



Issue 34

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**THE RYE ENVIRONMENTAL CENTRE
DEVELOPMENTS**

ROAMING IN THE CHILTERN

THOUGHTS ON IMPENDING LEGISLATION
INVITATIONS TO DISCOVER AND ENJOY WALKING IN THE CHILTERN WITH:
THE RAMBLERS ASSOCIATION
AND THE CHILTERN SOCIETY'S RIGHTS OF WAY GROUP

WINGS OVER WYCOMBE

RED KITES IN THE CHILTERN PROJECT
ARE YOU KILLING YOUR GARDEN BIRDS WITH KINDNESS ?

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PENN WOOD
VISIT TO RAYNERS HOUSE
WILDLIFE WATCH REPORT
RAINED-OFF SURVEYS



NOTICE BOARD

CONTACT LIST
YOUR GUIDE TO LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL ORGANISATIONS

The Countryside Centre
Telephone : 01494 563 930
Registered Charity, No. 1075175



60 Fennels Road
High Wycombe
Bucks HP1 1SL

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 and 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 & 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 of the group is available on request)

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

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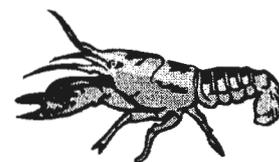
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Wildlife Notice Board



Editorial

We have been delighted with the reception of our new, enlarged Newsletter, with articles submitted by four other organizations. Read on to find out who they are. Yet another article, which we were unable to include this time, will appear in the April 2001 issue.

The much-vaunted year 2000 has gone. Many Millenium projects are now well-established. Ours, though, has yet to receive the support it deserves. (See article by Angus Idle) However, though there are few visible signs that hedgerow surveys have been carried out, my visits to schools with my "hedgerow roll" have proved that much wonderful work is taking place in the classroom. The fact is that due to other pressures, teachers lack the time to send the results of their pupils' investigations to Wycombe Wildlife Group, or, in some cases, even to carry them out. What a sad reflection on our times! The same is true even among members of Wycombe Wildlife Group. I myself have carried out some seven hedgerow surveys, but have yet to find the time to write them up neatly. It will be my New Year's Resolution. The Hedgerow Project is on-going, so why not make it yours as well.

Butterfly Year's Overview

The weather - June 19th was the hottest day for 25 years-, and November the wettest month on record - has had its repercussions. While those butterflies that like long grass and tolerate damp conditions did well - hundreds of Meadow Browns at Berryfields (Hazlemere) and even larger numbers of Marbled Whites and Ringlets in Penn Wood, for example - others have been notable for their absence. The Small Tortoiseshell, once a frequent visitor to gardens, was hardly seen last year, and Common Blues were hardly common. Butterflies (and moths) are truly barometers of the environment. Pat



New members - Welcome

We welcome the following new members who have joined since September 2000 :
Mr A P Comley, Ms Karen Roberts Mrs Violet Collins,
We look forward to meeting them at future events.

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.

The Rye Environment Centre

The 'Wider Group' met in November and was updated on the building and the formation of the Trust to run the Centre. They then split into two groups to discuss and generate ideas on creating the themed trails.

The Building.

Planning permission has been granted with the following conditions:

- ◆ Details of cycle parking provision to be approved by Planning Authority
- ◆ No floodlighting or external lighting unless approved by P.A. Planning Authority
- ◆ No development until an approved archaeological investigation has taken place (see Stop Press in right-hand margin)
- ◆ Details of ventilation systems to be approved before work takes place
- ◆ Details of provision for chlorination plant and methods to be approved by the Planning Authority (P.A.)
- ◆ Details of storage of chemicals to be submitted to be approved by the Planning Authority

Timetable for construction :

It is intended that the Centre will be open by September 2001 and that the work will start soon.

Current designs :

As a result of feedback from the Wider Group a lift is now included to give access to the first floor.

The heating system to be used :

The "biofuel" boiler has not proved practicable and the installation of a Ground Source Heat Pump has been agreed. Although more expensive and lacking the "local resonance" of using wood as a fuel, it is arguably the "greenest" option & has lower running and maintenance costs.

Solar energy :

The most efficient PV system will be specified to minimise roof area taken up and visual impact.

Executive Direction, Management & Operation of the Centre :

- ◆ Executive direction is likely to be a company, Limited by Guarantee, and registered as a Charity
- ◆ Day to day management may be by a paid Centre Manager working alongside volunteer staff
- ◆ A users group will be formed with whom the trustees can meet and consult.

Volunteer Trustees required :

The creation of a strong group of Trustees is vital and anyone who feels they could make a contribution is invited to contact James Donald to find out what would be involved.

(Contact details below, right)

The Themed Trails :

The trails should improve enjoyment of The Rye in ways that complement its character

- ◆ Up to six trails are envisaged but less, or more, trails are possible
- ◆ Up to £28000 has been earmarked to cover, for example, design and printing of leaflets, consultants' fees, appropriate way-marking, and interpretation boards
- ◆ There is no intention to create new metalled footpaths
- ◆ Trails would be designed to avoid creation of new routes across grassed areas
- ◆ There is no intention to create obtrusive or unnecessary way-marking

The Wider Group then generated a range of ideas relating to the trails, including Potential Users, Themes and Interpretation.

**Volunteer help
is wanted to develop
the trails ideas**



STOP PRESS

Exploratory pits, dug in December, seem to indicate possible Roman remains.

While an archaeological assessment will now have to take place, it is still hoped that the plans will remain on course. More on this story next issue.

Walk to look for Trails

David Dyson will lead a walk on Tuesday 9th January 2001 to help volunteers to gain an understanding of the trail possibilities.

Meet in the Holywell Mead swimming pool car park at 9.30 am. The session will finish by mid-day. All weather gear advised, including Wellington boots.

If you can help with the trails please contact :

James Donald on :
01494 637877 or
Email :

james_donald_new.uk@
excite.co.uk

Roaming in the Chilterns



The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 will, once maps have been drawn up, give greater freedom of access to the countryside but with this "freedom" will come greater responsibility on those exercising their new gained right to roam.

Here in High Wycombe, on the edge of the Chilterns, we are surrounded

by wonderful walking country so it is appropriate that we look more closely at these new rights and responsibilities.

