

**WYCOMBE
 and
 SOUTH BUCKS**

**W
 N
 L
 E
 D
 W
 I
 L
 D
 L
 I
 F
 E**

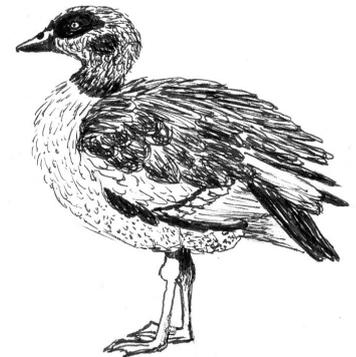
**MAY
 2013**

**Issue 71
 Contents**

Chairman's chat	14
New members	14
Natural history of a Chiltern village	15
Cancellation of the January talk	16
A hole in the ground	16
Managing succession from grassland to woodland	18
Birding in the UK	19
How long is a piece of chalk stream?	21
Focus on Chairborough LNR	22
How environmentally friendly is your garden?	23
Wildlife observations	24
Contact and membership details	24



*Waxwing (above)
 and Egyptian Goose
 (below)
 Both seen in Wycombe
 in Early 2013 (see
 page 24)*



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

Drawings: Frances Wilding

Photographs: Roger Wilding

Printed by : Design & Print, Wycombe District Council.

**COPY DATE FOR THE
 NEXT ISSUE**

**Friday 2nd August
 2013**

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



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.

After an extended winter, spring suddenly sprung. Our flora and fauna has at last started to catch up, following the extended cold weather that they, as well as us, had to put up with. As life once again returns to our gardens and the countryside, we will have to wait and see the full extent of the impact of the long cold spell on our national and local wildlife habitats and species.

Although the majority of Snowdrops were late appearing this year, they had one of the best and longest flowering seasons I can remember. Some were still flowering when the wild Daffodils and Primroses in our garden came into flower. Surprisingly, the shoots of our Fritillaries appeared very early this year, and they started to flower early. I expect many readers will be anxiously looking at their treasured flowering shrubs in their gardens, and waiting to see what has survived and what has been lost.

Having thought how clever the frogs were at not being fooled by the occasional warm day, and thinking that they realised they needed to wait for a real change in the weather before they started mating, they did in fact get it wrong: many of us ended up with lots of frozen frog spawn in our garden ponds. Although a few birds started nest building at the normal time, few got very far, and others didn't appear to be in any hurry. At least the birds knew where to come for a good meal in the cold weather, and we were constantly putting out food for both the regular and occasional visitors.

To help get rid of the winter blues, I wrapped up well and went for a number of walks through the local countryside in February and March, when the weather was cold but dry, and took photographs of views which are often obscured by hedges and foliage later in the year. It was on one of these walks that I photographed the unusual sight of a roadside ice palace in Radnage, created by water from the flooded Wye stream in Bottom Road being splashed onto the roadside hedges by passing cars and then freezing as it dripped off. It is a sight I have never seen before and will probably never see again.

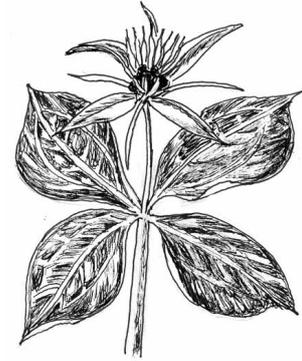
Anyway, that's enough about what has passed. We now need to look forward to what will be probably be a short spring prior to the arrival of an early summer. I hope that the weather allows Nature to recover from its losses and provide us all with plenty to see and do. Perhaps we will have a long period of moderate weather that is not too hot, not too cold or windy, with sufficient rain to satisfy the gardeners and farmers, and keep our chalk streams flowing, but not in the quantities and for the duration we had to put up with last year. Of course, we will have to wait and see what comes.

New members

We welcome Yvonne Mustapha and Richard Bird as new members of Wycombe Wildlife Group.



Natural history of a Chiltern village



Members of Frieth Natural History Society, which has been in existence for 18 years, have a wealth of wildlife to see and enjoy both around their village and within a relatively short driving distance. This became very clear at the joint BBOWT/WWG members' meeting at Holtspur on Friday 14th December 2012, when Juliet Gudge, supported by her husband Alan, gave us an interesting talk, illustrated by some excellent photographs, showing some of their local flora, fauna and fungi that can be seen through the year.

