



Friends of Forest Farm & Glamorganshire Canal Nature Reserve

SUMMER 2022

No.124

Summer is a wonderful time to visit Forest Farm and it seems to be bursting with so much life of every description at the moment. The reserve feels like a haven of peace and beauty from the more turbulent events going on in the wider world at present. It is something for us to treasure, but also to guard and protect.

With this in mind the Committee have arranged for the newly elected Whitchurch counsellors to visit the reserve and to see how vitally important it is for the local community and to learn about our hopes and concerns for it's future. The Committee have also made arrangements to meet with the project managers for the Velindre Hospital development to make them aware of our interests and concerns and so we can be aware of the possible impacts upon the reserve. There are many competing demands and priorities in society right now, so getting our voice heard is important. More feedback on this in the next newsletter.



Photo: Kingfishers. Colin Harvey

Our new Chairperson Anthony Matthews is warmly welcomed; you will be interested to read his article below and see his vision for the future direction of Friends of Forest Farm.

Sheila Austin has been the newsletter editor for 16 years and has done a wonderful job in what has clearly been a labour of love. We want to say thank you to Sheila for all her hard work and her inspiration in producing the newsletter which has been a source of great enjoyment whilst also keeping us up to date with developments both big and small. THANK YOU SHEILA.

After serving for many years as a committee member, as treasurer and currently Chairman, John Harding, has just stood down from his present role but remains on the committee and an active member. We would like to thank John for his commitment and leadership over these many years, in promoting and developing the reserve. THANK YOU JOHN

Volunteering, like so many activities, was severely curtailed by COVID, but is now getting back with a burst of activity. Jon's report gives more detail of all that has been happening. The rangers however kept going throughout and Alec highlights what has been happening within the reserve during this Spring.

Finally thanks to you all for your ongoing interest and support. We would be pleased to hear views from any of our members with comments, concerns and contributions that you would like to see about Friends of Forest Farm and/or the Newsletter.

So please contact us at editor@forestfarm.org.uk

RANGER REPORT SPRING 2022

Our time in the early spring this year was mainly taken up by helping on the Coed Caerdydd project, planting trees all over Cardiff to increase the canopy cover to 25%. Unfortunately, work on the reserve took a back seat for a while. We also still had work to do to get the reserve looking good for the Green Flag judges, and we should know soon if we have been successful this year.

We are having difficulties with the pipe system that feeds the ponds from the canal and we will have to use the excavator to renew some pipes and clear a blockage. This work should be happening in the early summer, and will sort out the problem on a more permanent basis.

This spring we have had a good show of wildflowers with Bluebells that were planted last year showing well, and the scout field once again covered in Red Campion. This is the direct result of all the work the volunteers and rangers have put in to control the Bramble, Bracken and Himalayan Balsam. Other plants of note are the increase in numbers of Marsh Orchid that we are seeing on the reserve, with good numbers at hide 2 and in the warden centre bog garden.



Malcolm Farley: Red Campion



Colin Harvey: Peacock Butterfly on bluebell.

There has been a fair amount of activity with the birdlife and I think most people managed to see the Green Woodpeckers and Greater Spotted Woodpeckers busily raising young.



Cheryl Vinnard Knapman: Green Woodpeckers

Also a young Tawny Owl was seen, and it's nice to know they are doing well. Lots of the small birds now have young with Blue and Great Tit juveniles everywhere. A Cettis Warbler has been present and calling regularly but it could just be a lone male and may not have a partner. Of course, the Moorhens have nested as usual on the ponds and in the wetland and the canal. A nice surprise was some really good views of Grass Snake around the reserve with some excellent pictures taken on the canal.



Colin Harvey: Great Spotted Woodpecker



Andre Van de Sande: Grass Snake

The warden centre pond has also been busy with good numbers of Azure Damselfly and Four Spot and Broad Bodied Chaser Dragonflies putting on a good show. Spring butterflies have been evident with Orangetip, Green Veined White and Brimstone in good numbers around the whole reserve.



Andre Van de Sande: Male Broad Bodied Chaser

We have also had a record of a bee *Chelostoma florissomme* which was found by Liam Olds from Buglife while surveying the reserve. We believe this to be the first record for Glamorgan.

ALEC STEWART, RANGER



HELLO FROM THE NEW CHAIRMAN

This is my first contribution to the Newsletter since being elected Chairman of the Friends of Forest Farm at the AGM in April.

