

Issue No 11. Winter 2006-07

**M**ay we wish you all a happy New Year! We hope you all had a good Christmas and that Santa did his duty on the day.

Already the evenings are beginning to draw out and it won't be long before we have signs of lively growth all over the Reserve. Perhaps a bit of snow to deal with before then but I'm sure that won't chill our enthusiasm for the coming Spring. Amazingly, there are still plants in flower which one normally associates with high summer. Which reminds me of the saying I learnt as a child in Ireland: "Never get married when the gorse is in bloom." The reason for this is quite obvious - it blooms all the year round! A short walk around Foxglove will confirm that this is so, although it might be more difficult to prove the saying is correct.

It's not often that one can record a new bird species at Foxglove. With so many expert eyes around it's a wonder that we haven't already recorded the whole of the British List. So it was with some delight that I recently saw a female Teal take off from one of the ponds below net rides 9 and 10. The Teal is the smallest British duck and is about half the size of a Mallard. They are not rare and can be seen in many places from park lakes to moorland ponds and salt marshes. However, this was the first sighting at Foxglove.



## *Annual General Meeting*

Please remember the date of our AGM - 24 January at 7.30 in Lizzie's Bar, Piave Lines. Everyone is welcome to come along and have an input into the way the Reserve is managed.

As we write, the Management Committee is in a state of flux. Mark Hewitt and Winifred Hodge have both decided that they are no longer able to give Foxglove the commitment which it needs and have resigned. Although everyone will be aware of the work which Mark has done for the Reserve both in his capacity of Community Liaison Officer and as a volunteer, they

may be less aware of the tremendous contribution which Winifred has made over the past few years. She has been involved in most aspects of the Reserve, as a volunteer, a bird ringer and as a committee member. Her enthusiasm, combined with her willingness to take on almost any task has been a real asset to Foxglove. She has great skills in organising people and events and, with her practical common sense, has played a pivotal role in many aspects of what we have done in the past. Our open days, coffee mornings and a host of other events just won't be the same without her input.

Many of us know Winifred as an artist and it was she who painted our interactive board, produced over 30 small flower paintings which we have turned into notelets and held painting classes in the Field Centre for people from far and wide. She has been a great ambassador for Foxglove, helping to spread the word about the Reserve.

Our thanks, Winifred, for all your hard work on the Management Committee; we will miss your sense of humour and your involvement. And we will miss your smile.

## *Coffee Morning*

We held a Coffee Morning in Richmond Town Hall on November 9th. This raised £290 for the Reserve. We would like to thank everyone who took part, in particular Jean and John Gabriel and Sylvia Broadwith who came all the way from Masham to run the tombola which was responsible for raising most of the money.

Our thanks, again, to Winifred who organised everything and made sure we were at our best on the day.

## *Highland Cattle*

The highlight of the recent few weeks has been the arrival of four Highland cattle on the Reserve. These have been introduced to help keep the vegetation on the new area under control by grazing. The cattle, all bullocks, arrived just before Christmas and seem to have settled in well. They are available for a photocall on payment of a few handfuls of feed.

They have all been given suitable manly Scottish names and so we have Hector who is dun coloured with silver highlights, McGregor who is brown, McDuff who is white and Fraser who is light brown.

Our picture shows them on the day they arrived:



### *Christmas Party*

We held our Christmas party on 20 December in the Field Centre. Not a huge turn out but 24 of us had a most enjoyable evening with some excellent food. Sue organised a quiz with 40 fairly easy questions on a wide variety of topics. We were surprised when this was won with a score of just 24. Perhaps it wasn't as easy as we thought - mind you, we did have the answers when we made our assessment.

### *Christmas Cards*

Our Christmas cards were a great success this year and a big thank you to everyone who bought them. In all we sold about 50 packs which made the whole exercise really worthwhile.

As an experiment we also produced a 2007 calendar. These were entitled Foxglove Through the Year and showed scenes from the Reserve and our activities. Many of the pictures were drawn from the winners of our 2005 and 2006 photo competitions.

The problem with the calendars is that they were very difficult to produce; the numbers were so small that it would have been very expensive to have them printed professionally and so we did them by hand. And, as each one took over an hour to print, it was just as well that we didn't have a huge number of orders. In the end we sold about 30 which was about as many as we could cope with.

