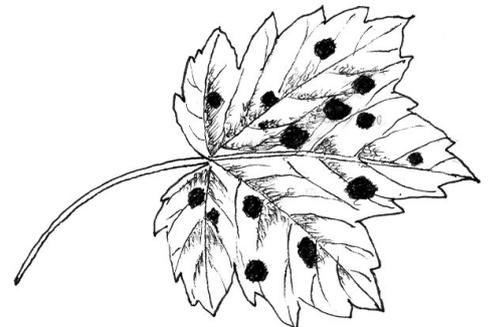


Great Burnet (*Sanguisorba officinalis*)



Jelly Ear (*Auricularia auricula-judae*)

Sycamore Tarspot (*Rhytisma acerinum*)



## Issue 76

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### COPY DATE FOR THE NEXT ISSUE

Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> April  
 2015

**Wycombe Wildlife News** is published 3 times a year to promote the Group and wildlife issues, and inform members and the public of its activities.

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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.

**WYCOMBE  
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 SOUTH BUCKS**

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**JANUARY  
 2015**



#### **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.

## Chairman's Chat

The time between newsletters seems to get shorter with every issue: this may be linked to the widely held view that time passes more quickly as you get older, but it is more likely to be a result of leaving the preparation of the newsletter until the last minute, rather than planning the content of and preparing items for the next issue earlier.

On this occasion I have received an article based on a two year garden bird survey, and an interesting report by a relatively new member, about October's fungus foray at Holtspur Bank; the first she had attended. These items, together with reports of our recent talks and a few news items, have provided plenty of material for this issue, enabling the newsletter to be completed ahead of schedule. Although this should provide plenty of time to get the newsletter printed and distributed before Christmas, this aim can so easily be affected by circumstances beyond my control. So, I wish all our readers a Happy Christmas and New Year, and, for anyone reading the newsletter after the festive season, I hope you had an enjoyable Christmas and wish you all the very best for 2015.

We have some interesting talks and other activities planned in the coming months, and I hope that as many of you as possible will be able to attend them.

Roger Wilding

## Event cancellation policy

Very occasionally, it proves necessary to cancel a planned event. This has happened in the past when snow and icy roads have prevented indoor meetings from taking place, and in February 2014, we had to cancel a planned walk around Spade Oak Lake and back along the Thames Path, because of serious flooding.

Wycombe Wildlife Group's policy, if it is decided to cancel an event, is to notify as many members and supporters, for whom we have an email address, as possible. Otherwise, we consider the onus must be on anyone planning to attend one of our events to get in touch with the person shown as the contact for the event, if they think there is a possibility of it being cancelled, to confirm whether or not it is taking place.

Please bear in mind that a decision to cancel an event is not taken unless considered to be absolutely necessary, and that such a decision may be left to a late stage in some circumstances.



## Scottish Wildcats in Berkshire!



We invited Nick Shelley from the Berkshire College of Agriculture (BCA) to our September meeting to speak to us about the BCA's animal collection, which is used in connection with the animal management courses run by the College.

Nick explained that he had always had an interest in animals, and that he had worked with them since the age of 18. He spent two years at Sparsholt College working with primates, before he took up his present employment with BCA. His current work involves both looking after the animals in the College's collection and lecturing on the courses. Nick's love of animals came over very clearly in his talk.

The BCA occupies a 400 acre estate near Burchett's Green in Berkshire, and whilst most of its courses used to be related to agriculture and horticulture, animal management courses now make up about two thirds of the college studies. Core animal care covers sheep, poultry, pigs and llamas, but there is an increasing focus on exotic invertebrates, reptiles, and small mammals, and on British wildlife.

As well as contributing to the College's animal management training needs, the British wildlife collection breeds and releases scarce species into the wild. We were informed that 18 Polecats had recently been released, and that a number of Red Squirrels were to be released on Brownsea Island. Nick said that he would very much like to expand the range of rare British species, and hopes that it will be possible to add Great Bustards and Natterjack Toads to the collection.

We were informed that BCA is the only college in the world to keep Scottish Wildcats (*Felix sylvestris*), and that this is the only mammal species in the world that

cannot be tamed. The species is unique to Britain, and is only found in the Scottish Highlands.

