

WYCOMBE



WILDLIFE GROUP

Issue 57

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SEPTEMBER  
2008



*Photograph of Brick Moth larva by Roy Barker. See page 42 for photo of the moth, reported in Observations on the back cover.*

**WILDLIFE GARDENING EXHIBITION**

**2008 A.G.M.**

**WHERE HAVE ALL THE SMALL**

**TORTOISESHELL BUTTERFLIES GONE?**

**LATEST NEWS FROM MARY'S GARDEN**

**WHAT YOU MISSED!**

**"LOOK OUT FOR WILDLIFE"**

**MOTH TRAPPING 2008**

**GRASS IDENTIFICATION WALKS**

**WALTHAM PLACE GARDEN VISIT**

**HUGHENDEN WALLED GARDEN VISIT**

**TALK ON GLOW-WORMS**

**BAT TALK AND FOLLOW-UP WALK**

**WHAT IS WRONG WITH OUR HORSE-**

**CHESTNUTS?**

**WWG CONTACT & MEMBERSHIP DETAILS**

**WILDLIFE OBSERVATIONS**

**LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL GROUPS**

**Contact address, telephone and e-mail :**

see page 47

Registered Charity No : 1075175



*Yellow Vetchling - a rare flower which has been introduced along the Jubilee River - see page 41*



*Common Milkwort seen at Perks Lane Nature Reserve - see page 43. Its small flowers may be blue, purple, mauve, pink or white.*



**Wycombe Wildlife Group** is a registered charity with the following objects:

To conserve the environment, mainly using volunteers, for the benefit of the public.

To educate the public in the principles and practice of conservation.

Within **Wycombe District** the Group:

Surveys wildlife habitats and their associated flora and fauna, giving those taking part plenty of opportunities to increase their knowledge and identification skills.

Helps manage local wildlife sites, undertaking practical conservation work on local nature reserves.

Provides advice to schools, other bodies and individuals on all aspects of wildlife.

Stimulates public interest in wildlife and its conservation.

Organises walks, talks and other activities covering a wide range of wildlife topics.

Provides advice on and encourages wildlife gardening.

Organises activities for young children and their parents.

Co-operates with other groups with similar aims and supports the Environment Centre on Holywell Mead.

**Wycombe Wildlife News** is published 3 times a year to promote the Group and wildlife issues and inform members and the public of its activities.

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### Editorial

The rain, also reported in my Editorial last year, has caused a huge amount of plant growth this past Spring and Summer. Everyone I speak to complains of the amount of cutting back needed to keep gardens under control, one person sadly observing how he left his garden "patch" immaculate before a week's holiday abroad, only to come back and find it a jungle.

The rain caused an epidemic of snails, resulting in loss of patio crops and favourite blooms. No amount of late-night capture and transportation to far corners of the garden made any difference. As everyone knows, a snail's homing instinct is strong, and it will come back, as long as it takes, to its favourite vegetation.

One surprising consequence of one weekend of torrential downpour was the appearance in my garden of a Horsehair Worm. This cotton-thread like creature, about 10 cm long, is rarely seen - an expert confessing that he had only ever found one - and it only emerges from the soil, where it lives, after heavy rain. I told attendees at our A.G.M. about it.

This leads me to a constant complaint: that, in general, so few people attend activities. However, we live in hope, and we shall see if the next Programme inspires more of you to turn out. Any comments, good or bad, would be welcome, and help us provide what you really want.

In the meantime, we are grateful to those who come along regularly in support of events, and to those who have so generously given of their precious time to assist at activities.

Pat Morris

### Note

The Horsehair Worm, aka Rainworm or Thunderworm, was so-named, because it was thought to be made of horsehair, due to its shape and size. Some can be 30-40 cm long. The young live as parasites inside various arthropods.

### New Members

We welcome the following new members, and look forward to seeing them at future events:-

Caroline and Kevin Harden-Old  
Philip Hussey

Views expressed in this 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 Wildlife Gardening Exhibition Friday 6<sup>th</sup> June - Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> July 2008

The exhibition at the Environment Centre, to encourage people to make their gardens friendlier to wildlife, was a total success. The display was arranged by Group members, under the direction of James Donald, with additional help from Environment Centre staff, who later took responsibility for the day-to-day maintenance of the plants and wildlife.

