

Issue 37

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**JANUARY
2002**

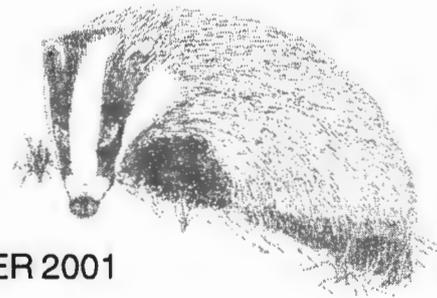
Incorporating
Countryside News



ONE OF LIFE'S ADVENTURES

PHENOLOGY

WILDLIFE NEWS
THE BADGER
BUCKS BADGER GROUP



HUGHENDEN - SUMMER 2001

THE HUGHENDEN STREAM

SHEEPRIDGE POND RESTORED

WYCOMBE DISTRICT RANGER SERVICE



CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS
BEE & WASP NURSERY

HIGH WYCOMBE NATURAL HISTORY - PAST & PRESENT
MEZEREON

REPORTS
FUNGUS FORAY - PENN WOODS
WILDLIFE GARDEN - 2001
WILDLIFE WATCH

E-MAILS & WEBS



NOTICE BOARD
DID YOU SEE ?

CONTACT LIST - YOUR GUIDE TO LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

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 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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Illustrations by:

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Clip art: Nova, Art Explosion

Printed by :

Design & Print

Wycombe District Council

Wycombe Wildlife Group

is a Registered Charity

Reg. Charity no: 1075175

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Editorial

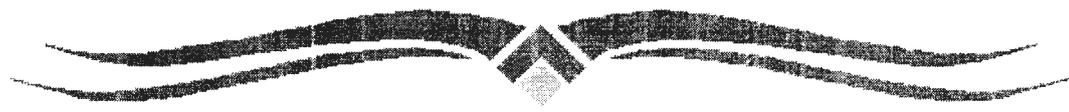
Phenology catches on : Phenology, that word that has been cropping up with monotonous regularity in this Newsletter since January 1997, has now reached national status, it seems. When member Angus Idle first mentioned phenology five years ago, and appealed for information regarding flowering times of plants and their location, he met with little response. Now, however, with the Woodland Trust and the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology behind the project, along with the support of BBC weather forecaster Isabel Lang, and coverage from television radio and newspapers alike there are more than 11,000 people nation-wide, busily observing changes in Britain's countryside.

Phenology - The study of recurring phenomena such as animal migration, especially as influenced by climatic conditions

Why has the Woodland Trust become involved? Because they feel that climate change is the biggest single threat to our ancient woodland heritage. Records supplied by 11,000 observers (the Woodland Trust hope they will attract even more) will be of immense help to scientists studying the effects of climate change, and specifically the effect on woodland.

The Woodland Trust has found a more user-friendly term for phenology: Nature's calendar. Into this calendar are entered the dates of the arrival and departure of birds, the emergence of butterflies, and, of course, the flowering of plants, and when trees lose their leaves. Anyone can join in. Members of Wycombe Wildlife Group do so regularly and a selection of their observations are produced both on the back and within the Newsletter. Children could also take part, and this is where the Woodland Trust hope to extend their campaign.

continued at foot of page 69



New members - Welcome

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

Mr R.I.Grayston and Family

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.

One of life's adventures

Continuing the saga of the exploits of
James Donald, Wycombe Wildlife Group Chairman,
in South America

Being so close to the equator the day length at the Research Site is around 12 hours, all year round, so our days started around 6 o'clock. It was lovely to be woken by the cock crowing (although usually it was the generator being switched on!) and after dinner we'd generally go to bed well before ten, snuggling under the warm alpaca wool blankets.

The forest at this altitude is also known as cloud forest as at times it stands in the clouds. The dry season starts towards the end of June and although it did rain it was not drenching or long lasting. Despite being almost on the equator the climate was quite temperate and felt a lot like home, indeed the forest is not hot and steamy and full of biting insects at 2200 metres.

The project work was important but fairly simple with a number of different tasks for the volunteers to undertake, including:

Job 1 - Collecting

The first thing I had to do was brush up my childhood caterpillar finding skills. It sounded so easy at the briefing, but you know, they don't wave flags as you approach. Even so the team of six volunteers, together with help from the scientists on site, collected in excess of 600 caterpillars. Each one was carefully recorded in the field, with notes being made about which instar, (too young and we left them), details of their coloration, and their behaviour when stroked with a paintbrush or gently pinched with tweezers, (these two activities to test the likely reaction to attack by parasitic flies or wasps), and a note of the food plant on which they were found.

Job 2 - Processing

This involved logging the specimens as they came into the laboratory. The field record was translated into

a more permanent record and an attempt made to identify which family was represented by the caterpillar. There is no field guide to Butterflies and Moths in Ecuador and most of the species were unknown. Emerging adults will be sent to taxonomists to be named and a huge data base is being set up on the world wide web and to show pictures of the caterpillar and the adult as well as details of the food plant and parasitoids. The last part of this "induction" process was to place the caterpillar in a plastic bag, along with some leaves from its food plant and hang them in line.

Job 3 - "Zoo"

Remember those soggy, smelly leaves & frass (caterpillar droppings) from your childhood collections? Well, it's the same today, and every bag needed daily attention. The contents were carefully removed and the caterpillar examined for any evidence of pupation or parasitoids. The bag was then turned inside out, the food plant added to the "shopping list", if required, and the caterpillar put back inside. Any which had pupated or showed signs of parasitoids were transferred to other parts of the lab for special observation.

Job 4 - Shopping

This was a very cheap way to shop, all it took was time, an ability to recognize a number a food plants in the field, and picking fresh food to take back to the laboratory.

