

# FRIENDS

OF FOREST FARM COUNTRY PARK  
AND GLAMORGANSHIRE CANAL  
LOCAL NATURE RESERVE  
WEBSITE REF: [www.forestfarm.org.uk](http://www.forestfarm.org.uk)

ISSUE 83

MARCH 2012

## **WHITCHURCH HOSPITAL DEVELOPMENT**

Dear Member,

As you will have read in our previous newsletters, the planning permission for the Whitchurch Hospital development was up for renewal for another five years. A site visit was arranged for the planning committee. Those who did attend were taken to and were shown the location and it's proximity to the Reserve and the effect it would have on the Reserve was indicated.

May I thank those Friends and supporters who attended the site visit and also the planning meeting at City Hall.

Throughout the process we have had strong support from the Whitchurch and Tongwynlais local councillors and our Cardiff North AM for which I would like to thank them. Unfortunately, in my view, the same cannot be said about the planning department or the other Councils' departments that could have helped us.

With the financial resources available to the Trust and the planning department recommending a further extension we were always in a difficult position. Therefore, it came as no surprise that the planning committee voted 5 – 3 in the Trust's favour with 2 abstentions

Therefore, if the proposals are proceeded with by the Trust in accordance with the existing plans, then the hospital meadows will be destroyed and the Reserve damaged for ever.

Much is said and written about the importance of protecting the environment and sustainability, but neither the planning committee nor planning department mentioned this at any time during the planning meeting. From my experience of the planning process, it would appear that it is what many people think ... only words.

What I would say now to you is that if, in future, the Trust comes back with an application to change any part of the present proposals, that we should at that time be prepared to mount an even more vigorous action to fight for the retention of the meadow land.

**Martin Chamberlain**

Secretary

Friends of Forest Farm



## Editorial

**Sheila Austin**

*Does not seem much room for the editorial this month! Concerning the Hospital Meadows, suffice it to say—disappointed, sad, exasperated and angry—hardly express our feelings about the decision and we are astonished that a relatively small piece of untouched land adjacent to a SSSI site has to be destroyed for housing and that the environmental aspects carry so little weight in this context.*

*It is heartening, therefore, to know so many people care about the Reserve; volunteers helping to maintain and manage it (pp 4,8,9) the walks indicate continuing interest — as does the increasing activity on the web (pp5, 10) and the wardens report (pp3-4) and that from the RSPB (pp5-6) show how much there is to see. Don't forget to keep an eye out for what the Wildlife Watch Group is doing as well (p11). Finally, I was delighted to get a letter as well ( p7) . Its always lovely to hear from you.*

*Now that the nights are getting lighter, perhaps you can join us at one (or both!) of the last 2 evening talks for this programme, really interesting subjects (p6), and don't forget the AGM and renewing your membership—both really important to us.*

## Important notice

### MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Our new 'Membership Year' commences on the 1st April.

***To renew your membership (Annual subscription is £5 for individuals, families or groups) you will find a tear off slip on our A.G.M. announcement (included with your Newsletter).***

Your membership is so important as it helps not only financially but also gives the committee encouragement to carry on its work throughout the year.

Thank you.

**Noel Gale**  
Membership Secretary

Deadline for next edition 8th May 2012  
Contact details—See back page

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***A message from Matt Locke, our web master...***

***Would you like an opportunity to donate or renew your membership electronically?***

There will soon be a **DONATE button** on our website and **we are looking to enable our members to join or renew their membership online via Paypal.**

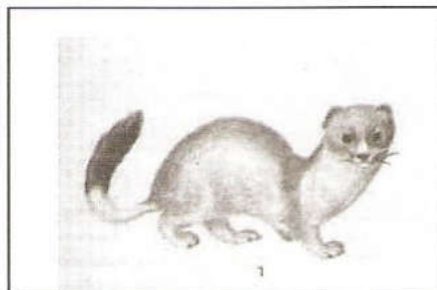
Paypal is owned by ebay and is one of the most trusted and widely used online payment systems in the world.



