VYCOMBE WILDLIFE

no. 13

IANUARY 1994

The Countryside Centre, Basssetsbury Manor, Bassetsbury Lane, High Wycombe, HP11 1QX 0494 536930



HEDGEROWS

BASS Wildlife Action Fund grant for Sheepridge development. 31

Update: We will continue our Survey. 32

Flora & fauna: **HEDGEROWS** for butterflies. 33

Wildlife Gardening: Some questions and 34-35 answers.

The GREAT HEDGE SURVEY - How green is Wycombe's boundary? 36-37

Historic **HEDGEROWS** 38

Wildlife Reports -Sands Bank & Penn Wood 39

> Wildlife Notice Board

Past Successes and Future Challenges

The past year was busy a one, with all the activities connected with our Wildlife Garden Competition and the survey of the District boundary hedge. Now the organization is in place, we hope to repeat the Garden Competition this year, to encourage more people to garden for wildlife.

However, a new exciting opportunity has arisen. Our application for a grant for the development of our reserve at Sheepridge, Little Marlow has been selected, out of 85 projects, and we shall receive sponsorship of £1000 from BASS plc, under their Wildlife Action Fund, which is administered by RSNC. The Sheepridge Project will be promoted in our next Newsletter but a couple of work parties have already taken place with students from the Berkshire College of Agriculture. Needless to say we are delighted with the news of this grant, and thank BASS plc for their generosity.

Another company we have to thank is Axa Equity and Law, who have sponsored not only the current Newsletter, but also the accompanying Spring programme sheet. We are most grateful. Pat Morris



Vice-President of RSNC, Michael Palin (on left), shakes hands with WyUWG Vice-Chairman, Angus Idle, during the presentation of the Bass Wildlife Action Fund Awards, held at Camley Street Nature Reserve. near King's Cross, London, on 11th. October 1993.



This issue generously sponsored by

AXA EQUITY & LAW



WYCOMBE

Wycombe Urban Wildlife Group is a voluntary organization the OBJECT of which is to further the ecology and knowledge of the urban and fringe areas of High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire to conserve, protect, restore and create wildlife habitats; to encourage colonization and survival of all plant and animal life in such areas and to promote the education of the public in matters pertaining to urban wildlife and its conservation.

Within Wycombe District the Group aims to:

- Survey and map wildlife habitats.
- Protect important wildlife sites.
- Study wildlife sites and their associated wildlife.
- Manage wildlife sites and associated flora and fauna.
- Stimulate public interest in wildlife & its conservation
- Encourage wildlife gardening.
- Co-operate with other groups with similar aims.
- Promote the objectives of the Group.
- Encourage active participation in conservation of all persons and groups and provide appropriate training to that end.

(A detailed copy of the aims is available on request)

Wycombe Wildlife News is published 3 times a year to promote the Group's activities and inform members & the public of its progress.

Editor: Pat Morris. Produced by Maurice Young. Printed by:

WDC Design & Print. Illustrations by: Pat Morris, Frances Wilding & Maurice. Photo: L.P.A International Photographers.

Update ___

We still have the ambition

to map all the Wildlife in

and around the town



Members' meeting - surveying the problem

High Wycombe, like any town, consists of an intimate mixture of buildings, open spaces, roads, railways and footpaths, developed land or waste and derelict places. Because wildlife doesn't recognize any of these preceding categories, it often puts down its roots in the most unlikely spots. We have had a long term plan, since the inception of the Group, to survey our town and its immediate surroundings to

discover what its wildlife consists of & where it is.

Our plan was that those who

could would walk throughout the area and colour large scale maps to show the location of wildlife habitats. Unfortunately the scheme adopted was too ambitious. It included colour codes for every conceivable habitat type, we could even have shown the sea shore and coal mine waste heaps if we had

found any. It was so complicated that many of us were frightened to attempt any surveying.

