

Issue 35

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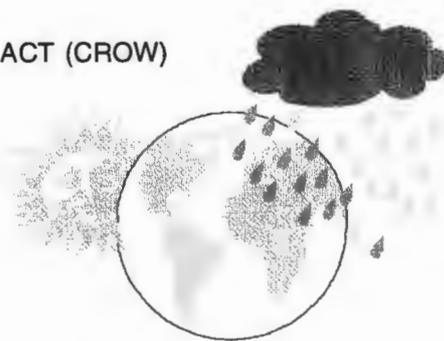
**THE RYE ENVIRONMENTAL CENTRE
PROGRESS TO DATE**

ROAMING IN THE CHILTERN

THE CHILTERN WAY - THE CHILTERN SOCIETY'S MILLENNIUM PROJECT
ROAMING WITH RESPONSIBILITY :

THE COUNTRYSIDE & RIGHTS OF WAY ACT (CROW)
FOOT & MOUTH

**LOCAL AGENDA 21
CLIMATE CHANGE**



MUNTJAC

WILDLIFE GARDENING PROJECTS

A PROJECT FOR SCHOOLS - BEETLE FRIENDLY GARDENING
DOWNLEY WILDLIFE GARDEN PLEDGE

GREEN GYMS

REPORTS

GRANGE FARM & TERRIERS FARM

WDC RANGER SERVICE

DEMONSTRATION WILDLIFE GARDEN - WEST WYCOMBE GARDEN CENTRE

WILDLIFE WATCH

E-MAIL & WEBS

NOTICE BOARD

DID YOU SEE ?



CONTACT LIST - YOUR GUIDE TO LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

**APRIL
2001**

Telephone : See the WWG
contact list on back page
Registered Charity, No. 1075175



Address : WWG, C/O
73, Carver Hill Road
High Wycombe, HP11 2UB

SUPPORTED BY WYCOMBE DISTRICT COUNCIL

WYCOMBE



WILDLIFE GROUP

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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Printed on Environmentally friendly paper

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Editorial

The time when frogs appear from hibernation varies enormously across Wycombe District. In the north of Wycombe it is generally before mid-February, but to the south the first week in March is more the norm.

However, those few frogs that ventured out on 2nd February this year, in my garden, soon returned to hibernation, and the first few clumps of spawn produced on 26th February, succumbed to hard frosts. Those frogs that delayed their appearance till the next mild spell (7th March) along with those from south Wycombe, were more fortunate, and to date, their spawn has remained viable. I note from my Year Book, which I have kept since 1988, that frogs have been visible in my ponds on 2nd February since 1994, though I would have to go back to my diaries for those years to compare weather conditions and breeding fortunes.

The start to 2001 has not been encouraging to humans either. Some people have described it as the worst winter ever, with the continuing threat of floods, prolonged bouts of freezing weather, and now Foot & Mouth Disease. This last has closed the countryside down entirely, in spite of what government ministers say, and makes it impossible to go out and enjoy the sights and sounds of nature. However, for most of us, we still have gardens, and what goes on there can provide endless interest. Apart from frogs, I have been able to witness at close range several appearances of a male sparrowhawk, which has swooped over the very ponds where the frogs were carrying out their business. Was he searching for an easy meal perhaps? (I have heard that sparrowhawks occasionally take frogs). What is certain that he has had an effect on the bird population, as soon as he arrives, there is a frenzied clatter of wings and feeding birds miraculously disappear. They soon come back, once the danger is over, but a great spotted woodpecker, once seen here on a daily basis, has ceased to call, having decided no doubt that discretion is the better part of valour. *Pat*

New members - Welcome

We welcome the following new members who have joined since January 2001:

Mr & Mrs John Newman, Mrs Audrey Roberts,
Dr David Reed & Dr Vasandra Karthigesu

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.

WWG

The Rye Environment Centre

The Building

In our last edition we broke the news about the discovery of Roman remains where the pool-side extension of the Centre will stand. A special foundation has been designed to bridge, and not damage, the remains and will allow the building to go ahead. Time scales for the construction have always been tight and in the event it has not proved possible to start and complete the work in time for an autumn opening without a great risk of impacting on the opening date of the Swimming Pool. The building work will now start after the pool closes at the end of the summer season and will be completed in time for the Centre to open in Spring 2002.

Themed Trails

Local 'Trail Champions' have volunteered to take forward the planning of the trails with the following themes:

Water Life Trail,
History Trail,
Trees Trail,
Exploring the Rye Trail,
Fungus Meadow Trail, and
a Garden / Sensory Trail.

An initial meeting will be held in April to ensure the Champions are all working to the same agenda and that the trails will be different but complementary and offer a range of trail lengths and interests. The aim is to have the trails in place when the Centre opens.



Some concern with regards to "Themed Trails" on the Rye has been expressed. The term 'Themed' evokes visions of "Disneyland" or garish "Country Park" type trails with their visually intrusive display boards. No one involved with the management of the Centre, the Trustees or the Trails Champions, would countenance any such development on the Rye.

The trails will be promoted by means of leaflets and, although they will require the installation of a number of small posts, these will most likely be under half a metre (2ft.) high so should not impinge on the visual amenities of the Rye.

The Trust

Seven prospective trustees have now started to meet regularly to take forward the planning for the operation of the Centre. An early task is to confirm the operating name of the Centre and then, in April, to lodge an application for registration of a Company, Limited by Guarantee. When the Certificate of Incorporation is received, probably in June, an application will be made to register the Company as a Charity.

There is still an aspiration to see a small increase in the number of trustees and additional trustees are being actively sought to encompass a wide breadth and depth of skills and experience.

Your say

Since the project's conception in 1997 a great deal of effort has gone into consultation and keeping everyone informed. At the recent Wider Group meeting there was a great deal of interest and comment on the operation of the Centre. The Trustees are very keen to maintain close contact with the Wider Group to ensure that the Centre meets the needs of the community and will lead the next meeting in May. Invitations will be sent out nearer the time and as each local group's contribution is important to the final shape of the Centre's operations please encourage your group to send a representative along.