Early spring in the woods around Frieth was illustrated by the very common but attractive Lesser Celandine, the less common Spurge-laurel and the fairly rare Herb Paris. We were told that there is a large patch of the latter in Mousells Wood, that the nearby Adams Wood is good for Primroses and Bluebells, and that Hatchet Wood is good for Wood Anemone. Later in the talk, mention was made of the White Helleborine and Coralroot to be found on the edge of the beechwoods and the Fly Orchid, which often appears in shady places.

Moor End Common, with its SSSI status, received several mentions during the talk on account of the wet, acid soil conditions to be found there, and the presence of the most impressive swallow hole in our area. Ragged-Robin, including a white form, and Cuckooflower grow on the damp soils, and the Common is an excellent place to look for orchids: it supports Southern Marsh-orchid and Heath Spotted-orchid as well as the Common Spotted-orchid. The Early-purple Orchid and Green-winged Orchid can also be found around Frieth.

Mention was made of other orchid species that can be seen without travelling too far from Frieth, including Greater and Lesser Butterfly-orchids, Fragrant, Man, Musk, Military, Monkey and Lady Orchids. Within a 14 mile radius of

Frieth, there is the only UK site for a hybrid between the Lady Orchid and the Monkey Orchid and the only UK site for the Fringed Gentian. The very rare and highly protected Red Helleborine also has a site within this 14 mile radius. Both the Autumn and Chiltern Gentian can be seen on Watlington Hill, along with many other chalk grassland species.

Butterflies were well covered in the talk: from the species frequently seen in gardens such as Speckled Wood, Comma, Peacock, Orange Tip, Holly Blue and Brimstone to the Marbled White, Dingy and Grizzled Skipper, Green Hairstreak, Small Copper, and Common, Chalkhill and Adonis Blue on grassland sites. The rare Small Blue and Duke of Burgundy are found in a few locations not too far away but some of the rarer species have particular habitat and larval food plant requirements. Less frequent species such as Silver-washed Fritillary, Purple Emperor, White-letter Hairstreak and Painted Lady were also mentioned.

Moths received a good coverage in the talk and we were shown excellent photographs of the Mother Shipton, Larger Emerald, Buff Tip, Leopard Moth, Maiden Blush, Elephant, Lime, Poplar, Eyed, Privet and Hummingbird Hawk Moths and of the larvae of the Elephant Hawk Moth and Emperor Moth. The final moth photo was of a Jersey Tiger, which has been recorded twice during moth-trapping events in Frieth.

Roadside verges were also mentioned as a place to look for interesting plants, including Common Spotted-orchid, and Bee and Pyramidal Orchids. The verge approaching Fingest from the east was singled out as being a particularly good habitat supporting Broomrapes and Dragon's-teeth. A visit to Lodge Hill was recommended to see Biting Stonecrop and Wild Candytuft, looking for the latter where the soil has been disturbed by rabbits.

(contd on next page)

(contd from previous page)

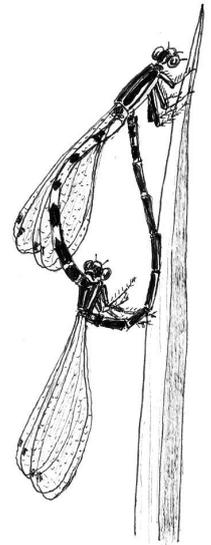
Garden ponds got a mention for their support of dragonflies and damselflies and we were shown some excellent photos of a Broad-bodied Chaser, Southern Hawker, Emperor Dragonfly, Banded Demoiselle and Common Blue Damselfly, covering mating, egg laying and the emergent stages of their life cycle.

Mention was made of the regular tasks undertaken by Frieth Natural History Society in Hatchets Wood, where a chalk pit is managed as a nature reserve. After finding a nest and other signs of dormice in Hatchet Wood, nest boxes were put up and, every year, these are taken down, cleaned and put up again in April ready for re-use.

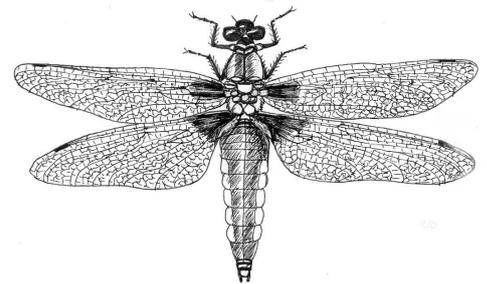
Having covered the local flora and fauna, Juliet rounded off her talk with a mention of a few of the fungi regularly found in and around Frieth, including Giant Puffball, Hedgehog Puffball, Jelly Ear, King Alfred's Cakes, Oyster Mushroom and Fly Agaric. The rare resupinate fungus Cobalt Crust is found in Adams Wood.

