Friends of Forest Farm

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"To plant a garden is to believe in tomorrow."

Audrey Hepburn

The tree planting on the Top Meadow, is an important issue for us and one on which we have pushed hard with developers and local politicians. Although this will not save all of Top Meadow it is beginning to seem that probably the iconic 'Bowl' can be salvaged. Please read the article **Have we lost the last meadow?** on Page 5 for more details.

In addition, confirmation that the rare and endangered Hazel Dormouse is present is really good news; it is also something practical that we can work on and which makes a conservation difference. Please read the articles on **Hazel Dormice** and on **Hazel Dormouse Surveying at Forest Farm.**



We spoke in the previous edition about the Cardiff Council budget cuts and the possible impact on Forest Farm. The final outcome is not as draconian as proposed and thank you to all those who lobbied Cardiff Council on this matter. Cuts in staff and resources will still happen and the longer term impact is yet to be felt. It is likely to mean that the Park Rangers will at times approach the Friends for practical and financial assistance; something we as an organisation with limited resources will need to think hard about.

Alec provides a fascinating Rangers Report. Amazing how much they manage to get done with limited resources. Read about new developments with the installation of wildlife cameras and the planned YouTube channel. Balanced perhaps by his comment on the absence of insects and butterflies this year, something reflected in our own gardens. Is this just a transient happening or a portent of something more sinister? Anyway, enjoy Dave Wall's photograph of a White-tailed bumblebee at Forest Farm.

Lots of other interesting articles reflecting all that is going on here - volunteering and walks and talks and local history. We are also making good progress with the new display panels which will go into the hides, and our thanks to all the Forest Farm Photography members who have been assisting.

Naomi and Paul



MY FAVOURITE PHOTOGRAPH

I have been visiting Forest Farm Nature Reserve for over 25 years and I first went there after moving home to live in Tongwynlais. I was told about it by a newly acquired friend who also lived there. I can remember very well having my first digital camera, one of the early bridge cameras from Olympus, and learning how I could photograph wildlife with it. I also remember extremely well photographing a Wood Pigeon just sitting on a post and feeling really proud of myself! Over the years I started visiting Forest Farm on a more regular basis and gradually improved the equipment I was using. This obviously led to myself obtaining better quality photographs and learning more about wildlife and the various birds and animals that use Forest Farm as their home. I also use it as a place to walk my son's dog every week.

To me, Forest Farm has been extremely good for my mental health and the friendships I have made down there have been a real bonus in my life. There is also no doubt that wildlife photography is what I call a double pleasure hobby - the pleasure you get taking the photograph in the first place and the pleasure you get looking at them when you get home on your computer.

Therefore, when I was asked to produce an article and include my favourite photograph I knew this was not going to be an easy task!

The photograph I have chosen is one which gave me immense pleasure at the time and even more pleasure when I got home to see what I had captured in the first place. To obtain a photograph of a Red Fox is not an easy task but to get one with two Common Snipe being disturbed is something which will never happen again in my lifetime.

Colin Harvey

IN MEMORY OF ANDRE VAN DE SANDE

We were very sorry to learn of the recent death of Andre Van de Sande, a long-term Friend of Forest Farm, and send our sincere condolences to his family and close friends.

Many of you who read this newsletter would have become familiar with Andre's outstanding images taken at Forest Farm. He contributed many photographs over the years.

He was a stalwart and popular presence on the reserve and made many friends over the years with other regular visitors. His photographic skill and eye for a shot were both outstanding and he was always ready to offer advice to those seeking it, always having time to explain how to achieve better results.

Although known mostly for his wildlife images, his other work embraced portraits (I especially love his black and white portraiture) and surrealism.

We intend publishing a more detailed tribute in the next edition which will include some of his favourite images taken at Forest Farm over the years.

We have lost a very talented and thoroughly likeable Friend.

Anthony Matthews

FOREST FARM: HIDDEN HISTORY



Whilst Forest Farm is known as a much loved local Nature Reserve, as many of you know, before this time it was an area of heavy industry. Although most of the evidence of this industrial past was removed a long time ago there still remains some evidence of the past in addition to the more obvious South Glamorgan Canal.

For example, to house the workers in the Melingriffith Tin Plate Works, the Quaker owners the Harfords, provided housing called 'Sunnybanks'. This was situated at what is now the bottom of the canal alongside Parliamentary Weir with its curved side.

