

Issue 39

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- OPENING SOON

**A SAD LOSS TO CONSERVATION**

**THE PLIGHT OF THE BUMBLEBEE**

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**SEPTEMBER**  
**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

**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.

**Editor:** Pat Morris

**Produced by:** Maurice Young

**Illustrations by:**

Nova Art Explosion Clip Art,  
Maurice Young

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**Wycombe District Council**

Wycombe Wildlife Group  
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Printed on Environmentally friendly paper

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### Wildlife Notice Board

## Editorial

In 1997 Frances Alexander, then Chairman of Wycombe District Council, chose Local Agenda 21 as her year's theme while in office, and identified the redundant café at the Holywell Mead Swimming Pool as a possible centre for local environmental groups. Wycombe Wildlife Group supported the idea through thick and thin and now, after five years of consultations and meticulous planning that idea is about to become a reality.

**The Environment Centre on Holywell Mead** is about to open. See opposite page. In September 2000 Wycombe Wildlife Group undertook to keep all interested environmental groups, and schools informed of the progress of the new Environment Centre. To this end the editorial staff of Wycombe Wildlife News enlarged the number of pages and sent out copies to these other interested parties: about 200 further individuals and organizations.

Now that "*Ecobuzz*", the newsletter of the new Environment Centre is about to take over the all-embracing role executed by Wycombe Wildlife News, our own Newsletter will revert to its former, slimmer, self (from January 2003) A copy of the first edition of *Ecobuzz* will be mailed out to Wycombe Wildlife Group members, but after this members will have to choose whether they wish to continue receiving it and join The Environment Centre, or just to receive Wycombe Wildlife News, the cost of which will continue to be included in their membership subscription.

We thank all those who have given their support during this busy period.

Happy Reading !

*Pat Morris*

We welcome the following new members, who have joined this year

The Headteacher, Millbrook Combined School	24/01/02
Mrs Rosemary Cropper - Downley	02/04/02
Mr & Mrs M Shrubsole & Family - High Wycombe	13/04/02
Mr & Mrs J Moorby - Chinnor	29/04/02
Ms Jayne Boutell - High Wycombe	28/06/02
Mrs Wendy Webber - Booker	29/06/02
Mrs Mek Hiong Lim - High Wycombe	01/08/02

We look forward to meeting them at future events

Views expressed in the newsletter are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Group. For the purposes of management of the Group membership information is held on computer.

WWG

# The Environment Centre on Holywell Mead

If you've been down to Holywell Mead recently you cannot fail to have noticed the dramatic change to the appearance of the old café adjacent to the swimming pool.

By the time you read this the conversion of the building to form The Environment Centre on Holywell Mead will be almost complete and the huge task of turning the 'bricks and mortar' into a vibrant Centre for the community will have begun.

The Trustees are expecting the building to be available in early September, but it will be a few weeks after that before the doors can be opened to the public. Announcements will be made through the local media and on the Centre's web site.

With the aim of :

*"advancing community participation in sustainable development"*

the Centre will be available to everyone. Sustainable development means balancing the demands of our society and economy with those of our environment so that we can

*"meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs".*

There is much to be done, and that will take time, but with support already expressed by many individuals, groups and other organisations the Trustees are looking forward to the Centre being a major contributor to sustainable development in the area.

Jane Campbell, the Centre Development Manager, has already started to implement the Trustees' plans. Sixteen volunteers have been recruited so far, work has started on a 'Launch Event', various projects are under way, including Allotments and Wildlife Gardens, Sustainable Waste Education, and the creation of Interpreted Trails. Consultation on

the creation of a Local Agenda 21 Forum is underway.

In the slightly longer term the Centre is looking to establish an education programme, using local ecological resources as a basis for providing support for teachers and pupils. The curriculum areas which could be supported include : Science, Geography, History, Citizenship, and, of course, Sustainable Development.

The Centre has already established a web site – [www.ecobuzz.org.uk](http://www.ecobuzz.org.uk) and this and the membership newsletter, "Ecobuzz", to be published three times a year, are under development.

A most important thing is that the Centre, itself, is sustainable. Wycombe Wildlife Group has been a firm supporter from the start, some 5 years ago. We wish the Centre every success and encourage members and other groups to consider offering their support by:

- ✓ becoming members of the Centre
- ✓ offering their time as volunteers
- ✓ donating any surplus, but serviceable, furniture or equipment
- ✓ making donations

If you would like to help, in any way, or want more information please get in touch with Jane Campbell

- ♦ by e-mail at [jane@ecobuzz.org.uk](mailto:jane@ecobuzz.org.uk)
- ♦ by telephone at (01494) 535768 (temporary number)
- ♦ by writing to

The Environment Centre  
on Holywell Mead  
Bassetsbury Lane  
High Wycombe  
Bucks.  
HP11 1QX

Further information and updates can be found on the Centre's web site at :

[www.ecobuzz.org.uk](http://www.ecobuzz.org.uk)