Two voluntary organisations: The Ramblers' Association and The Chiltern Society promote and enable walking in the Chilterns so we have invited both to give you some information on their activities.

The Ramblers' Association

There can be few better, healthier and more environmentally friendly ways of appreciating the beauty of our local countryside than by walking through it. Many people prefer to do so in organised groups, and the Wycombe District Group of the Ramblers' Association has a full and varied programme of walks. This may not be the best way of observing wildlife, though we do have keen bird watchers among our regular walkers.

However, the promotion of walking is only one of the Ramblers' Association aims. Walking would be much less pleasurable if the paths were in poor condition or if the beauty of the countryside we walk through is threatened by development. We do what we can locally, and with the support of experienced central staff, to counter such threats.

At the time of writing, a long-term aim

of the Ramblers' Association, freedom to roam over uncultivated country, has been realised in the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. It is a source of considerable regret to us locally that woodland is not one of the types of country to which statutory access has been extended. Fears have been expressed that rights of access are incompatible with the well being of wildlife, but national wildlife organisations seem to have accepted that the Act contains adequate safeguards.

If you would like more information about the Ramblers' Association and the activities of its Wycombe District Group, please send a stamped addressed envelope to:

Mr. J.L. Esslemont
RA Wycombe District Group Secretary
4 Park Farm Way, Lane End,
High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire,
HP14 3EG.

There can be few
better,
healthier and more
environmentally
friendly ways of
appreciating
the beauty of
our local countryside



We have the best
maintained,
mapped and
waymarked
footpath network
in the
country

Since its inception in June 1966 (at a meeting in High Wycombe!) active members of the ROWG have been waymarking and clearing footpaths in the Chilterns so that we now have the best maintained, mapped and waymarked footpath network in the country.

Waymarking, in the form of white arrows painted on trees, fence posts

etc. was pioneered by Don Gresswell. It benefits both the walker and the land owner for it identifies the exact line of the path conferring confidence on the walker and ensures that he or she will not, unwittingly, stray from the path. This waymarking was the forerunner of the blue and yellow, stubby arrows adopted by the Countryside Agency.

The Society, however, still uses white arrows in woodland as they are more visible than the standard colours. In addition to waymarking the paths, members of the ROWG carry out clearance work and, where necessary, install and maintain stiles.

The Chiltern Society publishes a superb series of footpath maps, researched by Nick Moon and drawn by Bill Chester (& revised by Ted Swan); they concentrate on matters important to walkers so are very clear and easy to follow. For those who are not too keen on map reading, or those who prefer to walk in the company of others, the Chiltern Society ROWG organizes a programme of walks throughout the year (details should be in your local library).

The Chiltern Society ROWG and the R.A. are, by statute, notified of applications to divert or close footpaths.

Each application is examined carefully and if it is not satisfactory attempts are made to negotiate a compromise; if that fails the application will normally go to public enquiry. Both organisations are also actively involved in applying for the inclusion of long-standing footpaths omitted from the definitive map – the official map, held by County Councils, that records the location of footpaths.

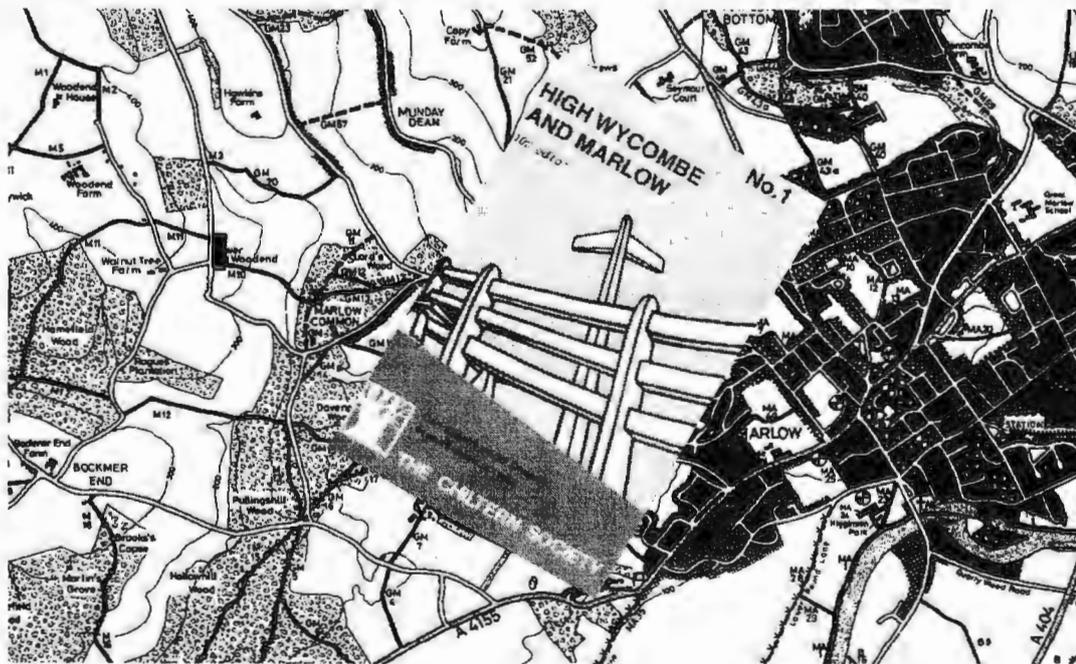
Maurice Young
(Secretary ROWG 1984-87 with information update from *John Coombe*, current ROWG Chairman)

If you would like more information about the Chiltern Society and the activities of the Rights of Way Group, please contact :

Christine Preston
113 Vale Road, Chesham
Bucks HP5 3HP
Tel/Fax: (01494) 771250



If you want to discover the countryside around Wycombe get yourself a set of the Chiltern Society Footpath Maps



As I intimated in the first paragraph our new "Right to Roam" must be exercised with responsibility. It will not mean that we will have the right to trample everything in sight and destroy the wildlife of the area.

If you visit a nature reserve, or other area known for its abundance of wildlife, keep to the paths. You can leave the paths – there are no armed guards patrolling the reserves to prevent you, but do you really need to?

Those of you who attend the walks I lead on the reserves I manage know I occasionally take groups off the path to see something special but I know the site so take them along a route where they will do least harm. If you do go searching for unusual plants or animals on your own, look where you are treading and don't crush too many plants and if you do find something unusual or rare let Angus or myself know so that it can be recorded.

