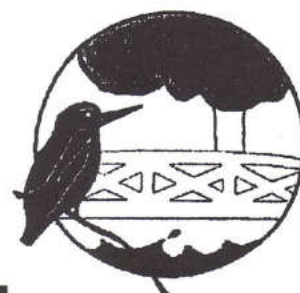


October 1995



and Glamorganshire Canal Local Nature Reserve

EDITORIAL FORUM

No matter how hard we try, life cannot be kept at a tranquil level all the time. The latest challenge to our Reserve is again **housing development**. We feature the latest information on our response, and hopefully a great deal of public support will be forthcoming.

On the positive side, our contributors highlight the Friends' various activities in their reports. Despite the hot, dry summer much has been accomplished; the Country Park continues to promote a happy venue.

Our Barbeque held in July with the Forest Farm Watch Group was attended by approximately fifty children and adults. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed the occasion with plenty to eat and drink. A pleasant, leisurely stroll along the river for the bat walk rounded off the evening.

Ken Patterson

IT'S HARD WORK ...

... to attract private and charitable funds to support our appeal for cash to help us with the project to make the Reserve accessible for people in wheelchairs and other health mobility problems.

Can you please help by approaching individuals and organisations which could possibly assist? The Secretary can let you have an Information Pack to pass on.

Dennis Davies

HOSPITAL MEADOWS

Members will be aware that an Outline Planning Application has been lodged for **370 housing units** instead of the original 180. Your Executive Committee is drafting a response, probably along the following lines:

1. The meadows on the Reserve side of the fenced public footpath from Hollybush should become part of the Reserve.

2. Where development takes place, the boundary with the Reserve should be protected by the 12m deep buffer zone and a 2m high security fence, and there should be no direct access to the Reserve from the development.

3. Within the development, land should be set aside for an adventure-type playground as well as the formal sports ground. A dogwalk should be identified.

4. There is concern about the impact of the development on the village of Whitchurch, the inadequacy of the infra-structure and the highways in particular.

You can influence the Council's decision by sending your views to the City Planning Officer.

Dennis Davies

More from Dennis on the Hospital Land on Page 4 ...

Forthcoming events ...

Saturday **14th October** from **10am - 12pm**
Work on the Reserve with the Forest Farm Watch Group
(nothing too strenuous!)

Sunday **26th November** from **10am - 4pm**
Woodland Fayre at Forest Farm
(showing the use made of wood and woodlands)

Price to Non-Members : 20p

MEMBERSHIP enquiries to MR NOEL GALE
8 Heath Park Drive Heath CARDIFF CF4 3QJ
Tel: (01222) 756771

RESERVE NEWS

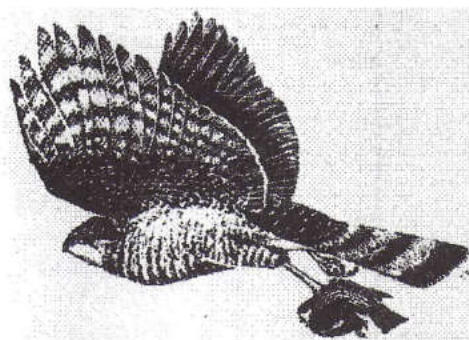
SOME LIKE IT HOT!

The long hot summer brought with it very low water levels everywhere, including the Glamorganshire Canal. This gave us the opportunity of getting in there to patch and repoint areas of crumbling stonework, which are normally under water for most of the year; and also some of those holes in the towpath caused by dogs trying to scramble back onto the path out of the canal.

The pond, (**Llyn y Gamlas**), dropped slightly due to evaporation, exposing some soft mud at its margins, where two **Green Sandpipers**, several **Snipe** and up to five **Common Sandpipers** were seen feeding. The birdlife in general has been quite varied; an **Osprey** was seen perched on an old telegraph pole alongside the river (2/8/95 - P. Kent, ranger).