James

Opening of
the Centre
now planned
for Spring 2002



On the trail
of a theme



Could it be a
sensory trail?



The Chiltern Way leaflet, shown here is available from the District & Tourist Board Information Offices



The Chiltern Way traverses parts of 4 counties, 10 districts and 60 parishes.



It just shows what can be done by dedicated volunteers

The Chiltern Society celebrated the Millennium by launching a new 215km circular walk in the Chilterns called the Chiltern Way

The Society, formed in 1965 with the aim of conserving the beauty and character of the Chiltern Hills, now has over 6700 members with very active Rights of Way Group (ROWG) and Conservation Volunteers (Con Vols) Group who, for many years, have looked after nearly 5000 footpaths, bridleways and byways in the Chilterns with a total length of over 2,300 miles. It only needed the incentive of the Millennium for these groups to widen their horizons and set up this new long-distance path.

When the project was first proposed early in 1999, Nick Moon, the ROWG Research Officer, well-known author of walker's guide books, and a recognized authority on Chiltern paths, volunteered to choose the route and to write the guide book.

Scenic interest is apparent in his choice of route that goes through some of the most beautiful areas of south Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire. In all the Chiltern Way traverses parts of 4 counties, 10 districts and 60 parishes.

All four Counties were approached and gave their support to the Project. Members of the ROWG and the Con Vols took on all the clearance, maintenance work and the necessary way-marking. To give an idea of the task, over 1500 waymark discs were used, and 550 finger pointers were installed, 360 by one husband/wife team. In woods where discs could not be used, white arrows and CW were painted on trees where it was necessary to define the route.

MILLENNIUM PROJECT 2000

The Chiltern Way

A 200km circular walk round the Chilterns



The Chiltern Society

This leaflet has been generously supported by Fox's of Amersham

Most of the work on the route was carried out between November 1999 and June 2000.

Whilst the ROWG & Cons Vols groups were establishing the Chiltern Way on the ground, other members of the Society dealt with publicity, fund-raising and producing maps. Fifteen thousand leaflets describing the Project were distributed and tremendous interest shown in the Project. The response from Society members

was beyond all expectations and their donations and others from local authorities, parishes, businesses, etc. was far in excess of expenditure. As a result of the tremendous support from Society members the whole Project was completed well within the time schedule and also well under budget.

The Chiltern Way was officially launched at Coleshill, near Amersham on Sunday 22 October by Olympic gold medallist Chris Brasher, Michael Rush, Chairman of the Chiltern Society and Sir John Johnson, President of the Long Distance Walkers Association and a Vice-President of the Chiltern Society.

A reception for nearly 200 guests was held in the church hall. Visitors included Cheryl Gillan, MP for Chesham and Amersham and Michael Meacher, Minister for the Environment. The minister was very supportive of the Society's work in maintaining the amenity value of the Chilterns and Chris Brasher expressed his amazement at the amount of work that had been done to establish the Chiltern Way in such a short period of time. It just shows what can be done by dedicated volunteers.

Rob Bethell
(ROWG Chiltern Way Officer)

Roaming with Responsibility

In the last issue we guardedly welcomed the new Countryside & Rights of Way Act.

In addition to promising access, the Act imposes clearly defines restrictions on our activities in the countryside - to the benefit of farmers,

The phrase 'right to roam' assigned to the revision of the Countryside Act by the media as it progressed through Parliament was misleading as it implied complete freedom of access to land. Apart from the fact that the new areas of land to which you will, in future, have right of access will be clearly defined, you will only be allowed to enter, on foot, and stay on this land for open-air recreation. Several general restrictions will apply everywhere, i.e. to land to which we already have right of access as well as any new areas to be designated.

You are not allowed to:

- ↳ damage walls, hedges, fences, gates and stiles;
- ↳ light fires;
- ↳ leave gates open;
- ↳ play organized games;
- ↳ camp;
- ↳ swim;
- ↳ feed livestock; or
- ↳ let your dogs off the lead from March-July inclusive.

Areas of the countryside you will not have right of access to include: buildings, and anywhere within 20m of domestic or livestock housing, gardens, cultivated or ploughed land, mineral workings, livestock pens, railway land, golf and race courses or aerodromes.

Landowners and managers can exclude or restrict access for up to 28 days a year (but not on bank holidays or summer weekends) irrespective of purpose. Landowners can apply for additional days for management purposes. Owners will also be able to exclude dogs from certain fields at lambing time.

Access can also be stopped or restricted where necessary for other reasons, including to avoid hazards to members of the public, at times of exceptional fire risk and for nature conservation and heritage reasons.

The bodies responsible for managing access to the countryside are the Countryside Agency or where appropriate, National Park Authority.



On 30 January the Act became law but, apart from the restrictions we detail here, you will have to wait until 2003, when the Countryside Agency hope to have produced the maps,

Since writing the above article the **Foot & Mouth** crisis has developed and my choice of title a few months ago is now even more apt. We must all exercise responsibility now and stay out of country areas to avoid unwittingly spreading the disease. This does not only mean keeping off footpaths crossing agricultural land but also footpaths crossing nature reserves, especially those where grazing stock are present such as Buttler's Hangings Nature Reserve at West Wycombe where some of the **BBOWT** sheep are currently marooned as, of course, we are unable to move them. Holtspur Bank LNR is also out of bounds as the adjoining fields, one of which we have to cross to get to the reserve, are grazed by cattle. *Maurice*

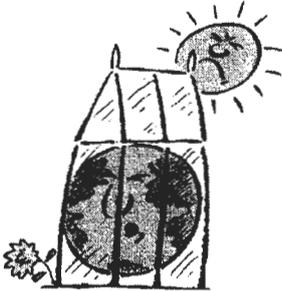
I have been notified that the Wildlife Trust Calendar of Events, which consists mainly of reserve visits and other country walks has been cancelled. Although we are publishing our programme you will note that the outdoor activities are somewhat curtailed but our normal Members and Trustees meetings will continue and we hope to at least see you at those. Our wildlife gardening sessions at West Wycombe Garden Centre are not cancelled as the Garden Centre is, of course, open to the public. *Maurice*



To check if events are on phone the contact number given



Global warming
- natural
or man-made ?



