

Issue 65

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**MAY
2011**

**ANCIENT WOODLAND, AND
WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN SPRING**

BIRDS ON THE RYE

**DO MALE GREAT TITS ATTACH
MORE IMPORTANCE TO FOOD
THAN MATING?**

TRACKS AND TRAILS

WALK IN PENN WOOD

ALL IN A MORNING'S WORK

**THE HISTORY, MANAGEMENT
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FROM THE KITCHEN WINDOW

**COMMUNITY MATTERS AND
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**WWG CONTACT & MEMBERSHIP
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WILDLIFE OBSERVATIONS

**LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL
GROUPS**



Can you name the above bird? It was heard in Common Wood in 2010.



The Cuckooflower, or Lady's Smock, is common in wet meadows, but it has appeared in a number of drier places this year.

See page 47 for our contact details

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.

Co-operates with other groups with similar aims.

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

After the coldest December for 100 years, Spring did arrive, as it always does, and it has been interesting to note what has perished, and what has survived. In my garden, I have lost some of my perennials, and a few shrubs, but casualties have been surprisingly few. What have done well are the Snowdrops - more prolific this year than they have ever been - and most other bulbs, too. The frogs turned up, extremely suddenly, deposited their spawn, and just as mysteriously vanished. (I hope a visiting white cat, which I spotted swiping a bathing bird from the pond, was not responsible). Birds which managed to evade the cat's claws began to nest, and butterflies (only the Brimstone, and latterly the Holly Blue I am afraid) have started to flit through the garden. There have been a number of Tree Bumblebees (*Bombus hypnorum*) as well as others. In the wider countryside, perhaps what I have noticed most is the huge spread of violets and 7-spot Ladybirds, both in hedgerows and on grassy banks. The Harlequin, so far, has not been seen.

As far as the Wildlife Group's fortunes are concerned, there has been a striking increase in numbers attending walks and talks. So we must be doing something right. What has been disappointing, is that no-one new has sent in records for the website. Only the faithful few who have always supported this activity have done so. As always, we thank them for their loyalty and support, but would welcome interest from other members also.

Malcolm Pusey, who has been running the website for us since it was set up, has moved to Dorset, after a lifetime in High Wycombe. He has generously agreed to continue as webmaster for the time being at least, for which we are most grateful, but he, too, would appreciate greater support. We thank Malcolm for all he has done for the Group over the years, and wish him every happiness in his new home.

Pat Morris

New members

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

Mr R. Hartwell

Mrs P. Froud

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.

Ancient woodland, and what to look for in Spring

Ancient woodland is something we hear a lot about, and rightly so, because it is an important habitat for much of our wildlife. But what is it? The Buckinghamshire Inventory of Ancient Woodland, published by the Nature Conservancy Council in 1988 (along with Inventories for all the other counties) explains what it is, and I quote – “Ancient woodland sites are those which have had a continuous woodland cover since at least 1600 AD to the present day and have been cleared only for underwood or timber production. A wood present in 1600 is likely to have been in existence for centuries.” These woodlands are either primary, ie. relicts of the tree cover which developed after the last ice age or secondary on sites which were cleared of their trees but rewooded before 1600.

How do we identify such woodland? Apart from historical records and features, we look at the plants. Ancient woodland has “indicator” species and many books have lists of them. They are plants which are found only in ancient woodland, because they find it difficult to move about and it therefore takes them many years to become established. Why is this? Well, when we look at the list, it becomes clearer. Most have fruits and/or seeds which are relatively heavy, so, when ripe, they fall to the ground and are not easily moved about – like Bluebell, Wood Spurge, Wood Vetch and Wood Sedge, but unlike Dandelion, Willowherbs, Cleavers and Burdock which are easily distributed by wind or animals. Some are less easily explained, like orchids and ferns, but these perhaps need a mycorrhizal fungus in the soil to develop and that also takes time to reach the wood.

Come to Alan’s talk, following our AGM on Monday 9th May, to learn more about orchids and sedges. At the end of his talk, he will announce the date of a walk to see some of them.

When visiting woodlands you can also use the sense of hearing. Migrant birds such as Blackcap, Chiffchaff and Willow Warbler are already here, and can be heard singing. You may also hear the Cuckoo if you are lucky. (One was heard in Common Wood last year.) Also listen out for Chaffinch, Robin, Goldcrest and Thrushes, and the calls of various members of the Tit family. There are endless possibilities.

