

WYCOMBE WILDLIFE NEWS

NEWSLETTER NO.3

SEPTEMBER 1990

SPECIAL WOODLAND EDITION

EDITORIAL COMMENT

It has been a long hot summer. So hot, plans for step building at Chairborough Road had to be abandoned and litter clearance tackled instead. But elsewhere our programme has proceeded in spite of the weather, one of the most successful events being the walk round Gomm Valley nature reserve on a rather grey evening.

Work for wildlife continues to increase. Our first wildlife survey has been initiated, Bellfield Middle School has become a Group member and is expanding a wildlife corner in their school grounds and Little Marlow Parish Council has offered us their Sheep-ridge Lane site as a nature reserve.

2 local companies of international renown have contributed articles to this news letter. One is our previous sponsor, Watson Hawksley. The other the Timber Research & Development Association whose Director, Dr. Christopher Gill, has written for us in person. In this, our special woodlands edition, we are most appreciative of this gesture of interest. Indeed we thank all who have shown interest and given us support with money, time and talents.

Special theme for next issue: Gardening.
Copy to be in by 10th. December, please, to Pat Morris, 30 Amersham Hill Drive, H.Wycombe.

DAVID BELLAMY COMES TO TOWN

Members of WyUWG were thrilled when invited by Helen Davidson of Wycombe Abbey School to fill vacant seats at a talk by Dr. David Bellamy. The event was to raise funds for British Trust for Conservation Volunteers and we immediately felt at home when Dr. Bellamy mentioned his early experiences of Dogwood bashing with BTCV.



In his talk Dr. Bellamy described the problems facing the countries he had crossed in a flight from London to Kuala Lumpur. He touched on many aspects of pollution and quoted the chilling fact that 100,000 people died every day from environmental problems.

He said underlying many of the world's difficulties was the loss of trees which help to maintain the balance between oxygen and carbon dioxide above ground and nutrients in the water-table below. David Bellamy stressed the importance of the use of trees for timber rather than burning them for fuel or just to clear land. In this respect, countries like Malaysia were getting it right, as their inhabitants used wood in their daily lives.

In Britain, David Bellamy would like to see more areas reforested and ancient practices like coppicing restored. It would seem, therefore, that Wycombe's Woodland Strategy is a step in the right direction. Pat Morris

**THIS ISSUE GENEROUSLY SPONSORED BY
THE TIMBER RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION
Hughenden Valley, High Wycombe.**

WOODLAND & TIMBER - A MULTIPLICITY OF USES

Timber is a marvellous material and not only because it grows on trees - well we at the Timber Research and Development Association would say that wouldn't we? But it is well worth reflecting on a number of issues in which forestry and forest products are central today.

The gales of 1987 and 1990 were sharp reminders that trees do not grow and live forever and are not permanent landscape features, They grow and develop, they mature and if left to themselves they die if they are not blown over first. The managers of our inherited, and of our more recently created, landscapes should understand this and the management of our woodland and forest resources need to be carefully thought out in these overcrowded islands in which we live.