One afternoon, while watching six **Ravens** performing aerobatics over Long Wood I heard the shrill distress call of a **Kingfisher**. Turning round I saw it flying like an arrow towards me with a large female **Sparrowhawk** in pursuit. The kingfisher was too fast, and without the element of surprise the sparrowhawk soon gave up.

It has also been a good year for butterflies on the Reserve. Walking past a bramble bush laden with large overripe blackberries, I counted at least twenty-five butterflies, mostly **Red Admirals** and **Small Tortoiseshells**. They had been feasting on the juice of the berries.



The hot summer has also brought its own problems. With everything tinder-box dry, I was waiting for the first fire. Unfortunately I was not to be disappointed. While at home one evening having my tea, the phone rang. It was John Baynham, one of our voluntary wardens, reporting a fire in Long Wood. John told me he had successfully contained and extinguished two smaller bracken fires, but after over an hour of hard effort had to give up on the larger. I rang the Fire Brigade and arranged to meet them on site. As we entered the Reserve we could see a plume of blue smoke spiralling upwards from the middle of the wood. A large beech tree had been set on fire. The local fire service soon had the fire under control, and fortunately only the one tree was affected. The centre completely burnt out, although badly weakened the tree might still survive.

Mike Wiley

SENIOR Y.O.C. ACTIVITIES

Following the Group's commitment in January to undertake a programme of work on the stretch of the Reserve between Longwood Drive and the M4, an evening was spent making nine nest-boxes, which were erected in early March. This made a total of 14 boxes on the site.

On May 13th a party of 8 (including two parents) met on site to cut back Knotweed and to check the nest-boxes. The density of the undergrowth defeated us in some places, and only half the boxes were reached; four of them were occupied.

In early July a small group spent a very hot afternoon clearing an overgrown path, and in late August the Knotweed was cut again. A further six boxes were checked and cleaned, but the rest must wait until access to them is less of a problem. We will then be in a position to report on the success-rate of the boxes.

Pauline Linck

BIODIVERSITY AND US

Since the 1992 Rio Summit, biodiversity has become a buzz-word. At the summit Britain, along with other governments, became signatories to an agreement designed to sustain the wide range of life on earth - biodiversity.

Up to the present, around one and a half million species of living organisms have so far been identified. With more animals and plants discovered as each year passes, the total count may fall between ten and one hundred million. The potential value of these organisms is incalculable.

Consider the fact that most medicines are derived from plants, animals and moulds. Some of our most potent drugs come from exotic and rare species. Medicines are only one area where biodiversity benefits man; new products emerging from biotechnology in the food and pharmaceutical industry are finding their way into the mass market.

We must preserve the full range of life forms by careful stewardship of the Earth. Mass extinctions have occurred in the past through natural disasters.

The extinction of the dinosaurs about 100 million years ago occurred when a meteorite collided with the Earth, leading to a global catastrophe that took around 20 million years for biodiversity to recover.

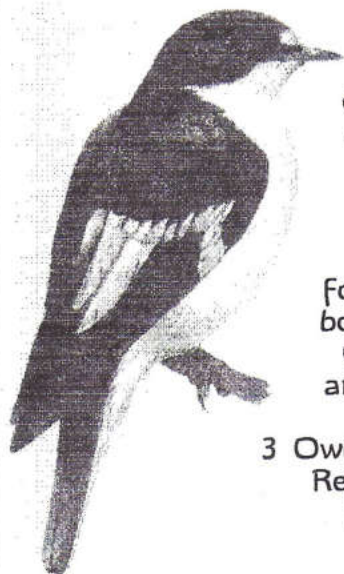
Although the Earth is not threatened by external forces, such as meteorites, in the foreseeable future, a far greater threat exists from man's activities. Destruction of the oceans, rain forests, savannas, etc. is causing extinctions of animals and plants on a grand scale, which compares with the great natural extinctions of the past. With recovery times of 20 million years, it is difficult for us to comprehend such a scale with our time-frame of three-score and ten years.

