

**Issue 38**

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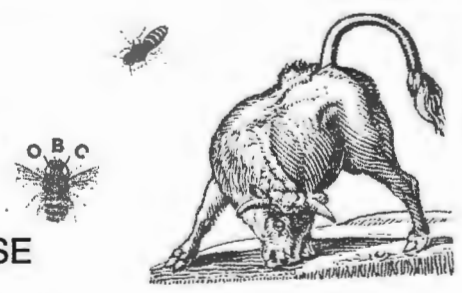


**THE ENVIRONMENT CENTRE on Holywell Mead**  
 - WORK HAS STARTED

**PENN WOOD**  
 - MONITORING THE EFFECTS OF GRAZING



**THE RED MASON BEE**  
 - NATURAL HISTORY  
 - AS A POLLINATOR  
 - HELPING TO CONSERVE BEES  
 - OXFORD BEE COMPANY



**THE COMMON DORMOUSE**

**WYCOMBE DISTRICT RANGER SERVICE**  
 - SECOND GREAT NUT HUNT

**HIGH WYCOMBE NATURAL HISTORY - PAST & PRESENT**  
 - SPURGE LAUREL  
 - LILY OF THE VALLEY  
 - SOLOMON'S SEAL

**SWAN FILE**  
 -- FIRST SIGHTINGS OF THE YEAR

**THE LAST WORD ON BEE & WASP NURSERIES?**

**REPORTS**  
 - WILDLIFE WATCH  
 - E-MAIL & WEBS



**NOTICE BOARD**  
 - DID YOU SEE ?

- CONTACT LIST - YOUR GUIDE TO LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

**APRIL  
2002**

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 & 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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Wycombe District Council

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### Wildlife Notice Board

## Editorial

By the end of February the cherry plum tree, which seeded itself some years ago in my front garden, was a blaze of blossom, followed soon after by forsythia. The procession of spring flowering shrubs had started. In the woodlands, forbidden to us by foot and mouth disease at this time last year, I spotted the first pink larch blossoms, and the leaves of bluebells well up through the soil in the beech woods, promising their usual spectacular display later in the year.

Plantlife is seeking County Flowers for the Queen's Golden Jubilee.

I would have selected the bluebell as the flower best associated with Buckinghamshire, but, to my surprise the organization Plantlife had other ideas. They are leading the search for "County Flowers" - the flowers which best represent a county's character, and they put forward coralroot, military orchid, Chiltern gentian and starfruit as possible candidates for our county. The bluebell was their suggestion for Sussex, London and other shires.

Which flower would you choose? Members of Plantlife are invited to vote via their website : [www.plantlife.org.uk](http://www.plantlife.org.uk) for the flower they think best sums up the essence of their county, and from these votes the organization Plantlife will compile a countrywide map of "County Flowers", to commemorate HM the Queen's Golden Jubilee. If you are not a member you can still take part by ringing 020 7808 0100 and asking for a form. There are members of Plantlife in Wycombe Wildlife Group and we are allowed to register your votes through our Group. So please let us know your personal favourite.

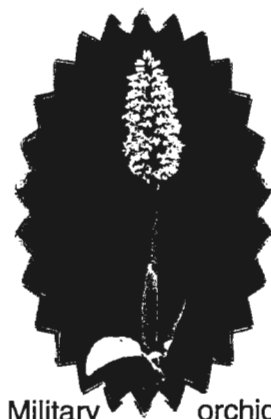
Pat



Starfruit



Chiltern gentian



Military orchid

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.



## The Environment Centre on Holywell Mead

Wycombe Wildlife Group is excited that work finally started in February to renovate and extend the old cafe at the Holywell Mead Swimming Pool site. Although most of the work is presently going on the pool side of the building, visitors will see a lot of activity as the builders use materials and install features to create an environmentally friendly building.

Much of the scheme has been funded by a £655,479 grant from Biffaward, and has also received grant aid in the region of £40,000 from Wycombe District Council and a further grant of £15,000 from the Environment Agency.

When the Environment Centre opens its doors later this year it will host exhibitions, meetings, and provide a base for school groups and others, visiting the surrounding areas. A number of interpreted themed trails around Holywell Mead and its environs will also be established.

The Centre will support Wycombe District Council's Community Action Plan by providing a meeting place for like-minded people and local environmental groups, and promoting environmental conservation & sustainable development schemes. These will be designed to improve the quality of life today without compromising the needs of future generations - Local Agenda 21.

By the time you read this the Centre's trustees will have appointed the Centre Development Manager who in turn will be actively seeking volunteers to help with a wide range of tasks and activities. If you would like to learn more about the Centre or play your part in securing a better environment for future generations please get in touch with :

James Donald, telephone 01494 637877  
or e-mail james\_donald@lycos.co.uk

*James Donald*  
(20/03/02)



Work has finally started!

**CENTRE  
MANAGER**

Centre Development  
Manager  
appointed

## Penn Wood

Wycombe Wildlife Group is supporting the Woodland Trust by undertaking survey work at this important woodland site. As many of our readers will know the Woodland Trust has introduced a small number of cattle into the wood to recreate a woodland pasture. The Trust is keen to monitor the effect the cattle have on the vegetation and members of WWG undertook an initial exercise last year to establish a base line measurement of the sward height prior to the introduction of the cattle.

The Group is standing by to take further measurements as soon as the cattle are taken off for the summer and then on a continuing basis as cattle are moved on and off the site in the Autumn and Spring of each year.

It is too soon to publish meaningful data but as it builds up over time we will let you know what effect the grazing regime is having.

We are very pleased to say that this work has provided an opportunity to work with the Penn Street School Environment Group who will be turning out in force to help with the collection of data and learn more about "their" wood.