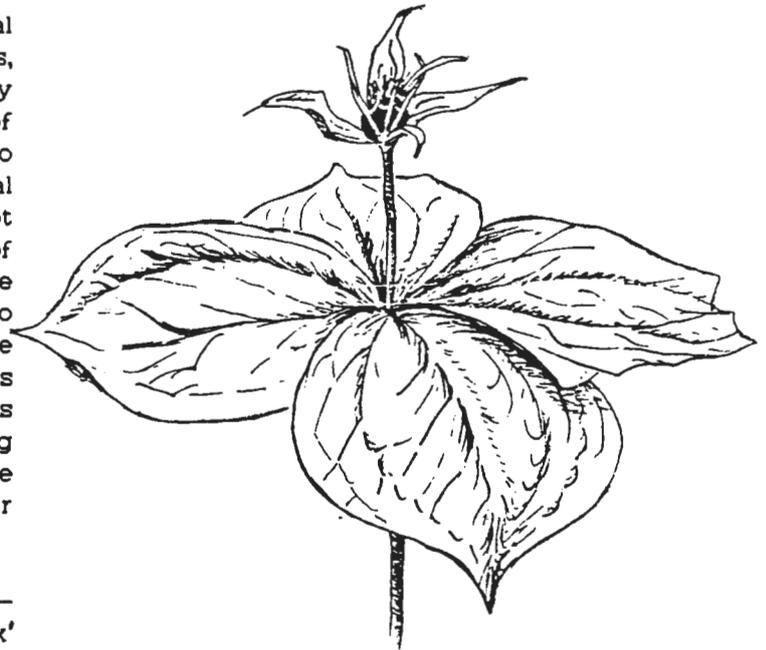
Currently, the coniferous plantations established by the Forestry Commission since 1918, and more recently by private enterprise, are coming increasingly 'on stream', providing us with soft wood for many uses including fencing, packaging and (to an increasing extent) constructional timber and board materials. Multiple use of our limited rural areas is a keynote of the 1990s and this, together with the 'set aside' policy whereby surplus agricultural land is taken out of agricultural production and often put into forestry use, present us with a very real opportunity. These afforested areas must not only contribute to the aesthetic value of the landscape and, if possible, to wildlife and environmental values, they should also be established and managed so as to produce high quality timber of appropriate species so that we can increasingly fulfil the needs of all those industries - from toy making right through to construction - which use timber, with a positive impact on our balance of payments.

For example, it is to be hoped that in implementing the excellent 'Operation Tree Link' initiative, the High Wycombe Rotary Club and their collaborators will give careful consideration to the choice of species, management and use of the wooded areas created.

Timber - the ultimate composite - is very much a material for the environmentally conscious 1990s and beyond. Strong but light, its growth and processing involves the minimum of pollution and consume far less energy than any other construction materials - thereby contributing far less than these other materials to global warming. It is renewable in the time scale of the human life span and, as it grows, absorbs and immobilises carbon dioxide while at the same time evolving oxygen. Significantly, this exchange of gases is executed far more effectively by the young, growing tree than by mature or over mature one - thus increasing the need for 'conservation management' including felling, rather than a purely 'preservation' approach. Research and development allows nature's product to be improved upon in engineering terms, with glued, laminated timber, laminated veneer lumber and a variety of structural board materials now available to designers and architects.

Despite the sensation in the press concerning tropical rainforests, it is important to remember that the sustainable production and wise use of timber worldwide is an important part of the solution to many of today's environmental challenges.

Dr. Christopher Gill.



Herb Paris, a rare woodland plant found in some of our local woodlands

CHILTERN WOODLANDS PROJECT



This project was the idea of Charles Mills and was set up by him while he was Chairman of the Chiltern Society, an amenity society covering the whole of the Chiltern Hills. Charles was concerned about the deteriorating condition of small woods in this area and wanted to do something about it. Work started in August 1983 with my appointment as Project Officer.

For five years the Project operated as the Chiltern Society Small Woodlands Project, with labour provided by the Manpower Services Commission. In addition to MSC funding the Countryside Commission and Local Authorities made contributions to the Project's running costs. The Forestry Commission offered its support and provided an office. Other grants and donations were obtained from organisations such as UK2000.

From the 1st. April 1989 the Project changed its name to the Chiltern Woodlands Project and became a non profit making company limited by guarantee, with a board of Directors and it now employs a staff of nine.

Since 1983 we have visited over 220 woodland owners to offer them advice on woodland management and the Project's team have worked in over 125 woods, often with grant aid from the Forestry Commission or Countryside Commission towards the cost of replanting.

The Project is not just about advice and practical help, one of its purposes is to alert woodland owners and the public to the need for woodland management. We emphasise the landscape, recreation and nature conservation importance of the Chiltern Woods. To these ends the Project has produced leaflets organised displays & guided walks, staged woodland open days & management demonstrations and undertaken survey work.

The Chilterns suffered badly from the storms of 1990 and this has increased the demand for help. There is much work to be done but the Chilterns Woodland Project will continue to carry out its challenging task.

John Morris.

(Project Officer, Chiltern Woodlands Project)



On Tuesday 24th. April Matthew represented WyUWG at the Council's launch of their Woodland Strategy. He was joined by Maurice representing BBONT, Lyn for FOE and Janet for the NCC. The event took place in Court Gardens in Marlow and was attended by representatives from local environmental groups, businesses and the council.