Maurice

Exercise your rights
(when you get them)
with responsibility

Wings over Wycombe



The most numerous
bird of prey in
Great Britain during
Medieval times

Extinct in
England by the end
of the 19th century



93 red kites were
imported from Spain

The Chilterns chosen
as the reintroduction
area in England



In the year 2000
there were over
100 breeding pairs
raising more than
170 chicks

*Drawings above by
Dan Powell, John Busby
and Mike Langman
of the RSPB*

Red kites, large birds of prey with an impressive fivefoot wingspan and distinctive forked tail, are now a common sight in the skies over High Wycombe and the surrounding area, but this hasn't always been the case.

Having been the most numerous bird of prey in Great Britain during Medieval times, they became subject to intense persecution between the 16th and 19th centuries. They were shot, poisoned and trapped because it was believed that they attacked game birds and lambs and thus threatened the livelihoods of farmers and gamekeepers. In fact, these beliefs were unfounded, as red kites are mainly scavengers, rarely killing anything much larger than a small rabbit.

By the end of the 19th century, red kites were extinct in England, with only a handful of pairs holding on in mid-Wales. Concern was so great by this time, that a Kite Committee was set up to make payments to farmers with kites nesting on their land, encouraging them to protect the birds.

Slowly the population started to recover, but it was thought highly unlikely that they would ever repopulate their former range across Great Britain. In 1989, the Nature Conservancy Council and the RSPB started a programme to introduce red kites from abroad to two release sites in England and Scotland. The Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) was chosen as the location of the English reintroduction. The landscape of rolling hills capped with woodland, and the mosaic of farmland and chalk grassland make the area a haven for wildlife and hence ideal for kites.

Over the next four years, a total of 93 red kites were imported from Spain and released around the Stokenchurch area. These birds started to breed in

1992 and by 2000, there were over 100 breeding pairs resident in the Chilterns, rearing more than 170 chicks. This breeding success has allowed red kite chicks to be taken from the Chilterns to other reintroduction sites in Yorkshire and the Midlands in 1999 and 2000.

Despite the rapid growth in the population, the kites have not spread as much as was first expected. The fringes of the population now reach the Vales of Oxford & Aylesbury and northeast Berkshire, but there has been very little spread eastwards. Kites are rarely seen east of High Wycombe.

The fact that there are a large number of kites in a relatively small area, means they are quite easy to spot, flying low over fields and close to roads in search of food. The birds have generated a great deal of interest amongst residents and visitors to the Chilterns. In response to this, a new project has been introduced. 'Red Kites in the Chilterns' is a partnership between the RSPB and the Chilterns Conference, an alliance of 35 organisations working together to conserve the special qualities of the Chilterns AONB. The project is led by Red Kites in the Chilterns Officer, Cathy Rose and will raise awareness of red kites, using these spectacular birds as a 'flagship' species to generate interest in the other wildlife and distinctive landscape of this special area.

Cathy will work closely with local communities, businesses & visitors to provide good quality information about red kites, their habitats and other local wildlife. A selection of leaflets and information sheets has been produced, and a programme of guided walks is underway.

continued opposite.

Killing Garden Birds with Kindness

It may not be common knowledge but your good deed in feeding your garden birds with peanuts may be having the opposite effect; it may be killing them!

Following an investigation by Buckinghamshire Trading Standards Department they established that out of 32 garden centres and shops that were selling peanuts, 7 were selling peanuts with over 40 times over the legal limit of aflatoxin.

Aflatoxins are invisible substances caused by poor storage conditions in the tropics and/or during shipment from tropical places. It can cause cancer in animals and humans and there are legal limits on the amounts which can be present.

Please be careful where you buy your peanuts; only buy from reputable organisations; you are better spending more, if they are of reputable quality.

One suggestion is to buy from the following, ring them and they will gladly send you their price lists.

CJ Wildbird Food; also provide a free handbook on how to feed birds
0800 731 2820

Please consider getting together with friends and buying in bulk from a reputable dealer (CJ Wildbird Food!) and then splitting it up. In fact, this year, I am only going to be putting out seed, until the situation is clarified.

Do spread this information around and ring me if you need additional advice on 01494 866 908, after 6pm only, please.

Mike Collard

CJ Wildbird Foods have a web site, (last updated on 09/12/2000, 3 days ago, as I write) which covers this matter in some detail. For those with access to the web the address is: <http://www.birdfood.co.uk/> or GO CJ wildbird foods & click their site in the list that comes up. For those without access here are some of the most informative bits:

Aflatoxins are powerful, tasteless, odourless and colourless toxins (poisons), produced by strains of the fungus *Aspergillus flavus*, which develops in conditions of high temperature and humidity. *

Aflatoxins are absorbed into body fats. Birds have low levels of body fat and are therefore estimated to be many times more sensitive to aflatoxin than mammals.

Thousands of tonnes of imported peanuts rejected from the human food chain are available to suppliers at low prices! - the message "don't buy cheap peanuts"!!!

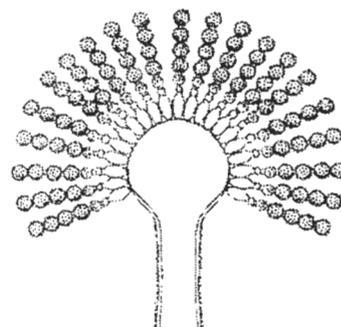
CJ Birdfoods triple test the peanuts they import and have rejected large quantities. Consequently their supplies are limited and they recommend you offer other seed to your garden birds such as Sunflower seeds or their high energy seed mixture.

* Take note, and make sure your peanuts, and any other seed mixtures you have, are dry and keep them in a cool, dry place.

Maurice



Sporophore
(spore producing structure)
of the mould
Aspergillus flavus
(X100)



Idealised diagram of a section through a sporophore of *Aspergillus flavus* showing chains of spores forming
(X500)



Call the number below for the project leaflets & walks programme. All the walks are free of charge and cover areas of the Chilterns countryside where sightings of kites are almost guaranteed. Places on each walk are limited, so book now! **Cathy Rose**

For more information, please contact:

Cathy Rose,
Red Kites in the Chilterns Officer,
Chilterns AONB Office,
8 Summerleys Road,
Princes Risborough, Bucks, HP27 9DT.

