

Issue 42

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**SEPTEMBER
2003**

WYCOMBE BLUEBELL SURVEY

- A FASCINATING AND REWARDING SURVEY

HISTORY OF THE BLUEBELL'S NAME

- ALL THOSE LATIN NAMES & THEIR AUTHORS .

HEDGEROW MAMMALS

HOLLOW LANE

WOODLAND ACTIVITIES

- FERNS

COLLECTING FRUITS AND SEEDS

- IF YOU WANT TO GROW THEM DON'T HANG AROUND

TWO NEW GALLS

- IN BERKS, BUCKS & OXON

FOXES PIECE LEARNING GARDEN

- INSPIRE, PLANT, GROW, SUSTAIN

MORE SCHOOL NEWS

- CHILDREN HELP ASSESS EFFECT OF CATTLE GRAZING

REPORTS:

- WYCOMBE WILDLIFE GROUP AGM

- WWG RESERVES

- WWG WALKS

- WWG TALKS

WYCOMBE WATCH REPORTS

WEB & EMAIL ADDRESSES

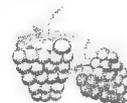
NOTICE BOARD

- DID YOU SEE ?

- CONTACT LIST - YOUR GUIDE TO LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

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

Address : WWG, C/O
129, Deeds Grove,
High Wycombe, HP12 3PA



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 & 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 Wildlife Group is a Registered Charity

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Editorial : Plenty Going On

One morning this summer my neighbour called me from over the fence. "I have a terribly swollen leg", she said. I commiserated, and then she added, "There are a lot of insects about I've never seen before". She described a fearsome creature, nectaring on her lavender "It had a black and yellow body, and it was huge - like a bumble-bee. It gave a horrible buzz when it flew off". Knowing at once what she was referring to, and immediately guessing her drift, I replied "It's a particularly large hoverfly, but perfectly harmless. It couldn't have bitten you". I also had observed this year, usually towards sunset, *Volucella inanis* nectaring both on lavender, and several other plants in my garden. Its larvae feed on the grubs in wasps' nests.

My neighbour then pointed out a couple of butterflies she did not recognize. One was a Painted Lady, the other a Small Tortoiseshell. These two colourful butterfly species have also been frequent visitors to gardens this summer, like another, the Red Admiral. In other years they are scarcely seen. No doubt helped along by soaring temperatures - it was the hottest day ever on August 10th 34.5 C (93.2 F) by the thermometer in my garden on that day - it has been a good year for insects. The long hours of unbroken sunshine for days on end have encouraged almost every type of hoverfly, butterfly, fly, bee, bumble bee and wasp to appear in abundance. Plenty to observe, and plenty going on in the wildlife garden.

At Wycombe Wildlife Group there has also been plenty going on, as this bumper issue of the Newsletter will testify.

The Group is grateful to Wycombe District Council for an SLA grant of £600 this year, which has enabled it to continue to distribute copies of the Newsletter to all schools in the District, as well as to members. The grant will also go towards providing advice to schools.

Pat Morris

We welcome the following new members, who have joined since March 2003 :

Miss Clare Kelly, Mrs Jean de Selincourt, Mr & Mrs David & Margaret Harris,

Mr David Wainman, Mrs Vivienne Pollock, Dr & Mrs J.R. Stanbury,

Dr & Mrs Sandy & Elizabeth MacFarlane, Mr & Mrs Michael Morley.

and 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.

The Wycombe Bluebell Survey

In order to promote Plantlife's National Bluebell Survey within the Wycombe District, Wycombe Wildlife Group organized a bluebell workshop at the Environment Centre on Holywell Mead. It was held on Saturday, 26th April 2003, and was well supported by members of Wycombe Wildlife Group, but only four other people turned up. Their main interest was to identify whether the plants in their gardens were native bluebells or not. They were all disappointed to learn that their specimens were hybrids.

Fourteen members of Wycombe Wildlife Group then agreed to take on the task of surveying bluebell areas near to where they lived. Altogether, more than 40 sites were selected, both woodlands and field and hedgerow margins, and covered an area of more than 70 square kilometres. Results were sent to Plantlife as Wycombe's contribution to the National Survey

Most woods and field margins to the north of Wycombe contained native bluebells, though Common Wood, Penn, and Kingswood did contain some hybrids, as noted at Hughenden. To the west of Wycombe, of 20 sites examined, fourteen were mixed and only six, one of them Sunter's Wood, were natives. Bluebells in gardens were either all hybrids or Spanish, with only one garden, again to the north of Wycombe at Holmer Green, reporting the genuine article.

It was a fascinating and rewarding survey, and provided an extra dimension, while out and enjoying the beauty of an English woodland in spring. It will be interesting to see whether the hybrid or Spanish bluebell advances still further into the native strongholds in future years.

Footnote:

The bluebell survey arose as a result of Plantlife's campaign to find a representative flower for each county in Britain. So many counties suggested the bluebell that Plantlife felt it should become a national flower. Buckinghamshire now has to choose between the Chiltern Gentian and Bee Orchid as its emblem. There is still time to place your vote at www.plantlife.org.uk but before 31st October 2003.



The native bluebell
Hyacinthoides non-scripta
to become national
flower

A fascinating and
rewarding survey
for all who joined in



Chiltern Gentian
Gentianella germanica
(Willd.) Boerner.

