

# WYCOMBE WILDLIFE



# NEWS

no. 29

## WILDLIFE GROUP

MAY 1999

The Countryside Centre, Bassetsbury Manor, Bassetsbury Lane, High Wycombe, HP11 1QX  
01494 536930

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## Wycombe Wildlife Group



### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

celebrating the **10TH** anniversary of  
the Group

**Monday 26th April 1999**

**7.30 p.m.**

- ★ 7.30pm. a. Reports
- b. Election of Trustees
- c. Presentation to retiring Auditor - Mr Lunnon
- ★ 8.00pm. a. Cake cutting by Town Mayor,  
Cllr. Mrs Frances Alexander,
- b. Refreshments - Raffle tickets will be on sale.
- ★ 8.30pm. Talk "**Reserves of Wycombe District & their History**"  
by Ian Butterfield of WDC Ranger Service.  
A Review of Wycombe's open spaces and how they  
have developed over the past 10 years
- ★ 9.30pm. Raffle draw.

This issue generously sponsored by :

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**Wycombe 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 plants & animal life in such areas and to promote the education of the public in matters pertaining to wildlife and its conservation.

Within **Wycombe District** the Group aims to :

- Survey and map wildlife habitats.
- Protect important wildlife sites.
- Study wildlife sites and associated flora and fauna.
- Manage wildlife sites and associated flora & fauna.
- Stimulate public interest in wildlife & its conservation.
- Encourage wildlife gardening.
- Co-operate with other groups of 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 & public of its progress.

Editor : Pat Morris  
 Produced by : Maurice Young  
 Printed by : Rank Xerox  
 THE DOCUMENT COMPANY  
 Illustrations by : Pat Morris, and Maurice Young.  
 Photographs : Ann Priest

Tim Hiatt, our last Project Officer, left in February and has been appointed Support Assistant at the Disraeli Combined School. As Bellfield School, this was the first school to become a member of the Wycombe Wildlife Group, so it is particularly pleasing that Tim has found a post there. We wish him well. In the meantime we are still searching for replacement Project Officers. Any offers of help from our readers gratefully received.

**Group's Logo hung in Bassetsbury Manor**

On Tuesday 23rd. March 1999, a small band of Wycombe Wildlife Group and Wycombe District Council members gathered at Bassetsbury Manor to witness the presentation of their framed logo, to be hung on the walls of the Manor. Margaret Simmons, who had made the quilted picture of our logo, handed it to the Town mayor, Cllr. Frances Alexander, who accepted it on behalf of the Manor.

Margaret is better known as an avid gardener, and her work on the Pann Mill garden was recognized with an Environmental award in 1993, as reported in our September 1993 Newsletter. Lorna Cassidy provided the frame.

**Move to Kingsmead Imminent**

At the same gathering the Group members learnt that the Council are proposing to transfer the Countryside Centre to Kingsmead. The Countryside Centre has needed larger premises for a long time, so the more spacious accommodation and greater accessibility will be welcome. It was set up in 1992.

**Penn Wood**

Terms have been finally agreed for the purchase of Penn Wood by the Woodland Trust, from its owners GBS Estates. However, the Woodland Trust are still £230,000 short of the sum needed to complete the purchase, so any further donations are greatly welcome. If you can help contact Andrea Miles on 01892 513733.

**Ron Beaven**

We were very saddened to hear of the death of Ron Beaven on 16th February, as a result of cancer. Ron was a founder member and butterfly expert of the Group and his helpfulness and good humour will be greatly missed. We extend our condolences to his widow Jaci who has agreed to act as adviser on butterfly matters. Pat and Roy Morris, and Eric Britnell represented the Group at Ron's funeral.

**Lucie Elmidoro**

Group member Lucie Elmidoro also died in February, after spending two years in a nursing home, following a stroke. Although unable to attend meetings she was always there in spirit represented by her luscious cakes. She was a most interesting person, having spent all her life in Wycombe, and will be much missed.

*Pat*

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.



## Hedgerows

New regulations to protect important hedgerows in England and Wales were introduced in 1997 and since then it has been an offence to remove some countryside hedgerows (or parts of them) without first notifying the local planning authority.

These regulations, however, do not protect all hedgerows but only those which met certain criteria set by the Minister for the Environment. The criteria, of course, include ecological ones

such as the number of woody species per 30 metre stretch, protection being given to those with five or more - i.e. hedges aged 500 years or more and any hedges that are host to priority species in the UK Biodiversity Plan e.g. the dormouse. Another criterion of importance to the protection of hedgerows in the Chilterns is that where the hedgerows are considered to be characteristic of the landscape.

