

FRIENDS

OF FOREST FARM COUNTRY PARK
AND GLAMORGANSHIRE CANAL
LOCAL NATURE RESERVE
WEBSITE REF: www.forestfarm.org.uk

ISSUE 69

SEPTEMBER 2008

EDITOR'S FORUM

by Sheila Austin

Hello again – and to new members, welcome. Since the last edition, the Friends of Forest Farm have had their stand at 2 'summer' events, Rhiwbina Festival and Whitchurch Carnival, been on a coach trip to Stackpole and some attended the Friends Forum barbecue. So that must mean there has been a 'summer' – doesn't it?

*However, we'll not let the weather depress us. Here you can read about what has been going on. **Rosemary Waters'** description of the Stackpole visit didn't quite make up for me not being able to go, but I know now what I missed! Thanks go to her and also to 2 new contributors. **Chris James** led and reported on the July birdwalk and **Gareth** (one of the Community Rangers) sent in an introductory article on Forest Farm Wildlife Watch Club (FFWWC). We hope to hear more about their activities from time to time in the future. Last but not least, **Les Gibbon** has kindly found some more interesting historical information about people previously living at Forest Farm.*

I hope you enjoy reading this edition – and look forward to seeing you at some of our forthcoming activities; the tasty Foods of the Forest, the autumn/winter evening meetings, a volunteers event and tree planting.

Deadline for articles for December newsletter - 6th November 2008.

(Please see contact details on page 12)

MEMBERSHIP

At the time of going to press, our present membership stands at **253 Families plus 2 Groups**. This figure is somewhat short of last year's, but there are still a number of members (some long-term) who are yet to renew; on receipt of their subscription we will not be far short of last year's figure.

A few of those members receiving their Newsletter via e-mail have also yet to renew; if you are not sure whether you are one of those, please contact me.

Noel Gale

Membership Secretary

n.gale@hotmail.co.uk

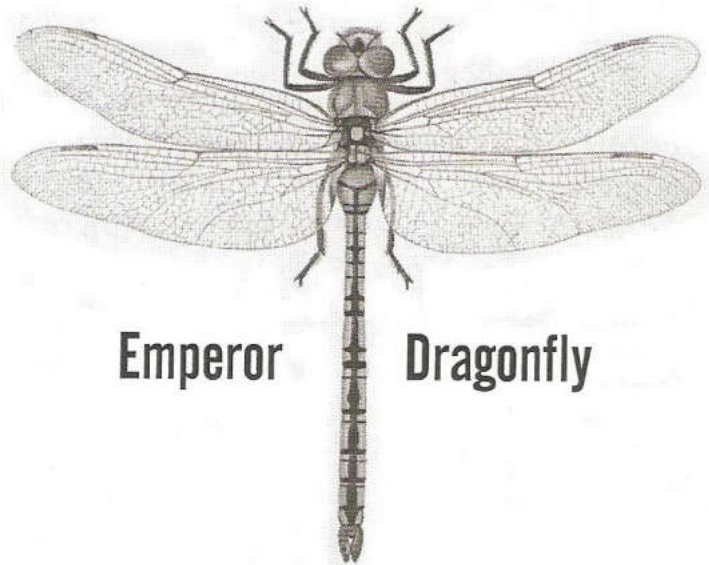
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Forest Farm Reserve News

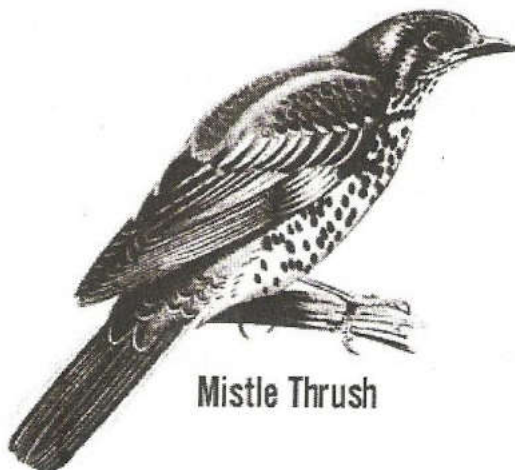
Paul Davies

The wildlife on the new pond continues to improve - various dragonflies have been seen; namely the Broad Bodied Chaser, Black Tailed Skimmer and **Emperor Dragonfly**. The latter also seen ovipositing (laying eggs) under water. Also many Azure Damselflies

The Friends Forum barbecue was very well attended and included a short guided walk around the Reserve.



Emperor Dragonfly



Mistle Thrush

The first bird hide had been vandalised again so repairs are underway. We have been working closely with the police and to date a number of youths have been cautioned.

