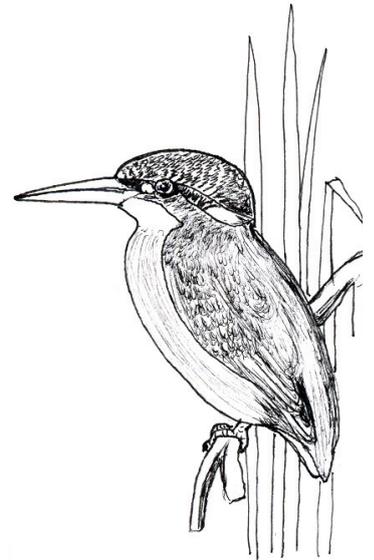


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Above: Kingfisher, a bird seen on our walk along the Thames from Cookham to Maidenhead, on our visit to the Spade Oak Lake Nature Reserve, and on our walk around Virginia Water in Windsor Great Park.

**COPY DATE FOR THE NEXT ISSUE
 Thursday 31st March 2016**

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: Karen Roberts (moths), Penny Cullington (fungi), Peter Osborn (Barberry) & Roger Wilding (others)
 Proof-reading: Frances Wilding
 Printed by: Greens, Lincoln Road, High Wycombe

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.



Below: Dog Stinkhorn, a fungus found on the foray in Keep Hill Wood.

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 and around 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, organising 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.

To ensure that the January to March events programme is received by members in plenty of time to give sufficient notice of events planned for January, it has been our practice to issue the new programme, together with the January newsletter, before the Christmas and New Year period where possible. On this occasion, it was not possible to achieve this, as we had not been able to finalise the February and April talks in time. I also needed to familiarise myself with new software that I had taken into use for producing the newsletter.

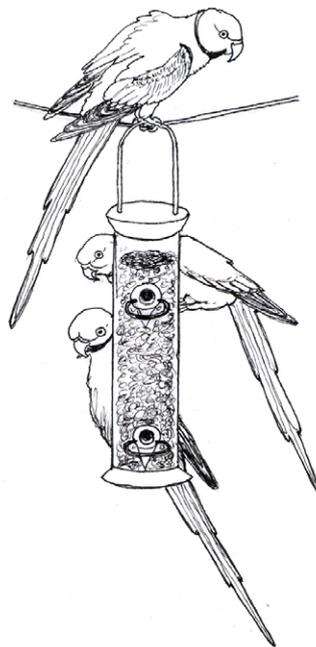
Looking at these problems in a positive way, the delays created more time to finalise the new programme, produce the newsletter, and arrange the printing and distribution. As the January newsletter was not completed before Christmas, it also avoided the usual problem of wording my Christmas wishes in a way that applied to those reading them both before and after the festive season.

As usual, we have a full newsletter with reports of all the talks and walks that have taken place since the September newsletter, plus some news items. I am sure, like me, you will enjoy Paul Bowyer's interesting account of how he and other members managed to increase the local population of Emperor Moths. There is a noticeable shortage of wildlife sightings in this issue, but this is something that can only be improved by more members submitting information to us about what they have seen in their gardens and on local walks: perhaps this might make a good wildlife New Year's resolution.

I hope you all had a good Christmas, and I wish you all the very best for 2016, and hope you will continue to support Wycombe Wildlife Group as best you can.

Roger Wilding

Garden bird behaviour



On 12th December, we had three Ring-necked Parakeets invade our bird feeders (an intermittent but not unusual event). It was amusing to watch our usual garden birds' behaviour, whilst I was doing some baking ready for Christmas. The Starlings all muscled in and totally ignored the alien visitors, arguing amongst themselves. The resident Collared Doves all flew in as usual, perfectly used to the pecking of the Starlings (strangely enough they are on equal footings with the rowdy rabble), took one look and veered off in another direction.

The Blue Tits, Great Tits and Coal Tits popped in and out, not seeming to take any notice. All this behaviour is totally different from when the Sparrowhawk streaks up the garden after one of the garden birds. All birds dash for cover and there is total silence for about half an hour until the bravest one ventures out again. Garden bird behaviour is endlessly fascinating.