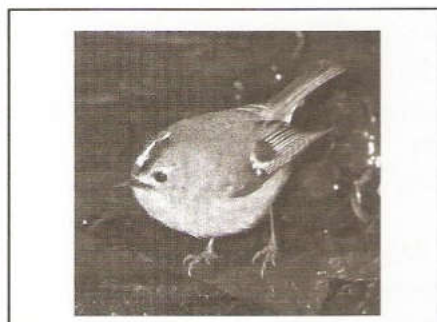
# Forest Farm Reserve News

## NATURE LOG – FOREST FARM 2011/2012

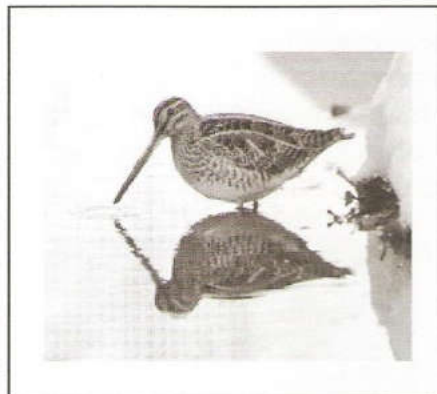
17 <sup>th</sup> Nov	Stoat spotted coming out of the allotments.
23 <sup>rd</sup> Nov	Sadly a dead badger found on the road to the Wenallt
28 <sup>th</sup> Nov	We have been contacted about waste paper on Longwood Drive and have been in touch with the businesses to try to resolve the matter.
6 <sup>th</sup> Dec	A male Sparrowhawk flew into the Wardens Centre and was flying around inside the centre in search of its quarry
13 <sup>th</sup> Dec	While walking with Chris James near Forest Lock, two goldcrests were sighted in the hedge near to the footpath by the wooden gate
22 <sup>nd</sup> Dec	A Reed Bunting was sighted on a branch of hazel clump just outside the Wardens' Centre in the morning. A flock of reed buntings were also seen later taking bird seed on the ground near the Centre. These were the first sightings near the Centre this year to date. Also, this afternoon, a Goshawk was observed flying overhead close to Two Pond Wood and Forest Lock areas. The Goshawk has been sighted on two previous occasions and we would like to learn of any more sightings.
31 <sup>st</sup> Dec	A female Sparrowhawk was seen hunting in the hedgerow by the Wardens' Centre today and took a house sparrow, plucking it immediately in front of the stable only yards from people, undeterred by our presence.
9 <sup>th</sup> Jan	Some Common Snipe were spotted feeding by the first hide today. An ongoing habitat management plan is for a flight path for birds at the two hides to enable rarer species to have better access and increase diversity
10 <sup>th</sup> Jan	The McDonalds outlet, Longwood Drive have now installed a longer fenceline with the idea that this will prevent wind-blown litter from entering the Reserve directly down the embankment. A female Sparrowhawk was seen on the curve of the lower end of Longwood Drive with its quarry, on the footpath – in this case, a wood pigeon carcass.
11 <sup>th</sup> Jan	A Red Admiral was seen flying in the exceptionally mild weather at Forest Ganol close to the Forest Fawr site
15 <sup>th</sup> Jan	A Treecreeper was seen feeding on the bark of a solitary oak along the disabled path by the feeder canal and winding its way up and around the trunk of the tree.
31 <sup>st</sup> Jan	Alec the Ranger caught sight of a weasel close to the allotments



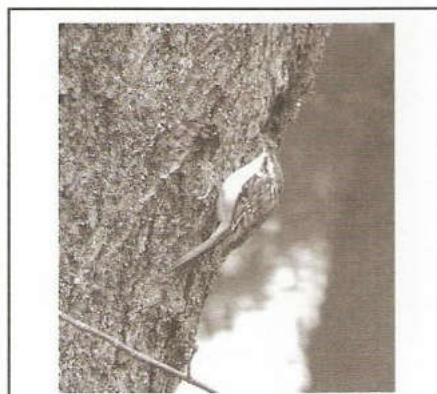
Stoat



Goldcrest



Common Snipe (photo Alec Stewart)



Treecreeper



We have been hedge-laying recently, with the Community Rangers working on a mature section between the two ponds. Their work here has opened up the canopy and facilitated ease of water fowl flying in and out of the pond areas.