Job 5 - Recording Outcomes

By the time we left the project we had seen several caterpillars pupate, or the parasitoids had evidenced themselves, but although it was somewhat disappointing that no adults had emerged, we will be kept updated on the outcomes and the levels of parasitism. (continued over....)



it was lovely to be woken by the cock crowing

I had to brush up my childhood caterpillar finding skills

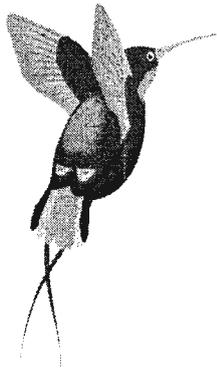


stroked with a paint brush



pinched with tweezers

Conclusion of One of Life's Little Sagas



The best ?

The worst ?

With the jobs done the rest of the time was yours, to eat, sleep, talk, read, play basketball or soccer, walk, watch the humming birds, be fascinated by the leaf-cutter ants, see the giant earth-worm holes, trek off to a waterfall, go fishing, move rocks from the river to build a bit more path at the station, walk several kilometres in pouring rain to borrow tools to fix the generator, spot the spectacled bear amble across the dirt road in front of the pick-up, visit the market to buy fresh fruit and vegetables. . . . to dream of going back?

What was the best bit? – the two weeks!

And the worst? – did you ever hear of Montezuma?

My thanks to everyone who made the experience possible – if you are interested in taking part in an Earthwatch expedition **GO FOR IT!**

Further information can be found at the following web sites :

Earthwatch
www.earthwatch.org

Millenium Commission
www.millenium.gov.uk

Dr Lee Dyer
<http://mesastate.edu/~ldyer/>

Yanayacu Biological Station
www.yanayacu.org/greeney.html

Harold Greeney
www.sheridanhill.com/greeney.html

James

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Rusty the Red Kite makes a personal appearance

People attending a red kite talk organized by **Wycombe Wildlife Group** at Bassetsbury Manor on 8th October 2001, got more than they expected, when Rusty the red kite made a personal appearance. Speaker David Lovegrove produced this life-sized replica of a red kite to demonstrate the bird's enormous wingspan (175-195 cm) the entire width of David's out-stretched arms.

It also illustrated the bird's markings, reddish plumage, dove-grey head, and white underwing patches, and forked tail.

David pointed out Rusty's slim legs which, even if real, would be incapable of carrying off gamebirds or lambs, a crime for which it was

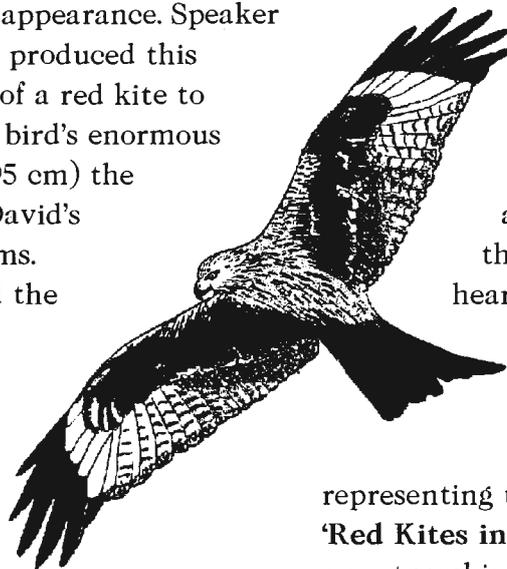
unjustly persecuted in the past. Red kites are mainly carrion feeders, the only live part of their diet consisting of small mammals, birds and insects.

Only one person in the audience had never seen a red kite, but such is the local interest in this once-almost-extinct bird that the room was packed to hear the talk, and several people who had not pre-booked had to be turned away.

David Lovegrove was

representing the 'Red Kites in the Chilterns' Project a partnership between RSPB and the Chilterns Conservation Board.

For further information on red kites, contact Cathy Rose telephone : 01844 271306



Wingspan of
175 - 195 cm
(5'8" - 6'4")

Pat Morris

Late bloomers

If you have been out & about lately you will have noticed numerous species of plants in flower again. This is not an uncommon phenomenon at this time of year, but this year it has been very pronounced. What causes this seasonal amnesia in the plant world. Why should they try to flower out of season.

To answer that, you first have to know how plants know when to flower normally. Except for the few species which always flower in winter, take the Snowdrop, the Elm and the Hazel for instance, many other species like to flower when the weather is usually more clement. As the weather is notoriously variable, one might expect flowering to follow that year's weather, but no. Plants use a "clock" which is much more constant than the variable climate, namely the length of the day as the seasons change. In fact it is actually the length of the night which they respond to. During the winter the nights are long enough and cold enough to prevent flowering, unless a plant is silly enough to grow next to a street lamp. During the spring the nights get shorter and at the right date flower initiation takes place. In what are called long-day plants, such as buttercups. Flowering will then take place after the required gestation period, so long as the other factors such as rainfall and warmth are OK. There are some species, such

as the Chrysanthemum which respond to lengthening nights to initiate flowering (short-day plants) In the autumn, the length of the night will again approach that which the plant used to initiate flowering in the spring. Normally that signal is overridden by the increasing cold, but a few species always give flowering another try. Cocksfoot grass is a good example of this. Other species such as Red and White Clover often give flowering a try, but then change their minds, so to speak, and produce little leaves instead of petals. This year, with October being a record warm month with September similarly warm, the clues to override the flowering instinct were just not available to many species, and so they went ahead and had their own Indian summer. There have been Brambles in full bloom, Buttercups and Hawk-beard flowering in the grassland, and grasses such as Golden Oat, False Oat, Perennial Ryegrass, Cocksfoot and of course Annual Meadowgrass were much in evidence. Annual Meadowgrass will of course carry on flowering throughout the winter regardless of daylength, and is called a day-neutral plant. If you want to find out more about this, look up Photoperiodism in a dictionary of biology.

