

WYCOMBE



WILDLIFE GROUP

Issue 59

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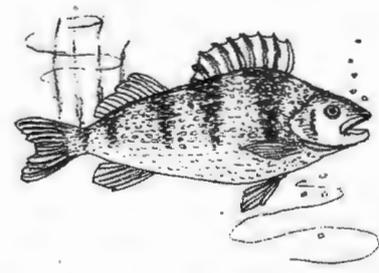
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Penquins in Africa - see the report on the "Around the Cape" talk on page 65. Photograph by Jane Bailey.



Perch - one of the fish in the Dyke - see the report on the "All about fish in the Dyke" talk on page 63

WWG'S INAUGURAL WALK IN 1989

FISH IN THE DYKE

MORE ON MISTLETOE

BIRDS ON THE RYE - JAN TO MAR 2009

AROUND THE CAPE

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REPORT ON THE SCILLY WALKS TALK

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Contact address, telephone and e-mail : see page 71



See page 70 to read about the nesting achievements of the Goldfinch (above) and Bullfinch (below) in a member's garden



Registered Charity No : 1075175

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 - April 2009

It was exactly 20 years ago that Wycombe Urban Wildlife Group, as it was then called, was launched, with about 100 people attending the launch event. A lot has changed since then, not least our Group's name, Wycombe Wildlife Group being considered more appropriate for the type of work we did and the areas included in our activities. We no longer have 100 people turning up for our walks, nine or ten being more likely! Our activities have had to be refined too, in accordance with the needs of our changing members. We do have more than the 10 members who joined at that inaugural walk, however, and our membership remains steady at around 90.

The launch walk included the Dyke, and one of the talks earlier this season was all about fish in the Dyke. A detailed report is included in this issue, most appropriately in our 20th Anniversary year, along with the latest list of bird sightings on the Rye compiled by one of our members for each issue, and an article on Mistletoe, which is very common on the trees around the Dyke.

The original report of that first Wycombe Wildlife Group event is reproduced below. I wonder how many people remember that day.

Pat Morris

KEEP HILL WALK - 23 APRIL 1989

About 100 people turned up for the launch of the group on the 23rd. Each of the leaders, Matthew, Eric, Ron and Maurice took a party of 20 or more on a walk lasting about 2 hours.

Points of interest were indicated along the route; the difference between male and female yews, the work carried out below the waterfall to improve the habitat for crayfish, the beautiful show of fritillaries planted by the Wycombe District Council in the damp "meadow".

In the wood itself, areas were indicated where it is hoped to carry out some clearance of the scrub to bring back butterflies and the chalk grassland flora. Woodruff was just coming into flower, and the ecology and use of various woodland herbs was described.

One of the main attractions was the sight of Coralroot, *Cardamine bulbifera*, with its beautiful pink flowers. This plant reproduces by bulbils and has a very restricted distribution in Britain, being confined virtually to this area in the Chilterns and the Weald.

Thank you all for turning up and making the afternoon such a success. At least one Councillor was present, and Lyn collected over 10 subscriptions. Well done!

J. WELSH, Nature Conservancy Council

In the 20 years since the above report was published, we have sadly lost two of the inaugural walk leaders, together with the native Crayfish and the Fritillaries referred to. The Nature Conservancy Council later became English Nature and the latter is now part of Natural England.

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.

All about fish in the Dyke

A talk by Adrian Hill - Monday 9th February

Local angler Adrian Hill has been fishing in the Dyke on the Rye since he was a boy and he is a member of the Rye Dyke Angling Club. This is a small society whose main aim is to teach angling and to encourage youngsters to take part in junior competitions. The Dyke, Adrian told us, is a good place for the young to learn how to fish.

Capability Brown originally created the Dyke during the 18th century as part of the landscaping for Wycombe Abbey. Water is fed from the Abbey's lake, which is spring fed. It is about half a mile long and is up to 15 feet deep in some places.

