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**SEPTEMBER**  
**2011**

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Top: Violet Helleborine (*Epipactis purpurata*)

Middle: Scalloped Oak moth

Bottom: *Pyrausta purpuralis* moth

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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.

**Editor:** Pat Morris

**Production:** Roger Wilding

**Photographs:** Roy Barks (Violet Helleborine and moths on front page), Karen Roberts (moths p.51), Clive Hill (bumblebees) and Pat Morris (butterfly)

**Drawings:** Pat Morris (leaves) and Frances Wilding (flowers)

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**Editorial - September 2011**

**“We don’t seem to have had a summer”,** remarked a friend when yet another brief spell of warm sunshine ended in cold and wet. In spite of this, and the fact that this has been the coldest summer since 1993, the season has progressed as usual, with the usual problems to deal with. Slugs and snails have been highly active after remaining dormant during an exceptionally dry April, and plants have reacted to the warmth and rain, which led to another friend complaining that she did nothing but cut back her garden. We are now enjoying a bumper crop of apples, pears and plums, while, in the countryside, trees and bushes are laden with acorns, Beech mast, berries, sloes, hips, haws and Hazel nuts: a feast for birds and mammals.

In the insect world, after Harlequin ladybirds succeeded the 7-spots, the latter now appear more numerous again. Hopefully, they are tackling any aphids that may have developed. I have had some interesting ruby-red aphids on my Tansy plants, but they didn’t last long. They left blood-like stains on the fingers, if one attempted to rub them off. I don’t know which predator disposed of them for me in the end, or maybe it was torrential rain. Hoverflies are always numerous around Tansy flowers, so maybe they helped. The hoverflies have also been on Fennel, Dahlias, and other open-topped blooms again this summer.

Huge mixed parties of tits have been busy in the garden, joined by migrants such as Chiffchaff and Blackcap. Other bird species have not been so obvious – probably enjoying the natural food available in the wider countryside.

This edition of Wycombe Wildlife News is later than usual. Alas, your Editor is wearing out and has been unable to tackle the job as before. So, if you value your newsletter, and want it to continue, do come forward with offers of help, or even to take over the editorship. I would be most grateful to hear from you. In the meantime, I wish to say how greatly I appreciate the loyalty and support of all those who have helped me in the past 22 years.

Pat Morris

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.

## Two new moths for me

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> July, I ran a moth trap in the Cressex garden of Karen Roberts, one of Wycombe Wildlife Group's members. We caught a moth we had never seen before. I couldn't identify it but Karen thought it was a Small Ranunculus, a member of the Noctuidae family.

In my copy of Skinner's "Moths of the British Isles" the first line of the description for this species reads, "Formerly resident, now extinct". Karen photographed the insect and sent a copy to Peter Hall, our consultant on all things to do with moths. He confirmed the identification and added that he was jealous because it was a species he had never trapped. The larvae of this moth feed on the seeds and flowers of wild and cultivated lettuce. On further investigation, it seems that the Small Ranunculus has made a comeback over the last 20 years. It has colonised areas of North Kent and London and is now spreading west and north. This year, two sightings in Aylesbury have been reported on the Butterfly Conservation website, and the national distribution map now shows a significant population in the south east of England.

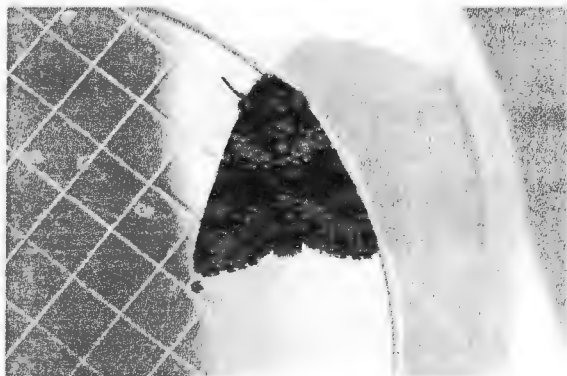
On the 29<sup>th</sup> July, Wycombe District Council's Woodland Service organised an evening event to see bats and moths at Cock Lane Cemetery. In conjunction with this, I ran my moth trap in the Cock Lane car park. A number of common moth species were

