Friends of Forest Farm

AUTUMN 2024 133

"As long as autumn lasts, I shall not have hands, canvas and colours enough to paint the beautiful things I see" - Vincent Van Gogh

The natural progression of the seasons from summer to autumn seems to have come suddenly this year. It is a season we often feel ambivalent about - a time of fruitfulness and beautiful colours, but also of change, loss and decay. On a positive note, did you know that people born in Autumn live longer! A study in the Journal of Aging Research found that babies born during the autumn months are more likely to live to 100 than those born during the rest of the year.

There has been a lot of anecdotal evidence and talk about the lack of insects this year. Last edition we suggested you might want to help with the Big Butterfly Count 2024. The preliminary results are back and make for a rather challenging read. On a lighter note do you know which was the most common Wales butterfly? Read the article to discover if you were right.

In this issue we provide another update on the Tree Planting on the Top Meadow. We continue to lobby local politicians and officials. It has been a busy summer on the reserve with much work and many activities taking place. Our thanks go to everyone, staff, volunteers and public, who made this happen, and our big thanks to all who have contributed articles to this edition.

On Page 15 we have a moving tribute to Andre Van de Sande, a long-term Friend of Forest Farm, with a collection of his wonderful photographs.



Oobi Benubi

The Friends Committee has continued to coordinate activities and act on your behalf. Walks, talks and volunteering, trees in the Bowl, lobbying, display panels in the Hides and Open-Days at Forest Farm. We have also been considering our finances - how and when to support the Parks department and what special projects are to be funded. Please let us know your views on this.

We are so lucky to be able to see amazing creatures like this on our doorstep - enjoy them.

Naomi and Paul

BIG BUTTERFLY COUNT 2024



Following on from the article in the last edition, we thought you might be interested in the comments from Butterfly Conservation when the Big Butterfly Count results reveal the lowest numbers on record.

Wildlife charity Butterfly Conservation declared a national 'Butterfly Emergency', with results from this summer's Big Butterfly Count showing a marked and hugely concerning decline in numbers.

Overall, participants spotted just seven butterflies on average per 15-minute Count, a reduction of almost 50% on last year's average of 12, and the lowest in the 14-year history of the Big Butterfly Count.

It was the worst summer in the Count's history for Common Blue, Holly Blue, Green-veined White, Small White, Small Tortoiseshell, Painted Lady and Scotch Argus. And the majority of species (81%) showed declines in the number seen this year compared with 2023.



In total, just over 935,000 butterflies and day-flying moths were recorded across the UK from 12 July - 4 August, down almost 600,000, equivalent to more than a third of 2023's total, and 9,000 Counts were logged as seeing zero butterflies, the highest in the citizen science programme's history.

Dr Richard Fox, Head of Science at Butterfly Conservation, said: "The previous lowest average number of butterflies per Count was nine in 2022, this latest figure is 22% lower than that, which is very disturbing. Not just that, but a third of the species recorded in the Big Butterfly Count have had their worst year on record, and no species had their best. The results are in line with wider evidence that the summer of 2024 has been very poor for butterflies.



"Butterflies are a key indicator species; when they are in trouble we know that the wider environment is in trouble too. Nature is sounding the alarm call. We must act now if we are to turn the tide on these rapid declines and protect

species for future generations."

Butterfly Conservation is writing an open letter to Steve Reed, Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs calling for the Government to act now for nature by declaring a 'Nature Emergency' and banning butterfly-killing neonicotinoid pesticides once and for all, with no exceptions, before it's too late.

Dr Fox explains: "When used on farmland, these chemicals make their way into the wild plants growing at field edges, resulting in adult butterflies and moths drinking contaminated nectar and caterpillars feeding on contaminated plants. Many European countries have already banned these chemicals, it's time for the UK to follow suit and put the natural world first. If we don't act now to finally address the long-term drivers of butterfly decline, we will face extinction events never before seen in our lifetime."