James Donald

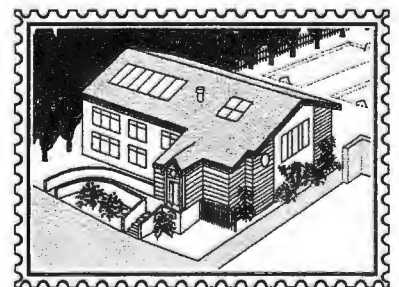


The  
**ENVIRONMENT**  
**CENTRE** on Holywell Mead

advancing community  
participation in  
sustainable development

Your support  
will be  
most welcome

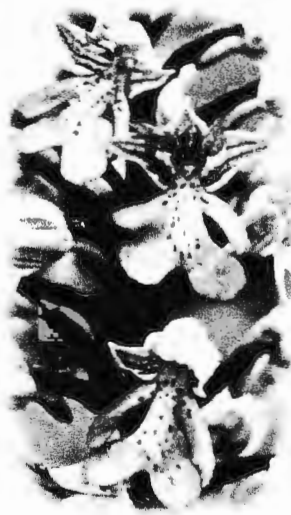
## Contact details



**web site**

## A Loss to Conservation.

in the 1980s there  
were 41  
Military Orchid plants



Military Orchid  
(*Orchis militaris*)

then Bill came on  
the scene  
---  
and things started  
to happen

It is difficult to find the words to express mine & the Group's sadness at the death of Bill Havers on June 17<sup>th</sup> this year, so, rather than dwelling on this sad loss let me give an all too brief, and I am sure inadequate, account of his wonderful contribution to conservation in Buckinghamshire.

Bill was very active in the Guide Dogs for the Blind Society and whenever they had street collections he was always in Marlow High Street. He was a dog walker for the Society and, I learnt at his funeral, it was this that originally brought him to Homefield Wood and led to his involvement with the Military Orchid.

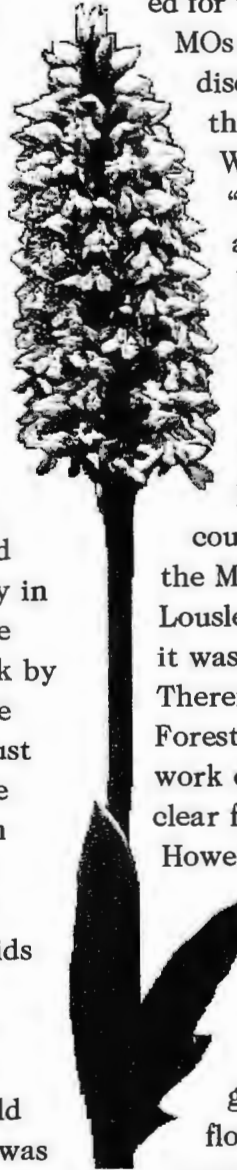
In the 1980s there were about 40 plants of the Military Orchid (MO) at Homefield tucked away in a clearing in the middle of the plantation, and one on the bank by the road. Very little was done about them by the Wildlife Trust – other than to keep very quite about their whereabouts. Then someone dug up a couple of plants. Up till then I did not know where the Military Orchids grew but, as a member of the South Bucks Committee, I got roped in for rare orchid guard duty and got to know Homefield and other rare orchid sites. It was not long after that that Bill came on the scene and took charge of the Military Orchid and Homefield and things started to happen.

Work parties were organised at Homefield! It was hard work in those early days. As I had a scrub saw Bill got me to cut the outer bank – that was the easy part – he and Ewan had to rake off all I had cut

and dispose of it among the trees. We did the same for the “inner sanctum”. However, Bill did not confine his efforts to managing the site, he set about finding out all that was known about the history of the Military Orchid in this country. He contacted the Natural History Museum and arranged for the two of us to inspect the MOs in the Herbarium. Here we discovered pressed specimens of the MO from Dane Garden Woods, Fennel's Wood, other “woods” in High Wycombe, and Gulch Wells near Uxbridge dating from 1880 to 1905 – yes, clearly the MO was pulled up and pressed to extinction by the 19<sup>th</sup> century plant hunters !!!

Bill then found out all he could about the rediscovery of the MO at Homefield by Ted Lousley and worked out that it was originally more widespread. Therefore, Bill contacted the Forestry Commission and set to work on them persuading them to clear fell a large area of spruce. However, they left all the brash for Bill to clear. Fortunately, by this time he had gathered a team of helpers so the clearing was soon back to bare earth and a few wisps of grass. By then BBONT had a flock of sheep and these were pressed into service on the outer bank & the inner sanctum relieving us of the annual strim.

At the same time as all this was going on, Kew had become involved so Bill & I travelled up to Kew for several years for seminars on rare orchids. Staff of the Sainsbury Orchid Project at Kew came to Homefield and showed us and the orchid wardens how to pollinate the MO.



This was duly done and the resultant seed pods were sent to Kew for them to work on the problems of germinating the seeds of rare orchids. Of course, all this had to be done with the blessing of English Nature, and who negotiated with them/persuaded them it was a good idea? - Bill !!

As I said above, some orchids had been dug up in the past and since then BBONT has had to employ a warden to guard the orchids while they are in flower & the seed ripens. Bill, of course, saw that the wardens were well watered etc and organized a rota of volunteers to give

them time off. Wardening is costly, so Bill persuaded the Trust to go public with the orchid and organised a massive, and very successful, open day when hundreds of people visited Homefield to see the orchids & management work, & donate a lot of money !

After one of the clearance sessions when trees had been felled and another new glade created, Bill, as usual, went up the following day to check the fires were out & to decide what to do next, when he spotted a dormouse. By coincidence, I had attended a meeting on management of woods for dormice, so knowing about dormouse boxes I made a dozen and put them up in the area where the dormouse was seen. In the Autumn that year Bill organised a "Dormouse Dawdle" - to show off the boxes and promote Homefield. There, right on cue, we found our first dormouse in one of the boxes. As you might imagine, great excitement and joy!