identified, including Ruby Tiger, Green Carpet, Yellow Shell, Large Emerald, Riband Wave, Common Footman, Elephant Hawk. Lobster, Dunbar, Snout, Lesser Treble Bar, Early Thorn, Coxcomb Prominent and the Large and Broad-bordered Yellow Underwings. At the end of the evening, I had to take two moths away with me to identify the next day in daylight. One moth baffled me. Its shape was similar to the smaller moths found within the Geometridae family which contains the Waves, Pugs and Carpet groups of moths. I took it to Karen Roberts for a second opinion. This time she could not identify it, but she again sent a photograph to Peter Hall. This time he replied that it was a Waved Black, a moth whose caterpillars feed on the fungi found on dead trees and log piles and which can be found in moth identification books amongst much larger Noctuidae species. While the increase in distribution of this moth is not as extreme as the Small Ranunculus, it is a species which is slowly spreading west and north from its localised colonies in southern England.

I returned to Cock Lane Cemetery at dusk the next day to return the formerly unidentified moths to their habitat.

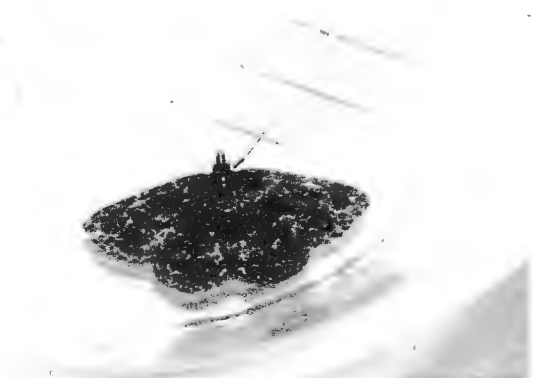
Paul Bowyer

If you would like Paul to hold a moth-trapping event in your garden, contact him on 01628 526225. You may discover a rare moth in your garden!



Small Ranunculus (*Hecatera dysodea*)

Waved Black (*Parascotia fuliginaria*)



## Introducing *Bombus hypnorum*, the Tree Bumblebee

**Introduction.** The Tree Bumblebee was first found in Britain near the New Forest, in 2001. Since then it has spread rapidly. By 2010 it was present in much of England, parts of Wales and close to Scotland: an amazing achievement (see map below). Bumblebees generally cause little concern to the public, but some aspects of *B. hypnorum*'s behaviour are unusual and can cause anxiety. Where the bee is common, there has been a large increase in calls to Beekeepers Association swarm help lines. As a "new to UK" species, remarkably little information about it is available in most English bumblebee books. The species is a widespread long-term member of the bee fauna within the Eurasian land mass.

**Recognising them.** Bumblebees can be identified by their fur colour patterns. *B. hypnorum*'s pattern is unique in the UK species and has a tawny to reddish brown, or darker thorax, a charcoal grey to black abdomen, and a white tail - and this stands out. The thorax colour is the biggest variable, and there are a lot of dark bees about, but they always have a white tail. Darkness is often accentuated by partial baldness on the thorax, as though they have a monk's tonsure. Queens, workers and males (drones) all have a similar colour pattern. There is a significant body size variation within species with all bumblebees, but with *B. hypnorum*, drones are chunky, about twice the size of a honey bee, have blunter ends to their abdomens and noticeably long curved antennae. Fresh drones have a patch of yellowish fur on the front of their face, but this appears to wear off with time. Queens vary quite a lot in size, with a size range similar to that of *B. lucorum*. The workers are quite small.

**Where to look for them.** The queens come out of hibernation in March, or April, and may be seen visiting Pussy Willow catkins. The species is most likely to be noticed in May and June, when workers and drone bees are active. The species is now very common in the High Wycombe area. The bees are very useful active, and highly agile, pollinators. You

are most likely to see them working flowers of Blackcurrant, Gooseberry, Apple, Chives, Raspberry, Comfrey, Cotoneaster and Roses, but they must work many other types of flower. Watch out for them on Raspberries, which they work with great rapidity.

**Competing species.** You can often see *B. hypnorum* bees working the same flowers as *B. pratorum*, the Early Bumblebee, but as far as I am aware, these have not become less common since *B. hypnorum* became a member of our bee fauna.