Editor

We are fortunate to have many areas of ancient woodland in our part of Bucks, and Spring is the time to visit, since most woodland plants flower before the tree canopy closes over them. So take a walk somewhere and look for indicators of ancient woodland. There are about 100 in southern England, with 36 being especially indicative, but some you will not find on our chalk soils. And what should I be looking for? Four are very common and need no describing – Primrose, Wood Anemone, Wood Sorrel and Wood Violet; two are not very common, Green Hellebore (Bubbles Wood, Hughenden Valley) and Herb Paris (Langley Wood, Holmer Green and Millfield Wood, Hughenden Valley). One nationally scarce species, Coralroot, is quite common in our area and resembles Lady’s Smock, but with much pinker and fewer flowers, and bulbils in the leaf axils, which are the main source of new plants. Perhaps less familiar is Goldilocks Buttercup, the only woodland buttercup, with smallish flowers, the petals of which are often asymmetric because it is apomictic, meaning that the ovules are never fertilised and stay, in effect, as little buds or bulbils, from which new plants grow. So it suffers from inbreeding, which explains the deformity of the petals.

If you are not very good at looking, try smell; Ramsons or Wild Garlic is another springtime indicator. Breaking the springtime rule, Bird’s-nest Orchid and Violet Helleborine are amongst the top 36, which includes grasses, sedges and ferns as well. In the rest come Bluebell, Early-purple Orchid (Aston Rowant, but not in woodland), Wood Vetch (Dancers End), Sanicle and plenty more. So good hunting!

Alan Showler



Sanicle
(above) and
Coralroot
(left)

Birds on the Rye - January to March 2011

	January 21 st	February 22 nd	March 17 th
Mute Swan	58	66	53
Mallard	230	247	225
Tufted Duck	31	24	17
Coot	24	26	22
Moorhen	13	16	17
Little Grebe	6	6	5
Grey Heron	1	0	2
Kingfisher	0	1	2
Lesser Black-backed Gull	4	1	0
Herring Gull	15	2	0
Common Gull	3	7	0
Black-headed Gull	245	76	3
Mistle Thrush	4	4	2
Nuthatch	0	2	4
Goldfinch	2	0	18
Goldcrest	2	2	4
Treecreeper	0	0	1

Members may have read in the local press about dead Swans found on the Rye, around the Dyke. Swan Lifeline conducted autopsies and found the birds had died of a virus (Dutch Virus Enteritis and Aspergillosis), thus establishing that their deaths were not the result of foul play by members of the public.

Scientific research suggests Great Tits may attach more importance to food than breeding

Put up a bird feeder in spring and Great Tits could end up choosing a secure food supply at the expense of successful breeding.

People put up bird feeders to help wild birds survive the winter, but little is known about how they affect behaviour. To find out, Valentin Amrhein of the University of Basel in Switzerland set up feeders in a forested area outside Oslo, Norway, home to territorial Great Tits (*Parus major*). Two weeks later, the dawn singing of each bird with a feeder in its territory was recorded and compared with recordings of birds with no feeder.

The dawn chorus is thought to be important for attracting and defending females, yet well-fed

birds delayed their singing by an average of 20 minutes, often waiting until after sunrise. They were still delaying the chorus two weeks after the food had been removed.

Amrhein thinks the birds might be chasing other males away from their valuable larder instead of singing. Stuart Bearhop of the University of Exeter agrees but cautions that this remains a theory. Whatever the cause, Amrhein advocates taking bird feeders down in the spring. Any change in singing behaviour could be costly for the birds: females listen to male songs to assess their performance and chose a mate.

New Scientist
8th January 2011

Tracks and trails



Badger droppings are rather shapeless, the colour and contents varying according to diet. They are left in dung pits or latrines.



The guard hairs of a Badger are long and coarse, and are often found caught on barbed wire.

Trinity United Reformed Church was the venue for the wonderful illustrated talk on "British mammals - their tracks and signs", given by Phil Horwood on Monday 10th January. One of the smallish upper rooms at the rear of the church had been booked for the occasion, but it was soon apparent that it was not going to be nearly large enough for the groups of people who kept coming through the door. The large room on the ground floor was offered to us and Phil good-naturedly moved all his equipment downstairs and set up for a second time. We all trooped down with our chairs and the talk began only ten minutes late.