So at a recent evening meeting, at which I am very pleased to report that nearly a dozen members came along, we discused Biological Surveying. We still have the ambition to map all the Wildlife in and around the town, so that if things happen, like the possibility

of the M40 being moved, or a new discount warehouse is planned, we will know beforehand what

wildlife is either in danger from the development or could be encouraged with careful planning. We will have to simplify the survey for a start to encourage more of you to take part, and come the spring we will organize some training sessions to help you find & map our wildlife. Angus Idle.



There are moves afoot to restart the WYCOMBE WATCH group. WATCH is the junior section of the Royal Society for Nature Conservation (RSNC) and is for youngsters between the ages of 5 and 15. We hope to be able to announce the first meeting in the next Newsletter. Those interested should contact Elaine Tague at the

> Countryside Centre on 0494 536930.

Creation of a Wildlife Area at Mariow Church of England First School.

On 20th. November 1993 members of WyUWG with parents and children from the school created a wildlife area in the corner of the school grounds. The area was planted with trees and a wetland area was dug out, lined and refilled. One area of the trees will be coppiced, while others will be allowed to grow on as standards.

A meadow area will be planted next year from plants grown from seed by the children. Maurice.

Copy date: Friday, 11th. March

Views expressed in the 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. Any members who object to their membership details being held in this way should notify the Secretary.





____ Flora and fauna ____



Hedgerows - good for Butterflies and Moths

roor butterflies and moths the hedgerow is an extended "woodland edge" habitat with its varying conditions of shelter (sunshine & shade) and diversity of vegetation. I will take you through the year and give you a glimpse of the insects you might encounter along a hedgerow.

Moths have a much longer season than butterflies and many species are

active early and late in the year. So our year starts during January & February with the unusual sight of the Early Moth fluttering in our car headlights. as we travel along a lane bordered by hedges. Females of this species are wingless and sit waiting on the bushes for the males to come along.

Buekthorn

Egg x3

the food plant of the Brimstone is most eonspicuous when in fruit

The first butterflies we notice will have hibernated through the winter

months. Fine spring days bring out Brimstones, Small Tortoise-shells & Peacocks all hungrily looking for early flowers. However, they do not lay their eggs until April or May when the leaves of their food plants begin to develop. Brimstones search out a nondescript hedgerow shrub, the purging buckthorn, laying their large, yellow eggs on the topmost leaves of new shoots.

Another welcome spring sight is the Orange Tip butterfly flying up and down the hedgerow looking for its food plant,
Jack-by- the-hedge, where once again, its large orange eggs can easily be found. Only one of the white butterflies breeds in significant numbers along the hedgerow, this is the pretty Green-Veined White which, as its shares the same food plants, is often found flying with the Orange Tip.

By the time the leaves are well developed disturbing branches on a hedge can reveal several species of moth, which hide there in the daytime, with names like Clouded Silver, Twinspot Carpet, Yellow Shell and any number of the Pug moths - there is a wealth of shape, colour and life-cycles to explore.

During midsummer a moth that
may well come to our notice is
the Lackey, its larvae live in
brown silken webs. When the
caterpillars have eaten all the
food in one web they move on
and spin another and soon the
unfortunate hawthorn, on
which they are feeding, is left
with no foliage at all, but is
covered by these brown threads.

Hairstreaks are rare, possibly overlooked butterflies, which live on mature hedgerows. The Black Hairstreak can be found in North Bucks on blackthorn (sloe), whilst the similar Brown

Hairstreak is virtually absent from this part of the country. A few White

Letter Hairstreaks survive on elm that has regrown following the ravages of Dutch Elm Disease. Purple Hairstreaks inhabit oak trees, the caterpillars eating the leaves and the adults feeding on the honeydew secreted by aphids.

In late autumn hedgerows may provide places for

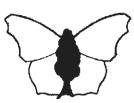
butterflies to hibernate - Brimstones in among ivy leaves and Commas down among the dead leaves in the foot of the hedge.

Jack-by-the-hedge

the food plant of

the Orange Tip

Finally, we return to the fluttering moths in our car headlights, long may our hedgerow reserves remain. Ron Beaven (Butterfly Conservation)



BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION

formerly known as
the
British Butterfly
Conservation Society
(BBCS)
promotes the
conservation
of moths as well
as butterflies.