One end of the exhibition was made to look like the shed at the bottom of the garden with compost bins etc. alongside, and the other end was covered with brick wallpaper to give the impression of the house. A path wound its way through the garden between the shed and the house. There were trees borrowed from the Rangers to represent a hedge, and pots of herbs and motor tyres with tomato and potato plants in them on one side of the path. A pond and bog garden had been created on the other side. There were pots of plants, guaranteed to attract various helpful insects, logs for shelter, and even tadpoles donated by a museum volunteer who had a surplus of them. When James emptied the pond at the end, and I took the oxygenating

### Footnote

Hopefully the froglets transported to the river below the Dyke didn't meet up with the Snapping Turtle that Phil from the Ranger Service took out of the water the following week, after it had been reported by WWG member Lisa Dodd. Phil reckoned it was about 10 years old and quite able to live in the wild - rather hazardous if a child put its hand near it. Presumably the turtle had been released by someone when it had outgrown its aquarium.

Wycombe Wildlife Group thanks Notcutts Booker Garden Centre and the Waterlife Studio for lending and donating materials, and sponsoring the printing of wildlife gardening advisory leaflets. We are also grateful to RSPB, Butterfly Conservation, Tom Dunbar of Manor Farm Infants School, WDC Ranger Service, High Wycombe Beekeepers, staff and volunteers at the Environment Centre and the members of Wycombe Wildlife Group who helped in various ways. All contributed hugely to the success of this venture.

weed out, we were amazed to see tiny perfectly formed frogs. They were later released near the cascade below the Dyke.

The Exhibition also included plenty of advice and examples of what to grow in the garden to encourage butterflies and bees, and how to plant companion plants to save using pesticides. There were homes to make for bumblebees, hides for hedgehogs (they eat slugs and snails), ladybird homes, bird feeders and bat boxes, and plenty of leaflets. But the star of the show, in my opinion, was a breeding cage containing a growbag containing nettles on which butterfly caterpillars had been placed. One Friday evening, the butterflies hatched out. At first they appeared black - and then it was a kaleidoscope of colour - Peacock butterflies - like a ballet. I e-mailed all my friends to come and see them, but on Saturday morning they had been released - naturally! But that one glimpse was stunning.

Hope there can be another such exhibition next year.

Margaret Simmons

*Photograph of the wildlife gardening exhibition taken by James Donald*



## Annual General Meeting of Wycombe Wildlife Group

The 19<sup>th</sup> A.G.M. of Wycombe Wildlife Group took place at the Environment Centre on Holywell Mead at 8 pm on 23<sup>rd</sup> June. It was well attended and the financial report revealed a healthy position, due to a windfall and good financial management. The existing Trustees were re-elected en bloc, their individual responsibilities for the year to be decided at the first Executive Committee meeting following the A.G.M. in accordance with the Group's Constitution.

After the official business of the A.G.M. had been completed, members visited the Group's wildlife gardening exhibition downstairs. Light and airy, it showed how to attract wildlife to gardens. A lot of work and commitment had gone into its design and

maintenance, and it was an interesting display for visitors and groups of children.

After the visit to the exhibition, there was an opportunity for members to enjoy cheese and wine or soft drinks, and a pleasant chat. To end the meeting, there were short presentations by three of the Trustees covering the current tasks of the Group. Copies of a book entitled "Attracting Wildlife to your Garden", generously donated by the R.S.P.B., were given to those present.

Many thanks to our Membership Secretary, James Donald, for generously supplying the refreshments.  
Pat Dancer

## Where have all the Small Tortoiseshell butterflies gone?

There have been many comments from members this year about the absence of Small Tortoiseshell butterflies.

Butterflies, like other creatures, have their parasites, and some years the infestations are greater than others, causing more extensive mortality of the butterfly in question. The regular parasite of Small Tortoiseshell butterflies is a small Ichneumon fly, but a larger tachinid fly, *Sturmia bella*, is now suspected as a parasitoid. It was recorded in Britain for the first time in 1999, and lays its eggs on the foliage of nettles near feeding caterpillars, which then eat the eggs along with the leaves. The fly's eggs hatch within the caterpillar, feed upon its body, and eventually kill it, emerging from the butterfly at its pupal stage. It forms its own pupa outside its host.

*Sturmia bella* is a moderately large black and grey fly, bigger than a house fly, and this year Dr Owen Lewis, Department of Zoology, University of Oxford, appealed for volunteers to collect Small Tortoiseshell larvae, and rear them in captivity, to see if any of them were infected with this parasite. Peacock butterflies can also be infected, but none of the larvae donated to us for the wildlife gardening exhibition at the Environment Centre, showed signs of parasitism, as far as we could detect.

Our thanks to Tom Dunbar of Manor Farm Infants School for supplying the Peacock larvae and cage for our exhibition, and for passing on the above information.

