

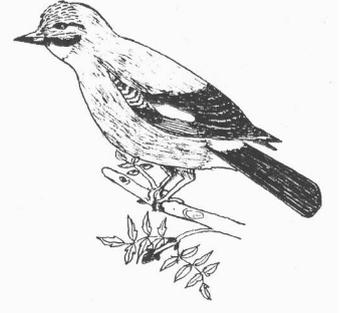
**WYCOMBE
 and
 SOUTH BUCKS**

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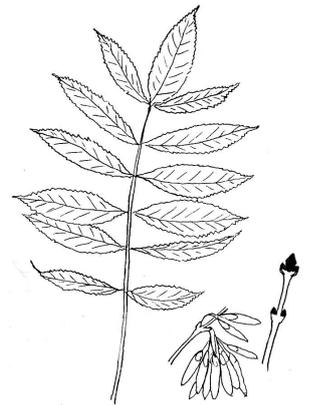
**JANUARY
 2013**

**Issue 70
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Above: Jay, seen regularly in members' gardens recently (see page 12)
 Below: Ash - will it survive ash dieback? (see page 11)



**COPY DATE FOR THE
 NEXT ISSUE**
Friday 5th April 2013

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.

Produced by: Roger Wilding

Photographs: Earthworks (Gomm's Wood), Penny Cullington (fungi) and Roger Wilding (others)

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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.

Chairman's Chat

In the last issue of our newsletter, I referred to the advice I had received that if I couldn't think of anything else to say, I could always rely on the weather as a talking point. On this occasion, so much is happening that I don't have time to even think about the weather.

First of all, we have been debating the rising costs of posting our newsletter to members to whom we cannot deliver by hand, and we have been experimenting with other methods of distribution, as well as reviewing some of the hand delivery rounds. Following the issue of the last newsletter, we produced a trial e-mail version and most of those to whom I sent a copy said that they would be pleased to receive future issues by e-mail. One of the advantages of e-mail distribution is that circulation can take place as soon as the newsletter is complete and has been checked for accuracy, well before the printed version is ready for distribution. We will also be putting a copy of the newsletter on the Wycombe Wildlife Group website, where it can be accessed and read on-line.

The other change affecting our group is John Hoar's decision to step down as Chairman of BBOWT (South Bucks), with whom we share our activities programme. Although John has appealed for someone to take his place, no one has yet come forward, and this means there is now a strong possibility that South Bucks will cease to exist as a local BBOWT group, at least for the time being. Because the local group is only part of a much bigger organisation covering three counties, local BBOWT members will continue to be part of this large thriving organisation, but it does impact on the availability of local events for them to attend. In order to continue to provide on-going events for local BBOWT members, John and the other active members of the South Bucks committee asked if Wycombe Wildlife Group would be prepared to continue to provide an on-going programme of events both at Holtspur and Wycombe, with the members of the South Bucks Committee continuing to assist with the planning and organisation of the programme. The Trustees of Wycombe Wildlife Group unanimously agreed with this proposal, and the two groups have made contingency plans for the new arrangements to come into force, if necessary, at the end of the current season of indoor meetings. BBOWT has agreed to continue to publish the events in the BBOWT Wildlife Diary and, although they will be shown as 'organised by Wycombe Wildlife Group', we all hope they will continue to be regarded by BBOWT members as joint meetings and that, apart from a few administrative changes, they engender a 'business as usual' feeling.

Partly in recognition of the even closer ties between Wycombe Wildlife Group and local BBOWT members that would follow the implementation of the above contingency plans, Wycombe Wildlife Group will be changing the title of its newsletter to "Wycombe and South Bucks Wildlife News". Copies of the newsletter are already made available to BBOWT members who attend the joint meetings, and the latter are being encouraged to sign up for the new e-mail version. The other reason for the change, is the fact that not all members of Wycombe Wildlife Group live in High Wycombe: many live in nearby communities, in all directions from the town, and referring to the group as being based in Wycombe and South Bucks is actually more accurate.

So with this January 2013 issue, we start a New Year, a slightly changed newsletter with various ways of receiving it, and possibly a few administrative changes affecting the future activities programme. Can we cope with such changes? Yes, of course we can: Wycombe Wildlife Group has been coping with changes throughout its existence, and we are still thriving.

I wish all members and other readers of this newsletter a Happy Christmas and New Year.

Roger Wilding

New members

We welcome Jackie Kay and Ruth Youd as new members of Wycombe Wildlife Group.



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.