Adrian gave us details of the fish that inhabit the Dyke. He said that there have been up to 14 different species including some introductions, for example the Golden Orfe. Now there are five main species that can be caught there. The first of these is the Roach, the adults growing to about 1.5lbs in the Dyke. They may be found swimming in shoals of between 20 and 30 in the shade of the trees all the way along the water. They bite quickly and are easy to catch but are not pleasant to eat because they smell of slime. The second species mentioned was the Perch. These may grow to 2 or 3lbs but are typically 5 to 6ozs. They have sharp spines and are powerful, opportunistic predators. Perch are naturally inquisitive and may be seen at the fringes of the Dyke. The spawn of this fish are eaten by the alien Crayfish now inhabiting the water. A third species, the Tench, is a popular fish amongst anglers. It is a golden-green colour but often appears to be black because it feeds at the bottom of watercourses. An average weight for the Tench is from 2-3lbs but they may grow up to 6lbs in the Dyke. Carp, we were told, also feed at the bottom of the water. They feed on silt and weed but also take insects from the surface of the water. They are greedy fish and in the Dyke may grow up to 20lbs. An average specimen is 6-7lbs. The fifth species described by Adrian was the Pike, a powerful and aggressive predator. In the Dyke, it may grow up

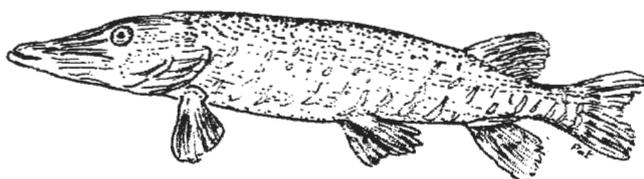
to 20lbs. If it weighs less than 6lbs, it is known as a Jack Pike. The largest Pike will eat small ducklings. Live bait is used to catch Pike, and this has to be attached to the line with wire, because the Pike are so powerful.

Adrian continued his talk by describing the different sections of the Dyke. He identified five areas of the water having distinct angling characteristics. The first is at the western end of the Dyke close to the boathouse. This is not popular with anglers because the bank is too steep, especially for children. However, larger fish may be found in this area. The next section of the water adjoins the boathouse bay, and stretches as far as the rope boom. This is the widest part of the Dyke and Carp and Tench can be caught here by casting to the middle of the water. Further to the east, the Dyke becomes narrower and deeper, and the trees provide shade in summer for the fish. Angling is complicated here by the popular pastime of feeding the ducks. To the east of here next to the new car park and tennis courts, the depth of the Dyke increases to 14-15 feet. There is not so much weed in this area and shade is provided by a dense tree canopy that benefits the Perch. The last section is the area above the waterfall, where the flow is at its slowest and where all natural food ends up. Here, early in the morning, is a good place to see fish.

The Dyke as a fishing venue has declined in recent years. Adrian explained that the natural balance of its ecology has been upset. The weed upon which many of the fish used to feed, has been cut low and too severely. Weed killers have been introduced into the Dyke, by run off, to the detriment of the water quality. The feeding of wildfowl has also had an adverse effect on the balance of nutrients in the water. Where once a single pair of Swans could be seen, now more than 50 upset nature's regime. Fish species numbers have declined, Rudd for example no longer being found here.

Thanks to Adrian for providing us with a detailed account of one of High Wycombe's major wildlife sites.

Paul Bowyer



Pike (Esox lucius)

Can grow up to 1.3m long. It is a voracious predator of smaller fish, including its own species, frogs and water birds. Its long, greenish-brown body, and golden-green markings make it difficult to spot among the water weeds.

There are numerous Mistletoe plants on the trees shading the Dyke. Here is some more about this interesting species.

More on Mistletoe

The Editor's suggestion (Issue No. 58) to "plant" some Mistletoe reminds me that in 1995 I was taking part in the BSBI's National Mistletoe Survey. This led to me visiting a number of people to see their plants, mainly on Apple trees in their gardens. I was told several times of the "best" way to plant it, but there were, I heard, others who had secret methods and these were not divulged. So it seems very public-spirited of Pat to make her recommendations available to all! I was also told of a Mr Burrows, who ran a nursery locally, and, whenever he sold an Apple tree, he inoculated it with Mistletoe berries: whether his customers knew was not revealed. This then, might just account for some of the local Apple/Mistletoe occurrences. The nursery was, I think, where Burrows Close, off Hazlemere Road, Tylers Green, now stands.