Pat Morris

Below:

*Peacock butterfly larvae may also become victims of Sturmia bella. This caterpillar is totally black with white spots. It feeds on nettles.*



Right:

*Sturmia bella* is a parasitoid fly, which may have caused the reduction in numbers of the Small Tortoiseshell butterfly in recent years. The fly is larger than a house fly, and is black and grey.



## Latest on my Garden by Mary Williams

There always seems to be something new in even my tiny garden, especially in the spring, and this year has been no exception.

Although large numbers of Frogs did their duty this year, no spawn hatched out into tadpoles. I thought at first that it was because my little pond was in a very poor state, and needed renewing, but I heard from one or two other people that they had no tadpoles either. It must have been either the weather, or a disease that was going about. The resident Frogs (11 at the last count) seemed quite healthy.

Sometime in April, very early indeed, I had a baby Robin in the garden, with no sign of parents. He vanished after about three days.

I had no tenant for my Hedgehog house during the winter, but I met one Hedgehog in the garden one evening in April, so started the saga of feeding again. I have been using the feeding station made of bricks that I set up last year, and the food was disappearing in quite a satisfactory Hedgehog-type way, until one morning I found that a large hole had been excavated at the side of the bricks, and the dish pulled out and emptied. I was rather at a loss until I remembered that one night when the ground was covered with snow, I looked out on to the grassy expanse in front of the house, and saw a Fox crouching on top of the snow, then jumping out as if pouncing on something. There seemed to be nothing there for him to be stalking, unless it was something tiny like a Mouse, so perhaps he was just practicing, or playing. I had not, to my knowledge, had a Fox at the back of the house for at

least five years, but perhaps this one had found his way around and dug out the Hedgehog food.

After this, I put the bricks on boards so that the ground could not be dug out, and now the Hedgehogs have it to themselves. I would not grudge the Fox a meal, but there is no way I could feed it without depriving the Hedgehogs, or providing free food for the neighbourhood cats!

I had one return visit from the Sparrowhawk who took one of my Sparrows last year, and this time I managed to take some photographs. So far as I could tell, he didn't catch a little bird this time, perhaps because I had moved the bird table closer to the trees.

The two Blue Tits, who used to come down for a bath in the birdbath each day, have now decided that the ideal place to bath is in the drinking dish which fits in one of the rings of the metal bird feeder station. They can only get into it one at a time, and I admit I get exasperated when I have just filled the dish with clean water, to find it half empty and full of dirty water that the pair have washed their feet in. They are fun to watch though.

I have also seen a Bumblebee (too far away to be identified) feeding on some nettle flowers, and a tiny blue butterfly.

Mary Williams

This report was submitted in May. An update on Mary's garden in mid August reported thirteen House Sparrows at the feeder together. On another day, they were joined by a green Budgerigar.

*Mary's photograph of the Sparrowhawk in her garden.*



## What you missed!

**A report on the Jubilee River and Dorney Wetlands visit which no-one supported**

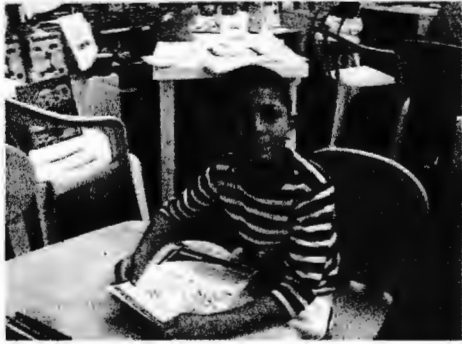
On Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> June, in beautiful weather, Roger and I stood by our car in the Lake End Road car park by the Jubilee River waiting for members to turn up for the short walk along the Jubilee River to the Dorney Wetlands. When no-one turned up, we decided to do the planned morning walk, so that we could report what people had missed, and then, in the afternoon, to walk around the huge rowing lake used by Eton College and the adjacent ponds which are

good for dragonflies and damselflies. Amongst the many flowers we saw during the morning walk, the highlights were magnificent displays of Grass Vetchling (*Lathyrus nissolia*) and Yellow Vetchling (*Lathyrus aphaca*). We also saw a range of bird species, including Skylark, Whitethroat, Reed Warbler, Sedge Warbler, Reed Bunting and Common Tern.