Phil went through all the different groups of mammals found living wild in the UK and told us how to look for tell-tale signs of their habitation and tracks, including carnivores, rodents and mustelidae. The talk was so

comprehensive, that not even Chinese Water Deer, wallabies and big cats were left out.

We learnt the difference between the tracks of the different species of deer, some left in snow, others in mud. We were told how to tell the difference between tracks of dogs, foxes and badgers, and which sizes of droppings belong to which rodent. Phil explained the difference between bat and mouse droppings, the former crumbling away and the latter being like plasticene.

This was the first talk on mammal tracks and signs arranged by Wycombe Wildlife Group, and the large audience of over 50 people showed how popular the subject was. I think it was one of the most interesting talks I have ever attended. Thanks to Phil for a wonderful evening.

Frances Wilding

The track of a Fox (left) has four toes and is narrow and diamond shaped. The track of a Dog (centre) also has four toes but is broad and square. The track of a Badger (right) is also broad but has five toes.



Muntjac Deer droppings are black, round or slightly elongated, and about 10mm long. They are generally found in clusters. The hoofprints of this species are less than 30mm long and 25mm across.

Walk in Penn Wood

The brightest and warmest day of February induced a large gathering of more than 70 people to attend a walk round Penn Wood. We met at Penn Street church car park and from there we were led by Kevin Holt and Roy Barkes around the wood in order to see bird life. This included the resident population and those winter visitors which had chosen the wood as their winter base.

Bird watching in woodland is not as easy as in many other types of habitat. Winter is the best season to see birds there, especially amongst deciduous trees, and even then a good knowledge of bird song helps a great deal in finding and identifying bird species. Our leaders knew exactly what to find at every turn of the walk. They both spend many hours a week in Penn Wood noting birds coming and going. The wood consists of mixed conifer and deciduous trees, a long avenue of rhododendrons and open areas of grassland and low scrub. This habitat provides shelter and food for a variety of birds. Resident birds seen were numerous and included Blue Tits, Great Tits, Long-

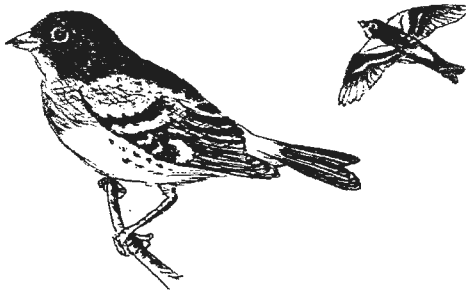
tailed Tits, Blackbirds, Wood Pigeons, Chaffinches, Goldfinches, Magpies, Robins, Blackbirds, Jays and, overhead, Crows and Red Kites. Added to this were small groups of winter visitors which included Siskins, spotted high up in the woodland canopy, and Bramblings, which returned to the wood to roost close to sunset.

Roy and Kevin knew the wood so well that, at the end of the tour of the wood, they were able to show those who wanted to see them, a large roost of migrant Greenfinches, which had been collecting from mid afternoon to spend the night in woodland shelter.

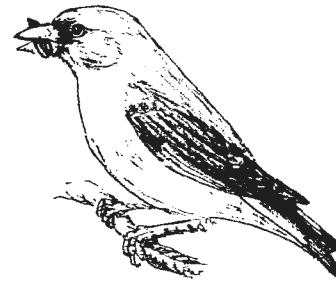
Thanks to both our leaders for their planning and detailed explanations of how Penn Wood is used by birds during the winter months.

Paul Bowyer

Kevin recorded 285 Greenfinches and 17 Bramblings on the walk.



Male Brambling in Summer (breeding) plumage. Has glossy black head, orange shoulders and breast, and a white rump, which is visible in flight.



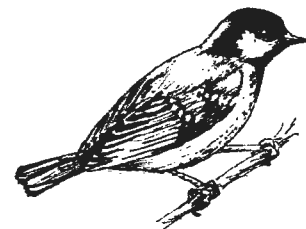
Following a sharp decline in their numbers, it is good to see that the Greenfinch is on the increase again.