We hope that this will be the start of a long partnership with benefits for the children, the School, the Woodland Trust and our Group and will publish updates from time to time.

*James Donald*



## THE RED MASON BEE (and relatives)

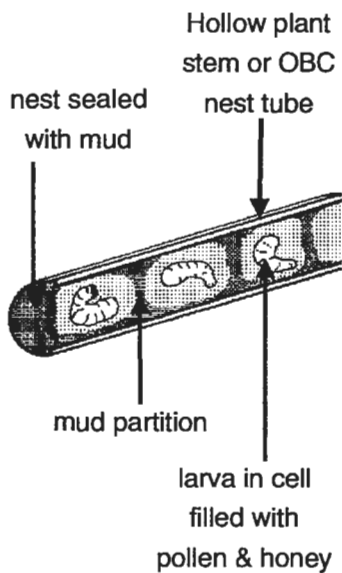


Red mason bee

a rusty red colour

Each cell is separated by a mud partition and the nest is sealed with mud.

This is why they are called "mason" bees



Solitary bees receive no help from other bees

Bees in general are very important insects: every third mouthful of our food is dependent on bees as pollinators of the plants we eat. This is because they are needed to pollinate flowers. Insects are by far the most important pollinators. These include moths, butterflies, beetles, flies and some wasps, but the most important pollinators of all are the bees: most species of insect-pollinated plants are specialised for pollination by bees. Bees are the best pollinators because they actively collect pollen as food for their larvae and they have evolved special structures on their bodies for handling and transporting pollen. And in the economy of nature, producing an excess of pollen, together with sweet nectar, is the price that plants pay in return for the pollination services provided by the bees.

### The Red Mason Bee (*Osmia rufa*)

The Red Mason Bee is widespread in England and Wales and particularly likes the range of flowers and trees found in domestic gardens. It is a more efficient pollinator of fruit crops than the honeybee and by attracting them to your garden not only will you notice improved fruit crops - apples, plums, pears, strawberries and raspberries - but the bees also visit a wide range of garden flowers.

### Life History

The Red Mason Bee is a solitary bee. That is, each nest tube is the work of a single female working alone. Unlike the honeybees and bumblebees, there is no worker caste of sterile females, so she receives no help from other bees; there is no colony or "hive".

The species has an annual life cycle and they are active from late March to the beginning of July. Males and females emerge in early spring (late March to April) and mate.

Females then seek out suitable nest sites usually beetle borings in dead-wood, hollow plant stems, or irregular cavities in stones and old walls. Each nest tube comprises a series of cells. The female starts her first cell at the back of the nest. She makes 10 to 15 foraging trips to collect sufficient pollen to provision each cell. The pollen is mixed with a little nectar and this acts as a food source for the single egg, which she lays immediately before sealing the cell with a mud partition. The process is repeated until the tube is filled with a row of about 6 to 10 cells. They also close the completed nest with mud. This is why they are called "mason" bees.

Females finish nesting in early July. Being a solitary species they will never live to see their offspring. However in the comfort of their nests, the eggs hatch into larvae, which feed on the pollen/nectar mixture. After moulting 4 or 5 times, the full-grown larvae spin a tough brown silk cocoon and pupate. The new adults form in September and remain in the cocoon until the following spring when the new generation of adults emerge and the cycle begins again.

Although solitary, mason bees are attracted to each other. They like to build their nests in aggregations and females tend to nest close to where they emerge. The design of the Oxford Bee Company Ltd nest box (see next page) is such that it will attract a number of nesting females, many of whose daughters will re-use their natal nests the following season. Thus a permanent nesting population will be established in your garden.

### Safety

As with other solitary bees, mason bees are gentle and shy. They do have a sting but they use it only if they are



caught and very roughly handled. They are docile simply because, unlike the honeybee, they do not make and store large amounts of honey and therefore do not have a huge resource to protect.

#### Busy bees

Research has shown that one female *Osmia rufa* does the pollination work of between 120 and 160 honeybees. *Osmia* species are, bee-for-bee, much more efficient pollinators of fruit trees than the honeybee for the following reasons:

- ◆ *Osmia* can fly in chilly weather and are often busy pollinating when the honeybee is still in the hive.
- ◆ At any given temperature, *Osmia* visits more flowers per minute than honeybees.
- ◆ On any given foraging trip, *Osmia* is more promiscuous than the honeybee in terms of the number of trees visited and hence effects more cross-pollination.
- ◆ *Osmia* females carry their pollen dry on a dense brush of hairs under the abdomen and are not very efficient at grooming themselves. By contrast, the honeybee compacts its pollen loads on to the hind legs, moistened with nectar and is very good at grooming itself. Thus, for anatomical

and behavioural reasons, with *Osmia* there is a greater chance of loose pollen being transferred from one fruit blossom to another than there is with the honeybee.

*Osmia* is almost entirely pollen driven: mason bees do not store honey and so actively scabble for pollen at every flower visit, unlike the honeybee, which is equally interested in collecting large amounts of nectar and often lands on the sides of fruit flowers to gain access to nectaries, with minimal contact with pollen-bearing anthers.

#### Native UK Bees Enhance Your Garden but They Need Homes

Besides the honeybee, Britain has more than 250 species of native bee, many of which help your garden by pollinating flowers. But these bees are becoming scarce as modern agriculture has produced a landscape that is rarely bee-friendly these days. With fewer wild flowers and suitable nest sites, about 25 per cent of our native bees are now endangered species. In addition traditional apiculture has been badly hit by the *Varroa* mite so it is vital to find additional managed pollinators to complement the honey bee. Importantly, mason bees are not susceptible to the *Varroa* mite.