The Woodland Strategy was introduced by Councillor Kathleen Peatey, Chairman WDC, & presented by Alison Field of the Economic Forestry Group, who devised the Strategy.

Mrs. Peatey stressed the influence of local woods on the character of Wycombe and the necessity of retaining and enhancing them for future generations. The enormous damage done by the recent bad weather highlights the need for action now and has served as a warning to the Council which has spurred them into action.

The Economic Forestry Group has surveyed & produced a plan for all 70 hectares of woodland in Council ownership, and come up with a plan for protecting and improving them. Replanting following the storm damage must be phased of many years so that we are not left with areas of single aged trees prone to wind blow. The problems of our woodlands, however, not only arise from lack of management but from misuse such as dumping of rubbish and old cars, which must be cleared and the habit discouraged. Erosion caused by riding of horses and trial bikes must also be dealt with and consideration given to the creation of signed trails. In undertaking this work due account must be taken of the high conservation value of our woods.

Many local groups already undertake valuable work in the woodlands but there is still much to do offering more opportunities for volunteers whom the council are keen to encourage

Lyn Jack.

SAVING PAPER SHOULD MEAN SAVING TREES

The glossy literature promoting Wycombe's Woodland Strategy, like the Green magazine was printed on "Environmentally friendly paper". What is "Environmentally friendly paper"? With my sceptical outlook on life I suspect it's a con to take the gullible, environmentally conscientious public to the cleaners and about as meaningful as those other dubious phrases used like "made from sustainable (or managed) woodlands". I always understood wood pulp for the manufacture of the bulk of paper came from conifers and conifer woodlands in this country are planted and therefore, managed and sustained in that they are replanted following felling. But what if that managed, sustainable woodland is planted on an area that was moorland, heathland or in the future comes from those planted in the flow country? - not exactly "environmentally friendly", is it?



recycled paper

Last May I came across an advert for PANDA brand, 100% recycled paper and was able to obtain a complimentary ream of A4 copy paper from the wholesalers Copygraphic PLC. So keeping up with the UWG Joneses, if not a jump ahead of them, our Group's hedgehog survey forms have been printed on 100% recycled paper - **THANK YOU Copygraphic PLC.**

The screed on the inside cover of PANDA Brand, A4 blocks of lined paper in the sample I received extol the virtues of this product and tells us that it is endorsed by WWF. A small donation is made to WWF from every sale of PANDA Brand products. Like David Bellamy I believe we must work with those firms who show a willingness to be genuinely environmentally friendly so I think we should give PANDA Brand recycled paper serious consideration and if possible use it for all our leaflets and letters.

But all that aside the success of the recycling revolution (sorry) depends on us, the consumer. It is no good bemoaning the lack of recycling, it is, after all, up to us, we must save our papers (bottles, tins etc. as well) and take them to collection points, but above all we must buy recycled (paper) products.
Maurice Young.

PROBLEMS FOR THE WOODLAND STRATEGY

One of the principle limitations of the Wycombe Woodland Strategy is that it is only concerned with council-owned woodlands, such as Castlefield Wood, Roliffe Wood and Chairborough Road open space. Privately owned woodlands are not included. Where privately owned woodland is adjacent to council-owned woodland the loss of the former could have a highly detrimental effect on the ecology of what remains.

Reductions in the size of a woodland area may lead to a lower species diversity of both plants and animals. (note: species diversity is a complex ecological concept, here it can be taken to mean species abundance - or simply the number of different plants and animals in the woods). The lowering of the species diversity of a habitat may make it more susceptible to adverse changes so there is a greater risk of losing rare plants and animals.

The reduction in size of habitats such as woodland can adversely affect certain groups of animals, such as carnivores and roaming animals, which require a large area to sustain viable populations. The movement of some species of animal may be limited by the loss of "woodland corridors".

Although a number of problems of our woodlands are addressed, the problem of acid rain and its effect on mature trees is not mentioned in the strategy. Some beech trees in the Wycombe area are considered by some people to show the typical characteristics of acid rain damage!