Tree planting in
Buckinghamshire
will help reduce
the greenhouse gas
carbon dioxide



Complete the
energy survey form
enclosed with the
newsletter and
get 2 free
energy efficient
light bulbs and save
on your electric bill

The consensus of the scientific community is that global warming is already with us. The question of whether there is a man-made contribution is still a source of debate although new evidence shows that we almost definitely play a part. The Met Office have developed a new modelling programme that combines the most important human and natural factors and shows strong evidence that man-made greenhouse gas emissions have been responsible for global warming over the past few decades.

The current rate of warming of 2-3 degrees centigrade per century is likely to continue for the next few decades, although the impact of climate change on individual countries requires further research.

Further bad news is that planting trees isn't going to get us out of trouble! Forests are generally darker than the ground beneath and so absorb more of the sun's heat. This is particularly so when the terrain is covered with snow. Research by the Met Office shows that in Canada and Siberia warming could be greater than the cooling effect of carbon dioxide uptake by the trees. The good news is that Buckinghamshire isn't in Siberia so planting trees is not something that we should worry about! With little or no snow to reflect the heat of the sun and absorption by grass and trees being fairly similar, planting of trees with their capacity to store carbon dioxide, should help the problem - so carry on planting!

Where does this rapid climate change leave our wildlife? Geological history shows that sudden, dramatic natural disasters such as volcanic eruptions have caused mass extinction. Are we going to be the cause of another?

Warm dry weather generally encourages faster development of the early stages of insect growth, which leads to less mortality and predation. However, if conditions become too dry, and their food less plentiful, this wouldn't be the case. It is, therefore, difficult to predict. Whilst it would be good to see an increase in insects generally, especially as they are near the bottom of the food chain, an increase in insect pests could have severe economic consequences. Bird populations are sensitive to environmental changes and pollution. Robins and chaffinches, have both shown a tendency to lay earlier as March temperatures have become warmer. However, this has made them more vulnerable to brief periods of inclement weather in April/May, and has had a serious effect on their nesting success in the past.

Met Office research suggests that Britain will see wetter winters, and in northern areas, wetter summers as well. More importantly, the frequency of intense heavy rainfall will increase and, therefore, the likelihood of flooding. This doesn't bode well for us and it probably doesn't bode well for birds either.

An international panel of scientists recently agreed that man-made causes of global warming can be conquered, but only if government policies are developed to tackle it, and only if major changes are made in other policy areas.

We can do our bit by saving energy. Please fill in the energy survey form enclosed with the newsletter and you will receive two free energy-efficient light bulbs, as well as energy efficiency advice.

Lesley Stoner

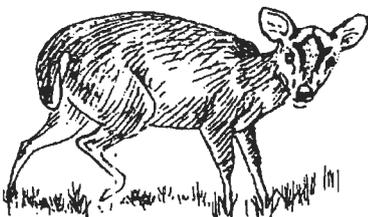
Muntjac

Six species of deer live wild in Britain; roe and red deer are indigenous. Fallow deer died out during the last ice age but were reintroduced by the Normans. Muntjac, Chinese water deer and Sika deer are all introduced species largely escapees from the very popular deer parks of the late 19th century.

The muntjac deer is a native of China and Taiwan, introduced into England in the late 19th century by the eleventh Duke of Bedford on his estate, Woburn Park in Bedfordshire. It is the smallest deer living wild in Britain, the male is about 48cm (19in), and weighs about 13.5kg (30lb), occurring over much of southern England and as far North as Lincolnshire. It has not yet been recorded in Scotland.

This small deer is a secretive animal enjoying the cover of scrub and shrubbery making its preferred habitat woodland and large gardens. Their choice of this habitat is influenced by their diet of fruit, berries, leaves, flowers, seeds and bark. This diet leads to conflict as their browsing damages shrubs and trees and endangers some flowering plant populations.

Studies done by the British Deer Society have concluded that even a small muntjac deer population can result in the grazing off of up to three quarters of oxlip flowers in one year threatening the seed production and, therefore, the survival of the oxlip in woods where the deer are present. The same has been found of the wild arum.



Damage by deer in gardens has also led to conflicts of interest. A number of deterrents have been tried by gardeners such as mothballs, human hair, unwashed socks, or even lion dung! It is thought that some deer will not walk over chicken wire. Unexpected noises that startle deer can be very effective. However plant preferences and scaring tactics mainly differ from region to region and from deer to deer.



The male muntjac has a pair of horns (antlers). V-shaped dark ridge on the forehead and glands in pits below the eyes.

The muntjac deer is sometimes known as the "Barking Deer" as both sexes occasionally bark, for various reasons; at repeated intervals of a few seconds, often for many minutes.

Muntjac are territorial and are often solitary although they can live in family groups of up to three or four. A female Muntjac will give birth to a single fawn after a gestation period of seven months. This species, however, does not have a breeding season so young

Muntjac and pregnant females can be found at all times of the year.

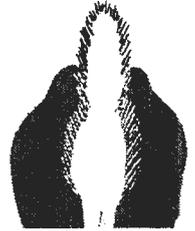
Like many other species found in the British countryside Muntjac are introduced and doing very well. It is unlikely that they will ever be lost from this country so it is for us to find a way to enjoy their presence without them undermining the fortunes of our own native species.

If you wish to find out more information about British Deer then the British Deer Society can be found at www.h.q.@bds.org.uk

Fiona Robertson
WDC Ranger Service

(more about Muntjac on page 45)

Muntjac slots (tracks) are less than 30mms long and 25mms across



Muntjac will signal alarm by raising their white tails, making them easy to identify as they disappear

Muntjac droppings are shiny black, about 10mm, & deposited in shallow scrapes usually under trees



A Project for Schools and for wildlife gardeners

Where do you usually find rotting logs ?