Finally I saw seven or eight **Mistle Thrushes** gathering yesterday. An early sign of Autumn!! Have we had a summer yet !!

Tree Planting in the Orchard—30th November 2008

Readers will recall that last year we had a very successful morning planting eleven Apple Trees in what we now call 'the orchard'. This is in the same field as the New Pond.

At that time we said we would be doing it again next year. Tree planting is therefore planned for **10.30 a.m. on Sunday 30th November** to link in with National Tree Week.

Thanks to generous donations received, and Friends of Forest Farm funds, we aim to plant over 20 trees this time. Once again they will be traditional varieties, and Pear as well as Apple.

Come along and plant one of them—you will be very welcome.

John Harding

SPREADING THE WORD—ABOUT FOREST FARM

As I mentioned in the editorial, The 'Friends' stand at Rhiwbina and Whitchurch resulted in us gaining some new members to whom we extend a very warm welcome. It also served the purpose of reminding local people about the Reserve generally and our projects in particular. What surprised me was that, considering how local and accessible it is, some people didn't even know it was there, and quite a few were not aware there was a 'Friends' group.

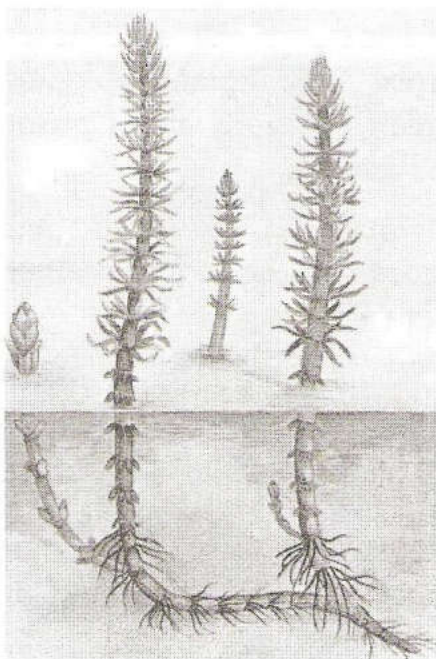
This of course is why the Committee participate in these and other such events. Our activities are included in the Council's Park Events and Guided Walks booklet, and we have a website and of course this Newsletter, some copies of which are left in local libraries. The Community Park Rangers conduct walks and run the junior branch FFWWC. The Friends have also recently conducted an organised party around the Reserve and have started to give talks to interested groups.

Our aim in all this is to promote and protect the Forest Farm Country Park and Glamorganshire Local Nature Reserve. Your membership, interest, subscriptions, donations and support of the 'Friends' are helping us to do this.

Sheila Austin

A LUNCHTIME WALK

A few days ago I had a lunchtime walk from Longlands Drive, under the motorway, across the iron bridge and over the playing field to Pugh's garden centre – a less frequented area of the Reserve.



What massive **Marestails** grow by the brook, maybe 1.5m tall; these very ancient plants really look like fodder for dinosaurs!

A knowledgeable friend pointed out the different feeding patterns of Swallows, House Martins and Swifts. The swallows were skimming the grass for insects that we disturbed on our walk. Above us, the house martins hunted for insects around the trees, while higher still the swifts hunted for insects over the River Taff.

On a sad note, we saw two dead hedgehogs, killed during mowing of the playing fields. Presumably the mower driver failed to notice them in the grass.

Albyn Austin

MONTHLY BIRDWALK: JULY 2008

Chris James



Regular monthly bird walks at Forest Farm started in 1972 under the leadership of Ted Edwards. On Ted's retirement in 2003, the leadership baton was taken up by Phil Baker. Unfortunately Phil is no longer available to attend and lead these walks because of work commitments. Grateful thanks are due to Phil for generously providing his time in all weathers to lead these very successful and popular walks.

July is a poor month for bird watching because breeding is complete and many species are in moult. The birds tend to be relatively inactive to conserve energy. New feather growth uses energy and they also remain hidden from predators because flight is weakened by moult. Foliage at this time of year prevents good views.