**Setting up home.** *B. hypnorum* is one of the first species seen in the spring. Nest searching queens can be seen in March and April. You can sometimes see them searching along vertical surfaces, which is unusual. They look for somewhere snug to set up home, most often within the structure of an old bird nest. In nature, *B. hypnorum* is a species of woodland edge situations, but these days is often associated with man-made structures. Colonies are usually located well above ground. Bird-boxes with tit or Robin nests are frequently used. Other places are holes in trees, places high up in buildings, like soffit boxes, under roof tiles, or at house eaves. Some nests are closer to the ground, but this is probably less common. Once a queen has established a colony, it might be two months before bee-flight activity becomes frequent enough to be noticed, and two or three more for the colony to go full-cycle and die out. Around six weeks in, the queen's worker children take over foraging. A really strong colony could build up to 300 bees, perhaps more, but most nests will be smaller. Bumblebee nest flight activity is very different to that of honey bees, usually a flight every few minutes, hardly noticeable and much less than honey bee colonies, which can have hundreds of flights in the same period, with many thousand bees in a colony. However, with *B. hypnorum*, matters are complicated by what is called "Nest Surveillance" by the drones.

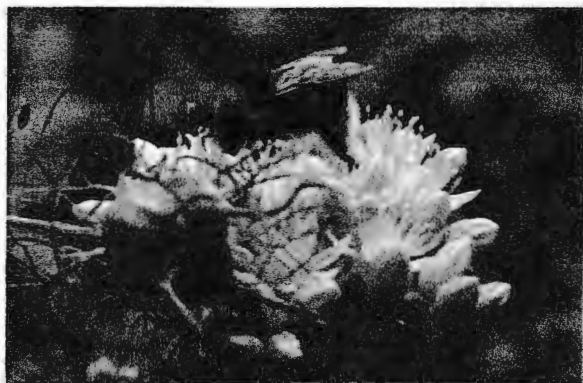


Distribution in UK at end of 2010

Copyright: BWARS

Right:  
The Tree  
Bumblebee has  
three distinct  
coloured bands (a  
tawny to reddish  
thorax, a dark  
abdomen and a  
white tail).





*Bombus lucorum* drone feeding on *Sedum* flowers. This white-tailed species has a yellow collar and second abdominal segment.



*Bombus hypnorum* "nest surveillance" activity

**Behaviour of concern to the public.** Two aspects of this species' behaviour have caused concern and are the reason for calls to BKA help lines. From a human viewpoint, both are made worse because the bees so frequently use bird-boxes close to our homes. The first area of concern is the bees' rapid reaction and defensive behaviour, when the nest suffers vibration. If an occupied bird-box is fixed to the side of a shed, using the shed door or carrying out activities in the shed such as carpentry or potting work, can cause the bees to react strongly and they may sting. In bad cases, the bees can 'boil out of the nest', which is highly intimidating - especially if you hadn't realised the colony was there! Such reaction is likely whenever the vibration occurs and the colony strong enough. Unless it is possible to stop using the shed, or to do so in a much quieter way, such defensive behaviour will continue. The other behaviour to cause concern is the apparent high level of flight activity like a sort of "aerial dance" of chunky bees in constant flight around the box. This activity often occurs over much of daylight hours and, if it is a strong colony, can last several weeks. It's really quite a spectacle and draws attention to the nest. To an untutored eye, it looks remarkably like the flight activity of a honey bee colony: but honey bees wouldn't choose a bird-box, because it is not big enough for them. The behaviour, known technically as "nest surveillance", is an unusual pre-mating characteristic of *B. hypnorum*. The bees flying in the "cloud" are male bees (drones) and are roughly twice the size of honey bees. They are also much more furry and will have the characteristic colour pattern, with the very noticeable white tail. There should also be a certain amount of normal worker to and fro flight through the cloud of drones. A third thing is that you will notice a few bees joining or leaving the cloud, as they move from nest to nest. Finally, if the colony is producing virgin queens, when these fly from the box, the drones attempt to mate with them. It looks like fighting and the paired bees will fall to the ground, where they stay together for a considerable time - sometimes an hour or more.

**How the beekeeper can help.** I suggest that members of the public calling a BKA swarm line about the above areas of concern should discuss the possibility of moving the colony if someone has been stung due to a vibration caused event. In the case of drone clouds, however, the caller would normally be advised to enjoy the spectacle and feel lucky to be a "bee landlord". Action to move a colony is normally undertaken at night, the beekeeper using red light from a cycle rear-light (so the bees can't see what's going on). The nest-box entrance is quickly stopped up with a piece of flexible foam sheet, or a kitchen scourer pad. The box can then be lifted off, and taken away, but it is important to check for gaps the bees can get through, and tape these over. The box can then be taken to a place outside the flying range of the bees, say a couple of miles away. There it should be re-mounted on a surface free from vibration. A few bees might return to the original location: the ones that camped-out overnight and came back to find home gone, but these will soon go away. At its new location, a colony can be of great interest to a new human landlord. Such actions are an excellent source of "Brownie points" and often result in grateful financial donations to the Beekeepers Association.