*Maurice*

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### A Challenge for WyWG

As part of the actions we are undertaking for the Bucks part of the Biodiversity project, we are starting to study hedgerows more intensively. They say that you can tell the age of a hedgerow by the number of woody species that go to make it up. I don't know that this is really true but it would be very interesting to put calculated ages to all the hedgerows around Wycombe. I wonder what the number of animal species in a hedgerow tells us?

Pat Morris is studying an ancient hedgerow near Grange Farm, and I am starting to study the hedgerows in Winchbottom. We aim not only to produce a list of species for each hedge, but also records of when the various species come into

leaf or flower or fruit. This is called the phenology of the hedge (phenology - the study of recurring phenomena) and it can be used to compare different hedges in different places. Can I ask you to choose your own selection of hedgerow, say one where you regularly walk, make notes of what you see, and we will create your own hedge phenology.

This information will not only be of interest to us at the wildlife group, but I have been told that it will be immensely useful to the Wycombe District Council planners in their Biodiversity action plans, enabling them to designate them in the control of development.

*Angus*

### How Old is that Hedge in the Valley ?

Angus is right to question whether or not we can age hedgerows accurately although research has shown that in many cases the age of a hedgerow can be determined by a simple formula - the number of woody species in a 30 metre stretch of hedge times 100, i.e. if there are five woody species in a hedge then the hedge is probably about 500 years old. In other words it takes about 100 years for a new woody species to establish itself in a hedgerow planted with a single species. This falls down, however, where the hedge is a "woodland remnant" hedge, i.e. it is made up of woody species left when the woodland, of which they were part, was cleared.

There are, fortunately, indicators of this origin - ancient woodland plants such as bluebells - that are still often present in the hedgerow, as you can see in one of the hedgerows at Winchbottom. Another problem that will face those determining the age of hedgerows in the future is the modern conservation practice of planting new hedgerow with a mixture of species. (Instant ancient hedges!). The presence of non-native species such as cherry plum and Swedish whitebeam, however, may be the giveaway to these hedgerows' more recent origin.

*Maurice*



## The Early Days

For our **10th Anniversary Issue** here is a letter from **Matthew Ellis**, who helped set up **Wycombe Urban Wildlife Group** and was our **First Co-ordinator / Project Officer**, reminding us of those early days.

Firstly I would like to congratulate the Wycombe Wildlife Group on its 10th Anniversary. Well done everyone!

My introduction and involvement in urban nature conservation began as an Environmental Science undergraduate at Plymouth. Whilst studying, I participated in a number of "urban fringe" community wildlife projects and represented the polytechnic conservation volunteer group on the Plymouth Urban Wildlife Group.

Immediately after graduating in July 1988, I was told about proposals to launch an urban wildlife group in High Wycombe. With interest, I volunteered my services to help launch the group. Work preceding the official launch included meeting existing local community groups that operated within the District. Following the launch in 1989, the Urban Wildlife Group ran events such as evening talks, wildlife walks and practical conservation projects. In addition, on behalf of the Group and together with the recently appointed BTCV Field Officer (Martin Jakes) for Buckinghamshire, I visited Kelkheim, Wycombe's twin town, to try and establish links with similar groups in Germany.

By 1991, the group was firmly established. The first reserve, at Sheepridge was secured and innovative events such as the 24 hour Wildlife Watch Marathon and the award winning Wycombe Bat Week were successfully planned and executed. This was also the time when the first development plan for the Group was written and successfully implemented with the continued support and help of **Wycombe District Council**.

## Where is he now ?

Matthew continued his letter to say how, on leaving us, his career "went down the drain"

Shortly after Wycombe Bat Week. I left Wycombe and Buckinghamshire to pursue my career in nature conservation. My first job was with the Scottish Wildlife Trust, as one of the Biological Survey Supervisors for the Lothians. Two years later I moved south to work for the Cyngor Cefn Gwlad Cymru or Countryside Council for Wales. Based in Mould, 10 miles west of Chester, my work is now orientated towards "biodiversity" and its delivery in Northeast Wales. The guide principles of Biodiversity in the United Kingdom - **the 59 steps** - offer challenges and unparalleled benefits to our wildlife. The involvement, of organizations such as the Wildlife Group, in the production and delivery of local biodiversity action plans will play a crucial role in ensuring the successful implementation of national biodiversity objectives and requirements.