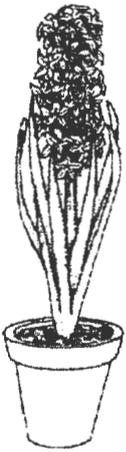
Which flower should be
the emblem for Buckinghamshire,
the Chiltern Gentian or
the Bee Orchid

?



Bee Orchid
Ophrys apifera Hudson

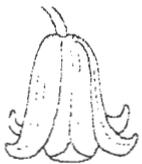
The History of the Bluebell's Latin name



Hyacinth
(*Hyacinthus orientalis*)



Flower: native bluebell
Sweet smelling
Tubular shape
parallel sided
Anthers/pollen: cream
Petal tips curled back
Leaves 12-20 mm wide wide



Flower: hybrid bluebell
Slight scent
Bell shaped
Anthers/pollen: pale blue
Petal tips slightly curled
Leaves: 20-30mm wide



Flower: Spanish bluebell
No scent
Very open bell shaped
Anthers/pollen: blue
Petal tips not recurved
Leaves: 25-35mm wide

It was originally called *Hyacinthus non-scriptus* by Linnaeus in 1794. He named the plant gardeners today call the hyacinth *Hyacinthus orientalis*

Then the Genus *Scilla* was separated from *Hyacinthus*, on the basis of the flower parts being six petals rather than the bell shaped tube with six tips, taking the bluebell with it.

In the "Handbook of British Flora" by Bentham and Hooker (1858 with reprints up to 1947), which was in use in the first half of the last century, the bluebell was called: *Scilla nonscripta*(L.) Hoffmanns & Link.

Endymion nutans appears to have been another original name for the bluebell (nutans means nodding or drooping).

So in the Flora of the British Isles by Clapham, Tutin and Warburg

in 1952 & 1958, it was changed to *Endymion nonscriptus*(L.) Garcke, conserving the nonscripta epithet with the move to the genus *Endymion*.

That flora also mentions a previous synonym of the bluebell *Scilla nutans*. J.E.Smith.

In the "New Flora of the British Isles" by Clive Stace in 1991 it is called *Hyacinthoides non-scripta* (L) Chouard ex Rothmaler. (the suffix "-oides" means "like" the root of the word; hence the bluebell is thought to be like a *Hyacinthus* species, as opposed to the Squills which were left in the genus *Scilla*).

The Spanish bluebell is *H. hispanica* (Mill.)Rothm., and the hybrid between the two is *H. non-scripta x H. hispanica*, which is, actually, more common than the Spanish bluebell

Angus

Abbreviations, Brackets and Floras

In surveying the Latin names which have over the centuries been applied to the bluebell, Angus has adopted the standard format of indicating the "author" of the name – and we have reproduced this in the article above. To the non-specialist this must be somewhat confusing. I am sure most of you reading this are aware that plants (and animals) are given two names in Latin by the scientists who study them. The generic name – always given a capital letter, and the specific name, which starts with a lower case letter. Hence the British bluebell is *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*. So what all this – (L) Chouard ex Rothmaler? as Angus

quotes from the New Flora by Clive Stace?

I have known the answer since studying Botany at college, but have never seen an explanation in print and to find it I have had to go back to the Flora by Bentham & Hooker (my copy is a seventh revision published in 1947) In the preface Bentham states: "the (Latin) name is followed by the indication, in abbreviation, of the botanist who first fixed the name for the species in question. In these abbreviations *Linn.* stands for Linnaeus (abbreviated in most modern floras as L.). So that explains the (L) but what of Chouard ex Rothmaler.

These two are the two most recent taxonomists (scientists who study classification) to have studied the bluebell and confirm that this is the correct latin name for the bluebell (until some one else has a go at it!)

Which leads on to the question of why the different Latin names for the bluebell? One reason for some plants is that two or three different plant hunters may have discovered them independently and given them a Latin name. Each botanist expressing, in the name they apply, what family of flowers they think it belongs to. In the laws governing the naming of plants the oldest name takes precedence. So the first thing

a modern taxonomist has to do is determine who first named the plant. But an additional complication comes in when the modern taxonomist looks into the relationships of the plants. Going back to our bluebell example: *Hyacinthoides non-scripta* (L) Chouard ex Rothmaler indicates that Linnaeus (L) was the first to apply the specific epithet *non-scripta* and Chouard ex Rothmaler have decided (in their wisdom, and much deep study) that it does not fit in to the genus *Hyacinthus* (or *Scilla*) but is sufficiently different to warrant the creation of a new genus *Hyacinthoides*. What did they get out of it? Probably a PhD.

Maurice

Why different names for the bluebell ?



Carpet of bluebells in a wood near Henley

Bluebells at Hughenden Manor

Plantlife has proposed that the bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) be adopted as the UK's national flower and this year, in conjunction with the BSBI, launched the National Bluebell Survey to map our native bluebells and determine how widespread the Spanish bluebell and its hybrid with the native bluebell are.

With this in mind, ten of us visited the National Trust property at Hughenden in May to see the bluebells that flower so spectacularly in a wooded dell behind the Manor. Their fragrance and intensity of blue were barely diminished by the plants being just past their flowering peak at the time of our visit. National Trust warden Neil Harris explained some of the problems of managing the site. Not only do visitors trample the



plants, there is also trampling and soil disturbance as a result of tree management and farming activities.

