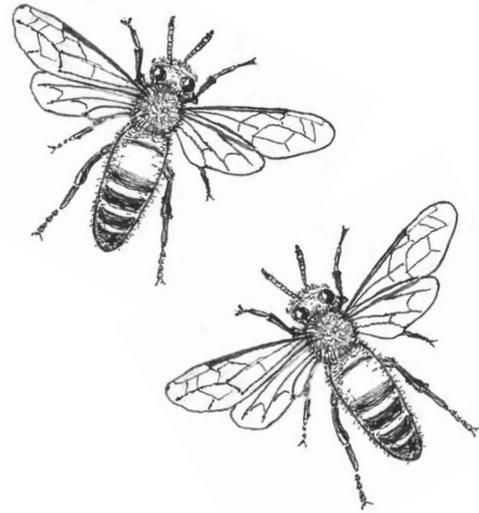


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Find out more about Honey Bees and beekeeping on page 28.

Below: A Cormorant was one of the birds seen on a bird walk at Marlow - see page 31.

COPY DATE FOR THE NEXT ISSUE
Monday 1st August 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.

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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 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.

What an unusual start to the year we have had. In January, Spring seemed to have arrived with reports of wild flowers appearing well before their normal flowering time, frogs that had not bothered to hibernate, and even a brood of young blackbirds in Marlow. By the time signs of Spring normally start to be seen, the delayed wintery weather arrived and slowed everything down a bit. Although by April we were having plenty of traditional April showers, these were accompanied by frosts, cold winds, and even some sleet, hail and snow in some places.

These atypical weather patterns have meant that there could be no certainty as to whether plants expected to be seen on the walks we had planned would be at their best. In some cases we were lucky, but perhaps we shouldn't worry too much, as there is always something of interest on any walk in the countryside whatever the conditions, and our walks so far this year have all been in good weather, most have been well supported and all seem to have been enjoyed by those attending.

May is AGM time for Wycombe Wildlife Group and this issue of the newsletter has been delayed until after the meeting, so that any members unable to attend can be updated on some of the important issues discussed and views expressed at the meeting.

We were privileged to have a talk on the London Wetland Centre by the Chairman of the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust in April, and we have booked another high profile speaker for our meeting on 16 January 2017, when the Queen's Swan Marker will give us a talk on Swan Upping. As he is only willing to talk to large audiences, we have arranged for the meeting concerned to be a joint one with The High Wycombe Society.

Roger Wilding

New members

We welcome the following new members:- Jane Beaton, Terry Bell, Georgie Fell, Jeff Herschel, Sian Herschel, Julia Panchen and Dr Frank Schoofs.

Getting the timing right

It has been our usual practice to issue the January newsletter in mid December, the May newsletter in mid April and the September newsletter in mid August. This was to allow more time to ensure that as many members as possible received their newsletter on time, and it tied in with the distribution of the January to April, May to August, and September to December events programmes and the distribution of the AGM documentation in April. Delaying the issue of the January 2016 until after Christmas proved helpful, however, and delaying the issue of the May 2016 until after the AGM has enabled us to report on the outcome of various issues discussed at that meeting.

Rescuing Ratty

At our first indoor meeting of 2016 on Monday 18th January we had a very interesting talk from Julia Lofthouse, BBOWT's Mammal Project Officer, on the subject of Water Voles.

The Water Vole is of course well known as Ratty because this is the name of the Water Vole in Kenneth Grahame's children's novel *The Wind in the Willows*, although the old incorrect name Water-rat for the species is rarely used nowadays. It is a fact, however, that many reported sightings of Water Voles that are followed up confirm that the sighting was a Brown Rat.

Julia illustrated the differences between the various species of vole and explained how to distinguish between the similar sized Brown Rat and a Water Vole. We were told to first look at the ears to see if they are prominent (Brown Rat) or small and hidden (Water Vole), and then to look at the tail to see if it is long and bare (Brown Rat) or shorter and fur-covered (Water Vole).

We heard how Water Vole populations have decreased at an alarming rate, becoming extinct in many areas. We also heard how a rapid recovery can be achieved when the habitat is good, where there is scope for recolonisation by nearby populations, and where predation is controlled. There are still good populations in Scotland, on the Isle of Wight and on Brownsea Island. Locally, the best chance of seeing Water Voles is either along the Great Ouse, the Misbourne or the Chess.