Throughout my career I have maintained my active interest in and commitment to urban nature conservation. In Scotland I was involved in urban nature conservation projects in Edinburgh, similarly in Wales I now work closely with the local urban wildlife. This close association has, for example, led to detailed monitoring of amphibians trapped in roadside gulley pots (what most of us call drains). Studies of this avoidable issue in NE Wales have been published in Wildlife News.

Once again I would like to say how much I enjoyed working for **Wycombe Wildlife Group**.

*Matthew Ellis.*

*Joking apart, Matthew's story shows that working for **WyWG** can lead to excellent posts in nature conservation.*

*Maurice*



## Robin's Project Team Memories

It is now over a year since I left WyWG but still I have very fond memories of my time there (including Pat's packed lunch at my interview) Among the many highlights are: paddling in the stream by the Manor after a hot day strimming; falling down a slope into John with a crowbar in one hand and a tree in the other; kissing Steve Crosby's hand; making it through the wildlife marathon and beating the locals at Pool in the Flint Cottage (I never got to see the exotic dancers though !)

I remember it being quite difficult to start with but there was always good friendship between Team members and our varied skills complemented each other. I think my proudest moment was going back to the pond at Beechview School, seeing how natural it looked and knowing that I had played a large part in its existence.

I still believe the post gave me a firm and essential grounding for my future career and I have used much of the knowledge gained in my current post. Working for a local authority is not, however, without it challenges, and I have great respect for the work done by the Wycombe Rangers, particularly having

experienced things from their side.

I think it is also well worth pointing out that the equivalent body to WyWG down here is still in its very early stages with limited resources. Wycombe is very lucky to have such an active, knowledgeable and welcoming group and I am sure many towns are extremely jealous. Everyone should be proud of the great achievements over the past ten years and I am very grateful for being a small part of it.

Christchurch is a wonderful place to live, with easy access to the sea, New Forest and the city lights of Bournemouth. Jo and I have committed ourselves further to the area by buying our house and are even thinking about getting married !

I think it unlikely that I will be able to make the AGM but you never know - if I am in the area. I wish everyone well and congratulate the Group on the Big 10.

Best wishes,

*Robin Harley*

WyUWG Project Officer  
April 1996 - November 1997

### Some Highlights and achievements of the Past Ten Years

During its ten years of existence, WyWG has achieved some remarkable things. Under the leadership of Matthew Ellis, working with Steve Crosby, the WDC Bat Week took place. Also under Matthew's guidance the first 24 hour wildlife marathon was invented. Under Jo Hale, in conjunction with BTCV the Countryside Centre was set up and our Wildlife Gardening Competition was introduced along with the Demonstration Wildlife Garden was set up at West Wycombe Garden Centre. Since then there have been more Marathons and Wildlife Gardening, Wildlife Art and Wildlife Poetry Competitions for schools have been established.

The key figures in all these activities have been our Project Officers, but one by one they have all had to leave, moved on by financial pressures to take up paid employment.

We are currently without a Project Officer but hope to rectify this soon. Fortunately we have always had a fully committed, hard working committee who have continuously invested their own expertise, in their particular fields, in the Group, and they will continue to contribute to the well-being of the people and wildlife of the area, even if it is on a smaller scale until further Project Officers are appointed.

*Pat.*



## Conserving Wildlife Down Under

(It's surprising how far some Project Officers will go to get away from us)

**Fatima, who was with us in 1996 & 1997 with Kate and Robin writes to us from Tribulation in Australia.**

Dear Pat, Roy and The Committee,

Hello I hope you are well. It was a lovely surprise to hear from Angus and it made me realize that one year had passed.

For the past 5 months I have been working on a dive boat called "The Jungle diver". I am very lucky to spend each day diving and snorkelling on the Great Barrier Reef.

We frequently see Reef Sharks, Turtles, Lagoon Rays and the coral itself is really amazing. I have also see four Manta Rays while diving and have been swimming with one in the bay, which was unbelievable.

Before that I spent 3 1/2 months working at the Australian Tropical Research Foundation. They have a refuge cage for Flying Foxes which cannot be released into the wild. Some were hand reared and then not released at six months, while others have been injured and only have one wing, so an hour was spent each day preparing all the fruit as bat food.

During October, when the young are born, we had four Flying Foxes which had been orphaned, to hand rear. That was good fun, they were so tiny and had to be fed every four hours.