The Cardiff Conservation volunteers also laid two sections of hedge near the canal which has 'opened up' those areas. Our next project is to cut the tall laurel hedge next to our border fence adjacent to GE Health Care.

**Paul Davies, Paul Pinnell (Community Rangers)**  
**Chris Prince (Voluntary Ranger)**

(It was a surprise to get this nature log and I think it makes interesting reading and is a nice change. What do you think? Ed)

## Friends' Volunteer Day 29th January

About 10 of us assembled at the Wardens' Centre on 29<sup>th</sup> Jan – a dry but cold, grey day. After a safety briefing by Paul the Warden, we set off following his Landrover with the tools.

We were in the area of the Reserve near the border with GE Healthcare and our task was to coppice hazel and reduce the spread of laurel. Some of the hazel was straight enough for reuse as supports, but the rest, and the laurel, was stacked for the Rangers to deal with another day – completing the cutting up and poisoning the laurel stumps to prevent them regrowing.



One of the many laurel that had to go!



2 of the volunteer party were missing for the photo—but here is the result of some of our coppicing

I think we were all pretty amazed at how much we were able to achieve in a couple of hours. Our Chairman arrived with home made soup and bread rolls (very much appreciated) and after another short working session we returned to the Wardens' centre.

This and other voluntary work on the Reserve (see pp 8 and 9) is essential to its maintenance and is part of the management plan for its environmental future previously outlined by Chris James in our last newsletter.

*Albyn Austin*



## Forest Farm/RSPB Walks



**Stella Wells**

On the last three walks we have had a mixed bag of weather, ranging from calm autumn days, frost, full sun and cold wind and rain. The trees have shed most of their leaves and so it is a lot easier to see the birds. The trees are heavy with berries, a food store waiting to be plundered in the months to come.

The thrush family has been well represented: song thrush, mistle thrush, blackbirds and redwings, all plainly visible and voluble. We may not have nightingales here, but who needs them when we can stand beneath a tree and listen to the song thrushes' variations on a theme.

The finches have also been on show with their winter muted feathers bringing colour to even the gloomiest of days. Chaffinches, bullfinches, greenfinches, gold finches and siskins all brightening up the day. The male bullfinch, to my mind, is one of the most stunning of British birds. We are so lucky to have such a healthy population of these birds on our doorstep.

Great, blue, coal and long-tailed tits busied themselves in the trees and hedgerows, calling to each other as they passed us by. The great tit has so many different calls that it is difficult to decide which bird is calling. "Teacher, Teacher" is the one call that is easily recognised, as is the ching ching call.



Teal—Forest Farm

On and around the river, ponds and the canal we have been treated to moorhens, always busy, mallards with their gloriously coloured plumage when the sun catches them and a solitary teal on one of the ponds. This is such a pretty duck and always makes me wish I was talented enough to paint it.



Grey wagtail—Forest Farm

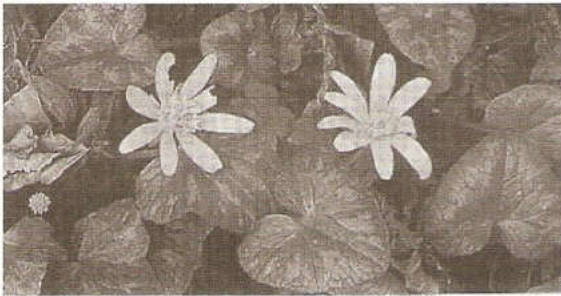
The herons don't seem to be as plentiful as they used to be, but maybe they just go elsewhere on Saturdays. Fleeting glimpses of a kingfisher always lift the spirit. Grey and pied wagtails and a dipper added to the pleasure of walking near the waterways.



