
FRIENDS of FOREST FARM and Glamorganshire Canal Local Nature Reserve

NEWSLETTER No 9 SPRING 1992

EDITOR'S FORUM

As the 'Friends' head towards a second Annual General Meeting we should all feel a quiet sense of satisfaction at what has been achieved to date. Despite the need for vigilance over the *Health* land there is an optimism about future plans in which all can share.

I trust you will find the following articles interesting and informative.

Our thanks as always to the contributors, to Robin Sotheby for layout, and to Cllr Vic Riley for assistance with photocopying.

Please check that you receive 2 inserts with this Newsletter, i.e. AGM Notice and Membership Form.

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY'S REPORT

(Feb 1992).

It's membership renewal time. You will find a membership form enclosed with this newsletter. Please make sure you complete it and send it back as soon as possible so that you can continue to receive the newsletter. You should also get a membership card, when these are produced.

Some old 'friends' will be receiving this newsletter. This is because we don't want to lose you. If you didn't renew in 1991, here is your chance to rejoin us.

If you are one of those who have already paid, then do not waste the form; pass it on to a friend, neighbour or colleague.

Try and encourage others to join. Phone for more forms, or write the relevant details on a sheet of paper.

If every member introduces one other, then we should hit the 500 member mark in 1992.

Esther Jennings (tel: 625021)

CAN YOU HELP ?

Keeping a voluntary group active and worthwhile involves a lot of work. A number of individuals have accepted responsibility for specific areas of work, and this means no one person is overburdened. We now find we need someone to be responsible to the Committee for coordinating information about members who are willing to do a bit of practical work at the Reserve.

We are committed as a group to undertake, from time to time, simple practical tasks; those who have already been involved derive a great deal of pleasure and satisfaction in giving something of themselves to the Reserve.

The jobs are specific, time-limited tasks from Spring to Autumn, under the watchful eye of Mike Wiley, the Warden. Each task involves a range of jobs, and participants' age and health can be taken into account. For example, in the creation of the Butterfly Garden, the men were quick to note the nifty bit of spadework put in by the ladies! Once the main ramp is down, much can be done to improve access for wheel chair users by small-scale adjustments to the gradient, camber and width of the path.

The problem at present is that when these tasks come up it is difficult to contact all members quickly for volunteers. If we had a list of people who would be interested, we could give them a ring to see if they were available. Somebody has to be responsible for maintaining this list and to encourage others to join - a *Voluntary Work Organiser* is needed. It is not an onerous job, but an important one because most grants are made subject to some of the work being done voluntarily. Expenses will be met by the 'Friends', and we hope the organiser will attend Committee meetings.

What about you? If you would like to chat about it, please ring Dennis Davies (sec) on Cardiff 691051.

RESERVE NEWS

(Mike Willey)

This winter's reserve management has been both varied and interesting, with emphasis on Coppicing, Hedgelaying, Hedge Planting, Tree Planting, Thinning and Sycamore clearance.

The reserve's voluntary wardens have been busy this winter in renovating the old nest boxes and erecting new ones. 20 new boxes were made and donated by the junior wing of the R.S.P.B. - our Watch group constructed another 20.

A number of the bird boxes are specifically aimed at attracting the handsome Pied Flycatcher, a scarce summer visitor to wooded upland valleys. Although this flycatcher nest about 2 miles further up the valley at Coed y Bedw, to my knowledge it hasn't been reported on the reserve.

As this flycatcher doesn't migrate into the country until early April, we have stopped up the entrance holes to the boxes with cork bungs, thus preventing them being used by the earlier nesting tits. It's then a critical matter of removing the bungs at the right moment. Although we aren't expecting instant results, over a number of years - who knows?



Our new scrape (winter wetland) is looking good. It has held water all winter, despite it being one of the driest winters on record. Up to 18 Mallard have been recorded on it, and during one of the cold spells a couple of Common Snipe were flushed from it.

Flocks of up to 14 Tufted Duck have been seen on the river here, along with Goldeneye and Little Grebe. Our regular Little Grebe has been on the canal all winter.

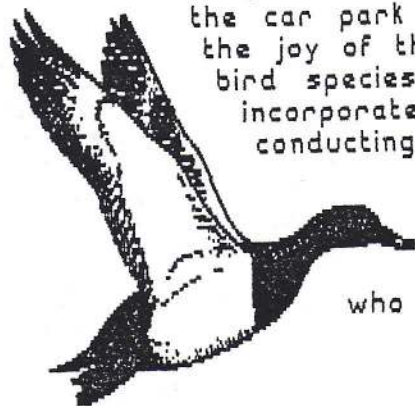
During the colder spells, flocks of Redwing and Siskin were seen and the occasional Brambling. On several occasions a Peregrine has been seen overflying the reserve, scattering the local bird population.

