



Making food balls for the birds. Photo by Ian Cormack

Our feathered friends

By Ian Cormack

The Friends of Cherry Tree Wood were pleased to have Sue Corson give an insight into the various birdlife that frequents the wood at different times of year.

The redwing is a winter visitor, whereas in summer there are blackcaps and chiffchaffs. There are also a few noisy wrens, song and mistle thrushes, and dunnocks (ground sparrows).

Habitat is very important and oak trees are probably the best as they house many invertebrates for bird food but

the hornbeams are good for tits. Chaffinches like shrubs, and brambles are very good cover for the smaller birds, as is ivy as a food source. There is competition for nesting sites, particularly from squirrels who are predators as are the growing number of magpies and the deadly crows.

There are both green and

greater spotted woodpeckers in the wood which can be differentiated by the former's croaky laugh and the stilted single note of the latter. Owls cause a shudder of fear in other birds and if you hear a "Twit Twoo" it means that there are two of them.

If you want to encourage birdlife water is most important, so ponds are good and different boxes with graded holes for the various size of birds can be effective. Long cables are necessary for feeders with domes to stop the ubiquitous squirrels from muscling in on the act and sunflower hearts (without husks) are a favourite.

Our own Ana Sanchez-Martin kept the children amused making food balls and a good time was had by all, although we might have hoped for a better attendance on such a pleasant February morning.

Long Lane Pasture

A piece of old Finchley, tucked away on the N3 side of the North Circular and recently under threat from developers, may soon become a wildlife site to be enjoyed by the community.

This is the plan of the Long Lane Pasture Trust, who hope to sign a lease for the land in the near future. However, they do still need to raise £1,100, plus stamp duty, and would be very grateful for any financial contribution. Cheques, made payable to Long Lane Pasture Trust, should be sent to the treasurer at 256 Long Lane, N3 3SN.

Practical assistance would be welcome too. Anyone feeling like a bit of work in the fresh air can join them on alternate Saturday mornings, between 10am and noon. Next work dates are 10 and 24 March.

For further information, please contact The Finchley Society's Derek Warren on 020 8346 5258.

St. Johns Christian Spiritualist Church

4 Woodberry Grove - North Finchley
Just behind Homebase
phone 020 8446 3544

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Every Sunday at 10.30 a.m.**

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Neighbours get fired up

Everybody needs good neighbours. Reader Judy Leigh got in touch with *THE ARCHER* this month to thank her friends and neighbours for their help when an explosion rocked her home in Manor Park Road. Here's her letter in full:

Dear Editor,
I would like to let you know about an experience we had at the end of last year which, although stressful, really showed us what community is all about.

We had a small house fire in our kitchen on 17 December (late Sunday afternoon) while we were out (combination of me leaving hob on, and my husband putting plastic box containing shoe polish, and shoe cleaning equipment including aerosols ON the hob!).

We were called about 40 minutes after leaving the house, by the fire brigade, who were in our house. We didn't stop to buy the pot plants we had chosen at the garden centre, but bundled ourselves back into the car and came home. There had been an explosion, causing a window frame to crack and another window to leave the wall, and cracks all over the house from blast damage, where the house went "Whooompph". There had been a fire; our neighbours on one side heard the explosion, then heard our smoke alarms going off, and saw the fire through the letter box, before dialling 999.

Our neighbours on the other side then helped us clean up and wash up. They escorted my mother-in-law to the tube station to return home and helped repair and secure the front door which had been cut up by the fire brigade to gain access.

There was smoke damage all over the place, and also water and mud from the fire brigade. Two local friends appeared within days with meals we could re-heat and we had supper at a neighbour's soon after.

Without our friends and neighbours we might not have a house at all; we wouldn't have been able to secure the house with a new front door; we would have been a lot more traumatised. We now have the builders in, creating a new kitchen for us, and the house has been deep cleaned, courtesy of the insurance company. We moved to East Finchley four years ago, and the BEST thing about it is that there really is a sense of community, a feeling that we look after each other when we need to. And we would like to thank the people of East Finchley and Muswell Hill who looked after us.

Best wishes,

Judy Leigh

Manor Park Road.

Vale of Health?

By Daphne Chamberlain

Is Hampstead Heath for walkers, or should cyclists rule OK? While you're pondering that one, do you know which of us may be unintentionally killing heathland plants?

The Heath and Hampstead Society's newsletter says that dog-exercisers who don't always scoop are over-fertilising the soil. Most dog owners, they say, are very conscientious on short grass and paths, but often leave things to nature in woodland and long grass. Apparently this means that the Heath now has soil nutrient levels equivalent to well-fertilised farmland, which can disturb the balance of naturally-occurring plants.

Hastily reverting to cyclists, there is a Heath for Feet campaign against requests to build or designate more than the current four paths which cyclists may share with pedestrians.

These are just two of the issues being considered by the Heath's managers, the City of London, who were due to publish a consultation document on policies and priorities in February.

Meanwhile, why not enjoy one of the society's regular walks? "Birds of the Heath in Spring" starts from Burgh House, New End Square,

Hampstead Village, at 10.30am on Sunday 1 April. For further information, contact Thomas Radice on 020 8455 1025 / mobile 07941 528 034 / email Thomas@radice.clara.co.uk.

Raise a glass

There is nothing new about binge drinking, except the name. In earlier times, public houses catered for many activities. Graham Ives will describe the history of pubs and drinking in an illustrated talk to the Finchley Society.

Called "The Public House Before the Railways", the talk will start with the Roman taverna and Anglo-Saxon drinking halls, tracing the history of social drinking right through to more modern times.

It takes place on Thursday 29 March at Avenue House, East End Road, at 8pm. Entry for non-members is £2.

Going, going...

A host of fantastic lots will be up for grabs at Holy Trinity School's annual auction, being held on Friday 23 March at 8pm.

They include an Arsenal shirt signed by the Gunners' first-team squad, a print donated by a local artist, a Power League party, gym memberships, a host of vouchers for pubs and restaurants (including the Rainforest Café in Shaftesbury Avenue), family days out to Legoland and the Roald Dahl Museum, pampering treatments, yoga and much more.

Tickets for the evening, which also incorporates a Race Night, will cost £3 (including a complimentary drink) and be available on the door.