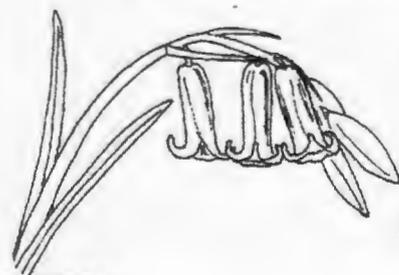
He thought that the considerable distance of this bluebell wood from private gardens explains how it has remained as a colony of native bluebells, "uncontaminated" by cross pollination with the Spanish bluebell. That said, we did manage to find some hybrid plants near the car park, so evidently the threat is getting closer!

As well as examining bluebells, we found several other spring flowers such as woodruff, wood speedwell and garlic mustard (with eggs of orange-tip butterfly) and at least eleven species of grass in the vicinity of the Manor. Our thanks go to Neil and his assistant for making the time to lead our walk.

Robert Raper

Bluebells in a wooded dell behind the Manor are native bluebells, "uncontaminated" by cross pollination with the Spanish bluebell

but the threat is getting closer



Our native bluebell
Hyacinthoides non-scripta

Inflorescence pendant
(drops at tip)

The Spanish bluebell
Hyacinthoides hispanica

Inflorescence straight



Hedgerow Mammals

Small mammals can be found in quite large numbers in hedgerows.

Hedgerows are most important habitats as they offer food, shelter, and a way of moving between areas in safety.

Most of our British mammals can be found living in or close to hedgerows. Foxes and badgers will often make their earths & setts in well-established hedgerows. Rabbits will also create their warrens in the safety of the hedgerow, especially around farmland. As its name suggests the hedgehog can also be found here, but it is small mammals that can be found in quite large numbers in hedgerows. The leaf litter at the bottom of the hedge is a good place to find shrews, rushing around to find invertebrates that they eat. Both common and pygmy shrews can be present and if the hedgerow has a ditch filled with water or stream close by, then the water shrew may also be found.

Our smallest mouse is the harvest mouse; it weaves a round summer nest about the size of a tennis ball up to 50cm off the ground and can be found in areas of tall grass and other vegetation next to the hedge. This mouse has a prehensile tail that helps it when climbing.



At ground level field voles create a vast system of runways through the long grass. They make their nests under logs or other items that offer a dry roof over their heads.

Bank voles live in burrows in the base of the hedgerow along with wood mice and yellow-necked mice; these three species tend to be nocturnal and often climb up in to the hedgerow in search of food sometimes using old birds nests as a platform to store and eat berries and seeds.

If the hedge runs between two woods with hazel coppice or similar habitat the now rare common dormouse may also be found using the hedgerow to feed as well as a means of moving to other areas.

Hedgerows can be considered one of the most important habitats as they offer food, shelter, and a way of moving between areas in safety.

Phil Horwood
Wycombe District Council
Ranger Service

Hollow Lane

On Saturday, August 26th, the Members met for a field day, having chosen Hollow Lane for the purpose of exploration. Mr. Britten pointed out many of the floral beauties, and gave some interesting information concerning their names & reputed medicinal properties. Although many rarities have not been found in the lane, the great profusion of flowers has attracted the notice of all who have rambled in it; the

mulleins in particular being numerous and very fine, both *Verbascum nigrum* and *V. thlapsus*. The hedges are just beginning to revel in all their autumn luxuriance and beauty, the various coloured fruits of the Mealy Guelder Rose (*Viburnum lantana*), the Dogwood (*Cornus sanguinea*), the Black Bryony (*Tamus communis*), the Red Bryony (*Bryonia dioica*), the roses and the brambles all contributing their share.



Wayfaring tree in fruit and Peacock butterfly

Just a short extract from the journal of the High Wycombe Natural History Society this time.

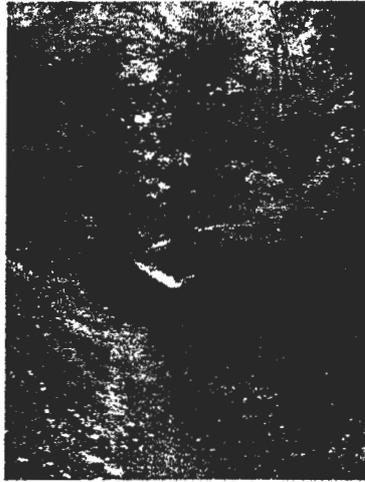
Initially it raises one of two queries in my mind which, although I am unable to answer them we should take note off to avoid creating the same problems for those reading our newsletter in 100 years time, celestial missiles permitting.

Which year? From the one date we have in the half-dozen pages we have been quoting from, probably 1878. We must always give the year when we quote dates in articles, if the front pages are damaged or lost there is no confusion on this matter. So, remind me if I forget to give the full date.

The other, very important, detail is where is the "Hollow Lane". Clearly, it was a well-known feature of the countryside around Wycombe in the 1870s to be referred to by name. It would be nice to know exactly where it was to see if it still exists and how it has changed.

Was it a descriptive term, rather than a name, for what we call sunken paths, of which there are many in the Chilterns? They developed over hundreds of years from the slow attrition of their regular use by local people on horseback and on foot walking and riding, possibly daily, along tracks between farms and villages. They are a feature of the slopes on the side

of the valley where the soil disturbed by the walker or rider can roll, blow or wash away. The fact that the underlying rock, chalk, is soft has, no doubt, played a part in their development as a significant feature of the Chiltern countryside. They do not develop in areas underlain by granite, unless the soil cover is very deep.