To sign Butterfly Conservation's letter to the Government asking them to declare a 'Nature Emergency' and ban butterfly-killing neonicotinoid pesticides visit: https://butterfly-conservation.org/emergency

For more detailed information on the Big Butterfly Count 2024 results go to: https://butterfly-conservation.org/news-and-blog/uk-butterfly-emergency-declared

Photographs: 1 & 2: Common Blue butterfly, Steve FfPhotos.
3: Comma, Mark Ann Wright

(The most common butterfly in Wales was: **Meadow Brown**)

HAVE WE LOST THE LAST MEADOW: AN UPDATE



Throughout the summer, you may rest assured that we have not relented in pressing for the trees in 'the Bowl' to be removed to a more suitable location, and the meadow restored. Meetings have been attended and email exchanges made. We were told that it would be done by November, but sadly, we are still waiting for news that an alternative site has been identified.
Councillor Burke has remained involved in pressing for updates and the latest that we have from Cardiff Parks Department is copied below in full:
'You will recall that two initial sites, which ran along the adopted north/south footpath to the east of the new hospital build, were rejected. They were excluded as it transpired that they were already assigned as mitigation to meet the requirements of another licence. A third site within the Whitchurch Hospital Grounds was identified but this had to be discarded as well due to ownership complications.
The Council continues to work closely with the Velindre Team and their Ecologists looking at possible sites but also now the enhancement of existing nearby habitats in order to satisfy the European Protected Species Licence requirements. We are collectively talking to NRW throughout for their input on suggestions, who are understanding of the position and being responsive to our approaches.
The Council and the Velindre Team are mindful that the planting season is approaching and if no alternative is found this year, it is hoped that NRW would agree to the removal of the planting in the bowl with mitigation put in place in the next planting season.
You will be kept abreast of developments.'

DIWRNOD AGORED FFERM Y FFOREST

DYDD SADWRN 12fed HYDREF 2024, 10.00-3.00

Bydd lluniaeth ar gael trwy gydol y dydd

MYNEDIAD AM DDIM CHWILOTA PYLLAU

GWEHYDDU HELYG STONDINAU CREFFT

Cewch gyfle i gwrdd â'r gwenynwyr

Dewch i weld y wasg afalau ar waith a blasu'r sudd





CARDIFF
CAERDYDD

www.forestfarm.org.uk





FOREST FARM OPEN DAY

SATURDAY 12th OCTOBER 2024, 10.00-3.00

Refreshments will be available throughout the day

FREE ENTRY POND DIPPING

WILLOW WORK CRAFT STALLS

Meet the bee keepers

Come and see the apple press working and sample the juice

VOLUNTEER REPORT: SUMMER 2024

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, our Ranger. 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 Forest 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 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 Robber fly eating its freshly caught lunch, although disappointed not to have his camera with him!

July: At the next session, a dozen volunteers spent the morning removing yet more Himalayan balsam from the Scout Field (over the bridge at Forest Lock and on the right), with lots of bracken getting sheared and trampled as collateral damage.



At times it can seem like a thankless task, but slowly, but hopefully surely, we're winning the battle against Himalayan balsam in the Scout Field. It's wonderful to see the flowers that still manage to hold their own, like the Rosebay willowherb. The more Balsam we defeat, the more native plants will thrive.
That said, we did have to leave some of it un-pulled, owing to a nest of wasps that took serious exception to being disturbed by our activities. Some risks are just not worth taking!



August: Fourteen volunteers (ages ranging from 6 to 60+) got lucky with the weather, working in warm sunshine instead of the forecast rain. We walked up to Forest Lock, where Alec showed us a small area that had recently been de-silted, an expensive but much-needed task. The Council have a three year plan to try to de-silt the entire stretch up to Asda, but this is funding permitting. Just behind the lock is the location for the feeder pipe to the wetland area. The intention in tackling this small area first, is to ensure that this pipe is no longer blocked by silt, thus helping to keep the wetland supplied with water from the canal as originally intended.



We then spent our time tidying up the edges of the towpath downstream of Forest Lock, and removing some overhanging branches. This allows more light through for other vegetation and also ensures that the path remains safe and accessible for all.

Naomi Brightmore

WHAT'S IT LIKE TO VOLUNTEER AT FOREST FARM?

As a new member of Forest Farm I've really enjoyed the nature walk and conservation sessions. Having walked and cycled around here for years these sessions have made me understand more about what is right on my doorstep and how it needs looking after.