Like many domestic cats, Scottish Wildcats play with food before eating it. The latter eat all of their prey, including the bones. They have broad jaws, and razor sharp claws which retract to keep them sharp. Unlike domestic cats, the wildcat hisses and spits. We also heard that the species is getting smaller by evolution.

Whilst the Scottish Wildcat does suffer from poaching, the main threat to its survival is hybridisation. The species can interbreed with feral domestic cats and the numerous hybrid wildcats that already exist. Nick showed us a very complex identification key that he had been developing to help determine whether a wildcat is a true wildcat or a hybrid: he added that his key had caused him a few problems, when it showed that a number of wildcats in collections were hybrids. He went on to say that a comprehensive DNA survey, using blood samples, was the only really effective way of identifying pure bred wildcats, and that the only way of protecting the species from the hybridisation threat would be to establish strong colonies on uninhabited Scottish islands, where interbreeding could be prevented.

There was considerable interest expressed at the end of the talk when Nick indicated that it should be possible to arrange a follow-up visit to BCA to see the animal collection, including the Scottish Wildcats. It was agreed that WWG should take up Nick's offer of arranging such a visit at a convenient time. We are very grateful to Nick for his talk, and we look forward to being able to visit the College in the summer to see the animals.

### Footnote

Those who watched BBC1's Countryfile programme on Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> November will have had a preview of some of BCA's British animal collection, when John Craven went to see the Polecats and Pine Martens, which had been bred at the College for release into the wild. The Scottish Wildcats appeared briefly on the programme, but John Craven and the camera crew wisely stayed at a safe distance.

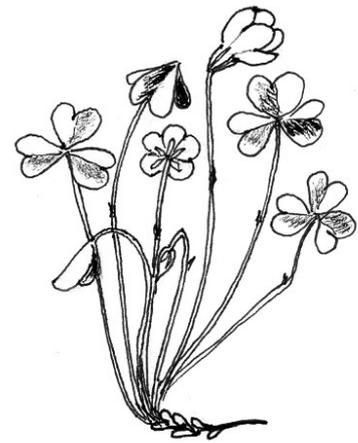


Right: Pine Marten (*Martes martes*)



## Keeping Woods Alive

Left: Wood Anemone  
(*Anemone nemorosa*)



Right: Wood-sorrel  
(*Oxalis acetosella*)

**K**eeping Woods Alive was the title of the talk about the Woodland Trust given to us by Mike Hyde, the local voluntary speaker for the Trust, at our October meeting.

The Woodland Trust was formed in 1972 by Kenneth Watkins, who was concerned about the loss of ancient woodlands. With his wife and friends, he began to purchase woods in SW England in order to preserve them. After about five years, this infant Trust expanded, with the aim of protecting woodland throughout the UK. Today the organisation has over 220,000 members and protects over 1,000 sites covering some 73 square miles. The Trust's largest holding is the Glen Finglas Estate in the Trossachs, covering over 12,000 acres. Nearer to home, the Heartwood Forest, which is being created at Sandridge near St Albans, will cover some 860 acres. The Jubilee Woods Project resulted in 60 sites being identified for the creation of new woodlands of at least 60 acres in size, in addition to many smaller woods being planted on sites across the UK. The rate of woodland purchases by the Trust has reduced, mainly because of the rising costs of managing the woodlands already in their care.

The aims of the Trust are to save as much of our ancient woodland as possible, to conserve the woods they own, and promote wildlife diversity within them, whilst preserving the right to unrestricted access within their woods other than in exceptional circumstances, such

as where there are dangerous trees or endangered plants.

Despite all the efforts of the Trust, we are still one of Europe's least wooded countries, and ancient woodland, home to many of our threatened species, remains our most threatened habitat. 85% of ancient woodland is not protected. Many of our plant species such as Wood-sorrel (*Oxalis acetosella*), Wood Anemone (*Anemone nemorosa*) and Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) are indicators of ancient woodland, and many species such as Oxlip (*Primula elatior*) rely on appropriate management, such as coppicing, for their survival. The diversity of habitats within the Trust's woodlands supports woodland butterfly species such as White Admiral, Purple Emperor and Silver-washed Fritillary, and mammals such as the Common Dormouse.