In thanking Juliet for giving the talk, John Hoar mentioned the practice of following up talks with a relevant walk, and dropped a hint that it would nice if a follow-up walk could be arranged in Frieth.

Right:
Common Blue
Damselflies
mating



Below: Broad-
bodied
Chaser



January 2013 talk postponed until November 2013

The decision as to whether or not to hold the January members' meeting was left until late in the day because the snow conditions appeared to vary around Wycombe. When Angus Idle, our speaker, said he wouldn't be able to drive along his road, it decided the matter and we emailed

members and supporters, for whom we had email addresses, to let them know.

Angus has offered to give his talk on cells at the next available slot at the High Wycombe venue which will be in November.

A hole in the ground – a talk by Rodney Sims at Holtspur on Friday, 8th February 2013

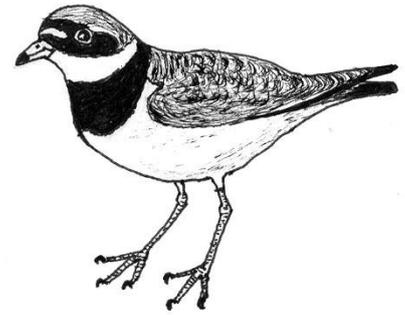
The hole in the ground, referred to in Rodney Sims' talk, first appeared when a small company began excavating chalk near Bulbourne to produce cement. Following a number of takeovers, the cement company became bigger, as did the size of the excavations and the machinery used. The exposed chalk began to reveal interesting geological features and the fossilised remains of mammals from earlier warm climatic periods came to light, resulting in the site being accorded SSSI status. Some 200 boxes of small mammoth, rhinoceros and hippopotamus remains, plus many items too large to go in boxes, were collected from the site. Responding to an appeal from the local museum for help in sorting all this material, Rodney became involved in an archaeological site, which what was to become, in due course, one of BBOWT's most important nature reserves.

At this point in his talk, Rodney referred to Graham Atkins, an employee of the cement company, who was the driving force in creating the College Lake reserve that we see today. Graham and a few other interested naturalists recognised the conservation value of the land around the cement workings. Initially, an area north of the railway line, containing an old chalk quarry, in which potash-rich flue-dust deposits had been dumped, became the Pitstone Fen Nature Reserve, supporting masses of unusually large Common Spotted-orchid plants. We were told how Graham, being a very persuasive individual, managed to get agreement to develop a new nature reserve on land not required for the cement workings, and the creation of the College Lake Nature Reserve began. He managed to salvage items such as crates in which large machinery was delivered and anything else that he thought might have a use.

(contd on next page)

(contd from previous page)

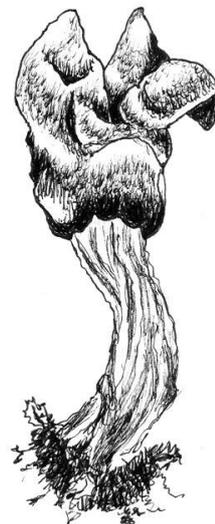
The first bird hides were made from secondhand materials and, supplemented by the donation of a large number of metal drums from another local firm, saved wood was used to create three large nesting rafts. These needed to be covered with large amounts of shingle, and Graham managed to talk the cement company into providing enough shingle not only for this purpose but also to create a shingle bank: the company even provided the large plastic membrane needed for the latter. A buffer zone (30 feet wide by the time it had been measured by Graham's long strides) was created between the cement workings and the area set aside as a nature reserve, and over 30,000 trees were planted around the perimeter of the reserve. When the company needed to extract more chalk from an area nearer the hill, Graham suggested that the turf be removed and transported to the nature reserve to conserve the chalk flora. Laying the turf (each measuring 4 x 6 x 1.5 feet) was not the easiest of jobs. To help manage the reserve, a flock of Jacobs Sheep was introduced.



As well as covering the history of College Lake, Rodney's presentation included photographs illustrating some of interesting flora and fauna, which have gradually colonised the reserve. The Bee Orchid was an early coloniser and Great-crested Grebes soon moved in and raised their young. Dragonfly species included Black-tailed Skimmer and Ruddy Darter and butterflies included the Green Hairstreak and White-letter Hairstreak. Moths seen included the Leopard Moth and the Small Elephant Hawkmoth and bird species on the reserve soon included Lapwings, Kestrels and Ringed Plovers. A number of fungi have been recorded on the reserve, including Hairy Earthtongue, White Saddle, Elfin Saddle and *Clavaria* spp. An arable weed project, started in 1988, has gradually resulted in rare plants such as Thorow-wax, Pheasant's-eye, Field Penny-cress and Wild Candytuft being introduced.