The local group of
Butterfly
Conservation,
the Upper Thames
Branch,
is very active and
last August "their"
Prestwood Picnic
Site was designated
a Local Nature
Reserve

Anyone who wants more details of their activities or is interested in helping with work at this site should contact Ron Beaven - see
WyUWG's contacts





Wildlife Gardening.



Welcoming

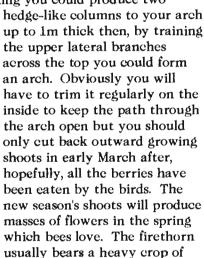
WILDJIFE

TO YOUR GARDENS

Some answers to wildlife gardening questions we have been asked.

uestion: We have a new trellis arch in our garden. What can we grow up it to encourage wildlife?

nswer: The shrub Pyracantha coccinea (firethorn) is excellent in this situation. It will grow to 3 or more metres high but needs support. It is usually grown on a wall and produces fairly dense cover. With careful training and pruning you could produce two



berries much appreciated by birds. As it matures and becomes more dense from repeated pruning you may get the added bonus of birds nesting in it. You could add even more wildlife value to this Pyracantha arch by growing a honeysuckle through it - the native, wild honeysuckle for the true wildlife garden! but for the non-purist Lonicera halliana, is a semi-evergreen species with a long flowering period and nicely scented flowers which should, like the native species, attract night-flying moths.

There are several varieties of firethorn you can choose from and those wanting to attract birds are often told to get the red berried forms because birds do not like the yellow form - var. flava. My own

observations, however, contradict this widely held belief. In November our yellow-berried firethorn carries a heavy crop but following the first frosts it is attacked vigorously by several blackbirds, a thrush, starlings and - this year a pair of blackcaps. By mid December, every year, there isn't a berry left!

Looking round Marlow and Wycombe just before Christmas I have seen both yellow and red-berried bushes still smothered with fruit. Is it a matter of position? All these bushes are in front gardens, does traffic and people going in and out of the houses deter birds from feeding from these 'exposed' bushes?

Our blackbirds eat red berries on the Cotoneaster outside our kitchen window and will, no doubt, have a feast from our bright red, decorative crab apple after Christmas as they begin to soften - so they are not colourblind or prejudiced!

Pyracanthas produce nectar for butterflies and bees and berries for the fructivorous birds but few insects feed on it so, although Pyracantha make an excellent hedge, native shrubs are far more valuable for the wildlife garden hedge. So why not -



149 different insects and mites feed on hawthorn and 109 on blackthorn. I do not have figures for Pyracantha, but it is probably under a dozen. If you want an impenetrable hedge around your garden these two, of course, are the best species to plant - have you ever tried to get through a blackthorn or hawthorn hedge? and, from the figures above, you can appreciate their value to wildlife. Better still, why not plant a mixture and you will get a mosaic of colour, texture and leaf shape.

If you are fortunate enough to be able to plant a long hedge how about including a few small standard trees like rowan or whitebeam in it to add interest & expand the range of habitats? Small hedges, however, are just as valuable in providing shelter and breeding sites for mammals, birds, and invertebrates. (cont. on p. 38)



Blackbird

feasting on yellow Pyraeantha berries



🗕 Wildlife Gardening .



Welcome all

WILDJIFE

TO YOUR GARDENS



uestion: A hawk visits our garden regularly, taking sparrows and other small birds attracted to our bird table by the food we put How can we deter the hawk?

nswer: My immediate reaction when asked this question by a visitor to our demonstration

wildlife garden at the West Wycombe Garden Centre was "Aren't you lucky! Many people only see this sort of thing on television and keen bird watchers only if they spend hours cooped up in a hide."



Sparrowhawk

Broader wings than kestrel, less pointed tips and longer tail. A woodland bird manovering easily among the trees.