Tel: 01844 271306. Fax: 01844 271301.

Email: crose@chilternsaonb.org

For information
on walks and talks
on Red Kites

Butterflies In Schools

Tom Dunbar tells you how to give your pupils first-hand experience of butterflies



Small tortoiseshell butterfly
(*Aglais urticae*)



Caterpillar of a small tortoiseshell butterfly on a nettle

The threat to the survival of butterflies is largely down to loss of suitable habitat caused by changes in land use over successive generations. By giving children first hand experience of butterflies we can make them aware of these causal effects as well as involving them in witnessing the wonders of the life-cycle of such a splendid creature.

Insects have always been a source of wonder and great interest to kids. Children of all abilities can possess an extensive knowledge of particular 'creepie-crawlies'. Try doing some planting with 7 year olds. While you are trying to keep an eye on safety aspects (amongst other things) they are busily spotting and pointing out every single living thing that has escaped your notice. Enthusiasm is boundless. Survival is the keyword!

The topic of Butterflies is often an area where, although children are aware of them, their knowledge can very superficial. It can provide an excellent starting point for work (and play!) in many areas of the curriculum! science, art, maths, design technology, English, and more. Some schools do good work in establishing and maintaining 'wild areas' in their school grounds. However a long-term commitment and much work out of 'contact' hours is often necessary and not easily manageable for busy teachers. Breeding butterflies in the classroom on the other hand is very possible. Once you get set-up you have a resource that can be used every year. What you need:

- flight cage
- source of butterfly eggs or
- larvae (caterpillars)
- food source for hungry caterpillars

The Cage

If you are 'handy' a wooden framed cage is a worthwhile investment of your time. Cover it with black netting (available from sewing shops/department stores) and ensure that one side is removable to give access for feeding. A good tip is to make your flight cage a suitable size to fit in a car to allow the 'little darlings' to be taken home weekends and holidays. An alternative structure can be made from an empty plastic sweet jar (from your local sweet shop) and the above mentioned black netting. Use a Stanley type knife to remove rectangular sections from two opposite faces of the jar. Then glue or sellotape netting on the outside covering the two holes. This will hopefully keep your caterpillars in while allowing good circulation to maintain a healthy micro-climate in the 'cage'. Keep the 'cage' in an upside-down position! unscrewable lid at the bottom, for easier removal of droppings and old food (droppings fall to the bottom). Tip: The gauge of standard netting is too large for the early stages of caterpillar development. They escape! Enclose the 'mini-cage' in a sock made from an old pair of tights and tie at the top until the caterpillars put on some weight. Considerations: Many species of butterfly require a specific habitat in the wild which they have adapted to over time. Release of bred specimens will most probably not be successful for those individuals. A great deal of valuable monitoring of local butterfly populations, especially the rarer species, can be undermined by such releases. What then are you going to do with your adult butterflies? The problem can be minimised by sticking to the more common species - small tortoiseshells, peacocks, large whites. Release of 20 to 30 individuals locally will have minimal impact in that these species will disperse over a wider area. What stage of the life cycle do you start with?

What came first? the butterfly or the egg? The caterpillar stage is probably the most straight forward stage to start with. Many gardeners are more than willing to supply you with large white caterpillars. Late Summer is probably the likeliest time for ready availability. Just ask!

A more expensive route is to buy large white pupae (chrysalids) from a supplier such as World Wide Butterflies. These are available earlier in the year. Large Whites overwinter as pupae, emerging as adults in May. Caterpillars collected in September can be taken through to the pupal stage and then allowed to hibernate in a cold location (attic, shed). The same class of children can see these individuals emerge the following May. Small tortoiseshell and peacock larvae are sometimes available from gardens. They live in large colonies of perhaps 100 - 200 individuals. Removal of a small percentage will not threaten the colony. For more information go to Butterfly Breeding in the UK.

Caterpillar Food

Caterpillars, in common with children, need a constant supply of fresh food. The maxim "You gotta eat your greens" certainly holds here. Choose your species carefully. Small tortoiseshells and peacocks require a daily supply of fresh nettles. Large whites require cruciferous plants cabbage, Brussel sprouts (good example to the children!) and nasturtium, amongst others. Caterpillars produce droppings (called frass) which, if they are fed on cabbage, is quite smelly. Nasturtium is easier on the nose.

Food Tip:

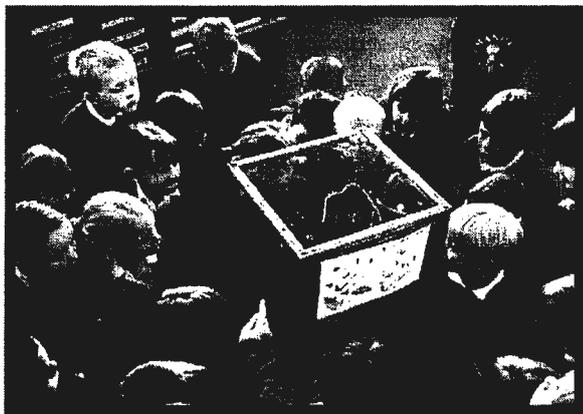
- several days supply of nettle can be kept in the fridge.
- food plants must not be left standing in water in the cage as it will make the humidity in the cage too high and result in high mortality.
- grow nettles/nasturtiums in pots. This requires forward planning.

Tom Dunbar

Check out these web sites:

Upper Thames Branch of Butterfly Conservation:
<http://www.members.sniffout.com/butterfliesutb>

Manor Farm Infant School: <http://www.manorfarm-inf.bucks.sch.uk>



Pupils of Manor Farm School observing the development of cabbage white butterflies

Additional tips: To attract colourful butterflies to your school grounds grow nettles in tomato grow-bags (that will stop them spreading where you don't want them). Put the bags in a nice, sunny, protected spot and, hopefully, some small tortoiseshell butterflies will find them and you will have a ready supply of caterpillars. Nasturtiums grow best in a sunny flower beds. Let the children inspect them regularly and they may find eggs!