Reference was made to the storms of 1987 and 1991/2 and their effects on the local woods. Beechwoods suffered particularly badly, because of their shallow root systems, and whole woods were flattened as the wind toppled the trees like dominoes. Beech regenerates quickly, however, and the strongest of the resulting trees will survive. The larger the area of woodland cover, the more species can survive, so the Woodland Trust has a policy of joining up woods where possible.

Former woodland management methods have been reintroduced where it is considered the effects would be beneficial. Although more expensive than using tractors, the use of horses for removing cut timber is less damaging to the woodland floor. Pollarding, removing some of the top branches at a time to within 10-12 feet of the ground, enables a tree to live to a considerably older age. We were shown some photographs of local ancient trees and also dead standing trees, which are left when safe to do so, because of the valuable habitats they provide for bats, and birds such as woodpeckers. Deadwood is also left on the woodland floor for the benefit of fungi and invertebrates, especially beetles. Coppicing (see illustration below) also enables a tree to live longer, constantly producing a supply of young straight poles, which can be used for numerous products.

The work of the bodgers is often demonstrated on woodland open days. Although the term bodger now tends to be used to refer to a person doing a job badly, the original meaning referred to the rough, unfinished products, such as chair legs, produced in the woodland using a simple lathe, reducing the transport costs and saving

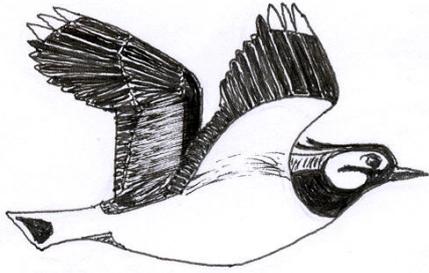
time in the furniture factories, where the items could be finished off by machine.

During the talk, some of our local woods in the care of the Woodland Trust were illustrated, including Bisham Woods near Cookham Dean, Pullingshill Wood near Marlow Common, Munces Wood and Hunts Wood in Marlow Bottom, and Gomms and Bubbles Wood in Hughenden Valley. Reference was made to the saving of Penn Wood: this local 436 acre wood pasture would have become a golf course, if the Woodland Trust hadn't been able to raise the £1.4 million needed to save it. Heathers are now coming up where rhododendrons have been removed, and the large conifer plantations are being removed gradually, felling a few trees at a time.

Our thanks go to Mike for his talk, and to the Woodland Trust for the valuable work they do to help preserve our existing woodland heritage and to create additional woodland for the benefit of future generations. We all need to remember, however, that although new woodland can be created, ancient woodland, once lost, remains lost forever: it can never be recreated to its original level of biodiversity.

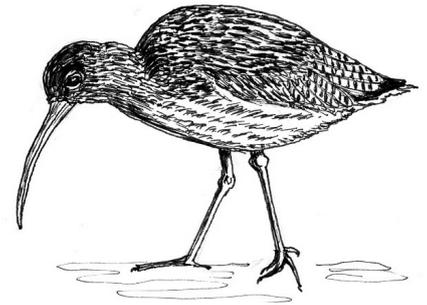


## Otmoor - past, present, and future



Left: Lapwing

Right: Curlew



The speaker at our November meeting was Barry Oxley, a retired horticulturalist, who travels to far off places around the world photographing habitats and wildlife. He creates Powerpoint presentations of his travels, and uses them to give talks, the fees for which he donates to the RSPB for specific projects. The project that Brian has been most involved with is the creation of the RSPB wetland reserve on Otmoor, and this was the subject of his talk to us.

We were informed that Otmoor, being one of the lowest parts of Oxfordshire within the floodplain of the River Ray, has always been a good area for wildlife, being regularly flooded in winter. The inhabitants of the seven villages around the moor relied on it for their living, taking wildfowl to London for sale, catching fish to eat, grazing cattle in the summer and cutting reeds for thatching. This way of life was sustainable, because the wildlife was plentiful. With the Enclosure Acts, the moor was divided up and sold, and much of it was drained to create fertile land that could be farmed. As a result, the wildlife of the moor gradually reduced. The only part not adversely affected was the area taken over by the Ministry of Defence to provide a firing range and a bombing range. Vast quantities of bombs and shells have been removed from Otmoor over the years, but unexploded ordnance still gets dug up during farming operations, and when new wetland areas are dug out on the reserve.