**Imaginative bees.** In 2010 there were at least four cases of *B. hypnorum* colonies nesting within the waste air system of a tumble drier - in a side arm filled with fluff. Please let me, or The Bumblebee Conservation Trust, know if you come across such a colony. It is possible to move them, but this is extremely time consuming, and in most cases a live-and-let-live approach will be adequate, cleaning out the old nest etc., once the colony has gone full-cycle and died out naturally.

I hope you find our new bumblebee interesting: it is an excellent pollinator.

Clive Hill  
High Wycombe Beekeepers Association  
Email: [clive\\_hill@talktalk.net](mailto:clive_hill@talktalk.net)

## Some of the best plants to attract bees into your garden

*Verbena bonariensis*, Borage, Lavender, Globe-thistles (*Echinops spp.*), Teasel, Mint, Marjoram and Fennel. See Wycombe Wildlife Group's leaflet "Gardens for Bees and Wasps" for further information.

### Booker Common and Woods Protection Society

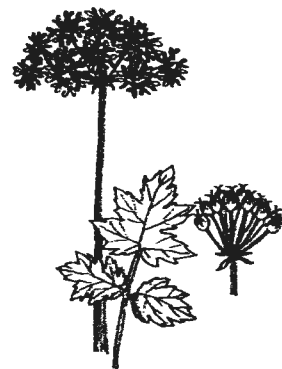
**B**ooker Common is an area of approximately 100 acres of woodland and areas of open common land to the south west of High Wycombe owned by the Dashwood Estate. It is bounded on the west by Horns Lane and Lane End Road and the further woodland of Newmer Common and Sunters Wood. The other boundaries of Booker Common are adjacent to housing and Fernie Fields playing fields.

Much of the woodland was originally planted for the High Wycombe furniture trade, which would have included bodgers working in the woods. In the early 1970s, the local Ercol furniture factory harvested many of the then mature Beech trees and the woodland was left to regenerate itself. Due to neglect, the woodland came under threat from housing development, and with the inspiration of Alan Duggin and like minded people, Booker Common and Woods Protection Society was formed in 1982. Using volunteers, the Society removed over 60 tons of rubbish, the footpaths and bridleways were cleared, and over 400 wooden bollards installed to prevent further fly-tipping. A programme of planting indigenous trees was also started. The hurricane force winds of 1990 had a dramatic effect on the larger shallow-rooted Beech trees. A lot were toppled and were removed by the Dashwood Estate, leaving open areas. By March 1991, the Society had planted 1,300 trees (Beech, Sweet Chestnut, Field Maple, Cherry and Oak). After 1990, the flora of the woodland changed from being shaded out by the large tree canopy to open glades attracting a

At the Society's AGM on 16<sup>th</sup> May 2011, Roger Wilding gave a talk on the achievements of Wycombe Wildlife Group during its 22 year history and was presented with this year's Alan Duggin Memorial Award for Conservation on behalf of Wycombe Wildlife Group. Our thanks go to the Society for this recognition of our achievements and for their donation to our funds.

The wild plant identification walk, attended by members of the Booker Common and Woods Protection Society and Wycombe Wildlife Group took place on 28<sup>th</sup> June 2011.

Hogweed (*Heracleum sphondylium*) - one of the plants needing to be cleared prior to creating the wild flower meadow below the "Squirrel".



diverse range of plants, which in turn attracted more insects and butterflies.

The woodland in 2011 still has mature Beech, Cherry, Ash and Yew, but many of the newly regenerated young trees are being damaged by Grey Squirrel and Muntjac Deer. As the woodland is no longer managed for timber, it has developed into thickets of Ash and a crowded growth of bushes and brambles. There are still open areas with a diverse mix of grasses and other flora. All the most common bird species can be seen, including Great Spotted Woodpeckers, Long-tailed Tits, Bullfinch, Goldfinch etc.