Before I say anything else, I would like to mention the significant contribution to the Group by the previous Chairman, John Harding. It's not easy sometimes getting things done but John has been a steady pair of hands over the years and has guided the Group through one of its most challenging periods during Covid.

We also have new editors of our newsletter, Paul and Naomi Brightmore who will take over responsibility for publishing it. Welcome, both. I would also very much like to thank Shelia Austin for her immense contribution and unwavering commitment to the group as editor over the years. Both John and Sheila will remain on the committee as they both have a wealth of experience to tap into.

Whilst most of us have been able to get out and about a bit more since the restrictions during Covid, the impact on the Committee of not meeting face to face, has been to curtail our opportunities to make decisions together. This means that there is now much work to be done over the next year or so. With current raised awareness of the importance of protecting our natural environment and the increase in interest in wildlife the committee are giving further thought as to how to enhance FoFF's contribution to conservation.

Membership numbers have stood up well over the past couple of years and the limited opportunity of utilising our funds to improve facilities/promotion of the nature reserve has meant that we have a balance of funds available to embark on targeted expenditure, in cooperation with Cardiff City Council who of course are responsible for the site. Various options are being looked at by the Committee, and more information will be published on our website and newsletter as and when agreement has been reached.

On the subject of membership, as a committee we have discussed raising the membership fees for some time as these have remained unchanged since March 2002. It was proposed to raise the fees to £8 per household at the AGM and this was voted on and agreed. It still remains remarkably good value for money in my view, but your views are invited on this.

Volunteering remains a cornerstone of what we do and sessions have been reinstated under the direction of Jon Wallis. For those who haven't taken part in one, give it a go. It really does make a difference to the reserve and helps significantly towards conservation work. Dates are advertised in the newsletter and/or on our Social media sites.

So, plenty of things to be getting on with and I'm looking forward to implementing the plans we have in mind to make things even better at Forest Farm. Thank you for continuing to support what we do.

Anthony Matthews

Your other committee members are:		
Vice Chair: John Harding	Treasurer: Phil Baker	Fundraiser: Laura Thomas
Membership Secretary: Pauline Fisher	Webmaster and Volunteering Co-ordinator: John Wallis	Secretary: Martin Chamberlain
Editors: Paul & Naomi Brightmore	Duncan Hockridge	Sheila Austin

GOODBYE FROM PREVIOUS CHAIRMAN

My first memories of Forest Farm were joining Ted Edwards and Mary Gillham when they did their evening walks, also the evening talks in the Tabernacle Church, Whitchurch, plus of course the early Open days.

I became Treasurer in 2000 taking over from Eric James. When I became treasurer, I raised the membership fee to £5 where it has remained for over 20 years! Then in 2005 Ted Edwards suggested that if Phil Baker took over as treasurer, I could replace him as he thought after 15 years it was time for him to stand down as Chairman.

Some of the projects that I am particularly pleased with are the improvements to the Wardens' Centre, the new dipping pond, the Orchard, and recently the reinstatement of the old dipping pond to a wildlife pond with the large dragon fly in the centre. I was also very pleased when we started the Friends Open Days in early October, with the apple pressing and tasting. I really hope we are able to restart these after not being able to for the last 2 years. My main regret is that there haven't been any improvements to the Canal.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the members, volunteers and committee for all their support over my 20 plus years as Treasurer and Chairman. I now leave the latter in the capable hands of Anthony Matthews but look forward to continuing to work with the committee.

John Harding

2022 AGM REPORT

For the first time in three years, we were able to hold our AGM in Ararat Church Rooms again, on 27 April. Numbers attending were understandably less than in previous years. However, we agreed the annual audited accounts (a copy of which is available from p.baker1@ntlworld.com).

After many years a committee member, previous treasurer and current Chair, John Harding, has stood down from his present role but remains on the committee. Members would like to thank John for his commitment and leadership over these many years, in promoting and developing the reserve. Anthony Matthews was elected as the new Chair, and is now settled into his new role ably supported by John. All other committee members were re-elected.

Whilst financially the Friends are in a sound position, we expect to be spending some of these funds over the next few years now that restrictions due to Covid 19 have been lifted.