Frances Wilding

WWG members increase the Emperor Moth population



Female Emperor Moth

At the beginning of April, I was given five pupae of the female Emperor Moth by Dave Wilton. He is the secretary of the Upper Thames branch of “Butterfly Conservation”, and has a keen interest in moths. He was able to identify the pupae of the females, because they are bigger than the males. I planned to carry out some moth “assembling”, a process whereby one uses a newly emerged female moth expelling pheromones to lure males to mate with it. I hadn’t performed or witnessed this before, but Dave gave me some instructions.

I put the pupae in a keep net hanging in my garage and waited for the moths to emerge in their adult form. I was told to keep them cool by Dave, who after two weeks phoned me to tell me one of his moths had emerged. I hurried to my garage, and found a magnificent female Emperor Moth in my keep net. This emergence emphasised what a great responsibility I had to look after these creatures well.

The Emperor Moth’s main habitat is heathland, where its caterpillars feed mostly on heather, but they will also eat Bramble, Blackthorn and Elder. In South Bucks there are some heaths, notably Burnham Beeches, Littleworth Common and Stoke Common. I had been instructed to try to widen the known range of the Emperor Moth’s distribution.

In previous years, Dave had recorded the Emperor at Littleworth Common, but I didn’t want to let down my emerged moth, so I tried there to begin with. I needed someone to hold the keep net whilst I drove to these sites, so Karen, my partner, helped in my first quest.



Male Emperor Moth

The male Emperor Moth flies by day and the female by night, so I was told that “assembling” was best in the late afternoon. We hung the keep net on a low branch of a tree in an area of heather. The afternoon was chilly and we were getting cold, so we returned home, mission not accomplished. The next day my son Owen and I tried Littleworth Common again, and then tried the southern end of Burnham Beeches. We had no luck, but the day was getting warmer. My former accomplices were unavailable, so I contacted Caroline Kay, another WWG member, to help this time, and we went to Stoke Common. Whilst we drove to the site, another two moths emerged. After hanging the keep net on a tree, we walked away for about 10 metres and in that time a male Emperor had flown in and attached itself to the netting. I unzipped the net and took out one of the females and placed it on the heather where it immediately mated with the eager male. We repeated this process for the other two females, but I made a mistake. On the second occasion I opened the zip of the net too far and a male got in and a pair started mating.

I wanted to let Karen see the male of the species and took home the mating pair and the remaining two chrysalises. The next morning there was a mass of moth eggs. I needed more help from Dave Wilton. Over the next few days the last two moths emerged and I tried assembling at Penn Wood, Holtspur Bottom and Dereham’s Lane Loudwater, but no luck. I was anxious about my moths so I returned to Stoke Common and managed to have the last two females mated, a longer wait this time.

I had the problem of the eggs to resolve and Karen and I were going to California in about three weeks. The eggs hadn’t hatched within a few days of us leaving so I phoned Caroline Kay again to see if she

could help. She hung the keep net in her second car, which was permanently immobile, and it became Wooburn Green's newest nature reserve. The morning after we returned from our trip, I contacted Caroline and she said that all the eggs had hatched and we had a large amount of caterpillars to place in their natural surroundings. Later that day, Karen and I returned to Stoke Common to place the Emperor moth larvae on heather. I hope they prosper.

Paul Bowyer



Female Emperor Moth with eggs in a keep net

A local stream of international importance

At the members' meeting on 21st September Roger AWilding gave his talk entitled 'A local stream of international importance', all about the local Wye stream and its tributaries. Roger has also given this talk to a number of other local organisations to promote Revive the Wye, the partnership of organisations (including Wycombe Wildlife Group) which aims to improve our local river system for the benefit of both wildlife and people.

Roger's talk took us on an illustrated journey down the Wye showing the location of some of the mills which had once existed along the river, some of the wildlife to be found in or near the water, improvements to the river that have been undertaken in liaison with the Revive the Wye Partnership, and locations where future improvements are in hand, planned or under consideration.