The Wycombe Woodland Strategy is welcomed by the Wycombe Urban Wildlife Group. It is a positive approach to the care and protection of the trees and woodlands of our area. Careful planning in the future will reduce the impact of the limitations of the strategy.

Matthew Ellis.

DISCLAIMER

Opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the writers and not necessarily of the Group as a whole.

ENVIRONMENTALLY-FRIENDLY ENGINEERING

Environmental engineering - somewhat over-simply described as the study, design, construction and operation of our environment - embraces many fields. Crucial to the well-being of Man, from High Wycombe to the Himalayas, is the effective control of air and water quality through the good engineering of liquid and solid waste treatment and disposal schemes. This has been the "bread and butter" activity of Watson Hawksley of High Wycombe since 1866.

In Britain a century ago, when sewerage systems were in their infancy, sewage was "treated" by irrigation over grass plots on sewage farms. These gave only limited treatment and rapidly became unacceptable, particularly close to major towns and cities. The philosophy of "mechanised" sewage treatment works evolved because it offered economy of scale and convenience.

The treatment technologies developed have reached high levels of efficiency. It now requires only the will and the finance to achieve the effluent standards deemed necessary. Interestingly, sewage works, now often completely surrounded by urban development, form useful habitats for urban wildlife.

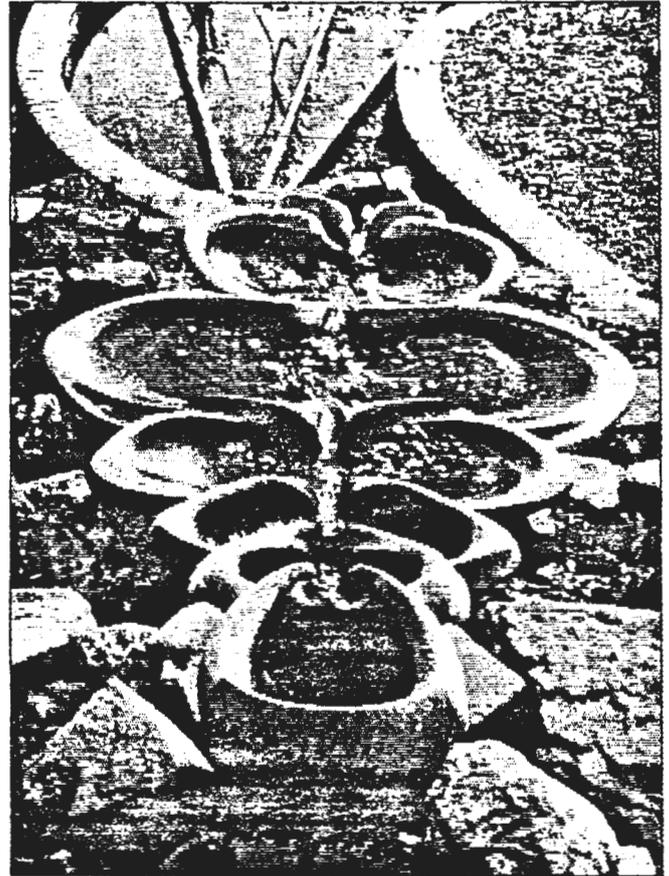
The growth of interest in our environment over the last two decades has helped to promote the idea of a sewage treatment method which takes rather more account of the importance of the balance of nature than before. In the 1960s the German scientist Dr Käthe Seidel initiated research into the natural effect of aquatic plants like reeds and rushes in rivers and watercourses.

Treatment systems using such aquatic plants eg. phragmites, scirpus lacustris, iris pseudacorus, sparganium, acorus calamus and carex elata, planted in gravel and sand beds, are now being developed in the United Kingdom, Australia, the USA, Denmark, France, Germany, Czechoslovakia and South Africa.

Peter Lawrence of Watson Hawksley, also Chairman of the Chiltern West Ark Group, is co-author of a paper on the two systems designed and installed by Uwe Burka at the Oaklands Park Campmill Village in Gloucestershire. These treat the sewage from a community of about 100 people by settlement followed by three stages of aquatic plant beds and a final lagoon containing fish. Incorporated in the system, to encourage aeration and impart natural water movements comparable to those found in meandering rivers, are two FLOWFORMS. These sculptured cascades were developed by John Wilkes at Emerson College in Sussex and have been shown to influence positively plant growth patterns and fish responses. The overall effect is to achieve a very high quality effluent AND create a rather more beautiful place than the average sewage treatment works. The only mechanical input is from a small lift pump.