In the 1851 census there were 13 dwellings here which housed 66 people. Further investigation of the census noted that many people who lived here were born in the Forest of Dean area where the company also

had works.



Behind the site of the old Sunnybanks is a large stone wall, and within the wall there are some unusual different stones that look like doorways. What where they for? Tunnels?

This question remained unanswered for me for many years, until one morning I was walking past the wall and met an older resident who was actually born in Sunnybanks.

The answer to this question is …they were larders used to keep food cold by being cut into the hillside well before the invention of fridges.

It is thought that Sunnybanks was demolished in the late 1930's when council housing was provided in the Whitchurch area.

Martin Chamberlain

Editor's note: If you have any stories to share about the history of the Forest Farm reserve, we'd love to hear from you.

CAN YOU HELP?

As a committee we are very busy throughout the year and we are finding that occasionally we struggle to achieve results without external help from members.

This is a plea for assistance from those willing to provide help to the committee in achieving stated aims. To give an example we will shortly be introducing interpretation boards in the hides. This sounds quite straightforward but the work which has gone into achieving this has been very intensive. We have other projects in the pipeline which will need similar commitment.

So, we are seeking assistance from Friends able to devote some time to helping the committee. Other planned projects include information boards on the canal outlining its fascinating history, preparation of articles for our newsletter, nature walks, help with our regular winter talks programme, and of course our Open Day in October.

Please give some thought to this and let us know if you are able to help, by contacting me at editor@forestfarm.org.uk

Anthony Mathews (Chair)

HAVE WE LOST THE LAST MEADOW: AN UPDATE



The Spring newsletter described the shock we felt at the planting of tree saplings in the precious area of remaining meadow next to the Velindre Hospital development, and our actions in response. We had received many unhappy communications, particularly regarding the planting of trees in the area known as 'the Bowl'. Here is an update on developments.

The Committee has maintained its position that we want the trees in the area of the Bowl to be removed before they become established and the meadow area completely destroyed.

In April and May two meetings were held on site, plus another office-based meeting. Attendees included many of the local elected politicians (Anna McMorrin, Julie Morgan, Kate Carr, Marc Palmer), the Velindre project team (VUNHS), FoFF Committee members and a senior official of Natural Resources Wales (NRW).

You will be aware that Dormice have been confirmed as living on the new Velindre site. They are a protected species and a license (EPSL) from NRW was therefore required to comply with the Dormouse conservation guidelines. As part of this license a specified acreage of tree planting in appropriate locations was required - hence the Top Meadow planting. If any of these trees are removed then alternative equivalent sites must be found. NRW must issue a new license before this work can take place. There were serious concerns that the required paperwork could be very time-consuming, and NRW appeared unable to shorten their processes. It was clear that nothing could happen without formal authorisation from NRW.

All of the politicians agreed with our stance that the trees must be removed from the Bowl area. They agreed to contact NRW and Cardiff Council management at a senior level in order to get a speedy resolution.

Unfortunately, we felt that the meetings were hampered by the absence of anyone from Cardiff Council Parks Department. Subsequent correspondence with the manager Jon Maidment in May confirmed that they are seeking alternative locations. He stated that Cardiff Council would be working with Velindre and NRW with the intention of removing the trees from the Bowl and planting elsewhere in compliance with Licence requirements.

It was also unfortunate that the political activity was impacted once the General Election was announced. We sought to re-open this dialogue once the election was over, and immediately received an assurance from Councillor Jennifer Burke, Cabinet Member for Culture, Parks & Events, that 'all your elected members are working with stakeholders to get this addressed and have a positive outcome.'



The information we had was that the Velindre team had identified and proposed two alternative sites, but that these were rejected by NRW. In response to our requests for an update, we have now been informed by Jon Maidment that a third site has been identified



within Whitchurch Hospital Grounds. We are told that relevant checks are being carried out but it looks positive. The Velindre team hope to share conclusive news soon and we will share this when received.

Thanks to everyone who has been involved so far, but it's not yet the end of the story: the trees still need to be moved from the Bowl and into a more suitable location. The pressure can't end yet.

One positive outcome of these events and meetings is that we have attended meetings with Sacyr, the contractors who are building the hospital. Their community engagement manager is keen to learn about Forest Farm and to develop a good relationship. We are hoping to secure some practical assistance and resources on the reserve. Watch this space!