We all love to see kestrels hovering over the fields and valleys when we go out in the country and quite a lot of time and money has gone into the re-introduction of the red kite in this part of the Chilterns. To survive, however, they must feed. This hawk has found your garden an easy, good hunting ground and although it is, perhaps, a little distressing to witness small birds your kindness has lured to your garden being slaughtered, take the philosophical view. The hawk is only redressing the natural balance which you, by feeding birds in your garden, have upset. By providing extra food you enable more small birds, and in particular, the weaker individuals, to survive than would do so if they had to rely solely on the natural food supply in your area. The birds that the hawk takes from your bird table are, most probably, the slower, less fit individuals. What you are observing is natural selection and survival of the fittest in

action! which, although individual birds lose out, keeps the overall bird population of your area "fit", i.e. stronger, faster and generally more healthy.

Pat, our editor, discussed this with Arthur Brown of Bucks Bird Club and he suggests the only thing you can do is to plant a few shrubs around the bird table into which the birds can dive "for cover" when they see the hawk coming. Clip the shrubs regularly to encourage dense, bushy growth but REMEMBER the danger of cats! which Arthur considers to be a more serious threat to garden birds than hawks, so don't plant the shrubs too close to the bird table.

Some of the small birds that fall prey to your hawk, however, are not absolute angels. A recent issue (no. 54) of Butterfly Conservation News had a fascinating article entitled "Buddleia Butchery" in it. described the predation of butterflies on garden buddlejas by tits, sparrows, robins, wagtails, wrens, flycatchers and even a magpie. All of these birds, including, the

that the bird discussed here was most likely

to have been a sparrowhawk.

Kestrel

wings longer and more

pointed

hovers over its hunting grounds - motorway

verges

Similar in size to

the sparrowhawk

your garden congratulations!

SCHOOLS there is a super, challenging project here - work out the food web of a (wildlife) garden what eats what.

magpie, are potential prey for the hawk - all are part of the natural food chain/web and if it is all going on in

In writing the draft for this article I, not thinking, used the term "kestrel" instead of hawk and Arthur pointed out, from the results of an annual Garden Bird Survey he conducts among Bucks Bird Club members. that kestrels very rarely visit gardens and

Now is the time to put up nest boxes - if you need more! and clean out any old ones.

In frosty weather keep drinking bowls free of ice.

Keep bird tables and feeders clean - scrub with water containing detergent (washing up liquid) and bleach.

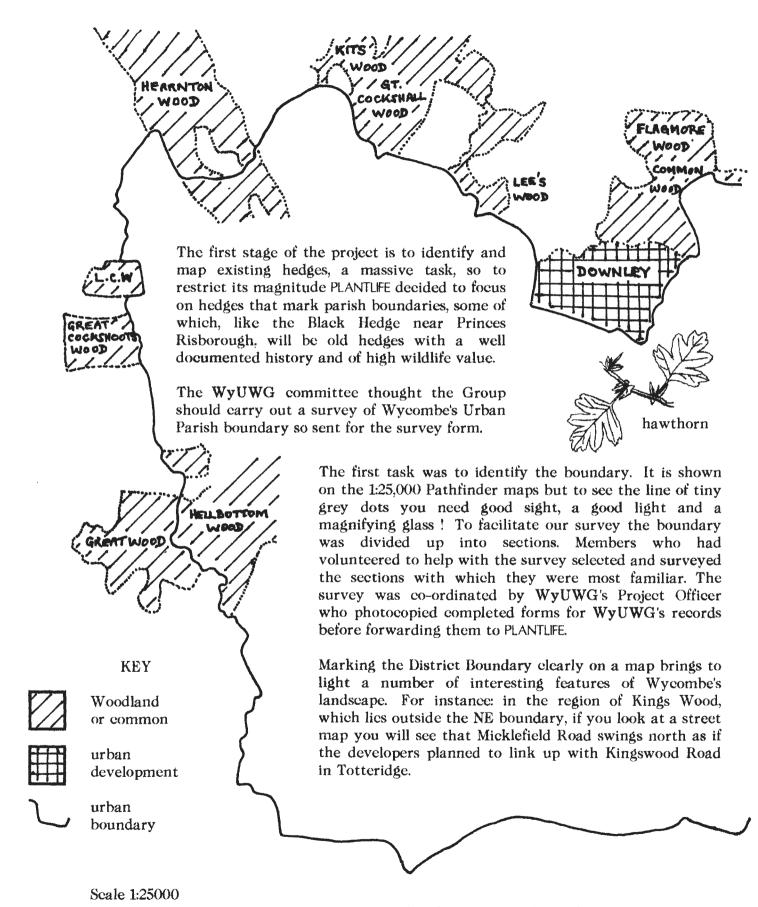
Good hygiene is essential for the health of your avian visitors and you - so do wash your hands after handling any animal feeders and bowls!