E-mail copy of newsletter

Did you receive this issue of the newsletter by hand delivery or by post, or did you pick up a copy at one of our events? If so, would you like to receive future issues as soon as they have been finalised, even before the printing and distribution stages have begun? To receive the newsletter by e-mail, please contact us on w.w.group@btopenworld.com

Burnham Beeches walk



On Tuesday 25th September, Martin Woolner led a walk around a small part of Burnham Beeches looking at small life associated with big trees. The walk had been arranged as a follow-up to the talk given by Martin following the WWG AGM in May.

Although the walk was not long, Martin managed to show us lots of interesting things, based on his intimate knowledge of Burnham Beeches and its natural history. We saw fungi, plant galls, and trees which host rare lichens and mosses, and Martin showed us illustrations of unusual invertebrates that have been found in the diversity of habitats in the Beeches. We saw some good specimens of Beefsteak Fungus (*Fistula hepatica*) and Oak Mazegill (*Daedalea quercina*) on Oak trees and Porcelain Fungus (*Oudemansiella mucida*) high up on a Beech tree. We were shown a *Hartigiola annulipes* gall on a Beech leaf, caused by a gall midge; one of the few trees in Britain supporting the Knothole Moss (*Zygodon forsteri*) which can only be seen in Spring; and *Pyrenula nitida*, a very rare lichen only found on five trees in Britain.

At the start of the walk, Martin explained the underlying geology of Burnham Beeches and how the areas with alkaline soil and the areas with acid soil determine the vegetation of different parts of the Beeches. He mentioned the on-going removal

of Rhododendron, which was necessary to protect the Oak trees, as the former is a host species for the disease known as "Sudden oak death".

We were shown examples of the damage caused to young trees by deer and squirrels, and learnt that Beech appears to tolerate such damage better than most species. We saw some British White cattle busy grazing the areas of wood pasture, and we were told these animals were confined to the areas where the grazing was required, by the use of buried electric fences.

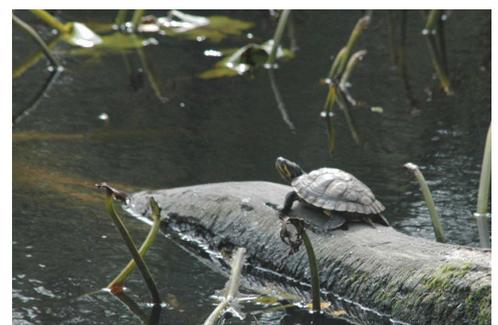
When we passed a large ants' nest, Martin pointed out that the Southern Wood Ant (*Formica rufa*) found in Burnham Beeches did not get there naturally but spread into the wood from a nearby estate where the species had been introduced in the early 20th century as a pest control agent. He added that surveys had shown that the ants have never crossed the road traversing the Beeches from east to west, even though the western half has been closed to traffic for some time. We watched some of the ants that were busy "farming" aphids for the honeydew that they secrete.

Our thanks go to Martin Woolner for leading this interesting walk and for pointing out so many things of interest, which many people would pass by without even noticing.



Left: British White cattle helping to manage Burnham Beeches.

Right: A turtle (an undesirable addition to the wildlife of Burnham Beeches) seen on the walk.



Life in ponds and streams

Our speaker at the joint members' meeting in High Wycombe on Monday, 17th September was Peter Lapsley, an expert on fly-fishing and on water fauna. In his talk, Peter explained the importance of aquatic invertebrates, both as an essential part of the food chain for fish, birds, bats and other invertebrates higher up the food chain, and for monitoring water quality. The main part of the talk covered the five major groups of aquatic flies - flat-winged flies (Diptera), flies with roof-shaped wings (Trichoptera), stoneflies (Plecoptera), dragonflies and damselflies (Odonata) and mayflies (Ephemeroptera).

Flat-winged flies - This group of species is by far the most numerous of all insect orders, including many terrestrial species such as houseflies, dung flies and crane flies. There are, however, over 400 species of aquatic non-biting midges in the UK and they are widespread. Midge larvae range in size from being minute to reaching 2cms in length, and the colour can range from black or grey to fawn, green or red. They are bottom-dwelling and swim with a distinctive figure of eight lashing motion. Like many water invertebrates, they have a 12-month life cycle. The midge pupae are comma shaped and vary as much in size and colour as the larvae.

Flies with roof-shaped wings - These are most commonly known as caddis flies and there are about 190 species in Britain, most with a 12-month life cycle. Some caddis larvae are free swimming, but most species make cases from cut vegetation and small pebbles. Some species crawl ashore to hatch, but most hatch in open water. The adult caddis flies are readily identifiable by their roof-shaped wings, which are covered with small hairs. They often appear to have difficulty in getting airborne. Alder flies (Megaloptera), which can be abundant in May and June, are easily mistaken for caddis flies but they do not have hairs on their wings.