Angus

or better still read about it in:

"Plantwatching - How plants live, feel & work"
by Malcolm Wilkins (Macmillan Books, 1988)

Maurice



Cocksfoot grass
(*Dactylis glomerata*)



Perennial ryegrass
(*Lolium perenne*)

Our Education Officer, Maurice Young, suggests that there are some splendid phenology projects here for schools, and anyone who has ever worked with children will know how splendid young people are at spotting things.

If you would like to become an observer of Nature's Calendar, contact :
Jill Attenborough, Phenology Project Manager, UK Phenology Network,
The Woodland trust, Freepost, Autumn Park, Grantham, Lincolnshire NG31 6BR.
And , of course, **Wycombe Wildlife Group** will still welcome news of your sightings. An observant New Year !

Pat Morris

Phenology Network
details

The Badger



The badger's preferred habitat is woodland

The Badger (*Meles meles*) is a member of the family Mustelidae which includes the stoat, weasel, & polecat. Badgers can be found throughout the British Isles, but are not common and, due to their nocturnal habits, are rarely seen. Their preferred habitat is woodland with access to open ground, where they will construct an extensive network of tunnels to live in (the sett), preferring an area that is easy to dig, dry, relatively warm, safe from predators, unlikely to collapse and with cover around it so that the young can play in relative safety. They try to avoid heavy clays and prefer sandy soils.

They can wreak havoc and ruin a pristine lawn

The sett will also be situated near to a plentiful food source, the most important of which is the earthworm which makes up a large part of the diet. This will be supplemented by a wide variety of other foods including grubs, berries, vegetables, underground plant storage organs, beetles and other small animals. A ready source of which can be a nearby garden where they can wreak havoc and ruin a pristine lawn.

Those who have this problem can find it very difficult to deter them because they are very good at forcing their way through any garden fence.

Signs of badgers can be seen in many of our local woodlands. The most obvious sign is an extensive network of tunnels with the entrances being about two foot wide but this does not necessarily mean that there are still badgers about. Further investigation may uncover further signs, these may include latrines which are shallow holes dug in the ground with droppings in that are generally elongated, not twisted or coiled and are often loose if their diet is earthworms but can contain beetle and other insect remains. Often you will also find fresh scratch marks on nearby trees and logs. Where ground conditions are suitable you may find footprints that are often described as like those of a teddy bear because usually only the main pad and four round toes are clearly seen.

The badger will use the same routes back and forth to its foraging ground so you are likely to find an extensive network of runs through the undergrowth which will often go straight through any fences in their way. If you follow the run to open areas where the badgers forage another sign of badgers at work can be seen in the form of shallow holes which they dig in search of food.

Tony Speight (WDC Ranger Services)

The law on badgers

The badger is protected under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 although this has not prevented them from being persecuted by farmers because they carry bovine TB and it is believed that they can pass it on to cattle, although this hasn't been proven. Under the law it is illegal to kill or injure a badger or to have one in your possession, live or dead. It is also illegal to disturb any area within 20 metres of a badger's sett, e.g. by cutting down trees.

Bucks Badger Group

The **Group** was formed in 1986 and, in common with another eighty Groups throughout the country have the following aims:

- a) Record and analyse all sett records and sightings of dead badgers. This information is invaluable for effective protection.
- b) Offer advice and help to Planning Authorities, Road Engineers and the general public on a wide range of badger issues.
- c) Liaise with the Police and the RSPCA to help combat illegal activities. Regrettably some badger persecution does take place in our County, although badgers and their setts are protected by law. We also campaign for a ban on the use of all snares.
- d) By talks and the use of display boards we educate children and adults on the problems that badgers face and what can be done to help.
- e) To rescue, rehabilitate and return to the wild, where possible, any sick or injured badger.

Any information you have about badgers in the area would be gratefully received. I already have lots of historical information from the area but I would prefer it to receive it twice than not receive it at all.

Badgers have been persecuted for centuries and still are despite full legal protection to both badgers and their setts.

Digging badgers out and baiting with dogs is one of many threats they face. Lamping badgers at night using high powered lights is a crime that goes undetected.

Any suspicious activity near a sett should be reported to the police/RSPA and the badger group immediately.

Road deaths account for about 20% of the adult population each year and both legal and illegal snares cause horrendous injuries.

If you would like to know more about badgers, we suggest the following:

Badgers by Michael Clarke, published by Wittett Books; The Natural History of Badgers by Ernest Neal and Chris Cheesinan, published by T & A D Poyser

Group Activities:

We produce a quarterly newsletter and have workshops and field and evening meetings. Field work and studies can be undertaken and there are opportunities for both adults and children to watch badgers without disturbing them.

The Badger Group are members of the National Federation of Badger Groups and also the Mammal Society. These groups can be joined independently. They both produce excellent newsletters and have active junior sections.

How you can help

You do not need to join the group to help badgers in Buckinghamshire. You can help us by providing information direct to one of the following contacts. Please keep these numbers handy or add to the memory of a mobile phone.