All in a morning's work

Twenty-two species of bird were recorded during a morning spent working in the garden on 4th April 2011. Among the less common species was a Lesser Redpoll, a "first" for this garden. It liked the Nyger seed so much that it came back during lunchtime and stayed for half an hour on the Nyger feeder before

finally flying off. A Coal Tit arrived on the adjacent Sunflower seed feeder, raising the total to 23 species. And whose garden was it? Your Editor's.

For a full list of the birds seen, see our website.



Coal Tit

The history, management and wildlife of Chiltern woodlands

Report on talk by John Morris on Monday 14th March

Introduction

John Morris is the director of the Chiltern Woodlands' Project. This project was initially started by the Chiltern Society in 1989, but is now an independent charity. Its aims are to promote and manage woodlands within our region, to conserve and improve the landscape and, subsequently, the wildlife within it. The project deals with woodlands in the area between Reading to Luton. This area has over 900 woodlands, which cover 21% of the area. It provides advice to woodland owners, running training days and publishing newsletters and informative leaflets.

The History of the Chiltern woodlands

John began to outline the history of the Chiltern woodlands, stating that there had been continuity of woodland cover for more than 400 years. In Norman times, woodland economy included the use of wood for timber and fuel and for animal husbandry, especially pigs. A change occurred when the woodlands began to be used more specifically to help supply London and local communities with wood for fuel. Both Henley and Marlow became ports, from which billets and faggots of wood were shipped along the Thames. For example, in 1218, a shipment of 14,000 bundles of firewood was cut in West Wycombe and sent from Marlow to London. More income could be made from these products than from agriculture and so, by 1300, woods tended to be enclosed to keep animals out. For the most part, woods consisted of Beech, but Oak, Ash and other species of trees were also present. William Camden in his "Vision of Britain" in 1607 still referred to the area as "thick with trees".

By the following century, the furniture industry had begun to thrive. Daniel Defoe in 1725 noted "a vast quantity of beechwood which grows in the woods of Buckinghamshire more plentiful than in any other part of England" and referred to its "diverse uses, particularly chairmaking and turnery wares". This resulted in a reduction in the use of trees as fuel, and they were left to grow taller. Nowadays, John told us, the demand for woodland produce has diminished considerably. The price of a mature Larch tree might be about £9, a mature Beech tree might fetch £50, and that would probably be used for firewood, while an Oak may be sold for £200. Woodland management has other problems. Planting trees is expensive and entails a lot of work, while harvested trees have a low value. Machines used to cut trees may churn

up the woodland floor and leave liquid mud. Protection against the influence of deer is also a problem. Their numbers may double over a period of 5 years, so there is a need to cull. If left unchecked, deer will eat a lot of young trees and damage others.

Archaeology

The talk then moved onto woodland archaeology, which relates to former woodland management. Earlier land uses leave their imprint on the woodland floor. Boundary banks can be found within woods and a change in vegetation in these areas may help in identifying these low banks. Aerial photographs can be used to view features on the woodland floor, which can show characteristics of particular types of land use. In the woodland areas of Micklefield in High Wycombe, field systems typical of Saxon and Roman agriculture have been discovered. An example of archaeological remains can be found at the Cholesbury iron age hill fort. This significant earthwork is within woodland, and has provided evidence of occupation in remnants of iron smelting and iron age pottery. There are a number of old iron smelting sites within the Chiltern woodlands. The finding of lumps of iron slag have identified these sites, which were situated within the woods because the weight of wood fuel required in smelting far outweighed the weight of iron ore needed.

There are a number of ancient and medieval settlement sites within the Chiltern woods. These are characterized by boundary or defensive banks and ditches, which may now be hidden by the regrowth of vegetation. An example of these may be found at Bray's Wood near The Lee. Other features within the Chiltern woodlands are associated with the working of wood for the furniture trade. The history of the itinerant bodgers and their part in the making of chair legs for local industry is well known. Saw pits are also a feature of the wood working industry. These were oval pits dug in the woodland, usually about 5 by 2 metres, to enable the sawing of long tree trunks by 2 men using a long 2 handled saw. Quarrying has also taken place within our area. Chalk, clay, flints and other deposits have been excavated and, subsequently, a significant mark has been left on the topography within the woodlands. A flourishing tile making industry existed in the Penn area in the 13th and 14th centuries, which would have used clay from pits in the surrounding area.