A new residential development enabled riverside public access to be provided between Desborough Recreation Ground and Desborough Park Road.

The talk showed us where the Wye rises in a normal winter, and where it can rise, and flow from, following an unusually wet autumn and winter. We saw photos of the stream running along roads and across fields above Bennett End in the Radnage Valley in 2014, and the unusual sight of icicles hanging from the hedgerows in 2013, where water flowing along Bottom Road in Radnage had splashed up onto the roadside hedges and had frozen.

Other views showed the Hughenden Stream in 2015 when it was flowing from Warrendene Road in Hughenden Valley, way above the pumping station at the foot of Cryer's Hill, which is normally the highest source of this stream when it is flowing. Even more unusual was a new stream, which Roger said he had called the "Saunderton Stream", which appeared in early 2014. It flowed continuously from near Saunderton Station to West Wycombe for a while, flooding the A40 near the Pedestal at West Wycombe for a couple of months: it also created a couple of temporary lakes, one of which had ducks swimming on it.

We then had a photographic trip down the Wye from its normal source at West Wycombe through West Wycombe Estate and Park Farm to Sands and on through Desborough Recreation Ground and the industrial areas approaching High Wycombe town centre, where the river enters an 800m long culvert.

At this point in the talk, we diverted to the Hughenden Stream, following its course through the Hughenden Estate and Hughenden Park and by Morrisons supermarket before it enters a culvert to join the Wye.

We then moved on to where the Wye emerges from the culvert, behind 'Riverside' and the fire station, and where, Roger pointed out, it's a good location for observing Trout. We followed the main river and its

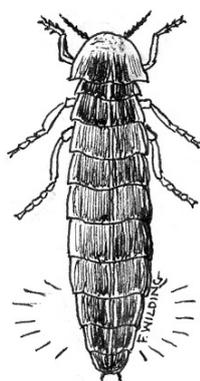
back stream through the Rye, Holywell Mead, along Bowden Lane, through Wye Dene, King's Mead, and on to Boundary Park where the Wye and back stream join. The route of the river towards Wooburn Green was illustrated from points where there is public access, and we then went on to look at the various river channels through Wooburn Manor Park and Wooburn Park, before following the river alongside Brookbank to Cores End. Beyond Cores End we were shown where the stream can be seen from road bridges, as it flows through housing areas, and where it can be viewed as it flows through modern business developments.

After a visit to the Bourne End Recreation Ground which backs onto the Wye, we ended our journey where the Wye joins the Thames.

James Donald



Talk on glow-worms



Female glow-worm

Although we had a talk by John Tyler on Glow-worms some years ago when we held our members' meetings in the Environment Centre on Holywell Mead, we thought it would be good to ask John to repeat the talk as our membership has changed considerably since the previous talk. On this occasion the talk took place at Holtspur and hardly anyone present had attended the earlier talk.

As expected, the talk provided a comprehensive account of the life cycle of the Glow-worm, an interesting and unusual species of beetle which continues to survive, albeit in smaller numbers despite modern-day problems such as habitat loss and light pollution.

We learnt that our Glow-worm is a member of the Firefly family and is the most northerly species of some 2,000 in this family worldwide. Most of the fireflies are tropical species and their main stronghold is South America. John mentioned the Lesser Glow-worm but said that it would not be covered in his talk as it is restricted to a single site in Hampshire.

The lifecycle of the Glow-worm starts when one of up to 200 eggs, laid about a month previously, hatches. These eggs are only 1 mm across and are buried just

under the surface of the ground and glow as soon as they are exposed, a feature retained throughout the insect's life cycle. The pure white larva that emerges turns black within a few hours. The larva doesn't need to eat immediately and can last weeks without feeding. When it hunts for food it follows the slime trails of slugs and snails, and often rides on the back of its prey whilst waiting for the poison it injects to take effect, a process which takes about 15 minutes, paralysing the prey and turning it into a liquid which the Glow-worm can easily digest. After feeding, the Glow-worm needs to clean itself to get rid of the excess slime, and is equipped with a range of rake and comb like attachments which it uses for the purpose. The Glow-worm larvae have few predators as their markings act as a deterrent and their skin contains small quantities of poison. Rove beetles are able to bore into the Glow-worm's body, however.