Each time I have been given a friendly welcome, a chat about the task and then we've got stuck into laying a path, clearing brambles or pulling up the Himalayanbalsam. I've found that I can be quiet and focus on the task or natter away to a new person. I still haven't learnt everyone's name but it doesn't matter.

There's a real sense of achievement after a 2 hour session and then it's time to walk home, get cleaned up, have a cuppa and feel that I've contributed to this lovely area.

Fiona Churchill

THE TONGWYNLAIS TOLLHOUSE

If you walk or cycle along the Taff Trail between Whitchurch and Tongwynlais, you may see remnants of an old tramway built by the Melingriffith Company (fig. 1). Its main role was the transportation of iron, on horsedrawn trams, from the Pentyrch iron works (located on the west side of the Taff roughly opposite Taffs Well) to the Melingriffith tinplate works, on the east of the Taff in Whitchurch. Although very important in their time, nothing now remains of either works save the Melingriffith pump.



The tramway opened in 1815, when the industrial revolution was in full swing and south Wales was on its way to becoming a global superpower in the production of metals, particularly tinplate (very thin sheets of iron or steel given an even thinner coating of tin as an anticorrosive).

This tramway crossed the Taff at the Iron Bridge which, despite its name, was apparently made largely of wood. It is thought that the original bridge was destroyed in a storm in 1877, and replaced by the bridge that still stands. It occupied a very strategic location – when built it was the only bridge between Llandaff and Pontypridd suitable for the passage of carts, and so benefitted not only the Melingriffith company but also local people and businesses.

It seems that the Melingriffith company decided there was money to be made and so a tollhouse was built on the Tongwynlais side of the bridge to collect fees from those using it. The design is typical of tollhouses on turnpike roads, with business transacted in an octagonal room which, given appropriately placed windows and doorways, provided a wide field of view to prevent toll-dodging! This is clearly seen in the Google satellite imagery (fig 2). This also shows additional rooms, presumably for living space; in fact we know from census returns that it could accommodate at least ten people.



The tollhouse was likely built in or shortly after 1815; certainly we know it was occupied by 1822, as we have a burial record of Richard Lloyd, whose abode is recorded as ‘at the Iron Bridge’. His wife, Elizabeth is our first toll keeper, and she crops up in the 1841 census as a ‘Gate Keeper’, at the surprisingly old age of 91! It seems she continued in this role until her death five years later. She may have been assisted in her duties by her daughter, Mary Watkin (nee Lloyd), who took on the role after Elizabeth died. Mary was a widow in her fifties by this time, and remained at her post in the tollhouse until 1864 when, according to her death certificate, she died of ‘old age’.

In 1847 Mary remarried a labourer named Evan Howells, who sadly died of pneumonia in 1850. She appears in the 1851 census as a ‘Gate keeper’, living with her ten-year-old grand-niece Elizabeth Spencer and a 14-year-old servant, Sarah Sherman. In the 1861 census, Mary is a

‘Bridge Keeper’, now in her late 70s. By this time, the Tollhouse had been occupied by the same family for at least forty years. We suspect she was assisted by her grand-niece Elizabeth, who was perhaps being trained in the expectation she would take over the role. However, this did not happen: Elizabeth married Daniel Mayo in 1863, eventually moving away to Tonypandy. In fact, it was Daniel who reported Mary Howells death.



We know something of Mary’s life at the Tollhouse from the Melingriffith company accounts; these are fragmentary but provide information for the years 1853 and 1856. They show she was paid six shillings a week, a low wage even for the time (similar to that earned by a boy at the Melingriffith tinplate works), though presumably she occupied the tollhouse rent-free. Strangely, her wage comfortably exceeded the value of tolls collected - £3 13 shillings in 1853 and a mere £1 13 shillings in 1856. Why this loss-making situation was tolerated is a mystery.



Who paid the toll? The Pentyrch iron works, the Melingriffith tinplate works, and the tramway were all owned by the Booker-Blakemore family, who levied charges on users of the bridge. A newspaper report from 1857 tells us that ‘the tram-road is used by Mr. Booker-Blakemore; it is a road for carts to the station; if they cross the iron bridge, they pay a toll’. However, given the meagre takings, either the bridge was used very infrequently or, more likely we think, there was no charge for simply walking across.