In 2007, a small area of the original Booker Common open grazing land below the Squirrel public house was reclaimed. Volunteers cleared Bramble, Hogweed and Nettles, the area was rotovated, seeded and planted with indigenous plants as recommended by Roger Wilding of the Wycombe Wildlife Group. Blackthorn scrub and fallen trees were removed from wood edges and the footpaths cleared to access the woodland. The area is now being managed and planted to encourage native wild flowers and plants. On a recent wild plant identification walk in the woodland and open common, Roger Wilding identified over 100 native wild plants.

Hedley Luxton

## The story of Bassetsbury Lane allotments

It has been two years now since Wycombe District Council declared the Bassetsbury Lane allotments to be contaminated and tried to close the area. Since then, the remaining keen allotment holders have formed an organisation known as B.L.A.G. (Bassetsbury Lane Allotments Group).

In 1996, two officers of the Council were photographed handing over an area alongside the tree-covered old Brunel railway embankment to Wycombe Wildlife Group (then called Wycombe Urban Wildlife Group). We chose to cultivate the three allotment plots allocated for the Group's use as a wildlife area and the grassland surrounding the plots was mown regularly by the Council. Only part of the allocated area was used initially but, at a later date, Roger Wilding turned the unused section into a wildflower meadow by removing the topsoil and creating a bank to divide the working areas.

Now I am the only one working the whole plot and nature has taken over – a hedge has become a thicket with blackberries surrounding it and, beyond, flowers like Canadian Goldenrod, Green Alkanet, Borage and Comfrey thrive. Some species have introduced themselves, and others I have planted or encouraged to grow. I also grow potatoes and runner beans on the allotment. Nettles have become rampant and I am discovering the only way to control them is to pull them at this time of year when the ground is moist, and then to tackle the roots.

These roots spread like an underground Spaghetti Junction and seem to smother everything else. Even worse are the roots of Hogweed that run straight down into the stony clay. So I only have patches of cultivated ground and have planted fruit trees and willows.

I myself cycle to the allotment and do not use power tools. I go there every day when the weather permits, because I love the place and need the friendship of like-minded people in my old age. I think, in years to come, young people will be grateful that we saved this beautiful field from development. We have yet another meeting with newly elected councillors in September.

Lorna Cassidy

In 2010, Wycombe Wildlife Group were formally requested by Wycombe District Council to give up the use of the Bassetsbury Lane allotments, which had been allocated for our use free of charge. The Council stated that these plots were needed to meet the increasing public demand for allotments. The WWG trustees agreed to give up the allotment plots, but supported the continued use of the allotments by Lorna Cassidy as a private allotment holder, in recognition of her long-term use of the plots and her willingness to pay to continue to use them. We all hope that Lorna will be able to continue to maintain the area concerned for her own enjoyment and to preserve its biodiversity for the future.

Roger Wilding



Left: Borage (*Borago officinalis*) - very attractive to bees.

Right: Green Alkanet (*Pentaglottis sempervirens*)

This bristly, blue-flowered plant grows along hedgerows. Its roots are a source of red dye.



## Things to do in your garden this autumn

**Waterlife:** Clear out excess vegetation from ponds. Construct a hibernaculum for amphibians.

**Birds:** Clean feeding surfaces and wash out feeders, ready for winter. Empty and disinfect bird boxes.

**Insects:** Put up winter homes.

**Mammals:** Leave a pile of leaves or logs in which Hedgehogs and other creatures can hibernate.

See our wildlife gardening advisory leaflets for more details.

## Two butterfly walks in Wycombe

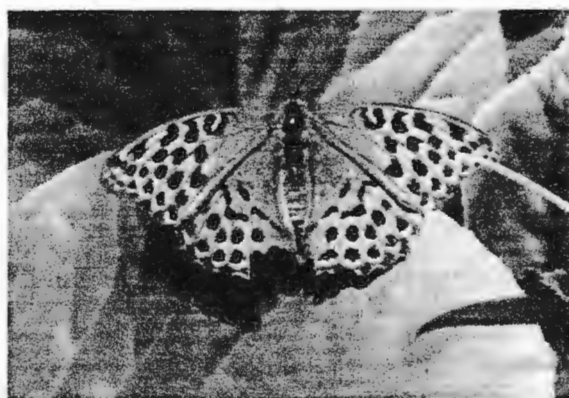
Wycombe District Council's Woodland Service organised two butterfly events for the national "Save Our Butterflies Week". One took place in the Gomm's Wood area on 24<sup>th</sup> July and one was held at Sands Bank on the 31<sup>st</sup> July.