- on the woodland floor

What is it like on the woodland floor ?

- shady, cool & damp

So what conditions do the insects etc that feed on decaying wood like ?

- shady, cool & damp

So where should you build your log pyramid so it will attract these organisms ?

- in a -----, ---- & ---- area of your garden or school field

Stag beetle



larva

Log piles are not only beetle friendly habitats but encourage the dead wood fauna & wildlife generally in your garden

The People's Trust for Endangered Species, (PTES) founded in 1977, aims to ensure a future for many endangered species world-wide, in their natural habitats. The species which they are concerned for include a number in Britain such as the dormouse and red squirrel. They purchased - with the help of the Heritage Lottery Fund - a wood on the Isle of Wight which is home to both the dormouse and red squirrel!

They are currently promoting a conservation strategy to improve the lot of the Stag Beetle (*Lucanus cervus*). Although here in the Chilterns it is close to its northern-most limits in this country we know from the survey promoted by the Berks, Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust in 1998, which we reported in Issue no. 28 (January 1999), that it is quite common in the woods around Marlow.

The PTES have produced a leaflet and a sheet of instructions detailing how we can provide for the larvae of the Stag Beetle, and have given permission for us to present that information here so that you can do your bit to help these amazing insects. They are the UK's largest terrestrial beetle, and they thrive in Wycombe District.

What do the larvae of the Stag Beetle require? - dead wood and you can provide that with, you've guessed it - log piles. But log piles with a difference - the logs are sunk vertically into the ground. An ordinary log pile is OK provided it is in partial shade and the lowest layer of logs are partly buried, moisture being very important to the survival of the larvae of these insects.

Log piles are not only beetle friendly habitats but encourage the dead wood fauna & wildlife generally in your garden.

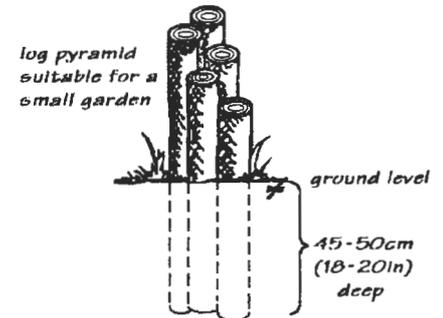
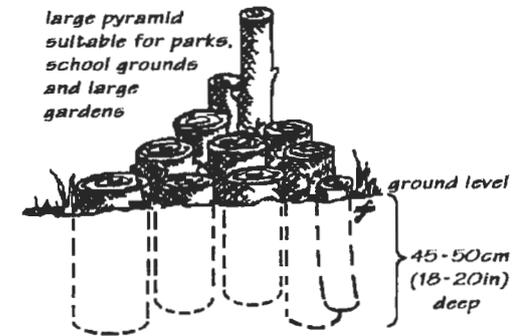
To get Stag Beetles in your logs:

Use wood from broad-leaved trees, especially oak and beech, which support the richest communities of invertebrates

* Place logs in partial shade to prevent them drying out.

* Use fresh logs with bark attached as these will generally provide habitats for the longest period of time and they also provide a wider range of habitats.

Log Piles with a Difference



* Use big logs. The larger the diameter of the logs the better; they should be at least the thickness of an adult's arm (>90mm diameter).

* Place logs on, or partly buried in, the soil where they will retain more moisture. This makes them more valuable to the Stag Beetle.

* Place the logs vertically in the soil as this will further increase the numbers of visiting insects. Don't pile logs too high as the timber on the top will dry out. Keep them in a moist but warm place and allow plants to grow over them to create shade and humidity.

Schools might like to make an artificial breeding log for Stag Beetles as it would enable the children to see the larvae without destroying the logs in their log piles.

- * Females Stag Beetles lay eggs in dead, decaying broad-leaved timber. Larvae have also been recorded in decaying broad-leaved wood-chippings and sawdust.

- * Larvae feed and develop within the decaying wood, chippings or sawdust.

- * Eggs are usually deposited below the soil surface, the female digging down to reach the ovipositing (egg laying) site. Pupation occurs in the soil and may be up to 45cm below the surface.

- * Larvae use soil particles to build the cocoon. Emerging imagos (adult beetles) dig an almost vertical tunnel to the soil surface.

- * Beetles that emerge late in the year overwinter in the soil

- * Hard-baked clayey soil poses problems for beetles attempting to break through the soil, both when emerging and when searching for an egg-laying site.

- * Deep, well-drained loamy soils seem to be the favoured habitat.

Choose a site which :

- * Is in a key area for Stag Beetles.
- * Has breeding colonies nearby.
- * Has deep well drained loamy soil
- * Has dappled shade.
- * There is some evidence that adult beetles rest on tree trunks at night and during the day. Shrubs and trees in the vicinity may therefore be of benefit.

- * Gardens with deep, loamy, 'improved' soils should be ideal.



Making & setting up an artificial "log"

(Drawings showing the construction of the artificial log are given over page)

- * Ensure that the bottom of the artificial 'log' is covered with a suitable mesh that will allow free drainage but prevent a large loss of sawdust.

- * Dig a hole 45cm (18in) deep, and wide enough to take the log.

- * Lower the 'log' into the hole leaving approximately 16cm (6.5in) protruding above the ground.

- * Replace the soil around the 'log'.

- * Fill the 'log' with deep, coarse sawdust. The sawdust must be from broad-leaved timber, preferably oak or elm. If this is not available, other hardwood sawdust will make a good substitute. Do not use softwood (pine) sawdust.

Monitoring :

- * The 'log' and sawdust should not be disturbed until any eggs that have been laid in the sawdust have had time to develop into identifiable larvae.

- * It is suggested that the 'log' be lifted during the first two weeks of May each year so that the sawdust can be examined for larvae. This will allow a ten month development period from the previous year's egg laying time. Sufficient time will also be available for the disturbed sawdust and larvae to resettle before the next adult peak emergence in June.