Other birds seen over the November to January period were: gold crest, tree creeper, nuthatch, wren, sparrows, robins, buzzard, sparrow hawk, great spotted woodpecker, green woodpecker and members of the corvid family.

As I am writing this, in early February, I have already seen celandines, violets and a couple of wild garlic plants in flower.

Perhaps Spring will be early this year. We shall have to wait and see.



Lesser celandine



Wild garlic growing by the side of the canal Forest Farm

### *Dates for your diaries*

Wednesday

21st March 2012 at 7.30 p.m.

An illustrated evening talk on

***The History of Waun Treoda***

By

***Chris Soughton***

Wednesday

18th April 2012 at 7.30p.m.

**AGM** followed by a talk about

**Keep Wales Tidy**

By

**Chris Partridge**

At Whitchurch Community Centre, Tyn y Pwll Road Whitchurch.

Tea /coffee and biscuits.

Limited parking outside but plenty nearby in car park behind the British Legion.



## FEED THE BIRDS

### Letter

*We spend more than Forest Farm on bird food and would like to ask someone who knows, one. Where do you buy your bird food from? And two. How do you offer it to the birds, on the ground, in bird feeders, on open tables?*

*If you could pass this on we would be pleased. Many thanks*

*Penny Liddle*

I hope the following is helpful to Penny and other readers

The Friends of Forest Farm have spent £507 on bird feed since 1<sup>st</sup> September 2011 **(and we have received donations of £274.50, for which we are extremely grateful)**. John Harding buys various types of seed and they are mixed and put in the extra long bird feeders by the Wardens' Centre. Some of this falls on the ground for other birds to eat and the Wardens put some on the wall and other surfaces around the Reserve.

Stella, who does our bird walks, gets the feed for her birds from Vine House farm [www.vinehousefarm.co.uk](http://www.vinehousefarm.co.uk) who grow a lot of their own seed and are in partnership with the Wildlife Trust. She follows these feeding methods.:-

Seed feeder

Peanut feeder

Fat ball feeder

Half coconut shells containing fat and 'stuff'.

Ground feeding tray for robins, dunnocks, etc protected by a wire cage which can be adjusted to whatever size you like

Providing clean, fresh water is also important

I picked up a very useful RSPB leaflet "Feeding garden birds" from the Newport Wetlands Centre. Their website has some really useful information too. [Www.rspb.org.uk](http://www.rspb.org.uk)

The leaflet has sections on e.g. When to feed wild birds/ How to feed birds/ What food to provide/ Drinking water. In 'How to feed', it points out that the birds have different feeding preferences. Some are ground feeders, some forage in trees, some will come out in the open, others prefer close cover. 'Ground feeding benefits many birds. Scatter food on the lawn ...well clear of cover to avoid lurking cats. Spacing the food reduces competition... Change the area where you scatter... never put out more than is eaten the same day to avoid attracting vermin.' There is similarly advice on bird tables and feeders.

By the time you read this, hopefully the worst of the Winter will be over, so I quote from their advice on 'When to feed' for Spring and Summer. 'Only selected foods should be fed at this time and good hygiene is even more important.' It advises on what sort of foods and to 'be careful with peanuts fat and bread at this time' Peanuts must be in a rigid mesh feeder or chop them to granule size, they and chunks of bread could choke the chicks – and bread does not nourish them. Home made fat balls can go soft and rancid in warm weather.

*Sheila Austin*



## Design Team — Volunteering Away Day

at Forest Farm Country Park and

Glamorgan Canal Local Nature Reserve on 22 November 2011



15 Welsh Government employees from the Design Team (Designers, Typesetters and Print Buyers) choose to have a go at volunteering at Forest Farm Country Park and Glamorgan Canal Local Nature Reserve.

The Warden gave us a talk at the centre about their conservation work before issuing us all with gloves and outlining the work we were going to do.