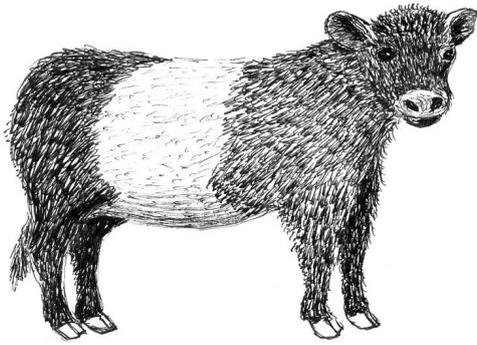
The College Lake reserve we see today is very much the result of the successes in the early years, but when the cement company ceased their operations there, their responsibility for restoring the land they had used provided an opportunity to make further large-scale improvements. Graham Atkins took this opportunity to suggest that the land be turned into one large nature reserve and drew up plans for consideration. The work was put out to tender but no-one seemed interested in undertaking the work. Eventually, Graham managed to find someone prepared to take on the job and the task was completed. Since then, many changes have taken place, including the building of the visitors' centre.



Our thanks go to Rodney for giving us this talk on the development of College Lake and to Graham Atkins and the other enthusiastic volunteers mentioned in the talk, without whose efforts we would not have this wonderful nature reserve to visit and enjoy. Those of us who attended this talk when it was delivered at a Wycombe Wildlife Group meeting held at the Environment Centre on Holywell Mead in 2009 were more than happy to hear the story of College Lake for a second time.

Rodney has offered to give us a follow-up guided talk around the reserve in June, when the rare arable weeds should be at their best. We look forward to this visit.

Top: Ringed Plover
Middle: Thorow-wax
Bottom: Elfin Saddle



Belted Galloway cattle prove their worth at Coombe Hill

Managing succession from grassland to woodland - a talk by Neil Harris on 11th March 2013



Fringed Gentian

Neil Harris took up the post of Estate Warden at Hughenden in 1991, having previously been the warden of the National Trust's Wicken Fen Nature Reserve in Cambridgeshire. When he first came to Wycombe, Neil regularly attended planning meetings of the then Wycombe Urban Wildlife Group. After 13 years as Estate Warden at Hughenden, Neil took on the role of Property Manager there for a while, before taking on the role of Gardens and Countryside Manager. Now, as Head Ranger for the Chilterns Countryside and West Wycombe, he is part of a team of seven responsible for the management of some 3,000 acres of National Trust land and properties in Bradenham, West Wycombe, Whiteleaf, Pulpit Hill and Coombe Hill.

Neil's talk considered factors influencing natural succession in grasslands and woodlands and management of this succession for wildlife and people. The first half of his talk covered Coombe Hill, a Chiltern Escarpment viewpoint that attracts large numbers of visitors each year, 45% of whom bring dogs. A bridleway brings horses and riders through the site, and families come here for recreation and picnics. Coombe Hill is the only site in the country for the Fringed Gentian, and this plant and other chalk grassland flora require management, which is best achieved by grazing. Sheep have been used, but they tend to be chased by dogs, resulting in some fatalities each year. Dartmoor ponies were used and they did an excellent job and could cope with the dogs, but they proved to be a nuisance to those trying to enjoy a picnic, and to horses and riders. Belted Galloway cattle, on the other hand, have proved they can get on with their job ignoring both dogs and people. Not all conservation tasks can be undertaken by grazing animals, so tractors and a range of other machinery are used as necessary. A lot of work, particularly scrub bashing, is undertaken by volunteers, including those attending green gym work sessions, and Coombe Hill is in a higher level

stewardship scheme. The National Trust have a policy of encouraging children to get out into the countryside and with this in mind, trails, picnic and play areas have been created at Coombe Hill to make it a location attractive to families with young children.