Part of my work was at the visitor information centre with a display on the Rain Forest, and I had a different Flying Fox for the public to meet each day.

I also gained some construction skills while helping to build a new lab, by laying the decking and putting up the rafters, and bearers for the roof. It made me think of the bird hide at Spinfield School. I only hit my thumb with the hammer once, but managed to hit myself on the forehead with a prying bar.

I have been tree planting to create wildlife corridors and took part in a Cassowary tracking programme. At the moment I am trying to learn frog calls.

I spoke to Robin and Jo recently and we were remembering the good time we had at WWG. I am very glad to have been part of the wildlife group and feel I have gained a lot of skills and good experience from all the projects we were involved in.

I hope the group goes from strength to strength, and look forward to seeing you all when I get back. Take care.

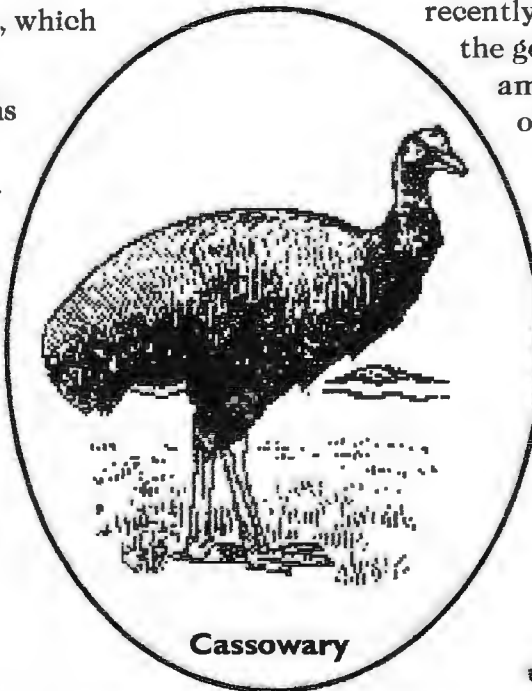
Best wishes,

Fatima (March 1999)



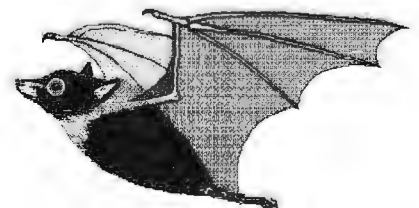
**Koala bear**

Although Fatima doesn't mention Koalas she wrote to us on a card with this picture of a Koala on it.



**Cassowary**

Flightless, running bird found in Australia and New Guinea  
Fatima must have run fast to keep track of these.



**Flying fox or fruit bat**



## The First of Wycombe Wildlife Group's Current Conservation Tasks

The Chairborough Nature Reserve has been in existence since 1990. Following initial work by Wycombe Wildlife Group members, the reserve has been managed by the Wycombe District Council's Ranger Service through the Wycombe Woodland Strategy in association with our Group. In 1992 Chairborough became Wycombe's first Local Nature Reserve in recognition of its importance for local people and wildlife. At the end of 1993 I was appointed as Voluntary Warden for the Reserve.

When Wycombe Wildlife Group was launched in 1989, the Group Committee wanted to identify suitable sites where practical conservation work would be beneficial to local wildlife.

Having been aware of the wildlife interest of the Chairborough site for a number of years, I put together a report describing its various habitats and recommending suitable management for enhancing its wildlife value. The report was passed to Wycombe District Council for consideration and this resulted in our Group receiving permission to work on the site. For our report and our initial work on the site we were awarded **First Prize** in the first of the Wycombe District Council's annual "Your Environment" awards.

The first work party at Chairborough took place on Saturday 20th. January 1990 - the task was cutting back the encroaching scrub; nine years later we are still cutting back encroaching scrub, but it's all been worth it.

The reserve has had a lot done to it over the last nine years and a lot of people from a number of different organizations have played a part. Particular mention must be made of all the hard work carried out over the years by the team of

regular helpers from Hillcrest, who carry out essential maintenance tasks on the site helping the Ranger Service with footpath improvements, litter clearance and burning up all the cut material after my work parties.

Let's look forward to the next nine years of conservation at Chairborough.

*Roger Wilding*



Matthew and Roger at work at Chairborough in the early days

(Photograph by Ann Priest)

Congratulations and best wishes to Matthew on the birth of his daughter, Bronwen, on 5th. January 1999



## West Wycombe Demonstration Wildlife Garden



a constantly changing haven for wildlife



When Cllr. Pam Priestley, Chairman of the Leisure Department at Wycombe District Council, dug the first turf of Wycombe Wildlife Group's Demonstration Wildlife Garden, she could hardly have imagined how it would have developed and changed over the years.