The W.A.G. Design team

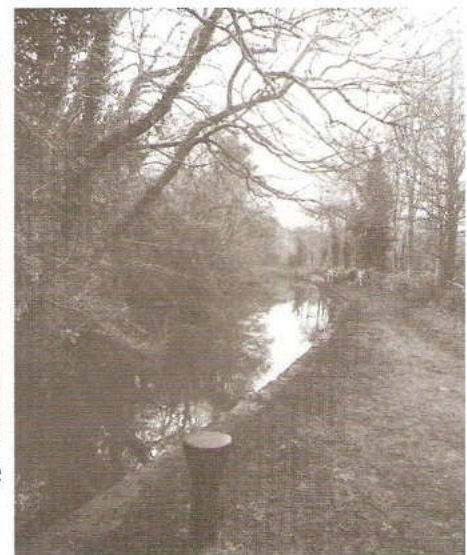
Our first project was to pull up laurel saplings which had self seeded in an area of woodland which causes problems to the wildlife. These varied from tiny shoots to quite large trees. Aaron was amazing at tackling the larger ones as seen here.



You can just about Aaron amongst the foliage!

As a second project we worked clearing the edge of the canal of mud and weeds which had grown up and is a hazard to walkers. This was a great way to become connected to the environment and mud.

The photos show the canal before we started clearing and the finished effect and us on our way back to the Centre.



We all enjoyed our time here and hope to return in the spring.

(My thanks to Penny Lockyear for sending this in and for the work the team did. — Ed)



## Cardiff Conservation Group

### *Doing something positive*

It was a rather damp morning in November for our last visit in 2011. We were slightly down on numbers though there were enough of us to split into two groups. The main party went off to tackle some old dead trees and thinning out rather weak and spindly specimens with the aim of improving the undergrowth. Two of us went off to clean out the boxes of old nesting material and replace lost or damaged boxes.

Our first work party for 2012 went extremely well. We were greeted with a sunny morning after a week of rain. Our task for the morning was to clear brambles and prune any new saplings on the North bank. The area is slightly awkward to work, being a steep slope. It was gratifying to find the area had really benefited from previous clearing of the undergrowth; nowhere as dense as it had been. This is all good news - as it is our main area for wood anemones and bluebells in the Spring. We were also able to put up another finger post to mark our horse route.

Conservation work will be held on the coming **Saturday mornings at Forest Farm, Longwood Drive Whitchurch - 10.30 - 12.30.**

\*\*\*\*\*

### **Programme 2012**

- |                              |   |
|------------------------------|---|
| <b>March 24<sup>th</sup></b> | BIG LITTER PICK. Come and help clean our patch<br>Middle entrance |
| <b>April 28<sup>th</sup></b> | First knotweed cut /general clearing.<br>Middle entrance          |
| <b>May 26<sup>th</sup></b>   | Wildflower and nest box survey.<br>Middle entrance                |
| <b>June 30<sup>th</sup></b>  | Clear balsam/second knotweed cut.<br>Middle entrance              |

The group works for a few hours during the morning roughly once a month. It is not particularly strenuous work, similar to an active gardener, (you work to your own level). If you feel you would like to get involved ... just turn up or better still, give me a ring.

**Hugh Harrison (029 2070 4889)**

### **Progress on the management of the Reserve - Chris James**

1. Thinning of the woodland between the Canal and GE Healthcare site has started and will continue until the breeding season starts.
2. A substantial amount of hedging has been completed near Forest and Middle locks and near the first hide.
3. New covered litter bins have been installed on the Reserve.

During the next few weeks, work on the hedgerows will continue as will woodland thinning.



## WALK OFF CHRISTMAS 2012

When organising walks, it is always difficult to know how many people will turn up so that we have sufficient leaders. For the 2011 walk we had five leaders and one walker! So it was with some doubt that we arranged this year's walk - only to be met by 50 people waiting at the water engine.