High Wycombe/Missenden:

01494 866908

Stokenchurch: 01494 483673

Beaconsfield/Chalfonts: 01494 677633

Thames Valley Police, Wildlife Liaison Officer: 01753 506363

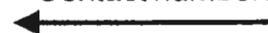
or e-mail me on:

badgersinbucks@btinternet.com
or for urgent calls, use my mobile
07887 955861. *Mike Collard*

study
advise
liaise
educate
rescue
rehabilitate



Contact numbers



Please report
any suspicious
activities
in the vicinity
of any badger sets

Hughenden - Summer 2001

Sarah Bentley leads Chalk-stream Walk

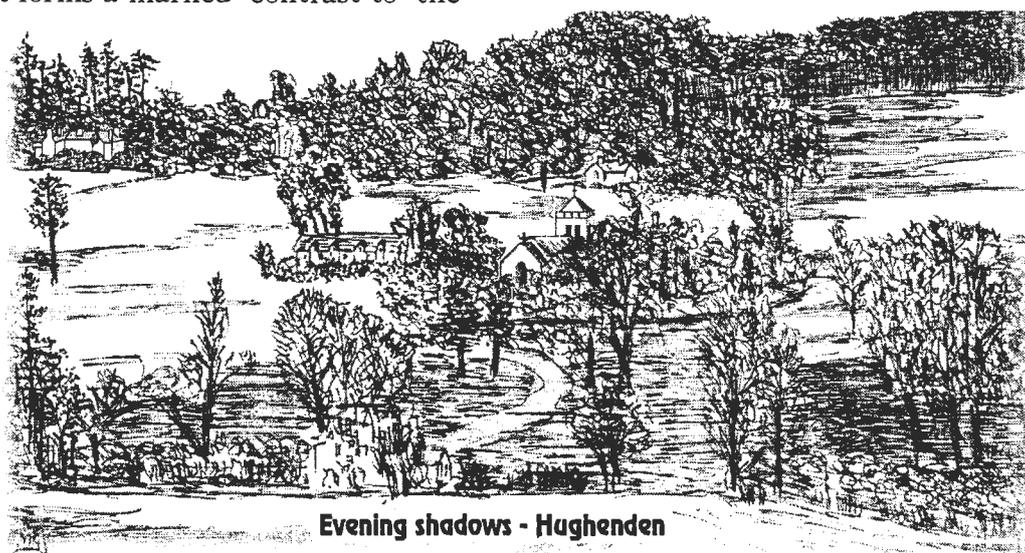
In
Hughenden Park
the stream flows
swiftly

On Wednesday 11th July Sarah Bentley led Wycombe Wildlife Group's evening walk along the chalk stream from Hughenden Park to Hughenden Manor. Sarah explained how rare the Chalk Stream habitat is on a global scale, and how important it is to look after this heritage.

In Hughenden Park the stream is flanked by dense vegetation, and it flows swiftly through narrow banks. It forms a marked contrast to the

The National Trust has been able to do something about the degraded banks, however, without causing contention, and has fenced off a section of the stream where it is not noticeable from the Manor, and thus keep the cattle out. The public can still gain access through a couple of gates. The improvement to the bankside vegetation, so important to chalk-stream wildlife, was already

In the National Trust
area its swift flow is
slowed by weirs



Evening shadows - Hughenden

adjacent National Trust area, where there is little bankside vegetation, due to trampling by grazing cattle, and its swift flow is held up by a series of weirs.

The weirs were first created in the 1830's, and were restored by the National Trust in the mid 1980's amidst public protest. Now they have become an accepted amenity and no doubt there would be a public outcry if they were to be removed. However Sarah pointed out that the weirs do not provide good chalk stream habitat: sediment is dropped in them and this damages the water's clarity and causes a build-up of water weed – in this case water crowfoot. The weirs, in their current state, also prevent the progress of fish upstream.

apparent during the July visit.

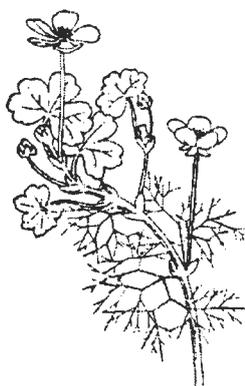
The walk ended with a surprise guided tour round Hughenden Parish Church, led by the verger, Arthur Johnson, after choir practice had finished. After this there was only time to admire the view and return home.

Thanks to Sarah for a most interesting walk, and to Arthur Johnson for his impromptu tour of the Church.

Pat Morris & Angus Idle

Editor's Note:

Since this article was written, all the bank-side vegetation in Hughenden Park has been cut down, leaving the stream open to people and dogs. In mid-November, loose vegetation was impeding the stream's flow beneath one of the bridges, and rubbish had been dumped in the stream.



Water crowfoot
(*Ranunculus peltatus*)

The Hughenden Stream

Neil Harris outlines its management - past, present & future

Background

The parkland at Hughenden is a well-known and much-loved local attraction. The fields that surrounded the Church were amalgamated into a parkland setting by John Norris II in the 1820's and 30's. The valley road was realigned in 1828 to take it away from the line of the river. The bridge (1830) replaced a ford sited some 100m downstream. John Norris II completed his work in the North Park by realigning the river; taking it around what is now the sports ground. Weirs were constructed and pools formed, to hold brown trout. The gravelly areas beneath the weirs provided spawning areas.

The South Park (now owned by Wycombe District Council) was developed by Benjamin Disraeli from 1848 onwards. He was very fond of conifers & planted many, both in the park and in other parts of the estate.

Future Plans

The National Trust commissioned a complete landscape survey and plan for the future, in 1994. This plan - the Hughenden Estate Landscape Restoration Plan - is our blueprint for future works in the park and the wider estate.

Work specific to the river includes further tree planting along the river-bank, in particular alder and crack willow. These trees will not only be beneficial to wildlife; they will also help screen the clubhouses from the park.

Management

Livestock has grazed the park since its earliest days; indeed the upper section of the Wycombe District Council parkland was grazed only decades ago. Nowadays cattle only graze the National Trust Park, and yet it is the ever-increasing dog

population that has done more damage to the banks than the cattle. The habit of throwing sticks for dogs into the deeper parts of the river has caused considerable erosion damage to the edges of the weirs. Works to remedy this are taking place. However, finding a permanent solution without resorting to hard revetment works will be difficult. As Sarah mentioned on her walk, we have excluded stock from a 120m length of the river. This should improve the habitat for invertebrates, nesting birds, and plants.

