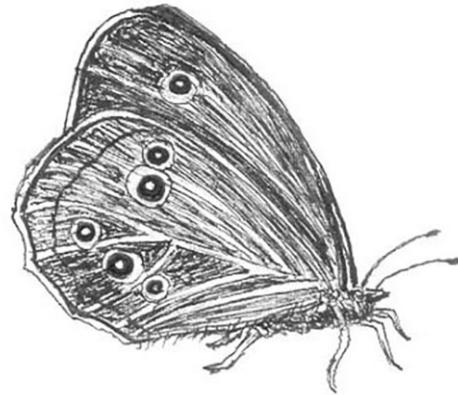


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Both the Ringlet (above) and Purple-loosestrife (right) have had a good year.



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Wycombe Wildlife News is published 3 times a year to promote the Group and wildlife issues, and inform members and the public of its activities.

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Views expressed in this newsletter are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Group. For the purposes of management of the Group, membership information is held on computer.

Wycombe Wildlife Group is a registered charity with the following objects:

To conserve the environment, mainly using volunteers, for the benefit of the public.

To educate the public in the principles and practice of conservation.

Within and around Wycombe District the Group:

Surveys wildlife habitats and their associated flora and fauna, giving those taking part plenty of opportunities to increase their knowledge and identification skills.

Helps manage local wildlife sites, undertaking practical conservation work on local nature reserves.

Provides advice to schools, other bodies and individuals on all aspects of wildlife.

Stimulates public interest in wildlife and its conservation, organising walks, talks and other activities covering a wide range of wildlife topics.

Provides advice on and encourages wildlife gardening.

Co-operates with other groups with similar aims.

In this issue, we report on the Group's response to the public consultation on the draft New Local Plan. There is certain to be lots of debate and local opposition to some of the proposals in the Plan to meet the housing needs of Wycombe District up to 2033, especially the large scale development envisaged in Princes Risborough and plans to remove small amounts of land from the Green Belt. Our response has been restricted to issues which fall within the remit of our Group's charitable aims, and have only commented on specific site proposals, where there is a related conservation issue. We have expressed our support for the policies in the New Local Plan which refer to conserving and enhancing Wycombe's green infrastructure.

This issue also brings to the notice of members a WWG initiative to create a circular walk around High Wycombe, that can be split into shorter walks, using buses to get to the starting points and back from the finishing points. We hope that some of our members will join us when we walk the route to identify related issues that may need to be addressed.

The weather was very kind to us on our Summer walks and they have given us opportunities to see lots of wildflowers, invertebrates (especially butterflies), and birds.

Let us hope that our proposed Round Wycombe Walk will, when created, be well used, and contribute towards the joined-up green infrastructure envisaged in the policies of the New Local Plan, enhancing the links between rural and urban sites which benefit both wildlife and people.

Roger Wilding

WWG has expressed its support for policies in the draft New Local Plan for conserving and enhancing Wycombe's green infrastructure, including our chalk streams. The photograph below shows the latest improvement along the Wye by the police station in Queen Victoria Road.



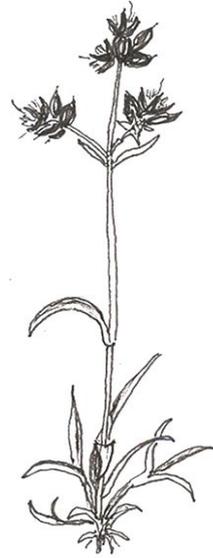
Summer walk at Holtspur Bank

This year's summer wildflower walk on the Holtspur Bank Local Nature Reserve took place during the afternoon of Sunday 3rd July and was led by Dr. Brenda Harrold. On this occasion, Brenda handed out copies of a check list she had produced covering grassland plants that she thought we might see on the walk. The check list separated out species that grow on neutral soil and those which are indicators of an alkaline soil. Some useful notes were included on the check list, pointing out that (a) the larger, faster-growing species such as nettles, docks and thistles grow best on nutrient-rich soil where they will smother and replace smaller, slower-growing species, thus reducing species diversity; (b) unimproved, infertile soils support a greater diversity of species; (c) chalk grassland is low in nutrients and drought-prone, and therefore agriculturally poor, but it supports a very diverse flora; and (d) most of the plants that grow on unimproved neutral soil will also be found on chalk, together with many chalk (or limestone) specialists, including most of the orchids, that grow nowhere else.