In my survey, I managed to locate Mistletoe in 19 of the 25 tetrads in the Wycombe grid square, SU89. As Pat says, the majority was on Lime, Apple, Poplar and Willow. There was a surprisingly long list

of other hosts, which included Field Maple and Hawthorn (fairly commonly), but also Sycamore, Pear, Hornbeam, Horse-chestnut, Cotoneaster, Robinia, Laburnum, and ornamental Sorbus and Prunus. But probably about 1% or less was made up of these additional hosts and even less than this when total quantity is considered (eg one Horse-chestnut only with two plants, and 500 Limes with up to 200 plants on each.

Where, in the survey, was there no Mistletoe? Great Kingshill and the western edge of the square from Lacey Green to Lane End. Even a prize of a pot of honey produced no records from the latter area! Finally, there are plenty of other weird hosts recorded from other areas, one of the most unexpected surely being the conifers on which it grows commonly in S. Europe. And if you go to Spain, look out for the red-berried species, *Viscum cruciatum*, on Olives.

Alan Showler

Mistletoe-laden tree near Bassetsbury Manor. Many trees around the Dyke have large bunches of Mistletoe. Photograph by Pat Morris.



Bird sightings on the Rye - January to March 2009 Recorded by Roy Barkes

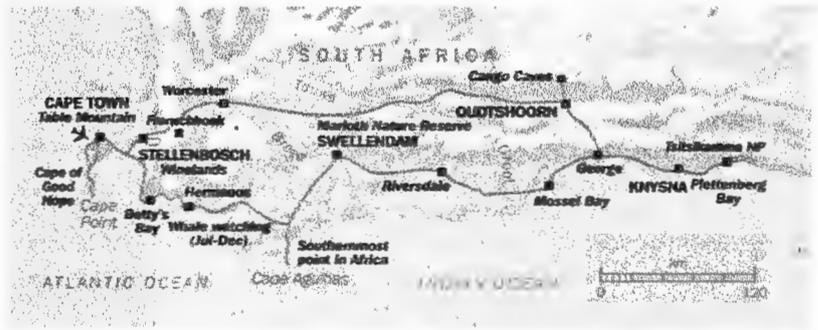
	Jan 23 rd	Feb 24 th	Mar 11 th
Mute Swan	47	36	48
Mallard	153	125	79
Tufted Duck	41	37	38
Moorhen	28	26	24
Coot	31	26	21
Little Grebe	1	-	-
Black-headed Gull	260	175	7
Common Gull	4	-	-
Lesser black-backed Gull	2	-	-
Kingfisher	1	3	1
Mistle Thrush	4	5	2
Blackbird	9	7	6
Song Thrush	2	1	3
Pied Wagtail	1	1	2
Grey Wagtail	2	-	2
Little Owl	-	1	-
Nuthatch	2	3	2
Herring Gull	-	-	1
Goldfinch	-	-	3



Swans on the Dyke and a Coot on the bank beside the Dyke - photographs by Pat Morris



Around the Cape



At the meeting on January 12th we were treated to an illustrated talk by Jane Bailey, on her trip to South Africa.

The tour started in Cape Town and took in the Cape Peninsula National Park; the vineyards of Stellenbosch; Oudtshoorn, a town of fine Victorian architecture; and the Tsitsikamma National Park. The route continued via Swellendam with its Marloch Nature Reserve, Cape Agulhas and back to Cape Town. The trip even shoehorned in a boat trip out to Robben Island where Nelson Mandela was incarcerated and to Kirstenbosch with its wonderful display of native wild plants.

Along the way, a wealth of animals and plants were to be seen, some well-known and others quite unusual. There are more plant species per square metre in this region than anywhere else on Earth. Jane's photos showed huge areas of wild flowers, countless brightly coloured blooms stretching as far as the eye could see.