From the start point we moved to Hailey park where Derek Kingsey and Penny Bowers from Hailey Park gave a talk about the history and environment of the area. We then returned to the water engine where Paul Davis activated the mechanism to show how the engine worked and then gave a short talk about what and why it was built.

With such a large group it is difficult to gauge peoples' fitness, so we offered two alternatives when we entered Forest Farm. Either a longer, steeper walk via the meadows with myself, or a shorter level walk back to the Wardens Centre with John Harding our Chairman.

When we returned to the Wardens Centre we were welcomed with refreshments and cakes organised by the Committee.

It always surprises me how long these walks take as there is always something new to stop and talk about.

Some people were new to the area and agreed that they would return, others discovering new parts of both Hailey Park and Forest Farm.

Now for 2013.

**Martin Chamberlain**

### Membership report

As we near the end of our 'Membership Year', the current membership numbers stand at 258 Families plus 1 Group. During the year 30 Families became new members and a very warm welcome is extended to them.

However this was offset as, for varying reasons, we lost 40 plus past members who did not renew their membership.

To all our members, many thanks for your support over the past 12 months.

**Noel Gale**  
Membership Secretary

### ALLOTMENTS

Some news just in ...

... 20 more new half sized allotments are going to be allocated in the area between the present allotments and the Taff trail at the end of Forest Farm Road.

This should help alleviate the waiting list a bit!

### Facebook and Twitter

We now have a facebook page with 61 fans at the moment and it is steadily increasing. People can find out about upcoming events and share their own photos and comments on:-  
[www.facebook.com/forestfarmuk](http://www.facebook.com/forestfarmuk)

We also have a Twitter account:  
[www.twitter.com/forestfarmuk](http://www.twitter.com/forestfarmuk)  
currently 76 followers from all over the world.



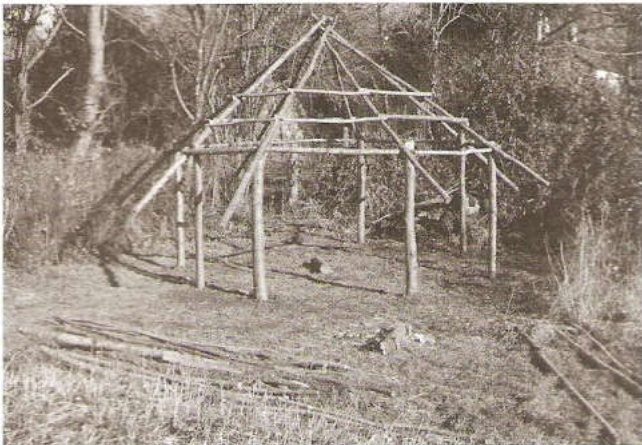


From time to time its good to catch up with what the junior section - the Watch Club -are doing.

Below is an update from Alec. He and Raj—and the children of course, have been busy—as you can see!

Basically the Round House and the Herb garden were ideas that we came up with to use with the Forest Farm Watch group.

The idea was to give the kids a practical long term project that we could dip in and out of when required. This would give them some practical knowledge and skills, but hopefully also give them a sense of achievement when they see the finished product.



Above : Preparing the ground for the herb garden

Left: The main structure of the Round House

The round house is very organic in its nature and we may add other things to the project such as a Celtic/medieval garden.

**Alec Stewart**  
Community Ranger

( See Events below for details of the Watch club dates—Ed)

## Events — March to June 2012

Saturday 17th March 10.00-12.30	<b>Monthly bird walk around the Reserve with the RSPB</b> Meet at the Wardens Centre, Forest Farm Road ,Whitchurch
Wednesday 21 <sup>st</sup> March 19.30	<b>"The History of Waun Treoda"</b> an illustrated talk by Chris Soughton. Whitchurch Community Centre Tyn y Pwll Road Whitchurch
Saturday 24 <sup>th</sup> March 10.30 – 12.30	Cardiff Conservation Group Doing Something Positive. <b>BIG LITTER PICK.</b> Meet at the Middle Entrance Longwood Drive. See p9 for details
Sunday 25 <sup>th</sup> March 10.30 – 13.00	<b>Vounteering event</b> Friends of Forest Farm. Meet at the Wardens Centre Forest Farm Road, Whitchurch,