Maurice



Caterpillars of the cabbage white butterfly



Pupa (chrysalis) of a cabbage white butterfly



Cabbage white butterfly (*Pieris brassicae*)

Wycombe Show - Create a Hedgerow

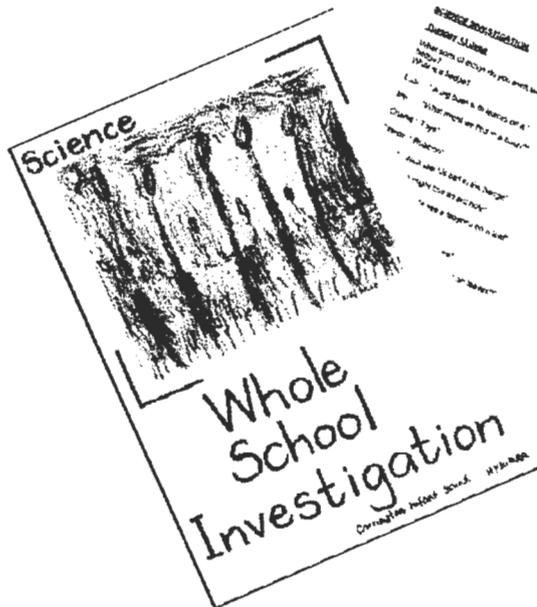
Has your school made its contribution to our hedgerow collage?

At Wycombe Show, 2000, 47 children helped "Create a hedgerow" Four metres of a "hedgerow" collage were produced by sticking leaf rubbings and pictures on to a roll of lining paper. Since then the "hedgerow" has been added to by schools I have visited, and families attending an Environmental Day at Downley on 8th October, 2000 and other schools. The "hedgerow" now measures 7.2 metres.

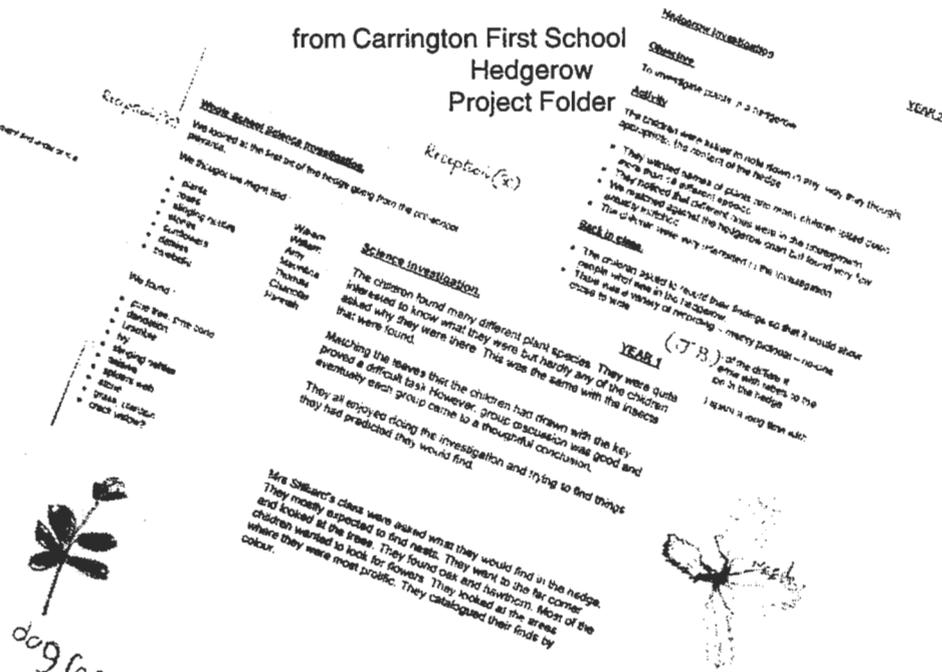
We hope to exhibit the finished work at the new Rye Environment Centre (REC) when it opens together with the names of all who participated. Who knows, if more schools join in the hedgerow collage may stretch right round the REC exhibition area.

If your school has not yet taken part, please contact Pat Morris on: 01494 529484, or e-mail Pat at roymorris@freeuk.com for more information or to arrange a hedgerow "creation" session. Pat

Our "Create a Hedgerow" project is intended to focus attention on hedgerows and it has done this in those schools that have taken part. They have not only drawn leaves and added them to our 'pictorial' hedge, they have gone out and looked at the hedges round their schools. and this has generated a whole range of work including poetry, prose, art and science. Some of the work from Carrington First School's project folder is shown below.



from Carrington First School Hedgerow Project Folder



"An enjoyment of Leaves"
Autumn 2000

- I heard the moan and saw leaves fly up in the air
- When the wind blows, my leaf twirls and does back flips
- Some leaves were flying in the air and some were floating
- It cracked and crunched against my hand
- I jumped in the leaves and they tossed and twirled and the wind moaned
- It glides down then spins - twirling and swirling
- They tossed, turned, swirled and flew
- Suddenly the wind whistled and the leaves started doing their tricks
- A lovely coloured leaf with holes in it
- What a crunchy noise as I jumped and stamped on the leaves

From Carrington Infant School's Hedgerow Collage Section

Local Agenda 21 in Lane End

Wycombe District Council has been working in partnership with Lane End Conservation Group and Lane End School to rejuvenate an area of land adjacent to Slayter Road. Formerly known as Slayter Road Pond, this patch of land, that belongs to the Housing Division, had become a boggy mess and frequently covered in fly tipped rubbish.

However, it has an interesting topography and vegetation that lends itself to being redeveloped as a wildlife area with educational value for the school.

A class has visited the site to investigate and come up with some ideas for design & features they would like to see.

Needless to say, they would like the pond brought back to its original state, with a dipping platform. However, for reasons of safety, it is more likely to be a shallow area of water filled by run off from the adjacent fields with a wetland area created from the over spill. Paths and seating areas will also be created.

As a result of a 'Community Work Day', which was publicised by means of a flyer distributed by Wycombe DC,

the Lane End Conservation Group and the Council's Ranger Service have, with the help of villagers, cleared the area of rubbish. Some branches have also been cut back to open out the canopy and it is already possible to see and hear more birds in the area.