The sunken path I most frequently walk is the one that starts at the NT picnic site at Small Dean and leads to Bradenham which I used to get to the former BBONT reserve known as Parkwood. A hundred or more years ago it may have had a good flora or chalk-loving plants, as listed in the extract

above, but today much of it is in the shade of large beech and yew trees. It runs along the edge of the wood just above the top of the fields on the sides of the valley.

The other interesting point about the extract quoted above is the change in common names. We call *Bryonia dioica* white bryony today and we know *V. lantana* as the wayfaring tree. Also, they used capital letters for the common names (see my article on "Plant & Animal Names in a previous Newsletter - no. 38).

Maurice

p.s. I have looked in the County Street Atlas, there is no Hollow Lane only Hollow Rise, High Wycombe

A feature of the Chiltern chalk valleys.

Left: Picture of sunken path leading south from Small Dean picnic site to Bradenham (17/08/2003)

SU 823 987

A change in the common names of some plants over the centuries



Cyphel
(*Minutaria sedoides*)
a sandwort forming
a moss-like cushion

Limestone Flora of the British Isles - 10th April 2003

This combined BBOWT/WWG talk was given by Dr Michael Keith-Lucas, at Liston Hall, Marlow. A man of great charisma, Dr Keith-Lucas was as amusing about his students and expert on his subject, and recounted how one young woman insisted on climbing a waterfall in high-heeled shoes, in spite of repeated advice on the proper footwear. Among his slides were baneberry, net-leaved willow, and cyphel.

Woodland Activities

WWG has undertaken to survey Common Wood and advise on education activities in the wood. Angus Idle, WWG's Recorder master will be reporting on the flora and fauna of the wood and it is down to me to advise on the education activities. Fortunately, through my involvement in WATCH in past years, I have a copy of the WATCH publication entitled "Woodlands" which provides an excellent introduction to woodland investigations for children of primary school age. I have, therefore, passed this on to Margaret Harris who will be taking children from Tylers Green Middle School to Common Wood.

One activity children, and many adults, enjoy is growing things. One of the most fascinating things to grow are ferns and on the first foray into the wood I was disappointed not to find any. But on returning to the car park I realised that the wood opposite was lower than the level of the road and looked much more shady.

On crossing the road Margaret and I could see several ferns close to the footpath that goes through the wood. So the children will be able to collect and take a fern leaf back to school and collect many spores from it.

Back home I found out my sheet of instructions for growing ferns from spores – and old typed copy so they must be 20 - 30 years old. So I have scanned it into a Word document on my computer. Spell check spotted and corrected one or two typing errors and I emailed a copy to Margaret.

I hope the children are successful in their attempts to gather and grow fern spores and hope we will be able to publish some of their observations in a future edition of the Newsletter. Any teachers or classroom assistants who would like a copy of my sheet on growing ferns from spores should contact me via email:

(mauriceyoung@sniffout.com)

or on 01628 472000.

Maurice

Collecting Fruits & Seeds.

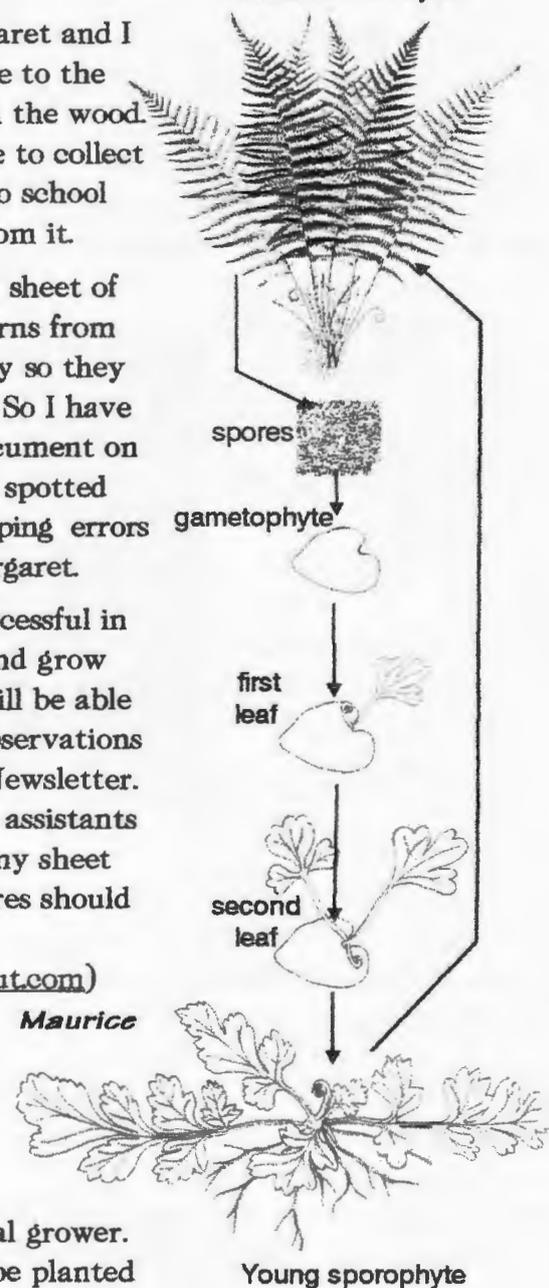
With the new initiatives concerned with creating forests the collection and growing of seed from native trees in an area provides another excellent "woodland project" for schools. Schools wanting to get involved could take groups of children into their local woodland and collect fruits and seeds from the trees that grow there.