Janet Keene

(from information supplied by Chris O'Toole)

One female  
red mason bee  
does  
the pollination work  
of between  
120 & 160  
honey bees



### The Oxford Bee Company

OBC exists to raise the profile of our native bees and to encourage their support and management in the environment. The Oxford Bee Company is a spin-out company of Oxford University, set up by Chris O'Toole in collaboration with Isis Innovation Ltd., the University's technology transfer company. The idea of these spin-out companies is to exploit commercially ideas and discoveries of Oxford University staff. Some of the profits of the business will be used to support further research on native bees at the Bee Systematics and Biology Unit in the Oxford University Museum of Natural History.

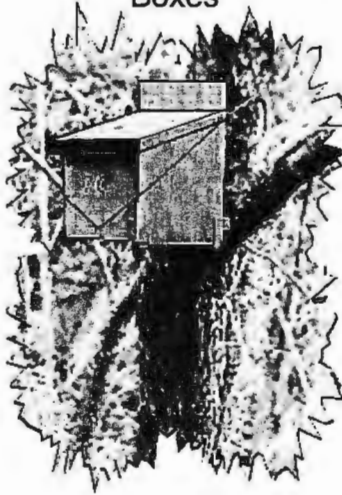
#### Bee Nest Boxes

Sturdy nest boxes can be bought from the OBC; details below. All you need to do is place them in sunny, sheltered, south-facing position in the garden and you will attract nest-seeking females of the red mason bee in early spring. No work is required if the nest boxes are in the garden at the right time the bees will find them. Because they like similar nest sites you could be lucky and also attract the blue mason bee (*Osmia coerulescens*) and two species of leaf-cutter bees (*Megachile* spp.). The nest tubes mimic the natural nest sites of these bees: beetle borings in dead wood and hollow plant stems. Kits can be ordered from Oxford Bee Company Ltd, 40 Arthur Street, Loughborough LE11 3AY. Tel: 01509 261654, E-mail: oxbee2000@netscapeonline.co.uk. Each kit comes with a complete set of instructions, together with an outline of the life history of the red mason bee. More information and an order form are on the OBC website: [www.oxbeeco.com](http://www.oxbeeco.com).

# The Common Dormouse

(*Muscardinus avellanarius*)

## One of the Ranger Service's Dormouse Boxes



How do the dormice get in?

Round the back - two spacer bars hold the box away from the trunk of the tree so the dormice can use the hole in the back of the box

There are now over 80 boxes in the wood

The common dormouse must be considered as one of our most attractive small mammals, which, despite its name, is far from being common. They are easy to tell from other small mammals, as they are a bright golden colour with a thick furry tail and big black eyes. With a body length of about 7cm and a tail of similar length, dormice are quite small.

During the summer an adult would weigh around 17-20 grams, doubling this prior to hibernation in late Autumn.

Dormice are mainly found in deciduous woodlands and old thick hedgerows, although there have been reports of them on the edges of conifer plantations.

The Dormouse year starts in late April early May when they emerge from hibernation. They usually take to a nest box or natural tree hollow where they build a woven nest from honey-suckle bark or similar. The weather at this time can still be quite variable. So during bad weather or when food is in short supply they go into a form of semi-hibernation termed torpor which helps save valuable energy.

Dormice are nocturnal and because they have a varied diet that is dependent upon various flowers, pollen, fruits, nuts and insects, they spend a

lot of their time looking for food high up in the trees.

They rarely go far from their nests and most keep within 50 metres of it although males tend to roam more than females. Actual distances travelled each night can vary according to the time of year and availability of food.

Dormice breed from mid June onwards, usually producing one litter of 4 - 5 young.

The young are born pink, blind and helpless. By 18 days their eyes are open and they



Two of the young dormice found - fast asleep! in one of the Ranger Service's dormouse boxes

have grey-brown fur. They will remain with their mother for 6 - 8 weeks. Before the onset of winter both the adults and especially the young have to fatten up, ready for hibernation. Hibernation usually begins some time in October.

Currently the Ranger Service only has one known site with dormice present. Here we provide over 80 nest boxes for the dormice to use. One of my jobs is to monitor them once a month from March-November. This is carried out under a special licence from English Nature. Over the last three years my records show a small but steady increase in numbers.

*Phil Horwood*  
(WDC Ranger Service)

**The Great Nut Hunt** (see opposite)

There is a web site for the Great Nut Hunt. It is [www.greatnuthunt.org.uk](http://www.greatnuthunt.org.uk)



## Wycombe District Council Ranger Service

Since the last newsletter the Rangers have been consolidating their work during a somewhat mild and wet period of weather. Progress has been made with a variety of outstanding tasks including the thinning of the lime plantation at the bottom of Brush Hill LNR in Princes Risborough. Other works have been undertaken at Slayter Road pond in Lane End with local communities and the Lane End Conservation Group. A new 'friends of group' is being set up for the Micklefield area to look after the decline in Highfield Wood following on from the success made at Gomms. Several working parties have taken place and great assistance was given by a party of French students from Toulouse who between them put in some 1200 hours of work in the area.

Despite a shortage of staff resources this winter, it is surprising how much has been completed. Probably the most important objective has been the launch of our web pages on the Council site at:

[www.wycombe.gov.uk/rangers](http://www.wycombe.gov.uk/rangers).