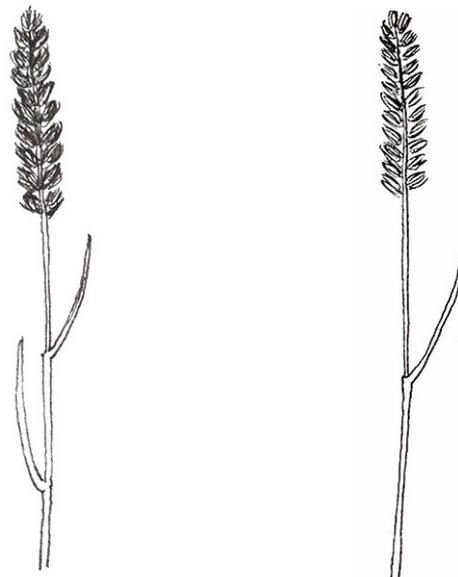
As usual, we found a good range of wildflower species on the walk, including Common Milkwort (*Polygala vulgaris*), Hairy Violet (*Viola hirta*), Fairy Flax (*Linum catharticum*), Yellow-wort (*Blackstonia perfoliata*) and Pyramidal Orchid (*Anacamptis pyramidalis*), together with grasses including Quaking-grass (*Briza media*), Crested Dog's-tail (*Cynosurus cristatus*) and Timothy (*Phleum pratense*) plus Glaucous Sedge (*Carex flacca*) and Field Wood-rush (*Luzula campestris*).



Yellow-wort



Field Woodrush (above) and Crested Dog's-tail (below). The seed head of the latter is flat on one side.



The good weather also brought the butterflies out, and a number of other insects and a crab spider were spotted.

Although the Holtspur Bank events are not arranged by Wycombe Wildlife Group, The Friends of Holtspur Bank do like us to include their walks in our events programme, and we are grateful for the opportunity to do so.

The September to December 2016 events programme includes the annual Autumn walk and another fungus foray at Holtspur Bank.

Return to Stoke Poges Memorial Gardens

Each year, Paul Bowyer visits Stoke Poges Memorial Gardens to undertake a 'butterfly day' guided walk: this year's visit took place on Saturday 16th July. The weather was perfect and 12 species of butterfly were recorded, including Speckled Wood which has not been very common this year. There is, of course, far more than butterflies to see in the Memorial Gardens. They consist of a mix of well designed and managed formal areas including rose gardens, rock gardens and water gardens, and areas which are left wild.



During our visit in 2015, we saw an area that had been sown with mixed cornfield annual seeds and we commented then how difficult it is to achieve the desired results. This year we saw a new area that had been sown near the entrance to the gardens, and it was a perfect native cornfield mix consisting of yellow Corn Marigold, (*Chrysanthemum segetum*) blue Cornflower (*Centaurea cyanus*), red Common

Poppy (*Papaver rhoeas*), white Corn Chamomile (*Anthemis arvensis*) and mauve Corncockle (*Agrostemma githago*). When we reached the area that we had seen the previous year, we saw that it too was looking really good this year.

Perhaps the most unusual sight was to see a Marbled White butterfly sitting on a Corncockle flower. The butterfly flew off before I had chance to photograph it, and I wondered what the chances are of seeing this sight again, as Marbled Whites are not common in gardens, and Corncockle is extinct in the wild, except where it has been reintroduced by man. I suppose the best opportunities of seeing the two species together might be Plantlife's Ranscombe Farm reserve in Kent or BBOWT's College Lake reserve, both of which have large areas set aside for growing arable weeds. They also have plenty of chalk grassland, the best habitat for Marbled Whites.