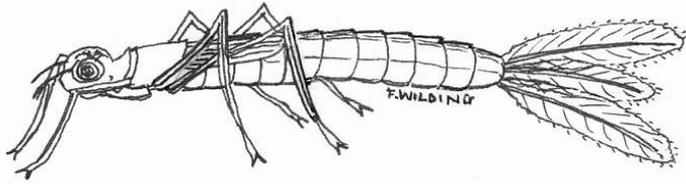
Stoneflies - There are about 30 stonefly species in the UK, all having a 12-month life cycle. Most species are found in Scotland, Wales, Ireland and the North of England: only 2 species are found in Southern England. The nymphs (or creepers) range from 16-33 mm in length and live amongst rocks and gravel on the riverbed, crawling ashore to hatch. Adult stoneflies look very similar to the nymphs, with hard, shiny and heavily veined wings. Some males cannot fly, and females crawl into the water after mating, shedding their eggs as they go.

Dragonflies and damselflies - There are 34 species of dragonfly and damselfly in the UK. Generally dragonflies rest with their wings extended whilst damselflies usually fold their wings back. The eyes of a dragonfly meet on the top of the head, whereas those of damselflies do not. Most damselflies have a 12 month life cycle, but the life cycle of a dragonfly can be one or two years, according to the species.

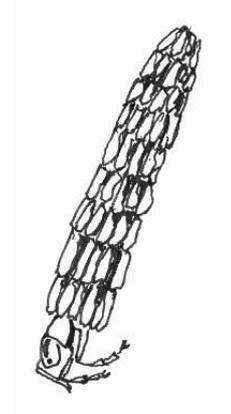
Mayflies - The mayflies are the most visible and recognisable aquatic invertebrates. The nymph of the mayfly *Ephemera danica*, the species found in our chalk streams, is two and a half cms in length and, when they hatch, the females only live 23-36 hours, but long enough to mate and lay eggs. The males, on the other hand, live for up to 10 days in order to mate with as many females as possible before they die. Mayflies are dull coloured, and known as duns, when they first emerge from the water, but they soon moult and turn into a shinier form known as a spinner. Peter referred to the nymphs of the three species in the mayfly family as bottom burrowers, and described other nymph groups within the Ephemeroptera Order as silt crawlers, moss creepers, stone clingers, laboured swimmers and agile darters, in accordance with their varied habitats and behaviour.

Peter finished his talk by referring to problems faced by water invertebrates. He stated that records show a decline of over 65% in fly abundance since the 1950s and that possible causes for this decline could be a combination of pollution by herbicides, pesticides, fertilisers (especially phosphates), detergents, road run-off, siltation, damaging non-native species such as Killer Shrimp and Signal Crayfish, and low flows resulting from water abstraction.

Our thanks go to Peter for giving us this informative introduction to the often out of sight wildlife in our ponds, rivers and streams, and its importance to the condition of our water courses and the wildlife higher up the food chain. Instead of charging a fee for his talk, Peter requested a donation to the Wild Trout Trust, a charity that promotes improvements to rivers and streams for the benefit of trout. The Trust has provided some training for Revive the Wye volunteers and advice on some proposed major improvements to the river margins of the Wye. The Trust takes the view that when a river is good for Trout it is also good for all the other fish species and invertebrates present.



Common Blue Damselfly nymph



Caddis fly larva and case

Fungi walk at Holtspur Bank - 14th October

This walk, which was organised by Derek Bourne, was led by Penny Cullington from the Bucks Fungus Group. Both Derek and Penny were very surprised by the unexpected massive support for this event, which was almost certainly the result of it being publicised in the October issue of BBOWT's Nature Notes e-newsletter.

Although Penny pointed out that fungi were not as plentiful in the area as they ought to be at this time of the year, the large number of forayers, including a lot of sharp-eyed youngsters, certainly found enough species to make the event a satisfying experience for everyone.

Around 50 different species were recorded, including some less common species such as Ringed Conecap (*Conocybe arrhenii*), Pimple Pinkgill (*Entoloma hebes*), Dewdrop Bonnet (*Hemimycena tortuosa*), Pearly Parachute (*Marasmius wynnei*), Yellow Shield (*Pluteus*

chrysophaeus), Wrinkled Shield (*Pluteus phlebophorus*), Smoky Roundhead (*Stropharia inuncta*) and *Tephroclype antracophila*,

Penny was delighted to be able to record an *Agaricus* species new to Bucks. Having taken the fungus concerned home for more detailed examination, Penny identified it as *Agaricus phaeolepidotus*, one of the Yellow Stainer group which are considered to be poisonous because they can cause gastric upsets if eaten. Her initial identification was confirmed by the application of a KOH (potassium hydroxide) solution to the base of the stem, which resulted in a distinctive instant chrome yellow colour reaction.