Technologies, whether considered environmentally-friendly or not, take time to develop. Aquatic plant treatment is the subject of a second international conference in Cambridge at the end of September with the rather impressive title of "Use of Constructed Wetlands in Water Pollution Control". The interest in this shows that the process actually works. Whether it can be scaled-up for larger applications remains to be seen. Out of the conference should come ideas for extending the process in size and application to help solve some of the problems facing the water industry of the UK - EEC Bathing Water Directives, Sewage Sludge Disposal, Industrial and Agricultural Wastes. Whatever the chosen solutions, Watson Hawksley will be there helping.

Martin Haddrill



Flowforms at Oaklands Park

Martin recently spent 6 months in Russia and on October 24th. is speaking at the Oakley Hall, Desborough Road, on the theme, "How green are the reds" - don't miss it.

Note from the typesetter: Martin kindly sent his contribution already typeset, since I not match this quality I am using it but will fill the remaining space. Thank you Martin.

HEDGEHOG WATCH IS ON !!!



WyUWG has launched a hedgehog survey with the aim of finding out how many hedgehogs we have in the area, as well as what type of site they are living in.

We need as much help as possible to ensure success. Please help by looking out for hedgehogs and completing the survey forms with as many details as possible. More forms available from the address on the form (SAE please) or from local libraries, tourist offices or Council offices. Louise Niekirk.



- BIOALERT 90

The World Wide Fund for Nature is warning **WWF** that we only have to the end of the century to master the environmental calamities of pollution. Every day in U.K, tonnes of industrial waste and sewage sludge enter the North sea, carbon dioxide is pumped into the atmosphere, habitats are lost, threatening U.K wildlife - in the last 50 years half the countries woodlands have disappeared. Globally we are wiping out 4 million years of evolution. Some of our common drugs like morphine were derived from plants in the wild, yet today many similar species are under threat. **WWF** wants everyone to take a more active role in protecting the environment by changing daily practice; sharing travelling, using unleaded petrol, recycling, conserving energy, etc., etc..

WWF is working on hundreds of projects in this country and worldwide. Their latest initiative **BIOALERT 90** needs help. If you care and would like to help and secure the future of our world for your children and grandchildren, contact: Valerie Lambourne
47, Arnison Avenue, High Wycombe,
Bucks. HP13 6BD Tel: 443761

**WORLD WIDE FUND FOR NATURE
"WALK FOR THE RAINFOREST"**

Sunday, October 7th. start at Bourne
End Community Centre, walk 9 - 11 a.m.

BELFIELD PIT - AN UPDATE

Footpath HW 25 has still not been officially designated. The developer, Ivor Beeks has applied for retrospective planning permission so he can ignore previous constraints including one concerning the footpath.

The land above belongs to another developer but the exact boundaries are not yet known. The area is a mass of wild flowers and golden rod. Two wild cherries on the edge of the pit and although one has been hacked and its trunk has split off it is sprouting again, The other cherry is one of the most valuable tall trees on the hill side as it is visible for miles around is in need of protection.

Lorna Cassidy.

Lorna's sketch on the front page shows the damaged cherry springing back to life.

SANDS BANK SURVEYS

The Group has made further visits to Sands Bank and more species have been added to our records. On May 20th. we noted 13 kinds of butterfly including green hair-streak and wall brown. The latter used to be quite common around Wycombe but has become scarce in recent years.

Additional plants have been seen including corn salad and common star of Bethlehem but no bee orchids were encountered this year.



The presence of horse-shoe vetch and kidney vetch was confirmed which is particularly significant as the former is the food plant of the chalk-hill blue

several, of which, were seen in flight on 4th. August.

Birds are relatively few in number and those which do occur in the summer are mainly associated with Sands Wood and the hedge to the north-west were a lesser whitethroat was heard singing and a willow warbler nested. A tree pipit was seen in June during its display flight but no signs of a nest were found.

