

Spring Walk

Following trails where rabbits run
we walk
shifting grass
and scuffing stones.
A Frog sits, motionless
at the edge of the path.

Spring sun shines on budding
catkins
we talk,
yellow boughs
swaying in the breeze.
Buzzing bees labour
'till the day is done.

A hawk hovers, balanced on the
wind.
we watch
tilting heads
to a pale blue sky.
It dives then soars
up over treetops.

Following paths the deer have
made
we stop
beside whin and broom
where butterflies flit,
dogs at our feet
then go home.

Fiona Russell

Be A Responsible Dog Owner

If you have visited the Nature Park recently you will have seen the pathways which are in the process of being laid. Now is the time for all dog owners to be, if they are not already, responsible for clearing up after their pets. The pathways invite everyone to come in and enjoy the park. It is imperative that all areas be kept free from dog faeces and litter. Both are unsightly and dog faeces can be a danger to humans. The rule is simple for ordinary litter - DON'T DROP LITTER, BIN IT OR TAKE IT HOME. For all dog owners, here is a reminder of the best way to clear up after your dog.

Use a doggy bag, or a carrier bag, to pick up the faeces. Ideally, this should then be placed in a designated dog bin. If this is not possible, take the bag home or, as a last resort, double wrap the faeces and put in a normal litter bin. Poop scoops can also be used; they are available from most pet stores.

At the moment the nearest Dog Bin to the Nature Park is at the entrance opposite Dennyloanhead Bypass but in the near future one will be in place at the end of Bonnyvale Place.

Hanging the bags on trees is not an option as there is no scheme in place to collect the bundles and they will not decompose.

Useful websites.

ENCAMS www.encams.org
Kennel Club www.the-kennel-club.org.uk
Dogs Trust www.dogstrust.org.uk

Beth McGinnes

Motorcycles In The Nature Park

David McPherson

Bonnyfield Nature Park has been going through a number of changes recently, highlighting the positive aspects of this local amenity and improving park access for all.

Unfortunately there have been a number of recent occasions where people have been using off road motorcycles and mini motos in the park. The use of motorcycles in the park is not only a danger to other users and the wildlife, but causes severe damage to the paths, trees and vegetation. From a legal point of view, the use of motorcycles is only allowed on private land, with the permission of the landowner and with local planning and environmental (noise) regulations being observed.

While we want the park to be used by as many people as possible, use for such activities conflicts with the reasons the park was set up and anyone using the park in this manner, without Council permission, would be breaking the law. It is Council policy not to allow motorcycling on its land.

If you require further information on areas where it is legal and safe to ride you should contact your local Council or visit the Scottish Auto Cycle Union web site (<http://www.sacu.co.uk>) where there is a wealth of information and links to many interesting web sites. Thank you for helping us help the environment for all.

Contact Numbers :

Ian Edwards
Tel: 01324 504714



e mail
ian.edwards@falkirk.gov.uk

Web Page :

www.falkirk.gov.uk -
search under 'B' in the A-Z
for more information

This newsletter has been prepared by members of the nature park management group, in conjunction with Falkirk Council, whose aims are to increase awareness of the park and encourage people to use it and look after it.



BONNYFIELD NATURE PARK

Newsletter

Spring 2007
Issue 2



BONNYFIELD NATURE PARK - BONNYBRIDGE'S GREEN SPACE

Since the last issue of the newsletter much has been going on in the park: - visits, bridges coming down, bridges going up, new paths, gates, and fences. News of all that and lots more below.

Bonnybridge School Children Enjoy the Park
Gillian McPherson

In early February we were lucky enough to be able to take a class from each of the local primary schools out into the park to encourage their understanding of nature in their area. With the professional support of Falkirk Council's Outdoor Rangers - Fiona, Lesley and Allie, park committee members and local council representatives we led a group of children from each of the 3 primary schools. The children ranged in age from P4-P6.

The main emphasis of each of the mornings was looking at the trees within the park and trying to identify them with the absence of any leaves! On one of the days, a light dusting of snow enabled some of the children to examine tracks left by small animals and birds moving through the park while others were able to look for evidence of animals by identifying their trails and

tunnels. The rangers were a mine of interesting facts ranging from folklore tales and witchcraft stories to factual information on bird identification and the "Angels Share" fungus found throughout the park.

At the end of the walk the children worked in pairs to build a nest - demonstrating how difficult it is for a bird with no hands!!!! There was a great fun and competitive spirit within the groups but I'm not sure how many eggs would have remained intact.

The children found all of this very interesting and many were keen for their teachers to bring them back - perhaps when it gets a bit warmer - and the committee members learned something new too. Over the page are some of the stories from the children who took part.



Bridges

The old railway bridge has been demolished as it served no useful purpose, and was the focus for anti-social activity.



The old iron bridge over the Bonny Water was beyond repair and has been replaced with a larger, wooden one.



These works were organised by the management group in conjunction with Falkirk Council's Development Services Bridge Engineers

The following are extracts from the stories written by the pupils of Bonnybridge Primary following their visit to the nature park.

"When we went into the school the Rangers were waiting for us. We put on yellow jackets so the cars could see us and we headed for the nature park. When we arrived we split into 3 groups. We played which animal am I? We walked down the park and found some mouse holes and fox tracks, also flying above us was a heron. Down by the river we saw some dead trees with holes made by a woodpecker. One of the ranger told us about badgers. Then we saw a mole tunnel that was really really long! We stopped and made birds nests which was really

fun. Then we looked at loads of different types of trees and some of them had Dutch Elm Disease. The we saw a man and his wife walking their dog. Then we got our picture taken. Then we walked back to school and took our jackets off. My school trip was great and I learned loads. You should come along. It was great!