Frances Wilding

## Look Out for Wildlife at Notcutts Garden Centre

It was a lovely sunny day when Notcutts Booker Garden Centre held their "Look Out for Wildlife" day on Saturday 31<sup>st</sup> May. Wycombe Wildlife Group had a stand alongside a display stand of hawks and owls, so there were plenty of passers-by to look at our display on wildlife gardening for birds and butterflies as well, while their children took part in colouring activities. Updated leaflets on wildlife gardening were also available, appropriately sponsored by the Garden Centre



*One of the many young visitors to the WWG stand at Notcutts "Look Out for Wildlife" day. Photograph by Mary Williams.*

and the adjacent Waterlife Studio. Many thanks to both organisations for their support for our Group.

Thanks, also, to Julie for organising the children's activities so efficiently, and also to Mary for her photographs and to Gita, Martha, Lorna, Rosemary and Wendy for their willing support. We all had a most pleasant day.

Pat Morris

*Angle Shades - one of the moths seen in two different gardens in early summer*

*Photograph of Brick Moth by Pat Morris*

### Moths count

With nearly 900 species of macro moths existing in Britain, they form a most important part of the food chain. Moth larvae provide a major food source for the young of many birds, and the moths themselves are eaten in large quantities by bats.

With two-thirds of moth species now in decline, Butterfly Conservation has introduced a Garden Moths Count to help find out why. Wycombe Wildlife Group has been organising regular moth-trapping and identification sessions in and around members' gardens for 12 years now. For us, moths have always counted!

Results of this year's sessions were as follows:-  
11 moth species recorded at Bassetsbury Lane allotments on 23<sup>rd</sup> May. Evening cool and clear. Five members present.

17 species recorded at Holtspur Bank on 7<sup>th</sup> June. Weather warm and cloudy. Two members present.



14 species recorded in Hughenden Valley on 13<sup>th</sup> June. Weather cool and cloudy. Five members present.

22 species recorded at Cadmore End on 18<sup>th</sup> July. Weather damp and cloudy. Three members present.

27 species recorded at Deeds Grove on 8<sup>th</sup> August. Weather warm and cloudy. Five members present, including two children - Laura and Alex-who, with great enthusiasm, helped to catch the moths for identification.

Among the moths identified were Small and Elephant Hawkmoths and a Copper Underwing. This last one was seen at Deeds Grove where the tally over the years has reached nearly 100 species.

Thanks are due to Paul Bowyer and Karen Roberts for their dedication. Without them, these events would not take place. A further event at Holtspur Bank is scheduled for Friday 12<sup>th</sup> September - see programme. Lists of results are available to see on our website.

## Grass identification walks

Four people, two of whom were WWG members, turned up at Hughenden to join Angus for his grass identification walk on 7<sup>th</sup> May. We started at the allotments and then made our way onto the nearby grassland.

Angus explained the different parts of a grass. Stems (culms) are mostly hollow and at intervals have swollen joints (nodes). Some grasses have stems, which grow along the ground (stolons), form new shoots (tillers) at their nodes, and then grow upwards, resembling a knee joint. Leaves originate from nodes and the lower part of a leaf forms a sheath, which encloses young shoots. The upper part of the leaf opens out to form a leaf blade. Where the sheath and the blade meet, there is a small flap of tissue called the ligule, which stops water going down the stem and rotting the plant. The flower (spikelet) is made up of many small flowers. To help identify different grasses, there are three different arrangements of spikelets - panicle, raceme and spike. Angus told us that in Britain there were

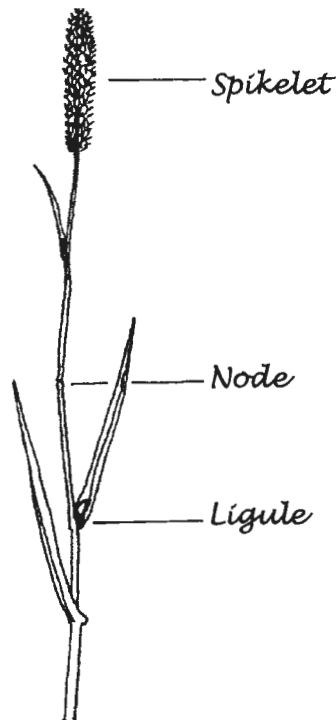
150 different species of grass and that around 30 of these could be found in this area. Some of the grasses we saw were Cock's-foot, Perennial Rye-grass, Yorkshire-fog, Sweet Vernal-grass, Red Fescue, Common Bent (also known as Brown Top) and Crested Dog's-tail.

