



Report on Rushcliffe Country Park BioBlitz, 2nd- 3rd July 2022

Introduction

Rushcliffe Country Park is situated to the south of Ruddington in Nottinghamshire (map reference SK575321). It is an 85-hectare site, created in 1993, with public amenities as well as parkland, a lake, meadows and woods.

A BioBlitz is an event that focuses on finding and identifying as many species as possible in a specific area over a short period of time, involving specialists and members of the public.

A BioBlitz was held at Rushcliffe Country Park in July 2010, 17 years after the park was created. At that event 655 species were identified, of which 234 were new finds for the park. The Friends of Rushcliffe Country Park planned to repeat the BioBlitz in 2020, to see how the wildlife in the park had evolved and to raise the public's awareness of the site's status as a Local Nature Reserve (LNR) in Rushcliffe and a Local Wildlife Site (LWS) previously called a Site of Interest for Nature Conservation (SINC). The event was then postponed to 2022, due to the Covid pandemic.

The BioBlitz was eventually held over a 24-hour period from 5p.m. on Saturday 2nd July to 5p.m. on Sunday 3rd July 2022.

History of the Country Park site

The site has an interesting and varied history. Originally it was an area of boggy land, Fowemer, containing four ponds. In the 1880s much of the land was drained and became farmland, although two ponds remained: Little and Big Fowemer. In 1939, early in World War II, the land was requisitioned, the farmland destroyed, the site levelled, the stream culverted and an Ordnance, Supply and Disposal Depot was created, also called the Royal Ordnance Factory. When the war ended the factory closed and the site remained in Ministry of Defence hands as the Ordnance Storage and Disposal Depot, being used as an auction site. This stopped in 1981 and in 1983 the site was abandoned, allowing the wildlife to move back in. Lapwings, short-tailed voles, short eared owls and newts were recorded at this time.

In 1989, the depot site was brought by Nottinghamshire County Council for a nominal £1 and the decision made to turn 85 hectares of it into a Country Park. The buildings were demolished in 1990, the land levelled and landscaped; Fowemer Hill rose by eight metres as rubble was dumped there. Great Crested Newts found in a water tank were moved to another site. The 'lake' (officially a large pond) was dug, lined, and filled from the mains by Severn Trent; the water was then left for some weeks before fish were introduced. A Bat hibernaculum was created.

In 1993 the land was leased to Rushcliffe County Council; meadows were sown, 140,000 trees and shrubs were planted and the park was officially opened. The full history of the park can be found in the book 'Bombs to Butterflies'. (1)

Rushcliffe Country Park was awarded the status of Site of Interest for Nature Conservation (SINC) in 2008, following the discovery of a breeding population of Waved Black moths, *Parascotia fuliginaria*, BF2475.

Preparation for the BioBlitz

The BioBlitz was planned by a committee of the Friends and Rangers of Rushcliffe Country Park, following the recommendations given in the 'Guide to Running a BioBlitz' (2). Experts, representatives from the Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust, local societies and Friends groups were contacted and invited to take part and/or lead activities. A programme of walks and surveys was organised with the experts. Publicity was drawn up and displayed on local websites and notice boards. All activities were covered by appropriate risk assessments and a number of the Friends of Rushcliffe Country Park (FoRCP) received First Aid training specifically for the event. A team of volunteers from FoRCP and other local organisations was recruited to help to run the event.

Two days before the BioBlitz, the insect specialist Chris Terrell-Nield set up insect pitfall traps in two locations, a wood and a more open area bordering on a woodland edge.