After walking along the path by the lake and resisting the urge to remove some of the invasive Indian Balsam plants growing there, we spent some time enjoying the water gardens and looking at some of the interesting trees, including Caucasian Wingnut (*Pterocarya fraxinifolia*), with conspicuous seeds hanging down in long racemes, and old Oak trees, some of which are estimated to be over 400 years old, and one is thought to be around 600 years old. With trees of such age present, it is not surprising that the gardens also support lots of fungi, which are monitored during an annual autumn visit to the Memorial Gardens, by Bucks Fungus Group.



Walk to Buttlers Hangings

The walk to Buttlers Hangings on Saturday 23rd July was a great success. We met in the car park at the top of West Wycombe Hill where Paul Bowyer explained that the larger than usual number of people gathered for the walk was due to the fact that the Upper Thames Branch of Butterfly Conservation had arranged a walk to the same location as Wycombe Wildlife Group, starting at the same time from the same meeting place. This didn't cause any problems as several people in the two groups knew each other and the two groups soon became separated as stops were made along the route to look at the butterflies, daylight flying moths and wildflowers. We did have one member of the other group with us for the first part of the walk after he had become separated from his own group.

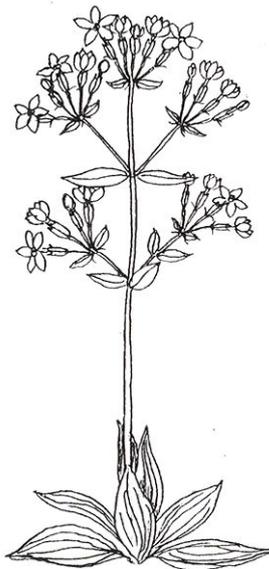
A total of 19 butterfly species were recorded on the walk, including Silver Washed Fritillary, Painted Lady, Dark Green Fritillary and Chalkhill Blue. Three species of daylight-flying moths were also recorded (Silver Y, 6-spot Burnet, and Shaded Broad Bar).



Chalkhill Blue

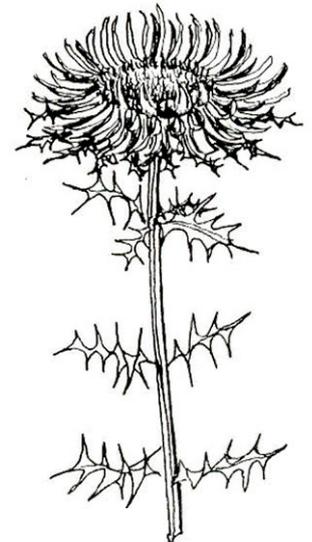
We saw a good range of flowering plants as we walked along West Wycombe Hill and through Hearnton Wood. When we reached Buttlers Hangings, we found an even more impressive range of flowering species, including Common Centaury (*Centaureum erythraea*), Squinancywort (*Asperula cynanchica*), Yellow Pimpernel (*Lysimachia nemorum*), Common Restharrow (*Ononis repens*), Kidney Vetch (*Anthyllis vulneraria*), Common Rock-rose (*Helianthemum nummularium*), and Carlina Thistle (*Carlina vulgaris*) plus a few orchids which had finished flowering.

Right: Kidney Vetch



Left: Common Centaury

Right: Carlina Thistle



The general opinion of those knowing Buttlers Hangings was that, although its condition was not as good as when it was managed as a BBOWT reserve, this SSSI still supported a good range of wildflower species and butterflies and was well worth a visit. Although we saw a few grasshoppers, we were not lucky enough to see a Great Green Bush-cricket, which used to be the highlight of a visit to this former BBOWT reserve.

Our thanks go to Paul for leading this excellent walk, which everyone taking part enjoyed.