The initial RSPB reserve was created in 1997 with the help of the Heritage Lottery Fund, and it now occupies about 1,000 acres, a third of the total size of Otmoor. Some former river courses, located using aerial photos, have been opened up, scrapes have been created, and new reed beds have been dug out and planted. Permission has been given by the MoD for wildflower seeds to be collected from their part of Otmoor, which has a rich flora, to help create good wildflower areas within the reserve. Some of the farmland purchased by the RSPB has been turned into a wildflower habitat, and after 17 years, there are certainly far more invertebrates and wildflowers to be seen. Flower species that are doing well on the reserve include Dyer's Greenweed (*Genista tinctoria*), Sneezewort (*Achillea ptarmica*) and Great Burnet (*Sanguisorba officinalis*).

When the reserve was created, the primary target was to increase numbers of Lapwing, Redshank, Curlew, Snipe and Bittern. The numbers of all these species visiting the reserve have certainly increased, but the number of breeding pairs is still low. There are large numbers of Pintail, Wigeon, Teal and Shoveller to be seen on the reserve. Hobbies visit the reserve to feed, and Marsh Harriers regularly fly over it, although they haven't yet bred there. Following the creation of new reed beds, Bearded Tits appeared. Grasshopper Warblers can be seen on the reserve, but the numbers of Turtle Doves and Cuckoos are reducing.

RSPB reserves are not just for birds. They cater for all wildlife, and Otmoor supports 19 species of dragonfly, and is one of the best sites for this group of insects in the area. There is also a good population of butterflies, including several species of Hairstreak. There are signs of regular Otter visits and, although Water Voles used to be seen on Otmoor, they disappeared as a result of Mink predation. Efforts were made to control Mink numbers and Water Voles were reintroduced, but, until the Mink are exterminated, there is little hope for the Water Voles.

In view of the size of the reserve, and the need for some very large areas to be dug out, the RSPB purchased some very big and powerful diggers: these are rented out to other wildlife organisations undertaking similar work. One of the diggers spreads the soil as it digs, saving both time and money. Cattle are then used to create the muddy water margins that provide perfect conditions for waders to feed.

Barry referred to the landscape scale approach to Otmoor being adopted by the RSPB in association with BBOWT, which results in a coordination of conservation effort. The two organisations have jointly developed a long-term vision for a living landscape covering the entire River Ray floodplain from Marsh Gibbon to Otmoor.

The creation of a new reedbed was used as an example of the problems associated with putting such a large-scale proposal into practice. First of all planning permission needs to be sought, and the area needs to be dug out. The seed will only germinate at the correct temperature, and must remain damp but not wet. The only way of achieving the right conditions for producing the 100,000 plants needed, was to use polytunnels.

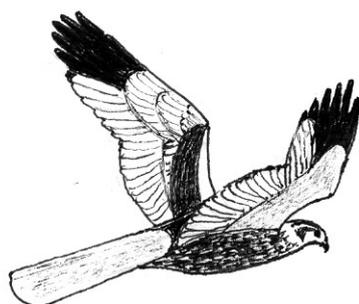
When planted, the seedlings had to be netted to prevent them being uprooted by birds feeding on them, and the netting had to be removed before the plants grew through it, as taking the netting off after that would have pulled up the plants. Once new reedbeds have become established, they need to be managed.

The Blackthorn hedges on the site are around 50 years old and support Brown Hairstreak butterflies: they need to be cut on a rotational basis. Willow trees are pollarded on a 3 year basis, needing to be kept low to avoid them being used as perches by predatory birds. The Willow seedlings need to be removed to prevent the development of willow carr, which would otherwise result from natural succession. Hedge laying is undertaken by rough cutting rather than following any traditional style, as it provides almost instant cover for birds. There is a lot of Ragwort on the reserve, and this needs to be removed because of the grazing cattle. Fences have been installed to prevent predation by foxes and badgers, but crows are impossible to control and remain a problem.

Looking to the future, Barry pointed out that there were still two and a half thousand acres of Otmoor left, offering scope for buying more land to extend the reserve. He added that, if the MoD ever decided to stop using their area, it would make a wonderful addition to the reserve.