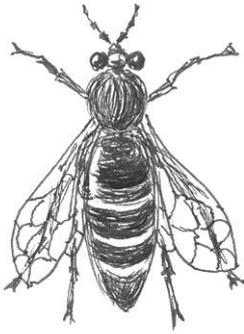
Our thanks go to Derek for organising the event and to Penny for leading the walk, and identifying and recording the fungi being handed to her from all directions at once.



The fungus seen on the walk, which the leader, Penny Cullington, identified as *Agaricus phaeolepidotus* (a new species for Bucks). The second of her two photographs on the right shows the yellow staining caused by the reaction of an application of KOH.



The Honey Bee and its relations



Honey Bee



Hoverfly

The speaker at the joint members' meeting held on Friday 12th October at Holtspur was John Catton, and his subject was the Honey Bee and its relations. John, who has kept bees for 27 years, is the President of Bucks Beekeepers and a member of his local beekeepers' association in Chalfont St Peter. John informed us that there are some 200 species of bee in the UK, including 24 bumblebees, but only one Honey Bee. He told us about the history of beekeeping, and we learnt that the Egyptians kept bees around 650 BC. In the 17th and 18th centuries, bees were kept to produce honey for sweetening purposes. For hundreds of years, beeswax has been used for making candles, which have always been popular because of their lack of smoke, and the nice smell and steady bright flame they produce. The Honey Bee is the only species that produces honey and beekeepers are keen to collect swarms to start new colonies. We were told, however, that whilst a swarm collected in May results in lots of honey, one collected in August doesn't result in any honey. There can be 50,000 Honey Bees in a hive, most of these being female workers, although a small number of males are produced for mating purposes. A queen, who is really just an egg-laying machine, can live for about 4-5 years.

Much of the food we eat comes from plants that have been pollinated by bees, and they increase the yield of self-pollinating crops. In the USA, bees are regularly transported to where they are needed for pollination and, in the UK, DEFRA has valued the benefits provided by bees at around £200 million per annum. Einstein estimated humans would only survive for 4 years in a world without bees. Honey Bees have decreased in numbers by 50% in the last 20 years, and bumblebee numbers are down by 60% since the 1970s. Three species of bumblebee have become extinct in that time. As less pollination reduces plantlife, which in turn affects the numbers of wildlife species that rely on plants for survival, the whole food chain is at risk.

Monoculture is of no use to bees, and fertilisers, loss of habitat, air pollution and climate change have all contributed to bee losses. In recent years, the Varroa mite has had a serious impact on Honey Bee numbers: affected colonies only last 18 months without treatment. 120 million years ago, all plants were green, and were wind pollinated. Although the grasses, which include our cereal crops, still rely on the wind for pollination, most plants have adapted to be colourful and attractive to insects, which they now rely on for pollination.

John went on to talk about the various other bees, wasps, and insects which resemble bees. Bumblebees hibernate in holes in the ground, often in old mouse or vole nests, and are usually seen from March to September: the queen lays up to 200 eggs in individual wax cells. The Tree Bumblebee, which is fairly new to Britain, nests in trees, in bird boxes or in the soffits of houses. There are some 200 solitary bees in the UK, including the Red Mason Bee, the Tawny Mining Bee and the Leafcutter Bee. These do not live in colonies, but when the bees hatch, the large numbers of emerging bees may resemble a swarm. These bees have no sting and are not aggressive. The Mining Bee usually lays its eggs in soft sandy soil, and the Leafcutter Bee uses cut leaves for a nest. The Mason Bee lays its eggs (about 40) in walls and then dies. The young bees emerge the following Spring.

The Narrow-bordered bee hawk moth, which flies in May and June, mimics a bumblebee. The Bee fly is another mimic: it drops its eggs into the nests of solitary bees and the larvae develop as parasites on the solitary bees. Hoverflies, which also resemble bees, have one pair of wings, whereas bees and wasps have two pairs. Many hoverflies lay their eggs in stagnant water. Wasps are carnivores: their nests, which can be up to the size of a football, may contain 500 to 600 hundred wasps. At the end of the season, the queen lays eggs that produce fertile females and males for breeding. Hornets are a larger species of wasp with the same life cycle.