It is imperative that we do what we can to preserve the habitats that support the world's biodiversity. This involves supporting local, national and international initiatives that prevent both large- and small-scale habitat destruction. It is not just our duty; it is vital for the survival of mankind.

Chris James



DON'T FORGET THE WOODLAND FAYRE
SUNDAY 26TH NOVEMBER
10 A.M. UNTIL 4 P.M.



NEST BOXES

A survey of the 1994 breeding season showed that 69 boxes had been used and only 8 unused - an improvement on 14 unused in 93 and 20 in 92.

For the 1995 breeding season, 92 boxes were in place, with a further 6 placed at the end of April to try and entice the Pied Flycatcher.

3 Owl boxes were also put up on the Reserve, but the demand for housing is still sluggish!

E.O.Edwards

WEDNESDAY
15TH NOVEMBER 1995
7.30 PM

ILLUSTRATED TALK
 BY
DON READ

"THE WORK OF THE RSPB"

TABERNACLE
 CHURCH HALL

MERTHYR ROAD
 WHITCHURCH

WHAT DO YOU THINK SHOULD HAPPEN TO THE WHITCHURCH HOSPITAL FARM?

Who really owns the Land?

Legally, of course, it belongs to the Health Authority. However, it is worth remembering that originally it was donated to the Local Council for the care of the "mentally sick" of the locality - the farm land to provide work and food for the patients. On one of the many reorganisations we have had, the responsibility for this group of patients was transferred from the Council to the Health Service - and the farm with it.

Now that the farm land is no longer used for the original purpose, morally ought it not to revert to the stewardship of the Local Council, so that it can once more be of immediate and direct benefit to the people of the locality?

The intention is to sell it off as a surplus asset, and the relatively small capital gain thrown into the massive pool of health services finance. If this happens, sadly this highly valued public asset will be lost for ever.

Dennis Davies



The 4th Woodland Fayre, showing the use of WOOD and WOODLANDS

The R.S.P.B. / FRIENDS Monthly Walk

This is a leisurely stroll alongside the River Taff, then through the Nature Reserve, calling in at the Lockley Hide and back to the farm. It takes about two and a half hours. During the walk, every bird is identified and comments made on its habitat, migration habits and any other information that will be helpful to members. It is basically an introductory walk to help members who are out for maybe the first time, but it does have its serious side in that we keep records to show what birds are there over the year. This year, not very good - 56 compared with 67 last year. Is there a decline, or was the talking more than the looking?

E.O.Edwards

INDOOR MEETINGS

With winter will come our indoor meetings. This Winter we will be given illustrated talks by four experts from different environmental groups. Why do we need these different groups, all dealing with the same subject? Come and hear how each one fits into its particular niche, and learn how diverse the environment is.

The first illustrated talk will be given by Don Read on the work of the R. S. P. B. - **Wednesday 15th November at 7.30 pm in Tabernacle Church Hall, Merthyr Road, Whitchurch.**

E.O.Edwards

Tales Of the River Bank

I have temporarily taken over responsibility for our involvement with the friends Of the River Taff (FORT). In the next year we have to undertake a minimum of 5 projects to improve the environment of the river banks within the area of our responsibility. This will enable the funding from Keep Wales Tidy to continue.

A survey will shortly be undertaken to identify what needs to be done. This will range from litter-picking to larger-scale projects. So there should be opportunities for everyone to become involved. I will keep you all notified of the projects, but if you want to book your places early please ring me on Cardiff (01222) 691421.

Martin Chamberlain

Published on behalf of Friends of Forest Farm and Glamorganshire Canal Local Nature Reserve by Mr Ken Patterson. 12 Manor Court. Whitchurch. CARDIFF CF4 1BJ. Tel: (01222) 627077.

The Editor wishes to state that all views expressed by contributors are their own. as is the responsibility for them.