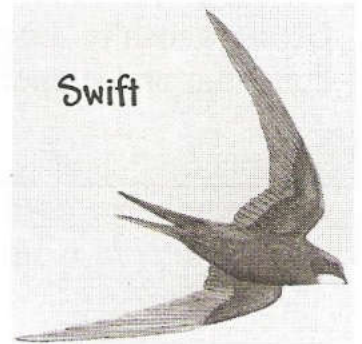
The walk followed a regular route and started at the Warden Centre where **House**

House Sparrow

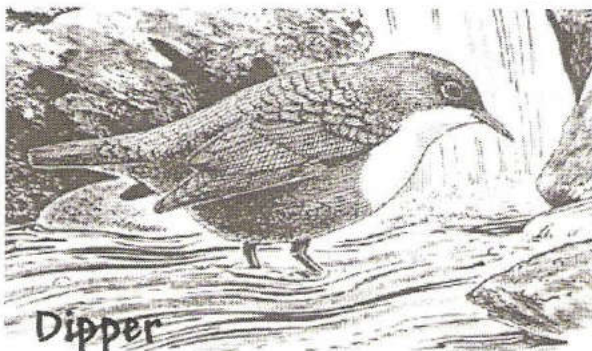


Sparrows twittered and flew around the barn while a few **Swifts** flew high feeding on aerial plankton before they leave us in early August for their winter feeding grounds in Africa.

Swift



Birdlife along the river bank was sparse and disappointing. However, at the Radyr footbridge, a **Dipper** was seen below the bridge turning stones in shallow water and feeding on the stone fly larvae exposed in the stone turning. Near the allotments, several Dunnock sang in competition, their high pitched flat little warble from the tops of high bushes.



Dipper

Overhead, the occasional Black Headed Gull, recently returned from upland breeding sites and **Woodpigeon**, Magpie and Carrion Crow flew about the Reserve.

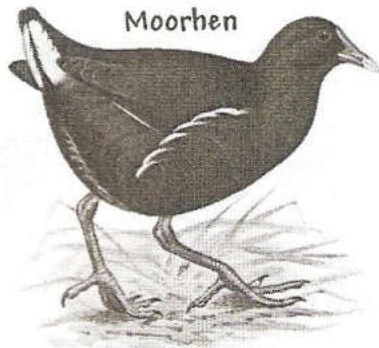
Along the Feeder path, Chaffinches and Greenfinches scurried at the path edges seeking out invertebrates and seeds while small

Wood Pigeon



groups of tits flitted through the trees. At the gas pipe crossing, food scattered on the concrete plinth attracted Coal tits, Blue Tits, Great Tits and Nuthatch for good and easy viewing.

Bird activity at the hides was minimal; a possible **Reed Warbler** flitted across the pond at the first hide and at both hides juvenile and adult **Moorhen** were present. At the second hide, there was



Moorhen

a beautiful display of Field Cranesbill carpeting the area between the hide and the pond. These one inch diameter soft violet blue geraniums attracted numerous bumblebees, showing the management of the Reserve is achieving a diversity of species.



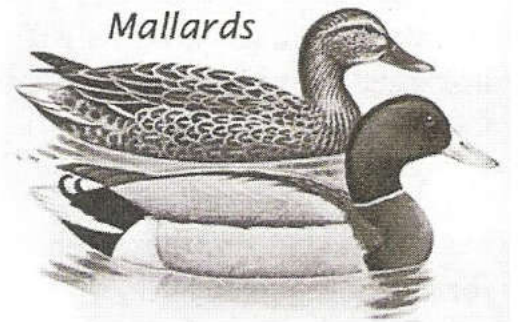
Reed Warbler

Passing along the feeder path, several bold Robins were seen at close quarters and in the meadow a solitary **Grey Heron** fed in the meadow close to the path showing its black nape plume, yellow dagger shaped bill and grey neck with its black streaked central band.



Grey Heron

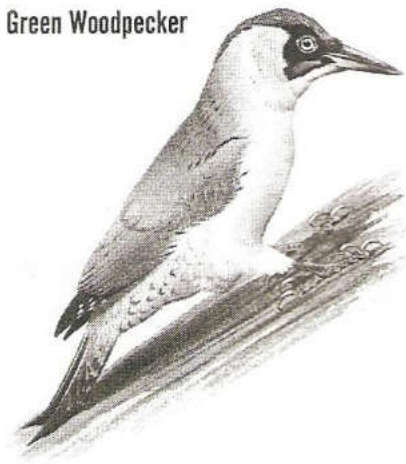
Ducks on the canal all seemed superficially the same; but closer observation showed them to be both male and female **Mallard**. The male birds had moulted from their bright breeding plumage into the dull "eclipse" plumage which camouflages them during this flightless moult period.



Mallards

A **Green Woodpecker** called, a male **Blackcap** and Song Thrush sang in the canalside cover on the return to the warden centre.

Green Woodpecker



The next few months will see summer visitors leaving for warmer winter feeding abroad and northern breeders migrating south to become our winter visitors.