The second grass identification walk was at Perks Lane Nature Reserve on 14<sup>th</sup> May. Three others attended, two of whom were WWG members. As we walked, Angus pointed out various grasses and wild flowers. These included Common Couch, Barren Brome, False Oat-grass, Yorkshire-fog, Timothy, Common Milkwort, Cowslip and the leaves of Fragrant Agrimony.

It is such a shame that these walks were not very well attended. Angus is a mine of information and now I look at grasses with more interest and, hopefully, more understanding. Thank you Angus for your knowledge and enthusiasm on both walks.

Karen Roberts

*Some of the grass features referred to above*



*Spikelets may take the form of a spike, raceme or panicle - see examples below*

*Left: Perennial Rye-grass - a spike  
Middle: False Brome - a raceme  
Right: Yorkshire-fog - a panicle*



## Waltham Place garden visit

I was fortunate to be offered a place in Roger's car to visit Waltham Place garden on Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> July. The garden opened at 10 a.m., but we were there early due to the traffic being lighter than anticipated. This gave us an opportunity to study the quaint buildings, so many nooks and crannies and doors. We were told later by a friendly gardener that the many small doors were originally kennels, and that the odd shaped building at an angle in one corner of the courtyard was the smoke house, where oak chips are burned to smoke the bacon for the organic restaurant. There was also a tall water tower.

The garden was huge and lovely, but not formal and immaculate as some. Many weeds are tolerated and, when cut, are allowed to fall as a mulch for the other plants. Although there was some untidiness, it didn't detract from the variety of unusual and old-fashioned plants. There was a butterfly garden with a strange metal design on the wall. Frances thought it might be Arabic but the talkative gardener told us it was meant to depict the life cycle of a butterfly, from egg through the pupa and adult stages back to the egg. I was sorry that the designer had used polished steel bolts, which looked strange in the rust coloured whorls. I wish I could include a picture of the design but no photography is allowed anywhere on the estate - my only, albeit very small, gripe!

There was so much to see and, with such knowledgeable companions able to identify many of the plants, it was a very informative morning. At noon, we retired to the organic restaurant, where the display of cakes was a gastronomic delight, as were the salads with Day Lilies and Nasturtiums - and one just had to sample the Sorrel soup. Fortified with this, we walked round the lake, which was rather hazardous with the droppings of dozens of Canada Geese - even worse than the Swans on the Dyke. Then there was the kitchen garden, where we saw examples of companion planting, including African Marigolds with Tomatoes and Nasturtiums with Courgettes.

There was so much to see that regrettably we missed the Lime Walk: the Limes would have been in blossom too!

Seven WWG members joined Roger and Frances on this visit. It was a lovely and informative day: I heartily recommend it as a place to visit. Thanks to Roger and Frances for organising and leading our visit.

Margaret Simmons

Sorry about missing out the Lime Walk and other parts of the 170 acre estate, but by 3.30 p.m. we decided that we really ought to call a halt to our morning visit.

Roger

*One of the interesting weeds we found in the Waltham Place garden was Gallant-soldier (*Galinsoga parviflora*). It is also known as Kew-weed as it escaped from Kew Gardens into the wild.*



## Hughenden walled garden visit

There was an unexpected bonus to this evening visit on Friday 20<sup>th</sup> June, when the seven WWG visitors found head gardener Frank Parge there to welcome them. Frank explained that no plan of the original wall garden had been found, so when it was decided to restore it as an organic garden, it had been necessary to design it from scratch.

WWG's native wildflower plot in the walled garden was looking most colourful under Roger Wilding's management, and Frank was delighted at how it

had developed, saying it was everything he had hoped for. We saw the bird and insect boxes made by WWG trustee Malcolm Pusey, though Frank commented that a rare Bumblebee had ignored its purpose-built residence and had set up home elsewhere in the garden.

All in all, it was a most interesting and rewarding visit. Thanks go to Frank for giving up his evening to show us around the walled garden and to Roger for making the necessary arrangements.

Pat Morris



## Talk on Glow-worms

*The adult female Glow-worm does not eat. She spends her life trying to attract a male in order to mate and lay eggs. She will then die.*



John Tyler returned to us on Monday 9<sup>th</sup> June to give another well informed talk. This time his subject was Glow-worms.

John introduced his subject by explaining that Glow-worms are beetles and part of the Firefly family, of which there are about 2000 species worldwide. In Britain, there are two Glow-worm species, one of which, the Lesser Glow-worm, is very rare and is found on only one site. John's talk concentrated on the well known species of Glow-worm, which can be found on a number of local sites.