- * The sawdust should be tipped, a little at a time, onto plastic sheeting and examined for the presence of larvae (black plastic makes it easier to spot small larvae).

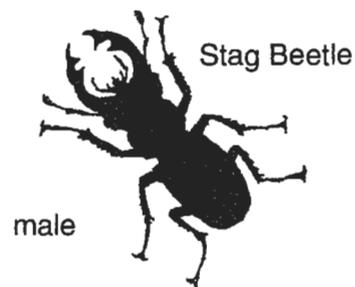
- * The depth at which any larvae are found should be noted. If possible identify the larvae.

- * If large numbers of larvae are present, remove one with some sawdust and place it in a perforated container (margarine tub). Store in a cool place until its identification can be independently confirmed.

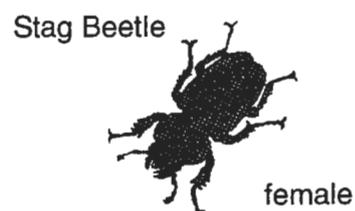
- * Count the larvae.

- * Replace the empty 'log' in the soil and then carefully replace the sawdust and any larvae as near to their original position as possible.

Stag Beetle larvae have been found in decaying wood-chippings & sawdust



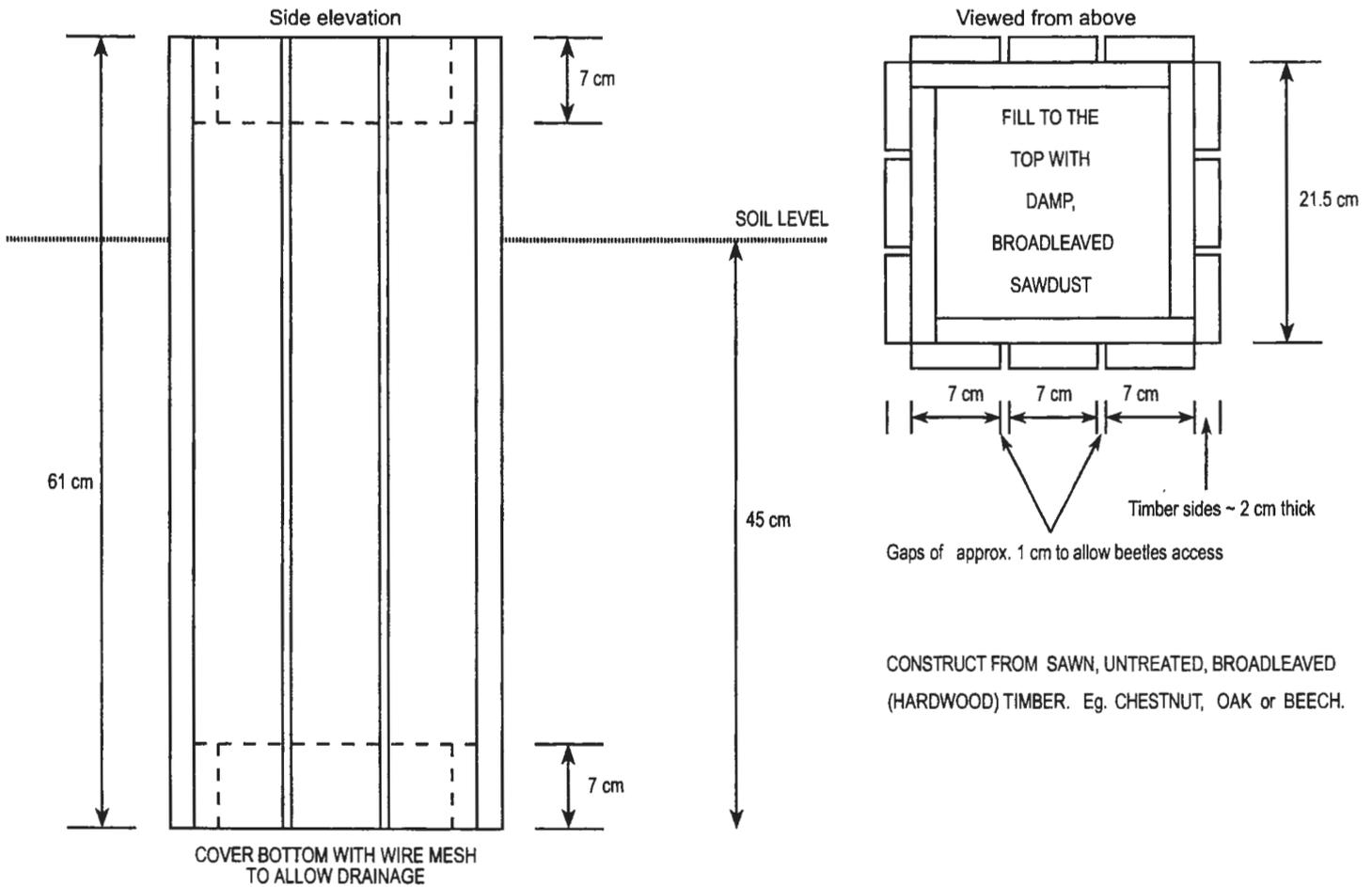
You can make an artificial "log" which you can empty once a year to find out what is living in it



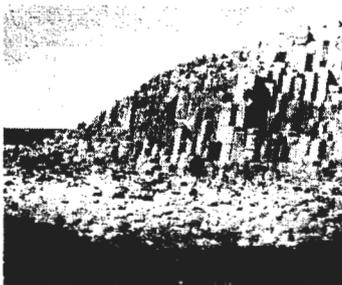
Evidence that beetles rest on trees suggests that shrubs & trees in the vicinity of a log pile may be of benefit.

Continued over.....