They could plant these in pots in the classroom and observe their germination and growth, potting them on and then planting them out in "nursery" plots where they will grow into small trees – much more fun, instructive and cheaper! than buying

in whips from a commercial grower. Many of these could then be planted out around the school grounds to create small wooded copses which will provide a wonderful habitat for wildlife and shady places where future generations of children at the school sit and work outside.

A pamphlet from the Forestry Commission Pat Morris brought to my notice drew attention to a very important point about the most popular of tree fruits that people collect and grow. "The fruits of oak (acorns), chestnuts and sycamore are very perishable (because) they are shed at high moisture content and, unlike

Male fern life-cycle



To find out more about the life-cycle of the fern consult the RHS Wisley Handbook on Ferns.



acorn

most fruits and seeds, are killed by very little drying." So, if you collect these, don't let them dry out – keep them slightly moist (not wet!), cool and allow air to them – they are living things so respire !

Two New Galls

Towards the end of the morning gall hunt at Dinton Pastures on July 5th someone spotted a hawthorn with a swollen stem and passed a sample to me to identify. But it was not in the book. I, therefore, sent it to Peter Shirley, one of the authors of the new key to British Plant Galls, as he has taken on the identification of new, or undocumented, galls for the British Plant Gall Society. He is of the opinion that it is a gall caused by a fungus of the delightful name of *Gymnosporium*. It is mentioned in the new Key to galls but is described as affecting the fruits. I understand from Brian Gale, who organised the Dinton Pastures meeting, that Peter will amend the draft for the second edition of British Plant Galls to reflect this new information.

Just over a week later I had a phone call from Angus reporting that he had found a gall on herb Robert at Brush Hill LNR. Again I could find nothing in the book matching the description fitted so a few days later when I collected the specimen from Angus and went on to examine the plant at Brush Hill. The plant itself is unusual in that it was growing in deep shade and was a dull mid-green colour. Leaves of herb Robert growing out in the open are usually a yellowish-green with some develop-

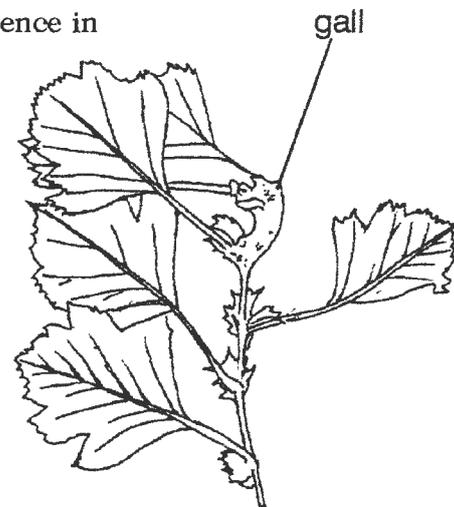
The best advice is to collect and plant them as soon after they fall from the tree as possible.

Maurice.

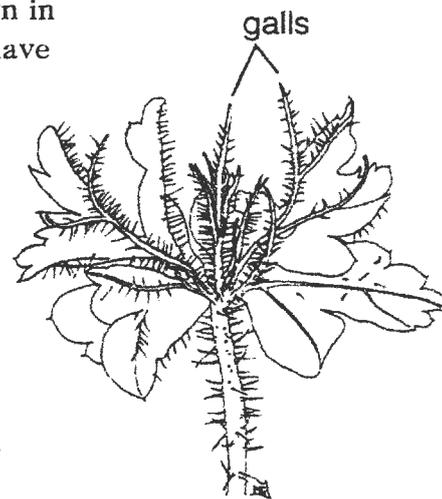
ing a reddish tinge. The difference in colour is probably only due to the fact that it is in deep shade – the reddish tinge seen on many leaves only develops in sunlight. The leaf I collected, that is sitting on my windowsill, is beginning to develop a red tinge. The other striking feature of the plant – apart from the presence of the galls – is that it is more hairy than usual. The galls are very hairy.

I have sent a specimen off for identification.

Over 400 galls are already known in this country but, because they have not received much attention in the past from naturalists collecting records on nature reserves galls "not previously recorded in the UK" are regularly reported in the journal of the British Plant Gall Society. As the last few weeks have shown new ones can certainly be found in Berkshire and Buckinghamshire. So it is well worth keeping your eyes open when out for walks in the Wycombe countryside.



Gall caused by *Gymnosporium* (a fungus) on Hawthorn.



New gall on leaf of Herb Robert

Maurice

Things to do in the garden

1/. Put out Lacewing and Ladybird hibernation boxes NOW, but remember to bring boxes into a frost-free environment in November.

2/. Create hibernation spots for frogs and toads. Send for our Wildlife Gardening leaflets for instructions. £1.50 per set of 7 - post-free.

For leaflets contact
Pat on
01494 529484

Foxes Piece Learning Garden

inspire - plant - grow - sustain

Over the past two years two young ladies, Roxanne & Tess have been involved in creating their own vegetable and wildlife area at Foxes Piece School, Marlow. After winning the title "Young Environmental Group of the year" in June 2002 they decided to develop the garden further involving much more of the school grounds. It will encourage food production in a wildlife friendly way.