Wayfaring-tree (Viburnum lantana)
Shrub bearing flat, umbel-like, creamy flowers, followed by fruits which, as they ripen, turn first red, then black.



The Edible Dormouse (Glis glis) is not a native species in the UK but it is protected under European law. It has never spread very far after escaping from captivity in Tring, but it causes damage to houses as well as to woodlands.

Flora and Fauna of the Chilterns

John's next topic was the flora and fauna, which can be found within the Chiltern woodlands. The long continuity of woodlands in our area has meant that plants, which have adapted to these conditions, have flourished. These tend to be Spring flowering and shade tolerant, such as Primroses, Solomon's-seal, Wood Anemone, Herb Paris and Bluebells. Rarer plants may also be found in a few Chiltern woods, including Bird's-nest, Ghost and Military Orchids and White, Green-flowered and Violet Helleborines. Our woods also provide a home to invasive plants. Himalayan balsam and Laurel are major threats to the native flora.

The woodlands provide food and shelter to bird life. Many winter bird visitors use the Chiltern woodlands for shelter. Most of the local woods have fruit bearing trees providing wildlife with autumn and winter food. Amongst these are Holly, Crab Apple, Oak, Hawthorn, Blackthorn, Spindle and Wayfaring-trees. Woods also provide homes for mammals, including the Common Dormouse, a number of bat species, Grey Squirrels and deer. The squirrels and deer have become pests, stripping bark from trees and becoming a major threat to a large variety of trees. Another problem animal within the

Chilterns is the Edible Dormouse (*Glis glis*). This is a species which has been introduced to this country comparatively recently, and can significantly damage trees.

Special trees of the Chilterns

The last part of the talk concerned special trees within the Chiltern woodlands. Single trees may have some significance within a local area. Their planting may celebrate historical events or human achievement, or there may be some story or social history associated with them. These have been researched by volunteers. A number of ancient Oak trees at Bulstrode Camp, Gerrards Cross, have been investigated and recorded within this project, as has an ancient Yew tree at Ibstone. An old Beech at Frithsden, Ashridge, has attracted much attention and has been featured in a number of films, and its image may be bought and used for advertising purposes.

Thanks to John Morris for a talk packed full of entertaining information. His book "The Cultural Heritage of Chiltern Woods" has recently been published, which I am sure will be well worth reading.

Paul Bowyer

Charles Darwin and his effect on Christian beliefs

In 1859 Charles Darwin published his "On the Origin of Species by Natural Selection", reason enough to celebrate that anniversary. I read *The Origin*, from a copy in the library of Sir John Cass College in London, on the London Underground, over quite a long period on my way to and from university at Tower Hill. I was reading Botany and Zoology, so evolution was central to my studies. I was fascinated by the immense amount of study which Darwin put into its writing, putting together piece by piece, the logic he was describing. I read the *New Scientist* regularly, in fact I have bought and read every edition of it. In the few years approaching the 150th anniversary of *The Origin*, and since, there has been a steady stream of research works on the subject of evolution published in the *New Scientist*, and much of the tenor of these researches has been from an atheistic viewpoint. Darwin was aware that his work would generate this angle; he worried if he had not in fact killed off God.

Evolution was not something which Darwin invented. In my talk last September, I listed many of the people who were instrumental in forming Darwin's thinking on the subject, particularly Linnaeus. His naming system put plants in relational families and he was aware that plants could hybridise. But it was Darwin's studies of many species which led him to try to show how evolution could have happened, from looking at the evidence of both natural history and palaeontology. The idea that creation occurred in the space of 144 hours some six thousand years ago, as a literal reading of the Bible account would suggest, just did not match the field evidence. All the little pieces of this evidence from many scientists over the years now fit together into a growingly completed jigsaw puzzle, which Darwin anticipated in *The Origin*. However, since *The Origin* was published, there has been growing the idea, that if you can show how evolution occurred, by the scientific method, then you can take the leaps of "faith" to say that God is firstly not needed and therefore God does not exist. This is the view taken by Professor Richard Dawkins and others, who go further in saying that those who hold to religion/Christianity must be deluded.

It always seems very strange that the evolution of the Earth and its biota is just the result of an

enormous string of accidents. The first law of thermodynamics insists the entropy should increase, not decrease. Such a finely tuned ecosystem, and that includes the whole universe, just shouts "author". The analogies I quoted in my talk last September were Microsoft Windows and Ferrari F1 racing cars. They evolve, but under what control?