At the end of his talk, Barry offered to arrange a guided walk around the Otmoor reserve, and this has been arranged. (See WWG events programme for booking information.)

We are grateful to Barry for such an interesting and informative talk, and for agreeing to arrange a follow-up walk.



Marsh Harrier (male)

## My first time on a fungus foray

The WWG programme listed the event on Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> October as a “fungus walk” but I was soon to learn that I should call it a “fungus foray”. Organised by the Friends of Holtspur Bank, it was led by Penny Cullington from the Bucks Fungus Group, who arrived armed with a basket of specimen containers and her all-important notebook in which she diligently noted every fungus sighting. 15 of us gathered at the appointed time and place. I was pleased to recognise Roger Wilding who also came prepared, clutching a large, obviously well used fungus identification book for reference. I was relieved to discover that I was suitably attired, and was soon very glad of the support my walking boots gave me. We were told the weather was not ideal for our task - there had been too much prolonged warmth and not enough rain in the week before the foray to encourage the fungi to produce their fruiting bodies. A “fungus foray” conjures up childhood images of toadstools and tales of fairies in the forest, mixed with distant memories of adults’ warnings not to touch or eat the poisonous things that look like mushrooms. Well, I didn’t expect to see any fairies, but neither had it occurred to me that the term fungus covers a very broad spectrum of life from micro-organisms such as yeasts and moulds through to the larger familiar mushroom-like structures.

Our first “sightings” were not exciting to untrained eyes. Some black marks on a stick prompted our leader to reel off a Latin name and scribble in her book. We passed the stick round, not quite sure what we were looking at. An enthusiast offered to lend me her magnifier. Another early sighting we were encouraged to touch was the Jelly Ear, or *Auricularia auricula-judae* to some of those present. Once inside the nature reserve, the more experienced forayers diverged from the well-

trodden path, and the newbies among us soon learned that piles of rotting wood were particularly promising sites to explore.

We learned that there are over 16,000 species of fungus in the country, and that fungi enthusiasts and experts tend to specialise in certain varieties. As an aid to identification, it is very important to note what a fungus is growing on or in. Fungi are very selective in this regard, and this is often reflected in the English names given to them. I felt very proud when I was the first to spot the Hazel Woodwart (*Hypoxylon fuscum*): we had already observed a Beech Woodwart (*Hypoxylon fragiforme*).

In passing a Sycamore tree, Penny observed the black spots on the leaves and explained that they were a fungus called Sycamore Tar-spot (*Rhytisma acerinum*), adding that there’s hardly a Sycamore tree in the country that does not host this fungus: the good news is that it only affects the leaves and doesn’t do the trees any harm. On another felled and rotting log, a very different picture presented itself: a wiggly black line on the exposed cut surface marked the frontier between two competing micro-organisms which were attacking the wood from within.

As the afternoon progressed, we began to appreciate the enormous variety of fungi that exist. Our leader patiently showed us the difference, for example, between Hazel Bracket, Smoky Bracket and Blushing Bracket. And finally, one of our number even spotted a fungus which looked a little like a mushroom. Penny was unable to identify it, so she placed it in a specimen box for later examination. It turned out to be the star of the afternoon. (See footnote below).

Jackie Kay

### Footnote

The star of the afternoon referred to above was a pure white agaric (a mushroom shaped fungus with gills). After microscopic examination of the spores, Penny eventually identified it as the rare fungus *Tricholomella constricta* (the only species in a new genus, which has been created especially for the species, as it doesn’t match satisfactorily with any other genus - it has previously been in the genera *Agaricus*, *Armillaria*, *Tricholoma*, *Lepiota*, *Lyophyllum* and *Calocybe*). Although the collected material was not in perfect condition following the identification processes (as can be seen from her photograph on the right), Penny said she would be drying it and sending it to Kew for retention.

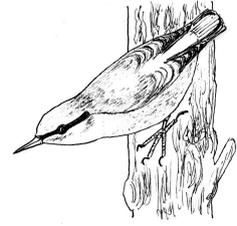
The list of fungus species for Holtspur Bank is creeping up gradually, and the total number recorded by Penny on the 3 annual forays to date is nearly 90. The site has produced a new species for the county in each of the three years.