In the second half of his talk, Neil spoke about the Bradenham area. The manor house and most of Bradenham village belong to the National Trust, and there is a large expanse of both chalk grassland and woodland nearby which is in the care of the Trust. Mention was made of the recent reintroduction of the Duke of Burgundy butterfly to the area. Neil mentioned that the local beech trees are not doing very well and predicted that our local woods would comprise a wider mix of species in the future, as they would have done in earlier times. The grassland areas below the woods are on poor soil, which makes them good for native plants. Neil gave us a detailed account of how an area of former chalk grassland, planted with conifers at a time when this was encouraged by Forestry Commission policies and grants, had been restored to a chalk grassland site. The whole conifer plantation had been clear felled using large scale tree felling machinery which sawed through the trunk, removed the side branches and positioned the cut material ready for chipping. By using the road that was made when the MoD bunker was built at Walters Ash, it was possible to do the chipping on site and bring in large vehicles to remove the 1600 tons of wood chippings produced. The sale of these by the contractor enabled him to undertake all the woodland clearing for a mere £250 per hectare. A stump grinder was used to remove all the tree roots and the cleared area was grazed, first by sheep and then by cattle, to remove the vigorous early coloniser plants, leaving a grassland habitat suitable for the returning chalk grassland flora. The clearance also opened up good views over the valley.

(contd on next page)

(contd from previous page)

At the end of his talk, it was announced that Neil would be leading a walk on Wednesday, 3rd July, starting from the National Trust's car park in Smalldean Lane at 10am and finishing by 12.30pm. This walk would give us an opportunity to see part of the area referred to in the second half of the talk.

Our thanks go to Neil for his talk and we look forward to the follow-up walk.



Duke of Burgundy

Birding in the UK

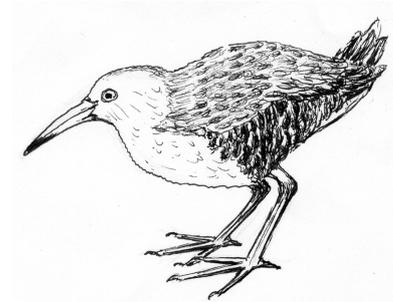
Over the years we have had lots of bird talks, but none quite like the one at Holtspur on Friday 12th April. Although the talk covered birdwatching sites in many parts of the country, many of the sites mentioned were much nearer to home. Gerry Studd, our speaker, told us that he was only an amateur photographer but everybody thought his photographs were brilliant. What made the talk so different was hearing recordings of the calls or songs of the birds as they appeared on screen.

Gerry told us he was an ex-teacher and he started his talk by giving us a lesson in birdwatching terms. We were taught the difference between birders and twitchers and how to recognise a dude (someone who has all the right gear but not much knowledge about birds). We also learnt about life lists, and what it means to tick, dip and become gripped off. Around a hundred different species were illustrated during the talk, from the very familiar to rare visitors, which attract the twitchers from far and wide. Mention was made of one twitcher who covers 30,000 miles a year to tick off additions to his life list.

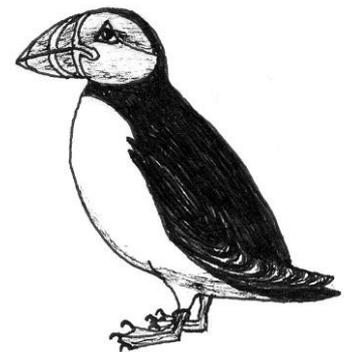
The talk took the form of a birding trip around the UK starting at Gibraltar Point near Skegness where the species illustrated included Oystercatcher, Black-tailed Godwit, Jack Snipe, Grey Plover, Curlew, Whooper Swan, Short-eared Owl, Tree Sparrow, Redstart and Red-crested Pochard.

We moved on to Titchwell Marsh in Norfolk to see and hear Water Rail, Avocet, Ruff, Spotted Redshank, Redshank and Yellowhammer. We were told that Cranes were now breeding at Lakenheath Fen in Suffolk and that the Golden Oriole used to be found there: although it is still on the species list for the reserve, it is now rarely seen there. The site is, however, a good place to see Bearded Tit and Bittern. At Minsmere in Suffolk, Tree Creeper, Pochard, Smew, Barnacle Goose and even the occasional Flamingo can be seen.

In our talk we next travelled to Yorkshire where we saw Dipper, Whitethroat and Water Rail and going northwards to Northumberland, we saw Puffin, Arctic Tern and Razorbill on the Farne Islands, but we took a trip to Northern Ireland to see Hooded Crow and Chough.