Glow-worm larvae take between two to three years to reach maturity, and they are often found in broad daylight as they move to more open ground and cluster together as they prepare to pupate. The female takes about 10 days to pupate, whereas the male takes about 2 weeks. On emerging as an adult, the female finds a grass stem to cling onto where her glow will attract a mate. She does not eat at all and, when mated, she ceases to glow, lays her eggs, and dies. The male emerges as an efficient flying beetle, with huge eyes capable of spotting females in all directions, although light pollution makes this task more difficult for the males. Loss of suitable habitat can affect Glow-worm numbers and it is difficult for new colonies to become established, as the species can only spread as far as the larvae can travel. The species is found mainly on chalk and limestone, where snails are more plentiful.

Our thanks go to John for another interesting and informative talk.

Joint fungus foray with Bucks Fungus Group on 24th October

When Penny Cullington of Bucks Fungus Group asked its members for suggestions for new sites for the 2015 fungus foray programme, I came up with the idea of holding a joint foray with Wycombe Wildlife Group in Keep Hill Wood. I know the wood quite well, and have often seen a good selection of common but colourful and interesting fungi species there. The management of the wood, which is undertaken by the Chiltern Rangers, includes leaving all the cut timber and branches in situ, which of course is good for fungi.

The event was quite well supported, mainly by WWG members, and I am sure most people enjoyed it. Although 75 species of fungi were identified, hardly any of the ones found on this occasion could be described as either colourful or particularly interesting to look at, and I hoped that this would not prevent those attending their first foray developing an ongoing interest in fungi. However, we did see the interesting Dog Stinkhorn (*Mutinus caninus*), and the Saffrondrop Bonnet (*Mycena crocata*) which exudes an orange coloured latex that stains the cap and stem, and the fingers of anyone picking it.

As a fungus foray, the event was certainly a great success, as the findings included three unusual

species within the *Inocybe* (Fibrecap) genus. Penny, who specialises in fibrecaps, identified one as *Inocybe pseudoreducta*, a rare species which she had never seen before, and one as *Inocybe erinaceomorpha*, for which there are only a few records in Britain. She was even more delighted when she was handed a white fibrecap, which she determined was either an undescribed albino variety of Star Fibrecap (*Inocybe asterospora*) or a new unknown species. Penny has since consulted other *Inocybe* experts in Sweden and Spain and they too think it must be an undescribed fungus, so the next stage will probably be DNA testing to help determine its status.

A full list of the species found on the foray can be seen on the Bucks Fungus Group website.

Our thanks go to Penny Cullington and Bucks Fungus Group for agreeing to this joint event which has certainly confirmed that Keep Hill Wood is an important site for fungi and will be included in one of their future foray programmes.

Roger Wilding



The photograph on the left is of the undescribed albino Star Fibrecap (*Inocybe asterospora*), which will require DNA testing to determine its identification.

The photograph above shows the normal Star Fibrecap for comparison.

Both photographs were taken by Penny Cullington.

Wycombe's night-time wildlife

Those who attended the AGM in May will recall the interesting short video clips shown by Stan Armstrong, a long-standing member of our Group, illustrating some of the wildlife that comes into his garden from the adjacent woodland. The 12 minute slot allocated to him on that occasion merely whetted members' appetites to see more of Stan's garden wildlife, so we invited him to give us a full length talk at our November members' meeting.

Stan set the scene for his illustrated talk by showing us where his house in Loudwater is situated in relation to Fennell's Wood. Using maps and aerial photographs, he illustrated the effect that the building of the M40 had on the wood. Built initially as a bypass for High Wycombe, it split Fennell's Wood in two, affecting both the habitats and wildlife of the lower northern half of the wood, including making it much drier than it used to be.