The river last dried up in 1996; most of the trout and some coarse fish were rescued and re-homed in the Wye and the Thames. The Environment Agency restocked the river last winter, the eggs hatched around New Year, and after about 7 months the fish were between 4" and 6" long. This shows the large number of invertebrates in the river. We are also exploring the possibilities of installing fish swims to enable fish to move upstream, and work to aerate the gravels beneath the weirs.

The importance of North Park, especially in relation to the house and garden mean that the aesthetic views to and from the river take precedence over works that might restore the river to a true chalk-stream type. However we are determined to improve the nature conservation interest wherever possible, in line with the National Trust's own management objectives.

Neil Harris

(Hughenden & West Wycombe Properties Estate warden, November 2001)

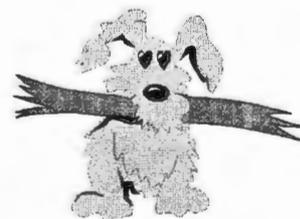
Neil will be giving a talk on the Hughenden Stream on Monday, 11th February 2002. See programme for details

The fields surrounding the Church were amalgamated into parkland in the 1820's & 30's

Weirs were constructed and pools formed, to hold brown trout



The bridge (1830) replaced a ford



1994
Hughenden Estate
Landscape Restoration
Plan

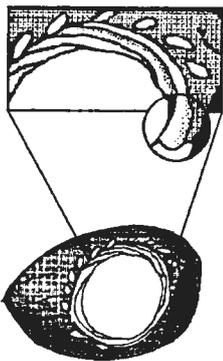
STOP PRESS: Very last? Red Admiral - Pat's garden - 08/12/2001
Hoverfly (*Erisyrphus balteatus*) - Hazlemere - 06/12/2001

Sheepridge Pond Restored

Our thanks to
**Little Marlow
Parish Council**
for funding the task



and our thanks to
**Earthworks
Conservation
Volunteers,**
James Donald and to
the Ranger Service



Hazel nut
nibbled by a
Dormouse

Some ten years ago, when we created **Sheepridge Nature Reserve** on the land between Sheepridge Lane and the Little Marlow Cemetery, one of the main tasks was to build a pond. The result was a great success, providing much wildlife interest. Unfortunately, the pond liner became damaged at one end, resulting in a low water level even in wet weather.

Last year I was approached by one of the local Parish Councillors, who asked if we would be restoring the pond and I said I would like to if we could obtain the necessary funding. A follow-up site visit and submission of estimated costs resulted in **Little Marlow Parish Council** considering and agreeing to fund the restoration project. I then contacted **Earthworks Conservation Volunteers** to arrange for their help with this major undertaking.

On Saturday 3rd November work commenced and the whole of that morning was spent digging out the existing vegetation which had formed a tight matted mass in the remaining mud and water. The next stage was to improve the shape of the original pond, removing some of the former steep banks. By mid-afternoon we

were ready to line the pond with old carpets to protect the expensive rubber liner which was manoeuvred carefully into position. It's amazing how much a 36ft by 30ft liner weighs.

At last we were ready to fill the pond with water and, using some 360 ft of garden hose connected to the cemetery tap, the slow flow started. A total of 30 hours was taken up getting the water high enough to determine the levels of the pond edges, and a second work party was needed to finish off the task. The liner edges were buried and some of the vegetation, both on the land around the pond, and in the shallow water was replaced. It is now up to Mother Nature to complete the task of restoring the pond back to its former glory.

I would like to record my thanks to **Little Marlow Parish Council** for funding the task, to **Earthworks Conservation Volunteers** and to James Donald for their help with the hard work, and to the **Ranger Service** for transporting the carpets and pond liner to the site for us. All of the above played a vital part in enabling this project to be undertaken

Roger Wilding

The Great Nut Hunt 2001- National Survey

Last autumn a second Great Nut Hunt was launched. It is now eight years after the first, and it was felt that a second hunt would gather further information about the distribution of the dormouse, establish whether it still exists in previous sites, identify potential reintroduction sites, and lastly, raise the public profile of the dormouse as an indicator of the health of our woodlands and hedgerows.

The dormouse is one of our rarest mammals. It is now extinct over half its range in England. Because it is small and nocturnal it is rarely seen, but its presence can be detected by finding hazelnut shells, which the dormouse has nibbled, in woodlands and hedgerows. Although the dormouse opens hazelnuts while they are green and still on the tree, *(continued opposite)*

Wycombe District Council Ranger Service

As we move into the autumn/winter the Ranger Service is finding the need for increasing help in the woodlands. Flooding and foot & mouth restrictions early this year curtailed much of our outdoor work leaving a backlog for this oncoming winter. The Ranger Service is, therefore, inviting any enthusiastic members of the public to join us on a Thursday for a fun and healthy day in the woods. Tasks to date have included sycamore removal at Keephill, lime thinning at Brush Hill Local Nature Reserve and clearing around young trees at Rayners Wood. There is work to be done all over the District. The pick up point for anyone wishing to join us is at The Rye swimming pool car park at 10.00am. every Thursday morning. If you would like to join us but cannot get to The Rye then please call us to arrange transport.

The ebb and flow of staff is still occurring within the service with Kenley Thomas leaving to take up a position with South Bucks Tree

Surgeons in Thame. It is likely that the Service will be recruiting new staff in the New Year. We would like to thank Wycombe Wildlife Group for providing the Ranger Service with the much awaited recorder computer package, which can hopefully be used to keep records up to date and allow them to be used by various organizations. As the Ranger Service is moving into the technological age of computers we are also pleased to announce that we are soon to have our own web page which will allow us to reach a wider audience for promotion, recruitment and information. We now have an e-mail address for any inquiries:

Ranger-Services @wycombe.gov.uk
We have a series of short, circular, Thames walks running in conjunction with the Chiltern Chalk Streams Project designed to increase fitness & awareness of the countryside for more information please ring or see the Wycombe Wildlife Group programme.