In the 18th century, Ostrich feathers became a fashion accessory and during the 19th century it was discovered that these birds could be farmed. In the Oudtshoorn area today, there are over 90,000 Ostriches reared mainly for their meat and hide. From here, the road takes you through countryside lush with Proteas. This flower is the national emblem. Then through the Outeniqua mountain pass to the coastal area known as the Garden Route. From the

Robberg Peninsula, Seals, Dolphins and Southern Right Whales can be seen. Right Whales were given their name by whalers who considered them the right whales to hunt. Perhaps we should rename all of them "Wrong Whales". To the east of this part is Tsitsikamma. Lush forest extends for about 50 miles along the coast with rugged wooded cliffs falling steeply to the crashing waters of the Indian Ocean. Back along the Garden Route is the farming area around Swellendam, an old town with many fine buildings in the Cape Dutch style. Cape Agulhas is the most southerly point of South Africa and where the warm Indian Ocean meets the cold Atlantic. The coastal area towards Cape Town is one of the best places in the world for whale watching. Southern Rights congregate here for several months to mate and calve. The African or Jackass Penguin is found at the coast here and its latter name refers to its donkey-like call. They are black with white marks, which run from their foreheads down under their chins and down to their feet. At the Cape lives the Dassie, which resembles a 50cm long Guinea-pig, but which is actually a member of the same family as Elephants, Sea-cows, Tenrecs (large Madagascan insectivores), Elephant-shrews and the Aardvark. Sir Francis Drake described this part as "the fairest cape we saw in the whole circumference of the Earth".

This was an excellent evening with many fine photographs of the very interesting trip. I'm looking forward to Jane's next holiday talk.

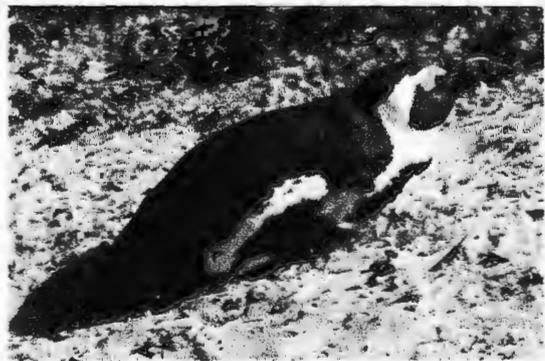
Harry Wheate



Left: Dassie

Right: African or Jackass Penguin

Photographs by Jane Bailey



WYCOMBE WILDLIFE FAMILY GROUP

Report on the 14th March meeting by Peter Bailey

On Saturday 14th March the Family Group met at Brush Hill near Princes Risborough. The total turnout was eight people, consisting of Julie and two families. Given that the event had been published in the Bucks Free Press and the Wycombe Star, and listed in the Wycombe District Council and Wycombe Wildlife Group websites, we did feel that we might have expected more people. However, it did mean that we were able to take full advantage of Julie's knowledge and experience. And with more-or-less the same people turning up each time, it is becoming more like the club that Julie had always had in mind.

With Lesser Celandine and Dog's Mercury in flower in the wood, the first signs of spring were evident. However what really caught Mikki's attention was a fallen log. Its wood had partially rotted and in places it had the same texture and water-retention properties as a bath sponge. In the wood, we came across King Alfred's Cakes - a very hard fungus growing on logs. Neither Mikki nor Jake were

impressed by King Alfred's cooking abilities, which is I guess the point of the name.

From the wood we went into an open field, which was covered with little mounds that were ants' nests. Julie explained that the ants were active all year round and that, if we were to slice through one of the nests, we would find ants active even at this time of year. Heading back towards the wood, we saw what looked like a dog kennel on a pole. We were told that this was a Barn Owl birdbox. Finally, we crossed back across the road to Whiteleaf Cross where we looked at the view and watched a Red Kite.

Peter Bailey

The next meeting of the Family Group will be on Saturday 13th June, when there will be pond dipping at Funges Meadow.



Photographs of the Family Group event at Brush Hill by Peter Bailey



Top left: Julie, Martha and Theo examine a tree stump.

Top right: Julie, Martha, Will, Theo and Hannah

Bottom left: King Alfred's Cakes

Bottom right: Barn Owl birdbox



Scilly walks

An illustrated talk by Roger Wilding on Monday 16th March

Roger and Frances Wilding spend much of their spare time walking, and I have seen them on numerous occasions setting out on one of their jaunts, making good use of local public transport. Last year for their summer holiday they planned a trip to the Isles of Scilly with the aim of walking around all the inhabited islands looking at the scenery and wildlife. Roger gave us an illustrated account of what they found.

We were told that the Scillies comprise about 500 islands in a group about 28 miles SW of Land's End. The islands vary in size from large rocks to St Mary's, which is about 2.5 miles by 2 miles. Although most sources refer to five of the islands being inhabited, Roger pointed out that Gugh, with its three houses, is separated from St Agnes at low tide, making the total six.