Like most ambitious projects it will require funding but, today, such

funding is tightly controlled by government legislation. So they have to establish an overseeing committee and become a Trust.

As I am keen to see, and have in the past, promoted greater use of school grounds I have volunteered to serve on this committee.

In future issues of this Newsletter I will report on the progress of this project and, when completed, on the on-going activities in the Learning Garden.

Maurice

An ambitious project several parts of which will require funding.

Any readers who know of firms wishing to support local schools please contact Maurice

More Schools News

This autumn, the pupils of Curzon C of E School will be going to Penn Wood to measure the sward height before the cattle return for the winter. This research is carried out again in the spring, after the cattle leave, to discover the effect the cattle have had on the surrounding vegetation during their stay. Wycombe Wildlife Group give assistance and advice during these activities, Angus Idle, our Biological Survey Officer having designed the special yardstick the children use. Results are sent to John Brown of the Woodland Trust.

Since the Woodland Trust purchased Penn Wood, they have been keen to return it to its original state of woodland pasture, hence the introduction of cattle. The children's work helps them monitor the effects of the cattle on wildlife, and at the same time contributes to the children's National Curriculum objectives in Science, so performs a dual function.

The school is just outside Wycombe District, but has always been supportive of wildlife, and has joined in wildlife activities organized by Wycombe Wildlife Group for a number of years, such as their hedgerow survey in the year 2000.

The children's work helps monitor the effects of the cattle on wildlife, and at the same time contributes to the children's National Curriculum objectives in Science

A.G.M. 28th April 2003

The Annual General Meeting was held at the Environment Centre on Holywell Mead. All eight current Trustees were re-elected unopposed, and officer posts were then decided at the subsequent Trustees Meeting on May 12th, in accordance with the Group's constitution. James Donald retired as Chairman, after three years in the post, and was thanked for his hard work. We are grateful for all the foundation work he put in place during his term of office. Roger Wilding was elected the new Chairman. Other posts remained unchanged.

After the AGM member Barbara North gave an illustrated talk on "Nature in my garden". Everyone enjoyed Barbara's slides of the plants and animals found in her garden, and her stories of some of the less-welcome ones, such as the muntjac.

Pat



Swan News Update - Summer 2003

Resident Rye swan family versus newcomers

Cob David, pen Amanda and their six cygnets have been on the Wye since early May. A new couple nested on the Dyke and of six cygnets born in early June, five survived. Late



June David frequently confronted the cob on the Rye but always retreated to the river.

On Tuesday 24th June David led his family under Pann Mill bridge for the first time, and they walked about on the shallow bank eating corn offered by admirers. The next day they again swam under the bridge, but this time David led the family across to the boathouse at the end of the Dyke, where he and the new cob had a fight. The boathouse couple, Jeff and Jenny, reported the fight to Eric, who being out of action with a cracked thigh-bone, alerted Swan Lifeline, and local rescuers. Before rescuers arrived, the cobs were separated but the new cob tried to drown a resident cygnet, without success. Amanda then took her cygnets towards the waterfall end of the Dyke, out of trouble. David, now licking his wounds on the grass by the boathouse, was keen to re-enter the Dyke to re-engage; he was led back to the river, also out of trouble. Experienced rescuers arrived, and after an hour, at 9.30 pm, the whole new family of seven had been gathered up, the swans with a swan hook, the cygnets by the scruff of their necks, and nets. That evening they were taken to Cuckoo Weir, Eton, leaving the Dyke

to the resident family.

The next evening David took his family to the Abbey lake to ensure that the new family had really gone, for he

was seen leading his family out of the gates at the foot of Marlow Hill, and back to the Dyke. They have since enjoyed peace and quiet on the Dyke.

Peter Hazzard

14th July 2003

Postscript:

After spending a month at Eton, the new swan family, cob, pen and four surviving cygnets, were re-located on the Hughenden Stream, below Hughenden Manor. They were taken there by Swan Lifeline Ambulance, and began feeding on the abundant vegetation, immediately they had entered the water. They have now taken up residence on the island next to Broom & Wade's Sports Club. The new cob and pen have been named Hero and Leander, after a favourite pair of Benjamin Disraeli and his wife, original owners of the Manor. Everyone is delighted at their presence, as there has been no resident swan pair at Hughenden since the late 1980's. It is to be hoped that people exercising their dogs will respect their privacy, and not discourage them by letting their animals swim in the water!

The main picture (opposite) shows Eric Britnell with two helpers from Swan LifeLine Checking Hero (cob) and Leander (pen) in their new home on Hughenden Stream

Photographs by Ann Priest

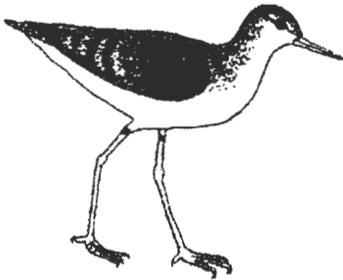


Hero (cob) and Leander (pen) and their cygnets

Reports : Reserves & Walks



swallows



Redshank
(*Tringa totanus*)

Note the similarity in its legs to the stems of the plant also called redshank (shown opposite)

Thanks to the Management of Pfizer for releasing their staff to work on the reserve.



Did you spot the mistake ?