Bill working his magic on the orchids

I was beginning to spend more time on the newly established Holtspur Bank LNR and its dormice therefore, although I continued to monitor the dormice at a Homefield, Bill took over managing yet another rare, endangered species. He contacted Dr. Pat Morris, Chairman of the Mammal Society and joined the National Dormouse Monitoring Scheme regularly checking the boxes and weighing and recording all the dormice found. More dormouse boxes were obtained from the Mammal Society so there are now over 100 boxes on the reserve.

There is now a thriving colony of dormice at Homefield and the orchids ?

You should have seen them this year ! There are now 213 MO plants including 46 in the meadow (the area near the road) where, originally, there had only been one.

The orchids in the inner sanctum have declined over recent years but in the new, large clearing they are springing up all over the place, beautiful, big, healthy specimens - a wonderful testimony to Bill's dedicated work & skilful management.

Bill was also working on the Forestry Commission trying to persuade them to let BBONT (now BBOWT) purchase the site. I hope the Trust will follow up on this and that Homefield will become a Trust owned Nature Reserve so that the dormice and orchids can continue to thrive and expand making a wonderful memorial to a remarkable man.

Maurice

seed was sent to Kew



Dormouse box

dormouse dawdles

- another of Bill's initiatives



dormouse dormant !

there are now

213

Military Orchid plants

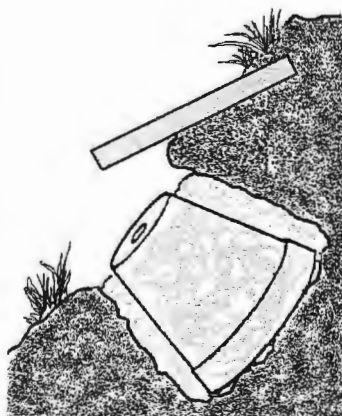
p.s. The total number of orchids quoted (213) does not include 12 exported to Basildon Under English Nature licence in the species recovery program me !

## The Plight of the BumbleBee

at least 2 species  
have become  
extinct,  
others are declining

Photograph on right  
*Bombus lucorum*  
(white-tailed bee) in a  
white dead-nettle  
flower.

The same species is  
shown pollinating this  
flower in an illustration  
in the Reader's Digest  
Field Guide to Butter-  
flies and other Insects



Inverted flowerpot  
sunk in a slope  
containing loose ball of  
dry grass or old mouse  
nest for bumblebees  
to nest in.

The tile above the pot  
is to keep it dry

A new leaflet from English Nature, produced by the Bumblebee Working Group, highlights the decline of bumblebees in the British Countryside in recent decades. At least two species have become extinct, the range of several others has been considerably restricted and common species are reduced in number in the last 10-20 years.

The decline is the result of changes in farming practices. Clovers, especially red clover, are important sources of nectar for these bees, & although grown as a silage crop, it is cut before it flowers.

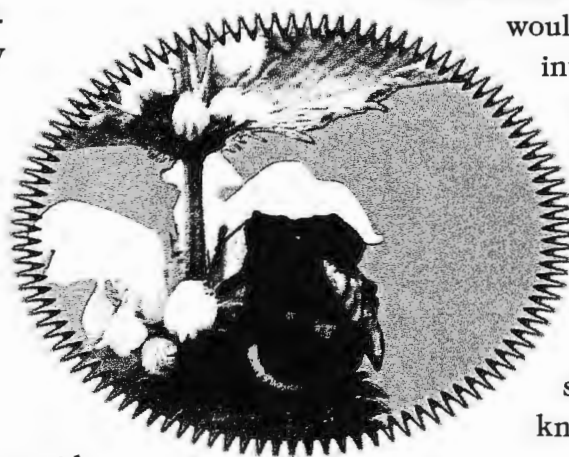
It is hoped that set aside and the establishment of flower-rich margins to many fields will reverse this decline for bumblebees & benefit both farmers and gardeners. They fly &, therefore, pollinate at lower temperatures and in poorer weather than honeybees. They are important in the pollination of legume crops for the farmer (runner & french beans for the gardener). The leaflet "Help Save the Bumblebee ... get more buzz from the countryside" lists several other benefits to farmers and landowners at whom it is mainly directed.

This is not to say that the wildlife gardener in town cannot take positive action. You can plant and encourage white deadnettles in your hedge-bottoms. The variety with variegated leaves and the garden variety of yellow archangel with variegated leaves may be more acceptable for gardeners & should be used by bees -

if you grow them your observations would be very welcome.

Other species, recommended in the leaflet, for gardeners to grow are red & white clover. White clover does well in my lawn, which I only cut every two weeks, so I get a flush of clover flowers in-between each cut, and I regularly see bees on these flowers.

You can get red clover seed from the wildflower nurseries and it would be worthwhile introducing it into your spring & summer meadows. Other "bee flowers" for your meadow areas include bird's-foot-trefoil, field scabious and dark knapweed.



Some bumblebees nest under ground using old mouse and vole nests. For the wildlife gardener, Michael Chinnery suggests in his book "The Complete Amateur Naturalist" that you three-quarter bury a clay flowerpot upside down and fill with material from an old mouse nest. I wonder if they would use old gerbil or hamster bedding. If you keep one of these why not try it - again, your observations would be most welcome! You could also try T-Rex Mouse Maker which was suggested by the Animal Magic Pet Centre, 31 Marlow Road, when Pat asked if they had any old mouse bedding she could use. If you try this, make a loose ball of dry grass, sprinkle with a few drops of T-Rex M M, put it in your flowerpot and observe - yet again let us know if you have any success.