John finished his talk by offering advice to gardeners on how they could help bees. He suggested a range of plants that would provide a source of nectar all year round, adding that growing the recommended plants in clumps or drifts was best. He also suggested using plants, which would attract bees, for hedging and wall cover, and pointed out that growing plants that would cater for foraging bees early and late in the year was particularly valuable. He added that bees needed a

supply of drinking water, suggesting that this need could best be met by providing a dish containing gravel and water.

Our thanks go to John for his informative talk, for reminding us that habitats, plants and pollinators are all interconnected, and for suggesting actions we can take to help this threatened and invaluable group of insects.

John Catton's recommended plants for gardeners

Bee friendly plant calendar

January: *Mahonia*, Hazel, Snowdrop, Winter Aconite

February: *Crocus*, Lenten-rose, Laurustinus (*Viburnum tinus*)

March: Blackthorn, Lesser Celandine, Marsh-marigold, Goat Willow

April: Dandelion, Violet, *Berberis darwinii*, Grape-hyacinth

May: Hawthorn, Apple, Cherry, Californian-lilac (*Ceanothus*)

June: *Cotoneaster*, *Ceanothus*, *Buddleja*, *Escallonia*

July: Blackberry, Broom, Mallow

August: *Fuchsia*, *Hebe*, Ling, Bell Heather

September: Globe Thistle (*Echinops*), Speedwell, Goldenrod

October: Borage, Michaelmas-daisy, *Sedum*

November: *Viburnum tinus*, Bellflower (*Campanula*), *Aster*

December: Christmas-rose, Witch-hazel, *Viburnum tinus*

Some plants for all bees

March and April: Bluebell, Cherry, *Pulmonaria*, Rosemary, *Dicentra*, Apple, Flowering Currant

May and June: *Aquilegia*, Foxglove, *Ceanothus*, Comfrey, Bugle, Thyme, *Cotoneaster*, Sage, Honeysuckle, Chives, Lupin, Jacob's-ladder, *Campanula*

July and August: Borage, Lavender, Cornflower, Catmint, *Echinops*, Heather, *Nasturtium*, Rock-rose, Hollyhock, Scabious, Raspberry, *Delphinium*, Snapdragon

Plants for bees when they most need your help

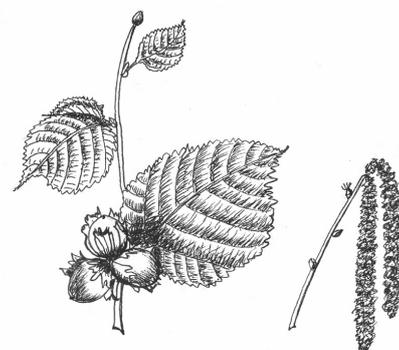
Early forage: Snowdrop, *Crocus*, Winter Aconite, *Mahonia*, Lenten-rose

Late forage: Ivy, Goldenrod, *Sedum*, *Fuchsia*, Dahlia, *Aster*

Garden perimeter plants good for bees

Hedging: Hawthorn, Blackthorn, *Pyracantha*, Privet, Holly

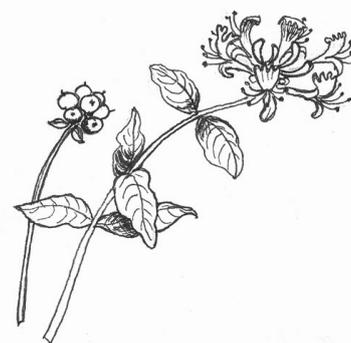
Wall covering: *Cotoneaster*, *Clematis*, Honeysuckle, *Ceanothus*



Hazel



Bluebell



Honeysuckle

A successful day with Earthworks

For several years, Earthworks Conservation Volunteers have supported Wycombe Wildlife Group's management of a small section of Gomm's Wood, near the Cock Lane Cemetery, in the care of Chepping Wycombe Parish Council. The Earthworks team have always enjoyed their annual autumn visit to Gomm's Wood where they can admire the colourful views across the valley towards King's Wood, and see how the site has developed as a result of the previous year's work.

On this occasion, we cut back the scrub at the bottom of the site to create a strip of grassland on the lower side of the path, and also cut back the scrub on both sides of the path leading from the main glade towards the coppice area overlooking the Micklefield valley. The latter action will increase the amount of light reaching the path and should increase its biodiversity.

One of the advantages of having a larger team is that it makes it easier to keep a bonfire constantly fed with the material being cut. It also provides an opportunity to burn any remaining cut material from prior strimming and raking tasks undertaken by Wycombe Wildlife Group on nearby banks and glades. Wycombe Wildlife Group member Derek Sawyer helped with this year's grassland maintenance, sharing the strimming and raking tasks.