Naomi Brightmore

UPDATE ON GREEN FLAG AWARD

In 2020 Forest Farm was awarded The Green Flag award by Keep Wales Tidy.

Every two years there is follow up visit to ensure that the required standards are still met, and it is usual for a number of actions to be requested.

In May myself and three Council Ranger Staff once again showed the two judges from Keep Wales Tidy around the reserve. We highlighted volunteer involvement, plans for the future and different habitats.

The judges were impressed with the environmental diversity offered by the reserve and by the work of the Friends of Forest Farm. A report is being produced by the judges of any areas that can be improved and an action plan for the future will be provided.

Martin Chamberlain

ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR & SAFETY AT FOREST FARM

Earlier this year, the Committee received reports of a couple of men with dogs (possibly greyhounds) walking around the reserve, and the men were shooting up into nearby trees with a catapult.

If you see anything suspicious like this, please don't confront the people involved, but report it to the Park Rangers on 029 2044 5903.

You can also report it to 101, or use the South Wales Police Online Crime reporting service - https://www.south-wales.police.uk/.../report-crime.../

If you are able to safely take a photograph or video of the suspicious activity, that would be helpful, but make sure that you don't put yourself at any risk.

Thank you for your diligence.

VOLUNTEER REPORT: SPRING 2024

April

Sunday dawned bright and sunny, a very pleasant day for volunteering. 16 people came along ready to do whatever task was handed their way by Alec, our Ranger.



One group tidied up the path around the hut, removing weeds and rubble, smoothing down the surface and applying a layer of fresh pink grit. They created a very satisfying improvement, as the photos show.

Another group attacked the dense brambles and other overgrowth in the area behind the pond, cutting back the first couple of feet only in case any birds were nesting. Vegetation on the path leading round to the dog-walking field, and also along the fence was also cut back leaving a much more open access route.

Finally, more Bramble (there is a theme here!) was removed from the hedges at the far end of the field.

Whilst it is vital to keep it under control, the humble Bramble is a much-used and important plant for many species, including human blackberry pickers in late summer. Therefore, it was noted with some concern that a large area of it had become smothered by an introduced species of Clematis. The Rangers are going to keep a careful eye on this situation.



May

Hey ho! Hey ho! It's off to work we go! A group of seven people, showed up for whatever jobs were in store. Unusually, it was on a Saturday this time, and it turned out to be yet another bright, warm and sunny volunteering event.



Well, summer is approaching and the job of the day was the first Himalayan Balsam pulling session of the year. We walked to the field beyond the second hide, currently a mass of Buttercups and other meadow flowers. It's not open to the public, so it was interesting to walk along the edge of it to the lightly wooded area behind the canal. We were glad that Alec had the 'Spider' with him, (his shiny new toy, a remote controlled grass cutter, much more fun than Scalextric!) to clear an easy path through the vegetation.

Earlier this year, some of us had worked to cut back and clear dead wood and vegetation in

the same area. It was lovely to see that this had indeed opened up the space to more sunlight and that this was being enjoyed by some more pretty spring flowers, particularly Red Campion.



At the same time, it was alarming to see the forest of Himalayan Balsam that is also growing there. This plant is a vigorous invasive species that thrives in every part of Britain, to the serious detriment of all other flowering plants that had previously enjoyed the same space. It's best managed by pulling it before it produces hundreds of seeds, and ideally this needs to be done selectively so that other plants are not destroyed during the process. The group set to with enthusiasm to see how much could be cleared before noon.

The Balsam had reached a size where it was possible but still easy to pull. You can see some before and after images in the photos, and the potentially back-breaking process that took place in between. The result was extremely satisfying, even if there is plenty left for another time!

June

A trusty bunch of familiar faces arrived at the Warden's hut to pick up gloves and tools and to receive instructions from Alec. It was no surprise that there was more Himalayan Balsam to pull up, but this time we had the added excitement of also bashing Bracken.



The site requiring our attention was the Scout Field, an open area behind the middle canal lock, where a lot of work has been done over recent years to keep the Balsam in check. It was good to see that to a certain extent this has been successful – although there was still a tall forest of Balsam at the back.