ARTIFICIAL BREEDING LOG FOR STAG BEETLES (*Lucanus cervus*)



“Upright” log piles can be an attractive feature of a garden or school grounds



The Giant's Causeway

Stag Beetles will not lay their eggs in decaying soft wood logs (pine & larch), hence the strict instructions, above, to use hardwood logs and sawdust. However, the larvae of other beetles and other insects do. So why not make a second log pile or artificial log using pine and pine sawdust and compare what you get in the two log piles? It is probably best if you put your artificial logs in with other logs in a log pile rather than in an isolated position on their own.

If you have room for a large “upright” log pile you could use several different types of log. If you do this, group the different types of log together, i.e. put all the oak logs together in one part of the pile and all the beech logs, etc. together in another part. The picture of a large, “upright” log pile used to illustrate the finished product in the PTES leaflet reminded me of pictures of the Giant's Causeway and clearly showed that it makes quite an attractive, abstract, wood sculpture - a nice feature for that shady corner

where you cannot seem to get any bright, showy flowers to grow.

With time the log pile will rot and crumble away and will, hopefully, have provided a home for a great variety of saprologinous (dead wood eating) organisms. But where will they live when it has rotted away?

If you have enough space you could set up log piles every few years. This would be particularly useful for schools as you will eventually have a series of log piles showing the successive stages in decay and your pupils will be able to make direct comparisons between the various stages.

Maurice

The Giant's Log Pile



The Downley Wildlife Garden Pledge

In the world of gardening one of the current trendy terms is "biodiversity". It sounds important but what actually does it mean?

Biodiversity means "the variety of life" and it has taken millions of year for the variety of living species we see around us to evolve. Each variety, or species depends on a healthy environment for it to survive and prosper, but as I am sure you know, many of our human activities are detrimental to such environments, and in the Chilterns these activities, particularly in agriculture, have already had a very substantial negative effect on our indigenous wildlife. More than 100 species of plants and animals have been lost in the UK since 1900. Wildlife and habitats in Bucks are threatened by building development, pollution, low river flows, pond filling, road traffic, as well as agricultural methods. Statistics show that nationally there has been a 95% loss to our wildflower meadows, over 60% of hedgerows (with their reservoir of winter food) and a 95% loss to our wetland peatbogs with all the associated unique and irreplaceable wildlife.

So what can we do to try to reverse this trend, or what can we do to build a reservoir of biodiversity which will then be able to recolonise when the way we manage our national landscape changes to a more sustainable and life enhancing system?

One answer is to view one's own garden, or part of it, as a mini nature reserve. It is interesting to think, when looking down on the town of High Wycombe, and its thousands of houses and gardens that it could be a refuge for wildlife, protected from the "desert" landscape of agribusiness beyond the town. A wildlife garden is a fascinating concept in this world of ours. As habitats have been lost elsewhere, gardens have become refugee camps for a tremendous range of wildlife, but there is always more that can be done.

For example the selection of plants, and materials such as pesticides and composts, affect wildlife. With a few simple changes and at little cost, your garden could become home to a fantastic variety of wild plants & animals.

The Downley Wildlife Garden Pledge Scheme, supported by **Earthwatch**, asks you to pledge that you will, for a minimum of one year, reserve part or all of your garden as a wildlife garden, managing it on basic ecological and sustainable principles. During that time it would be useful if you could keep a record of any changes you make and list the variety of wildlife you observe. It is hoped that at the end of the year, (late winter, February /March 2002) there will be a social event to exchange experiences and compare notes! There is an excellent publication produced by the **Berkshire, Buckinghamshire & Oxfordshire Wildlife Trusts (BBOWT)**, entitled "Gardeners Wildlife Challenge" which is a guide to those prepared to have a go at this project. You can obtain this publication from John Willson (tel 01494 525966). **Aylesbury Vale Countryside Service** and **Wycombe District Council Ranger Service** produce "A Practical Guide on How to Create Gardens for Wildlife" which can be obtained from Lesley Stoner, Environmental Co-ordinator, Wycombe District Council, (tel. 01494 421744).

John Willson

We hope the organizers of this commendable scheme get an enthusiastic response from the residents of the Downley area and we look forward to reporting their progress and successes in coming issues.

It would be really great if other residents' groups in High Wycombe were to take on the Wildlife Gardening Challenge and set up similar schemes.

Maurice

*The Downley
Wildlife Garden
Pledge Project*

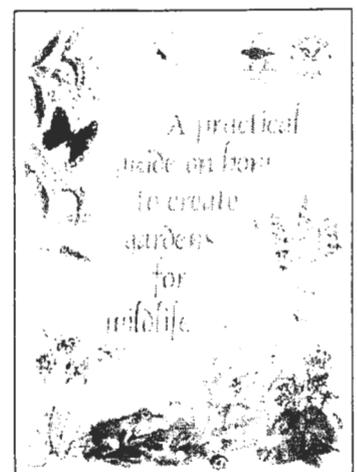
I pledge that I will, for a minimum of one year, manage part or all of my garden on wildlife and natural principles.

Name: _____
Address: _____

Tel No: _____
Email: _____

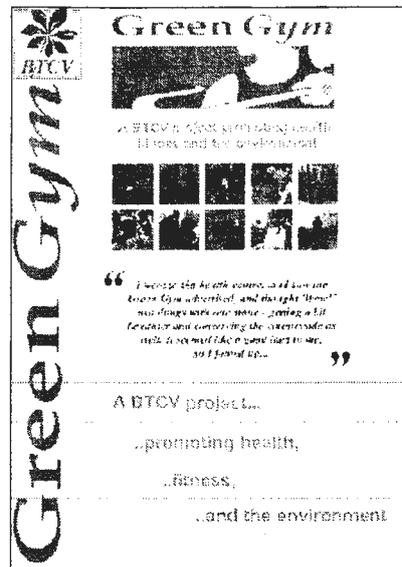
The Downley Wildlife Garden Pledge Project is supported by Earthwatch
J Willson 2001

A copy of the above pledge leaflet is available to Downley residents from J. Willson



The Downley Wildlife Garden Pledge Scheme is supported by Earthwatch

Did you wonder what's that ?
when Lesley Stoner mentioned
GREEN GYMS in her article
about Lane End in the previous issue
It is a BTCV initiative so we have asked
Marion Lyon of BTCV
to tell us all about it



Green Gym meets
the objectives of
Agenda 21 by
empowering people
to make a difference
to their environment
at a local level

GREEN GYM started as a BTCV pilot project in Oxfordshire, and is now spreading across the country....