Did you feel you had seen the report "Sheepridge Pond Restored" before? Unfortunately a gremlin took over the system in our last issue, and the wrong article was used. Here is the update which should have appeared. Apologies to Roger and our readers

Sheepridge revisited

On Saturday 1 March, members of Earthworks Conservation Volunteers came back to see how the pond they helped to restore on the Sheepridge Nature Reserve just over a year ago was faring. They were pleased to see frogspawn in the pond and to see that most of the plants put back along the water's edge had started to become re-established.

The visit to Sheepridge was arranged to get Earthworks to help with some major thinning out of the young woodland to promote the healthy development of the remaining trees and to let in more light to encourage ground flora. The tree management work undertaken on the day has also paved the way for the creation of a woodland walk through the reserve.

I will end with my usual appeal for some help from members with our reserve management work. Having just retired, I have been able to catch up on some outstanding tasks on weekdays instead of being restricted just to Saturdays as in the past. If anyone can give any of their time to help, I can always find something for them to do, at Chairborough and at Cock Lane as well as at Sheepridge.

Roger

Volunteers at Chairborough

An offer of help from Pfizer in Hillbottom Road, Sands, to release members of staff to help with charity work was taken up by Wycombe Wildlife Group. On some of the hottest days of the year, volunteers from Pfizer helped with a footpath improvement task on the Chairborough Local Nature Reserve. Our thanks go to the management of Pfizer for releasing their staff to assist, to Volunteer Focus for making the initial contact, and of course to the volunteers themselves who have done an excellent job.

Plans are in hand for further practical tasks to be undertaken on Chairborough L.N.R., using volunteers released for a day by Wycombe District Council.

Roger

Spring farmland walk 2003 at Puttenham Estate, Penn

On 26 April we returned to the Puttenham Estate. Our walk took us alongside fields of young pea plants and conspicuously flowering oil-seed rape, past a very overgrown clay pit and through Twitchell's and Brook Woods.

We were disconcerted to see evidence of herbicide use on some field margins and on a fallow field. Apparently this has been done as a preliminary to establishing the field margins as conservation areas, or, in the case of the whole field, before bringing it back into cultivation. Where the field edges had not been sprayed we found several arable 'weeds' in flower, including field madder,

shepherd's purse, field speedwell and the delightful field pansy. It was also pleasing to see that more hedge planting had been completed using a good variety of hedgerow shrubs such as hawthorn, rose, hazel, spindle and dogwood. By the hedgerows and wood margins flowers of ground ivy, celandine, primrose, white and red deadnettles and charlock competed with the fields of brilliant yellow oil-seed rape for the attention of insects.

It was that magical time - so short-lived - when the trees are "bursting" into leaf. Distinguishing between the emerging leaves of hazel, hornbeam and beech had us comparing leaf shape, venation and leaf bud scales. And if that was not challenging enough, Roger had us examining bluebells in Brook Wood to decide whether they were true English bluebells or hybrids with Spanish bluebells. Useful practice for those of us intending to contribute to the national bluebell survey organised by Plantlife.

In spite of the cloudy skies and cool breeze, seeing skylarks ascending and a pair of swallows soaring on the wing raised our spirits. Summer cannot be far off!

Robert Raper

Summer farmland walk 2003 at Puttenham Estate, Penn

We revisited the Puttenham Estate on 5 July - how different the farmland looked in the height of summer. The fields of peas, their pods temptingly swollen, were ready for harvest. Ready too, but not so appealing, was the impenetrable mass of drab brown, pod-laden oil-seed rape plants that in spring had been such a blaze of yellow.

The natural vegetation had also grown prolifically since our last visit and some of the new hedge, for example, had almost disappeared amongst nettles, docks and scrambling plants such as bedstraw, bryonies and bindweeds. Those nettles were home to several colonies of caterpillars of the peacock butterfly. We noticed that these larvae were approaching their full size, and, at the least provocation, they fell off their food plant into the dense vegetation below - presumably a ploy to evade foraging birds. Even the field margin that had earlier been sprayed with herbicide had had to be cut to reduce the burgeoning growth of plants such

as mayweed, knotweed, redshanks and plantain. Elsewhere, careful examination of the crop edges revealed some typical annual weeds of arable fields such as swine cress, sharp-leaved fluellen, field madder, scarlet pimpernel, parsley piert, field pansy and of course, common poppy.

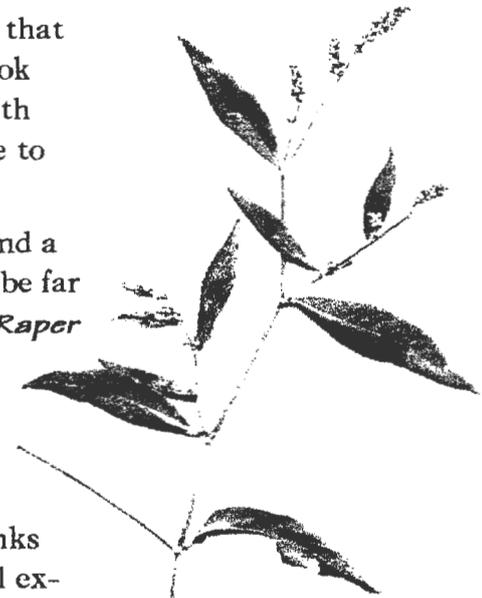
The English countryside in summer would not be complete without the prevalence of grasses and here was no exception. Angus, our grass expert, did a great job in identifying the many species we came across and, as always, entertained us with his cryptic *aides-mémoire* for plant names.