TALES OF THE BONNY WATER - MR. MOLE LIVES DOWN A HOLE

Mr. Mole had moved twice in his short life. When they were old enough, he and his brothers and sisters left their nest and set off separately, each to find their own territory. Mr. Mole came to an area that seemed to offer plenty of his favourite food, earthworms, insects and slugs. There was good soil and easy digging. However, what Mr. Mole didn't realise was, he was in the garden of a house on the edge of the Bonnyfield Nature Park. Shortly after Mr. Mole's arrival, the man, who owned the garden noticed there were soft bits in his prized flower beds, also holes and small piles of earth. The man complained to his wife about this evidence of underground activity in his flowerbeds.

Then one day his daughter came to tell him, there was something digging under the soil, because she could see the earth moving in a flowerbed. The man grabbed his spade and rushed to the spot and sure enough, there was soil being pushed up. The man dug his spade deep into the soil and tossed out a huge "spade-ful" of earth. Mr Mole was tossed up and turned over in mid air. The man was astonished, when he briefly saw Mr. Mole. Mr. Mole was about 15 centimetres long with, a velvet-like, black coat, no neck, tiny eyes, a pointed nose and whiskers. Mr. Mole was aware he was in danger and as soon as he hit the ground, he dug furiously and disappeared in a flash down into his network of tunnels, before the man could do him any further harm.

Mr. Mole has very strong shoulders, forelegs and shovel-shaped paws with five sharp claws on each front paw. This allows him to dig into the

ground very quickly. Mr. Mole got quite a fright and he decided to move.

Moles have long been considered a nuisance by gardeners and farmers, because they push up mounds of soil in the gardens and fields. In the past, mole catchers were employed to trap moles and their velvet-like coats were sold, as fur trimmings on garments or to make waist-coats. Moles do bring positive benefits, as they eat pests, which damage plant roots, such as Leatherjackets, the larvae of the Crane fly (better known as Daddy Long Legs). Also the moles' tunnelling helps to aerate the soil.

That night, Mr. Mole moved from the garden, where the man had dug him up. He made his way, through the grass, under the cover of darkness, into the Bonnyfield Nature Park. He started tunnelling into a dry, earthy, slightly raised area, just north of the new wooden bridge.

Mr. Mole has quickly established a network of tunnels and in the process has created the inevitable mounds of excavated soil, which we call molehills. Mr. Mole patrols his tunnels regularly, eating any worms, grubs and insects, which have fallen into his tunnels.

If you go down near the new wooden bridge, you will see the little mounds of soil or molehills, which Mr. Mole has pushed up from his tunnels. Mr Mole is very sensitive to vibration. If you are very quiet and tread very softly you may see earth being pushed up at one of his molehills. However you must be very, very quiet.

I was in the class and the rangers came in. They put green jackets on us. I looked like a cowboy. We walked to the nature park. When we got there I was amazed the place was covered in snow and I played a game called animal identification game and then we walked down a hill and looked at some trees then we saw rabbit poo. We saw the most amazing things, it was a mole hole! We saw lots of trees. Here are the names of the trees - hazel, beech, alder, blackthorn, pine, elm,



gorse bush and ash we saw lots of other things as well like a mouse hole and fox den, woodpeckers holes, mole hills, burdock. We learnt about velcro - this is a story of a man who was covered in burdock so he decided to invent velcro. The other group got to hold a badgers skull. We walked all the way back. Our feet were aching.



The woman called Lesely showed us a badgers skull. We got to hold it too. It was terrifying. After that our group had to do exercise. Then Lesely told us a story about the man who invented velcro. Then we came back to the school. Our trip was terrific!

We all walked round the park. Some trees had a disease. There was a pond and my group seen a heron fly over it. When we walked more it got colder. The class made a bird nest. When my group got cold we marched to warm up. It was great fun. At the end the other group was there waiting on us. We all went back and said bye to the rangers.

First we played a bird or animal identification game. My bird was a blackbird. Then we looked

for animal tracks. Mrs White found rabbit poo then Ian showed us woodpeckers holes then he told us there was a disease called Dutch Elm. Then he showed us these trees called the hazel tree the beech, alder tree, ash tree, elm tree, gorse bush, pine tree and blackthorn tree. Then we saw mole hills and we saw a heron by the pond then we built a birds nests. After that a lady called Lisa took pictures of us. When we got back Struan told us we walked 3 miles.

Our school trip was great at Bonnyfield Nature Park. Rangers met us in the class. We were



really cold walking there. When we got there we were put in 3 groups. I was in the insect group. With our partners we played a insect identification game. Then we started walking on the path we had identify a tree called beech, ash, alder and hazel. We kept on walking and kept identifying trees, but we stopped to let some dogs past. Then our teacher opened her bag and said, " I have someone here that likes to eat worms" and she threw the bag at my partner Kelsey, she hid behind me and and we all laughed. The teacher took out a badgers skull and we all got to hold it There was a tree with a Dutch Elm disease. We found out that baby beetles ruin trees. We got to see a heron flying in the sky. We saw foot prints of foxes, rabbits, deers and birds. We went past a beehive, we saw lots of them. We saw a burdock and then we had to make nests without partners. We played tig to warm up and some star jump's too, Then we got in a circle and waited until the others came back then we went home. Our trip to the park was brilliant.