Further funding is to be sought to carry out the rest of the work. It is

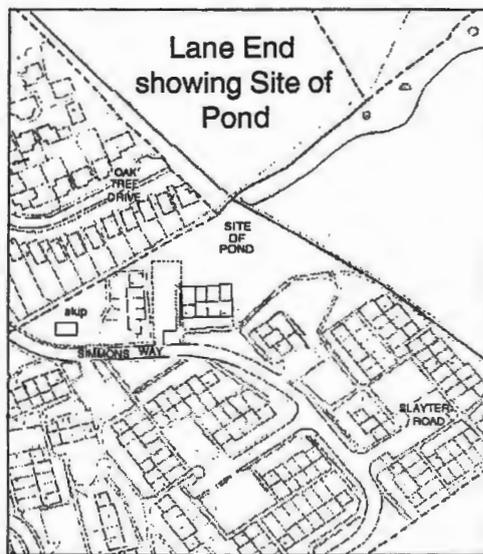
hoped that other groups will become involved through the community development work that is being carried out in Lane End. The idea of a 'Green Gym' has also been suggested in the hope that it will encourage residents, who do not normally

become involved in conservation work to take an interest for health reasons.

Whoever gets involved it is hoped that an area will be created which will be pleasant for everyone to visit and enjoy and which will encourage a greater variety of wildlife.

Lesley Stoner

For further information contact
Lesley Stoner on 01494 421744



New lease of life for Slayter Road Pond



Green Gym proposed

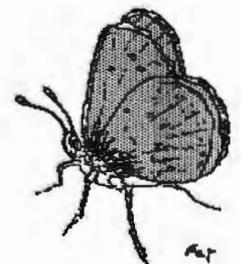
Wildlife Gardening

A total of 194 man-hours of work were completed during gardening sessions at the Group's Demonstration Wildlife Garden at West Wycombe Garden Centre in the year 2000. Now in its seventh year, the garden attracted nesting Great Tits during 2000, followed possibly by sparrows, and the Holly Blue butterfly was recorded egg-laying on the ivy. The main excitement of the year, however, was the discovery of the Common newt, found when clearing the pond of blanket weed. A new cornfield meadow was created, providing an extra splash of colour.

Work will start up again on Saturday 17th March, with regular Wednesday sessions held fortnightly thereafter (see programme)

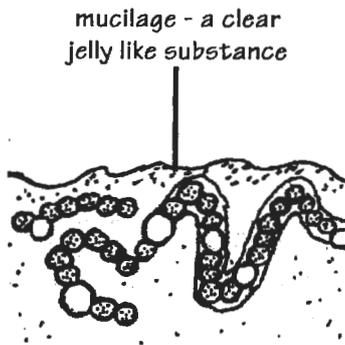
Thanks to Irenke, Mary and Sylvia for all their hard work during the past year.

Pat



Holly blue
Celastrina argiolus

Surveying & Biological Recording

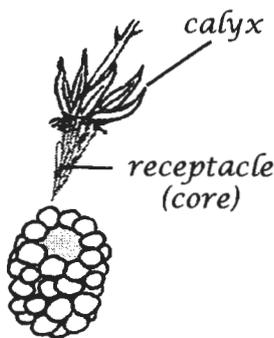


Nostoc
a blue-green alga
(X1500)

Distinguishing a
blackberry from a
raspberry



The fruit of the
blackberry remains
attached to the calyx
and receptacle (core)



The fruit of the
raspberry detaches
from the calyx
and receptacle (core)

As we are approaching the end of the twentieth century (a plug for those of you who can count!). I think it is time I gave you a report of each year's wildlife surveying.

The Wildlife Group is in its twelfth year and since its start we have been looking at wildlife on walks, marathons and other activities, as you would expect. I have lists of species found on these events right from the beginning and these show what a marvellous area we live in here in Wycombe.

One project that has been going on quietly for several years now is the use of the English Nature (EN) Recorder Database package. This is a computer package which has been produced by EN in order to standardise species recording in the UK and allow the exchange of data between the various organisations involved in recording wildlife and EN. We have had this package for over five years now. In fact we are recorder site 89, one of the first urban wildlife groups to have the system. We are now looking forward to a new, Windows based, version of this program. This new version will, by means of the internet, enable us to transfer data up to, amongst others, English Nature and the Bucks County Museum which is the centre site for the county and with whom we have worked very closely ever since 1995.

Inspired by Roger Wilding's work at Chairborough Road the Ranger Service of the Wycombe District Council has created a number of nature reserves around the town and it tries to manage them to produce the best biodiversity of plants and animals possible. One area of biological surveying in which we are involved, I am proud to say, is the monitoring of nature reserves in the Wycombe District. I have been recording the flowering of all wild species on these sites since 1995. I now have a database of nearly thirty seven thousand records. Yearly reports are made to

the Ranger Service enabling them to evaluate the effects of their management of the reserves.

Surveys of other sites help determine the outcome of planning applications. For instance, our surveys have helped to keep Penn Wood from being developed into a golf course, and on the other side of the coin a survey of Harewood Downs golf course will enable them to manage their course in a more ecologically friendly way.

Two finds in this year have particularly excited me. A friend found a green blob (I can't think of a better description) on a track at Bradenham, and, I think, mainly as a test, he asked me what it was. At first I thought it might be a Liverwort, however, it turned out to be a blue-green alga (like a land seaweed) called Nostoc.

The other was a Bramble at Cock Lane Cemetery Local Nature Reserve. I went there on the 10th May and the bramble was in full flower! - far too early for either Blackberry or Raspberry. The flowers were larger than expected and some seemed a little irregular. Was it a hybrid? To determine whether it was in the Raspberry or Blackberry section of the genus *Rubus* one looks at the fruit. Does the fruit come away cleanly from the plant like a Raspberry or take some of the flower with it, like a Blackberry? I just had to wait to let the fruits ripen. Then, would you believe it - it did not set ripe fruit at all. That at least showed that it was a hybrid, but hasn't helped identify it. However, it has started me looking at Brambles, and I have found other similar ones at Mickfield and at Brush Hill which do not set ripe fruit. If you know of any others that flower early and don't set any fruit, please tell me.