Enjoy getting fitter

GREEN GYM gives a chance for people of all ages to enjoy getting fitter, out in the open air, with others, while benefiting the environment !

BTCV - is the
UK's largest conservation
charity, helping
over 130,000 volunteers
take hands-on action
to improve their
local environment.

GREEN GYM is designed to improve physical fitness by a series of warm up & cool down exercises, at the start and finish of each practical conservation task.

Approved and prescribed by GPs, nurses and health visitors, it is official that:

*By looking after the environment,
you can look after yourself too !*

If you are interested in more information or setting up **GREEN GYM** in the Wycombe area contact: Yvonne Trehalik at BTCV 01403 730572 or visit the BTCV web site www.btcv.org/web
Marion Lyon



Invitation

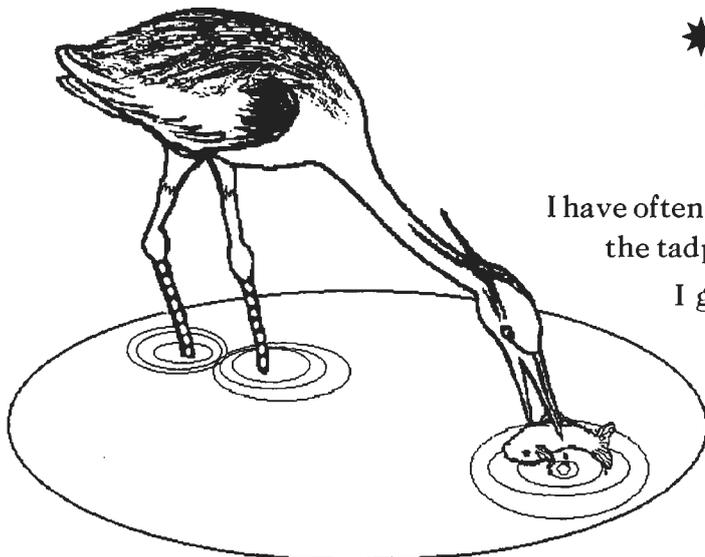
For a gentle introduction to some green gymnastics why not come on our Grange & Terriers Farm surveys (see opposite page). A gentle walk of a mile or two with frequent stops and then, when you feel a little more adventurous you could join Roger Wilding's work parties at the Chairborough Road or Sheepridge Nature Reserves, then some BTCV work parties. *Maurice*



**Wildlife News Snippet
- a problem solved -**

I have often fretted about the goldfish in my pond which polish off the tadpoles each year.

I got them to keep down the mosquito population. I've long wanted a wildlife pond but my sensitivities made it hard for me to kill the goldfish. Anyway it seems like the balance of nature is intervening as we had a grey heron by the pond yesterday (22/3/2001 around 4.30pm)
James



Grange Farm & Terriers Farm

putting their flora & fauna on record

Wycombe Wildlife Group will begin a survey of the areas around Grange Farm & Terriers Farm later this year. They form part of the local development plan and although any development is probably some years away a survey now will identify and help to protect any areas of particular wildlife value.

Our work is planned to start in April (foot and mouth restrictions permitting) and will initially concentrate on mapping the trees on the site and highlighting those considered to be of high biological or amenity value. We will also make incidental recordings of other flora and fauna on the site and pass all our records to the County Biological Recorder at Halton.



If you would like to support this work by joining one or more of our survey parties please let us know. Don't be put off if you have not done this sort of work before as we will provide the necessary guidance.

You can register your interest by writing to :

The Secretary,
Wycombe Wildlife Group,
C/O 17 Tamar Close,
High Wycombe,
Bucks, HP13 7BQ

or via our Web Site at:

www.wycombewildlifegrp.co.uk

We will then get in touch with you to let you know more once arrangements have been finalized.

James



If you want to get to know your plants & trees come and help with this survey - do something positive to help protect your local environment

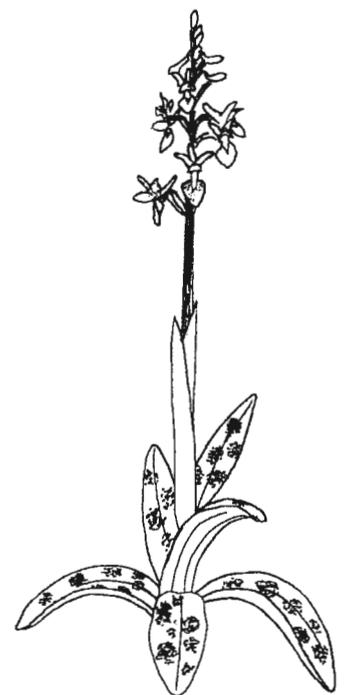
Muntjac & Conservation

As Fiona said in her account (page 39) The Muntjac diet of almost anything green brings them into conflict with gardeners and conservationists. At Homefield Wood the reserve manager, Bill Havers, has had to protect hazel stools after coppicing so they regenerate, as the Muntjac and Roe deer will browse off all the regrowth from unprotected stools.

At Holtspur Bank Muntjac show a particular liking for the early purple orchids and two years ago took all but one of several hundred flowers. As with the hazel at Homefield the Friends of Holtspur Bank LNR have had to protect the main area of the orchids in order to protect seed production and ensure the survival and spread of this orchid in Cut-throat Wood.

Muntjac deer are found everywhere in Wycombe and adjacent Districts, they have been recorded by members of Wycombe Wildlife Group in the centre of Wycombe, in the cemetery, and along Amersham Road. One was seen clambering over a 4 ft high fence in a back garden in Amersham Hill Drive. In east Wycombe they have been seen along the railway embankment, at Wycombe Heights Golf Course, and at Rayner's Avenue. Hughenden Manor (NT), Gomm Valley Nature Reserve, & Hazlemere Recreation Ground are other places where they have been spotted, and in woodland further out, of course, in Langley and Penn Woods.