On 24<sup>th</sup> July, the day was fine and more than a dozen people met in the Cock Lane Cemetery car park. Tony, one of the Woodland Rangers, led us on our walk, which went through the cemetery, along the rides in Gomm's Wood down to the grassy meadows in the Micklefield area, returning through a small area of chalk grassland behind the school, and back up through the woods to the car park. It was a remarkably successful walk for butterflies, with 20 species being seen. The most significant sightings were of the Silver-washed Fritillaries seen gliding up and down the woodland rides and in the meadow close to the school. Nine were seen in all. This species has spread throughout the woodlands of South Bucks in the last few years, and has now been spotted in a number of local gardens. Large, Small and Green-veined Whites were identified, as well as brightly coloured male Brimstones. The Vanessa species seen were Red Admiral, Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock and Comma and members of the blue family seen were Holly Blue, Common Blue, Brown Argus and Small Copper. Small and Large Skippers were seen and the browns were represented by Speckled Wood, Gatekeeper, Meadow Brown, Marbled White and Ringlet.

On 31<sup>st</sup> July, another fine day, we started our walk from the Wycombe Wanderers' car park and walked from west to east covering the lower paths and the woodland edge. Despite being so close to factories, this is an area of prime chalk grassland. The steepness of the slope allows numerous wild flowers and grasses to prosper unhindered by the invasion of rank vegetation and scrub. Again, this was a successful butterfly walk for such a comparatively small area covered. The highlights of the walk were a Chalkhill Blue, which one of our party was able to photograph, an Essex Skipper successfully identified, and a second generation Dingy Skipper. By the end of the walk, 16 butterfly species had been identified, a good count, but surprisingly none of the whites were seen.

Reflecting on the success of these walks, I can't imagine that there are many urban areas in Britain where so many butterfly species can be found within their town boundaries.

Paul Bowyer.



A rather battered female Silver-washed Fritillary which turned up in the Editor's garden on 25<sup>th</sup> July 2011.



## Butterfly walk in Stoke Poges Memorial Garden - 30<sup>th</sup> July 2011

The Stoke Poges Memorial Garden is a 20 acre site, which is for the most part formal but has a few areas, mainly on its perimeter, of vegetation suitable for butterflies and other wildlife. The Head Gardener, Graham Pattison, keeps records of wildlife found within the garden. He invites people to lead walks with varying themes, so that he can keep these records updated. Nine people met for the walk on 30<sup>th</sup> July to look for butterflies. It was a cloudy day with some warm sunny intervals.

One of the best features of the garden is an area of long natural grass and wild flowers, left purposely to encourage insect life. Here Meadow Brown, Green-veined White and Brown Argus butterflies were found. This area provides food plants for the caterpillars of certain species, as well as nectar sources for adult butterflies. The eastern border of the garden is a substantial hedgerow containing Bramble, Holly, Ivy, Ash, Elm, Oak and various wild flowers. This again provides caterpillar food plants and nectar sources. Holly Blue, Specked Wood and Small White were seen in this area.

At the southern end of the garden there are workshops, and rougher areas of vegetation can be found there. Nettles, Thistles and Brambles thrive in an area screened from the public by ornamental trees and bushes. Nettles provide food for a number of our butterfly species and we saw two of these in this area - a Comma and a Peacock. The garden is home to a number of Oak trees, two large specimens dating back to the fifteenth century. The life cycle of the Purple Hairstreak butterfly has a close association with Oak. Eggs are laid on it and the caterpillars feed on its leaves. The adult will sit on its leaves and flutter around its upper branches. We were lucky enough to spot two Purple Hairstreaks

high up on one of the large Oak trees and another which had come down briefly to head height, offering a good view for identification.

Stoke Park Golf Club lies on the western edge of the garden, separated by an ornamental lake. Since I first visited the Memorial Garden in the 1970s, this area has been cleared considerably of any vegetation which may be beneficial to insect life. This crimpling of grass and verges seems to be a characteristic of many golf courses. However, a narrow strip of wild flowers still borders the lake on the Memorial Garden side. Cloud cover and a brisk wind prevented us from seeing Common Blue and Small Skipper which have been seen here in previous years, but a number of Gatekeepers were seen.

The central area of the garden has little appeal to butterflies for breeding purposes. Wild flowers cannot be found here but garden plants, including Lavender and Butterfly-bush (*Buddleja davidii*), provide important nectar sources for adult butterflies. Large White and Red Admiral were added to our list of species here.