The Great Hedge Survey







The Great Hedge Survey



How Green is Wycombe's Urban Parish Boundary?

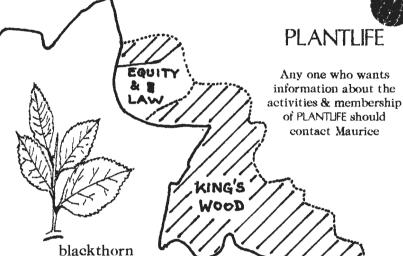
At the beginning of the year - that is last year, PLANTLIFE, the new national society that aims to "put plants first" launched their Great Hedge Project the ultimate aim of which is to revive boundary hedges across the UK and link them together to form a Great Hedge Network running from coast to coast.

HANGING WOOD
HUGHENDEN

Similarly tiny cul-de-saes off Forest Way look like the beginnings of roads Wood, Kings these Micklefield Road are cut short - by the parish boundary. Only one road in the Micklefield complex breaches the parish boundary - Lea's Close. Kings Wood is in Chepping Wycombe C P and this stretch of the boundary is not so much hedgerow as woodland edge although where it continues along the boundary of the land of our sponsors - Equity & Law - to the north of the wood there is, of course, a neatly trimmed hedge.

The urban parish boundary also follows the woodland edge of Hanging Wood in the Hughenden Estate and Downley Common, Lee's Wood and Gt. Cockshall Wood and Lt. & Gt. Cockshoots Woods as the boundary swings round West Wycombe. In this area it also passes through the middle of two woods - Hearnton Wood and Hellbottom Wood.

Shrubs, some of which in unmanaged hedges have grown into small trees included: blackthorn, box, buckthorn, hawthorn, hazel, spindle, dogwood,



Another surprising point is that residential developments only straddle the boundary in three places - Downley, Daws Hill and along the London Road. This means that at least 75% of Wycombe's "urban" boundary runs through fields! so an urban wildlife group opting to do a hedge survey is not so daft as it might have originally seemed.

In our survey members found 18 species of tree: apple, ash, beech, eherry, downy birch, English elm, hornbeam, oak, field maple, holly, Douglas fir, Lawson's cypress, Norway maple, Scots pine, sycamore, rowan, whitebeam and yew in the hedgerows of the District

boundary.

elder, goat willow, guelder rose, dog rose & bramble.



Conservation —





Hedgerows and History.

When
Butterfly Conservation
members walk a
transect at a site and
count the numbers of
butterflies they say
they are doing a
"POLLARD" after
E. Pollard who
devised the scheme.

?

Should, therefore, those walking a 30yd. transect to date a hedgerow describe the activity as doing a "HOOPER".

As the recent Great Hedge Survey. in which we participated (see p. 36-37), has shown, our landscape possesses a wealth of hedgerows, copses & woods. The tragic loss of much of this heritage has been much publicized in recent years and it is to be hoped that the recent MAFF (Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food) Hedgerow Incentive Scheme will redress these losses. The Countryside Commission's Stewardship Scheme, which pays land owners to manage their land in traditional (the old) ways, to help conserve hedges, walls, woods and many other countryside features, shows signs of being successful.