As I write this article (mid-February) the welcome signs of Spring are beginning to show. Dogs Mercury is already in flower, along with one or two Lesser Celandines, and the first clumps of frogs spawn have appeared in Sheepsbane Wood.

In conjunction with the Glamorgan Wildlife Trust we are operating a FROG HOP LINE, putting those people with too much spawn in their ponds in touch with those seeking it. Last year this proved a great success with spawn coming from all over South Glamorgan, and the reserve's new ponds also benefitting.

R.S.P.B. MONTHLY BIRD WALK

This 'walk', on the first Saturday of every month, has been in constant operation since 1978. It is a leisurely walk, starting at 10 am from the Forest Farm car park, up to Radyr Bridge, then across to the Feeder and along to Radyr Weir, on to Middle Lock, down along the towpath to Melingriffith, and back along the road to the car park - approx. 2½ hours. The object is to introduce members to the joy of the countryside and the art of bird spotting. So far over 80 bird species have been observed, and this year our sightings will be incorporated in the detailed survey which the Voluntary Wardens are conducting. Since October 91 our count is 49, so there is quite a long way to go, and with 72 nest boxes in the area there should be a lot of activity this Spring and early Summer.



There will be a warm welcome awaiting any of the 'Friends' who care to join us on this morning walk.

E.O. Edwards

WE MUST REMAIN VIGILANT

..... about the hospital meadows, warns Member of Parliament Gwilym Jones. Following the massive public protest, the City Council rejected the Local Plan proposal to allocate the land for housing. We asked various people for help and guidance on how we could encourage the Council to acquire the land as part of the Reserve. Mr Jones took up the matter with the Council, and he has now sent us a copy of the reply he received from the Director of Administration.

Within the next two months the Council will deposit the final draft of the Local Plan, and this plan will not allocate the land for housing. However, the Director points out that the Health Authority can, and possibly will object to the plan. If the objection is upheld by any subsequent local inquiry, the land will attract a residential value and, to quote the Director, "notwithstanding any other consideration it would be too costly to acquire". The following paragraph quoted from the Director's letter sets out the Council's current position.

"I have discussed with my colleagues in the Leisure and Amenities department the question of whether or not the land

would be an asset to them if it could be acquired for use as a Nature Reserve, and I can confirm that the officers' view is that it would be a most worthwhile acquisition, having regard to its location. I must point out, however, that as far as I am aware no money has been allocated for the acquisition of the site. I have, however, forwarded a copy of your letter and my reply to the Director of Leisure Services, and I am sure he will take into account your views and those of Councillor Riley in the allocation of the limited resources in future years."

This correspondence is most helpful in that it gives a clear picture of the situation. The Officers of the Council see it as a worthwhile and realistic proposition to purchase the land at agricultural value and probably would recommend accordingly to the Council Members. If, as a result of Health Authority objection, the Welsh Office changes the allocation to housing, the residential value of the land would make it impossible for the Council to purchase, and the 180 units of housing would go up.

Gwilym Jones is right to warn us to be vigilant.

Report by *Dennis Davies* (Secretary)

DISABLED ACCESS. As you know, the Friends are applying for grant aid to construct a ramp allowing disabled access to the towpath. This is very much *your project*, and a really worthwhile one. It is intended that the project begins in the spring, but as yet we have no firm date. Your help is essential. The work will be of a general nature, and you work at your own pace. Every little helps. If you would like to volunteer your assistance, please give me a ring, leaving your telephone number so that I may contact you nearer the date.

Tel: 0222-612213
Mobile: 0850-371057

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Mike Wiley
(Countryside Warden)

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




COUNTRY PARK

The Consultant's report will go to the Leisure and Amenity Committee in March. We have asked that we be given the opportunity to comment on the Report before the Committee make any decision.

THE PASSING SEASONS



When biting March winds blow
Our hopes begin to stray
To the coming spring.
Roll on April, May.



Then as we cast a clout
And dance to merry tune
When all May is gone,
Joyful welcome June.

Ken Patterson

Solution to Natural History CHRISTMAS CROSSWORD

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WINTER EVENT

The last talk in the 'Friends' winter series for this year will be on WEDNESDAY 25th MARCH, at the BETHEL HALL, Penlline Road, Whitchurch, at 7.30 p.m.

Mr Dave Bull, who has participated in the long-running bird ringing project at the Kenfig National Nature Reserve, will be giving us a talk. He will describe the project, explain how and why birds are ringed, and some of its results. The talk will be illustrated by slides, which include pictures of some of the rare species which have been found in the area.

Dave Jennings

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: 0222-627077.