The site is in its early days and it is up to those using it to suggest improvements to the content. Julie Hopton was tasked with the project and has managed to get it up and running with some good comments coming back. We are now hoping to get back to compiling our CMS

### Second Great Nut Hunt

In the first Great Nut Hunt dormouse nibbled nuts were found in two woods in Bucks. However, the interest generated by the Dormouse nest boxes at Homefield and Holtspur led to the discovery of more signs of dormice at Sands, Coleshill & Cadmore End. English Nature and the Mammal

(Countryside Management Scheme) data. It will be a valuable tool for both historical records relating to management plans and their on-going analysis as to the benefits or not of any action.

On the subject of declining species, a water vole was sighted on the back stream in Kingsmead recently. Dormice appear to be holding their own, moving up the hill at Sands LNW. We at last been able to move the sheep that grazed so successfully for the past year and will be able to breathe a sigh of relief now that the fingering shadow of FMD has finally been lifted, together with its movement restrictions which seriously curtailed our plans.

Following site inspections it was recommended that Highfield and Roundwood will be confirmed as conforming to Wildlife Site Status. This is a status that though non-statutory gives a site recognition of its value for nature conservation. As a County Wildlife site (previously referred to as SINC sites) it is a little below LNR status.

By the time this is read we should be well on the way to recruiting our new replacement staff. Let us hope for some fine weather that will allow more projects that can be carried out without the intervention of muddy hillsides.

*Mike Ambrose*

Trust set up a second nut hunt last October. Although October is the best time to look you could still find the nuts under the leaf litter - why not have a go? I have a leaflet describing the appearance of hazel nuts nibbled by dormice. If you would like one please contact me.

*Maurice*



Water vole  
Seen on Back Stream  
at Kingsmead

Wildlife Site Status  
For  
Highfield  
&  
Roundwood

Can you discover more  
woods around  
Wycombe where  
dormice still live?



## Recent Biological Surveys

As usual, at the beginning of March, Angus started his annual quadrat analyses of the vegetation on the nature reserves.

Here is his account of what he does -



Solution to the problem of how to find the discs

This involves counting the number of plants of all the flowering species that occur in spots selected in the various nature reserves several years ago. The spots are marked on the ground by small metal discs hammered in so as to avoid being disturbed throughout the year. The idea is that if you repeat this counting every year at the same date, you can compare the results & see if the reserves are being managed satisfactorily. The problem always is how to find these discs to start with each year. I wrote descriptions of the various locations when they were originally placed there, saying how many paces from various landmarks. In addition, I took photos of a yellow cane stuck in the ground by the discs from various angles, so that I could get bearings from houses, trees or lampposts etc. These two aids usually enable me to get within a metre or so of the discs, even with fairly deep vegetation. Finally I have to use a metal detector to actually home in on the disc. The disc marks the top right-hand corner of the 5-metre square of vegetation that has to be analysed. The analysis is done by throwing a one foot (30cm) square metal frame twenty

times in the area and counting the plants enclosed by the frame; first you make a list of species present, and this can be as high as 25 species in some grass swards. Then the counting is done by estimating the percentage area covered by each species and recording that using what is called the DOMIN\* scale, and these results are summed for all the twenty throws & are presented in a sequence sorted by descending abundance. Each of these quadrat areas can take in excess of two hours to complete, often in the blazing sun. They cannot be done in the rain, because in addition to the fact that the recording sheets all go soggy, the concentration level required to do this accurately is impossible to maintain in the wet. There are six quadrats to be done on Sands Bank, three each on Tom Burts Hill and Gomms Bank and two on Micklefield Bank. In addition to these which have been surveyed over the last eight years, there are now a further ten to survey on the newer reserve at Brush Hill.

Angus

\* DOMIN, Doe, a deer, a female deer -  
- sorry wrong scale! Maurice,  
see the table below.

Each quadrat can take in excess of 2 hours to complete



The DOMIN Scale

Cover (per cent)	Density	Domin symbol
< 5	1 - 2 plants	+
< 5	3 - 5 plants	1
< 5	6 - 10 plants	2
< 5	11 - 30 plants	3
< 5	31 - 100 plants	4
5 - 10		5
11 - 25		6
26 - 33		7
34 - 50		8
51 - 75		9
76 - 100		10



# Plant (& Animal) Names

The vexed question of the use of Latin and common names

In recent months, the Committee embroiled in discussions over when to use capitals and lowercase letters when naming plants and animals in written/printed works. I, therefore, dug out my copy of PLANT NAMES, A Guide for Botanical Artists by Michael Hickey. He gives the following rules that govern the naming of plants in printed and written publications :

Plants Names: General rules :

1 GENERIC (the GENUS) NAMES always begin with a capital letter.

Eg. *Ranunculus* (the Buttercup Genus), *Rosa* (the Rose Genus)

11 SPECIES NAMES always begin with a small letter.

Eg. *Ranunculus acris* (Meadow Buttercup), *Rosa canina* (Dog-rose)

In older books and picture titles specific names derived from the name of a person began with an initial capital letter. This is no longer allowed.

Eg. *Berberis darwinii*

III SUBSPECIES (ssp); IV VARIETY; V FORMA. These names always begin with a small letter. Eg. *Prunus domestica* ssp *domestica* (Plum)

VI CULTIVAR NAMES (at one time known as varieties) start with an initial capital letter and must be written in single quotes or have cv. placed before the name. Eg. *Primula polyantha* 'Gold lace'

Common Names :

Common or English names as distinct from fancy names of cultivars are not regulated by any international code. Some publications (e.g. extract from Hilliers' Tree & Shrub Catalogue) use quotation marks when writing English or common names, e.g. "Golden Rain"; Golden Rain (without quotation marks) is quite satisfactory. Therefore, in order to avoid any confusion when dealing with common names versus cultivars, it is suggested that one leaves out any form of quotation marks.

Eg. Ash for *Fraxinus excelsior* and not "Ash" or 'Ash' for that plant.