The Group's organised visits to this area were mainly supported by a few stalwarts, Other members making their first visit were surprised at the quality of the site and the obvious potential of it for a local nature reserve. The committee understands that there are talks relating to the future status of the area in progress. The bank can be easily seen from the public footpath and we would be pleased to receive notes of any interesting sightings.

Eric Britnell

WyUWG INFORMATION LEAFLETS

With approach of winter our thoughts will be turning to feeding our garden birds. Like many of you, I have problems with squirrels raiding the nut feeders so in view of the damage these attractive, furry "tree rats!" do to our woodlands the production of our first wildlife information leaflet - an anti-squirrel nut feeder for birds - in this special woodlands issue is very appropriate.

Maurice Young

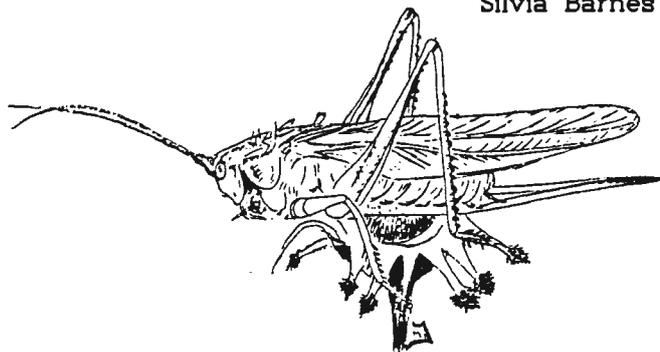
WYCOMBE WATCH GROUP

The Group held two of its recent meetings on the BBONT reserve at Buttler's Hangings, near W. Wycombe. This reserve has a very different habitat to our normal home base on the Rye and, therefore, a good number of parents, children and BBONT members assembled in anticipation of the variety of plant and insect life of a chalk bank. The children were particularly fascinated with the of insects & spiders on the reserve and leaders had a tough time trying to put names to the various creatures temporarily encapsulated in bug boxes. Maurice Young, who warden the reserve, made sure the children did not miss the specialities on the reserve, the little juniper and the different plant galls for example. They even had a murder to solve when someone discovered two gristly birds feet and part of a carcass.

A month later several children returned to Buttler's Hangings for a conservation session, clearing dogwood scrub.

In July the Group returned to Keep Hill Wood to survey the progress of their previous conservation efforts. The bird boxes, now down to six, showed no signs of occupation, although the first broods may have flown. Our clearing gave us plenty to discover, 23 plant species in flower at the same time, and a variety of insects including ringlet butterflies. We finished our session by challenging the children to catch insects with tweezers, pretending they were feeding a nest full of baby chicks. They found it very difficult, and concluded that spiders were the easiest to get. We were all full of admiration for the bluetits in our gardens who seem to have no trouble finding and picking up food for their offspring.

Sylvia Barnes



Great green bush-cricket - female
(*Tettigonia viridissima*)

NEWS FROM THE RESERVES AROUND WYCOMBE Buttler's Hangings, West Wycombe.

Buttler's Hangings, like Park Wood and Gomm Valley described in previous issues, is on a steep, west facing slope of a valley but is more open than these reserves. Consequently it is much warmer than either of them and, perhaps, this is why it supports the great green bush cricket which is normally associated with grassland near the south coast. Both sexes are bright green and the females grow to about 6-7 cms. long (2.5"). Half the length of the female's body is taken up by a dagger like ovipositor which they dig into the soil to lay their eggs.

Like Gomm Valley, Buttler's Hangings was in the national butterfly recording scheme, but the recorder has moved away and a replacement has not been found yet, any volunteers? Chalk-hill blues breed on the reserve and when painted ladies and clouded yellows are around you can almost guarantee to find them on the reserve.

It is one of the best recorded sites in the district. One BBONT member interested in spiders has recorded many different ones on the reserve, and some are national rarities.

The reserve is part of the W. Wycombe estate who kindly lease it to BBONT who manage it. The public footpath which crosses the reserve is part of the W. Wycombe farm trail, a pleasant, & interesting walk described in a leaflet available in shops in W. Wycombe.