Participating experts

Bats - Lynn Victor and Colleagues, Notts Bat Group and Alastair Glenn, RCP Senior Ranger

Mosses - Margaret Crittendon, Notts Biological Recorder for bryophytes

Moths – Mick Thompson, Former Ranger, Rushcliffe Country Park; Neil Ward, Kieron Hudson, Peter Patrick and Darren Clark, Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Entomological Society (DaNES)

Birds - Neil Glenn and colleagues, John Elwell, Notts Birders

Plants - Neil Pinder, Gordon Dyne and Jenny Swindells, Notts Wildlife Trust

Insects - Chris Terrell- Nield, Nottingham Trent University

Pond life - Chris Davis, Rushcliffe Country Park Ranger

Dragonflies - Chris Bradbury, Notts Biological Recorder for dragonflies

BioBlitz activities

Saturday 2nd July

In the evening, the moth trappers set up their traps in two locations: one in an open grassy glade in a wood (the Tree Trail) and the other in the work compound near the Visitor Centre, which is surrounded by hedges and trees. The moth trapping was carried out overnight and some of the moths were displayed to the public the next morning, before being released.

A bat walk was held at approximately 9 p.m. This followed the lake margin and woodland edges, and bat detectors were used to help identify the bats.

Sunday 3rd July

The main BioBlitz event was held from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on a grassy area near the children's playground in the park. We were unable to use the park's Visitor Centre, as the building was being refurbished. For this reason we were also unable to provide hot refreshments, although cold drinks were available.

Gazebos were set up for registration, first aid and identification of finds. The Nottinghamshire Bat group and the Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust had gazebos with wildlife displays and activities. Children's wildlife-related activities (craft, floor puzzles and snakes and ladders) and a beekeeping display were organised by FoRCP volunteers.

Members of the public booked in for the activities at the registration area and set off with the leaders at timed intervals. The following activities were available: insect surveys (examining the pitfall traps) with Chris Terrell-Nield, bird and plant walks with the Notts Birders and the Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust groups, dragonfly walks with Chris Bradbury and pond dipping with Chris Davis. The pond dipping took

place in two of the ponds in the Education Wood. One activity, examination of mammal paw print traps with Tim Williams of Ruddington U3A, was planned but had to be cancelled.

Maps and recording sheets were also provided for those who wanted to perform their own surveys. Text books and identification sheets were available in the identification area and experts were on hand to aid in identifying finds. Moths and other insects found were displayed in the identification area.

The activities were well attended, and all enjoyed spending time with the various experts finding and identifying different species. The children's favorite surveys were the beetle traps and pond dipping.

Recording

The finds were recorded on standard sheets. After the event, the records were collected and entered into Nature Counts, a Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust site which feeds into the National Biodiversity Network's database. The BioBlitz records are stored under Activities: Rushcliffe Country Park.

Results

In total, 441 species were identified, of which 29 were not on our species list. A complete list of species found and a list of those new to the park are presented in the accompanying tables to this report.

Total number of species found, compared with the 2010 BioBlitz

Animal/plant type	2022 Total	2022 New Finds	2010 Total	2010 New Finds
Flowering plants	162	4	152	25
Trees & shrubs	46	2	50	4
Grasses	15	1	40	6
Rushes/ reeds/sedges	9	0	11	0
Ferns/Horsetails	3	0	0	0
Birds	36	0	44	1
Moths	68	11	90	19
Butterflies	10	0	15	1
Spiders & Opiliones (harvestmen)	6	1	164*	8
Insects	41	0		101
Invertebrates - terrestrial and aquatic	14	10		11
Odonata (dragonflies and damselflies)	6	0	9	1
Lichens	0	0	49	49
Mosses	10	0	4	2
Fungi	0	0	5	5
Mammals	7	0	9	1
Fish	1	0	2	0
Molluscs	6	0	7	0
Amphibians & reptiles	1	0	4	0
TOTALS	441	29	655	234

Notes: * In 2010, Insects, Invertebrates, Spiders and Opiliones were grouped together.

It is not possible to draw any definite conclusions about wildlife changes in the park by comparing these two BioBlitz results. The event in 2010, run by Rushcliffe Borough Council, was much larger, with more specialists taking part. In particular the lichen team, who had identified 49 species in 2010, were unable to attend in 2022.

The weather prior to this year's BioBlitz had been very hot and dry, which may have reduced the number of species found.