The aim with the Bracken was to either cut or bend it, so that its growth is weakened, and to enable other plants to gain more of a foothold. Small 'scalloped' areas along the path were cleared in this way and the Rangers hope to come along later with larger tools to further extend these.

Balsam and Bracken bashing can be a very satisfying experience, and there was much laughter as we worked together in the warm sun. In amongst the six-foot Bracken stems it was very satisfying to find tall purple Thistles, yellow Ragwort, red Campion, and also pink Rosebay Willowherb just coming into flower. These are all excellent food plants, and providers of nectar for many insects. It was interesting to learn that the Willowherb leaf is the food plant for the Elephant Hawk moth caterpillar.

Even Bracken provides a shelter to insects and Alec was pleased to see a Robberfly eating its freshly caught lunch, although disappointed not to have his camera with him!

Thanks to everyone who came – it really makes a difference. If you haven't tried it yet and are fit and able to spare a couple of hours, do come along next time. Volunteering events are advertised on the Forest Farm Facebook page, and also by email to Members.

Naomi Brightmore

HAZEL DORMICE

Hazel Dormice (Muscardinus avellanarius) are confirmed as living in the Forest Farm/new Velindre hospital area and you may have seen the nest boxes which have been appearing in Long Wood/ Top Meadow. This is very exciting news, but it has unfortunately had recent consequences for the Top Meadow with the substantial tree planting - see the article **Have we lost our last Meadow?** So, it seemed like the right time to provide you with a bit more information about this small, sleepy, charming and cute creature which is seriously endangered.



Hazel dormice are small, native rodents with golden-brown fur, large black eyes and long whiskers. They are the only small British mammal with a furry tail. Dormice are active in late spring, summer and early autumn in the trees and shrubs canopy and they hibernate in nests on the ground over winter.

Dormice can be found in a variety of habitats and landscapes, particularly old managed woodlands linked by continuous hedgerows. Their long-term decline reflects the loss of many old woodlands over the last century, the lack of management of those that are left, and the removal and neglect of hedgerows. They rely on good tree and shrub diversity to provide them with food when they are active.





They are known as successional feeders eating a range of foods as they become available. In spring, they will feed on willow catkins, flowers of oak, hawthorn, sycamore and willow. As these become unavailable they will move to later flowering plants such as honeysuckle and bramble, and invertebrates like caterpillars, aphids and wasp galls. Bramble is a very valuable plant to dormice with its long flowering and fruiting season. In high summer, when few flowers are available, dormice will move higher into the woodland canopy and eat a variety of invertebrates. In autumn, they will eat fruits and berries such as blackberries and hazelnuts to fatten for hibernation. Their specialised diet isn't available over winter, so they hibernate on the ground for about five months until spring. (Dormice are well known for their habit of sleeping for much of the time and their popular English name is thought to derive from the French word 'dormir' meaning 'to sleep'.) On average dormice live for three years but they can live up to five years in the wild.

In the UK hazel dormice spend the winter in hibernation and will start to emerge during March. By April about half the population is active. Dormice are strongly nocturnal and only occasionally active during afternoon hours. Torpid dormice (with reduced metabolic rate and temperature)



are found in spring and in May over 50% of dormice found in nest boxes are still torpid. By late September dormice start to increase their weight for hibernation, this can continue into October and November.

Breeding: Pregnancy lasts for about 3.5 weeks, with an average litter size of four typically born in late July, August or early September. Young are weaned after four weeks but may remain with the mother for a further four weeks before they become independent and disperse. A single litter is usual, but early breeding females may have a second litter. The young are sexually mature after 8-10 weeks, so it is possible that young from early litters could breed in the same year.

Habitat: When active hazel dormice are fully arboreal (tree dwelling) and nocturnal. Moving at night through the trees and shrub canopy can be challenging, so dormice don't travel far to feed and are relatively sedentary in their woodland homes. When juveniles disperse they need good tree, shrub and hedgerow connectivity within their home woodland and beyond. Dormice prefer the new growth of woody vegetation following woodland management such as coppicing, thinning or glade creation. In the UK, they favour old coppice woodland but also use scrubland, old hedgerows and even conifer plantations.

Distribution: Hazel dormice used to be widespread in Britain but they have declined in population and range over the past 100 years. National monitoring records, show a UK population decline of 70% between 2000 and 2022. Therefore, it is really good news that they are definitely present in Forest Farm.