Some English or common names are very similar to their Latin equivalent.

Eg. Fritillary for *Fritillaria meleagris*; again here treat as an ordinary English or common name.

Capital letters

Use capital letters when writing common names as a title to your picture in the same way as you would if you were writing a plant list.

The only time that you do not use capitals is when you write the names in a running order in a sentence.

Examples:

- |                |                |                  |
|----------------|----------------|------------------|
| 1) As a list : | Dog-rose       | Meadow Foxtail   |
|                | Bramble        | Lady's Bedstraw  |
|                | Wayfaring Tree | Meadow Buttercup |

2)As in a sentence :

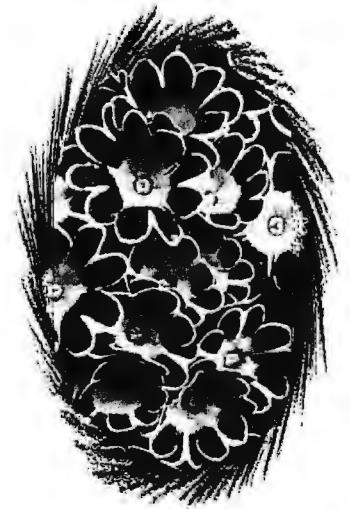
The scrub consisted of dog-rose, bramble and wayfaring tree with a ground flora of lady's bedstraw, meadow foxtail and meadow buttercup. M. Hickey

-----  
If only the editors of all wildlife magazines had read this publication and adopted these rules there would be far less confusion. There are a couple of other points which Hickey does not cover, that I address over. (cont. ....)



*Ranunculus* sp.

Buttercup



*Primula polyantha*

'Gold lace'



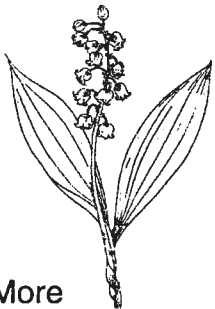
Fritillary

*Fritillaria meleagris*

## Reports

### First Walk of the Year

A small party of four, under the leadership of Angus Idle, assembled for the first walk of the year, held on Saturday January 12<sup>th</sup> at Deangarden Wood. It was a raw and foggy morning, with the trees dripping with water, but this did not deter the walkers, who identified wood barley and wood spurge along the muddy tracks, and several large clumps of *Daphne*



More

Lily-of-the-valley



*laureola*. There was a spindle tree, laden with colourful fruits, while the robin sang and great tit and nuthatch called, reminding us that spring was coming. Muntjac fumets and the pungent scent of fox provided evidence of mammal activity (indeed a dead fox was found a few fields away from the Wood).

Thanks to Angus for an enjoyable and interesting morning. *Pat*

### First Talk of the Year

The first talk of the year, presented jointly by the National Trust and Wycombe Wildlife Group, was held on Monday 11<sup>th</sup> February, and was entitled "The Wildlife, Landscape, and History of the Hughenden Stream".

Neil Harris, the Hughenden Estate Warden gave a fascinating account about the Stream, or 'the river' as the local children call it, where it flows through the National Trust land. Disraeli and John Norris before him designed the river to be a major

visual feature of the view from the house. The National Trust now has to balance this with the modern ecological demands of how a chalk stream should be managed.

Twenty-nine people braved torrential rain to hear this talk, which had created great local interest, and grateful thanks to Neil for giving up his time in order to 'put his case'

NB : Neil is leading a walk at Hughenden on Saturday May 18<sup>th</sup> see programme for details

*Pat*

### Lily-of-the-Valley

Eric Britnell reports that there is a patch of lily-of-the-valley growing in

a triangle of woodland between Penn Road & New Road at Tyler's Green, & it has probably been there 30 years

### Plant (& Animal) Names continued. ....

There is one further "rule". Latin names should be printed in italics or underlined. When reports are typed or hand-written, the Latin names should be underlined, but today, with computerised printing, Latin names are always given in italics.

Use of brackets.

In scientific publications the Latin names are usually given first with the common name following in brackets.

In our newsletter and most of the popular wildlife publications the common name is given first and the

Latin name, when given, follows in brackets.

Another common practice in wildlife publications is to "highlight" the common name by emboldening it. This is a matter of choice. I note that in the main articles of the British Wildlife magazine they do not embolden the common names in the main articles but they do use a bold typeface for the common names in the wildlife report sections. This does make it very easy to pick out the reports on species in which you are particularly interested. *Maurice*



## Reports

### Dormouse Talk

A highly successful talk, attended by more than 90 people, was given on the life of the Dormouse at Liston Hall, Marlow, by Dr Pat Morris, Chairman of the Mammal Society of Great Britain, and took place on 21<sup>st</sup> March 2002. During the talk Dr Morris described the advances in the knowledge of the biological facts, lifestyle and needs of the dormouse, gained through painstaking research over many years. This has contributed to a better understanding of

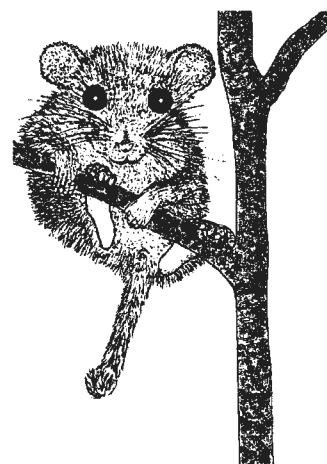
this strictly arboreal animal, and to hopes of its successful conservation in the future.

Dr Morris later dealt with all questions from the floor, and people who had come from as far away as Waddesden expressed themselves well satisfied with the evening.