Maurice

Our wildlife gardening leaflet "Welcoming Bees & Wasps to Your Garden" available at the West Wycombe Garden Centre tells you all about creating nesting sites for these beneficial insects

## Wycombe District Council Ranger Service

The past 3 months have been very busy due to shortage of staff and technological problems with our computer system. However, we have managed to continue offering a wide range of services to the community.

There have been many environmental developments with local schools. Castlefield School have added a vegetable garden to their wildlife garden where the children have learnt how to grow their own produce. They were able to harvest part of their crop before finishing for the summer. We hope this has encouraged their environmental & organic awareness. The enthusiastic response from these children and their teachers over the past 3 years has been exceptional. As from September there will be 3 new Rangers joining our team.

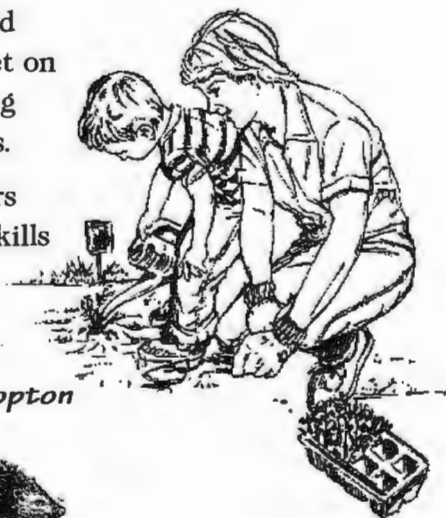
Hopefully this will mean that we can provide a full and varied service to the users. Up and coming events can be accessed via our new website :

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

There was a Funday Sunday on the last Sunday in August at the Micklefield Community Centre where there were various activities including Willow Sculptures, quizzes for all ages, environmental arts and crafts etc. We also raised the awareness of how recycling household waste could have a positive effect on the environment, such as making bird feeders out of plastic bottles.

Help from enthusiastic volunteers will be much appreciated. Any skills would be very welcome. Please contact the Ranger Service. on 01494 421825.

from September  
3 new Rangers  
will join the Team



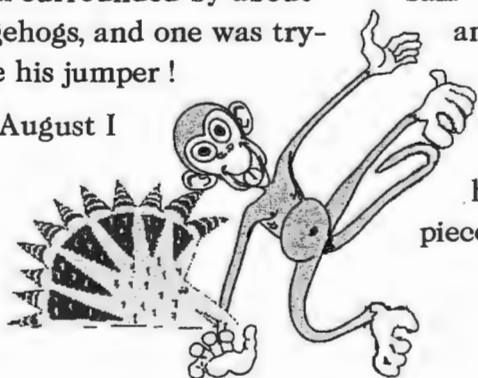
Julie Hopton



## Hedgehogs with a Penchant for Wool

One fine summer night, WWG member Sylvia Parmenter's son offered to sleep out on the lawn in her garden as there were insufficient beds indoors for all her visitors. After a while, finding the lawn rather wet her son moved to the patio, but was awakened after about an hour by something tugging at the jumper he was wearing. He was astounded to find himself surrounded by about six little hedgehogs, and one was trying to remove his jumper!

One night in August I sent my dog into the garden to fetch his soft toy,



a stuffed woolen monkey. Instead of returning with it, however, Tramp started barking and refused to come in. I went down the garden with a torch and discovered he was barking at a hedgehog which seemed to have hold of his toy and would not let go. The more we tugged to remove the monkey the more the hedgehog tightened its grip and curled into a ball. I had to fetch some scissors and carefully cut the monkey free, without injuring the hedgehog's spines and leaving the hedgehog with its own piece of cloth. *Pat*

awoken by something  
tugging at his jumper



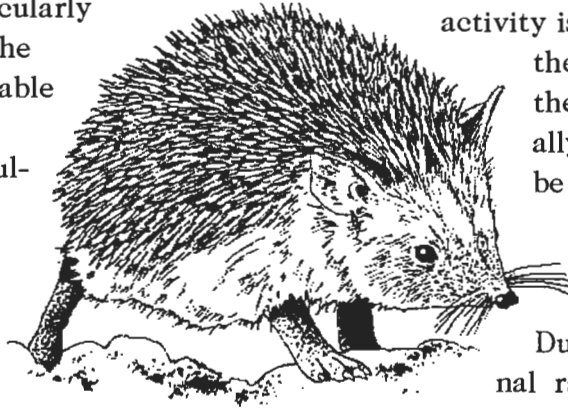
# The Life of a Hedgehog

scarabeid beetles,  
caterpillars and  
earthworms formed  
55% of their diet  
by weight.



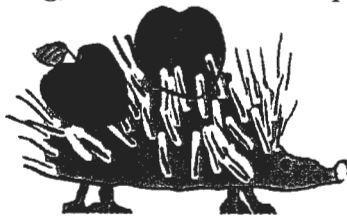
Hedgehogs  
hibernate from  
October to April

The hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*) can be found where there is close proximity of grassland to woodland, scrub and hedgerow, e.g. at edge of woods, hedgerows in meadowland, or sand dunes with shrubs. They are virtually present in all lowland habitats where there is sufficient cover for nesting. A limiting factor in their distribution, particularly across Europe is the availability of suitable site and materials for nesting, particularly in the winter. Hedgehogs can be found all over the UK and Ireland however, and are a common sight in our woodlands.



Hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*)

Hedgehogs are known for their main distinctive feature of several thousand sharply pointed spines. These completely replace hair on the upper surface of their body except for the face and a narrow patch on the skull. Their spines, which are about 22mm long are long lasting, irregularly replaced and used as a defence mechanism at the first sign of danger.