Having said that, if anyone else would like a calendar, please ring Sue or Jez on 01748 831113.

### *Working Weekends*

In our last edition we published some dates for our working weekends. Due to unforeseen circumstances we have had to change them and the dates are now as follows:

Saturday, 27 January

Saturday, 17 February.

If you are able to come along to work off a bit of the Christmas turkey, please let Sue or Jez know so they can plan the work to suit the number of people available.

### *100 Club*

We have held two 100 Club draws in recent weeks, one at our last Committee meeting and one at our Christmas party. The first was won by Margaret McCord and the second by Val and Midge Spencer. Congratulations to all of them.

Our membership now stands at 27 which is just about enough to keep the club going. However, we would still like to recruit new members if we can. We will hold the next draw at our AGM so, if you are not a fully paid up member by then, prepare to be badgered.

### *Friends Group*

Our Friends group now has 62 members which is pretty good. Unfortunately we have lost one family member in recent weeks but this has been made up for by new people joining. Our new members are as follows:

Eric Pounder	Preston-under-Scar
Angela Bartley	Darlington
Carol Leaman	Leyburn
Jean Ross	Catterick Village
Anne Harbron	Richmond
Judith Lowther	Streetham

We are conscious that we have in our Friends a group of very enthusiastic and like-minded people for whom we do little except send out our newsletter and invite to a couple of evening events during the year. This seems small recompense for the support which they give the Reserve and we are looking to find ways of improving the situation. To this end we are looking for someone who would be willing to act as secretary to the Friends group and help to organise some events for



both our Friends and our Volunteers. If anyone would be willing to do this, please let us know so that we can get the ball rolling.

### *Catterick Thrift Shop*

The Catterick Garrison Thrift Shop is the Army's charity shop, but with a major difference. Unlike the charity shops in town where you receive nothing in return for your donations, the Garrison Thrift Shop attempts to sell unwanted items on your behalf. The proceeds are then split, with the selling customer receiving 70% of the purchase price, and the remaining 30% going to local branches of service charities, such as SSAFA, the Army Benevolent Fund and, indeed, in recent years to Foxglove Covert.

The Manageress of the Thrift Shop has proposed a scheme in which friends and supporters of FGC can help to raise money directly for the Reserve by using the Thrift Shop to dispose of articles no longer required. Instead of the individual receiving the 70% it can be directed straight to a Foxglove Covert account. Items which fail to sell may be reclaimed by the owner, but would otherwise, after a period of time, be sent to benefit the Great North Air Ambulance or the Chernobyl Children's Project.

The Thrift Shop is open on Tuesday and Thursday mornings throughout the year (apart from school holidays) from 10am to 11.30 to receive items for sale. Opening hours for those wishing to buy are the same, with the addition that we remain open until 3 pm on Thursdays. We are situated on Horne Road in the Garrison, which is the road that leads past the Hospital from the White Shop Traffic lights and takes you to Tunstall. We are located on the right side of the road, a little set back but with a large green sign on the fence.

It is important to remember that we only accept items in a good saleable condition, but we take virtually anything including the proverbial kitchen sink. We are unable to take mains electrical items.

Anyone wishing for more details should phone during opening hours on 01748 833259 and ask for Anne Flecchia. We look forward to welcoming you.

### *Winter Work Programme*

Our Winter work programme is in full swing with two main areas receiving attention from Sue, Jez and our volunteers. The first of these, the grassy bank above the lake is a good habitat for butterflies but has become

rather overgrown in the past few years. Large areas have been cleared to allow the grass to regenerate but patches of brambles and other species have been left to act as both food and cover.

The other area where we have done a lot of work is the conifer belt to the West of the Field Centre. Here there were a number of very weak conifers and some which had succumbed to the wind. These have been removed and a large area in the resulting clearing has been fenced off to keep our resident deer out while the land regenerates naturally. In time, this will give is a species-rich area within the conifer belt.