Angus Idle
(Biological Survey Recorder)

New Plans for the Wye

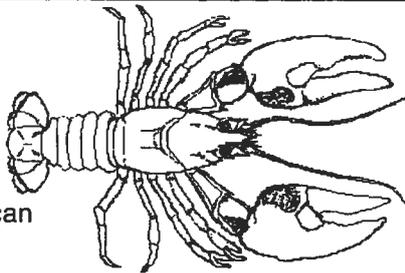
The River Wye will be the focus of a great deal of attention with the expansion of an exciting Chilterns initiative. The **Chilterns Chalk Streams Project** is a partnership of fifteen organisations led by the **Chilterns Conference**. The aim of the project is to conserve chalk streams and the special wildlife they support, to promote awareness, understanding and enjoyment of the streams and to promote the sensitive use of water. The Project initially focused on the Rivers Misbourne and Chess but is now expanding to encompass all major chalk streams within the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, including the Wye.

Chalk streams support some of our rarest species, like water voles and white-clawed crayfish - both species have undergone drastic declines over the last fifty years.

The Chilterns Chalk Streams Project will be working with Wycombe District Council & local conservation and amenity groups to develop and implement an action plan for the River Wye. This will include work for rare species, enhancements to the river and the land alongside it and the creation of new walk routes with leaflets and information to interpret the many interesting features in the valley.

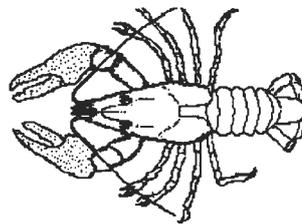
Sarah Bentley

Chalk streams like the Wye, Chess & the Misbourne are internationally rare habitats



American Signal Crayfish (*Pacifastacus leniusculus*)

Introduced in the 1970s for commercial exploitation - purportedly better flavour than the native crayfish and more to eat, being much larger. They are smooth and light to mid-brown in colour. The underside of their chelae (their massive claws !) are red with a white to turquoise spot on the top surface at the junction of the two parts of the claw.



British native, White-clawed Crayfish (*Austropotamobius pallipes*)

Growing to about 10cms in length they are a darker brown than the Signal Crayfish. The claws (chelae) are rough on the upper surface and pale below so it is sometimes called the White-clawed Crayfish.

A new project

The Chiltern Chalk Streams Project

will promote understanding and enjoyment of this rare habitat

Chalk streams are an internationally rare habitat confined mainly to north-west Europe and New Zealand. They are fed from groundwater that is stored in the 'aquifer' - layers of chalk rock that soak up water like a sponge. The water percolates through the chalk, and where it meets the surface the stream is formed.

If you would like further information on the work of the Chilterns Chalk Streams Project and how you can get involved, please contact :
Sarah Bentley,
Chilterns Chalk Streams Officer,
Chilterns AONB Office,
8 Summerleys Road,
Princes Risborough, Bucks, HP27 9DT.
Tel: 01844 271308,
e-mail : sbentley@chilternsaonb.org

For information on the project

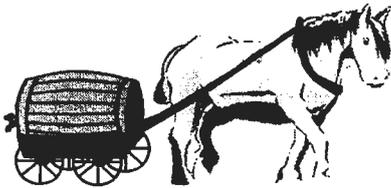
Report : Penn Wood

The final consultations with the public over the future management of Penn Wood took place in October 2000, to which Wycombe Wildlife Group contributed. Since then work on the "Access for All Route" behind Penn Street Church has been started. Visitors might like to try it, when it is finished in the New Year, if they are tired of splashing through the ubiquitous mud caused by the wettest November on record

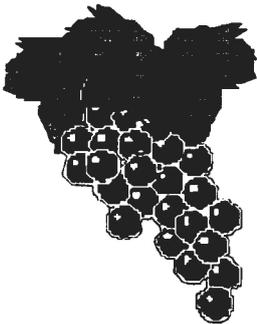
Reports

Visit to Rayners House, Penn

Philip Roses
"Summer House"



Severe
drought in Penn ?



Kitchen garden
with vines & peaches

Most people think of a "summer house" as a small wooden building, placed in a garden to catch the sun and provide some extra outdoor living space, but Rayners House was originally built in 1847 by Philip Rose for just that purpose for summer use from about June to October.

Alan Jones, Headteacher of Penn School, housed in Rayners, welcomed us in the Environmental Studies Room. He sketched in a brief history of the site, & also spoke about the fight to retain the school on the site. Current proposals involve some development.

There were some informative maps on display, one showing the extent of the estate when it was put on the market in 1920, stretching down between Beacon Hill and Cock Lane and taking in parts of Wycombe Marsh and Loudwater. Another was a beautifully detailed plan of the kitchen garden, showing how self-sufficient the estate could be.

One of the earliest problems was a water supply, so Sir Philip, the original owner, made a contract with a reputable firm of hydraulic engineers to sink a well. This well was the villagers' only source of water at times of severe drought, and on occasion a horsedrawn water barrel was sent round the village, even going as far as Hazlemere.

After our introduction we set off for our guided walk. There are deer, badger, and foxes in the grounds, but the only visible signs were those of badgers. Not everything in the garden was Victorian. In the wall along Church Road, for example, is a hole through which the Home Guard would have thrust a pole across the

road to stop German tanks during World War II. An even more up-to-date item is the "Met" recording station which sends in daily reports. We saw a small summerhouse, overlooking a large pond dug by Sir Philip Rose shortly before he died. This pond is now filled in.



Rayners

There is a fine expanse of lawn at the front and to one side of the house, around which Sir Phillip planted specimen and belts of trees, so that the park and gardens were surrounded by woods, creating the landscape that we see today.

At the other end of the house frontage is a tower and another pond, originally dug for its clay to provide bricks for the early part of the house. Sir Philip knew it was an important asset to have a water storage area on top of a hill. Today this pond is encircled by a belt of shrubbery. It is dark, with no visible wildlife, and covered in duckweed.

After a brief visit inside the house, we walked through the kitchen garden that still hints at the activities once undertaken, for example, the Peach Walk. The plan of this area shows what went on: there is a Peach House and a range of Vineries with sheds for stoke holes attached, as well as a gasworks and a gasometer, forcing pits, ash pits, gardeners' bothy and a drying ground for the laundry.

Finally we looked at the obelisk at the side of the main driveway, erected in memory of Disraeli, before returning to the Environmental Studies room for a cup of tea. Mr Jones was thanked for giving us such an interesting afternoon.