Although their eyesight is poor, smell and hearing is acute enabling them to respond rapidly to danger, rolling up into a prickly ball - the head and all vital organs being protected by this unique adaptation.

A hedgehog's whereabouts can be determined by its tracks (footprints). These are approximately 3.5 cm long & 2.5 to 3 cm wide, the length usually being measured without claws. The size of its tracks quoted

here is an average however, and can differ according to the age, condition, development and even sex of the animal. The hedgehog moves only by walking, or at the most by fast walking, which is reminiscent of a slow trotting tread, so the hedgehog is only capable of a very slow pace.

A hedgehog's main period of activity is at night, when they hunt. During the day they generally rest. They can be found resting in thickets, a pile of stones or in a nest of leaves.

During their nocturnal rambles they gather insects and often hunt small verte-

brates as well. A hedgehog exists almost entirely on ground living invertebrates but will take a small number of birds eggs and chicks. The only detailed study in Britain that covered a variety of habitats, showed that scarabeid beetles, caterpillars and earthworms formed 55% of their diet by weight. Food was found to be entirely caught and dealt with by the mouth.

Interestingly, during this study, some truth was found in old folk tales, which suggested that hedgehogs carry fruit (particularly apples), on their spines! Although some evidence was found for this, the validity of the story is disputed.

During the winter months a large nest is built for hibernation. Food is collected in preparation for this event. The nest is used for up to 6 months, usually from October to April (the hibernation period). Sometimes a summer nest is built but usually only for breeding purposes.



Hedgehogs deliver a litter of four to six young usually born in June, sometimes with a second litter later in the summer. Once a litter is born they put on weight rapidly as they begin to leave the nest after 22 days and live solitary lives thereafter. In order to survive winter they must become fully grown by hibernation in autumn. Later litters that hibernate at a sub-adult size are unlikely to survive the winter. Once the hibernation period is over the cycle begins again, resting in daylight and hunting at night in

preparation for next winter's hibernation. This is the main activity of a hedgehog's life.

Hedgehogs are particularly useful in the UK, as they are a predator of garden pests, such as slugs. They are often invited to gardens by food bowls! (See Mary Williams' article below) The hedgehog is a fascinating mammal and as a nation we are lucky that they are so prevalent in our country.

*Mike Ambrose*

a predator of garden pests such as slugs



## The Saga of the Cat and a Hedgehog

At the beginning of November, last year, I noticed a rather small hedgehog in my garden, and managed to catch him and pop him on the scales (to his great indignation) where he weighed just under 400 grams - less than the weight recommended (500 grams) for hibernating hedgehogs.

I put out a saucer of meaty dog food that evening and the hedgehog found it and appeared to enjoy it, but the next night, so did the cat next door who, though he wants for nothing in his own home, always prefers scavenging at night.

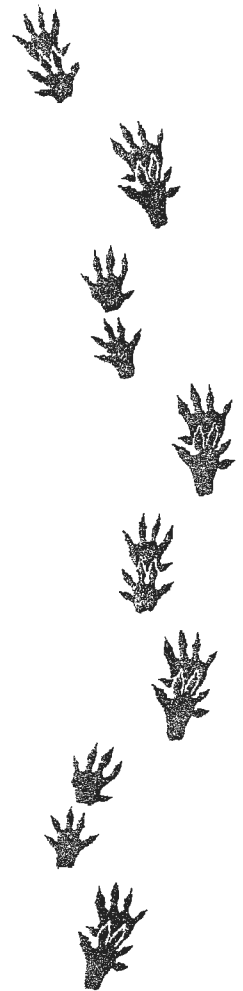
As my garden is tiny, St Tiggy-winkles suggested that I get a large (because hedgehogs need to walk right round and out being unable to back up) hanging basket, cut a small hole in the side, turn it upside down and put the food inside. The first night, the basket had been pushed aside, the saucer was outside, and the plate licked clean - cats obviously - so I found two small stakes and drove them in at an angle to anchor the basket down.

The next night, I saw the tabby sitting beside the basket, delicately inserting a paw into one of the spaces and bringing out a lump of food which he then ate.

My next ploy was to open a plastic bag, fasten it round the basket with sticky tape, drive in my two stakes again, and add the food saucer. This was too easy. I looked out of the kitchen window at the usual time, and the tabby was levering up the basket, the stakes acting as hinges, and pulling the food out. I rushed out and drove in two more stakes, anchoring the basket all round.

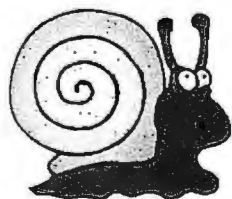
The following night I saw the tabby just sitting beside the basket, studying it carefully, and next morning there were hedgehog type remains in the saucer. I don't think the cat has finished though. Perhaps that night he was working out how to train the hedgehog to bring food out to him.

*Mary Williams*



## Do Molluscicides Harm Hedgehogs ?

Britain's gardeners  
and agriculturalists  
sprinkle  
1,130,000 tonnes  
of slug pellets  
each year.



A double wammy for  
hedgehogs :  
molluscicides seriously  
reduce the hedgehogs'  
food supply and,  
if they eat the pellets  
or any dead, poisoned  
slugs & snails,,  
they will be poisoned.

If you have visiting hedgehogs, and if, like me, you have found slugs and snails a major problem in your garden this year, you will be interested to read the article below, published in Mammals UK, Summer 2002, the Quarterly Magazine of the Mammals Trust. Dr Valerie Keeble, Chief Executive of MTUK (Mammals Trust UK), has kindly given us permission to reproduce it in full in our own Newsletter.