Mike Ambrose



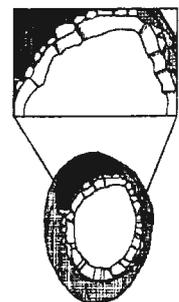
The Ranger Service moves into the technological age of computers

The Ranger Service invites you to join them on Thursdays for a fun and healthy day in the woods.

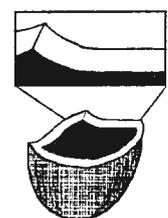
the discarded nuts later turn brown and drop off, and it is these spent shells which people can look for in the debris under the trees, and thus produce evidence of the dormouse's existence.

The second Great Nut Hunt goes on until the end of March, so there is still time to search for dormouse-nibbled nuts in your locality. If you would like to join in the survey, send for an information pack from :
Oliver Bennett, Great Nut Hunt Co-ordinator, Mammals Trust UK
15 Cloisters House, 8 Battersea Park Road, London SW8 4BG
It is being run by Mammals Trust UK in conjunction with English Nature, the Countryside Council for Wales, and Center Parcs.

The Chief Nutter himself, Dr Pat Morris, will be giving a talk about dormice at Liston Hall, Marlow on Thursday March 21st 2002. See Spring Programme



Hazel nut nibbled by a Woodmouse



Hazel nut nibbled by a Bank vole

WANTED

People to distribute the Newsletter (and save the Group money) in the Bourne End, Marlow & Downley areas. If you think you can help, contact Pat on 01494 529484



High Wycombe's Natural History

- past and present -

Continuing our look back at the Wycombe Natural History Society reports of 1880 here is a little of what was written on another rarity - the Mezereon

Is it a true native
or is it introduced
in our woods?



Will we find it
during our survey
of
Deangarden Wood?

Another of the most interesting plants which our county produces is the Mezereon (*Daphne mezereum*), known to almost everyone in a cultivated state, but comparatively unrecognized as a wild flower. Its bright pink or white blossoms, clothing the small but rugged branches before the leaves venture forth, adorn nearly every cottage garden, and appearing, as they do, at the present season of the year, when even the humblest flower seems a treasure, it is, of course, proportionately valued.

So popular a shrub is of course liable to extermination, from the fact that it is a cottage garden favourite; and in many cases the cottagers inform the enquirer that their 'Mezelion,' or 'Mazalum' trees were brought by their children out of the woods. Some botanists, among them Mr. Watson, consider the Mezereum as introduced into the woods, where it is found by the agency of birds, an agency which is by some made to account for a great many facts which run contrary to their theories. Professor Babington, however, admits, it as an unquestioned native. One person, living near Wycombe, who has in her garden a very fine Mezereum tree, assures me that she believes the birds brought it over from the woods, so that the poor birds seem doomed to be responsible, in one way or another. Be that as it may, no one who has taken the trouble to observe for himself, can doubt that Mezereum was formerly pretty plentiful in our woods, where, indeed, Professor Martyn found it to grow 'commonly,' when he was Vicar of Little Marlow, at the end of the last century. Cottagers and gamekeepers have, however, greatly thinned its

growth, and anyone who would now find it must indeed seek diligently.

I first undertook the search in January, 1864, and never was anything so like looking for 'a needle in a bottle of hay'.

Two botanists came from London to search for the plant, and to my astonishment, and I must add, envy, found it both in Fennell's and Dane Garden Woods. A week after, I had an opportunity of following in their steps, but again without success.

I will not deny that strong doubts crossed my mind as to the genuineness of the rediscovery - - - - -

There seemed a spell against my ever seeing *Daphne* in her native haunts, until, on a fine spring day, the 12th of last April, a last search was undertaken in Dane Garden Wood, and, to my great delight, was crowned with success; for in one part of the wood, obscure and unfrequented, were two or three fine Mezereum trees, about two feet high! I need scarcely add that I went home very considerably elated, feeling that my perseverance had been well rewarded. *J. Britten* (1880)

I think Mr Britten's account of this elusive plant is even more true today. As it is only recently, over 100 years since he wrote this article, that laws banning the digging up of plants from the wild have been enacted, I would doubt if any "Mezelions" in our woods are truly wild.

However, his eventual discovery of it in (Dane) Deangarden wood is of interest as WWG intend to make a thorough survey of this wood this year - can we find them? Quite a challenge - why not join us in our search. *Maurice*
(see the programme for dates)

Report: Fungus Foray at Penn Wood

After heavy rain the previous day, Saturday 27th October 2001 dawned clear and bright, perfect conditions for the Fungus Foray scheduled in Penn Wood. Under the leadership of Wycombe Wildlife Group Member Roger Wilding, nearly 50 species of fungi were found; varying from the troops of tea-plate sized Clouded Agarics (*Clitocybe nebularis*), invading the ditch alongside the A404, to the minute *Mycaena speirea* species, on their hair-like stems, growing within the wood.

Amethyst Deceivers (*Laccaria amethystea*), in various stages of decay, were abundant everywhere. There were various puffballs, both *Lycoperdon pyriforme* & *L. perlatum*, tiers of the Many-zoned Polypore (*Trametes versicolor*) on fallen logs, and the Candle-snuff Fungus (*Xylaria hypoxylon*). *Calocera viscosa* were

plentiful on conifer tree-stumps. The gems, however, were the Horn of Plenty (*Craterellus cornucopioides*), a blood-red *Cortinarius* species (later identified as *C. puniceus*), a rare bracket fungus (also identified later as *Gloeophyllum spiarium*), common



Helvella crispa
(Common white
helvella)

white and black *Helvellas* (*Helvella crispa* & *H. lacunose*), and several species of wax caps. These provided bright splashes of colour on the close-mown cricket green, and included the greenish-yellow Parrot Wax-cap (*Hygrocybe psittacina*) the golden yellow *Hygrocybe reidii* & blood red Scarlet Hood (*Hygrocybe coccinea*). A single Snowy Wax Cap (*Hygrocybe virginea*) had been found earlier.