Blackcap

Join us for future walks on the third Saturday of each month at 10am.

See the changing bird population and other seasonal changes on the Reserve.

ANNUAL COACH TRIP to PEMBROKE TOWN & STACKPOLE NATIONAL NATURE RESERVE

19th JULY 2008

We were blessed with improved weather at 8.30a.m for our annual coach trip. We left Canoflan Beulah and after 2 further pick up points and a short comfort stop, arrived in Pembroke Town 11.00 a.m.

There was plenty of time for a Castle tour to visit the church or browse some shops and have lunch. Back on the coach at 13.40 p.m. for a 5 mile drive south to Stackpole Estate.

This was the heart of the Cawdor family's estates in West Wales from 1698 until 1976, until bought and now managed by the National Trust. It is set in an area of outstanding natural beauty and much of it is designated as a Site of Special Scientific interest. Some 202 of its 810 hectares are also designated a National Nature Reserve, managed jointly with the Countryside Council for Wales.

Here we were met by the Warden, David Jarman his daughter Vicki, who is employed by the National Parks and Anna Mullarkey, a seasonal estate worker. David explained that the Stackpole Centre is used as a residential facility, and the Stackpole for a schools residential base camp for environmental education.

We walked down to the Eight Arch bridge over the lake, as with the other Bosherton lakes are all man made, created between 1780 and 1860, as part of a designed landscape surrounding the former mansion of Stackpole Court.

David explained to us a little about the ecology of the area & the rich wildlife found here which includes otters, wildfowl, dragonflies and the famous water lilies.

From the bridge we saw a heron patiently waiting, fishing from a rock. We also saw a pied wagtail feeding on some insects and several dragonflies on the lily pads, some of the 20 different species found here.

In the shadow of the weeds were several pike. It would have been hard to see them if our guides had not pointed them out. They wait for a meal from the shoals of passing small fish; by the size of them they are very successful!

At the lake edge, the old boathouse serves as a bird watching hide. We saw some swans and cygnets, coots, ducks - too far away for correct identification, another heron feeding in the reeds. Swallows were skimming across the lake surface, flying near to us. As we moved away, they flew in and up to some nests to feed their young in the roof space.

In the group photograph, we are sitting on the steps leading up to the area where the house had stood.

Our guide took us into the old Game bird larder where old photographs and plans displayed showed the enormous size of the Court. The first occupants could see the village of Stackpole – so they had it moved so as not to spoil the view!

The lofts of the Courtyard flats provide a good breeding site for the rare greater and lesser horseshoe bats. (2 of the 7 species on the estate). Vicki told us she had recently helped to count this year's offspring. They trim a nail to identify each baby as they look so alike to us, they could be counted more than once. There is a wide range of habitats, providing abundant food and good roosting sites, in trees, crevices, walls and in cellars and caves.

The family of Stackpole Court collected and planted several varieties of tree and shrub which have grown into an arboretum. There is also a summerhouse, tiled and built of big dressed granite stones and an attractively curved stone seat.

The tour ended in the Mencap Garden Project which began in 1983. It has developed as a service for local people with learning difficulties. It now covers 6.5 acres and was originally the walled garden of the former Stackpole Court. There was an amazing amount of fruit and vegetables grown there, plus herbaceous flowering plants. We visited their shop and bought various produce.

On our return, we saw a row of about 10 or more house martin nests under the edge of the roofs of one of the estate houses. It looked like a dormitory, with one or two heads of young peeking out of each nest, being fed by the ever-attentive parents.

So, rather footsore and weary but having enjoyed another memorable day, we returned to the coach.

Our sincere thanks to Duncan for arranging this trip, procuring a variety of leaflets, and the quiz – no dozing on these outings!

With the help of his wife Joy, he had also arranged a raffle, the profits from this and the trip helping to boost the funds for the Friends of Forest Farm. We much appreciated the bag of sweets.

We were driven safely by Clive for Burrows coaches and returned at 19.30. Thank you to all.

(Group photo on page 8)

Rosemary Waters



Stackpole Trip - 19th July 2008

FOREST FARM WILDLIFE WATCH CLUB

WATCH clubs are recognised nationally as the junior branch of The Wildlife Trust and are designed for children aged 8 -12 years.

Forest Farm Wildlife Watch Club (FFWWC) is a fun and interesting way for youngsters to learn about wildlife and the environment in a safe way. The Club is led by the Park Ranger Service and supported by the South and West Wales Wildlife Trust.

The Club prides itself on its friendly and welcoming team of staff and helpers. We offer an exciting and varied mix of activities which include arts and craft, pond dips, bug hunts, photography, nature walks, special visits and much much more!