The reserve is chalk grassland and suffers from the usual invasion of scrub, particularly dogwood and, as Sylvia has mention in her article, I had welcome help from the Wycombe WATCH Group this year to cut some of this down. During their walk around the reserve we found the first great green bush cricket of the year and, as I had been shown the web of the purse web spider for first time that very morning, I was able to show them one. This creature "knits" itself a sock like web which lies on the surface of the ground between the stalks of the grass. It is closed at both ends and the spider lives inside. If any insect crawls over the web it grabs it through the web, injects a paralysing fluid and then cuts the web open and pulls it inside. Before devouring its prey it "sews" up the hole it cut in the web.

Maurice Young

Programme of Events - AUTUMN 1990

SEPTEMBER

Sunday, 9th. September 10.00 a.m.

Sands bank and an introduction to biological surveying. Meet: Hill Bottom Road, SU 849922

Sunday, 9th. September 2.00 p.m.

WYCOMBE WATCH pond survey. Phone Wycombe 441487 the week before for venue.

Monday, 10th. September 8.00 p.m.

Planning meeting, room 1, Priory Centre.

Sunday, 23rd. September 2.00 p.m.

Walk round Stoke Common Nature Reserve. Meet/park at SU 985 856.

Sunday, 30th. September 10.30 am.- 4.30 pm.

Conservation work Buttler's Hangings reserve W. Wycombe. Phone Marlow 472000 for details.

OCTOBER

Sunday, 7th. October 2.00 p.m.

WATCH Autumn harvest, meet at the open air swimming pool on the Rye.

Sunday, 14th. October 2.00 p.m.

Fungus foray, meet at visitors centre car park Hughenden Manor.

Sunday, 28th. October 10.30 am.- 4.30 pm.

Conservation work Park Wood, Bradenham. SU 822 985. Phone Marlow 472000 for details.

NOVEMBER

Sunday, 4th. November 2.00 p.m.

WATCH - Save the rainforest, fund raising event. Rye Health Clinic.

Monday, 12th. November 8.00 p.m.

Planning meeting, Priory Centre.

Sunday, 18th. November 10.30 am.- 3.30 pm.

WATCH Keep Hill conservation work. Meet at the open air pool car park on the Rye.

Saturday 24th.) 2.00 p.m. Conservation

Sunday 25th.) 2.00 p.m. work

Chairborough Rd. Meet at SU 849 922.

Sunday, 25th. November 10.30 am.- 4.30 pm.

Conservation work, Gomm Valley reserve. SU 897 922. Phone Marlow 472000 for details.

DECEMBER

Sunday, 2nd. December 2.00 p.m.

WATCH Christmas crafts. Rye Health Clinic.

Sunday, 9th. December 10.00 a.m. & 2.00 p.m.

Create a 'mini' nature reserve. Sheepridge Lane, Bourne end. Meet at SU 884 886.

Monday 10th December 8.00 p.m.

Illustrated talk by Mike Wallen: Local Birds Followed by mince pies. Priory Centre.

Sunday 16th. December 2.00 p.m.

Christmas walk, meet at Rye swimming pool car park.

(WATCH indoor meetings 30p.)



YOUR MONEY

Subs. - £2.00 - are due NOW any one who has not paid by the end of the month will be considered to have lapsed and will receive no further copies of the newsletter. Send or give your sub. to the treasurer or any UWG official.

VOLUNTEERS FOR MAPPING

'Mappers' are still required for recording Wycombe's wildlife habitats. Advice available from Maurice or Angus. Coloured pencils available from Angus.

RECORDS OF THE GROUP'S ACTIVITIES

Photographs, slides, videos ? all pictorial records of the Group's activities for our collection. Contact Maurice or Pat.

WILDLIFE FURNITURE & PLANTS

Can you make or bird boxes etc., or grow things for fund raising sales. If so get sowing, sewing, and sawing.

ALICANS

Keep jumping on your drinks cans, when empty and and bring them to meetings or get them to Lyn Jack, 349 London Rd. to raise WyUWG funds.

WHO'S WHAT

The WyUWG contact list.

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Maurice Young, Marlow 472000

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Drawings and Cartoons:

Lorna, Maurice and Pat

MANY THANKS to Marlow Parish Council for offering Sheepridge Lane Nature Reserve to the Group and to all contributors to the newsletter.

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