## Events - March—June 2012 cont'd

Saturday 31 <sup>st</sup> March 10.00 – 12.00	<b>Wildlife Watch Club - for children aged 8-12. Wildlife Gardening Part 2.</b> Meet at the Wardens Centre, Forest Farm Road, Whitchurch. Contact Kevin or Gareth on 029 20445903; email: communityparkrangers@cardiff.gov.uk
Wednesday 18 <sup>th</sup> April 19.30	<b>AGM and talk on Keep Wales Tidy</b> by Chris Partridge. Whitchurch Community Centre Tyny Pwll Road Whitchurch
Saturday 21 <sup>st</sup> April 10.00-12.30	<b>Monthly bird walk around the Reserve with the RSPB</b> Meet at the Wardens Centre, Forest Farm Road, Whitchurch
Saturday 28 <sup>th</sup> April 10.30 – 12.30	Cardiff Conservation Group Doing Something Positive. <b>First Knotweed cut/general clearing.</b> Meet at the Middle Entrance Longwood Drive. See p9 for details
Saturday 28 <sup>th</sup> April 10.00 – 12.00	<b>Wildlife Watch Club - for children aged 8-12. Making a bug hotel.</b> Meet at the Wardens Centre, Forest Farm Road, Whitchurch. Contact Kevin or Gareth on 029 20445903; email: communityparkrangers@cardiff.gov.uk
Sunday 29 <sup>th</sup> April 10.30 – 13.00	<b>Vounteering event</b> Friends of Forest Farm. Meet at the Wardens Centre Forest farm Road Whitchurch
Saturday 19 <sup>th</sup> May 10.00 – 12.30	<b>Monthly bird walk around the Reserve with the RSPB</b> Meet at the Wardens Centre, Forest Farm Road, Whitchurch
Saturday 26 <sup>th</sup> May	Cardiff Conservation Group Doing Something Positive. <b>Wildflower/nestbox survey.</b> Meet at the Middle Entrance Longwood Drive. See p9 for details
Saturday 26 <sup>th</sup> May 10.00 – 12.00	<b>Wildlife Watch Club - for children aged 8-12. Roundhouse construction.</b> Meet at the Wardens Centre Forest Farm Road Whitchurch. Contact Kevin or Gareth on 029 20445903; email: communityparkrangers@cardiff.gov.uk
Sunday 27 <sup>th</sup> May 10.30 – 13.00	<b>'Melingriffith and Forest farm - a glimpse of the past'</b> A walk led by Chris James (voluntary warden) and Kevin Date (Park Ranger) along the Taff Trail, the site of the Melingriffith tin plate works; see the water lift pump running. Return to Forest Farm along the route of the Glamorgan Canal. Meet at the Forest farm Warden Centre, Refreshments will be provided by the Friends of Forest Farm.
Saturday 2 <sup>nd</sup> June 10.30 – 12.30	<b>Pond dip</b> for aquatic invertebrates and if the weather is good, the event will include searching for terrestrial invertebrates with Chris James (Voluntary Warden) and Alec Stewart (Ranger). Meet at the Wardens' Centre Forest Farm Road
Saturday 16 <sup>th</sup> June	<b>Monthly bird walk around the Reserve with the RSPB</b> Meet at the Wardens Centre, Forest Farm Road, Whitchurch
Sunday 17 <sup>th</sup> June 10.30 – 12.30	<b>Forest Farm - how to manage a nature reserve.</b> A walk led by Chris James and Park Ranger. A stroll around the Local Nature Reserve to see its variety and range of wildlife and to discover how the Reserve is managed to maintain its wide range of animals and plants. Meet at the Wardens' Centre, Forest Farm Road, Whitchurch.

Published on behalf of **The Friends of Forest Farm and Glamorganshire Canal Local Nature Reserve** by

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