Our auditor has commented that the membership fee at £5.00 has remained at the same level for many years (since 2003), while costs have been increasing for the newsletter, printing and postage.

It was proposed and agreed at the AGM that the membership fee is increased to £8.00 per year from October this year. However, as the attendance at the AGM was lower than in previous years, we would like to get your views on this proposal. Please forward any comments to secretary@forestfarm.org.uk by 31 August 2022.

Martin Chamberlain, Secretary

VOLUNTEERING REPORT: SPRING 2022

There has been a lot going on since the last newsletter, not least because the easing of Covid-19 regulations has allowed a return to almost normal activities. (That said, we know Covid-19 hasn't gone away, so we're still being careful.)

At February's Friends' volunteering session, twelve people repaired the path that runs between the hides and the canal, alongside the Melingriffith feeder. It was a lot of hard work – scraping off the mud, shovelling barrow-loads of stone, raking it level and tamping it down – but hopefully it will make the path more passable during and after wet weather.

A few weeks later, nineteen volunteers from Tokio Marine HCC, Pencoed, spent a morning adding a dressing of smaller stones over the repairs that the Friends had done. The volunteer rangers then spent a morning adding a top-dressing of stone dust to those path repairs, and also added stone chippings to several muddy areas along the towpath, towards Forest Lock.

Himalayan balsam is still a huge problem in parts of Forest Farm, especially after two years when organised group activities have been severely restricted. So the May volunteering session saw 17 people pulling it up in Two Ponds Field, which is an area of the reserve that's used by schools for educational purposes. Battling balsam does seem to be a never-ending task, but if it's done regularly it really can make a big difference.



Elsewhere on the reserve, in March the full-time and volunteer Rangers discovered a long lost drain. They were clearing a build-up of soil from the edge of the path between the end of Forest Farm Rd and the Taff Trail (by the station footbridge), which had been flooding badly over the winter months. None of the Rangers, some of whom have worked in Forest Farm for over 20 years, can remember ever having seen it before. They even managed to open the grating, and cleared about 300kg of mud from the chamber underneath. A few weeks later, the volunteer rangers added stone chippings around the newly discovered drain, to avoid having a large muddy ditch when it rains.



Only time (and lots of rain) will tell if all the mud in the pipe leading out of the chamber will get washed out. It's not exactly Time Team, perhaps, but it was a pretty worthwhile discovery!

Back in March, seventeen volunteers from the Friends group spent a muddy morning clearing stones and roots from the area of Forest Farm that's between Longwood Drive and the motorway, known colloquially as "Middle Section". The bigger stones were used to build the foundation for a "bee bank", which will be covered with sand, to provide a habitat for solitary bees and other invertebrates.

Much of Middle Section had become overgrown by Buddleia, but quite a large area was cleared by Welsh Water when they recently upgraded the sewage system, so we thought we'd take advantage of their work to create a wildflower meadow. It's going to take a few years (and quite a lot more hard work by volunteers) to really get established, but we've made a great start!

April saw the volunteer rangers putting up some "bee towers" in the newly created meadow area – basically, some huge posts made from cut tree trunks, with holes drilled in them for solitary bees or other insects to use for egg-laying and maybe hibernation.

They were followed a few days later by the Friends group, at the monthly volunteering session. Their first job was removing yet more stones, which had been brought to the surface when the area was rotavated. After that they sowed the meadow with two different wildflower mixes – one for the lighter soil, which gets lots of sun, and another for the heavier and wetter soil in the more shaded area.



In April, the volunteer rangers helped to renovate the "floating island" in the pond at hide 2, which had become very bare over the past year or two. They detached it from its anchor chains, moved it to the edge of the pond, covered it with geotextile membrane, added a layer of compost, and then planted Flag Iris and Marsh Marigolds, and sowed it with a wetland wildflower mix. Unfortunately, adding all that weight meant that the island got grounded in the heavy clay of the pond bed and was completely unmovable, so it had to stay where it was.

Eventually, at the start of June, the stranded island was finally returned to its proper place by volunteers from Cardiff Rivers Group. It turned out to be a much tougher task than expected. Any hope of simply pushing it back out into the pond was dashed when even eight people couldn't move it a millimetre!

So they spent a couple of hours removing all the plants, soil, logs and membrane, refloating the island, then carrying all the plants, soil, logs and membrane out to it and putting them back, and finally anchoring the island in its original position at the back-right of the pond.