As a Christian, I find that atheist logic just does not hold water. If I am aware of God's presence, how do I reconcile the scientific evidence with the Bible account? The first problem that I have is that there is a body of opinion among (fundamentalist) Christians that the Bible account must be true literally, *because it is written by God himself* and therefore the scientific evidence for evolution must be wrong. As a scientist I cannot accept that. The evidence appears to be overwhelming. I must see how to read between the lines of the Bible account. In fact, the Bible tells its readers to be scientific and to study creation, to see its creator and to understand his long-term purpose. The interesting thing is that the Bible creation account, which preceded any serious scientific research by thousands of years, put the events of creation in exactly the same sequence as the scientists have, without any evidence. Not only that, but the atheistic view completely cherry-picks the evidence, taking no notice of the rest of the Biblical account. Science has shown that the universe/creation had a finite beginning and life on earth will have a finite end. The Bible makes it clear that God has planned beyond that for Himself and Man.

Finally, in my talk I asked about evolution now and the future. I noted that palaeontological studies have shown that there have been several hominid species living alongside *Homo sapiens*, which we as a species have had no memory of, presumably because we didn't notice sufficient differences. Does the human population now consist of more than one species, one of which will succeed through selection? The Bible promises that immortality is on offer to those who believe. Will the rest be ephemerals?

Angus Idle

From the kitchen window with Phil Page

Bird brain is a derogatory phrase used to describe someone who isn't very bright. But it is a moot point whether it is a fair term, well, fair to birds. Some birds have developed ingenious methods of obtaining food and not only in the garden. The Lammergeyer, for example, and no I haven't seen one of those from the kitchen, uses thermals to soar into the blue while holding an animal bone in its talons. At the appropriate moment, it lets go of the bone which falls and shatters, if the bird is lucky, on the hard ground. This gives the hungry bird access to the bone marrow.

Nearer to home, a couple I know had a friendly Robin which used to tap at their kitchen window with its beak. This meant it wanted some food of course. The window would be opened and some crumbs proffered; sometimes it hopped into the room. But anyone who has kept chickens will have seen one bird tread on another's head when trying to get a tasty looking worm or slice of mouldy bread.

Great Spotted Woodpeckers are regular visitors to the garden. I watched one last year which had found a small fledgling on the ground. It picked it up and bounded up the trunk of the Apple tree where it

pinned the unfortunate creature to a branch with its claws and proceeded to use its heavy beak to chop into the small body and rip it to pieces. When the job was completed, it gathered all the pieces in its beak and flew off with a meal ready for a young woodpecker perhaps.

Just recently I hung a strip of bacon fat on a branch with a length of string. One of the woodpeckers, there are at least two males and a female, tried to get at the rind but without much success. Then it tried leaning over from an adjacent branch and pecking at it, but that was no good. So then it grabbed the food in its beak and he, it was a male, must have decided to take it away - back home maybe! He grabbed the bacon tightly in his beak and lifted off from the branch without working out that the bacon was attached to the tree via the string. When the string was stretched to its full extent, the bird's horizontal flight came to an abrupt end and was changed to a circular path around the branch. One revolution proved enough, the bird let go of the piece of fat and a confused Woodpecker retired to a nearby Cherry tree.

Community matters and gardens

There has been a pleasing focus in articles in the national press since the start of 2011 on the survival crisis facing bees, and more recently, butterflies, and on how to help them by selecting insect-friendly plants for the garden. It is pleasing, because it is useful for wildlife groups such as ours to have our message underlined by more powerful bodies. What is not pleasing, of course, is that such matters need highlighting at all.

Past articles in Wycombe Wildlife News have stressed the importance of insects to the pollination of plants, especially foodstuffs. Though we can pollinate plants in our greenhouses, using a soft paintbrush, no one is capable of pollinating a whole orchard or field to ensure our harvest. Without insects we perish.

Bees are vital, but other insects also play their part. The larvae of butterflies, moths and all insects provide an essential food source for birds to feed their young, ensuring the continuance of the food chain. The whole balance of nature is threatened if this, or any other link, breaks down.