The launching ceremony was held at West Wycombe Garden Centre on Saturday 24th April 1993. We had our plan, devised by Angus Idle on his computer, of all the main features needed for a wildlife garden: pond, boggy area, rockery and woodpile, where creatures could shelter and hibernate, and, of course a spring and summer meadow. Because there were trees already present we were able to include a shady, woodland edge type habitat, too, and there was room to create a modest hedgerow along one side, another plus for wildlife. The site was south facing, and backed by a high flint wall - ideal for a wildlife garden.

All the features listed above were installed, but over the years the garden has grown and changed. There is a small area devoted to arable "weeds". There is a compost bin, and Irenke York, the garden manager, is constantly adding wildlife-friendly plants, so that the area is a profusion of colour in the summer months. The wildlife has also moved in. The pond, now fenced; contains frogs and spawn and dragonflies have bred there. There is a mole. Blue tits have

nested in the box on the wall, and bees and butterflies visit the flowers climbing over the archway and flowering in the grassland. But not only is it a haven for wildlife. The Garden Centre staff like to come down and sit here on fine days to relax during their coffee breaks, and those who come to work here also find it satisfying.

We created this wildlife garden to encourage people to garden for wildlife. We wanted to demonstrate that you don't need a vast amount of space to do something about it, and that a wildlife garden need not look like a jungle. All that is required is to supply the essentials for all life: food, water and shelter. We have been lucky to have a sympathetic Centre Manager, in Stephen Moore, who was willing to loan a site for our use. A Garden Centre is a place where people often go, and its customers are gardeners, the very people we wished to target. We are grateful to Kevin Brown the current Centre Manager, for allowing us to continue developing our scheme.

Many thank to Irenke York and friends, who have masterminded the development of the garden over the years. The Group is most grateful for their support.

Why not come along and experience the wildlife garden for yourself.

Pat

### New Members

We welcome the following new members, and look forward to meeting them at future events.

Mr D A Lee	joined 10/11/1998
Mr M A Court	joined 01/02/1999
Spinfield County Combined School	joined 01/02/1999

### Acknowledgements

Many thanks to Rank Xerox, the Document Company, for five years of support and printing of our Newsletter. Their help has been invaluable.





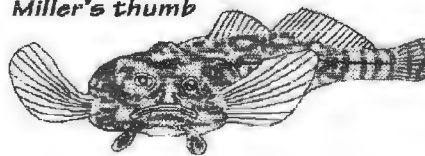
Hot chocolate and tree planting warmed up Watch members during a damp cool session at Plomer Hill in January. It was still cold in February when we visited Startops reservoir with Milton Keynes YOC who helped us through the bird identification as well as organizing games such as Bewick swans.

Spring was well underway for our March meeting on the Rye; frog spawn, newly hatched tadpoles and lots of mating toads were found. We also found Miller's Thumb - a fish with a squashed up head, so called because squashed thumbs used to be an occupational hazard of millers! We also found crayfish which was quite



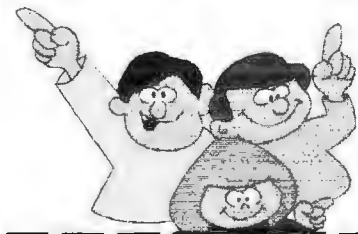
exciting but worrying because I think they were not our native crayfish but American whitclaw crayfish which are decimating populations our native species through introduced disease.

Miller's thumb



On a brighter note on the 24th April, there will be a special Wildlife Watch meeting at the Chairborough Local Nature Reserve with many activities: planting a meadow; mystery rope trail; recycled bugs; minibeast safari and lots more. All young people aged 8 and over will be welcome with or without parents. Please bring about £2 for the BBQ.

Wildlife Watch is the junior branch of the Wildlife Trusts and all leaders are registered (references and police checks made) and hold a first-aid certificate. Elaine.