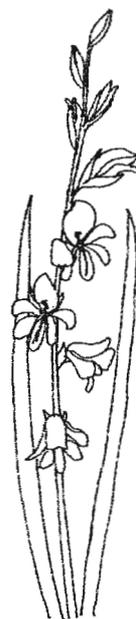
There are three ways to reach the islands by public transport: by sea, by fixed wing aircraft or by helicopter. The sea crossing can be rough and takes over 2 hours. Roger and Frances chose the 20 minute helicopter journey from Penzance with its opportunities for taking aerial photographs en route. Roger said it was worth spending a little time in Penzance before crossing to the Scillies and showed us photographs of St Michael's Mount with its impressive steep gardens, and Marazion Marsh which supports over 500 plant species and 22 species of dragonfly and damselfly. He recommended the coast walk from St Michael's Mount to Penzance for its botanical interest and the gardens in Penzance for their unusual plants.

Roger and Frances chose Hugh Town on St Mary's as their base during their stay in the Scillies and

visited the other inhabited islands using the boats which departed from the harbour each morning. Whilst boats to Treco leave in most weather conditions, trips to some of the islands only take place in calm conditions, and trips round the Eastern Isles, Western Rocks and the Bishop's Rock Lighthouse only take place if sea conditions are really favourable. The ability of the boat owners to forecast the local weather conditions surpassed the efforts of both the local radio station and tourist office.

Roger and Frances spent two and a half days exploring St Mary's, using paths which enabled them to explore all of the coastline as well as inland wetland reserves with Alder carr, Greater Tussock-sedge (*Carex paniculata*) and bird hides. There is no real woodland in the Isles of Scilly but native plants such as Red Campion, Foxgloves and Bluebells thrive amongst the Bracken. As well as native plants, many exotic plant species have become naturalised on the islands, including Pale Dew Plant (*Drosanthemum floribundum*) from South Africa, Giant Herb-Robert (*Geranium maderense*) from Madeira and the Giant Vipers-bugloss (*Echium pininana*) from the Canary Islands. Eastern Gladiolus (or Whistling Jacks as they are known locally) (*Gladiolus communis ssp byzantinus*) along with Red and Tubular Corn-lilies (*Ixia campanulata* and *I. paniculata*), grow wild on many of the islands, having escaped and naturalised from commercial bulbfields. Treasureflower (*Gazania*) species from South Africa are becoming widespread on St Mary's and the other islands.

(continued on next page)



Three of the many exotic plant species which have become part of the wild flora of the Isles of Scilly

Above: Treasureflower
Left: Eastern Gladiolus (Whistling Jacks)
Right: Tubular Corn-lily

Scilly walks (continued)

During the walk around St Martins, Roger and Frances found the native Small-flowered Catchfly (*Silene gallica*) and Springbeauty (*Claytonia perfoliata*), an introduction from North America. Whilst walking around St Agnes and Gugh, numerous larvae of the rare Grass Eggar moth were seen. Plant finds included Portland Spurge, English Stonecrop and Lousewort, including the latter with a white rather than the usual pink flower. Walking around Bryher, the Spring Squill (*Scilla verna*) was found and it was noticed that the Hottentot-fig (*Carpobrotus edulis*) was much in evidence and crowding out the native flora in places.

The climate on Tresco has enabled the Abbey Gardens to grow plants from many countries that

would probably not survive anywhere else in Britain. Even at Christmas, hundreds of plants are usually in flower. Roger showed us a photograph of a Protea from South Africa and a Starling fertilising a *Puya chilensis* from South America, a task performed by humming-birds in its native habitats. Walking around the island, the rare Orange Bird's-foot (*Ornithopus pinnatus*) was seen and photographed.

Thanks to Roger for his talk, giving us such a good impression of the Isles of Scilly. At the end of his talk, Roger passed round a wildlife checklist of the birds, flowers and butterflies of Tresco. This alone made me want to see the islands for myself.