As far as future volunteering sessions are concerned, we're not yet back to our previous regular schedule of the second Sunday of the month. But we do send an email about upcoming sessions to members, and also post notifications on Facebook and Twitter, a week or so in advance. You can also find out about future sessions by checking here:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/forestfarmuk/>
Twitter: <https://twitter.com/forestfarmuk/>

Do come along if you can!

Jon Wallis

"Nature red in tooth and claw"

We so often focus on all the lovely and beautiful things about nature, and we are right to appreciate all the beauty and biodiversity on offer. However, today I witnessed a rather distressing event which reminded me that nature has another side.

I was walking though the small park by Whitchurch Library and saw a lady with a dog watching a crow pecking the ground. Nearby was a female blackbird clearly distressed, hopping about and making distressed calls. The lady walked across towards the crow which moved away and the female blackbird flew into the tree. What we saw, of course, was that it was a baby blackbird, spread-eagled on the grass. The poor thing was breathing and tweeting feebly. Sadly, it died and the lady got some 'poo bags' to cover her hands and move it under the hedge. We couldn't bear leaving it there for the crow, even though we knew that that was nature and it was probably the crow's lunch.

Sheila Austin

If you have enjoyed a visit to Forest Farm which has been funny, awe inspiring, concerning or has reawakened happy memories please share it with us. (Editor)

WHERE HAS ALL THE WATER GONE?

You may have noticed that the water level of the pond at hide 1 is much lower than usual. There are various reasons for this, over which we have only limited control.

The wetland and ponds are not naturally wet, they get their water from the canal, fed by gravity. There is only a little control over the flow of water to the pond. When the water level in the canal is consistently low due to less rain not much can be done.

The main problem at the moment is that there has been much less rainfall than usual this Spring; April's rainfall in Wales was just 53% of the average (over the last 30 years) and May's was only 74%. You only have to look at local rivers to see how little rainfall there's been — the water level in the Taff was predominantly below its typical range for the second half of April and the whole of May.

It is complicated further by the fact that if the level of the water in the canal gets too high, the towpath floods and the already serious erosion gets even worse. So the level has deliberately been kept slightly lower for quite some time. When the edge of the towpath is eventually repaired, hopefully not too far in the future, it should be possible to raise the level again.

Finally, the inlet pipes get blocked and because of the length of the run from the canal to the ponds they are not easy to unblock. There are now plans to reduce the blockages, but this will take time to implement.

Jon Wallis

GREEN FLAG AWARD

In the December 2020 Newsletter I reported that Forest Farm had successfully been granted the prestigious Green Flag Award. This is a continuous process where the sites are re visited every two years to ensure that standards are maintained. In mid May myself and Nicola Hutchinson, Cardiff Council Parks Conservation Officer, showed two judges from the Green Flag organisation around the reserve. They were impressed by the biodiversity of the reserve and the involvement of volunteers now the Covid restrictions are being removed.

We are confident that the reserve will be able to maintain the standards required to keep the Green Flag Award into the future.

Martin Chamberlain



NATURAL REFLECTIONS

Look deep into nature, and then you will understand everything better. Albert Einstein

Robins are the angels of my vegetable garden. You turn around and they're not there. Then there they are, next to you. Roger Deakin: Notes from Walnut Tree Farm

Any glimpse into the life of an animal quickens our own and makes it so much the larger and better in every way. John Muir

Each species is a masterpiece, a creation assembled with extreme care and genius. E. O. Wilson

A FUN FAMILY DAY OUT!

Did you make it to the Ranger's Open Day at Forest Farm on 18 June? If so, you will know that there was plenty going on despite it being the one rainy day in a beautiful fortnight of summer weather!

Outside, in the orchard beyond the pond, were interesting stalls set up by the RSPB, the Wildlife Trusts and the Rangers. All wisely had gazebos, and provided games for children and plenty of information for all. The wild life trust invading species quiz asks, for example, if you know which invasive species looks pink and pretty, but likes to explode? (Himalayan Balsam), or which one can sprout up tall, and not even concrete can stand in it's way? (Japanese Knotweed) The RSPB want to encourage you to sign up to the Buzz pledge to enable wildlife in your garden, and they were ready to answer questions about birds and to identify them by their songs too.