Many thanks to Roger for an interesting and informative morning.

Pat

Wildlife Garden - 2001

Since the official end of the season, an extra 20 manhours have been worked, including 4 computer hours scanning photographs and making notices which we put up in the garden, and a session placing several plants given by Angela Colmer. (Thanks Angela!)

We also made a netting leaf-holder and nearly filled it, and transplanted several small foxgloves that were, as usual, growing in the wrong place. Our final task was to dig up a

dead shrub and replace it with a shuttlecock fern. Now we really have finished until next Spring.

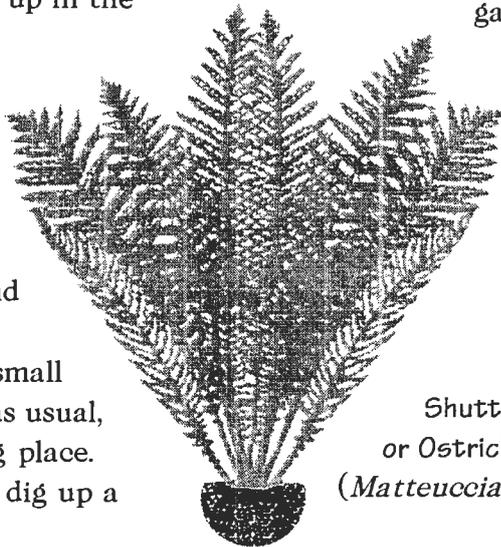
If you would like to join the gardening team, why not come to one of our gardening sessions.

All help welcome.

See Programme for details

Mary Williams

Shuttlecock fern
or Ostrich Feather fern
(*Matteuccia struthiopteris*)



You had better keep an eye on it Mary! Reginald Kaye, writing in the Wisley handbook of ferns, says "I planted a dozen or so in a group, some 40 years ago. Now there is a stand some 40m (50yds) across!

Maurice

Fungi found In Penn Wood

Ascocoryne sarcoides
Byssomemulius corium
Calocera glossoides
Calocera viscosa
Chalciporus (Boletus) piperatus
Clavulina cristata
Clavulinopsis luteo-alba
Clitocybe geotropa
Clitocybe nebularis
Collybia butyracea
Cortinarius puniceus
Craterellus cornucopioides
Crepidotus variabilis
Dacrymyces stillatus
Daedaleopsis confragosa
Diatrype disciformis
Gloeophyllum spiarium
Helvella crispa
Helvella lacunose
Hygrocybe coccinea
Hygrocybe pratensis
Hygrocybe psittacina
Hygrocybe reidii
Hygrocybe virginea
Hypoholoma fasciculare
Hypoxylon nummularium
Laccaria amethystea
Laccaria laccata
Lactarius tabidus
Lactarius turpis
Lycoperdon perlatum
Lycoperdon pyriforme
Mycena inclinata
Mycena speirea
Neobulgaria pura
Phellinus ferreus
Phlebia tremellosa
Piptoporus betulinus
Psilocybe semilanceata
Rhytisma aceroides
Russula mairei
Russula ochroleuca
Scleroderma citrina
Stereum hirsutum
Trametes gibbosa
Trametes versicolor
Tricholoma sciodes
Xylaria hypoxylon

27/10/2001

The Eden Project

In early September I went on a visit to the Eden Project near St. Blazey in Cornwall.

The concept of the Eden Project is a living theatre to tell the story of the bond between plants and man and it is done to great effect. The Eden Project is built in Boldeva a pit that had been quarried up until 1997 and in this pit was built a dreamscape of giant biomes containing plants from all over the world.

The tropical biome is home to exotic plants such as teak trees, coffee, cocoa, tea plants, orchids and on and on.

The temperate biome has olives and fruit trees and a variety of Mediterranean plants both useful & decorative. Outside are Cornish plants that fit in

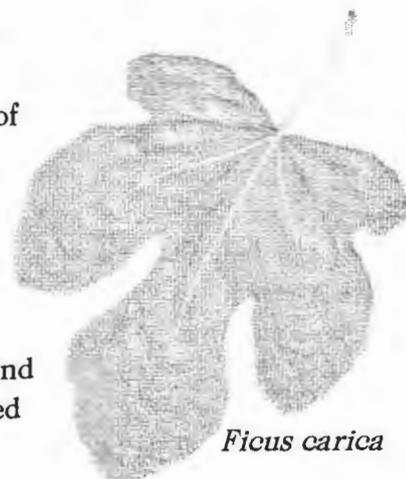
with the surroundings including flowers, shrubs and trees.

Eden is a magical place telling the story of the uses of plants - how they provide the basic necessities of life and their importance to the planets. It also tells the history of plants through the ages and their value to man such as spices, wine grapes etc.

Many butterflies had managed to find their way into the biomes and added to the beauty, they had also introduced some humming birds in the tropical biome.

Not exactly the place to go for a day trip but if you are planning a trip to that part of Cornwall definitely do not miss it.