Roger Wilding



## Bird species in a Flackwell Heath garden



Over the last 2 years we have watched and recorded the bird species we have been seen in our garden in Flackwell Heath. The species, and occasionally the number of birds, have been recorded on over 300 days in that period. Birds flying over the garden have not been noted, so the occasional Red Kite that takes food from a bird table is on the list, but the 6 or more flying around everyday are not. On the days when recording has taken place, a period of about 10-30 minutes has been set aside to watch, identify and log the species. Other sightings made during the day may be added to the day's list. Our house is situated close to the centre of Flackwell Heath amongst residential streets, and about half a mile from farmland. There are a good number of trees and bushes in the vicinity, and most neighbouring houses have gardens. Both our front and back gardens are easily observed from inside the house. The front garden is about 12m square and has one coniferous and one deciduous tree, plenty of bushes and a meadow with wild grasses and flowers which is cut just once a year. The back garden is roughly 24m long by 15m wide, and has a wide variety of cultivated and wild plants with trees and bushes, surrounding a mown lawn. We have 2 bird feeders with a mixture of seeds, 1 for nyjer seeds, 1 peanut feeder, and 2 fat ball holders. We also have 2 trays for ground feeding birds, filled occasionally with seed, meal worms and other bits and pieces.

Over the last 2 years we have recorded 36 species of bird. Some, like the House Sparrow, Woodpigeon, Blackbird, Robin and Dunnock, are seen every day that we make a list, while others, including Sparrowhawk, Mallard and Ring-necked Parakeet, have been present on only one occasion. Numbers of Parakeets are increasing in and around the village, however, and we could well be seeing more this winter. The Sparrowhawk was hunting in the garden when it was seen, and it may well have visited us on other occasions, as we have found the remains of what could have been its prey at other times. The Mallard might just have lost his way, although our neighbours do have a pond.

Some birds are regular seasonal visitors. At the beginning of November, the Redwings arrive to take advantage of berries on the Holly and Hawthorn trees. Sometimes they are accompanied by a Fieldfare, a Song Thrush or a Mistle Thrush. These

migrants are noted nationally, but we have recorded the passage of species in autumn that seem to be on a more local scale. In October 2012 we saw a Nuthatch and a Jay a few times. Both species had been seen in other local gardens on the same days, according to local contributors to the sightings page of the Bucks Bird Club web site. In winter we see some game birds, a few Pheasants but more often Red-legged Partridges, which are bred and released within a few miles of our garden for the shooting season. In winter, at times when food is scarce, we have noted Blackcaps and Goldcrests venturing closer to urban areas for sustenance from our bird feeders. Through late autumn and winter the species count goes up, with birds appearing more often than in summer. Blue Tits, Great Tits, Coal Tits, Wrens, Chaffinches, Goldfinches, Greenfinches and Collared Doves may all appear on the same day, while at other times of the year only a few of these species are seen together. Some days during spring, none of these species are recorded, presumably whilst nesting.

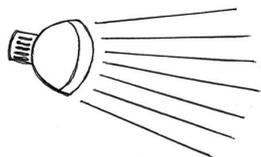
We see lots of birds flying over the garden but to entice them down, appropriate food needs to be provided. On a few occasions, we have put out some stale bread, and passing Black-headed Gulls have cleared it all in minutes. Magpies are quite often in the vicinity, and visit the garden when scraps of food are put out: they also perch and watch for opportunities to take young birds and eggs from nests. Quite large groups of Starlings are seen in Flackwell Heath and, in spring, a pair nests in the eaves of our house. They rarely appear in our garden to feed, and fly elsewhere straight from the house, although a couple of times during the summer, the parents have paraded their whole family in the back garden. There are bird species that we see in the local streets and hedgerows that visit our garden only occasionally. The Carrion Crows use our trees as vantage points as they search the area for food. Parties of Long-tailed Tits fly in for short periods, and Jackdaws that live about 200 metres away, make sporadic visits. Green Woodpeckers from local woodlands have been seen pecking at the mossy areas of mown grass, and Great Spotted Woodpeckers have been noted on the peanut feeder. One oddity was the sight of a Grey Wagtail that came to our garden on three consecutive days. These birds are usually seen close to streams, but the nearest stream is about a mile away, and over 200 feet below, in the Wye valley.