In the warden's hut were display boards about Forest Farm history and wildlife, plenty of Cardiff Council leaflets about local open spaces and walks, and much welcome drinks and snacks ably provided by John Harding and his very obliging grandson.

Alongside the pond, the rangers had one of the most popular activities of the day - the pond dipping. Children enthusiastically moved nets in the water and then emptied their finds into trays of water to be examined and identified. many adults found this as fun and interesting as the children, and many fascinating creatures are clearly thriving in the surprisingly clear water of the pond. Dragon and Damselfly nymphs, newt and frog tadpoles half-way to being tiny adults, whirlygig beetles, water boatmen and snails were all found and proudly displayed before they were carefully returned to their home.



In the field behind the pond the you might have been surprised to see people casting fishing rods onto the grass - actually a lesson in how to handle your rod and to fish, a popular activity in the Taf (please note that a valid rod fishing licence is absolutely required for this, from gov.uk).

Later some very active dogs could be seen competing for best junior handler, dog with the loveliest eyes and dog the judge would most like to take home!



Alec the ranger led an interesting photography workshop, showing his own wildlife photographs and providing lots of useful tips, before doing a practical his class in the Farm garden.

Opposite the farm, the gates to the Coed Caerdydd tree nursery were opened, giving an opportunity to learn about this very successful new project. It has a 10 year programme to increase the number of trees in Cardiff, supporting the city's One Planet Climate Change Strategy. Some of the project's aims are to protect current and new trees against climate impacts and diseases, and to plant new trees in the right places for nature and communities.

Text and pictures: Naomi Brightmore



Editor's note look out for a full length article about Coed Caerdydd in the next Forest Farm newsletter, and do please let us know about your own experiences with this project!

WILD ABOUT GARDENS

Wild About Gardens is a joint initiative by the **RHS** and **The Wildlife Trusts** to get more people growing for wildlife.

WHY SHOULD I BE CONCERNED?

Over the past 50 years we've seen declines in two thirds of the UK's plant and animal species, for a range of reasons, including loss of habitat. Many of our once-regular garden visitors - hedgehogs, house sparrows and common frogs, for example - are much less common. But together we can make a difference. Our gardens and green spaces have tremendous potential to support wildlife - Wild About Gardens campaigns to turn the UK's estimated 24 million gardens into a network of mini nature reserves. Each year Wild About Gardens explore a theme that inspires action for an animal or habitat that needs our help. In 2022 the theme is: Go Wild for High Flyers.

WELCOMING SWIFTS, SWALLOWS AND MARTINS.

High fliers soaring in all the way from Africa, swifts, swallows and martins are treasured summer visitors to the UK. However, their numbers are in decline and sadly, climate change and human interference are their biggest threats. Swifts and house martins were recently added to the **Red List**, meaning they are globally threatened, have suffered severe declines over the past 25 years and need urgent conservation action.

WILD ABOUT GARDENS Website <https://www.wildaboutgardens.org.uk>

WILD ABOUT HIGH FLYERS DOWNLOAD <https://www.wildaboutgardens.org.uk/sites/default/files/2022-03/Swifts%2C%20swallows%20%26%20%20martins.pdf>

THE OLD TOLLHOUSE



On the farthest reaches of the Forest Farm reserve, near to Tongwynlais, you may have seen a large mound of rubble, mud and brambles slowly being transformed.

What is it all about? The Tongwynlais Historical Society was formed in March 2020 by Sarah Barnes and Bob Wiseman. The initial aim was to create a self-guided audio trail along the historic sites in the village from the Ironbridge, through the village to Castell Coch and loop back past Ivy Cottage and back to the Ironbridge. The group wanted to research interesting historical snippets from different aspects of the life and times of the people who once lived in the village. From the long forgotten railway station, the vineyard, the mill, lime quarry, local shops etc. with an aim to bring local history back to life for visitors and residents alike.

The first stop was the Tollhouse, which at the time was no more than a few visible bricks covered in 70 years of earth and vegetation. For the past 12 months a group of hardworking volunteers have been busily bringing it back to life, drawing huge satisfaction from the slow unveiling of this exciting local project. A large mass of overgrown weeds is now more recognisable as the footprint of a once beautiful tollhouse building used by the Pentyrch and Melingriffith Iron and Tinplate Works during the late 1800s. It sat at a V-junction of two tramroads and is thought to be used to control the turnout to the branch leading to the Tongwynlais canal. Eventually no longer of any use and possibly unsafe, the Tollhouse was demolished in the 1950s.