Grateful thanks to Dr Morris for fitting in this talk in a busy schedule.

The event was organized jointly by BBOWT & Wycombe Wildlife Group

Pat



Hazel Dormouse

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### Annual Spring-Clean

Maybe the forecast of heavy showers put everyone off, for only four people turned up for the annual spring-clean of our wildlife garden at the West Wycombe Garden Centre on the 16<sup>th</sup> March 2002. However, their dedication was rewarded, for the sun came out along with a brimstone butterfly and dozens of 2-spot ladybirds. A total of 14 hours' work was achieved. A new metal arch to replace the one blown down in the winter gales was erected, a holly planted, the grass cut, & dead foliage removed.

Blanket weed was dredged from the pond and barley straw installed to control it in the future. The Group thank Jim and Mary Curtis for their donation of the arch and barley straw.

Postscript. At the next wildlife gardening session, 10 days later the 2-spot ladybirds had all disappeared, and the grass was teeming with 7-spot ladybirds instead!

Wildlife gardening takes place once a fortnight, on Wednesday mornings, and all help is welcome.

See the Programme.

Pat



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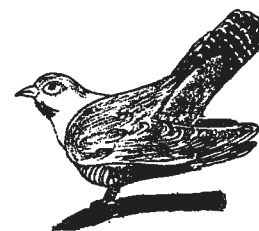
### Schools

When did you hear the first cuckoo? There is now a new scheme for schools to record the first cuckoo the pupils hear. This scheme has been organized by the Woodland Trust, in association with Junior Focus

Magazine and is open to any schools who would like to take part.

Schools that are interested should contact :

<http://www.naturedetectives.org.uk> where there is a live tracking map & plenty of information about cuckoos.



Cuckoo  
(*Cuculus canorus*)

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Note : Correction to the WDC Rangers e-mail address given in last issue.

It should be: Ranger\_Services@wycombe.gov.uk

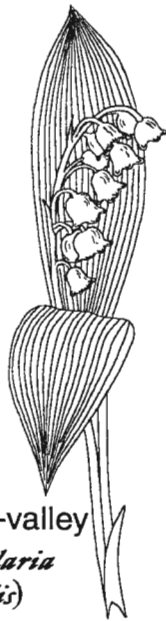
i.e. With an underline not hyphen between Ranger & Service.

# High Wycombe's Natural History

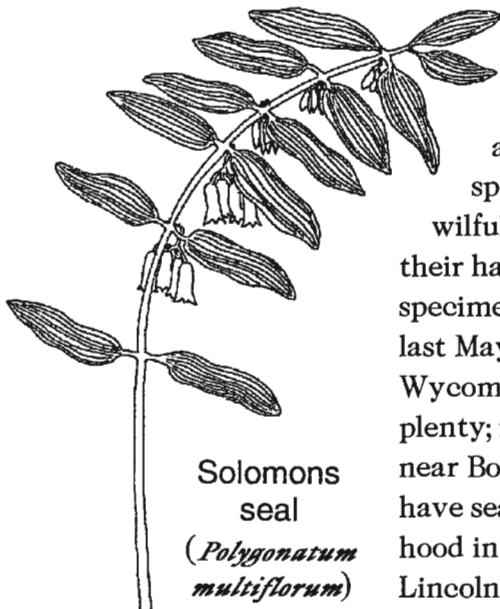
## - past and present -



Spurge laurel  
(*Daphne laureola*)



Lily-of-the-valley  
(*Convallaria majalis*)



Solomons  
seal  
(*Polygonatum multiflorum*)

Last issue we looked at Mr J Britten's observation on *Daphne merezeon* as one of the rare plants of our area. This naturally led him on to observations on the spurge laurel, followed by lily-of-the-valley.

"*Daphne laureola* however, is an undoubtedly British plant, and may be found sparingly in most of the woods in this neighbourhood. In cultivation, as in the Park, it attains a large size; the blossoms are pale green, with yellow stamens, and fragrant; the leaves, unlike those of *Daphne merezeon*, are persistent, that is, do not drop off at the approach of winter; the berries, when ripe, are black. Its flowers expand in January and February. It is known by the names of Wood Laurel and Spinge Laurel.

"The Lily of the Valley (*Convallaria majalis*) is of course too familiar to us to need any description. It is found sparingly in a wild state in most of the English and Scottish counties, and though a favourite border flower, is undoubtedly a native. The bright scarlet berries, which succeed the blossoms, are not so generally known. The root is considered good to apply

to bruises, while that of a near ally, the Solomon's Seal, 'taketh away in one night, or two at the most, any bruise, blacke or blew spots gotten by falls of women's wilfulnesse, in stumbling upon their hasty husbands' fists.' The specimen exhibited was gathered last May in a wood near West Wycombe, where it grows in some plenty; it is also reported from woods near Booker and Hughenden, but I have searched the latter neighbourhood in vain. In some parts of Lincolnshire, where this Lily is plentiful, annual excursions called 'lilying parties' are made to the woods."

J Britten

I would question whether the common name "Spinge", used by Britten, was a 1880s type-setting error as the common name used today is "spurge" laurel. Some of the best shows of this shrub today can be found in Homefield Wood near Marlow.

Although Mr Britten was unable to find lily-of-the-valley in the woods at Hughenden it grows in Millfield Wood. It would be nice if we could find it in the woods at Booker & West Wycombe where he saw it in 1880, any information welcome - Eric, Alan?

Turning to a more recent publication (Flora Britannica. R. Mabey, 1996) one contributor commenting on lily-of-the-valley observes that it grows in such profusion in one of the woods of St. Leonard's Forest east of Horsham in Sussex that it is shown as "lily" beds" on the Ordnance Survey map.