Water Voles will feed on more or less any vegetable matter, and their diet will include fruit and nuts in season, and even bark and roots in winter. They will supplement their vegetarian diet with crayfish and frogs, preferring the legs of the latter. They have a habit of leaving the tougher parts of the plants they have been eating in neat piles. These, together with latrines containing small blunt ended droppings, are signs that Water Voles are present. Reedbeds



and watercourses with plenty of vegetation, both in the water and on the banks, can make an ideal habitat for the species. They are not strong swimmers and dislike fast-flowing rivers with strong currents. They particularly like banks that they can tunnel into, and like to have several entrances up to 8cm across, some above the water line and some below. Within the bank, chambers will be created for storing food and rearing young.

Water Voles live in colonies, although each vole has its own territory within the colony, leaving scent marks to keep other voles away. Although they only live for about 7 months, they are prolific breeders. Each female can produce around 40 young, each litter containing between 5 and 8.

Flooding, drought and pollution can cause numbers to decrease, but the main reason for population crashes is predation by Mink. Unfortunately, the latter are small enough to enter a Water Vole burrow and, when this happens, the Water Voles stand no chance against this alien species. Mink can be controlled by siting trapping rafts at 1km intervals along a watercourse, but they have to be checked regularly and any trapped Mink dealt with.

Our thanks go to Julia Lofthouse for her interesting and informative talk.

All you wanted to know about beekeeping



Our indoor meeting at Holtspur on Friday 12 February was different from any other meeting in our Group's 27 year history. Although we have had talks on bees and on bee-friendly gardening in the past, we had never had such a detailed talk about beekeeping. Keith Broadley, who looks after the bees for the National Trust at Hughenden Manor, turned up with his protective clothing, a demonstration hive and a number of miscellaneous items of beekeeping kit, the purpose of which was explained during his talk.

Keith started his talk by explaining that, on retirement from the NHS, he went on a horticultural course and volunteered to help in the walled garden at Hughenden Manor, when it was opened to the public in 2006. He was asked to set up the beekeeping project there, which started with a team of 14 people, since reduced to 10. There are currently 7 colonies of bees, although it is planned to increase the number to 10. The project is financially self-sufficient and intended to be part of the visitor experience for those coming to Hughenden Manor. Honey and beeswax products from the hives are sold in the National Trust shop at Hughenden.

After assuring the audience that there were no bees in it, Keith dismantled the beehive to explain the purpose of all the component parts. He told us that the standard beehive with its moveable frames has changed little since the "National" beehive was patented in 1852. Although bees are self sufficient, some beeswax needs to be purchased when starting with a new hive so that the bees can create "bee

space" between the frames. A new colony can be started by collecting a swarm or by purchasing bees.

The queen starts laying eggs in February and, at the peak laying time in late June and early July, she will lay 2,000 eggs a day. Laying ceases in October as bees flying in cold weather will die. A queen normally lives for 2-3 years, but if she does need to be replaced, possibly because she is failing to produce enough fertile eggs, 5 or 6 newly laid eggs are selected by the workers and fed exclusively with royal jelly. The first of the emerging young queens will kill the rest: unlike other hive bees, the queen has a multiple stinging capacity, whereas the workers, which are also female, can only sting once and then they die. The drones are male and do not have a sting, as their only function is to mate with the queen and then die: those that don't mate are driven from the hive by the workers and they will die from the cold or starvation. When a maiden queen emerges, the drones gather and the queen will mate with several of them, retaining their sperm for life. Only about half of the number of workers are responsible for foraging, collecting pollen, nectar, tree sap and even water, and taking their findings back to the hive. Foraging is undertaken by workers that have performed the full range of duties within the hive and they remain foragers for the remainder of their life, which is usually up to six weeks. The workers staying in the hive look after the young bees, clean cells, generate heat and ventilate the hive, produce honey from some of the pollen brought back to the hive by the foragers, convert tree sap into a glue for closing gaps, produce royal jelly for feeding newly hatched bees and beeswax for the honeycombs, and undertake guard duties. During the winter, workers cluster in the hive to keep the queen alive.

When the workers decide that a new queen is needed, the old queen leaves along with around 20,000 workers, forming a swarm which will cluster, usually on a tree branch. If such a swarm is reported, an experienced beekeeper will only be too pleased to go and collect it to form a new colony in a spare hive. The beekeeper will smoke the swarm and brush it off the branch into a collecting box.

Bees are of course kept by man mainly for their honey. The honey is collected from the hive by removing the frames and cutting off the beeswax with a sharp knife. The honey is then removed from the frames by rotating them within a purpose-built drum by centrifugal force and then put into containers. The honey will last forever: although it will crystallise in time, it can be liquified again by heating.

Keith's talk certainly gave us a comprehensive account of the lifecycle of the Honey Bee and the complexities of the highly organised and structured society of the species, where every individual has a role to play during its short lifetime, before it dies, is driven out, or killed when it no longer has a purpose.