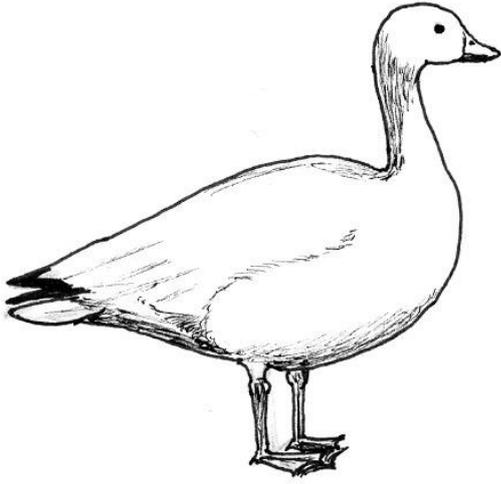
Water Rail



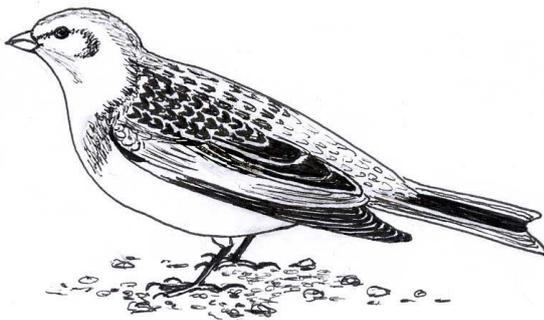
Puffin

(contd on next page)

(contd from previous page)



Ross's Goose



Snow Bunting



Shoveller

At Moor Green Lakes Nature Reserve, near Sandhurst, we encountered Great Crested Grebe, Great Grey Shrike, Greater Spotted Woodpecker and Redpoll. Amongst the more familiar species mentioned when talking about the local Spade Oak Nature Reserve, we were shown a photograph of Ross's Goose, which is occasionally seen there. Although this non-native species is probably an escapee from a collection, Gerry expressed the view that, with so many non-native species becoming established in the wild, perhaps the time has come to accept them as wild bird species, in line with the practice adopted for other groups of fauna and flora. We heard about the excitement caused when a Snow Bunting turned up at the Tring Reservoirs, and, when covering Burnham Beeches, mention was made of the Mandarin Duck. At Stocker's Lake we saw the Ring-necked Parakeet, Wigeon and Shoveler and saw a Lesser Spotted Woodpecker and Hobby at Maple Lodge Nature Reserve. Gerry finished his talk by talking about garden birds and the value of the information gained from the annual Big Garden Birdwatch. There were 590,000 responses this year and the gathered and collated data is very valuable to the RSPB for monitoring species that are in decline and those which are doing well. At the beginning of the talk we heard that some 260 species of bird are regularly seen in the UK, but that nearly 600 have been recorded, At the end of the talk we were told there are 52 species considered to be endangered in the UK and a further 126 species are giving cause for concern.

We really are grateful to Gerry Studd for giving us such a delightful and interesting talk, which I am sure we will all long remember.

This talk was the last event to be arranged by BBOWT (South Bucks) but BBOWT members were assured that there would be a continuing programme of indoor and outdoor events, including talks both at Holtspur and in High Wycombe. Although responsibility for these future events would pass to Wycombe Wildlife Group, those that have been responsible for the organisation of the BBOWT (South Bucks) programme will continue to be involved in the planning and organisation of future programmes. John Hoar was thanked for all his work for BBOWT (South Bucks) over his 15 years as Chairman.

How long is a piece of chalk stream?

There is no easy answer to this question, as the length of a chalk stream can vary from year to year and at different times of the same year. The streams are fed from groundwater, stored in the chalk aquifers, which emerges from springs along their course. When we have wet winters and dry summers, the upper reaches of chalk streams are expected to flow as a result of the winter rainfall, but to dry up during the summer. The stretches where this happens are referred to as winterbournes.

Although part of the Hughenden Stream is referred to as a winterbourne, the flow on this stream is unpredictable and in some years there is a continuous flow throughout the summer from Church Farm at Hughenden to the centre of High Wycombe and in other years the whole stream can dry up and possibly stay dry for several years. The presence of a pumping station on the river near the bottom of Cryers Hill also affects the flow of the stream, but this is where the water to meet the needs of the Hughenden residents comes from. This winter the Hughenden Stream has had, for the first time for many years, a continuous flow from beyond the pumping station.

The Wye normally has an all-year continuous flow from West Wycombe to the Thames. The upper stretches of the river act as a winterbourne with a

flow from a small coppice near Cockshoot Farm about half way along Chorley Road. This year, however, the stream has been flowing from Inver Farm off Bottom Road in Radnage. The stream has flowed across the bottom of Hatch Lane and continued south-east down Bottom Road where in very cold weather the water was splashed up onto the roadside hedges where it froze, creating a wonderful display of icicles on both sides of the road. Although the water in chalk streams remains at a constant temperature, this clearly doesn't apply to water splashed out of the streambed and exposed to sub-zero temperatures.