It is, perhaps, worth noting, should you find the red berries of lily-of-the-valley that they, and all parts of the plant, are very poisonous having a similar effect on the heart to *Digitalis* (foxglove).

Although Britten makes an amusing reference to Solomon's seal he does not give a location for it in woods around Wycombe. However, I have found it in Cut-throat Wood at Holtspur and the 1982 edition of the Atlas of the British Flora shows Solomon's seal in the 10km squares between Chesham & Princes Risborough (native or probably so from 1930 onwards) and an older record or records (native or probable so before 1930) in the 10km square which includes High Wycombe - something else to look out for!

The garden Solomon's seal is a hybrid between *P. multiflorum* & *P. odoratum*.

Maurice



# The Swan File

Update-the Comings and Goings of Wycombe's Swans

Since the notes in the September 2001 Newsletter (No36) the two cygnets raised from Amanda's second clutch of eggs grew into fine juvenile swans. Readers will recall that it is most unusual for any second brood cygnets to survive, if any first brood birds remain. The family, consisting of the two parents, one older cygnet and two youngsters continued to live on the Wye between Pann and Rye Mills.

By early September Dad had taken the older cygnet to the Dyke, Mum remaining to look after the others. The three eventually spent their time down-stream near Bassetsbury, but although Amanda tried to entice the cygnets onto the Rye, they were unable to climb the bank, which is high on the south side. Amanda became tired of the situation, and abandoned them to go to David, but eventually the stronger of the two found his/her way to join the three others on the Dyke. The deserted lone bird was plucked from the river and we carried it across the Rye to reunite the family, and was, to our relief, accepted by David who, however, soon walked them all back to Pann Mill only to return to the Dyke with his mate and only the oldest cygnet.

On 16th November the stronger

cygnet of the second brood was reported wandering in Queen's Road and promptly taken to St Tiggywinkles by the RSPCA to be checked over.

The other, now lone, second brood bird tried to join the others on the Dyke but David would not agree, driving him off the water. One of our Group members ushered the singleton across the Rye back to Pann MR as dogs were harassing him. At the end of November, the cygnet still tried to join the others but to no avail and one of the Swan Lifeline rescuers took him to the flock at Marlow.

Ultimately David decided he no longer wished to look after his remaining youngster and that too had to be removed, this time temporarily to the Eton sanctuary. She/he was named Megan after the rescuer's dog.

At the time of writing, late February, another pair, identity unknown, had arrived on the Dyke, apparently not realized by David, who, with Amanda was back on Wycombe Abbey Lake, preparing for the 2002 nesting season.

Thanks are due to all the interested folk who use the Rye, the dog wardens and all who raised the alarm when needed during the hazardous early months of the cygnets' lives.

*Eric Britnell*

*Photograph : Lorna Cassidy*

## First Sightings of the Year and more 'Did You See'

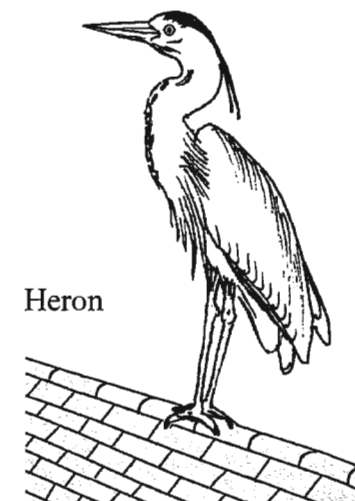
First Bumblebee	Amersham Hill Drive, High Wycombe	10/02/02
Many 2-spot Ladybirds	Wildlife Garden W Wycombe Garden Centre	16/03/02
Mandarin Ducks	The Dyke, High Wycombe	Late Feb.
Chiffchaff singing	The Dyke, High Wycombe	25/02/02
10 Song Thrushes singing	Tom Burt's Hill area, High Wycombe	Late Feb.
Heron (7.30am)	In river by Council Offices, High Wycombe	13/03/02
Heron	On roof in South Place, Marlow	21/03/02
Pair of Kingfishers	River West of High Wycombe town	Resident?
Tawny Owl - sitting on washing line, watching and making swoops over the pond	Carver Hill High Wycombe (6.23pm)	13/03/02
Blackcaps and up to 6 Bramblings reported from gardens throughout February,		



Swans on the Dyke, High Wycombe



Angle shades moth (*Phlogophora meticulosa*)



Heron

## Wildlife Gardening Leaflets

In line with one of our Group's major aims and activities, the promotion of wildlife gardening, we have produced seven Wildlife Gardening leaflets. Titles include :



Garden Ponds

Gardens for Birds

Dead Wood Habitat

Gardens for Butterflies

Gardens for Amphibians

Welcoming Bees & Wasps to Your Garden

Welcoming Beneficial Insects to Your Garden



We are very grateful to the West Wycombe Garden Centre for their sponsorship of the printing of these leaflets.

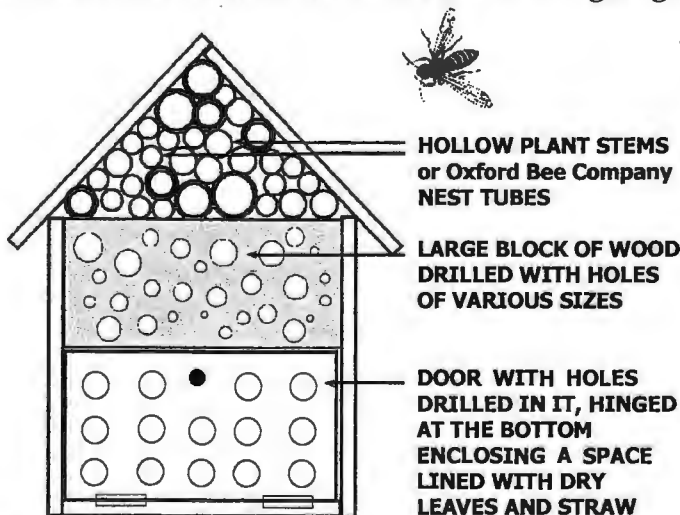
You can pick up copies of these leaflets at the West Wycombe Garden Centre and, of course, visit our Demonstration Wildlife Garden in the grounds of the Garden Centre.