Paul Bowyer

Wildlife gardening

Margaret Simmons

Wycombe Wildlife Group member Margaret Simmons has appeared in the local press a couple of times this year. On the first occasion, her work in the creation of Pann Mill garden was featured in a press report relating to an exhibition at the Environment Centre on Holywell Mead. It showed her achievements in a series of photographs taken by Dave French. Her second mention was less fortunate, for she laid down her camera while working at Pann Mill, and when she returned for it, it had gone. In spite of appeals in the press, her camera was never recovered.

Margaret spent 25 years creating the garden at Pann Mill, and she has also established another little garden by the entrance to the Environment Centre. Apart from looking after these two gardens, Margaret also helps tend the gardens at

the town Museum, where Wycombe Wildlife Group once had a wildlife garden of its own. Of course Margaret used to come along and help there also. So great was her enthusiasm, she did not notice the time one night, and was locked in. A passing policeman was very interested to know why an elderly woman was climbing over the gate as darkness fell!

Now Margaret's contribution to the life of the people of Wycombe has been recognised, and she has been invited to a Garden Party at Buckingham Palace in July. She is looking forward to it tremendously. Let's hope that the experience will compensate in some measure for the loss of her camera and the 200 or so pictures she had stored in it.

Pat Morris

Robin feeder exceeds expectations

About a year ago, I purchased a Robin window feeder from the RSPB catalogue. It is only 7 inches by 3 inches, so only just large enough for a couple of Robins at a time. I put it on the kitchen window with a plant on the inside window sill to half conceal the feeder from our prying eyes. Imagine our delight when we have had, not only Robins, but Chaffinches, Greenfinches, House Sparrows, 2 Starlings at once, Song Thrushes, Blue Tits, Great

Tits, and last but not least, 2 Collared Doves at once, one sitting on the feeder cover waiting for its partner to finish feeding. All of these interesting happenings are taking place only 2 feet from our gaze!

I think that Robin feeder has proved to be a good purchase!

Frances Wilding

Nesting finches in a semi-rural garden

I would like to share with other members my observations of the nesting of Goldfinches and Bullfinches in a semi-rural garden. Both species are present sporadically throughout the year, with Bullfinches being the more regular of the two. They can be seen attacking the buds of flowering Cherry and other fruit buds (notably Gooseberry) in January and February, and in the autumn and winter eating grass seeds from the un-mown parts of the garden. There are never more than 4 of either species outside the breeding season.

Nest building is obvious with Goldfinches: they can be seen flying to and from the site and singing from an exposed perch adjacent to the nest. Nesting by Bullfinches is a much more secretive affair and is usually only found to have taken place when the adults are feeding the young. The male appears to be frequently accompanied by two females!

What I have found most interesting is how site-specific both species can be and have summarised the nesting activities in the table below.

Goldfinch	Bullfinch
2008 Nested in left Copper Beech Unknown number fledged	2008 Nested rear garden right hedge 3+ fledged
2007 Nested in right Copper Beech 4 fledged	2007 Nested rear garden left hedge 4 fledged
2006 Nested in left Copper Beech but nest destroyed by weather. Re-built nest in front hedge. 4 fledged	2006 Nested front garden left hedge Unknown outcome
2005 Nested in left Copper Beech 3+ fledged	2005 Nested rear garden right hedge 3+ fledged
2004 (First time nesting observed) Nested in right Copper Beech Unknown outcome	2004 Nested rear garden isolated shrub 4 fledged
	2003 Nested front garden left hedge 2+ fledged
	2002 Nested front garden left hedge Unknown outcome

What I cannot determine is whether the same individuals are nesting each year. Both species have better nesting outcomes than Blackbirds which are predated by Magpies: only one successful brood in the same period from Blackbirds which have also nested every year.

Peter Daltry

From the kitchen window with Phil Page

Looking in a bird food catalogue recently I was surprised at the variety of seeds and food blocks that are available nowadays not to mention the array of devices in which to present the food.

Fifty and more years ago garden birds would have been lucky to get a handful of breadcrumbs and some bacon rind. I can also remember that sometimes, in the winter, my mother would hang up a piece of suet for the Blue Tits, presumably if there was a bit spare from the weekend's joint. Perhaps it was an attempt to keep the birds from the milk bottles. Blue Tits would peck holes through the foil caps to get at the cream (ah! Milk with cream). Who remembers when milk froze in the bottle and the frozen cream pushed the cap off (cardboard caps in those days)? Who remembers making woollen pompoms using those cardboard milk bottle tops? Back to the subject: this is sounding like Saga Magazine.