Pat



Early purple orchid
(*Orchis mascula*)



Stop Press : **Did you see ?** Waxwing - Hughenden - 26/03/01

Reports: WDC Ranger Service



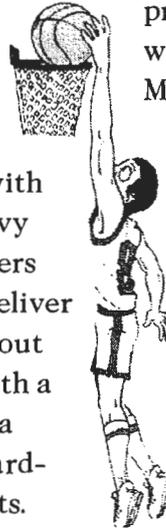
Delivering
teenage facilities

The third phase
of the
Woodland Strategy
to be published

Following the departure of Ian and Steve some long time ago two new recruits have joined our service : Paul Leatherland and Kenley Thomas, Paul taking on Steve Crosby's role of Woodland Ranger.

Whilst looking forward to the Environment Centre opening Easter next year the coming months will be filled with new activities involving a heavy workload. This year the Rangers have a heavy programme to deliver of Teenage facilities; "hanging out areas" consisting of shelters with a netball/basketball hoops and a hard surface to allow skateboarding use rather than local streets. At the same time play areas will be refurbished or rebuilt.

Foot and Mouth disease has had its effects on our conservation / woodland operations, curtailing many planned visits and work parties and associated events. Most of our LNR's and other footpathed open spaces have been closed but as there is plenty of other work to do the Foot and Mouth problem allows us other opportunities such as carrying out a Phase 1 Habitat Survey with those WDC areas in which we are involved.



Of major importance this year will be the up dating of Management Plans for all conservation sites and the input of information and records in a more freely accessible archive. Computer programmes are being looked at which will fit with the Council's GIS and Mapinfo systems.

This year too marks the end of the second phase of the Woodland Strategy and the publication of the action plans for the third phase.

The third phase will be more one of consolidation rather than any great changes. Interpretation, leafleting and signage should show improvement. The publication of the Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) should also generate actions. The BAP calls for the delivery of conservation by all sectors of society and we hope to support more "Friends of Groups" to become interested in their local environment together with support for the individual.

We shall do well if we complete our targets but we know we have the support of **WWG** group.

Mike Ambrose
WDC Ranger Service

(GIS - Global Information System)

Demonstration Wildlife Garden - West Wycombe Garden Centre -

The first work party of the new season took place at our **Demonstration Wildlife Garden** at **West Wycombe Garden Centre** on Saturday 17th March, 2001. Four hardy members braved sleet and drizzle to tidy up the garden after its winter rest (Temperatures of -12°C have been recorded at West Wycombe Garden Centre, taking their toll of at least one Hebe, and possibly other shrubs) Leaves and dead foliage were consequently cleared away, and a new border prepared to

mark the boundary of the wildlife garden. Though it remained cold, the weather soon improved, and a hot cup of tea, supplied by the Centre staff, was much appreciated.

If anyone else would like to do something for wildlife outside the home (which doesn't incur a £5000 fine) then their help would be most welcome at any future wildlife gardening sessions (See programme)

Pat



Wildlife Watching

January Watch - held on a very frosty but sunny day, and very well attended by children and parents who wanted to join the walk from Downley to Hughenden. We walked the route the undertaker from Downley took to get to the church.

Everyone was fascinated to find out that the old air raid shelter at the back of Hughenden Manor is now well populated by bats.

On the return walk to Downley we all had a chance to look down the 200 ft well - beautifully restored and maintained by the owners of Well Cottage.



February Watch - again very well attended by children and parents alike, was held in Gomm Wood. The Ranger Service helped us to coppice hazel which, along with willow, was used to model wildlife sculptures.

It poured with rain on every-one but the children and adults alike made some marvellous sculptures.

Anyone over the age of 8 is welcome to join **WATCH**.

Wendy

Contact: Wendy Thomas
01494 814068



Web Links Request

www.wycombewildlifegrp.co.uk

We are keen to create reciprocal links with other environmentally-minded local groups' web sites. If your group would be happy for us to display your web address on our site please use the "Contact Us" page to let us know.

www. & e-mails

Our web sites :

www.wycombewildlifegrp.co.uk

www.comunigate.co.uk/bucks/wwg

Committee members e-mail addresses :

Chairman : James Donald :

james_donald_new.uk@excite.co.uk

Newsletter editor :

Pat Morris:roymorris@freeuk.com

Maurice Young :

mauriceyoung@madasafish.com

snail-mail

Secretary WWG

17 Tamar Close

High Wycombe

HP13 7BQ

Chairman WWG

73 Carver Hill Road

High Wycombe

HP11 2UB

WWG

Would you like to join us ?

If so complete this application (or a photocopy) and send to :
WWG Membership Secretary
(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)





WILDLIFE NOTICE BOARD



Did You See ?



Amphibians - its that time of year !

First frogs in amplexus, Irenke's pond - 17/02/01
 Pat's pond - 20/02/01
 Greatest number frogs - 130 - Roger's pond
 First frog spawn - Pat's pond - 26/02/01
 - Irenke's pond - 10/03/01
 1st newts - Irenke's pond - 07/03/01

Birds

Grey wagtail - Pat's garden - 0/01/01
 Kingfisher - R. Wye, Oakridge Rd - 11/03/01

The WWG Contact list :

Chairman & Membership Secretary :
 James Donald, 01494 637877
 Newsletter Editor : Pat Morris, 01494 529484
 Site Management Co-ordinator :
 Roger Wilding, 01494 438374
 Treasurer : Peter Hazzard,
Wycombe wildlife WATCH & WWG Secretary :
 Wendy Thomas, 01494 814068
 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 (m' Chilterns branch.)	Sandy MacFarlane	01844 343004
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 755596
Pann Mill Group	To be appointed	- - - - -
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 Raimbach	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 Maurice Young 01628 472000
 or the WDC Rangers: 01494 421824