Jubilee River walk

Saturday 30th July was the perfect day for a walk: it was dry and warm, and there was a light cloud cover. Six of us met at Slough bus station, from where we walked southwards out of the town to get to the Jubilee River. We then walked westwards towards Maidenhead, leaving the section flowing eastwards to the Thames for a future walk, which could also start at Slough and return along the Thames from Datchet to Eton.

The Jubilee River is a man-made channel, which was created by the Environment Agency, within a flood plain containing drainage ditches and small brooks, to act as a flood prevention scheme for Maidenhead, Eton and Windsor. It works by taking water from the Thames north of Boulter's Lock at Maidenhead, and returning it to the Thames east of Windsor. The amount of water in the Jubilee River can be adjusted, whenever there is a need to do so, to prevent flooding. On completion of the river channel, the Environment Agency planted trees and sowed wildflower seeds to create the floral interest that we can now enjoy along this watercourse. Being a riverside walk, it is all on the level, and the path is also used by cyclists and horse riders. There are, of course, swans, ducks, geese and other waterbirds to see, and plenty of birdsong coming from the many trees and shrubs alongside the path, which can be enjoyed, except when near to where the M4 motorway crosses the river.

We stopped to eat our packed lunches at the Dorney Wetlands, the halfway point on our walk, and then went on a 'safari' along the partially overgrown boardwalk, where we were able to get a close look at the colourful wetland flowers and the invertebrates on them, including a Brown Hawker dragonfly (*Aeshna grandis*). The Purple-loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*), Common Fleabane (*Pulicaria dysenterica*), Meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*), and Marsh Woundwort (*Stachys palustris*) were all in peak flowering condition. It was noticeable that Orange Balsam (*Impatiens capensis*) was becoming the dominant species in some places. Although this plant is an alien, and in the same genus as the Indian (or Himalayan) Balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*), it is not yet regarded as a problem plant, although

like the Monkeyflower (*Mimulus guttatus*), another alien species which is common along our waterways, it is being monitored to assess whether future control measures are likely to be needed.



We continued our walk to where the Jubilee River flows under the A4, stopping for a cup of expensive, but good quality, tea at a boating lake café on the way. We admired, but did not walk along, the very attractive stretch of the Jubilee River below Taplow Court, as a 75 bus was due which would take those that needed to return to Slough, back to their starting point. It was also convenient for those of us who needed to catch the 37 bus from Maidenhead to Wooburn Green and High Wycombe, to make our way direct to the departure point, which we reached about five minutes before the bus arrived.

Everyone enjoyed the walk, especially those who had not been to the Jubilee River before.

The draft New Local Plan

Wycombe District Council published its draft new Local Plan in June for public consultation. The consultation period ran until 8th August, and WWG's Executive Committee considered the content and submitted an agreed response on behalf of the Group. Our comments on the draft Local Plan were restricted to issues that fall within the charitable aims of our Group, and we only commented on individual site proposals where we considered that there is a wildlife-related conservation issue.

The Council's stated aim is for the Plan to strike a balance between making a fair contribution to meeting the identified housing needs up to 2033 and protecting our countryside from development. Understandably, the proposals in the Plan have caused a lot of concern by residents in or near the areas identified for new development, and the proposals to develop small pockets of Green Belt land will face stiff opposition.

The Plan retains a number of existing policies that relate to conservation and green infrastructure issues, and includes two new policies, one which strengthens the provision of green infrastructure as part of new development, and one which ensures that the need for connected green infrastructure is taken into account in placemaking and design quality decisions. We have expressed our support for all of the policies that relate to such matters.

We were pleased to see the River Wye and the Hughenden Stream referred to in the Plan as internationally important habitats, and the inclusion of policies relating to the restoration of the District's chalk streams. We also welcomed recognition of the importance of green infrastructure to provide quality of place, helping to underpin our health and wellbeing, as well as providing habitat for wildlife, and of the need to make sure there is space for wildlife throughout urban and rural areas. The inclusion in the Plan of a need for provision of a network of woods, chalk grasslands, green links and waterways extending into urban areas, nurturing biodiversity and promoting mental and physical wellbeing, is an indication of the environment-friendly

approach adopted in this New Plan.

