

**FRIENDS**  
 OF FOREST FARM COUNTRY PARK  
 AND GLAMORGANSHIRE CANAL  
 LOCAL NATURE RESERVE

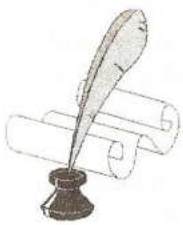
NEWSLETTER  
 35  
 MARCH 2000

*Editor's Forum* BY KEN PATTERSON

A warm welcome to new and old members to this first issue in the Millenium Year!

I am delighted to introduce **Calum MacIntosh** manager of the BTCV (British Trust for Conservation Volunteers) as a contributor with news of developments at Forest Farm. Representatives from our committee are now participating in a steering group which will help with the way forward.

On a personal note, I am pleased to report a volunteering partnership formed between the **RSVP** (Retired and Senior Volunteer Programme) and **BTCV**; posters have been issued. We are looking for mature people who want to get involved with conservation at Forest Farm Conservation Centre. There are many and varied opportunities for retired and senior people to help out and enjoy with the back-up and support of **RSVP** and **BTCV** membership.



Contact or phone:

**RETIRED AND SENIOR VOLUNTEER PROGRAMME**

**CSV HOUSE**  
**WILLIAMS WAY CARDIFF CF10 5DY**  
**CARDIFF 390477** (or myself on **627077**)

Or:

**BRITISH TRUST FOR CONSERVATION VOLUNTEERS**

**FOREST FARM**  
**WHITCHURCH CARDIFF CF14 7SH**  
**CARDIFF 626660**

From the Membership Secretary  
 NOEL GALE

The Family / Group Membership numbers for the current season has reached **244** (last year's final figure stood at 237). Thank you all for your continued support.

Our new year (2000/2001) will shortly be on us. A membership renewal slip will be found on the A.G.M. notice enclosed with your Newsletter. Once again we have kept the annual subscription at **£3** for Individual and Family members and **£5** for Firms and Societies.

**8 HEATH PARK DRIVE**  
**HEATH**  
**CARDIFF CF14 3QH**  
**TEL: 02920-756771**

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# Reserve News

by **Mike Wiley**  
**Countryside Warden**

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As I have mentioned in past articles, bird life generally in the UK is in sharp decline. Here on the Reserve we do all we can to help by sensitive management of the varied habitats, with the emphasis very much on wildlife. Obviously the winter months are the hardest time of the year. A severe winter takes its toll on many thousands of birds. With this in mind, it was decided that this winter we would begin a programme of **supplementary feeding**. The Friends kindly agreed to support this initiative by funding it.

The food was chosen carefully. It was to be rich in protein and include a variety of seeds, including sunflower, ground peanuts and soft bill food – crushed oats – to cater for such birds as thrushes and blackbirds. The amount we were to put down was limited by cost, so it was agreed on a small bucketful per day.

The next consideration was to locate the feeding station. This wasn't easy. The site should be one that could be viewed by the general public, but crucially to be free from disturbance. There is no point providing energy-rich food if the feeding birds are continually disturbed. They would use up this valuable energy flying back and forth constantly, thus depleting their already low energy levels and negating the additional feeding. The site chosen was the open ground on the right as you approach the **Lockley Hide**.

The feeding began in December. Initially the take-up was quite slow, but very soon birds began to find the site, and good numbers were seen to be feeding. I monitor the site on a regular basis and have recorded up to twenty two species, including ...

12 Reed Bunting

Pheasant

Moorhen

Song Thrush

Redwing

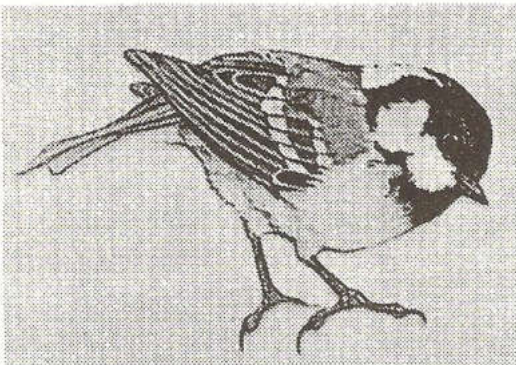
Fieldfare

Chaffinch

Green Finch

Dunnock

8 Blackbirds

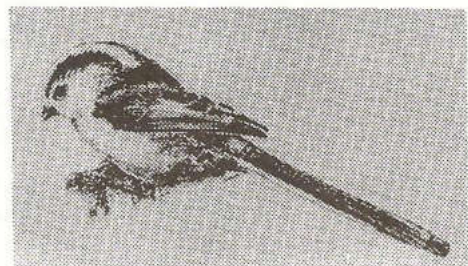
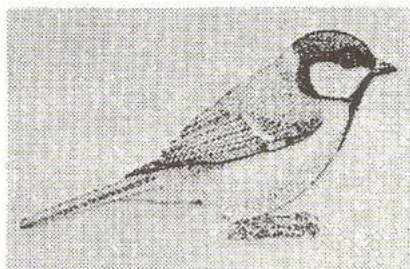
and all species of Tit (including the **Long Tailed Tit** – not normally a ground feeder)

All in all, the feeding programme (although a drop in the ocean) has proved a great success.