This is where gardens come in. With the human population increasing, and the countryside disappearing to support their needs, our gardens can play an ever more important part in helping insects to survive and thrive. The right garden habitats, and the right plants, can help provide what wildlife needs, and hence help us to survive and thrive. These articles in the national press have not been slow to point this out, and even put it out as a ray of hope.

Wycombe Wildlife Group has always encouraged wildlife gardening, from having its own demonstration wildlife garden, to producing advisory wildlife gardening leaflets. Although we no longer have the large demonstration wildlife garden we once had, we still maintain a small native wildflower garden we created within the Walled Garden at Hughenden Manor. This wildflower garden attracts beneficial insects which help pollinate the produce grown in the Walled Garden.

(continued on next page)

Using money obtained from sponsorship by Waitrose (Beaconsfield) Community Matters scheme, we have updated our wildlife gardening advisory leaflets, some of which will be made available for issue to visitors to the Hughenden garden.

So our wildlife gardening leaflets live on and will hopefully help to support our threatened wildlife and, by extension, ourselves.

Pat Morris


We have been asked by Lorna Cassidy, a member of Wycombe Wildlife Group, to publicise the fact that she is opening her studio and wildlife garden at 1 Hampden Road, High Wycombe, HP13 6SZ between 2pm and 4pm on the following dates:


Sat 25th and Sun 26th June

Fri 1st, Sat 2nd and Sun 3rd July


Lorna has pointed out that although there is free roadside parking on Sundays, parking is metered on other days.

Gardens for Birds 

Creating and managing small wildlife areas 

Gardens for Deadwood 

Gardens for Beneficial Insects 

Gardens for Amphibians 

Gardens for Butterflies 

Gardens for Waterlife 

Gardens for Bees & Wasps 

A pond is one of the most important features of a wildlife garden, attracting more wildlife than anything else. With the loss of so many natural and village ponds, garden ponds play a significant role in ensuring that those species which undergo their early development in water continue to thrive.

You can dig a pond at any time of the year, but it is probably best done in the autumn or winter. It will then be ready to stock in the following spring, allowing the plants a full season's growth before the next winter.

Various materials can be used to make a garden pond:

Precast concrete or glass fibre panels are an easy option but few have shallow shelves which are essential for hatching and breeding areas.

Butyl rubber is available as a liquid latex in widths up to 6m, and is the most versatile material available.

Plastic sheeting can be used but has a limited life. Cover any exposed liner with a 2cm layer of gravel to make it harder and crack-free.

Small garden ponds are ideal for creating mini ponds if you don't have the space for a full size pond in your garden.

Puddled clay or cement can be used to construct ponds but are not suited to small garden ponds.

We will not give full details of digging a pond here but suggest you consult one of the many books on the subject.

Continued on back page

Leaflet sponsored from funding received from Waitrose (Beaconsfield) Community Matters Scheme

There is a great variety of bees & wasps which, unlike the Honey Bee, are solitary. They don't live in colonies with a queen, drones and workers. There are just the males and females.

Some solitary wasps like to parasitise spiders, caterpillars and other insects on which they feed their larvae. They are not a threat or nuisance unless the Common Wasp, in the autumn, and most are smaller than the Common Wasp. Bumblebees are also unlikely to sting and are useful pollinators in the garden.

Some species may dig holes in the ground or use existing holes to lay their eggs in. Bumblebees dig holes in rotting wood, holes left by wood-boring beetles, in soil, hollow stems.

In the wildlife garden the most "natural" way of providing for these insects is to have a hedge-parity and Ferns, or you might prefer to have a few Cypripediums and Foxgloves and allow them to flower in their second year to flower. The flowers will benefit many insects and the seeds can be harvested and put on the lawn. Don't however, cut them down just out of the flower heads. In the winter dig up such as sedums and lavender will tolerate in these hollow stems. Then in the following summer a number of solitary bees and wasps may nest in them. Alternatively you could cut the stems of these plants when they are dry and stack them in a sunny corner of the garden or against a hedge.

A variety of artificial nesting and overwintering sites for bees and wasps have been devised, several of which are described in this leaflet.