I think it came as a surprise to all of us that Stan's four cameras are set up to run 24/7, and are positioned to capture whatever appears day and night. As Stan is interested in astronomy, one of his cameras is pointing up to the sky so that any comet, shooting star, etc., is recorded for subsequent

viewing. Down at ground level, any creature coming into his garden will be recorded, whether it be a tiny mouse or a human being.

Foxes, Badgers, Muntjac Deer and Roe Deer are all frequent visitors, and watching the recorded camera footage enables the behaviour of the different species to be observed, as they eat, drink and react to what is going on around them. Not all the behaviour recorded can be explained: for example footage of a Tawny Owl showing the bird turning its head and looking down whilst clearly looking for prey, also showed the bird looking up from time to time: having no natural predators, this action has no obvious purpose.

The way Stan carries out his garden photography must result in lots and lots of recorded material requiring careful and selective editing, but the end result is a wonderful record of the wildlife that visits his garden. Our thanks go to Stan for this opportunity to see more of his garden wildlife. Hopefully he will be able to produce some material which can be put on our Group's Facebook page.

Unusual hedgerow shrub found

The photograph on the right is of the uncommon Barberry (*Berberis vulgaris*). It was submitted by Peter Osborn who found this shrub in a hedgerow near Flackwell Heath. The plant which is deciduous with oval toothed leaves, bears yellow flowers in pendent racemes in May to June. The red berries are 6-8mm across and 10mm long. The species is of European origin but long naturalised. It can be found throughout Britain but its distribution is very scattered.



Birdwatching at Spade Oak Lake Nature Reserve



A walk around the Spade Oak Lake Nature Reserve is always full of interest, whatever the time of the year. In winter, seeing huge numbers of birds on the reserve can usually be guaranteed, and our walk there on Thursday 10th December, led by Paul Bowyer, was no exception. Seven of us, plus one dog on a lead, walked around the lake, stopping at intervals to observe and identify the species we could see. Although most people brought along a pair of binoculars, we all took advantage of the vastly superior views provided by Paul's tripod-mounted scope.

By the end of the walk, which included a return route alongside the Thames, Paul had noted a total of 44 species. Although heavy rain had been forecast, not a drop fell during the walk, which made it all the more enjoyable.

Holly, ivy and mistletoe

On 11th December, we were treated to a very interesting and informative talk by Martin Woolner on both the natural and social history of Holly, Ivy and Mistletoe. The talk started with Holly, of which there are many species around the world, many being found in tropical regions. Our native Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) often forms dense thickets of scrub, but it can grow into a large tree if it has the space to do so. The leaves of Holly are only prickly on the lower branches of the tree, the leaves at the top of the tree being smooth edged. The Holly produces male and female flowers on separate trees, and the female trees only produce berries if their flowers are fertilised by a male tree growing nearby. The wood of Holly has been used to make items such as chessmen, tool handles, printing blocks and shelves above fireplaces: the mature wood is fireproof, despite the fact that the green wood burns well.

The importance of Holly for wildlife was then explained. The species is the larval food plant for the spring generation of the Holly Blue butterfly, the first of the blues to appear in the year, and the only butterfly species associated with Holly. We were then introduced to some of the other invertebrates associated with Holly, such as the Double-striped Pug moth and *Phytomyza ilicis* (a leaf miner, which creates very obvious marks on the leaves). The dead leaves of Holly are often covered by black dots, some small and some large: these are the fungi Holly Speckle (*Trochila ilicina*) and *Phacidium multivalve* respectively. If a more typical fungus fruiting body is found on a Holly leaf, it is likely to be Holly Parachute (*Marasmius hudsonii*) which only grows on Holly.



Mention was also made of the rare *Mollisia subglobosa*, a disc fungus that may be associated with the more common orange-red *Nectria punicea* which grows on the dead wood of Holly.