The three main threats affecting dormice are:
1 **Woodland and hedgerow management**: Dormice breed slowly, disperse poorly and generally live in older woodlands with a well-developed understory often linked by old hedgerows. They prefer not to come to ground so desire a good connected matrix of stems, branches and twigs to get around. Dense scrub provides secure nest sites to raise their young. Inappropriate, or lack of, management reduces the botanical diversity and associated animals in our woodlands. Despite the revival of coppicing in some areas, many woodlands have changed too drastically to support dormice.

2 Landscape fragmentation: Changing farmland practices have left many hedgerows degraded or lost. Due to this loss, many woodlands are isolated within the landscape and woods that have lost their dormice are highly unlikely to be repopulated.

3 Climate: Dormice need to reach 15-18g to survive a winter hibernation during which they will lose about 30% of their body weight. They naturally wake during hibernation to excrete waste, but the likelihood of them waking increases, wasting energy, if winter temperatures fluctuate widely. Monitoring records suggest that 40-70% of dormice die over winter – the biggest survival threat to an individual dormouse. Wet springs and summers can impact on dormouse ability to breed.

Please do not attempt to touch or handle any dormice you may find – it is illegal to do so without a dormouse disturbance license, as they are a protected species under law.

SOURCES:
People's Trust for Endangered Species. https://ptes.org/campaigns/dormice/about-hazel-dormice/ Photographs from PTES.
Woodland Trust. https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/trees-woods-and-wildlife/animals/mammals/hazel-dormouse/
Mammal Society. https://www.mammal.org.uk/species-hub/full-species-hub/discover-mammals/species-hazel-dormouse/

HAZEL DORMOUSE SURVEYING AT FOREST FARM

On the 8th June myself and nine others attended a Hazel Dormice surveying course at Forest Farm. It was provided by the South and West Wales Wildlife Trust and Cardiff Council Countryside Team.



The first part of the course involved identifying suitable habitat for Dormice, to enable surveying to take place. The separate article about Dormice in this newsletter describes the types of habitat that they prefer.

The second part of the course involved checking existing surveying tubes and installing new ones. Surveying tubes are plastic guttering and rectangle plywood, covered by paper which is inserted into the tube. At each end of the plywood a mixture of harmless charcoal and cooking oil is used. This will ensure that the footsteps of any Dormice, or any other small mammal which enters the tube, will be recorded on the paper. These tubes are numbered, and will be checked at regular intervals to identify if there are any Dormice in the area. The density of these protected animals will also be estimated and recorded.



A special licence is required to handle Dormice, and therefore if any are found during the survey they are to be left alone.

I will keep you advised of the results of the survey and to provide an update for the next edition.

Martin Chamberlain

BIG BUTTERFLY COUNT 2024

Sadly, the State of Butterflies report last year found that 80% of UK butterflies have declined since the 1970's - this decline is telling us that our wider natural world is in trouble.

Taking part in the Butterfly Conservation's Big Butterfly Count is an easy but meaningful way to help.

The information you gather supports understanding of what is happening to the UK's butterflies, so Butterfly Conservation can put in place the conservation measures needed. This can help to turn around the fortunes of threatened species and halt the decline of many others.

Follow the link: https://bigbutterflycount.butterfly-conservation.org/

RANGER REPORT SPRING 2024



Summer at Forest Farm has been a bit of a mixed bag with some warm hot days but mostly dull and cool with showers. This has meant all the plants are loving the conditions and flourishing, with our meadows looking particularly good. We have had good numbers of Orchids around the site including Bee orchid, Southern Marsh orchid and Common spotted orchid all showing well in the meadows, verges and woodland glades.

The conservation meadow near the wetlands has also had large numbers of yellow rattle flowers. This plant is parasitic on the roots of grasses, helping to keep the grass from taking over. It helps to provide conditions for the finer wildflowers to come through and increase the biodiversity of the meadow.



This success also shows that our 'cut and lift' management of these meadows is working. By this method the tractor cuts the grass and the risings are collected and removed so as not to add fertility to the meadow from the decaying risings. This provides better conditions for more species of wildflower to flourish. Gareth Stamp, community ranger, surveys the cut and lift sites around Cardiff including the ones at Forest farm and we are beginning to collect some excellent data from these surveys.