Hilary Hide

With acknowledgement to Miles Green for additional information taken from "The Rose Family" by Miles Green & Evelyn Clarke.

Wildlife Watching

The October **WATCH** meeting was held in pouring down rain. We went across Booker Common and down into the woods to look for fungi.

It was a very successful afternoon, and many different fungi were noted and identified. Afterwards we all stood in the rain, drinking hot chocolate and eating apple pies. There followed a game of conkers with a Wycombe Ranger.

So despite the weather we all had a great time.

November **WATCH** was held at Cock

Lane Cemetery, where we assisted the Wycombe Rangers to do some scrub clearance.



After a lot of hard work we had hot potatoes from a BBQ watched over by Fiona of the Ranger Service. We also had hot marshmallows - another very enjoyable **WATCH** meeting.

Anyone over 8 is very welcome to come along and enjoy the **WATCH** meetings.

Contact Elaine Tague on :
01494 716492 for further details.

Wendy Thomas

One of the few highlights of our uneventful moth trapping sessions this year.



Larva (caterpillar) of the striped lychnis moth decimating the buds of a dark mullein flower on which they feed.

Survey Results 2000 - Rain Stops Play

Angus Idle's surveys recorded more than 380 species, spread over five different reserves (Cock Lane Ride, Gomm's Bank, Mickfield Bank, Sands Bank, and Tom Burt's Hill)

The four moth trapping events were all rained off, only a single moth being caught on the first two occasions. Heavy rain, which descended as the moth traps were being set up at Green Farm, limited the "catch" at this joint Wycombe Wildlife Group / National Trust event to 28 different species and caused the, Peter Hall to comment that the list had got "quite close to our lowest ever catch for July". At Pat Morris's trapping in August, 12 species were identified before the skies burst.

The most notable of all the moths were Striped Lychnis larvae, found by Peter at Green Farm, and a spectacular "Old Lady" moth at Pat's. A 10 spot ladybird, the only ladybird found in Pat's garden all year, was another insect attracted to her light trap.

For the uninitiated, all moths are released back into the wild, once they have been identified.

Thanks to County Moth Recorder Martin Albertini & Peter Hall for supporting the Green Farm event, and

to Ruth Douglas & Neil Harris of the National Trust for hosting it.

Two Churchyard butterfly surveys have been carried out, plus butterfly surveys at 11 other sites in Wycombe and its fringe area, together with a Breeding Bird Survey. The results of all these have been given to Butterfly Conservation, BTO and the appropriate landowners, to help with management.

Pat

Would you like to join us ?

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

I / We wish to join WWG

Name : _____

Address : _____

Tel. no. _____

Amount enclosed (please circle)

£5 (Individual/Family/School member)

£2.50 (Student or Retired Person)

Don't just think about it, do it - now !





WILDLIFE NOTICE BOARD



Did You See ?



Butterflies

7 Red admirals - on Buddleja, Hazlemere 14/9/00
 Last red admirals - ivy - Lorna's gdn. 6/11/00
 2 Clouded yellows - Brush Hill - 29/9/00

Mammals

Glis-glis - Prestwood - end October/00
 Glis-glis - Holtspur Bank LNR - September/00
 Water vole - Kingsmead - End August/00
 Muntjac - Wendy's garden (Flackwell Heath)
 - 14/11/00

The WWG Contact list :

Chairman & Membership Secretary :
 James Donald, 01494 637877
 Newsletter Editor : Pat Morris, 01494 529484
 Site Management Coordinator :
 Roger Wilding, 01494 438374
 Treasurer : Peter Hazzard, 01494 447949
wildlife WATCH : Emma Firth, 01865 775476
 Biological surveys : Angus Idle, 01494 563673
 Education Officer & Assistant Editor :
 Maurice Young, 01628 472000
 Project Officer : Post vacant



Contacts for Wildlife, Conservation & Environmental Groups - Wycombe District

Bassetsbury Group	Nigel Mossman	01494 462059
Berks, Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust	(Oxon Office)	01865 775476
(South Bucks Region, Vol. Reserves Manager)	Maurice Young	01628 472000
Booker Common & Woods Preservation Society	Ron Walker	01494 444824
British Naturalists' Assoc, S. Bucks Branch	Marion Hussey	01494 488336
British Trust for Conservation Volunteers	Marion Lyon	01494 536930
British Trust for Ornithology (Regional Rep.)	Mick A'Court	01494 536734
Bucks Badger Group	Mike Collard	01494 866908
Bucks Bird Club	Roger Warren	01491 638544
Bucks Community Association	Francis Gomme	01844 274865
Butterfly Conservation	Jaci Beaven	01494 444158
Chiltern Society	Angus Idle	01494 563673
Chilterns Chalk Streams Officer	Sarah Bentley	01844 271308
Chilterns Conference AONB	Steve Rodrick	01844 271300
Chiltern Woodlands Project	John Morris	01844 271315
Council for the Protection of Rural England (Bucks branch.)	-	
David Dyson & Associates	David Dyson	01494 511278
English Nature Conservation Officer Bucks.	Jenny Young	01635 268881
Frieth Natural History Society	Alan Gudge	01494 881464
Grange Action Group	Dave Wainman	01494 716726
High Wycombe Society	Frances Presland	01494 523263
Lane End Conservation Group	Joyce Davis	01494 881295
Marlow Society	Michael Hyde	01628 485474
National Trust	Ruth Douglas	01494 755573
Pann Mill Group	Myra King	01494 523968
Ramblers Association	J.L. Esslemont	01494 881597
Red Kites in the Chilterns Officer	Cathy Rose	01844 271306
Princes Risborough Countryside Group	Francis Gomme	01844 274865
Saunderton Wildlife Sanctuary	Margaret Baker	01844 342188
St. Tiggywinkles	Les Stocker	01844 292292
Swan Lifeline	Tim Heron	01753 859397
South Bucks Organic Group	Howard Rainbach	01494 531214
World Wide Fund for Nature	Valerie Lambourne	01494 443761
Wycombe District Council Ranger Service	Julie Hopton	01494 421824
Wycombe Youth Action	Lynda Cockerell	01494 447250



If you have any queries about BATS contact the COUNTRYSIDE CENTRE,
 60 Fennels Road, High Wycombe, HP11 1SL 01494 536930

