

News from Harrold Odell Country Park
October 2010

The Park is now gracefully sliding into autumn and the hedgerows are bursting with all kinds of lovely fruits. We've had a bumper crop of blackberries and crab apples this year – great news for this Park Ranger who has a weakness for fruit crumble and custard and crab apple jelly. I've been very busy stocking up my freezer.

We still haven't had anywhere near the usual amount of rain this year. Localised downpours yes, but not many sustained wet days. Water levels in the ground, lakes and rivers remain much lower than normal. This has caused us problems with toxic blue-green algae in the large lake and this has only just begun to dissipate.

Grebe Lake is always affected during drought conditions unlike the small lake. This is because there are two streams flowing into it from the surrounding farmland containing dissolved fertiliser residues. They change the fertility of the water, allowing the algae to bloom in prolonged hot sunny weather. The small lake however, only has water flowing into it if the river floods. There are no streams entering it thus the water has a different quality.

While the algae signs are up do not allow your dogs into the lake as the algae can make them ill.

The Community Orchard at Odell has been re-entered for an award from the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) in their Landscape Improvement category. We won a highly commended last year after we removed scrub, rubbish and nettles from the planting site at the back of the houses at Horsefair Lane.

This year, we wanted them to come back and see the progress we've made and we eagerly await the judge's decision. We would like to thank the volunteers, particularly David Bedborough and Trevor Smith who steadfastly watered the new trees during the drought. Also, Harrold Fire Brigade who, as a training exercise, put several hundred gallons of water on the orchard. If it wasn't for them, the trees would have died.

October will see us resume coppicing and hedgelaying activities around the park. Recent strong winds have brought down a poplar and three willows which have had to be cleared up. Some of you will also have noted the damage to Harrold Bridge when riverside trees were blown down. There will be a programme of assessment of all the larger trees within the park, looking primarily at safety. Anything dodgy will be cut down. These trees will then re-grow from the stumps.

The car park donations you so generously give are administered by our Friends Group and ploughed back into the Park. Recently they have purchased a small trailer for us to ferry tools, wood, cuttings etc to where they need to go. It has helped our workload enormously will be put to very good use during the winter work programme.

On October 24th, we are putting on a Living from the Landscape Day between with Bedford Museum between 11am – 4pm. This is a free family event where you can

come and watch various crafts people using natural materials to create useful utensils and decorative pieces. There will be an opportunity to buy some of the produce and take part in various activities during the day. You will also be entertained by the Hemlock Morris Dancers between 1pm – 3pm. We hope to see you there. For more info please call 01234 20016 or e-mail janet.munro@bedford.gov.uk or Susannah.oliver@bedford.gov.uk

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