The downside this year has been the low numbers of insects in general but particularly Butterflies. We believe that this is mostly due to the weather and natural population fluctuations, but it would be interesting to find out if it is a long term problem linked to changes in global climate.

Coming into July we are at the Balsam pulling stage, with the Friends carrying out work in several locations and the rangers cutting or pulling when possible to help to keep this invasive plant under control. The Swallows in the barn are on a second brood having had 4 chicks and this year they have been joined by a second pair, also on a second brood. So we are doing our bit for the Swallow population, although Richard Cornock was not happy about the state of his tractor…..a cover may be required!

Our project with the wildlife cameras has moved on and we have a You Tube channel set up and being prepared for release publicly. The plan is that soon we will be able to post footage of any wildlife we have encountered around Forest farm. When this has been sorted out the Friends will be informed and links will be available on their website.

The Volunteer BBQ is shortly due (10 July), the Rangers' chance to thank all the volunteers around Cardiff for their hard work through the year. I would like to add a special thank you to all who have been involved at Forest Farm, from the Friends to other groups and individuals who

have given up their time to help make Forest Farm such a great place to spend time - a small oasis for nature in a busy city.

Alec Stewart

A WALK WITH NATURE

08.30 Saturday 15th June and it was pouring with rain - I definitely need my cagoule and maybe overtrousers. But, by 10am when we met outside the Wardens Centre it was bright sunshine - a little cool but perfect weather for our walk. Four people new to the walk came, which was great. It was nearly six - until two ladies discovered we were not the Caerphilly group! (All was well, they passed us as we were ready to set off, so they joined the right party.)

As we started out, we saw a Dunnock and a lot of Swallows flying around the barn. Our route passed the car park (where the house for the manager of Melingriffith Tinplate works used to be) and then onto the Taff trail. The foliage this time of year of course, limits what you can see easily but I noted down 18 different birds - most seen, a few just heard.



Mallards were seen from Radyr bridge over the Taff, but nothing else at that time. Just a little further on, at the weir, where a couple of tree trunks straddled the top, there was a Heron. We then followed the path beside the feeder, seeing a Tree Creeper and Robin, and also heard Chiff-Chaff and Blackbirds. By the bridge across the feeder we were delighted to see a Jay settle on the wall a few feet from us. One of our group said they had never seen one that close before.

We continued looking and listening walking towards the hides and heard the glorious song of the Wren - so loud for such a small bird! At the first hide, there were Moorhen and four chicks. A Buzzard was flying overhead. Then we struck lucky at the second hide, with a Kingfisher on the top of one of the branches left for this purpose in the pond. It was not so easy to spot at first because it was facing the hide, but as it moved around, before diving, you couldn't miss it. We watched as it caught a fish and returned to the branch - so fast; blink and you will have missed it. Down towards the canal, there were Blackbirds, Nuthatch, Robin, Blue and Great Tits on the posts where people had left seed. The squirrels took full advantage of the free food too, of course.



There were a few Mallards on the canal, though not that many, but we also noticed that the Water Lilies were starting to blossom - which reminds me, there were some Common Orchids, Meadow Cranesbill, thistles - and some yellow flowers whose name we did not know(!!) in front of the hides which looked very pretty. We also saw one Damselfly during our walk and some Bracket fungi growing on a fallen tree trunk. The undergrowth everywhere was quite high and I've never seen so many ferns in Scouts Field; it makes a change from Himalayan Balsam!

I think everyone enjoyed their walk and will come again. All are welcome. It is always at 10.00am on the third Saturday of the month, come rain or shine. Finally, my thanks to Elaine Olsen and John Harding for leading the two previous walks.

Sheila Austin (07969 625248)

COMING EVENTS AT FOREST FARM

Saturday Nature Walks and Sunday Volunteering meet at the Warden's Hut, Forest Farm Rd, CF14 7JH, from 10am to 12.00
Winter talk events take place at Ararat Community rooms, CF14 1PT, at 7.30pm.
Restart: 17 October 2024

20 July	Nature Walk	Sheila Austin
21 july	Volunteering	Alec Stewart
3 August	Cardiff Rangers Open Day	See Below
25 August	Volunteering	Alec Stewart
21 September	Nature Walk	Sheila Austin
22 September	Volunteering	Alec Stewart
12 October	Friends of Forest Farm Open Day	Save The Date
17 October	Winter Talk	Martin Chamberlain
19 October	Nature Walk	Sheila Austin
27 October	Volunteering	Alec Stewart
16 November	Nature Walk	Sheila Austin
24 November	Volunteering	Alec Stewart