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Contacting and/or joining Wycombe Wildlife Group

To join Wycombe Wildlife Group, please complete the form on the right (or a copy) and send to the Membership Secretary, 15 Cherrywood Gardens, Flackwell Heath, HP10 9AX. Subscription £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

Newsletter Editor: Pat Morris 01494 529484

roymorris@freeuk.com

Membership Secretary: Paul Bowyer/ Karen Roberts

(Membership enquiries to Paul: 01628 526225)

Treasurer: James Donald 01494 637877

Biological surveys: Angus Idle 01494 563673

angusjanet@yahoo.co.uk

Website: www.wycombewildlifegrp.co.uk

Webmaster: Malcolm Pusey malcolm.pusey@o2.co.uk

Please enrol me as a member of Wycombe Wildlife Group

Name:

Address:

Telephone: Email:

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:

Number of payments: Until further notice

Signature Date

OR Payment by cheque or cash

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



WILDLIFE NOTICE BOARD



Observations



January

01/01 Song Thrushes singing Deeds Grove
 02/01 Blackbird in full song Deeds Grove
 11/01 Dame's-violet in flower Amersham Hill Drive
 Brambling occasionally all Jan and up to 3 Blackcaps throughout Jan and Feb in Amersham Hill Drive.

February

04/02 Nuthatch in feeder Amersham Hill Drive
 08/02 1st Frog in pond Amersham Hill Drive
 12/02 1st Brimstone Downley
 16/02 *Bombus terrestris* in Ivy Amersham Hill Drive
 17/02 1st Red Admiral Tylers Green
 24/02 1st 7-spot Ladybird Deeds Grove
 24/02 1st Frogspawn Carver Hill Road
 26/02 Frogspawn Deeds Grove
 27/02 Siskin on feeder Amersham Hill Drive
 27/02 Hen blackbird with nesting material Amersham Hill Drive
 28/02 Frogspawn Amersham Hill Drive

March

07/03 *Bombus hypnorum* Amersham Hill Drive
 13/03 Sparrows building Deeds Grove
 14/03 1st Chiffchaff Deeds Grove
 16/03 2 Siskins Deeds Grove
 23/03 Small Tortoiseshell Puttenham Farm
 23/03 Orange Underwing Common Wood
 23/03 Hebrew Character Amersham Hill Drive
 23/03 1st Tortoiseshell Deeds Grove
 29/03 50 Waxwings Deeds Grove
 29/03 Male Sparrowhawk bathing in pond and drying off for one hour Deeds Grove

April

03/04 7-spot Ladybirds Throughout N. Wycombe
 06/04 Orange Tip Downley
 07/04 Comma Downley
 08/04 Holly Blue Downley



Contacts for Wildlife, Conservation & Environmental Groups in Wycombe District



Bassetsbury Group	David Reed	01494 439665
Bat queries	WDC Rangers	01494 421824
Berks, Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust	(Oxon Office)	01865 775476
Booker Common & Woods Protection Society	Rita Luxton	01494 436807
British Trust for Conservation Volunteers	Jane Craven	01296 330033
British Trust for Ornithology (Regional Rep.)	Roger Warren	01491 638691
Bucks Badger Group	Mike Collard	01494 866908
	Mobile (at any time)	07887 955861
Bucks Bird Club	Neil Foster	01296 748597
Bucks Community Association	Francis Gomme	01844 274865
Bucks County Council Countryside Initiatives Team	Mark Bailey	01296 382389
Bucks Invertebrate Group	c/o BMERC	01296 696012
Butterfly Conservation	Nick Bowles	01442 382278
Chiltern Society	Angus Idle	01494 563673
Chilterns AONB	Steve Rodrick	01844 355505
Chilterns Chalk Streams Officer	Allen Beechey	01844 355502
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
Frieth Natural History Society	Alan Gudge	01494 881464
Grange Action Group	Dave Wainman	01494 716726
High Wycombe Beekeeping Association	Sheila Borwick	01494 739313
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
Natural England Conservation Officer	Rebecca Hart	01189 392070
Pann Mill Group	Robert Turner	01494 472981
Prestwood Nature	Tony Marshall	01494 864251
Ramblers Association	John Shipley	01494 862699
Risborough Countryside Group	Francis Gomme	01844 274865
RSPB local group	George Noble	01491 682563
St. Tiggywinkles	Les Stocker	01844 292292
Swan Lifeline	Wendy Hermon	01753 859397
Woodland Trust (voluntary speaker)	Michael Hyde	01628 485474
Wycombe District Council Woodland Service	John Shaw	01494 421825