Our next (and last) toll keeper was Barbara Harry, who was 75 years old when we find her at the tollhouse in the 1871 census (described as a gate-keeper), along with five other household members. Unlike her predecessors she did not die at the tollhouse - by 1881 she was an ‘annuitant’, and had moved to Aberdare to live with her daughter.

Barbara’s tenancy coincided with a major change, with the tramway being converted in 1871 to a standard gauge railway. Toll collection probably stopped around this time. The tollhouse continued to be occupied as a residential property; this period had its fair share of drama but these stories are for another time! Its last recorded occupants are listed in the UK register of 1939 as Thomas Robins, a 59-year-old scrap bundler and Edith Hassan, a servant aged 54.

The only known photo of the Tollhouse dates from 1951 (fig. 3), by which time it was abandoned and showing visible signs of deterioration. It was demolished later in the 1950s, its remains

becoming lost in the undergrowth until 2020 when the Tongwynlais Historical Society began an arduous and painstaking restoration program (fig 4), as was featured in the FoFF Summer 2022 newsletter.

The society has since held events at the Tollhouse, including a play, and a wet-but-fun Halloween ghost story evening. Historical walks and talks have also taken place. For updates and information about future events please visit our Facebook page at https://www.facebook.com/TongwynlaisHistoricalSociety.

PICTURE LEGENDS:

1. Remains of tram rails near Radyr Weir.

2. Satellite view of the Tollhouse and the Iron Bridge. (Imagery ©2024 Google, Imagery ©2024 Airbus, Bluesky, Infoterra Ltd & COWI A/S, Maxar Technologies, Map data © 2024).

3. Tongwynlais Tollhouse in a state of dereliction, 1951. Photo ©Ian L Wright courtesy of Stephen Rowson.

4. Tongwynlais Tollhouse following its partial restoration by Tongwynlais Historical Society.

Photos 1 and 4: ©Marion Sweeney 2024

Marion & Glen Sweeney, Tongwynlais Historical Society

POLLINATORS AT THE TOLLHOUSE



The wildflower patch at the Tollhouse has been attracting some interesting pollinators. A twenty minute 'safari' on 14th August revealed the following.

Two bumblebee species, the Common Carder bee (*Bombus pascuorum*) and White/Buff tailed bumblebee workers (*Bombus lucorum/terrestris*).



Common Carder bees have long tongues and can pollinate plants that honeybees cannot reach! Also spotted was the Furry Dronefly (*Eristalis intricaria*), a bee mimic which loves damp habitats near water.

Another mimic species, the Wasp Plumehorn (*Volucella inanis*) was abundant. This wasp is largely confined to the South of the UK but is gradually extending its range northwards. Both use mimicry for different reasons, the Furry Dronefly as a protective mechanism -it fools predators into thinking it can sting; and the Wasp Plumehorn tricks wasps into allowing it into their nests where it lays eggs in wasp larvae.



One notable feature of flies are their large eyes which cover most of their head, giving them excellent all-round vision. A tiny hoverfly, the Thick-legged or Compost hoverfly (*Syritta pipiens*) was also seen in large numbers. The males of this unobtrusive species are strongly territorial and will often chase other insects away from its chosen flower.

A day-flying moth, the Nettle-tap (*Anthophila fabriciana*) could be seen basking on the Hemp agrimony. As its name suggests, its larval food plant is the stinging nettle.

This is just taste of what could be seen. Next year, why not go along to see the Tollhouse and to find out what other visitors you can find? If you are lucky you may even spot one of the resident Toads!

Marion Sweeney

All photos: Marion Sweeney.
1 Common Carder bee
2 Furry Dronefly
3 Wasp Plumehorn

A WALK WITH NATURE

July 2024:



There were just 3 of us for this walk; we did wait a while in case there were any late comers but then set off on what proved to be truly a nature walk. It was the time of year for a wonderful range of wild flowers everywhere we went. I have never seen such lush vegetation around the Reserve – though maybe you have.