For current information about events check the website or Facebook pages.
Wildlife Detectives: https://www.outdoorcardiff.com/parks/cardiff-wildlife-detectives/

Cardiff Rangers Open Day at Forest Farm on Saturday 3 August has a range of family activities planned. For details see https://www.outdoorcardiff.com/events/

Please send your contributions for the next edition to the editors by **27 SEPTEMBER 2024.**

For more information about Friends of Forest Farm or to join see our website:
www.forestfarm.org.uk
Also on Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/forestfarmuk/

The editors advise that all views expressed by contributors are their own. Published on behalf of The Friends of Forest Farm and Glamorganshire Canal Nature Reserve by Paul and Naomi Brightmore. CONTACT: **Email** editor@forestfarm.org.uk

Printed by: Serol Print Unit 13, Milland Road Industrial Estate, Neath, SA11 1NJ

ARARAT TALKS 2024

MARCH: CATE BARROW - WELSH WILDLIFE: AN ILLUSTRATED TALK

Cate, a keen wildlife watcher and a photographer of international repute, gave the March talk. She faced a big challenge when the Ararat technology refused to play ball. This hurdle was surmounted when Cate gave an impromptu and fascinating short talk on hedgehog rescue; clearly one of her passions. Cate and 3 colleagues have now rescued some 600 hedgehogs with a 70% survival rate - a major achievement.



The hedgehog is probably Britain's favourite animal, but it has suffered severe decline since the 1950's - the last UK survey put the population at only 900,000.The 3 major factors for this decline are:

- Road Kill - mortality from vehicles is about 29000 p.a.
- Habitat loss
- Garden chemicals (eg rat poison). Strimmers and remote control lawnmowers are also a big issue.

Other factors include domestic dogs, whose bites often cause infection and death if untreated, and entrapment in garden netting.

Interestingly, although they are protected under the Wildlife Act (you cannot take them into your house without authorisation) their habitat can be legally destroyed.

Climate change is impacting behaviour. It is now more common for hedgehogs to have 2 litters each year, but those in the second litter have a low chance of survival because they cannot gain sufficient weight before Winter. This requires rescue and supplementary feeding. Also now they do not always hibernate over winter and so may require winter feeding.





Suggestions of what you can do to help:

- Provide warm/dry nest boxes
- Keep your garden scruffy for wildlife
- Make gaps in your fences for hedgehog highways and routes between gardens.
- Provide feeding stations. NB Do Not feed with milk - use dog/cat food and water

Hedgehog care: Do not do this yourself. They are complex and when found out in the day are ill and need a vet and specialist care. They are easily stressed so please get them to a legitimate rescue provider as soon as possible.

There was a lively Question and Answer session - this is obviously an issue members care about!

A subject we need to come back to and consider in more depth at another Ararat Talk.

Cate really needs more hedgehog release sites in and around Cardiff so if you want details about how you could help please contact her on cate.barrow@hotmail.com



Finally the technology was coaxed into life and Cate was able to start her planned talk. Due to time constraints it was only possible to look at the bird species. We covered a wide range of species from Avocet to Woodpecker, all accompanied by stunning photographs.

The raptors were well illustrated: The White-tailed (Sea) Eagle - is slowly being reintroduced into England, but is not yet in Wales. Osprey - slowly reestablishing in Wales. Red Kite - once seriously endangered it is now spreading across Wales again in significant numbers. Plus others including Sparrowhawk, Buzzard, Hobby and Kestrel (sadly undergoing a big decline). It was emphasised that they are all protected by law and it is illegal to go within 100m of a nest.



Lots more species were shown. Just to mention the Lapwing which is now a target species for Wales Government support following a massive decline in numbers. Similarly the Curlew is also declining and has Wales Government support.

The owls were popular with the audience, Barn Owl, Tawny Owl, Short-ear Owl and Little Owl; they are so photogenic and the photographic images were gorgeous.



The 3 bird photographs are all species that can be seen at Forest Farm - Water Rail, Snipe and of course Kingfisher.

It is strongly recommended that you visit Cate's website https:// www.catebarrow.co.uk/index.html where you can view more of her wonderful photography at your leisure.