Who lived there? The Melingriffith Works accounts, from 1853, indicate a salary made to a 63-year-old Mary Howell. Her role was to collect tolls at the 'Tramroad and Tramroad Bridge'. She is listed on the 1861 Census as a 77 year-old Bridge Keeper, living with her niece, 26 year-old Elizabeth Sheneer.



Every Saturday morning since May 2021, the group have met and worked to clear away years of debris. Trees have been removed with the help of local tree surgeon Simon Goodleff, and tons of stones cleared with the kind help of Cardiff Council Urban Park Rangers. What was once nothing more than an unloved eyesore and demolished, is now a recognisable shell complete with growing wildflower garden.

The crumbling walls have recently been restored and made good, to ensure the building is safe and tidy. The plan is to open it as point 1 on the historic trail by the end of this summer. What then happens to the Tollhouse in the future is something that is still under very careful discussion, but the clear hope is that this piece of history can go on to become a much loved and needed community resource for local people.



For further information, or to donate, contact info@tongwynlaishistoricalsociety.wales

With thanks to Sarah Barnes, Tongwynlais Historical Society
Photos: Megan Mandizha, Sarah Barnes.



FOREST FARM PHOTOGRAPHY

You may be aware that Forest Farm hosts two photography groups on Facebook (Forest Farm Wildlife and Wildlife of Forest Farm) which display many stunning photographs of the creatures and plants which exist right here on our doorstep. The photographers are a visible and active part of the Forest Farm community and they are the source for many of the pictures shown in the newsletter. So thank you to some very talented local photographers for your creativity and inspiration.

Comma Butterfly Rusan Phot

If any of the photographers would like to contribute to the Newsletter, with your favourite photograph, a few tips on getting better pictures or advice on what to see when on the reserve etc, please do get in touch, we would love to hear from you.

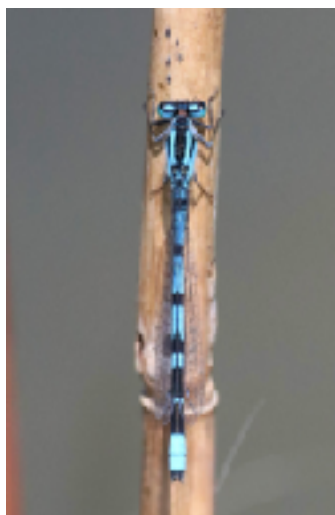
DRAGONFLIES

Recent visitors to the canal will have been delighted with many beautiful sights of dragonflies. The Facebook pages of the two Forest Farm wildlife photography groups are adorned with many fabulous shots of them.

Dragonflies are stunning and amazing creatures which are easy to observe and enjoy. Often they are brightly coloured, are powerful killers and have phenomenal powers of sight flight and manoeuvrability. Just sitting by one of the Forest Farm ponds or strolling along the canal we can get close views of these amazing insects.

Dragonflies belong to an ancient order of insects some of which were giants, the biggest we know of Protodonata had a one metre wingspan and flew some 325 million years ago. These were the ancestors of modern dragonflies and were much in evidence during the time of the dinosaurs. Today almost 6000 different species have been identified worldwide, although only a small number have been seen in Britain and Ireland and only approximately 40 species have a breeding population.

They belong to the order named *Odonata* which means “toothed jaws”. The term dragonfly applies to both damselflies (*Zygoptera*, meaning equal wings) and dragonflies (*Anisoptera*, meaning unequal wings).



Golden-ringed
Dragonfly.

Common Blue
Damselfly.