The talk moved on to Ivy, concentrating on the UK species *Hedera helix*. As with Holly, many attractive cultivars have been developed. The value of Ivy to wildlife became clear as we were introduced to moths such as the Small Dusty Wave, tortricid micro moths and the easily recognisable Old Lady moth. Comma and Red Admiral butterflies, wasps and hornets are also often found on Ivy, and weevils bore into the stems. As it matures, Ivy can completely cover the trunk of a tree, but it does not kill it. At this stage the Ivy can provide roosting and nesting sites, supporting bats as well as birds. The most recent new bee species recorded in Britain is the Ivy Bee (*Colletes hederæ*) - as its name indicates, this solitary mining bee is associated with Ivy. The Ivy Broomrape (*Orobanche hederæ*) is a root parasite of Ivy. When the bark of Ivy is removed, the wood beneath is very white and it has been used to make false ivory handles. The wood was also used to make rolling-pins, as its surface was non-stick.

After a refreshment break, Martin moved on to Mistletoe, concentrating on *Viscum album*, the species found in the UK and across most of Europe. It is hemi-parasitic on Apple, Lime, Hawthorn, Poplar and around 30 other tree species, often those in the Pea Family. Mention was made of other Mistletoe species such as the red-berried plant which is found in southern Europe, and species in Mexico and South America which are parasitic on conifers and cacti.



As with Holly and Ivy, Mistletoe supports our native wildlife. The mines in the leaves of Mistletoe are the home of *Celypha woodiana*, a tortricid micro moth. The Mistle Thrush gets its name on account of its liking for Mistletoe fruits and seeds. When these birds find a good supply of Mistletoe, they usually defend their larders. When they have eaten the berries, they need to wipe their sticky beaks, and they do this on the branches of the tree which helps to distribute the seeds. Introducing Mistletoe to a tree is not easy, but to maximise the chances of success, the seed should be harvested in late February or March and inserted into the bark of a mature tree of the same species as the one from which the seed was gathered. Always insert plenty of seeds as many will fail to germinate. Mistletoe is grown commercially to meet the demand for bunches of this plant at Christmas time, but its gathering is no longer restricted to cutting it from Oak trees using golden sickles and white sheets, as was the custom of the Druids.

Our thanks go to Martin for this brilliant talk which catered for many different wildlife interests and varying levels of knowledge within the audience. The cultural history aspects of the talk were also of great interest and, in some cases, also highly entertaining.

2015 “bus pass” walks

When it was decided to plan a series of “bus pass” walks, we took into account the need to consider options for the use of cars for those who would find it difficult to use public transport for all or part of the walk. The following brief reports summarise the first three walks, arranged in the summer, autumn and winter of 2015.

Cookham to Maidenhead walk on 15th August (report by Derek Bourne)

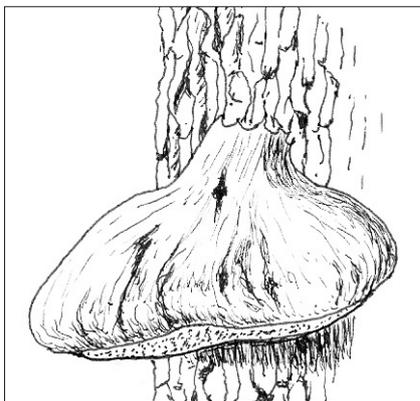
This first walk started from the Cookham war memorial. We first explored the area below Cookham Bridge where the river divides into four - the Lulle Brook, the main river, the canal cut, and Hedsor Wharf. The waterside vegetation was quite lush, with Great Willowherb (*Epilobium hirsutum*) and Purple-loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*) at their best, but away from the river banks, after the long period of dry weather, many flowers were nearly over. However, the white heads of Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*), Wild Carrot (*Daucus carota*), Upright Hedge-parsley (*Torilis japonica*) and Burnet-saxifrage (*Pimpinella saxifraga*) were still giving a good show, the difference between the last two being expertly explained by Frances Wilding. We also came

across an unusual white variant of Vervain (*Verbena officinalis*). Some butterflies and dragonflies were flying around, but few birds were seen or heard, this being the time when most are moulting and recovering from their breeding exertions.