We have been surprised by the number of bird species we have been able to add to our daily lists, just by providing a variety of garden and wild plants, suitable bird food and good cover. By taking time to watch, we have seen such delights as Goldfinches balancing on the seed heads of Field

Scabious about a metre from the back window, a Wood Pigeon, a Stock Dove and a Collared Dove feeding together, and a visit by a covey of Red-legged Partridges at dusk on Christmas Day. We encourage everybody to keep watching.

Paul and Karen

## Spotlight on:- Tom Burt's Hill and Carver Hill



This time we are turning the spotlight onto a local hillside on the southern side of the High Wycombe valley, west of the town centre. Tom Burt's Hill is a public open space that stretches in a northwest direction from Marlow Hill, along the hillside to the rear of the hospital and properties off Suffield Road, almost to Desborough Avenue. The eastern end of Tom Burt's Hill is open grassland with isolated trees, and this open area provides an excellent viewpoint overlooking the town centre towards Downley, the Hughenden Valley, and over the Rye towards the higher ground on the northern side of the High Wycombe valley, east of the town centre. A public footpath from Loakes Road provides convenient and easy access to this part of Tom Burt's Hill from the town centre, and permissive paths provide easy access around the other parts of the hillside. The western section of Tom Burt's Hill comprises areas of relatively young woodland, with some good quality chalk grassland in between: this section has Local Wildlife Site status.

Whilst Tom Burt's Hill extends the green corridor (incorporating Deangarden Wood, Keep Hill, Warren Wood and the grounds of Wycombe Abbey School) along the southern side of the High Wycombe valley westwards as far as Desborough Avenue, Carver Hill extends the green corridor up the east side of Desborough Avenue with the status of a Local Landscape Area. This hillside also contains good quality chalk grassland, but it is not in public ownership. As a result of natural succession, the

grassland, which used to support large numbers of Common Spotted Orchids, Bee Orchids and Pyramidal Orchids, as well as a wide range of other plant species, is likely to soon be dominated by Hawthorn scrub. Towards the southern end of Carver Hill, there is an area of established young Hawthorn woodland and, at the far end, there is a small area of WDC-owned land, which used to be a public recreation ground. This latter area is now subject to some management action, which is preventing it from becoming young woodland. Although the original line of the public footpath along the eastern boundary of Carver Hill has deviated slightly in places over time, a well used path is maintained, providing easy walking along the top of Carver Hill between Carver Hill Road at the south end and either Desborough Avenue or Suffield Road at the north end, together with links to the paths through the Local Wildlife Site towards the open area of Tom Burt's Hill.

Combined plant surveys for Tom Burt's Hill and Carver Hill, undertaken by Wycombe Wildlife Group a few years ago, indicated that there are at least 200 species present on these hillsides. Regular appropriate management of Carver Hill would almost certainly have the potential to increase the biodiversity of that area because, unlike the chalk grassland on Tom Burt's Hill, which faces north, Carver Hill is open to the west, and is a more sunny location.

## Wycombe Environment Centre reopens

Thanks to the drive and determination of Frances Alexander and her fellow trustees, and with help from volunteers, the Environment Centre is up and running again, following the need to vacate the West Wycombe Road premises, which the landlord decided to convert into flats.

The new Environment Centre, which is located in the Chilterns Shopping Centre, opened in September, as a temporary location for a couple of years, until another, more permanent, location can be found.

The Centre is open every day from 10am to 4pm, and all visitors will be given a warm welcome. The Centre has much to offer both adults and children, from information on wildlife and local environmental organisations, to advice on all of the important issues which impact on the environment. Why not pop in and have a look round when shopping in Wycombe.

