June (92, up slightly on last year), August (54, considerably down on last year), and July at 255, 15% lower than 2010. Sightings in April, May, and September, at 27, 10 and 10 respectively, were also down on last year. On three occasions – two weeks in May when it was a bit chilly, and the last week in September – there were no sightings. The most butterflies recorded in a week was 70 in the first week in July.

As in each of the last eight years, the Meadow Brown at 189 sightings in 15 weeks was the most abundant butterfly. Strangely, whilst many other species showed a marked decline, "browns" increased by 20% over the last year. The only others to increase were Speckled Wood (36 to 45) and Marbled White (19 to 37). Yet again, the previously prolific "whites" showed a marked decrease from 61 to 34. The Ringlet (30 against 80), Gatekeeper (29/49), Small Heath (27/54), Skippers (19/ 21), Orange Tip (14/19) and "Blues" (5/8) struggled to maintain their numbers. Although the Red Admiral showed a slight increase from 1 to 6, the other "aristocrats," Peacock, Comma and Small Tortoiseshell at 5 in total were few and far between. The only other butterflies encountered during the season were Brimstones (5) and Small Copper (4).

The most productive part of the transect this year was Section 6 (bottom of Hampton Road to Bishop's Paddock) – 123 sightings, followed by Section 3 (the stretch behind The Ranger's House as far as White Bottom) – 120. White Bottom itself was the least productive with only 32 sightings. The Southern Slopes, leading to St. James' Avenue was yet again responsible for the majority of the whites.

The most significant sighting, however, was a Purple Emperor *Apatura iris* adjacent to Yo-Yo pond at the end of June. This is possibly the first recorded sighting of this beautiful butterfly in the Park (*male pictured below left*) and it was seen by about a dozen of the Wednesday Work-Party (including the Ranger). Unfortunately it was not on the "transect", so I can't count it, but it has been reported to the Butterfly Conservancy. There was no sighting of the Glanville Fritillary in the Park this year, but it has been seen elsewhere in the area and there was no Painted Lady "invasion" this year either!

What are the prospects for a resurgence in numbers next year? Probably not too high, but given a mild autumn and winter and a sunny and warm 2012 spring – who knows?
– David Havenhand