The life cycle of the Glow-worm begins as an egg, which glows when first laid. The larva takes about a month to hatch, bursting out of the egg after pumping itself up. It takes a few hours to harden and darken. It will increase in size considerably as it begins to feed on its very much larger prey of slugs and snails. The Glow-worm larva is able to feed on these because of its special shaped jaw with which it is able to nip, and then inject the prey, via a tube from its mouth, with a liquid which paralyses and digests them. The Glow-worm eats the slug or snail in the form of a porridge, sometimes riding on the snail while waiting for the digestion process to complete. The Glow-worm has bristles in its mouth which help to strain any lumps from its food. When feeding, a Glow-worm may come into contact with a protective mucus secreted by its prey. It has, therefore, developed a system of cleaning itself by means of a cluster of tentacles.

Of the 50-150 eggs which may have been laid by the female Glow-worm, it is probable that only two will survive past the larval stage. It takes two years from when the egg is hatched to pupation. During this time, Glow-worms may die of dehydration, or they may be eaten. They are particularly vulnerable when changing their larval skin in order to grow larger. They may be killed by mites or fungi, which grow inside the Glow-worm larvae. Glow-worms do, however, have some protection against predators. John explained that

tests have been carried out which might prove that the Glow-worm larvae may contain unpleasant chemicals, which might deter predators. This fact, could be broadcast to would be predators by pulses of intermittent light given off by the larvae. In order to pupate, the Glow-worm larva will rest on its side for a few days before it rids itself of its final larval skin. The female is quicker to emerge as an adult than the male but neither will take longer than about two weeks. The emergent female Glow-worm does not feed. Her life is spent trying to attract a male, mating and laying eggs. She will not move very far and will usually stay close to the ground. At dusk, in order to display, the female twists her body round to show the underside of the tail which is the part that glows. The glow will not last much past midnight and will only take place until the female has been mated. Female Glow-worms will die within a few days of laying their eggs. The male Glow-worm has to work harder than its mate. It has wings and must search for a female. It may have to compete with other males for the right to fertilize the female, sometimes levering away the other male from the back of the female.

John continued his talk informing us about the decline in the Glow-worm population over the last 50 years. The amount of suitable habitat has been reduced and fragmented. Glow-worms do not move great distances and their ability to colonise new areas is limited. Pollution is also a probable reason for their decline. Chemicals used in farming processes and the artificial light of our increasing urban areas could also inhibit the health of the Glow-worm population. However, the disappearance of Glow-worms from a known site in one year may not indicate the end of a local population. The larval stage is so long, that a future generation may appear in subsequent years.

John Tyler is a leading authority on Glow-worms and that is how his talk came across. Thanks to him for an enthralling evening.

Paul Bowyer

## Bat talk

Julie Hopton is WDC's Senior Ranger. As part of her job, she holds a bat handling licence and has to deal with any problems concerning bats in the local community. She was able to bring some infant bats to show us: these were being cared for by Julie, after they had been rescued from a local house. This was one of many anecdotes Julie told us about her work. Another was a story about people leaving their home for a week while the Rangers dealt with a bat roost occupying their house. Part of Julie's work with bats involves talking to school children about them, and she used the same presentation material for our meeting. This gave us some information about the physical peculiarities of these flying mammals. Bats' wings can be considered to be the equivalent of other mammals' hands, with the fingers joined by folds of skin. These folds of skin are also supported by the arms and tailbone. The bats' knee joints are back to front, helping them to hang upside down when roosting. They can also cling to smooth surfaces. Bats feed and hunt, for the most part, on the wing and in poor light. They are able to do this by means of echo location. Noises are emitted by the bats so that they can hear resulting echoes from anything that is in front of them. This system helps them to detect their insect prey and to avoid bumping into objects in their flight path.

Julie explained how she has to dispel the myths existing about bats. Bats are not blind: in fact they have quite good eyesight. They are not dirty animals and their excrement is dry and crumbly, and is easily cleared up if you find bats roosting in your loft. British bats feed on insects and do not drink blood like the stories about vampires would have us

believe. Bats gather together to roost in winter, a time when they are at great risk. Bats feed well prior to hibernation, so that they can live off their stored fat throughout the winter, reducing their heartbeat considerably and entering into a state of torpor. Any disturbance during this period could cause the bats to use their limited energy resources unnecessarily and they could die of starvation. Bats have to feed voraciously when emerging from hibernation to build their energy levels quickly.