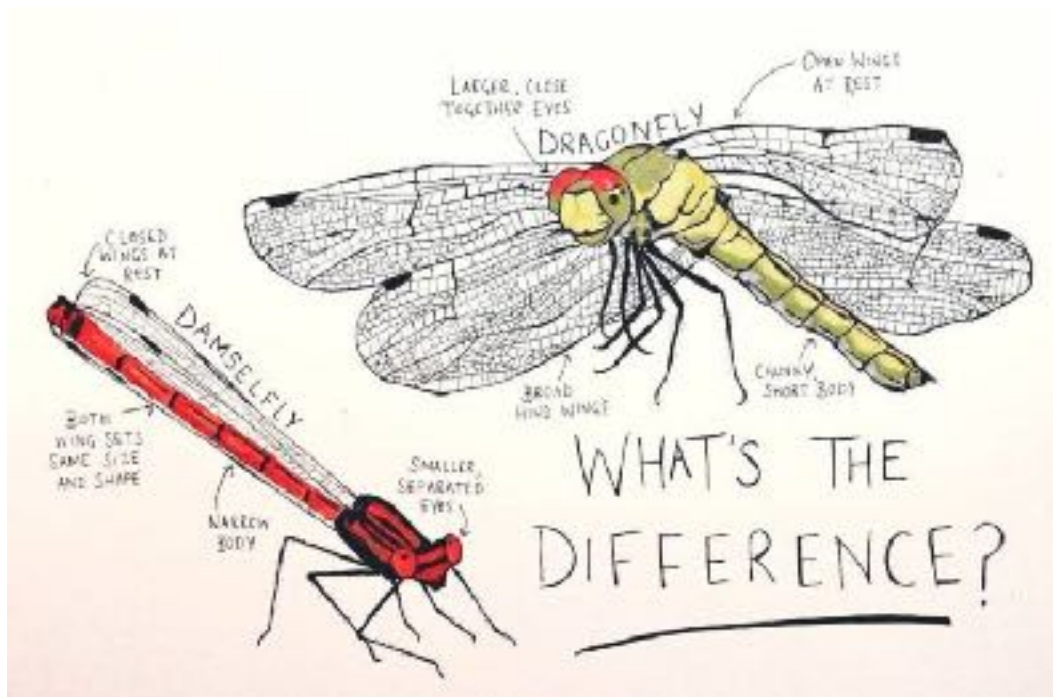
Photo: Mark Ann
Wright

IDENTIFICATION

Although the term dragonfly applies to both damselflies and dragonflies there are easily observable physical differences between the two groups

1. Look at their wings when they are resting. Are they spread like an aeroplane, or closed together? Damselflies rest with their wings closed, and dragonflies the opposite, so this is a big give away!
2. How close together are their eyes? If you are fortunate enough to get an up close view of dragons and damsels, then you will notice that dragonflies have very large eyes that are close together, whereas damselflies have, though still large, smaller eyes with a gap in between.
3. Are they chunky or are they twig-like? Dragonflies have much chunkier and short bodies, and damsels are the opposite with an extremely long and narrow body.
4. What shape are their wings? This is probably the most difficult feature to observe, as sometimes they have disappeared before you get a chance to look. Damselflies have wings that are both the same size and shape, which taper where they attach to the body.

Dragonflies, however, have different shaped fore and hind wings. Their hind wings are much broader and don't taper so much where they attach to the body, giving them more of a plane look.



Source: Scottish Wildlife Trust.

The **Lifecycle** of dragonflies follows in stages from egg to larva and finally adult.

The female lays her eggs either directly into water or for some species onto vegetation. What emerges from the egg is tiny and tadpole like and this larva (nymph) lives in water. During its time as a larva the dragonfly is a ferocious predator catches and eats live prey such as other insect larvae, tadpoles or even small fish. it will grow rapidly and moult a further 5-14 times until fully grown. Development typically takes 1-2 years but varies between species from 3 months (Emerald Damselfly) to 5 years (Golden-ringed Dragonfly).

Unlike other insects the dragonfly does not have a pupal stage. The adult emerges from the larval skin during the final moult which takes place out of water. When it is ready the larva will climb a suitable reed or stem or rock. Once finding a secure support they redistribute their bodily fluids, split the case and then emerge. the wings and abdomen are expanded and then harden. this process takes between one hour (damselflies) and three hours (dragonflies).

Flight: As an adult the dragonfly is a powerful and agile insect. The wings are light but also very strong. They are powered by large muscles in the thorax which enable some species to fly at up to 36 km/h. The wings are attached to the body by an ingenious flexible joint which means they can fly forward, backward, sideways and hover - amazing!

Senses: They have multi-faceted (compound) eyes with up to 30,000 lenses. they can see in front, behind and to the side with excellent colour vision and also ultraviolet light.

When combined with their long food collecting basket of legs and razor sharp mandibles they are formidable predators. Fortunately they are entirely harmless to humans!