We finished our walk outside the administration office. For those wishing to find more butterfly species, I continued my walk in the field to the north of Stoke Poges churchyard where Common Blue and Small Copper were seen, bringing our species count for the day to 14.

Thanks to Graham Pattison for inviting us to hold our walk in this peaceful setting.

Paul Bowyer

### Editor's note

WWG member Harry Wheate reports not having seen a single Vanessa on his Butterfly-bush (*Buddleja davidii*) this year. It is normally covered in butterflies.

## More about the Stoke Poges Memorial Garden

Stoke Park was laid out by Humphrey Repton and Capability Brown and survived until a few years before the Great War, when part of the grounds became a golf course. A further section was under threat of development in the 1930s but was saved by the efforts of Sir Noel Mobbs, the Lord of the Manor of Stoke Poges and Provost of Eton. Twenty acres to the south of St Giles Church, made famous in Grey's Elegy, were saved and became the memorial garden which now serves as a non-denominational cemetery for the burial of cremated remains.

The walk started at 10am or 11am (depending on where you saw it advertised), and a small group welcomed Paul's arrival eagerly. Graham Pattison, the manager of the garden, had already given a

short talk about the garden and had pointed out some of the mature trees, including a Red Oak and Caucasian Wingnut. The garden has many different areas, including grassland with trees (some centuries old), flower and shrub borders, a water feature, a rose garden, wild areas and a small lake on the boundary of the golf course. There are also hundreds of small, gated gardens being the burial plots of various families.

I know the person who used to be the manager, but regret to say that I didn't take up his offer of a guided walk. It is a beautiful garden and well worth a visit, especially on a sunny day. At no time does it give the impression of being a cemetery.

Harry Wheate



Left:  
Caucasian Wingnut (*Pterocarya fraxinifolia*) has ash-like, but more numerous, leaflets. These are unstalked, alternate and toothed, whereas the Ash leaflets are stalked and in pairs. The most distinguishing feature of this species is the very long pendent catkins developing into strings of broad-winged nutlets.

Right:  
Red Oak (*Quercus borealis*) As its name suggests, the leaves of this species turn a lovely colour in the autumn.



## River Wye work party - Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> July 2011

Indian Balsam (or Himalayan Balsam as most people call it) is a very attractive plant which grows in damp or wet soil. It is now a common plant in or beside waterways. Its stout stems grow to a height of four to six feet and produce many rose and pink coloured blooms from July onwards. This plant produces lots of nectar, bees love it and it makes excellent honey. This plant is an alien invader, however. It was introduced in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century as a garden plant, like that other nuisance plant Japanese Knotweed. In recent years Indian Balsam has caused serious problems along our streams and rivers. The plant outgrows native species which it soon crowds out and overshadows. The root systems of waterside vegetation help to hold the soil

on the banks in place during the winter months when much of the foliage dies down. In places where the Balsam has crowded out the native plants, these necessary root systems have also gone and the Balsam roots rot down after flowering and seed dispersal, because they are annuals. This results in soil erosion.

On Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> July, I joined a work party led by Roger Wilding, and attended by a few other Wycombe Wildlife Group members and some members of Earthworks Conservation Volunteers. Well, it had sounded a pleasant enough task for mid July - standing in the river in the sun doing a bit of weeding.

On that day, however, the sky was grey and it didn't stop raining all the morning, but that probably helped to keep the complainers away. Whenever you undertake this type of work, there are always those who are convinced that you are doing the wrong thing, and you then have to spend time trying to explain why the work has to be carried out. Anyway it was on with waterproofs and waders and into the river. The Indian Balsam plants had to be located amongst all the other vegetation and the stems cut low enough to prevent further flowering. Although very small plants could be pulled up, doing this with the larger plants would have caused too much soil disturbance. Any flowers already gone to seed had to be removed carefully and put into bags before they sent their seeds flying in all directions. All the remaining cut material was gathered up and bagged ready for later collection by the Council's waste contractors. We worked on the section of the Wye between Rye Mill and Pann Mill, starting by the bridge at the eastern end of the Rye and working upstream (to ensure that the disturbed silt on the riverbed was behind the

majority of those in the water). We didn't seem to have moved far but had filled numerous sacks by the time we broke for lunch. I couldn't stay for the afternoon session, but the group did a lot more clearing after their break. In spite of getting soaked to the skin, it had been an enjoyable few hours. I can recommend it to all those who missed out. Look out for the next work party and join in.