The logo (above) was the winning design in a competition launched to find a logo for the group. The design has been printed on T-shirts for all the members to wear proudly.

In recent years the Club has gone from strength to strength and meetings are always very well attended. We always welcome new people to join the group and if you would like to contact us to have a chat please phone **Kevin** or **Gareth** on

029 2044 5903 or e-mail: CommunityParkRangers@cardiff.gov.uk.



VOLUNTEER DAYS

June 22nd 2008 It was a bit disappointing that there were only four of us on the day, but we moved quite a lot of stone dust. Before we started there had been big puddles which we filled in, and it was quite rewarding to see how much of the path we were able to cover.

28th September 2008

Our next VOLUNTEERS DAY will be on Sunday 28th September.

Meet at the Wardens' Centre, Forest Farm Road at **10:00 a.m.**, when we will finish off some more of the path we started last June. Refreshments will be provided.

John Harding—Chairman

BILL ROWLES



A nice photo of Mister and Mrs. Bill Rowles, who lived on Forest Farm.

Bill was foreman of the Farm in the 1930's. They lived in the house just past the Wardens' Centre. The remains can still be seen. What we now call the 'Butterfly Farm' was his front garden, which I am told he kept in superb condition at all times.

They had four sons and two daughters. One I knew very well; her name was Annie. We lived just around the corner from each other when we all moved from Melingriffith. She was a pleasant lady with a ready smile.

I'm told that Bill was quite a strict man, and when he went up the old Ton Inn for a couple of pints he expected everyone to be in bed by the time he got home.

Oh, happy days!

Les Gibbon

THE WEATHERMAN'S LAMENT

By Ken Patterson

A weatherman indeed I am.
But no matter how I try,
The way the weather's turning out
Is enough to make me cry.

There's thunder in the west
And lightning in the east.
No doubt the north and south
Will really be a beast.

I try so hard to get it right
By studying weather map,
But is it any wonder
That I get in such a flap.

I think I'll ditch this science stuff,
As there is another way.
Some country folk have found the knack
Of predicting day by day.

It may be written in the sky
On dewy grass and such.
I hope it's not too late to learn
Before I finally lose my touch.

Reproduced with Ken's permission.

Ken was the former Editor of this Newsletter.

*Copies of 'Memories and Impressions', from which this poem is taken,
are available from **Ken Patterson** ... tel/fax : 029-2019 8658 at £10 each.*

A donation will be made to RSVP Wales.

EVENTS - SEPTEMBER to DECEMBER 2008

Saturday 6th September 6:00 p.m.	Foods of the Forest. Take a stroll around Forest Farm Country Park, then discover Nature's tasty treats. £2.50 per person. <i>ALL CHILDREN MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY AN ADULT.</i>
Saturday 20th September 10:00-12:30	Monthly Bird Walk on the Reserve. Meet at the Wardens' Centre, Forest Farm Road.
Saturday 27th September 10:00-12:00	Watch Club Age Group 8-12. £1 per child. (Phone Park Ranger service for further details: 029 2044 5903).
Sunday 28th September 10:00-13:00	Volunteering Event. Meet at the Wardens' Centre, Forest Farm Road for a couple of hours. We will be completing the repairs to the path started in June.
Saturday 18th October 10:00-12:30	Monthly Bird Walk on the Reserve. Meet at the Wardens' Centre, Forest Farm Road.
Saturday 25th October 10:00-12:00	Watch Club Age Group 8-12. £1 per child. (Phone Park Ranger service for further details: 029 2044 5903).
Saturday 15th November 10:00-12:30	Monthly Bird Walk on the Reserve. Meet at the Wardens' Centre, Forest Farm Road.
Saturday 15th November 10:00-12:00	Watch Club Age Group 8-12. £1 per child. (Phone Park Ranger service for further details: 029 2044 5903).
Wednesday 19th November 7:30 p.m.	Illustrated talk: 'Llanishen Reservoir' by Dr. Richard Cowie, Ornithologist at the Community Centre, Tyn y Pwll Rd., Whitchurch.
Sunday 30th November 10:30 a.m.	Tree Planting at Forest Farm in celebration of National Tree Planting Week. Meet at the Wardens' Centre, Forest Farm Road.
Saturday 6th December 10:00-12:00	Watch Club Age Group 8-12. £1 per child. (phone Park Ranger service for further details - 029 2044 5903).
Saturday 20th December 10:00-12:30	Monthly Bird Walk on the Reserve. Meet at the Wardens' Centre, Forest Farm Road.

Layout by Robin Sotheby

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