We started, as usual, from the Wardens' Centre but first visited the pond area behind it. In fact, there is a helpful Information Board there about grassland at Forest Farm and it was amazing looking around and seeing such a variety of wildflowers in all their glory.

Making our way back to the front of the Wardens Centre, we saw Buddleia, Daisies and Burdock in flower in several places. More flowers as we walked towards the allotments . To the right there was the 'sacrificial' crop of Yellow Ox-eye daisies, some Yarrow and a few Poppies. The sacrificial crop is planted for the birds in the winter months.

On towards the bridge over the feeder, listening and looking for birds and then to the hides. We saw all the Tits and then a sole Goldfinch feeding on Knapweed; it must have been hungry as it was there for ages. There was a little girl aged about 4 with her parents on her first visit to Forest Farm. She was absolutely delighted when a Great tit came to feed from seed on her hand; Her patience and stillness rewarded. Then, for a while, not much happening until the ears of a tiny rabbit were spotted as it moved among the wildflowers in front of the hide. This was followed by a Jay on a branch near the pond and then – a wonderful surprise for her (and us too), a Kingfisher. Moorhen, Mallard and a Reed Bunting were also seen there.





Time was getting on. We continued towards the canal and, on turning the corner, a female duck with 2 fluffy chicks were just crossing the towpath towards the water. They seemed oblivious to our presence, happily just pecking away. We enjoyed watching them for a while.

En route to and along the canal we had seen a Robin, Magpies, Sparrow, a Long tailed tit, Nuthatch, Song thrush and Mistle thrush and a Grey wagtail. Some other wild flowers we saw on our walk were Meadowsweet, Purple Loosestife, Ragwort and we think, Greater Spearwort.



It was all very peaceful as we strolled along the towpath. I don't know what made me look to my left near to Forest Lock, but there was a lovely Heron there - quite still for a while and then it started moving off at a stately pace; a great ending to a very pleasant and interesting morning.

If you would like to come along to the next Nature Walk, it's on **Saturday, 19 October at 10.00am**. It lasts about 2 hours, **it's free** and all are welcome. Meet at the Wardens' Centre Forest Farm Road, Whitchurch.

Sheila Austin (07969 625248)

All photos: Sheila Austin

FOREST FARM RESERVE REPORT SUMMER 2024

Ranger's Open Day 3 August

This year, the Summer Open Day was entirely planned and run by the Rangers and we hope that you enjoyed it. On 3 August, the Forest Farm Reserve was set up for a day of free fun for all the family. The event included pond dipping, mini-beast hunting, and bird-spotting. There were art and craft stalls and the opportunity to get hands dirty in the tree nursery. The idea to enable everyone to see the machines used by the Park Rangers was very popular – a chance to take a Selfie in a Tractor!

Many thanks to Ranger Jo Murphy for organising it all.



Ranger Boot Camp

From 14-16 August, the Rangers held a Boot Camp for ages 11-16, based at the Warden Centre. The event included:

-Master navigation and bushcraft skills

-Learn how to construct shelters

-Discover the art of fire building

-Challenge your endurance and survival instincts

Bat walk



On 24 August, the Woodland Trust held a bat walk at the reserve. Bats have a pretty frightening reputation, and their aim was to convince you that they're spectacular, not spooky! In fact, the presence of bats is a positive sign of a healthy woodland. These mysterious mammals use hedgerows and tree lines for roosting, foraging and navigation.

The Woodland Trust are working hard to protect their bat populations. They are making key habitat improvements in their ancient woodlands to drive an increase in appetising insects for bats to come and munch on.

Head to their website to find out more about bats and why they need trees! https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/.../why-bats-need-trees/



Clearing the wetlands:

From Saturday 31 August to Sunday 8 September the Park Rangers and volunteers carried out essential annual habitat maintenance work in the wetlands. Possibly not the best time for the taking of photographs, since this work inevitably causes disturbance in and around both bird hides during this period. The Friends Facebook page gave a advance warning and apology for this, and we hope that everyone agrees that a great job has been done! Thank-you for your co-operation, and thanks to all the rangers and volunteers who took part.

Arson Alert!