The fine weather had brought out the butterflies: small tortoiseshell, red admiral, painted lady, meadow brown, ringlet, marbled white and large skipper. The calls of house martins high overhead and of a yellow hammer atop the hedgerow proclaimed high summer.

Robert Raper



House martins



Redshank
(*Persicaria maculosa*)

Redshank, as I am sure you know, is also the common name of a wading bird. This plant, presumably, got its common name from the fact that its thin, straight stem with slightly swollen, reddish, nodes resemble the legs of that bird.

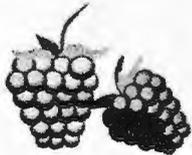


Field madder
(*Sherardia arvensis*)

Reports: WATCH Meetings



Cinnabar moth caterpillar



The Rangers work a lot with schoolchildren

May:

The meeting was held on 10th May at the Environment Centre on the Rye. Julie, from the Rangers, brought along all the materials that were needed to make some very creative sculptures – from very practical garden sculptures to grow flowers around, to beautiful butterflies and even kites.

June:

The meeting was held on 14th June at the Museum workshop.

It was very well attended and we were able to sit outside and work in the sunshine. We made mini-hurdles from dogwood and willow. Everyone was very pleased with the results of their work and enthusiastic to take some willow and make some more at home

The mini-hurdles look very attractive as border edging in the garden

July:

The meeting was held on 12th July at Sands Bank, looking for butterflies and bugs.

It was a very hot day and the butterflies were everywhere as were the flowers. We saw Cinnabar moths and found their caterpillars. We also enjoyed eating the raspberries we found on the way round. Everyone was truly 'cooked' by the end of the meeting.

There was no WATCH meeting during August.

Wendy

Member's Meeting 9th June 2003

At this meeting Julie Hopton of WDC Ranger Service gave an illustrated account of the Rangers' work. Though the Rangers care for 29 woodlands and 44 play areas within the Wycombe District, this was the first time Ranger numbers had been up to strength since August 1999. Castlefield was the first wood to be managed, after the devastation of the storms of 1989/90 brought the realization that woods needed managing properly.

The Rangers also work a lot with schoolchildren (Julie is part of the Wycombe WATCH team) and bring the experience of woodland – the colours, the wild flowers, the feel of trees – to children, sometimes for the first time.

After Julie's talk members had a chance to chat to her informally, and also to Mike Ambrose, Manager of the Ranger Service, who was also present. Everyone appreciated the fact that they had come.

More things to do in the garden

- 3/. Clean out bird boxes.
- 4/. Remember bird-feeding hygiene, once winter sets in and bird numbers increase. Keep feeders, tables and other surfaces clean.
- 5/. Keep bird-baths ice-free, and an air-hole in ice on ponds.
- 6/. Leave seed heads on plants and avoid pruning berry-bearing shrubs until birds have taken the fruit.



Any tree interested person can send for a free copy of



The Dendrologist

Send a stamped, self-addressed A4 size envelope to:

THE DENDROLOGIST
PO Box 341, Chesham Bucks HP5 2RD



WANTED (preferably alive) - Minutes Secretary

Can you help us ?

The Group thanks Barbara, Dr Keith-Lucas and Julie, for their widely-different, but excellent talks

Wycombe Wildlife WATCH meets on the second Saturday each month. To join in the WATCH meetings, which are open to children between the ages of 8-12, please contact :

Wendy Thomas on 01494 814 068
or Julie (WDC Ranger) on 01494 421 825

WATCH



Web Links Request

www.wycombewildlifegrp.co.uk

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

www. & e-mails

Our web sites :

www.wycombewildlifegrp.co.uk

www.comunigate.co.uk/bucks/wwg

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Chairman WWG
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High Wycombe
HP12 3PA

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 ?



May

White Germander Speedwell – Winter Hill
Lesser Whitethroat Singing – Holmer Green
25/05/03

2 White Helleborine – Benjamin's footpath,
High Wycombe 29/05/03

June

10 Painted Lady butterflies – Gt Missenden
02/06/03

Mullein Moth larvae – Hughenden allotments

July

Lesser Stag Beetle – Pat's garden – 07/07/03

36 Bee Orchids – Spade Oak, Little Marlow

(More sightings are given on our web site)

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James Donald 01494 637877

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

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Berks, Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust

(South Bucks Region, Vol. Reserves Manager)

Booker Common & Woods Preservation Society

British Naturalists' Assoc. S. Bucks Branch

British Trust for Conservation Volunteers

British Trust for Ornithology (Regional Rep.)

Bucks Invertebrate Group

Bucks Badger Group

Bucks Bird Club

Bucks Community Association

Butterfly Conservation

Chiltern Society

Chilterns Chalk Streams Officer

Chilterns Conference AONB

Chiltern Woodlands Project

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

English Nature Conservation Officer Bucks.

Frieth Natural History Society

Grange Action Group

High Wycombe Society

Prestwood Nature

Lane End Conservation Group

Marlow Society

National Trust

Pann Mill Group

Ramblers Association

Red Kites in the Chilterns Officer

Princes Risborough Countryside Group

Saunderton Wildlife Sanctuary

St. Tiggywinkles

Swan Lifeline

South Bucks Organic Group

World Wide Fund for Nature

The Environment Centre on Holywell Mead (Manager)

Wycombe District Council Ranger Service

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or the **WDC Rangers** : 01494 421824