Like most people, when I first started to put food out for the birds, I used breadcrumbs. Later a peanut holder proved popular with tits and finches until I bought a sunflower seed holder and they changed to that. Peanuts now rot and are thrown away. Then a friend bought me a wire container especially for those blocks of suet (with added insects) which you can buy. Very popular with Starlings and it brought a pair of Great Spotted Woodpeckers, both male, interestingly, into the garden. When the suet is finished, they might have a go at the peanuts, but I'm almost sure they're throwing sulky glances towards the house. They don't stay and don't seem to reappear until I replace the suet. How do they know it has just been replenished?

Now I'm waiting for the next must-have delicacy for the bird table to be announced, and if anyone wants a peanut holder...

The fact that this first article submitted for our newsletter by Phil Page uses the same heading as articles previously submitted by Phil Space makes one wonder whether or not the latter has changed his surname from Space to Page by Deed Poll.

Anon

Twenty years of wildlife recording

Twenty years ago, I was given an RSPB Year Book - a pocket-sized volume, in which I noted the first date on which, for example, spring flowers appeared, or migrant birds entered my garden. It was my first attempt at phenology. Nowadays, with such headlines as "longest cold spell in a decade" or "worst snow for 18 years", it is comparatively easy to find out when the last cold snap occurred, or when the last heavy snow fell, from this little book. It is, of course, also simple to find out my earliest recorded Snowdrops (16/01/02) or my first butterfly (a Brimstone in Penn Wood on 05/02/90), or the first Cuckoo in spring (16/04/99).

Another spin-off, however, of this little diary is how it denoted changes in wildlife behaviour over the past twenty years. In 1989 I wrote "flock" or "charm" of Goldfinches on Goldenrod, and other seedheads on 9th January. Now this sight is still not unusual, but it led me to reflect that although I faithfully leave my Goldenrod and Teasel seedheads standing all winter, I have only once recorded one Goldfinch extracting their seeds. Goldfinches come to my garden daily, but they ignore this natural food, preferring instead the supply of Nyjer seed readily available. The one unlucky individual not eating this artificial treat was on a Teasel because the feeder ports were already fully occupied, and it had been driven off by its fellows. And I wonder, too, if Goldfinches in the past were so aggressive towards each other when feeding. This record has also caused me to reflect that perhaps birds are becoming lazy - they ignore their natural food when "fast" food is

available, and how good is this practice for them? One cannot blame them: they are behaving just like humans under pressurised conditions, and taking advantage of what is on offer, rather than working harder elsewhere to obtain their meal.

There is no doubt that garden bird feeding helps birds survive under difficult circumstances, but it has been found that when the breeding season arrives, birds living away from the urban environment have a better chance of chick survival than town-dwelling birds. This is because the natural foods the young must have are more readily available in the open countryside, and there is a lesser concentration of predators, especially cats! So the best possible kind of garden is one that can provide caterpillars and insects for these youngsters, and safe nesting sites for the parents. I shall continue to leave my Goldenrod and Teasel seedheads, even if the birds ignore them - maybe insects are hibernating inside the hollow stems - and I shall continue to feed the birds all year. In spite of my doubts, garden bird feeding attracts some wonderful sights, such as 11 Long-tailed Tits, clustered together (no fighting here) around my Starling bar one winter's day. Such rewards are worth the doubts.

I hope all readers will continue to nurture their wildlife gardens as I do, and reap the same rewards.

Pat Morris

Plants to attract moths to wildlife gardens

Most wildlife gardens will contain a Butterfly-bush (*Buddleja davidii*) which will attract moths as well as supplying nectar for butterflies.

A climbing, and very fragrant, plant to attract moths and other insects is Summer Jasmine (*Jasminum officinale*). It can reach a height of 30 feet, but can be controlled by thinning out the shoots after flowering. It will fill the garden with perfume while in flower. Honeysuckle also attracts moths, and has the added bonus that it produces berries for birds later on. Jasmine also produces berries, but not in great profusion.

Other attractive plants for moths are Evening-primrose (*Oenothera spp*) and Night-scented Stock (*Matthiola longipetala*). (See our Gardens for Butterflies leaflet.)