Another impressive sight this year was the Hamble Brook, the only other chalk stream within Wycombe District. The flow on this stream was continuous from the Turville end of Watery Lane all the way through Skirmett and Hambleden to the Thames at Mill End. The whole width of most of Watery Lane was covered by flowing water and the depth increased as more and more water joined the stream from springs along the way. Several locations along the road to Hambleden were flooded where side streams from the surrounding higher ground came down to join the main stream. The streambed in many places was too narrow to accommodate all the flowing water, resulting in some extensive flooding of several fields.



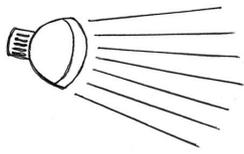
Unusual views of Wycombe District's chalk streams in March 2013

Top left: Water from the Wye flowing along Bottom Road, Radnage, that froze as it dripped from the roadside hedges after being splashed up by passing cars.

Bottom left: The Hughenden Stream near the pumping station

Bottom right: The Hamble Brook flowing down Watery Lane just outside Turville.





Spotlight on:- Chairborough Local Nature Reserve



Hairy Violet (Viola hirta)



In this first of a series of articles on local sites of wildlife interest, we take a look at a location in which WWG has had an ongoing interest since our Group was formed nearly 25 years ago.

During discussions at meetings, which led to the formation of the Wycombe Urban Wildlife Group in 1989 (Wycombe Wildlife Group from 1997), it was agreed to identify suitable areas of wildlife interest within the town that would benefit from management. Following a site survey, Roger Wilding produced a report on an area of public owned land known as the Chairborough Open Space, describing the various habitats on the site and listing the species he and Frances had recorded there. After getting permission from WDC to work on the site, it became the main location for our Group's work parties for many years. The Group was awarded First Prize in the WDC Environmental Awards in 1991 for its work at Chairborough. Following its designation as High Wycombe's first Local Nature Reserve in 1992, overall management of the site became the responsibility of the WDC Ranger Service (which became the Woodland Service in 2009). Roger was appointed Voluntary Warden for the reserve and has continued to undertake species surveys there and help with tasks such as the autumn management of the grassland areas.

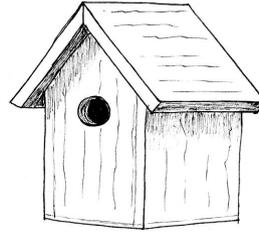
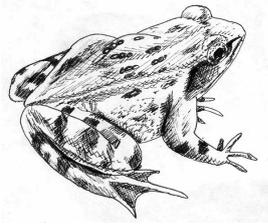
So what is so special about Chairborough LNR. I suppose it is because it is a wildlife oasis surrounded by a mix of industrial and housing areas. It is a delightful location to walk through and to work in, and can be very peaceful despite its urban location. Its only downside is a lack of green corridors linking it to other local sites of wildlife interest. Despite this latter factor, it is amazing what can be found on this reserve.

The central part of the site consists of an area of regularly mown amenity grassland. On the south side of the reserve there is an unusual woodland area consisting mainly of mature Hawthorn trees with a few Oaks. Part of this area has been planted with other tree species to create a mixed woodland. On the north side of the reserve, the slopes are a mix of Hawthorn and Dogwood scrub and areas that have been cleared and maintained as chalk grassland. Some of the higher ground on the east side was cleared and replanted with Ash, Wild Cherry and Whitebeam as part of the Wycombe Woodlands Project and has developed into young mixed woodland. Some scrub and open areas have been retained along the top boundary where the damp clay enables unexpected species such as Dittander and Reed Canary-grass to survive in a spot they have occupied since well before the site became a nature reserve. The reserve has always been a good place to look for violets, and Common and Early Dog-violets, Hairy Violet and Sweet Violet (including the white form) can be found.

The site supports nearly 200 plant species and, over the years, 30 bird species and 23 butterfly species have been recorded.

The best way to find out more about the reserve is to obtain a copy of the free leaflet containing a map and description from Wycombe Library or download a copy from the WDC website <http://www.wycombe.gov.uk/council-services/environment/conservation/woodland-and-nature-conservation-sites/chairborough.aspx> and go for a walk there. Late July is often a good time, when the grassland flowers are at their best.