Hedgerows have many uses, from boundary markers to wildlife refuges. Their origins lie back in the mists of time. A few date back to the times of the Anglo-saxon farmers but many originate from the land enclosure movements of the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. However, it has been estimated that up to 25% of present day hedgerows have established naturally - shrubs and trees springing up along field and stream edges from bird and wind dispersed seed in areas that have escaped the reaper's scythe or grazier's animals. When woods were cleared to create fields outer rings of trees were often left to divide the fields. The presence of small-leaved lime in an obviously sinuous hedgeline more often than not indicate the ghost of a former wood.

Straight hedges tend to date from the 17th, century up to the present day when hedges were planted to create a patchwork of regular, angular fields on land previously farmed on an 'open field' system.

Much has been said and written on dating hedges. In the Hooper method a count is made of all woody species (trees and shrubs) in a 30 yard stretch of hedge. The number of species counted X 100 is supposed to give the age of the hedge. Thus if you find hawthorn, blackthorn, hazel, ash and

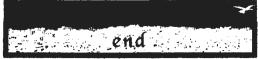
field maple in a 30 yd. stretch of a hedge it probably dates back to medieval times. The formula for dating hedges was derived by Max Hooper following his survey of some 227 hedges, the ages of which were well documented and ranged from 75 to 1100 years. This method of estimating the age of hedges is useful for old, established hedges but is not foolproof as modern hedge planters tend to use a mixture of species which rather upsets the calculations.

Hedges have been a major part of our landscape for centuries, it is important that they remain so for the future - and that is up to all of us. Neil Harris (National Trust)



A number of tree species, including beech and hornbeam, become very bushy in response to regular pruning and make excellent hedges. These two really come into their own as hedges, however, in the winter, for regular clipping keeps them young so, like young trees of these species, they keep their leaves in winter - beautiful to behold and a superb compages in which many things can hibernate.

Whether planting a hedge, or a Pyracantha arch, use young saplings no more than 50 cms high placing them about 30 cms apart in two rows 20 cms apart. Trim them to about 15 cms high to encourage them to branch low down, or you will get a leggy hedge with gaps at the base. Cut back all vigorous growths to 1/3rd of their length twice a year to encourage branching and build up a solid, entwined mass of twigs. As the hedge grows, clip to the desired width and ultimately at the desired height.







SANDS BANK LOCAL NATURE RESERVE

lan Butterfield, WDC's Community Woodland Officer, reported in our Newsletter last year that surveys would be carried out during the summer at Sands Bank - an area

of chalk grassland sandwiched between the factories of the Sands Industrial Estate and Sands Wood. The first year's surveys of



plants by Angus Idle (WyUWG) and moths by Martin Albertini and Peter Hall (BC) have now been completed.

Angus, who over the year, has recorded 155 species (sp) of plant and 22 sp of butterfly said "It used to take me two hours each time I walked round Sands Bank each week following the same route marked out with little wooden pegs, so I know the hillside pretty well now. I hope to start in the

Spring this time so as not to miss the early flowers and animals".

Nation Notable B moths at Sands Bank

Barred hook-tip - common in Chiltern Woods.

Mocha - known only from 4 sites, all south of M40.

Chalk carpet - a chalk grassland species, known only at 2 other sites.

Beech-green carpet - known from only 4 other sites.

Local species at Sands Bank

Small emerald - 6 other sites.

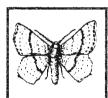
Maiden's blush - not
uncommon

Dark umber - not uncommon

Clouded magpie - generally
south of Wycombe

Martin & Peter ran their moth trap on the evening of 14th. August 1993. They recorded 58 sp of macro moth, 19 sp of micromoth, 3 different beetles, a forest shieldbug, an oak bushcricket and 3 types of lacewing. Of the macro moths 4 are on English Nature's Nation Notable B list (B being less notable than A), and 4 described as "local" i.e. more common than notable but not widespread.

Martin commented that "apart from the Barred hook-tip, the presence of the other 3 NNBs was very encouraging and suggested the bank was worth further investigation".



Maiden's blush

The Bank is being fenced ready for the introduction, in February, of a few sheep & cattle to graze it - as mentioned in our last Newsletter.



We were very pleased to join members of the Natural History Section of Bucks Archeological Society for their September fungus foray into Common Wood, Penn, led by Victor Scott.