## WANTED

### Butterfly records for the New Millennium :

Butterfly records from the areas listed below are in short supply, or non-existent. They are urgently required to complete Butterfly Conservation's New Millennium project. If you have recorded butterflies, or are willing to look for these in these areas, please contact :



Marbled white

Jim Asher  
24 Fettiplace Road  
Mareham  
Abingdon OX13 6PL  
01865 391 727

The places records are required for are:

Bourne End	SU88	Penn Street	SU99
Chesham Bois	SU99	Tylers Green	SU99
Coleshill	SU99	Widmer End	SU89
Cressex	SU89	Winchmore Hill	SU99
Flackwell Heath	SU88	Wooburn	SU98
Great Kingshill	SU89	Wooburn Green	SU98
Handy Cross	SU89		
High Wycombe (N)	SU89		
Little Kingshill	SU89		
Little Missenden	SU99		



Painted lady

## Would you like to join us ?

If so complete this application (or a photocopy) and send to :  
**WyWG Membership Secretary**  
c/o, The Countryside Centre,  
(see front page for the address)

I / We wish to join WyWG  
Name :

Address :

Tel. no.

Amount enclosed, (please circle)  
£5 (Individual/Family/School member)  
£2.50 (Student or Retired Person)

# WILDLIFE NOTICE BOARD

## Did You See ?



### Amphibians

- First frogs - Irenke's pond (01/02/99)
- First Newt - Irenke's garden (02/02/99)
- First frogspawn - Pat's pond (16/02/99)
- First tadpoles - Pat's pond (18/03/99)

### Insects

- Drone fly - Angus's house (30/12/99)
- Angle shades moth - Pat's house (Jan/99)
- First brimstone - Carver Hill Rd (13/03/99)
- First small tortoiseshell - Irenke's garden (15/03/99)
- First peacock butterfly - Common Wood, Penn (16/03/99)
- First comma - Carver Hill Road (28/03/99)

### Bird sightings

- Siskin - Hazlemere (22/02/99)
- Brambling - Pat's garden (16 & 30/03/99)
- Red kite - Carver Hill Road (21/03/99)

## The WyWG Contact list:

- Chairman & Newsletter Editor :  
Pat Morris, 01494 529484
- Wildlife Gardening Officer :  
Roger Wilding, 01494 438374
- Treasurer : Peter Hazzard, 01494 447949
- Membership Secretary :  
James Donald, 01494 445334
- Project Officer :**  
To be appointed : 01494 536930
- wildlife WATCH :** Elaine Tague 01296 730814
- Biological surveys : Angus Idle, 01494 563673
- Education Officer & Assistant Editor :  
Maurice Young, 01628 472000

MEMO : COPY DATE Friday, 30 July 1999

### GOODS FOR SALE

- Car stickers - £1 (inc p & p)
- T- shirts Cream or blue M/L/XL/XXL  
£6.50 - less if you buy them at meetings
- Sweatshirts - Navy with white logo S/L /XL  
£16.50 (£15 at meetings)
- Contact the Countryside Centre to order

## Names of Contacts for Wildlife Groups in Wycombe District

<b>BBONT</b>	Berks, Bucks & Oxon Naturalists' Trust	(Oxon Office)	01865 775476
	South Bucks Region, Vol. Reserves Manager	Maurice Young	01628 472000
<b>BNA</b>	British Naturalists' Assoc, S. Bucks Branch	Marion Hussey	01494 488336
<b>BTCV</b>	British Trust for Conservation Volunteers	Marion Lyon	01494 536930
<b>BBG</b>	Bucks Badger Group	Mike Collard	01494 866908
<b>BTO</b>	British Trust for Ornithology (Regional Rep.)	Mick A'Court	01494 536734
<b>BC</b>	Butterfly Conservation	Jaci Beaven	01494 444158
<b>BBC</b>	Bucks Bird Club	Graeme Taylor	01296 625796
<b>CPRE</b>	Council for the Protection of Rural England	Tom Cotton	01844 345183
<b>CWP</b>	Chiltern Woodlands Project	John Morris	01494 565749
<b>EN</b>	English Nature (Thames & Chilterns Team)	Corina Woodall	01635 268881
<b>SWS</b>	Saunderton Wildlife Sanctuary	Margaret Baker	01844 342188
<b>St.T</b>	St. Tiggywinkles	Les Stocker	01844 292292
<b>SL</b>	Swan Lifeline	Tim Heron	01753 859397
<b>WWF</b>	World Wide Fund for Nature	Valerie Lambourne	01494 443761
<b>WDC</b>	Wycombe District Council Ranger Service		01494 421824
	Steve Crosby, Ian Butterfield & Julie Hopton		



For other groups or if you have any queries about BATS contact the COUNTRYSIDE CENTRE, Bassetsbury Manor, Bassetsbury Lane, High Wycombe, HP11 1QX. 01494 536930