We stated our support for the principles for the High Wycombe Area which relate to 'opening' up the River Wye, securing further enhancements to the Hughenden Stream corridor, including opening up of the stream and securing enhanced access to it, and improving the quality and provision of open space in the Desborough area, including improved links from the town centre to that area. In connection with the latter, we suggested that the Plan should include a reference to extending the riverside access between Desborough Park Road and Westbourne Street as opportunities arise.

We made no comments on the policies relating to the Reserve Sites, as they have already been agreed for development, and the policies concerned take account of views expressed by the Reserve Site Liaison Groups, most of which included a WWG member.

We did submit comments on the following four individual sites:-

Tralee Farm off the A404 near Hazlemere

Whilst it is outside the remit of our Group to comment on the principle of whether or not any existing Green Belt land should be developed, we did express support for the intention to take steps to protect areas of environmental interest and retain green infrastructure links, should Tralee Farm be developed.

Land to rear of Hughenden Road

Whilst accepting the comment in the draft Plan that providing new housing to the rear of existing houses in Hughenden Road could enhance the setting of the Hughenden Stream, we expressed the view that it would be necessary to impose restrictive covenants on the land to prevent any future undesirable riparian management by the residents.

(Continued on Page 44)

The draft New Local Plan (contd.)

Former Bassetsbury Allotments

We expressed the view that any housing development on this site should be restricted to an area near the road, leaving the remaining land to the rear as part of the green infrastructure network linking Funges Meadow and Bowden Lane to Bassetsbury Lane, Abbey Barn North and beyond. We also pointed out the importance of safeguarding a cycle and walking route, should the elevated former railway track be returned to rail use in the future.

Wycombe Airpark

We expressed the view that the Policy relating to the Airpark should include a need to ensure that the proposed shooting range between the Airpark and the motorway does not compromise the two existing public footpaths and associated green infrastructure links between Booker and Widdenton Park Wood SSSI.

An exciting new project

Earlier this year, I was invited to attend a meeting that had been arranged to consider options for the land within the Gomm Valley Reserve Site that will remain undeveloped following the completion of the housing and other construction work on the site. The amount of land remaining undeveloped will be substantial, because of the need to retain the existing BBOWT Gomm Valley Nature Reserve (which is a SSSI), ancient woodland and hedgerows, a Local Wildlife Site and a Biological Notification Site. There is also a need to provide buffers around these areas to protect them from the effects of the development. One solution under consideration is to manage the undeveloped land as a countryside park, with walking and cycling routes through the valley linking Kings Wood to the A40 opposite Kingsmead. Some of the area is likely to be used to extend the chalk grassland in the valley.

Because Gomm Valley was designated as an Area of Opportunity when the Bucks Biodiversity Action Plan was last reviewed, there is a desire to achieve a net biodiversity gain within the Reserve Site, and the implementation of the countryside park proposal would be a means of achieving this.

At the meeting, I put forward a suggestion that the undeveloped section of Gomm Valley could also provide an opportunity to create a circular green walk around High Wycombe using existing rights of way through mainly undeveloped areas around the town. Some interest has since been shown in this idea, and I would now like to take

it forward as a Wycombe Wildlife Group initiative by walking and surveying the proposed route to note details and points of interest that could be used to produce a guide to the walk.