There are considered to be 17 different bat species in Britain. These vary in size, from the smallest, the Common Pipistrelle, whose body length is from 3.5 to 5 cm long to the Serotene bat, which is from 6 to 8 cm long. Julie told us about a newly discovered species of bat, the Soprano Pipistrelle. These bats are not newcomers to Britain, but naturalists have realised that some Pipistrelles use a higher frequency echo location system to others. It has been discovered that these bats roost separately and have different molecular characteristics.

The bat population is fragile and decreasing. A female will only have one baby a year, so conservation is important. All British bats are protected by law and there are fines for blocking bat roosts or disturbing or destroying their habitats. Julie has to give suitable advice when unwanted bats are found in buildings or condemned trees.

Thanks go to Julie, whose talk was entertaining and, with many accounts of first hand experiences, it gave a positive statement of wildlife conservation.

Paul Bowyer

### Follow-up bat walk at Little Marlow

As a follow-up to the bat talk, Julie Hopton led a walk looking for bats on Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> August, starting at Little Marlow church. Seven adults and two children supported this event.

Julie showed us where bats had roosted in the past at one end of the church, and one of the sharp-eyed youngsters found some bat droppings. Only one bat was seen near the church, however. We then walked down to the west side of Spade Oak Gravel Pit. It was starting to get dark, and here Common Pipistrelle bats appeared in very large numbers, swooping low over our heads as they caught their prey. Two Daubenton's bats were also seen.

While we were listening to the sound of the bats on bat detectors, we heard and saw several hundred Canada Geese come in right over our heads, as they descended onto the water for the night. We then saw a number of Glow-worms alongside the path. Having walked down to the Thames, where we saw more bats, we made our way back to Little Marlow, looking more closely at the Glow-worms on the way. Many thanks to Julie for leading this very enjoyable late evening walk.

Frances Wilding



Above:  
*Pipistrelle bat*

Below:  
*Daubenton's bat*



## What is wrong with our Horse-chestnuts?

Members have remarked this summer on the premature browning and leaf fall of Horse-chestnut trees, and asked about the cause.

Horse-chestnut trees can suffer from a number of diseases. There is leaf blotch, caused by the fungus *Guignardia aesculi*, and the Horse-chestnut scale, a sap feeding insect *Pulvinaria regalis*. Both have been around for a long time, but neither is fatal, and the tree may make a full recovery the following year. Now, however, there is the Horse-chestnut leaf miner, *Cameraria ohridella*, phytophthora root rot, and bleeding canker for the tree to contend with. Of these, bleeding canker is the most serious.

Examination of the fallen leaves from the Horse-chestnut trees on Amersham Hill reveals that there are blisters in the brown patches between the veins. As 3 mm long pupae can be found within the blisters, this is obviously damage by the leaf miner. Hopefully this will prove to be no more than aesthetic harm, and the tree will recover.

## To join Wycombe Wildlife Group

Please complete the forms below (or photocopies) and send to the Membership Secretary, 73 Carver Hill Road, High Wycombe, HP11 2UB.

**Subscription rates:** £6 per annum, if paid by standing order or £7 per annum, if paid by cash or cheque.

### WWG Contact Details

Postal correspondence should be addressed to:  
Chairman, Wycombe Wildlife Group,  
c/o 129 Deeds Grove, High Wycombe, Bucks, HP12 3PA

Chairman & Site Management Co-ordinator:  
Roger Wilding 01494 438374  
[w.w.group@btopenworld.com](mailto:w.w.group@btopenworld.com)

Newsletter Editor: Pat Morris 01494 529484  
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Membership Secretary: James Donald 01494 637877

Treasurer: Peter Hazzard, 15 London Road,  
High Wycombe, Bucks, HP11 1BJ

Biological surveys: Angus Idle 01494 563673  
[angusjanet@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:angusjanet@yahoo.co.uk)

Website: [www.wycombewildlifegrp.co.uk](http://www.wycombewildlifegrp.co.uk)  
Webmaster: Malcolm Pusey  
[mac@mpusey.freereserve.co.uk](mailto:mac@mpusey.freereserve.co.uk)

### Please enrol me as a member of Wycombe Wildlife Group

Name:.....  
Address:.....  
Telephone:..... Email:.....

### Payment options

#### EITHER Payment by bank standing order

To .....Bank  
.....Branch  
Address:.....

#### NEW standing order instruction:

#### Account to be debited (your account details)

Sort code:  
Account number:  
Account name:

#### Beneficiary bank and payee details

HSBC 1 Corn Market High Wycombe HP11 2AY  
Sort Code: 402417  
Account number: 92116685  
Account name: Wycombe Wildlife Group  
Ref:

#### Payment details

Amount of payment: £6.00 Six pounds  
Frequency: Annually  
From: Date in box below  
Number of payments: Until further notice

Signature  Date

#### OR Payment by cheque or cash

I enclose my cheque/cash for £7.00, payable to  
Wycombe Wildlife Group.