On retracing our steps to the village, we joined the Thames Path and followed it towards Maidenhead, with the steep wooded slopes of the Cliveden estate on the opposite side. The river banks were overgrown, and so waterside vegetation was rather restricted, but we did see a nice patch of Common Fleabane (*Pulicaria dysenterica*) and, in the scrub, hazelnuts, elderberries and sloes were well in evidence. Despite the dry weather, a number of fungi growing on wood were displaying their fruiting bodies, including some perfect examples of the Oyster Mushroom (*Pleurotus ostreatus*). The recreational area around Boulter’s Lock eventually came into view and we ended the walk with refreshments on the island. Just as we were leaving, there was a flash of blue and orange as a Kingfisher flew down river - a nice end to a very enjoyable morning walk. Our thanks go to Roger for organising and leading this first of, hopefully, many such “bus pass” walks.

Burnham Beeches to Wooburn walk on 27th October (report by Roger Wilding)

Following the success of the first “bus pass” walk, this second one started with a look at some of the interesting and varied habitats within Burnham Beeches. We then followed part of the Beeches Way through Littleworth Common and Hedsor, before descending through Farm Wood to finish at Wooburn. The date of this walk had been arranged to coincide with the peak autumn colours in Burnham Beeches and we got it right, with everything from the Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*) to the Silver Birch (*Betula pendula*) and Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) all at their best, and the reflections on the lakes perfect. Although the best section of the boardwalk was closed in readiness for amphibian hibernation, the wetland habitats still had plenty of interest, as did the areas of heathland and woodland. Both within the Beeches, along the Beeches Way and within Farm Wood there were plenty of interesting fungi to be seen, including a perfect specimen of the Beefsteak Fungus (*Fistulina hepatica*). As this good edible species is not that common, we all resisted the temptation to pick it and take it home to eat.



We finished our walk overlooking Wooburn where two of the participants turned to walk back to Littleworth Common, where one had parked and had offered to give the other a lift back to where she had parked at Burnham Beeches. Although only four people took part in this walk, they all enjoyed it very much and, while sitting eating a packed lunch in the porch of St Ann’s Church at Littleworth Common (having looked at the wildflower species in the churchyard) discussed possibilities for a winter walk in Windsor Great Park, using a combination of bus and car transport.

Walk in Windsor Great Park on 14th December (report by Roger Wilding)

This walk, which was suggested and organised by Inge Beck, was not included in the events

programme but, at the October and November members’ meetings, anyone interested was asked to speak to Inge. The walk started at the Visitors Centre and went past the Obelisk Pond, through the Heather and Valley Gardens to the north bank of Virginia Water. We then crossed the bridge over Johnson’s Pond, over the High Bridge to Blacknest Gate and followed the path along Virginia Water’s southern bank, visiting the Leptis Magna Ruins and the Cascade before breaking for a picnic lunch. Suitably refreshed, we continued round the lake and over the bridge by Wick Pond before returning along the north side of the lake to complete its circuit, before returning to the Visitors Centre.



The cascade on the south side of Virginia Water

This winter walk enabled us to view some of the large numbers of very old and very large specimen trees, both native and non-native, in far more detail than is possible when the trees are in leaf. We saw plenty of fungi both on the trees, on fallen timber left in situ and in the soil. We saw plenty of birds, including Kingfishers, and plenty of interesting plants, including mosses, liverworts, lichens, sedges and rushes, including many which we didn’t have the necessary expertise to put names to. We had a close up view of a Mistle Thrush defending its Mistletoe “larder”, and were surprised to see numerous Ring-necked Parakeets flying to and from the top of the obelisk which commemorates the services of the Duke of Cumberland, son of George II.

Our thanks go to Inge for arranging and leading this walk, and for preparing notes on the history of the Park and its features, which added to the interest. Inge has offered to lead further walks in Windsor Great Park, including shorter ones, for those who were unable to attend on this occasion.