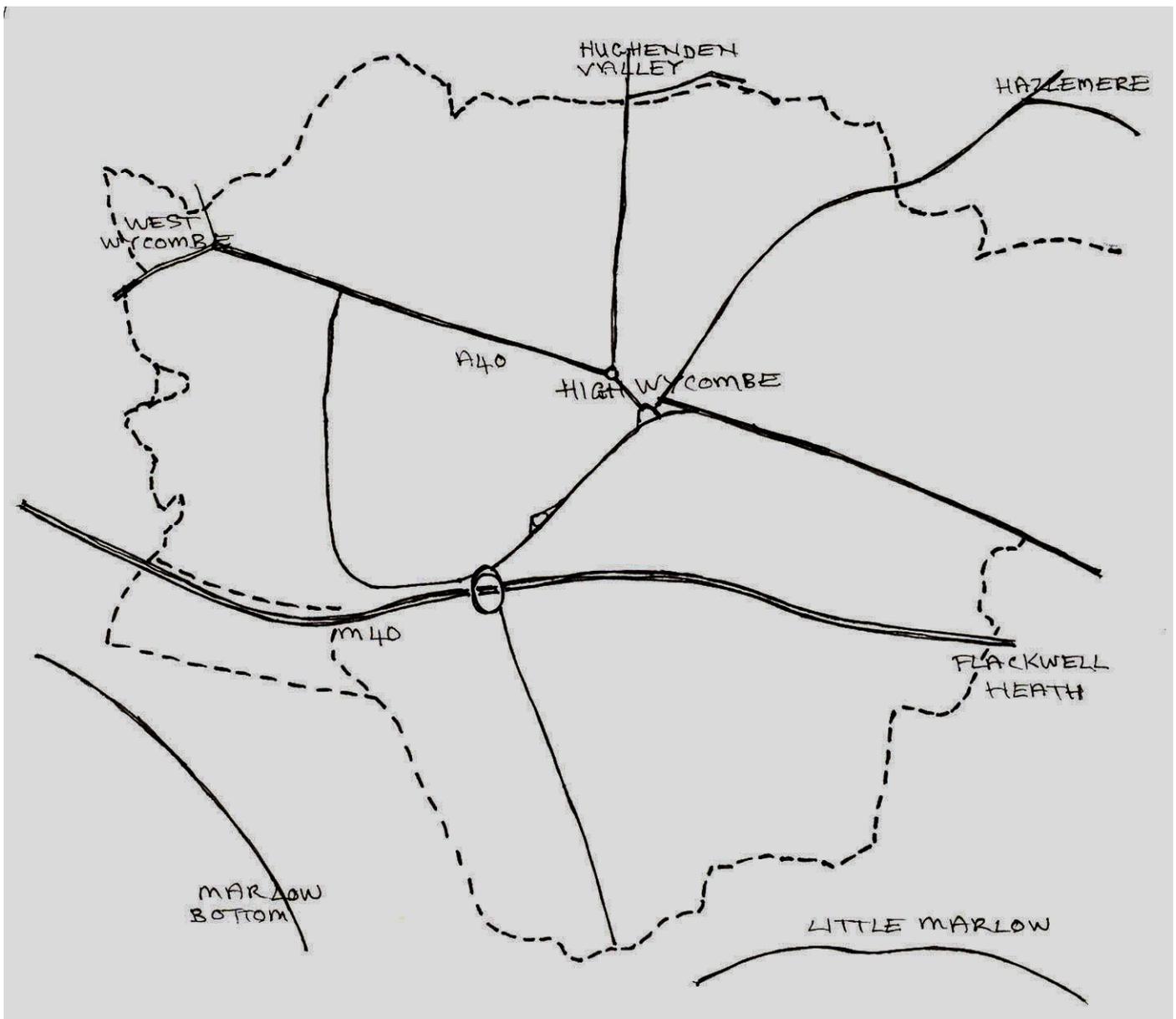
The walk I have envisaged would be approximately 20 miles long, and would be split into four sections, each starting and finishing at a location with a suitable bus connection from and to High Wycombe bus station. These locations are likely to be West Wycombe village, the entrance to Hughenden Manor, the A40 at the western end of Kingsmead and Burroughs Grove on the High Wycombe to Marlow bus route. The length of the four sections will vary between four and six miles, although they could all be split into shorter lengths. There is also an opportunity to create links from various points around the town to the route of the circular walk, so that users could plan shorter circular walks without using buses.