Wendy Thomas



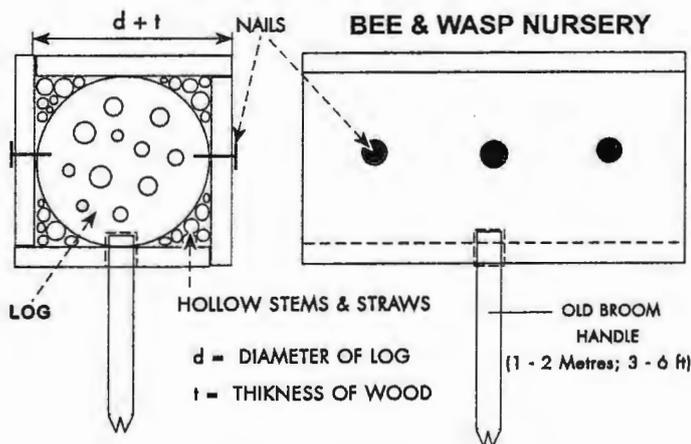
Ficus carica

Essential wear
in Eden

Construction Project - Bee & Wasp Nursery

Many bees & wasps are "solitary", the females laying relatively few eggs that they provision at the time of laying. They lay their eggs in hollow stems or small holes. This "nursery" provides holes drilled in an old log and a collection of old, hollow stems for them to lay their eggs in.

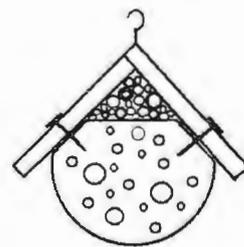
Select a log about 10cm (4") in diameter & cut off a piece about 22cm (9") long. Construct an open-ended box around the log as shown in the diagram. Nail the sides of the box together & secure the log in position with nails. Drill a hole through the centre of the underside of the box through into the log to take a broom handle on which the nursery will be mounted. Drill a number of holes (3 - 10mm diameter) about 50mm deep in both end of the log.



Fill the corners between the log and the box with a mixture of straws, hollow lengths of bamboo or other hollow stems collected from your garden in the autumn. If you collect stems from the fields around you do not use hogweed as some people can get a rash from handling this plant. If you can not identify a plant play safe and leave it alone. Erect the box in a sunny sheltered spot in your garden.

Maurice

This nursery design is relatively simple to construct. The more adventurous of you might like to try making the more attractive, hanging nursery, shown below, which gave us the idea



or you could make my simpler, square nursery and fit a hook in the centre of one corner and hang it like the one above

Wildlife Watching - Reports

September's 'Food for Free' meeting was well attended. We went for a walk across Downley Common and collected 'food' suitable for animals and 'food' for humans that included blackberries and apples. All the apples that we collected were chopped and put into an apple press. Everyone had a go at turning the press and the final result was a very drinkable apple juice. It was a very enjoyable afternoon.

October's meeting was at Wycombe Museum gardens and had a recycling theme. A table was laid with all manner of rubbish and a game was played guessing how many years each item would take to decompose. A scavenger hunt was also held to collect items around the Museum Grounds.



The most enjoyable part of the afternoon was making our own paper from newspaper, water and poster paint. A lovely messy job which resulted in some thick sheets of paper!

November's meeting, held in the Museum Grounds, looked at the way animals

hibernate over winter. We made our own hibernation sites, put in small jars of hot water to represent our hibernating animal, covered them and left them for about 45 mins. We then went back to the sites and found out whose water had kept warmest. There was quite a variation in temperatures as to where the jars had been hidden.

Wendy

To join in the fun of **WATCH** meetings, which are open to children between the

ages of 8 and 12, please contact Wendy Thomas on 01494 814068 or Julie or Fiona (WDC Rangers) on 01494 421825

Please note: Parents are very welcome as well

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 :

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mauriceyoung@madasafish.com

snail-mail

Secretary WWG 17 Tamar Close High Wycombe HP13 7BQ	Chairman WWG 73 Carver Hill Road High Wycombe HP11 2UB
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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 ?



Last sightings of the year !

Oak bush cricket - Pat's house - 08/10/01

Hornet - Angus's house - 09/10/01

Butterflies

2 sm coppers & brimstone - Sands Bank - 12/10/01

Large white & cmn. blue - Sands Bank - 01/11/01

Peacock & comma - Booker common - 03/11/01

Red admiral - Carver Hill - 10/11/01

Cmn darter dragonfly - Penn Wood - 06/11/01

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

Berks, Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust

(South Bucks Region, Vol. Reserves Manager)

Booker Common & Woods Preservation Society

British Naturalists' Assoc., S. Bucks Branch

British Trust for Conservation Volunteers

British Trust for Ornithology (Regional Rep.)

Bucks Badger Group

Bucks Bird Club

Bucks Community Association

Butterfly Conservation

Chiltern Society

Chilterns Chalk Streams Officer

Chilterns Conference AONB

Chiltern Woodlands Project

Council for the Protection of Rural England (m' Chilterns branch)

David Dyson & Associates

English Nature Conservation Officer Bucks.

Frieth Natural History Society

Grange Action Group

High Wycombe Society

Lane End Conservation Group

Marlow Society

National Trust

Pann Mill Group

Ramblers Association

Red Kites in the Chilterns Officer

Princes Risborough Countryside Group

Saunderton Wildlife Sanctuary

St. Tiggywinkles

Swan Lifeline

South Bucks Organic Group

World Wide Fund for Nature

Wycombe District Council Ranger Service

Wycombe Youth Action

Nigel Mossman 01494 462059

(Oxon Office) 01865 775476

Maurice Young 01628 472000

Ron Walker 01494 444824

Marion Hussey 01494 488336

Kate Mallard 01494 536930

Mick A'Court 01494 536734

Mike Collard 01494 866908

Roger Warren 01491 638544

Francis Gomme 01844 274865

Jaci Beaven 01494 444158

Angus Idle 01494 563673

Sarah Bentley 01844 271308

Steve Rodrick 01844 271300

John Morris 01844 271315

Sandy MacFarlane 01844 343004

David Dyson 01494 511278

Jenny Young 01635 268881

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Frances Presland 01494 523263

Joyce Davis 01494 881295

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Tim Heron 01753 859397

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Valerie Lambourne 01494 443761

Julie Hopton 01494 421824

Lynda Cockerell 01494 447250

If you have any queries about BATS contact Maurice Young 01628 472000

or the WDC Rangers: 01494 421824