After giving a brief introductory talk about fungi Victor led a party of about 30 people into the wood saying that, because of the

PUNCUS PORAY - PENN WOODS

cold weather, we might not find any fungi. In fact we ended up finding nearly 40 different ones, of which 30 were identified to species level and the remainder, apart from one, to genus level.

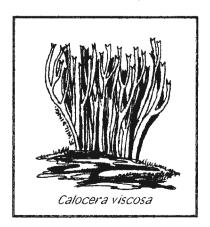
Most of the species found are common in our local woods but two, the fly agaric (*Amanita muscaria*) and the brown roll-rim (*Paxillus involutus*) are associated with acid soils & birch trees.

The most interesting finds were a yellow-orange cup fungus Neottiella (Pcziza) rutilans, the hedgehog fungus (Hydnum replandum) and a splendid fruiting body of Calocera viscosa, resembling a bunch of goldenyellow tuning forks.

As usual after a fungus foray, I spent the evening looking through my copy of Roger Philips' excellent book 'Mushrooms and

other fungi of GB & E' and came to the conclusion that the one that could not be identified on the walk was almost certainly *Mycena haematopus*; the blood red latex it exudes distinguishes it from the other 101 species of the Mycena genus which Philips says are found in Britain.

Roger Wilding.



WILDLIFE NOTICE BOARD



DID YOU SEE?





October

Dormouse (sleeping) seen on Dormouse Dawdle (30/10/93) at Homefield Wood, near Marlow

Red Kite - Gt. Kingshill (3/10/93)
Barn owl - Sheepridge (19/10/93)
150 Pochard - L. Marlow Gravel Pit (10/10)

November

Autumn crocus - roadside, Hughenden Valley

Birds at Little Marlow Gravel Pits:

120 cormorants, 3 scaup, 2 pin-tail, red-breasted merganser, water rail, dunlin, Mediterranean gull, ruddy duck lesser spotted woodpecker (also seen here in December and in a Hazlemere garden)

2 golden-eye - Dyke & Wyc. Abbey lake

December

1-3 crossbills - Downley Common



The WyUWG contact list:

Chairman & Newsletter Editor:
Pat Morris, 0494 529484
Secretary: Roger Wilding, 0494 438374
Treasurer: Sue Haines, 0628 532334
Membership Secretary:
James Donald, 0494 439840
Project Co-ordinator: Andy Correy, 0494 536930
Administrator: Elaine Tague, 0494 536930
Biological Surveys: Angus Idle, 0494 563673
Education Officer & Assistant Editor:
Maurice Young, 0628 472000



Congratulations to Roger Wilding on his appointment as Voluntary Warden of the Chairborough Nature Reserve



WyUWG thanks

Programme Secretary. This task is now the responsibility of the new Administrator.



NAMES OF CONTACTS FOR WILDLIFE GROUPS IN WYCOMBE DISTRICT



BC	Butterfly Conservation	Ron Beaven	0494 444158
BTCU	British Trust for Conservation Volunteers		
	Buckinghamshire Office / County Officer	Martin Jakes	0296 383393
	Wycombe Office - The Countryside Centre	Andrew Lyon	0494 536930
BBONT	Berks, Bucks & Oxon Naturalists' Trust	Maurice Young	0628 472000
BBC	Bucks Bird Club	Arthur Brown	0628 604769
FOE	Friends of the Earth	Lyn Jack	0494 447680
EX	English Nature	Frances Richmond	0635 268881
sws	Saunderton Wildlife Sanotuary	Margaret Baker	0844 342188
StTw	St. Tiggywinkles	Les Stocker	0844 292292
SC	Swan Lifeline	Tim Heron	0753 859397
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature	Valerie Lambourne	0494 443761
WyUWG	Wycombe Urban Wildlife Group	Pat Morris	0494 529484

For other groups contact the Countryside Centre

If you have enquiries about BADGERS contact the BBONT Aylesbury Office 0296 433222 and if you have any enquiries about BATS contact The Countryside Centre 0494 536930