### Molluscicides & Hedgehogs

In the on-going battle against slugs, Britain's gardeners and agriculturalists sprinkle 1,130,000 tonnes of slug pellets each year. Such widespread use raises concern for our hedgehogs, since they are known to eat both pellets and poisoned slugs.

A recent study supported by MTUK established that slug pellets used in gardens pose only a minor threat to hedgehogs, since the active ingredient - metaldehyde - is rapidly broken down in the slug's body. A hedgehog would therefore have to consume vast numbers of slugs before it suffered any adverse effects. Of more concern are the carbamate molluscicides used in agriculture, whose active ingredients - methiocarb and thiocarb - can adversely affect both the hedgehogs' physiology and behaviour. They are also less easily broken down and are highly toxic to vertebrates as well as other invertebrates. The hedgehog is therefore left with a food source both seriously depleted and capable of passing on toxic residues.

With little published data on the full range of the effects of carbamate use, the investigation found that more detailed research was necessary to draw firm conclusions.






We must determine the effects of toxic residues in invertebrates on hedgehogs, and study factors affecting hedgehog survival, such as foraging success, fecundity and their susceptibility to predation under different farming regimes.

A word of caution; all slug pellets are toxic to all vertebrates and, if used, the manufacturer's guidelines should be strictly followed.

You can contact MTUK at:

15 Cloisters House,  
8 Battersea Park Road,  
LONDON SW8 4BG.  
Tel: 020 74985262.  
e-mail : [enquiries@mtuk.org](mailto:enquiries@mtuk.org)

How you can help hedgehogs :

-  Check long grass before strimming, in case there are hedgehogs present.
-  In autumn, check bonfires before lighting, in case a hedgehog has started hibernation underneath.
-  Have a shallow end, or some wire netting at the side of your pond, so that hedgehogs which have fallen in can climb out again.
-  Provide a dish of water for visiting hedgehogs, and a saucer of meat-based dog or cat food in autumn, to help young hedgehogs fatten up for winter.
-  Place a Hedgehog Nest Box in a secluded area of your garden and cover it with earth. Have a supply of dry leaves nearby to use to make a nest inside.

Contact Wycombe Wildlife Group for further details.

*(Snails & slugs are Molluscs so molluscicides are poisons that kill snails & slugs)*

## Reports

### Moth-trapping and bat-detecting at Green Farm Hughenden

a huge success

More than 20 people assembled for the Moth-trapping and bat-detecting event held at Green Farm, Hughenden, on Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> August, 2002. Children as young as three years old, as well as adults and teenagers were soon enthusiastically collecting moths and taking them to County Moth Recorder, Martin Albertini, for identification.

Apart from moths caught in pots from the surrounding foliage, and one, the Straw Underwing, found drinking from a wine rope, there were others flying into five moth-traps dotted round the area and presided over by Martin, his colleague Peter Hall, Julia Carey, and Andy McVeigh, Countryside Officers from Bucks County Council, and Paul and Ellis Bowyer of Wycombe Wildlife Group. There was plenty for people to inspect, and the meeting was further enhanced by the use of two bat detectors, wielded by Angus Idle and Maurice Young of Wycombe Wildlife Group. "Bats are the enemy of moth-trappers" commented Peter Hall, and indeed this was vividly illustrated, when the calls emitted by a pipistrelle, over one of the moth traps, were picked up on Maurice's bat detector, and finished with a "glup" as the pipistrelle caught and swallowed its luckless prey.

"I want everyone to know how beautiful moths are" Peter stated, and this meeting certainly helped people go away with a greater understanding of the complexities of size, shape and pattern of these fascinating insects.

The Group's thanks to Neil Harris of National Trust, for allowing this event on the Trust's land, and to all those mentioned above for their unstinting support. Thanks, too, to all those others who came along and helped to make it such a success.

Martin and Peter identified a total of 65 macro and 25 micro moths during the evening, and these were recorded and later released.

Martin and Peter will be setting up their moth-traps again on September 27<sup>th</sup> at Downley Common. See Programme for details. All the family welcome.

*Pat Morris*

#### Was it a soprano ?

As Pat Morris reported above we could see a bat swooping over the moth-trap feasting on the insects drawn in by the light. It could also be heard on my bat detector emitting a series of clicks which, as it homed in on a moth were emitted more rapidly ending in a "buzz", which batters call a "feeding buzz".

What was more interesting was that I had to tune my bat detector slightly higher than usual (50+kHz). In recent years as bat detectors have improved and bat calls have been more closely studied it has been shown that there are 2 varieties of common pipistrelle bat. One echolocates at 45kHz the other at 55kHz, dubbed the "soprano bat". They are not easy to distinguish and I need more experience of both types to be certain but we may have had a soprano pipistrelle entertaining us that Friday evening.

*Maurice*

adults & teenagers  
were enthusiastically  
collecting moths  
and taking them to  
County Moth Recorder,  
Martin Albertini,  
for identification.



Blood-vein moth

bats are the enemy  
of  
moth-trappers



there are 2 varieties of  
Pipistrelle bat

## Why Latin Names ?

In our last issue, No 38, April 2002, Maurice discussed the use of capital versus lower case letters when using plant and animal names in written and printed works.

In particular, he gave the rules when giving the names in Latin. But why Latin names ?