### *Gillian's Bench*

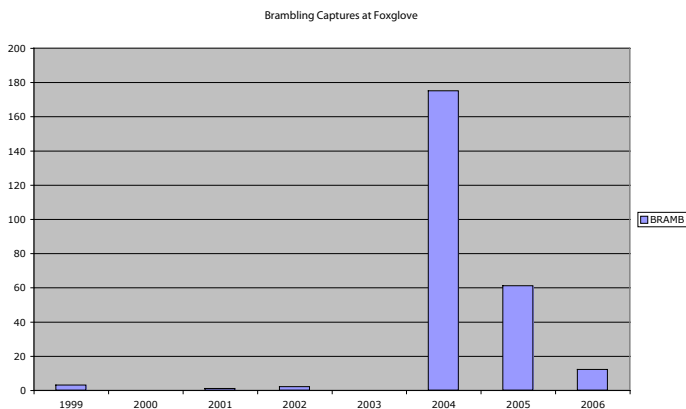
In our last edition we mentioned that Gillian Mackenzie had kindly offered to buy a new bench for the Woodland Walk. This has been delivered and installed at the top of the steps to allow those of riper years to rest after the climb. Many thanks to Gillian, once again, for making a most generous donation and one which we are sure will be a great benefit to the Reserve. Our pictures show Gillian testing the bench and the plaque that records her gift.



## From the Records

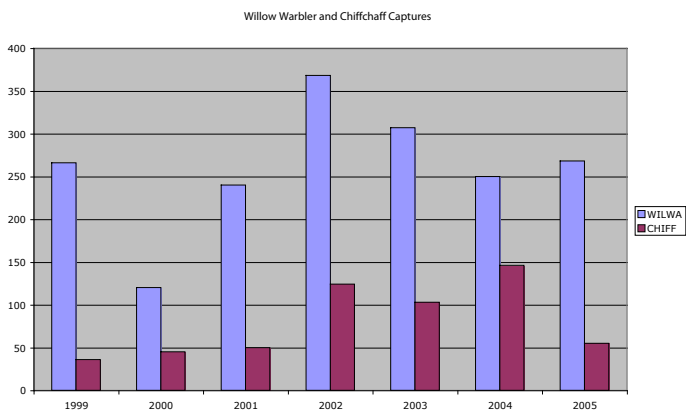
Many of our readers will remember the article we printed in the Autumn 2004 edition about Bramblings at Foxglove and might have wondered what they have been up to since then.

This species is always very variable in terms of numbers and we can see this from our updated graph below. The number we have captured has declined since our record high in 2004 and will, at this rate, return to just one or two birds by 2008. We will continue to monitor their progress over the coming seasons.



Two other species we have been looking at are Willow Warblers and Chiffchaffs. Both of these species are very similar in appearance, as any bird ringer will testify, but they have both been the subject of a general decline in numbers over recent years in the UK. The numbers we capture are, again, quite variable although not to the same extent as our Bramblings.

Our graph shows how they have fared since 1999. (Final figures for 2006 are not yet available.) From this we can see that Willow Warblers are much more



common than Chiffchaffs and their numbers peaked in 2002 and have declined since then. Chiffchaff numbers, on the other hand, increased steadily until 2004 before returning to 2001 levels. Again, we will continue to monitor these two species over the coming years to see if there are any conclusions that can be drawn.

## Competition Corner

Last month's competition was a word search for the names of 20 fungi. Not a huge number of entries, which we put down to over indulgence during Christmas, but the winner, with a score of 19, is Jean Gabriel. Well done Jean, a book token is on its way to you.

The one Jean missed was Cep. This was a bit of a cheat really because we had already included Penny Bun, another name for a Cep.

We apologise that there is no competition this time - moving house has reduced the time available to devise one.

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F	D	M	G	O	O	L	F	A	K	G	C	F	R	O	S	J	F	P	B
J	B	O	L	E	F	U	S	S	I	C	N	O	A	W	C	O	N	D	C
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B	M	S	G	B	W	E	J	V	D	E	A	T	H	C	A	P	L	R	I
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D	G	E	L	J	D	D	I	L	G	I	E	E	N	C	X	I	P	Q	N

*And finally . . .*

What's the difference between a cat and a comma?

One's got claws at the end of its paws and the other's a pause at the end of a clause.