# WILDLIFE NOTICE BOARD



## Observations



### May

01/05 Orange Tip - Carrington Road  
 02/05 2 Lapwings and Whitethroat - Puttenham Place  
 03/05 19 Red Kites and 3 Buzzards - Tylers Green  
 05/05 Swifts and House Martins - Cressex  
 07/05 Maybug - Amersham Hill Drive  
 07/05 Garden Warbler - Beacon Hill  
 07/05 Holly Blue - Common Wood  
 12/05 Homet - Amersham Hill Drive

### June

01/06 Cardinal Beetle (*Pyrochroa coccinea*) and Red and black  
 Frog-hopper (*Cercopis vulnerata*) - Lude Farm  
 05/06 2 Cormorants (flying over) - Beacon Hill  
 07/06 Eyed Hawkmoth - Holtspur Bank  
 08/06 Young Goldcrests and Sparrowhawk - Tylers Green  
 12/06 Glow-worm female - Hughenden Valley  
 14/06 2 Large Skippers - Common Wood  
 19/06 Toad - Amersham Hill Drive

### July

03/07 Ringlet - Amersham Hill Drive  
 12/07 Orange Ladybird - Pretoria Road  
 13/07 Small Tortoiseshell basking - Amersham Hill Drive  
 14/07 Magpie Moth - Littleworth Road, Downley  
 16/07 Green-veined White - Downley  
 16/07 Spotted Flycatcher feeding young - Mop End  
 18/07 Brick Moth - Amersham Hill Drive  
 18/07 Swallow-tailed moth - Pound Farm, Cadmore End  
 19/07 Bumblebee (*Bombus hypnorum*) - Amersham Hill Drive  
 19/07 Pine Hawkmoth on bathroom window - Tylers Green  
 21/07 Marbled White and Meadow Brown - Downley Common  
 23/07 Fern Moth - Amersham Hill Drive  
 25/07 Leaf-cutter Bee and 2 Harlequin ladybirds - Downley

### August

08/08 Phoenix moth - Deeds Grove  
 13/08 Tadpoles in pond - Amersham Hill Drive  
 19/08 50+ House Martins - Holywell Mead  
 Other records - see website.

### Contacts for Wildlife, Conservation & Environmental Groups in Wycombe District

Bassetsbury Group	David Reed	01494 439665
Berks, Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust	(Oxon Office)	01865 775476
Booker Common & Woods Protection Society	Ron Walker	01494 444824
British Trust for Conservation Volunteers	Alison Smith	01296 330033
British Trust for Ornithology (Regional Rep.)	David Lee	01844 347576
Bucks Invertebrate Group	Mike Palmer	01296 624519
Bucks Badger Group	Mike Collard	01494 866908
Bucks Bird Club	Roger Warren	01491 638691
Bucks Community Association	Francis Gomme	01844 274865
Bucks County Council Countryside Initiatives Team	Anna Humphries	01296 382288
Butterfly Conservation	Paul Bowyer	01628 526225
Chiltern Society	Angus Idle	01494 563673
Chilterns Chalk Streams Officer	Allen Beechey	01844 355502
Chilterns AONB	Steve Rodrick	01844 355500
Chilterns Conservation Board (Activities and Education)	Cathy Rose	01844 355506
Chilterns Countryside Group	Julie Rockell	01628 526828
Chilterns Woodland Officer	John Morris	01844 355503
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 Beekeeping Association	Christine Hazell	01494 531599
High Wycombe Society	Frances Presland	01494 523263
Lane End Conservation Group	Bärbel Cheesewright	01494 882938
Marlow Society	Bob Savidge	01628 891121
National Trust	(Office)	01494 755573
Pann Mill Group	Robert Turner	01494 472981
Prestwood Nature	Tony Marshall	01494 864251
Ramblers Association	J.L. Esslemont	01494 881597
Princes Risborough Countryside Group	Francis Gomme	01844 274865
St. Tiggywinkles	Les Stocker	01844 292292
Swan Lifeline	Wendy Hermon	01753 859397
The Environment Centre on Holywell Mead Co-ordinator		01494 511585
Woodland Trust (voluntary speaker)	Michael Hyde	01628 485474
Wycombe District Council Ranger Service	Julie Hopton	01494 421825



For queries about **BATS** contact the **WDC Rangers** : 01494 421824