The moth trapping was undertaken in two very different locations, one in the work compound, an open area surrounded by trees and the other, in a grassy glade in the Tree Trail. In total, 64 species, (50 macro and 14 micro moths) were identified. Out of the 50 macro moths, 13 species were found in both areas. Six were new finds for the Park. Fourteen species of micro moths were found 8 in the compound, 4 new to the Park; and 6 in the Tree trail, 1 new to the Park.

In the work compound, two of the larger hawk moths were found; the Poplar Hawk-moth, *Laethoe populi*, whose caterpillars feed on Aspen and the Lime hawk-moth, *Mimas tilae*, whose caterpillars feed on Lime trees which grow near to the compound.

The pitfall traps and sweep netting found 41 species across both sites, the Education wood and Gibbes wood glade, 9 species were new finds for the Park.

Midsummer is not the main season for mosses or fungi; we hope to look for these later in the year.

Acknowledgements

Without the help of the experts and volunteers the BioBlitz would not have happened; thank you for your participation and sharing your knowledge which was appreciated by all.

We are grateful for the sponsorship of the following organizations:

- Nottinghamshire County Council, who provided £1000 via Councillor Cottie
- Ruddington Co-Op, who provided £30
- Vision Express, for use of their car park on 3rd July

References

1. Bombs to Butterflies: From Ruddington Depot to Rushcliffe Country Park, edited by Margaret Lawson, ISBN 0 903929 10 4
2. Guide to Running a BioBlitz: Natural History Museum, parkscommunity.org.uk

Contact

For further information or comments please email us on RPBBlitz@outlook.com

Rushcliffe Country Park BioBlitz team

BioBlitz July 2022

29 new finds for the Park

Recorder	English species name		Notes	Location
Chris Terrell-Nield	INSECTS & INVERTEBRATES		Total 11	
"	Ground beetle	Calathus rotundicolis	(also called Calathus piceus)	Gibbies Wood
"	Ground beetle	Bembidion lampros		Gibbies Wood
"	Rain beetle	Amara lunicolis		Gibbies Wood
"	Meadow ant	Lasius fulvus	Trap by nest so many caught	Gibbies Wood
"	Black ground beetle	Pterostichus niger	female	Education Wood
"	Ground beetle	Leistus ferrugineus	Specialist springtail predator	Education Wood
"	Rove beetle	Tachinus rufipes		Education Wood
"	Rove beetle	Philonthus decorus		Education Wood
"	Harvestmen	Mitostoma chrysomelas	Knobbed setae characteristic	Education Wood
DaNES	Tiger crane fly	Nephrotoma flavescens		Tree Trail
Bird walk 03.07.22	Marmalade hoverfly	Episyrphus balteatus		Lake side
	PLANTS		Total 7	
Neil Pinder	Bush Grass	Calamagrostis epigejos		RCP
	Pineapple mint	Mentha suaveolens		RCP
	Domestic apple	Malus pumila		RCP
	Equal leaved knotgrass	Polygonum arenastrum		RCP
	Wood dock	Rumex sanguineus		RCP
	Common lime	Tilia platyphyllos x cordata = T.x europaea		RCP
R Dove	Common fiddleneck	Amsinckia micrantha		SK576 322

	MOTHS macro		TOTAL 6 macro moths	
Neil Ward DaNES & RCP M Thompson	Small Magpie	Anania hortulata 1376		SK57584 32088
	July Highflyer	Hydriomena furcata 1777		SK57584 32088 Tree Trail
	Bordered Sallow	Pyrrhia umbra 2399		SK57584 32088 + Tree trail +lakeside
	Brown Scallop	Philereme vetulata		Tree trail
	Coronet	Craniphora ligustri		Tree Trail
	Shoulder-striped Wainscot	Leucania comma		Tree trail
	Moths micro		Total 5 micro moths	
		Endotricha flammealis		Tree trail
		Eucosma cana		SK57584 2088
		Hedya salicella		SK57584 2088
		Hedya ochroleucana		SK57584 2088
		Eudonia mercurella		SK57584 2088
			TOTAL 6 + 5 micro moths	