### Wildlife observations - August to November 2014



Date	Observation	Where seen
<b>August</b>		
2nd & other dates	Badger	Front garden in Downley
2nd & other dates	Hedgehog	Shaftesbury St garden
3rd	Green-veined White, Small Tortoiseshell. Gatekeeper, Meadow Brown, Common Blue and Small Copper	On grass bank between Downley and Hughenden
13th	20 Swallows skimming over Thames	Just upstream of Bisham
13th	Pipistrelle flying round head	Deeds Grove garden
15th	2 bats	Shaftesbury St garden
15th	Tiny Tufted Duck chicks diving for food	The Dyke
17th	Southern Hawker	Shaftesbury St garden
26th	2 Jays on bird feeder	Deeds Grove garden
26th	2 Ravens flying over	Deeds Grove garden
27th	Flock of 46 Blue Tits flying over	Deeds Grove garden
29th	Female Blackcap	Deeds Grove garden
31st	3 Red Admirals	Downley garden
31st	4 Starlings still resident, gradually increasing to 8	Deeds Grove garden
<b>September</b>		
2nd	Speckled Wood	Downley garden
8th	Hedgehog	Shaftesbury St garden
9th	Brimstone, Large and Small White and Red Admiral	Downley garden
16th	Large White	Downley garden
18th	Jay	Downley garden
19th	25 House Martins	Near boathouse on Dyke
28th	Hummingbird Hawkmoth hovering on <i>Buddleja</i>	Hepplewhite Cl garden
<b>October</b>		
8th	Sparrowhawk sitting in apple tree above bird feeders	Downley garden
13th	Hedgehog (juvenile)	Shaftesbury St garden
19th	Hedgehog (juvenile) in road	Rose Ave, Hazlemere
31st	Apple blossom	Downley garden
31st	House Sparrow, Dunnock, Great, Blue, Long-tailed and Coal Tits, Goldfinch, Chaffinch, Jackdaw, Robin, Starling, Blackbird & Wren + Red Kite in tree	Downley garden
<b>November</b>		
4th	Clouded Yellow and Muntjac	Chairborough LNR
6th	Flock of Ring-necked Parakeets	Bassetsbury La garden
6th	3 Black-headed Gulls in Yew tree feeding on berries	Alongside the Dyke
15th	Fieldfares and Redwings heard	Nr Pens Place, Marlow

# NEW ONLINE INTERACTIVE FLORA - "ECOLOGICAL FLORA OF THE CENTRAL CHILTERNs"

by **Tony F Marshall**

Records of all wildlife and plants have been compiled from many sources for a typical 100 square kilometre part of the central Buckinghamshire Chilterns. The records extend back over a hundred years and provide an unusually dense picture across space and time. As the first part of a project to make these rich data publicly available, a comprehensive description of all the plants ever found in the area is currently being written by Tony Marshall, using the many records compiled by himself, members of the local conservation group Prestwood Nature, past residents, the county environmental records centre, and many others. This is being offered in discrete sections as they become ready. Out of a projected 47 sections, 12 are already available as free downloads at [www.prestwoodnature.org/chilternsflora.html](http://www.prestwoodnature.org/chilternsflora.html) When completed it will be the closest to a complete Flora of the Chilterns currently available. While it is a scientific work, it is also a celebration of our rich and fascinating wildlife and is readily accessible to the layman who wants to learn more about the plants of the Chiltern area. For each plant its distribution, frequency, and main identifying features are described, with key sites where it is most likely to be found, fully illustrated by photographs. It goes beyond the traditional flora in also describing the main ecological characteristics of each plant - other plants and creatures with which it is associated, including gall-creators, leaf-miners, predators, etc, and its human significance. An attempt is being made to include all plants native to or well established in the Chilterns generally, using the author's and others' own experience of the area.

By publishing online at this early stage, it is hoped that others will contribute their own comments and observations, making it a truly collaborative work in the same way that past and current records depend on hundreds of individuals. Updated versions of all sections will be placed online at regular intervals, so keeping abreast of developing knowledge. People will be able to register on site to receive updates on revisions and new sections as soon as they become available. Downloads currently available include the Introduction (incl. descriptions of the focus area, its chief habitats, woodland typologies, and changes in the area's flora over time), Index (to available sections), and sections dealing with all Trees, Spore-bearing Plants and Aquatic Monocotyledons. The sections on Terrestrial Monocotyledons (including orchids) should be completed shortly.

## 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

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### Please enrol me as a member of Wycombe Wildlife Group

Name:.....

Address:.....

.....

Telephone:..... Email:.....

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NEW standing order instruction:

**Account to be debited** (your account details)

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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.