Wildlife observations - August to December 2015

August 2015

20th 20 House Martins Over the Rye SU869926

September 2015

14th 30 Lapwings Over field near Marlow SU844853

17th 200+ mixed Rooks and Jackdaws In Hughenden Park SU864955

17th 100+ mixed House Martins and Swallows In Hughenden Park SU864954

October 2015

19th 30+ Red Kites Near Great Marlow School SU858875

November 2015

28th Brambling In Flackwell Heath garden HP10 9AX

December 2015

12th 3 Ring-necked Parakeets In Deeds Grove garden HP12 3PA

16th Great Tit singing its Spring song In Deeds Grove garden HP12 3PA

16th Bumblebees in garden all week In Deeds Grove garden HP12 3PA

17th Mistle Thrush and Song Thrush singing full song In trees behind the Dyke SU872924

18th Little Egret close to builders at work By footbridge over back stream linking Bassetsbury Lane to Kingsmead Road SU884917

18th Frogs still not in hibernation In Deeds Grove garden HP12 3PA

23rd Frogs still not in hibernation In Deeds Grove garden HP12 3NY

Plant to attract moths and butterflies

In our front garden we have quite a large stand of Red Valerian (*Centranthus ruber*) growing from the cracks in the paving slabs. Through the summer, it has attracted a number of moths, in particular migrant species. At dusk on warm nights I examine the flowers to see if there are any moths nectaring on this plant.



In mid June, over the space of a few days, I spotted 3 species of moth, all with origins overseas. One evening there were 6 Silver-Y moths hovering around the Red Valerian. The Silver-Y seems to be the most numerous of the migrant macro-moths. It flies from the continent in spring, and mates in this country to give a large population, often augmented by further migrants during the year. Numbers vary from year to year but it can be seen during the day and night on a wide variety of plants. It is identified by a white "Y" marking on both fore-wings.

The night following, a Bordered Straw appeared on the Red Valerian. This is a lot less common than the previous species, but it has a similar pattern of migration, arriving in the spring and producing a

British born generation. It can also be seen during the day, and can be attracted to moth traps at night. It has a background colour of straw yellow with a distinct large dark kidney shape on its fore wings.

A third migrant, the Hummingbird Hawkmoth, appeared on the Red Valerian 3 days later. These are mostly seen by day, although they may be seen

at dusk. The same plant was visited intermittently throughout the summer. I have seen this species as early as February on the coast, and as late as October. The moth flits from flower to flower very quickly, and by the time someone else is called to see it, it has nearly always flown away. It looks and flies like a hummingbird, hovering in front of nectar flowers to feed. It has orange hind wings and grey upper wings.

As well as these moths, I have seen both Painted Lady and Red Admiral butterflies on the same clump of Red Valerian this year. I recommend it for any wildlife garden.

Paul Bowyer

Joint activity with Friends of the Earth

Following discussions between WWG and Wycombe Friends of the Earth (FoE) to discuss possible wildflower planting opportunities around Wycombe, a site visit was made to some of the locations suggested. Follow-up actions such as surveys and approaching landowners were agreed, and it was soon discovered that any scheme to plant up road verges would incur a substantial fee to obtain the necessary licence to do so.

One of the suggested sites was the stream bed which flows past Morrisons supermarket, and an approach to the company by FoE resulted in agreement to an initial tidy up of the stream bed, which would provide an opportunity to consider what further action might be possible.

A team of WWG and FoE volunteers met in the Morrisons car park on 25th November, and armed with litter pickers, loppers and plastic sacks,

descended the banks behind the stream and started to remove glass and plastic bottles, cans, plastic bags, crisp packets, footballs, items of clothing, etc., etc. A few bulky items, including a chest of drawers, were also removed from the shrubs behind the stream. By the end of the task we had filled 30 sacks with small rubbish, and were glad we had taken along a wheelbarrow to transport the collected waste, past the surprised shoppers entering and leaving the supermarket, to the location designated by the store for siting it ready for disposal.

There was insufficient time to remove any excessive vegetation, so cutting was restricted to what was necessary to get to the rubbish. Although the stream bed is in a fairly shady location, my feeling was that it could be made more attractive by introducing a few native plants suited to this riverside habitat.

Roger Wilding

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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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To Bank
..... Branch
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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

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OR Payment by cheque or cash

I enclose cheque/cash for £7.00,
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