Many people ask the question "Aren't the common English names good enough ? "

This is what Angus Idle says in answer :

"The reasons for using Latin names are overwhelming. There is no register of vernacular (common) names comparable with *Index Kewensis* which is held at Kew, and lists the Latin names of all known plants, also any number of common names can and do refer to any species or number of species. You might talk to an American botanist about a grass which you call Cocksfoot, without getting a glimmer of recognition. You might find him saying that they have a similar grass in the USA which they call Orchard grass. If you had called it *Dactylis glomerata* L. you would have known for certain that you were both talking about the same species from the start."

### Plant families

You will have noticed that there are a lot of plants with daisy-like flowers, for instance sunflowers, dandelions and chrysanthemums, to name just a few. But there are many other plants whose flowers are nothing like daisies, let us mention grasses and horse chestnuts. The ones that look like daisies are thought to be related to each other, and the others not related to them. So we say that the ones that appear to be related are in the same family. The rules governing family names have been tightened recently and the Latin family name must be derived from that of a genus in that family - chosen because it is the most typical of the family. To identify it as a family name a special suffix (ending) is added to the name. The suffix is -aceae, and in the case

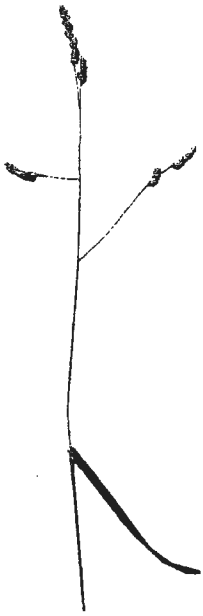
of the daisy-like plants, we chose the genus *Aster* as the one to name the family after, hence *Asteraceae* is the family name of the daisy-like flowers. (Note: prior to the tightening up of the rules, daisy-like plants were called *Compositae*). The change brings them into line with the names of other plant families e.g. *Rosaceae* - members of the rose family.

### Genus and Species

The use of Latin names consisting of two parts (the system introduced by Linnaeus) which are actually a noun followed by an adjective, is not only to name each individual species, but more importantly to show the relationships which are thought to exist between species. Within the daisy family there are some plants which are grouped as thistles and others which are grouped as hawkweeds and others as chrysanthemums. Each group has a generic name or names, and within each genus there will be species. So to fully identify a plant you do need a two part name. The first part, the noun, is the name of the genus and the second part, known as the specific epithet, is the adjective (species).

Think of it this way: We have names in two parts which indicate that we are related to our brothers, sisters and parents. Latin names fulfil just the same need. The first part is like our surname and the second part is equivalent to our forename.

(continued opposite ----->)



Cocksfoot grass  
(*Dactylis glomerata*)



*Aster* sp,  
Type genus of  
the family *Asteraceae*



*Leucanthemum vulgare*  
Ox-eye daisy showing  
*Asteraceae* family  
characteristics

# All Aglow

Those of you who are members of BBOWT (BBONT that was) will know I have been leading glow-worm walks at Holtspur Bank LNR for many years now. I think I took the first Glow-worm walk, actually in the Gomm Valley, in 1993. The year before I had listened to a talk on Country File, or some other radio programme, given by a Robin Scagell. Robin wanted to carry out a national survey for glow-worms and asked listeners to go out and look round their localities and report any sightings to him. So, during the next two weeks I visited the BBONT reserves around Wycombe and was delighted to find glow-worms on all of them and duly reported my finds to Robin. It was the first time I had seen glow-worms and it was an exhilarating experience. I felt that others would also love to see them and so, the following year, the now regular July evening glow-worm hunts began.

Following the designation of Holtspur Bank as a Local Nature Reserve I transferred these walks to this site. We had over 50 people on the first walk at Holtspur and, although the numbers have declined, it is still a very popular event and we have usually been lucky each year in seeing a good display – usually in the 20s and 30s. Last year was the only disappointing year. It was a cold, damp evening and we only found four that evening but, as those who came on the walk had not seen glow-worms before, they were very pleased. Following my example, other regions of BBOWT now also organise regular evening walks on their reserves and, I see, these glow-worm walks are becoming a regular feature at the Aston Rowant National Nature Reserve. Robin Scagell reports on his web site that they found 81 at Aston Rowant this year.

The walk was advertised, as usual, this year and about a week before the walk I had a surprise phone call from Robin Scagell who said he was in the area and could he come along! So on this last walk I, along with the others who came, learnt a lot about glow-worms.

I strongly recommend those of you with a computer and access to the web to visit Robin Scagell's web site at: [www.glowworms.org.uk](http://www.glowworms.org.uk) where you will learn all that is known so far about glow-worms and find some useful links to other sites dealing with glow-worms (p.s. note two "w"s and no hyphen. I, initially, typed one w by mistake and got the web site of a pop group!).

Although Robin's web site is excellent, I am sure he would say, nothing can beat seeing the real thing, so make a point of looking out for the glow-worm walks in next year's BBOWT & WWG calendars or the one at Aston Rowant.

*Maurice.*

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To sum up :

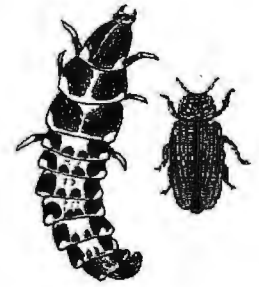
Family (Groups of similar species)

Genera (Smaller groups of species with greater similarities)

Species (Plants or animals which don't generally cross-breed, are given their own specific epithets - that is, the second part of the name)

If you can get along with the English or vernacular names, enjoy the sheer variety of things which people call plants and animals, then stick to that. If you do know the meaning of Latin words, however, they often tell you a lot about the plants which they are used to name.