Maurice

### The Last Word on Construction Projects for Bees & Wasps ?

The article on the red mason bee on pages 84-85 gives the benefits of making a home in your garden for the solitary bees. We provided instructions for making a simple bee nursery in the previous issue (No. 37, p.78) and our wildlife gardening leaflet "Welcoming Bees & Wasps to Your Garden", available at the West Wycombe Garden Centre, describes several others you can make. If, however, you prefer to buy them ready made, do contact the Oxford Bee Company (see page 85 for address etc.). A number of garden centres offer a selection bee & wasp tubes and insect boxes for sale, including Waterperry Gardens near Oxford. They have a selection of well-made boxes including the one illustrated below which combines all the ideas for bee & wasp nesting tubes & holes and an insect hibernation chamber "under one roof".

Like the nesting boxes described in previous issues and our leaflets, the back is closed and the holes in the blocks do not go right through the wood.



Although rather large, if the roof is made of 15mm, or thicker, wood and securely fixed this "Bee Mansion" could be suspended but it is probably safer to attach it to a fence or a wall via a batten attached to the back. **Maurice**

*I will make one of these for our wildlife garden at West Wycombe*



The tubes & holes mimic the natural nest sites of solitary bees: beetle borings in dead wood & hollow plant stems. They will attract the red & the blue mason bee and two species of leaf-cutter bees.



# Wildlife Watching - Reports

December: The December meeting was held at Penn School, when we made Christmas decorations from natural materials. Some lovely cards and wreaths were made, and taken home by the children

January: The January meeting was held on Downley Common, where we all worked very hard scrub clearing. It was very cold, so afterwards we enjoyed jacket potatoes,

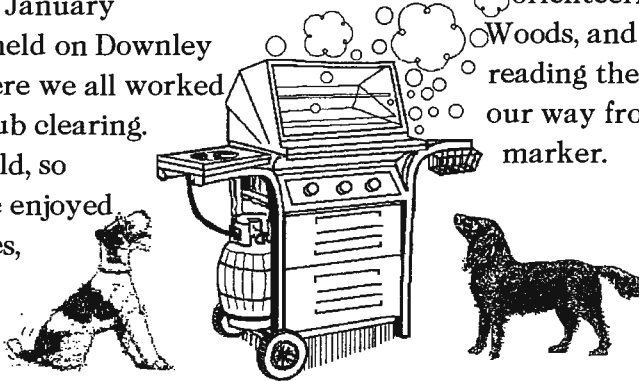


cooked on site on the BBQ.

Two canine members attended this meeting, Sue & Diva, and they stood guard by the BBQ, just in case!!

February: This meeting was orienteering at Keep Hill Woods, and we all enjoyed reading the maps and finding our way from marker to marker.

Wendy Thomas

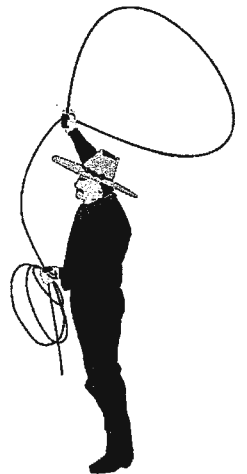


To join in **WATCH** meetings, which are open to children between the ages of 8-12, please contact Wendy Thomas on 01494 814068 or Julie (WDC Ranger) on 0 1494 421825

## Web Links Request

[www.wycombewildlifegrp.co.uk](http://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](http://www.wycombewildlifegrp.co.uk)  
[www.comunigate.co.uk/bucks/wwg](http://www.comunigate.co.uk/bucks/wwg)

Committee members e-mail addresses :

Chairman : James Donald:  
[james\\_donald@lycos.co.uk](mailto:james_donald@lycos.co.uk)  
 Newsletter editor :  
 Pat Morris:[roymorris@freeuk.com](mailto:roymorris@freeuk.com)  
 Maurice Young :  
[mauriceyoung@madasafish.com](mailto:mauriceyoung@madasafish.com)

**snail-mail**

Chairman WWG  
 73 Carver Hill Road  
 High Wycombe  
 HP11 2UB

### 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)

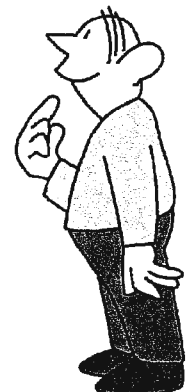
I / We wish to join WWG

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 - it's that time of year !

First frog - Amersham Hill Drive - 09/02/02  
First frog spawn - Amersham Hill Drive - 06/02/02

### Butterflies & Moths

Red Admiral - Pednor Bottom, Chesham 05/02/02  
Brimstones - Hughenden, Downley - 07/03/02  
Angle Shades moth - Wycombe & Marlow - mid Feb.  
Cmn. Quaker moth - High Wycombe - 07/03/02  
Hebrew Character moth - H. Wycombe - 15/03/02

## 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:**

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	Kate Mallard	01296 330033
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		01494 755573
Pann Mill Group	Robert Turner	01494 472981
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 421825
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

MEMO : COPY DATE Friday, 26 JULY 2002