One of the Earthworks team's most experienced members is moving to High Wycombe in the near future and he will be taking on the responsibility for organising the annual Earthworks task at Gomm's Wood. He has also expressed an interest in joining Wycombe Wildlife Group.

The following message of thanks was included in an e-mail sent to Wycombe Wildlife Group from Jeff Herschel, Chairman of the Chepping Wycombe Parish Council, following this year's work day with Earthworks:-

"Thank you once again for all you and the Earthworks team from Uxbridge and Hillingdon do, year after year, to help us maintain and improve Kingswood and in particular the area around the cemetery. I noticed last week that you had been busy. Not only do your efforts directly enhance the pleasure our residents gain from walking in Kingswood, but also they make a real contribution to the council's desire to improve and protect our wonderful local environment. Having you and other like-minded individuals on board, promoting and supporting conservation best practice in the parish, provides a real spur for us to try and do better."



Left: Two of the Earthworks team busy cutting scrub in Gomm's Wood.

Right: The Earthworks team look forward to their annual visit to Gomm's Wood and the autumn colours to be seen looking towards King's Wood.

Reviving the Wye - a talk by Allen Beechey on 12th November

Allen Beechey first gave a talk to Wycombe Wildlife Group in early 2008, when he spoke about proposals to set up a project called "Revive the Wye". Two years later, Allen gave a talk about chalk streams to a joint BBOWT (South Bucks) / WWG members' meeting at Holtspur, and on 12th November this year, Allen delivered a talk, again to a joint BBOWT/WWG members' meeting at Trinity United Reformed Church in High Wycombe, to give an update on the considerable progress that has been made by the Revive the Wye project.

Allen first explained his role as the Chalk Streams Project Officer for the Chilterns Conservation Board, where his work includes conservation, advice to landowners, improving access, and education relating to the nine chalk streams in the Chilterns area. He then explained the international importance of chalk streams, which are only found in four countries in the world. He pointed out that 85% of the world's chalk streams are in the UK, where there are 161 in total. With a constant temperature of around 11 degrees all year round, chalk streams provide an excellent habitat for plants such as River Water-crowfoot (*Ranunculus fluitans*), for water invertebrates and for fish. The water in chalk streams, which comes from groundwater in the chalk, tends to be clean and fast-flowing, which should result in a clean gravel riverbed in which both invertebrates and fish can lay their eggs. Upper reaches of chalk streams are often winterbournes, which dry up in summer but flow again when winter rains replenish the aquifers. Many chalk streams are shorter than they used to be, because of water shortages caused by climate change and over-abstraction to meet the increasing demands of the water companies. Allen explained that our chalk streams are a threatened habitat, particularly in urban areas where rivers cater for road run-off, industrial effluent and, in some areas, even surplus sewerage effluent. Flood prevention plans often rely on rivers to deal with water levels beyond the capacity of roadside drains, and on any remaining flood plains for holding water beyond the capacity of the rivers. Allen did reassure us that most of the local sewerage only enters the Wye after treatment at Little Marlow.

Like many chalk streams in urban areas, the Wye suffers from channel modifications and culverting but, despite it being one of the most urban chalk streams in the country, it has a rich diversity of plantlife and wildlife. Water Rails have been seen in

Wycombe and the Wye is the only Chilterns chalk stream in which the presence of Otters has been officially confirmed by the Environment Agency: spraints were found at Kingsmead. Allen pointed out that the large number of Brown Trout (*Salmo trutta*) in the river, together with a plentiful supply of Signal Crayfish (*Pasifastacus leniusculus*), provided sufficient food for the river to support Otters. Other chalk stream fauna to be found in the Wye include the mayfly *Ephemera danica* and the Bullhead (*Cottus gobio*), the only freshwater fish in the Goby Family. The male of the species looks after the eggs, which are laid on the underside of stones, and he looks after the young when they hatch. This species is a predator, but in its turn is predated on by the Brown Trout. Many of the smaller water invertebrates rely on the River Water-crowfoot to provide shelter for breeding and feeding, and effluent from the invertebrates provides fertiliser for the plant to grow strongly. It needs gravel to root in and, as it grows, it helps to keep water levels up and fast flowing, because it acts like a flow deflector. In times of water shortage, this plant species can survive quite a long time in a dried up state, and then return to healthy growth when the water levels rise again.