More Information:

British Dragonfly Society website: <https://british-dragonflies.org.uk>

Field guide: Britains Dragonflies. D Smallshire & A Swash

The Forest Farm Beech Woods

Between the Glamorganshire Canal and the Northern Meadow is a long strip of beautiful Beech woodland, known as Long Wood, which we can regard as very special. *Fagus sylvatica*, the European Beech, is native to Southern England and to Wales, and North Cardiff contains the most westerly Beech woods in Europe.

As you would expect, several Cardiff Beechwoods have been given Conservation designations: Long Wood, The Wenallt, Forest Ganol and Cwm Nofydd are Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI's), Cardiff Beech Woods are a Special Area of Conservation (SAC), and Ty'n y Coed is a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC). So, why are Beech Woods so important and why should we especially look after ours?

Many of the Long Wood species indicate that this woodland is many centuries old and may have even been a wooded area since the last ice age. A Beech tree can grow to a height of over forty metres, forming a dense, domed canopy, and can be extremely long-lived.



In Spring, the cigar-shaped buds burst and the young leaves are a bright 'lime' green edged with silky hairs. As they age, the leaves darken and the hairs are lost. Mature leaves are between 4 and 9 cm long, with a clear leaf stalk (petiole) and a pointed leaf apex.

In April or May mature Beech trees produce flowers. The male flower takes the form of catkins on long stalks, and the female flowers grow in pairs surrounded by a 'cup'. Once pollinated and fertilised, one or two small beech nuts begin to form within the cup, which hardens to form the woody beech nuts that crunch beneath our feet in the Autumn. The seeds within the nut case provide food for voles, mice and squirrels and are also a favourite food of pigs and wild boar!.




The undergrowth is not dense and so flowers are able to flourish in Spring. Some of the flowers identified in Long Wood this Spring, included Dog's Mercury, Wood Anemone, Wood Sorrell, Celandine, Wild Garlic, Dog Violet, and native Bluebells, followed in May by Yellow Archangel, Meadow Parsley and Herb Robert. Although dense enough to inhibit continuous flowering plants during summer, Beech woodland is comparatively quite 'open', with gaps in the canopy allowing other species such as Holly, Whitebeam, Ash and Sycamore and Oak to grow. All of these can be seen beneath the Beech trees on the Forest Farm reserve, especially in the damper areas.

In the Autumn, as with all deciduous trees, the leaves turn brown and fall, and are relatively slow to decay. This, and old tree stumps and branches, enable Beech woods to support a rich fungal display. Please do take a walk in the woods and let us know what fungi you spot later this year. Send us your photos to include in the next newsletter!



Naomi Brightmore, with thanks to woodlands.co.uk

Photos Woodlands.co.uk, Jon Wallis, Naomi Brightmore

	<p>There's nothing I enjoy more than to sit in our garden on a summer evening to watch the crazy sweeping flight of the Swifts above. I laugh out loud when I hear their screaming cry as they swoop in groups around the roof-tops! We're so lucky too, to have a nest under our eaves, sharing our home. So much joy!</p> <p><i>Do let us know what bring you special joy in nature (Editor).</i></p> <p>Naomi Brightmore</p> <p>Photo Martin Agg: Swift</p>
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FORTHCOMING EVENTS - Meet at Warden's Hut	
10 July 10-12	Monthly Volunteering.
17 July 10-12	Cardiff Wildlife Detectives. Book tickets on their website.
28 August 10-12	Monthly Volunteering.
11 September 10-12	Monthly Volunteering.
17 September 10-12.30	Restart of nature walks. <i>New leaders needed please</i>
18 September 10-12	Cardiff Wildlife Detectives. N.B. new booking arrangements
October - date pending agreement with CCC	Friends of Forest Farm Open Day, with all the old apple tasting and other fun!
15 October 10-12.30	Nature Walk.
30 October 10-12	Monthly Volunteering.
13 November 10-12	Monthly Volunteering.
19 November 10-12.30	Nature Walk
<p>More events or details will be posted on our website: www.forestfarm.org.uk</p>	

For more information about Friends of Forest Farm or to join please see our website www.forestfarm.org.uk

Also on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/forestfarmuk/>

Please send your contributions for the next edition to the editors by **25 September 2022**. Thank you!

The editors wish to state that all views expressed by contributors are their own, as is the responsibility for them.

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