Following discussion at a recent meeting of the Programme Planning Committee, it was decided that a series of preliminary walks around the proposed route would be arranged in the autumn, so that anyone who wishes to get involved in the early planning stages of this exciting project will have the opportunity to do so. The dates for these walks can be flexible to match the availability of those who would like to get involved, so if you wish to be one of them, please let me know and I will arrange a programme of walks based on the availability of those wishing to help get this project moving forward.

Roger

Map showing the possible route of the proposed circular walk around High Wycombe

The dotted line shows the most likely route of the path, following existing rights of way. Some possible alternative paths are indicated. The gap on the right of the map is the “missing link” which could utilise the new right of way which will be created within the undeveloped section of Gomm Valley.



Some initial walks will be needed this Autumn to decide on the best route for this circular walk, to make a start in preparing a description of the route, and to note points of interest. If you would like to help with this project, please email w.w.group@btopenworld.com to express your interest.

Will Castlefield Wood remain clean for the Queen?



I am sure many of you will have read the article in the Summer issue of Wycombe District Council's publication Wycombe District Times about the community clean-up undertaken in one of our local woods as part of the national 'Clean for the Queen' campaign to help clean up the country before the Queen's 90th birthday.

As part of this campaign, a local community activity was arranged to clean up Castlefield Wood and the nearby Desborough Castle.



Editorial footnote:

Although Castlefield Wood was chosen for this task, because it had been identified as suffering badly from the effects of waste dumping, there are bound to be other woods and sites of wildlife interest in our area that need a tidy up. If you are aware of such places, do let us know, and perhaps we can do something about it. If you would be happy to help with undertaking any tidy up sessions on your local patch, please let us know, ideally by email to w.w.group@btopenworld.com.

By the end of the task, enough rubbish had been removed from these woods to fill five trucks. The removed items ranged from bottles, wrappers and dirty nappies, to oil canisters, car tyres, oxygen cylinders and furniture. Let us hope that the publicity given to this clean-up will make those who were responsible for creating the need for it to think twice before continuing to use Castlefield Wood as a rubbish tip, and that it will remain clean for the Queen.

In the same edition of Wycombe District Times, there was a report stating that The Waste Partnership for Buckinghamshire, which investigates fly-tipping cases, averages more than one dumping conviction in the Wycombe area every month. The average penalty is over £1000 in fines and costs, and the increasing use of surveillance cameras to gather evidence is expected to result in a rise in the number of convictions.

Let us hope that increased enforcement action will help to overcome the fly-tipping problem, which is spoiling not only our precious woodlands, but road verges, lay-bys and indeed anywhere where a vehicle can stop and unload unwanted items.

Wildlife observations - May to July 2016

May 2016

3 rd	4 Herring Gulls on lawn	Deeds Grove garden	HP12 3PA
4 th	3 Swifts and a Willow Warbler	Deeds Grove garden	HP12 3PA
4 th	3 Whitethroats	In hedge near Temple Lock	SU838844
4 th	2 Little Egrets	In field near Pens Place, Marlow	SU844853
7 th	Tree Creeper	Alongside road near Pens Place	SU845855
12 th	First young Starling in garden	Deeds Grove garden	HP12 3PA
18 th	First baby House Sparrow on lawn	Deeds Grove garden	HP12 3PA
19 th	Skylark singing over Hughenden	Along Church Lane nr Coombe Lane	SU854964
19 th	2 Stock Doves nesting	Near entrance to Hughenden Park	SU865955
28 th	Shelduck drake	Spade Oak Lake	SU883877

June 2016

3 rd	20+ House Martins	West end of the Rye	SU869926
4 th	Cetti's Warbler and 2 Common Terns	Spade Oak Lake	SU883877
6 th	Young Greenfinches and Painted Lady	Deeds Grove garden	HP12 3PA

August 2016

3 rd	Nest of baby Blackbirds in hedge	Deeds Grove garden	HP12 3PA
9 th	Baby House Sparrows on lawn	Deeds Grove garden	HP12 3PA

Garden tweets

As I am writing this 'tweet', on 31st July, 8 young Swifts are screaming overhead. The adults have departed for Africa and left their babies to make their own way over. I know these are the young ones as their calls have been more squeaks than screams, developing more fully this past week.