You may have seen a notice placed by the Fire and Rescue Service at the Melingriffith waterwheel site. As we know all too well, it is true that fires have been set deliberately at Forest Farm on more than one occasion, bird hides and seating benches being notable examples. The notice asked that we remain vigilant in reporting any suspicious activity and provided a telephone number to use if needed: 0800 731 7287.

Bird Hides Display Panels: an update

Some members of the Friends committee have been working with Alec Stewart our Ranger to design and produce display panels to brighten up the inside of both hides. Several of the regular photographers have been contacted for permission to use their photographs, a company selected to produce the panels, species and wording chosen etc. However, the cogs move slowly when trying to contact a lot of people and also include Cardiff Council's busy staff and so after eighteen months we are delighted to see the project coming to a conclusion.

A seasonal photograph has been chosen for each of the four large panels, overlaid by smaller photographs displaying the iconic flora and fauna to be found on the reserve in each season. Fully funded by FoFF, we will be delighted to finally get the panels made and erected and really hope you will be able to see them for yourselves before too long!



Paul Pinnell Retirement

Ranger Paul Pinnell retired this summer, after 14 years working with Cardiff Council's Parks Service.

He'd like to thank everyone in the Friends of Forest Farm for their help and support over the years and says he will miss seeing them at the monthly volunteering sessions.

In return, we'd like to thank Paul for all his work around Forest Farm and we wish him a long and happy retirement. We will miss his friendly face and also his skills and knowledge.

Thank you Paul!

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 **7.15 pm**

12 October	Forest Farm Open Day	10:00 to 15:00
17 October	Winter Talk: Hedgehog Rescue	Kate Barrow
19 October	Nature Walk	Sheila Austin
27 October	Volunteering	Alec Stewart
16 November	Nature Walk	Sheila Austin
THURSDAY 21 November 7:15 p.m.	Llanishen & Lisvane reservoirs	Save the Reservoir Group
24 November	Volunteering	Alec Stewart
14 December	Nature Walk	Sheila Austin
15 December	Volunteering	Alec Stewart

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

Friends of Forest Farm Open Day at Forest Farm on **Saturday 12 October** with a range of family activities and fun. Apple-pressing. Photo Exhibition. 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Please send your contributions for the next edition to the editors by **31 DECEMBER 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

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ANDRE VAN DE SANDE

Our readers will recall the sad announcement in our last newsletter about the passing of Andre Van de Sande. He was a cherished member of the Friends Group and the committee felt it appropriate to publish a tribute to him and his work in light of his contribution to Forest Farm. A small selection of his images appear in this article beginning with one of my favourites, an Autumnal shot of the canal.



Born in Belgium, André spent much of his childhood and formative years in Amsterdam before briefly serving in the military and later embarking on a civilian career as a heating engineer, while also managing a small farm. His life's journey led him to France and Germany before bringing him to Wales, where he made his home after falling in love with the country during his numerous visits. It was here that he and Doreen built a life together.





André's love for Forest Farm was evident in his frequent visits, where he could often be found walking around the reserve or sitting in the hides waiting for "the shot". He was always ready to offer advice to those seeking to improve their techniques. His technical knowledge was outstanding.



His passion for photography, which he took up only 15 years ago, blossomed into a remarkable talent. His images, many of which have graced our newsletters and calendars captured the beauty and diversity of the reserve with exceptional skill and sensitivity.

Despite his relatively late start in photography, André's work displayed a proficiency and artistry that belied the short time he had been practicing. They need no further comment as the quality speaks for itself. His skill in blending two or more images together can be seen in the adjacent image where a series of shots of a Robin and Kingfisher were blended together which he published on April 1st….



Beyond photography, André was also a gifted artist, and his paintings reflect his deep appreciation for the world around him. On Saturday, 12th October, at the Warden's Centre, we hold a special exhibition in tribute to André's legacy which features many of André's printed and mounted works.



André's presence will be deeply missed, not only for his extraordinary photographic eye but for the advice and help he freely offered to fellow photographers. His love for the natural world and his many contributions to the Forest Farm community will be remembered for years to come.



May his images continue to inspire and remind us of the beauty he saw in the world. **Anthony Mathews.**