If you attract moths to your garden, you may encourage them to breed there - the variety of plants used for breeding by moths is enormous - and you may help birds, at the same time, in their hunt for food for their young.

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

Newsletter Editor: Pat Morris 01494 529484
roymorris@freeuk.com

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

Website: www.wycombewildlifegrp.co.uk
Webmaster: Malcolm Pusey
mac@mpusey.freeserve.co.uk

Please enrol me as a member of Wycombe Wildlife Group

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

Payment options

EITHER Payment by bank standing order

ToBank
.....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 Com 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



December

21/12 Glis glis - Hazlemere Rd, Penn
 21/12 Glis glis - opposite Coppice Farm, Tylers Green

January

01/01 2 Siskins - Amersham Hill Drive
 Daily from
 02/01 2 Blackcaps - Amersham Hill Drive
 04/01 2 Bramblings - Amersham Hill Drive
 05/01 Sparrowhawk took Great Tit - Tylers Green
 11/01 2 Redwing bathing in pond after thaw - Amersham Hill Dr
 11/01 First Frog - Holmer Green
 11/01 2 Snipe - Marsh Green stream, Keep Hill Road
 11/01 Goldcrest in Clematis - Shaftesbury Street

February

19/02 1st Frog - Amersham Hill Drive

24/02 1st frogspawn - Amersham Hill Drive
 25/02 Red Kite trying to take frogs from pond - Deeds Grove
 27/02 1st frogspawn - Carver Hill Road
 27/02 1st Brimstone - Carver Hill Road
 27/02 1st Bumblebee (*B.terrestris*) - Amersham Hill Drive
 27/02 1st Horse-chestnut buds opening - Hughenden Park

March

09/03 1st Harlequin ladybird - Amersham Hill Drive
 13/03 Common Quaker Moth - Amersham Hill Drive
 16/03 1st Starling for 18 months - Amersham Hill Drive
 16/03 8 ducklings with mother - Hughenden stream
 16/03 Brimstone butterflies reported widespread
 17/03 Red Admiral and 7 Commas - Penn Wood
 20/03 Chiffchaff singing - Common Wood
 26/03 Blackbird with nesting material - Amersham Hill Drive



Contacts for Wildlife, Conservation & Environmental Groups in Wycombe District

Bassetsbury Group
 Bat queries
 Berks, Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust
 Booker Common & Woods Protection Society
 British Trust for Conservation Volunteers
 British Trust for Ornithology (Regional Rep.)
 Bucks Invertebrate Group
 Bucks Badger Group

 Bucks Bird Club
 Bucks Community Association
 Bucks County Council Countryside Initiatives Team
 Bucks Invertebrate Group
 Butterfly Conservation
 Chiltern Society
 Chilterns Chalk Streams Officer
 Chilterns AONB
 Chilterns Conservation Board (Activities and Education)
 Chilterns Countryside Group
 Chilterns Woodland Officer
 Downley Common Preservation Society
 English Nature Conservation Officer Bucks
 Frieth Natural History Society
 Grange Action Group
 High Wycombe Beekeeping Association
 High Wycombe Society
 Lane End Conservation Group
 Marlow Society
 National Trust
 Natural England Conservation Officer
 Pann Mill Group
 Prestwood Nature
 Ramblers Association
 Risborough Countryside Group
 St. Tiggywinkles
 Swan Lifeline
 The Environment Centre on Holywell Mead Co-ordinator
 Woodland Trust (voluntary speaker)
 Wycombe District Council Ranger Service

David Reed 01494 439665
 WDC Rangers 01494 421824
 (Oxon Office) 01865 775476
 Rita Luxton 01494 436807
 Jane Craven 01296 330033
 David Lee 01844 347576
 Mike Palmer 01296 624519
 Mike Collard 01494 866908
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 Francis Gomme 01844 274865
 Mark Bailey 01296 382389
 c/o BMERC 01296 696012
 Nick Bowles 01442 382278
 Angus Idle 01494 563673
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 Steve Rodrick 01844 355505
 Cathy Rose 01844 355506
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 Jenny Young 01635 268881
 Alan Gudge 01494 881464
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 Rebecca Hart 01189 392070
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 Michael Hyde 01628 485474
 Julie Hopton 01494 421825