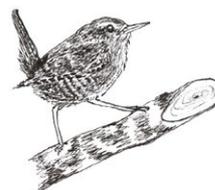
They have been nest prospecting, zooming up into eaves and cracked roof tiles. They will leave this week, and not set foot (claw) on land, incredibly, for 3 years, even sleeping on the wing!



Two Jackdaws have come regularly to our bird feeder. One waits politely for the other to feed, watching intently until it is its own turn. 50+ Jackdaws have been roosting intermittently in

the tall trees at the rear of our garden. They have made a lot of noise flying into the trees, and then quietened down after having selected a perch.

This week also, a large brood of young Wrens has erupted from their nest and they are 'cheeping' all over the garden.



Goodness knows how the parents keep an eye on them all, as they have scattered in all directions. They have no fear of us and sometimes are perched only an inch or two away from us. Wrens have done extremely well the last few years owing to the mild winters we have had.

Hopefully there will be more 'tweets' in the next newsletter, if the editor permits!

Frances Wilding

Looking ahead

The Group's events programme covering September to December 2016 has been finalised and copies circulated. As usual, we will start our new indoor talk season in September, and our talk for that month will be on earthworms: this should be of great interest to gardeners as well as to naturalists. Our October meeting will give us a wider appreciation of what BBOWT is achieving under its landscape-scale conservation policy, with a talk on the River Ray Living Landscape. Many of our members enjoy bird talks, and will, I am sure, look forward to November's talk on "migration mysteries". Those who weren't able to come on either of the walks around Windsor Great Park, which Inge Beck organised and led, will be able to find out more about this wonderful place by coming to the talk by Andy Fielder at December's meeting.

The New Year starts with a real treat, with a talk by David Barber CVO, the Queen's Swan Marker, who will be speaking to us in January about the traditional Swan Upping event which takes place along the Thames in July each year. For this special occasion, the meeting will be a joint one with the High Wycombe Society. We hope as many members as possible will be able to support this special talk. We are planning to create a display of swan photos for this event, so we would be pleased if members can provide us with plenty to choose from.

Our future programmes will continue to provide opportunities to attend walks and other outdoor events, some at regular venues and some in pastures new. Over the next few months, we will need to walk the route of our planned circular walk around High Wycombe, so that we can prepare a leaflet, and possibly a booklet, setting out the route and features of interest.

Contacting Wycombe Wildlife Group

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Website: www.wycombewildlifegrp.co.uk

Joining Wycombe Wildlife Group

To join our Group, please complete a copy of the form on the right and send to

The Membership Secretary,
15 Cherrywood Gardens,
Flackwell Heath, HP10 9AX

Subscription £6 per annum, if paid by Standing Order, or £7 per annum, if paid by cash or cheque.

Please enrol me as a member of Wycombe Wildlife Group

Name

Address

.....

Telephone

Email

EITHER Payment by bank standing order

To Bank
..... Branch
Address.....
.....

NEW standing order instruction:

Account to be debited (your account details)

Sort code

Account number

Account name

Beneficiary bank and payee details

HSBC, 1 Corn Market High Wycombe HP11 2AY
Sort Code: 402417 Account number: 92116685
Account name: Wycombe Wildlife Group

Payment details

Amount of payment: £6.00 Six pounds

Frequency: Annually

From:

Number of payments:

Until further notice

Signature

Date

OR Payment by cheque or cash

I enclose cheque/cash for £7.00,
payable to Wycombe Wildlife Group.