How environmentally friendly is your garden?



Count up how many of the following 30 statements apply to your garden. The higher your score, the better your garden is for wildlife and the environment. However, it is not possible for everyone to do everything listed for a variety of reasons. So to avoid penalising those with smaller gardens, calculate your score as a percentage of the total number of statements that would be feasible within your garden. If you are pleased with your score, let us know.

1. Supplementary food is regularly put out for birds.
2. There is a supply of clean water for birds to drink and bathe.
3. A variety of bird food is put out to attract a range of species.
4. A variety of food dispensers cater for the needs of different bird species.
5. There are plenty of natural nesting sites for garden birds.
6. The garden has nest boxes, which meet the needs of different bird species.
7. Bird feeding areas are cleaned regularly.
8. Nest boxes are cleaned every year.
9. Some nest boxes are kept in place in winter to provide somewhere warm for small birds to roost in cold weather.
10. Some materials that might be of use to birds for constructing or lining their nest are left around the garden.
11. Bats visit the garden.
12. Hedgehogs visit the garden.
13. Log piles have been placed in undisturbed areas of the garden to provide hibernation sites for hedgehogs and/or habitats for invertebrates.
14. Leaves and twigs have been left under hedges and/or in undisturbed areas of the garden to provide hibernation sites for small mammals and invertebrates.
15. There is a pond in the garden.
16. The garden has a pond that does not contain fish (which will eat tadpoles and other aquatic wildlife).
17. Ponds in the garden have a gently sloping edge to enable mammals, such as hedgehogs, to get out if they accidentally fall in.
18. The garden has a pond containing some native species of oxygenating plant, and native plant species, suitable for the various water levels of the pond.
19. The garden has a damp or marshy area containing some appropriate native plant species.
20. Amphibians regularly breed in the garden.
21. There is a rockery or rock garden made with sustainable materials.
22. As much garden waste as possible is recycled by composting.
23. Chemical insecticides, fungicides or weed killers are not used in the garden.
24. Butterflies and moths are regularly seen in the garden.
25. The garden contains garden* and/or wild plants that attract butterflies and moths.
26. Bees, hoverflies and other insects are regularly seen in the garden.
27. The garden contains garden* and/or wild plants that are attractive to bees and other beneficial insects.
28. Some flower seed heads are left uncut until spring.
29. The garden contains some native wild flower species grown from seed or obtained from other wildflower gardens or nurseries.
30. Water butts are used to collect as much rainwater as possible for garden use.

* Garden plants with single, as distinct from double, flowers provide the nectar and pollen which our beneficial insects are seeking and are just as valuable as native flowers for attracting them into our gardens.

Wildlife observations

December 2012

8 December and 10 December Common Lizard basking in the noonday sun in a garden in Combe Rise, Sands.

January 2013

3 January Bat flying over riverside garden in Bassetsbury Lane, High Wycombe.
6 January Song Thrush singing in Deeds Grove garden.
7 January Blackbird singing in Deeds Grove garden.
Early January Redpolls and a Blackcap in Bourne End garden.
Late January Goldcrest seen hopping around a hedgerow near Lane End.

February 2013

9 February 12-15 Waxwings on Crab Apple tree in Shaftesbury Street, High Wycombe.
16 February Robin starting to build a nest in a "sparrow hotel" in Deeds Grove garden.
Song Thrushes and Blackbirds singing in Deeds Grove garden.

March 2013

1 March 2 Egyptian Geese courting in tree on the edge of the Rye.
5 March Brimstone butterfly in Amersham Hill Drive garden.
6 March First Frogs in Amersham Hill Drive garden.
8 March First frog spawn in Amersham Hill Drive garden.
Robin still building a nest in the "sparrow hotel" in Deeds Grove garden, but getting confused over which of the three nesting compartments he is using.
Blackbird starting to build in Deeds Grove garden.

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.



Contacting Wycombe Wildlife Group

Postal correspondence
The Chairman,
Wycombe Wildlife Group,
c/o 129 Deeds Grove,
High Wycombe, Bucks, HP12 3PA

Telephone
01494 438374

e-mail
w.w.group@btopenworld.com

website
www.wycombewildlifegrp.co.uk

Please enrol me as a member of Wycombe Wildlife Group

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

EITHER Payment by bank standing order

ToBank
.....Branch
Address:.....
.....

NEW standing order instruction:

Account to be debited (your account details)

Sort code: Account number:

Account name:

Beneficiary bank and payee details

HSBC 1 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.