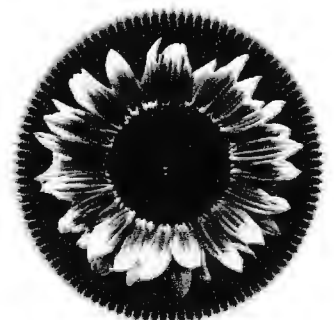
*Angus Idle*



A pair of glow-worms  
female on left  
male on the right



Female glow-worm  
photographed at the  
Warburg Reserve  
near Henley



*Helianthus annuus*  
Sunflower  
A big daisy showing  
Asteraceae family  
characteristics

# Update - West Wycombe Garden Centre

## Demonstration Wildlife Garden Springs Back to Life

The wildlife gardening team were most alarmed when they went for an extra session at the Group's Demonstration Wildlife Garden at West Wycombe Garden Centre on 10<sup>th</sup> July 2002, to find all the shrubs, ivy and bird boxes round the walls had been removed during their absence. It seemed as if nine years of painstaking work creating a balanced wildlife habitat had been destroyed. However, as is the way with plants, four weeks later the shrubs and ivy were all springing back to life from the base where they had been cut off, and it will not be long before a pleasant screen will again conceal the wall, with flowers and berries.

The wall around West Wycombe Garden Centre is a listed ancient monument, and the weight of the ivy had become a threat to its stability. Weaknesses in the wall's structure are now apparent. For this reason, in the future the gardening team will have to exercise strict control over the plants growing in the wall's proximity, to guard against further encroachment. The ivy, in particular, will have to be prevented from attaining its former glory, valuable habitat though it is.

Recent events at West Wycombe Garden Centre have meant a lot of extra work for the team, tidying up after Sir Edward Dashwood's workforce had been in, and making good the damage caused in the perimeter flowerbeds. A new log-pile has been formed and aids to gardening stacked up neatly. Wycombe Wildlife Group is greatly heartened by the support and encouragement of the Garden Centre staff. It is a great comfort to know that the wildlife garden faces no further threat in the near future, and that we can go forward confident that we can continue to create and maintain this wonderful habitat. A pyramidal orchid had already sprung up into flower in the spring meadow the day the seeming devastation was discovered, and bees, butterflies and birds are already back.

Work takes place every fortnight in the wildlife garden, and helpers are always welcome. See programme for times and dates. *Pat Morris*



Ivy (*Hedera helix*)  
on the way up  
again

## Reports - Walks, Moth-trapping & Bat-detecting

Thanks are due to Neil Harris of the National Trust for his most interesting walk, tracing the course of the Hughenden Stream and explaining his plans for its future; to Frances Wilding for her tour of the Rye Dyke,

and for pointing out all the birds to be found there; to Angus Idle for leading the walks at Deangarden Wood and Homefield. Seven species of orchids were seen at the latter.

*Pat Morris*

## Garden Hygiene

*How to Keep bird tables & feeders clean?* My solution has been to obtain a spray-can of a ready-to-use disinfectant. I give the table a quick spray each morning, wait a minute or so for it to take effect, then wipe dry with a disposable kitchen towel. The table or feeder is then ready to receive its daily

supply of bird-food.

The product is: Ark-Klens Ready-to-Use disinfectant, 250ml £5.50 including p&p. The 500ml size (£7.50 including p&p), supplied as a concentrate, which you dilute (1 : 50), has a long shelf life. You can get it from Vetark Animal Health Telephone: 01962 880376. *Pat*



# Wildlife Watching - Reports

## MARCH

The march meeting was well attended and held at the Rangers Depot at Kingsmead. We made bird boxes and the finished items were taken home

## APRIL

This meeting was held in the morning starting at



10am so that we could hear the Dawn Chorus

The meeting was led by Frances Wilding, who certainly knows all about the birds on the Rye. It was very interesting and everyone enjoyed themselves.

MAY (Meeting cancelled)

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 01494 421825

## Decline of the House Sparrow

Regular readers will be aware of the worrying decline of the House Sparrow, and the British Trust for Ornithology is anxious to find out why. They seek volunteer birdwatchers to take part in special House Sparrow surveys.

If you would like further information,

phone Carol Povey or Jacky Prior on 01842 750050. When it opens, there will also be postcards available from the Environment Centre, to request further information about Garden Birdwatch, the all-year garden bird survey.

## 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  
c/o, 73 Carver Hill Road,  
High Wycombe, HP11 2UB  
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 ?



### Butterflies

White Admiral - Mop End, 24/07/02

### Moth larvae

Great Prominent - Hughenden 28/7/02  
 Eyed Hawk - moth - Hughenden 28/7/02  
 Cinnabar - Demo. Wildlife Garden 7/8/02  
 Ergot fungus on *Festuca gigantea* -  
 Piggot's Wood 22/7/02  
 Ergot fungus on barley - Hughenden 28/7/02

For more sightings, visit our website

## 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	David Wilding	01296 330033
British Trust for Ornithology (Regional Rep.)	Mick A'Court	01296 623610
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
Downley Common Preservation Society	Bill Thompson	01494 520648
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
Hughenden & Missenden Conservation Group	Tony Marshall	01494 864251
Lane End Conservation Group	Joyce Davis	01494 881295
Marlow Society	Michael Hyde	01628 485474
National Trust	Estate Office	01494 755573
Pann Mill Group	Robert Turner	01494 472981
Priestfield Arboretum	Barbara Rippington	01494 565269
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, 25 OCTOBER 2002