Allen went on to talk about the setting up of the Revive the Wye Partnership, with representatives of the Chiltern Society, High Wycombe Society, Wycombe Wildlife Group, Wycombe District Council and the Environment Agency, together with the Chilterns Chalk Streams Officer, forming a Steering Group. Much of the work done on the Wye is similar to that done by local groups undertaking work on the other Chilterns chalk streams, but Revive the Wye is the only group to have made approaches to local businesses and involved them in undertaking voluntary tasks in the river. Much of the early work involved litter clearance and, being an urban area, this will remain an ongoing regular commitment. Dealing with invasive weeds is a priority task on the Wye, with volunteers dealing with the removal of Indian (or Himalyan) Balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*) and the Environment Agency dealing with Japanese Knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*). Allen showed a picture of the Balsam alongside London Road before the removal task started, and added that the plant now appears to be under control where the clearance work has taken place.

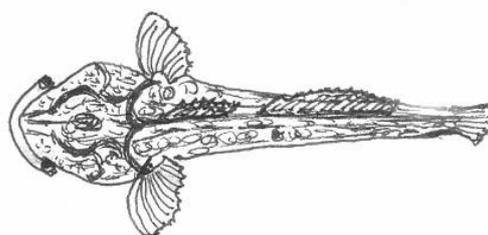
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Allen referred to the habitat enhancement tasks undertaken by Environment Agency staff in the Dyke, at Kingsmead, and at Wooburn. Practical tasks run by the Wild Trout Trust, as well as by the Environment Agency, at Kingsmead, have been used to train volunteers in some of the techniques that can be used for river habitat improvements. Mention was made of some major bank improvement schemes planned for the Rye and Holywell Mead, and the possibility of using funds that might become available for environmental improvements. This latter funding might enable the artificial concrete edges along the river margins at Desborough Recreation Ground to be replaced with natural sloping banks. This would be much safer for children, and enhance the appearance, as well as the wildlife value, of the river margins.

Allen finished his talk with a brief summary of the Water Framework Directive, which he described as the most important piece of legislation to come out of Europe. The legislation requires all rivers to be in good condition by 2027, and failure to achieve this will result in large fines. Interim assessments have shown that, at present, 76% of all our rivers are failing to reach “good” status, and, currently, the quality of the Wye is considered to be poor, due to flow levels, phosphate levels, and fish and invertebrate numbers.

Our thanks go to Allen for his very informative and interesting talk.

Bullhead
(*Cottus gobio*)



Revive The Wye news

Hughenden Stream flows again

When a team of students from Bucks New University undertook a planned litter pick along the footpath between Bellfield Road and Hughenden Avenue on 24th October, they had also planned to remove rubbish from the Hughenden Stream which runs alongside the path. Because the stream had been dry for such a long time, no-one, including myself and others who went along to help with and support the task, thought to check in advance that the stream bed was still dry, which it wasn't: the water had started to flow just where the task was being undertaken, and a lack of suitable footwear prevented some of the rubbish being removed from the stream.

The great news is that the Hughenden Stream is now flowing again from the north side of Church Farm to where it enters the culvert near Morrison's Supermarket. The stretch between Coates Lane and Hughenden Avenue was still only a trickle when last checked in early December, however.

River enhancements alongside Brookbank

Allen Beechey mentioned in his talk on 12th November that the Environment Agency had carried out some habitat improvement works that morning where the Wye runs alongside Brookbank between Wooburn and Cores End. I managed to take the photographs below of the work in progress with the help of BBOWT member and Revive the Wye volunteer Richard Bird who held an umbrella over my head and camera to keep off the rain.

Roger Wilding



Ash dieback

Ash dieback, the latest threat to our trees, has the potential to be as deadly for the Ash as Dutch Elm Disease was for our elm population. Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) is the third most common broadleaved native tree in the UK, and is the predominant species in around 130 hectares of our woodland, as well as being widely found in mixed woodlands and elsewhere throughout the country. It has been estimated that Britain has a total of around 80 million Ash trees.

Ash dieback is caused by *Chalara fraxinea*, the asexual incomplete ascomycete stage of an ascomycete fungus called *Hymenoscyphus pseudoalbidus*. The latter has small fruit bodies which appear on the dead wood of Ash, producing spores which are dispersed by the wind. Where the spores fall on the leaves of an Ash tree, they can germinate to form *Chalara fraxinea*. The latter fungus causes the leaf to wilt, blacken and die, and

can gradually spread through the stem, twig, branch and trunk. The spread of the disease through the tree becomes obvious as first the branches, then the crown of the tree, suffer from dieback, prior to the eventual death of the tree. At present, the problem in Britain appears to be limited to the *Chalara fraxinea* stage, and ash dieback is being referred to solely by that name. The development of the sexual ascomycete *Hymenoscyphus pseudoalbidus* stage could occur as dead wood from trees affected by the asexual stage of the fungus becomes suitable for the development of the spore-bearing fruit bodies, which would then be able to spread the disease far and wide.