Harry Wheate

The weather was fine in the afternoon so those who were able to carry on had dried out completely by the time we finished at around 4pm. Not all the Balsam plants were located and dealt with, as some of the plant's distinctive flowers are still appearing along this stretch of the river. It is anticipated that it will take at least three years of thorough action to get this plant thug under control where it has formed large colonies. If anyone else wants to join in the fun, let me know, as not all the opportunities to help will be in the WWG events programme.

Roger Wilding

## 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](http://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  
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NEW standing order instruction:

Account to be debited (your account details)

Sort code: ..... Account number: .....  
Account name: .....

Beneficiary bank and payee details

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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



<b>April</b>			<b>08/06</b> Muslin moth Tyler's Green garden		
07/04	Holly Blue	Downley garden	09/06	Large Skipper	Hazlemere Recreation Ground
08/04	Red Admiral	Downley garden	13/06	Jackdaw on Starling bar	Amersham Hill Drive
21/04	Green-veined White	Downley garden	16/06	Nuthatch & Song Thrush	Downley garden
22/04	3 Cuckoos flying north	Tyler's Green	16/06	25 bird species before 7.10am	Tyler's Green garden
25/04	Cuckoo calling	Penn Wood	21/06	Red-legged Partridge	Downley front garden
30/04	Harlequin Ladybird	Green Hill Wood	24/06	Red Underwing moth	Tyler's Green garden
30/04	Willow Warblers singing	Common Wood	<b>July</b>		
<b>May</b>			15/07	First baby Hedgehog since 1990	Cadmore End garden
02/05	Speckled Wood & Red Admiral	Downley Common	21/07	Swallow-tail moth	Tyler's Green garden
03/05	Male & female Bullfinch on seed feeder	Amersham Hill Drive	25/07	Silver-washed Fritillary	Amersham Hill Drive
04/05	Harlequin Ladybird	Downley garden	<b>August</b>		
11/05	Fox in garden 8am	Amersham Hill Drive	04/08	Violet Helleborines	Common Wood
17/05	Common Blue butterfly	Hazlemere Recreation Ground	<b>Mid month</b>		
<b>June</b>			Scalloped Oak moth & Pyrausta purpuralis	Tyler's Green garden	
03/06	Hummingbird Hawkmoth	Downley garden	29/08	Cowslip in bloom	Amersham Hill Drive

### 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
Bucks Bird Club	Mobile (at any time)	07887 955861
Bucks Community Association	Neil Foster	01296 748597
Bucks County Council Countryside Initiatives Team	Francis Gomme	01844 274865
Bucks Invertebrate Group	Mark Bailey	01296 382389
Butterfly Conservation	c/o BMERC	01296 696012
Chiltern Society	Nick Bowles	01442 382278
Chilterns AONB	Angus Idle	01494 563673
Chilterns Chalk Streams Officer	Steve Rodrick	01844 355505
Chilterns Conservation Board (Activities and Education)	Allen Beechey	01844 355502
Chilterns Countryside Group	Cathy Rose	01844 355506
Chilterns Woodland Officer	Julie Rockell	01628 526828
Downley Common Preservation Society	John Morris	01844 355503
Frieth Natural History Society	Bill Thompson	01494 520648
Grange Action Group	Alan Gudge	01494 881464
High Wycombe Beekeeping Association	Dave Wainman	01494 716726
High Wycombe Society	Sheila Borwick	01494 739313
Lane End Conservation Group	Frances Presland	01494 523263
Marlow Society	Bärbel Cheesewright	01494 882938
National Trust	Bob Savidge	01628 891121
Natural England Conservation Officer	(Office)	01494 755573
Pann Mill Group	Rebecca Hart	01189 392070
Prestwood Nature	Robert Turner	01494 472981
Ramblers Association	Tony Marshall	01494 864251
Risborough Countryside Group	John Shipley	01494 862699
RSPB local group	Francis Gomme	01844 274865
St. Tiggywinkles	George Noble	01491 682563
Swan Lifeline	Les Stocker	01844 292292
Woodland Trust (voluntary speaker)	Wendy Hermon	01753 859397
Wycombe District Council Woodland Service	Michael Hyde	01628 485474
	John Shaw	01494 421825