If it is to be continued next winter I may try and find a better site because there appears to be some disturbance at the present site from people passing to and from the hide.



I would like to take the opportunity to thank **The Friends** for their support in this venture.



**NEST BOXES**

by **TED EDWARDS**

The estimated count for the number of chicks last year was 392 – quite a bit down on previous years.

There were 49 boxes with nests, 28 empty, 24 dead chicks and 15 deserted eggs. Some were missing and others had a neat 2 to 3-inch circular hole, either in the base or on the side, made either by squirrels or woodpeckers. The jury is still out on that question!

The remedy suggested by Mike is to put wire mesh around the base and sides, and staples front and top. So far twenty three have been done. Sixteen boxes had to be replaced. These precautions, together with the 660 lb of food they have gobbled up this winter, should ensure a good hatch this year.

On the January Saturday walk we recorded forty species – the highest number yet. It must be the result of the new feeding station serviced every day by Mike and Paul. If the birds could talk, I'm sure they would say, "Thank you lads!"

In contrast, the number of birds in my garden is so few that even the Magpie is welcomed!

**OUT & ABOUT**

By **HUGH HARRISON**

In October last year the Longwood Drive section of the Reserve nest boxes were checked and cleaned. This showed that the breeding results were reasonable after a rather damp Spring.

Even so, when you check a box and find 8-plus dead, you wonder why. A cold snap? Adult birds taken by the resident Sparrow Hawk? Out of sixteen boxes, eight were confirmed fledged, four had dead young and four were empty.

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November saw the Group back on the Reserve, this time involved in some physical work coppicing on the north bank. We recruited a few extra hands doing their Duke of Edinburgh award scheme.

20 January 2001 – on a crisp sunny morning there was a good turn out for a final coppicing on the north bank. The old saying – 'Many hands make light work' - was very much in evidence.

**Litter Pick at Forest Farm – 18th March 2001**

As spring approaches many of us will start preparing our gardens for Summer. The Reserve also needs our help for its annual Spring clean, to remove the litter that has collected over the winter.

While this litter does not look very nice to us, it also has dangers for the wildlife we are trying to protect. Therefore, for the fifth year running, we have arranged a Litter Pick, starting at 10 am from the warden's Centre. The work is not very strenuous and will take between two and three hours. All equipment will be supplied. If you or anyone you know is able to help, please come along.

**Martin Chamberlain**

**029 2065 8488**

**m.chamberlain1@ntlworld.com**

**St Mary's Garden, Whitchurch**

The Editor would like to apologise to Mr David Clark for not continuing his article in this edition of the Newsletter, owing to lack of space. It is hoped to conclude Mr Clark's contribution in the next edition.

<b>This is what they told us .....</b>	<b>by Dennis Davies</b>
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Last September we wrote to the four local Councillors, expressing concern about various matters regarding Forest Farm and the Reserve, and invited them to meet with us. One member replied immediately, saying he would willingly attend such a meeting, and offering support and help. Sadly, the other three Councillors did not even take the time to acknowledge receiving the letters.

We were, therefore, very pleased when a small group of our officers was invited to meet **Councillor Michael Michael**, the Executive Member for Parks, and **Mr Mike Clark**, Operations Officer for Parks. The meeting took place on January 10th. The following is my record of what they said to us ...

1. The idea of using the Farm for re-cycling tree trunks etc. is abandoned.
2. The City Farm will be re-opened on its present site under new management.  
There is no question of it being re-located at Forest Farm.
3. With regard to the future plans for Forest Farm, a Planning Group of officers is being set up.  
It will consult with The Friends during its discussions.
4. The Council's vision for the future is a '**Real Farm Experience**', to be located at Forest Farm,  
based on stocking a range of rare breeds of farm animals.
5. The Council does not anticipate too much difficulty in acquiring the necessary capital and in meeting the revenue costs.

The Council will seek the co-operation of various other interested agencies in funding and running the project.

We welcomed the idea of this project, as long as it does not damage the Reserve and its habitats. We also said that we had heard various proposals in the past, but all had come to nothing. We expressed grave doubts about funding because the Council appears not to be able to provide the relatively small sums of money necessary to maintain the Canal towpath and the walls of the canal, and part of the 'Feeder', to make them safe for visitors to the Reserve.

In response, Councillor Michael said that there are new decisions about spending the 'Landfill' monies, and that some of this could be available for maintenance work. He promised to look into it and let us know.

There you are – this is what they told us!

<b>Indoor Meeting</b>	The last meeting this Winter will be on <b>Wednesday 4th April at 7.30 pm.</b>
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The National & Regional Offices of the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV) are based at Forest Farm. The National Director for Wales will be giving us an insight into the work carried out by BTCV, explaining how people can become involved, and how the organisation is run.

There will be a short **A.G.M.** - after a cup of tea.

**E. O. Edwards**

Layout by Robin Sotheby

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