Let us hope that action to spot and deal with trees affected by the early stages of ash dieback is effective, and is able to prevent another disaster such as that caused by Dutch Elm Disease.

Member comment

Plants with white instead of their normal colour flowers

In response to the request in the last issue for sightings of any white-flowered forms of wildflowers which are not normally that colour, the following comments were received from Tony Marshall:-

“ I have seen quite a few examples in the last couple of years including gentians and Clustered Bellflower. I get the impression they are becoming more frequent but that may be quite erroneous. The white form *alba* of Common Spotted Orchid (which also lacks all the spots on the leaves and flowers) certainly remains constant for year after year at Little Stocking Meadow, although they may be the same plants rather than the seeds carrying the genes on.”

Are other Balsam species potential thugs?

When Tony Marshall sent me the above comments on white forms of wildflowers he has seen, he also mentioned the view that I had expressed in the last issue that the Small Balsam (*Impatiens parviflora*) did not pose a threat where it has been found growing on shady banks in a small number of locations along the Wye. Tony pointed out that this species is becoming a problem in some local woodland areas. In particular he mentioned Langley's Wood, between Little Kingshill and Holmer Green, where the formerly good natural vegetation (which includes Herb Paris) is being swamped by this alien plant.

I guess this will happen with many of the alien plants that are becoming more common in the UK. I saw a list recently of alien plant species which are being monitored by the PlantTracker project, a collaboration between the Environment Agency, Bristol University and the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology. The list included the Orange Balsam (*Impatiens capensis*) which grows in profusion along the Jubilee River and the Oxford Canal, where it grows amongst the native flora without appearing to cause any problems. It was almost certainly the result of people taking a similar view about Indian Balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*) that allowed it to become the invasive weed it is today. It is important, therefore, that such species are monitored, so that appropriate action can be taken, if and when necessary, to prevent an alien species becoming a problem.

Thanks, Tony, for the comments on both white flowered plants and on Small Balsam.

Roger Wilding

Wildlife observations

August			
18	2 Small Coppers & 4 Gatekeepers	Hazlemere Rec area	
24	Red Admiral nectaring on Creeping Thistle	Hazlemere Rec area	
25	Meadow Brown	Ladies Mile Hazlemere	
31	2 Meadow Browns	Ladies Mile Hazlemere	
September			
3	1 st Robin singing	Amersham Hill Drive garden	
4	Tawny Owl calling	Amersham Hill Drive garden	
7	Brimstone butterfly and Brimstone Moth	Amersham Hill Drive garden	
15	Fox in garden 6 pm	Amersham Hill Drive garden	
15	Nuthatch on birdtable & Chiffchaff in tree	Deeds Grove garden	
17	Red Admiral on Buddleia Small Copper & Red Admiral	Amersham Hill Drive garden Hazlemere Rec area	
19	Common Red Damselfly	Hazlemere Rec area	
25	Jay	Deeds Grove garden	
26	Young Greenfinches in conifer	Deeds Grove garden	
29	Comma	Hughenden	
October			
1	Nuthatch on feeder	Amersham Hill Drive garden	
5	Fox in garden 7.40am	Amersham Hill Drive garden	
7	First Redwings flying over	Deeds Grove garden	
12	Comma in Ivy on house	Amersham Hill Drive garden	
20	Tawny owl calling	Amersham Hill Drive garden	
21	4 Jays, Green Woodpecker & Greater Spotted Woodpecker at same time	Deeds Grove garden	
22	Silver Y moth	Amersham Hill Drive garden	
29	2 Bramblings	Downley	
Up to 4 Jays at a time seen in Deeds Grove garden all month			
November			
26	First Blackcap in garden (then for rest of month)	Amersham Hill Drive garden	
28	Kingfisher along stream	High Wycombe garden	
Several sightings of Little Egrets on the Rye and in Bassetsbury Lane and Bowden Lane gardens reported early in the month.			
Jays and Greater Spotted Woodpecker regular visitors in Deeds Grove garden all month.			
A total of 19 bird species (including Goldfinch, Greater Spotted Woodpecker, Greenfinch, Green Woodpecker, Jackdaw, Magpie, Nuthatch, Starling, Long-tailed Tit, Coal Tit and Wren) regularly seen in a member's garden in Downley. Jays (rare visitors until recently) coming more frequently and Pheasants and Muntjac Deer often seen in adjacent field.			

Joining Wycombe Wildlife Group
 To join our Group, please complete a copy of the form on the right 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.



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 Sort Code: 402417 Account number: 92116685
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