As we enjoy our honey, we should think about all the effort made by thousands of bees to produce a product which we enjoy so much, although of course it was never their intention to work so hard for the benefit of man.

Our thanks go to Keith for his extremely interesting talk.



Nature's Jewels

At our meeting on Monday 21 March, Wycombe Wildlife Group member Julie Hopton gave a talk about her environmental education business Nature's Jewels. Julie became self-employed when she was made redundant from her post within Wycombe District Council's Woodland Service. Julie had been employed by the Council as one of the ranger team and later became the team leader. She has always said that working with schools and groups of young people was the best part of her ranger job, and setting up her own business has provided her with an opportunity to undertake work which gives her a high level of job satisfaction.

Julie described some of the varied tasks she has undertaken in her new role, and illustrated these by showing us some of the many photographs she has taken of her activities. She has worked with schools and other educational bodies, and with young people in the Scout and Guide movements. Her photographs illustrated the very wide nature of the activities she has organised and led, from giving advice to a school on how best to make use of a piece of donated land, to organising birthday party activities. Whilst activities such as painting, making things from natural

materials (including willow craft and den making) are intended to provide fun for the children taking part, they do help to raise an awareness of the natural world. Activities based on recycling, pollination and life cycles provide opportunities to create a better understanding of some of today's important issues. Some of Julie's activities, such as bat detecting, moth trapping, bug hunting, slow worm relocation and pond dipping are aimed at improving awareness of wildlife, and these extend to plants and fungi.

Julie is a licensed bat handler and a member of the North Bucks Bat Group. Not only does she lead bat walks and put up bat boxes, but she cares for injured and orphaned bats. She has cared for Rosie, a Noctule Bat that cannot be released into the wild, for the last 15 years, feeding it every 2 hours when it was a baby: Julie told us that Rosie could live for another 25 years.

Thank you Julie for your interesting talk. We hope Nature's Jewels goes from strength to strength, creating an interest in the natural world among young people, helping to produce the next generation of naturalists.

Talk by the Chairman of the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust

On Friday 8 April we were privileged to have Peter Day, WWT's chairman to talk to us about the history of the London Wetland Centre at Barnes and its contribution to conservation.

Peter started his talk by saying that his involvement with the London Wetland Centre started 17 years ago when he became a volunteer there. When he retired from his position as Chief Executive of a public company, he became a trustee of the WWT and was able to use his financial and IT experience to further the aims of the Trust, and eventually was appointed as its chairman. Peter pointed out that he still makes time to act as a voluntary guide to visitors to the Barnes reserve.



We were informed that the WWT was founded by Peter Scott, son of Captain Scott, the Antarctic explorer. In 1946, Peter Scott created the first of the Trust's reserves at Slimbridge in Gloucestershire. One of the Trust's first successes was saving the endangered Hawaiian Goose (or Nene) by captive breeding and releases into the wild: the species is now thriving. The Trust continues to save wetlands and associated species, and to raise awareness of them. Mention was made of a current SUDS (Sustainable Urban Drainage System) project, where WWT is designing wetland habitats for school grounds in areas where development has taken place on land which has been subject to flooding in the past. The idea is to make ecological use of the water rather than it being channelled directly into river systems, which can result in excessive water levels both in the rivers and on the surrounding land.

The WWT now has 10 reserves in the UK, the latest being Steart Marshes, a 1,250 acre site at the mouth of the River Parrett in Somerset. The total size of all the Trust's reserves is around 7,500 acres, and

they employ some 400 staff. The WWT reserves attract about a million visitors a year. The Trust has some 230,000 members and 950 volunteers: about a quarter of the latter are at Barnes.

The opportunity to create the London Wetland Centre arose as a result of the decommissioning of the former Barnes Reservoirs on completion of the London Ring Main. Thames Water gave the site to the WWT, who released 22 acres of the site to Berkeley Homes for housing. The cost of creating the London Wetland Centre on the remaining 104 acres was around £16 million and Berkeley Homes and Thames Water provided £11 million of this required funding with the remaining £5 million being raised by WWT. The result was the largest artificially-created urban wetland in Europe, and possibly the world. The London Wetland Centre was opened by David Attenborough in 2000 and it has been a great



success. As well as the wildfowl collections, some 220 bird species have been recorded on the reserve, and it has become one of the best sites in Europe for bats, with 11 of the 17 UK species being recorded, and well over 20 to 25 thousand bats being counted on a good night. The London Wetland Centre is also home to Water Voles, Grass Snakes, Slow-worms, and many other species of fauna. The site has been planted with a wide range of native plant species which attract invertebrates, helping to provide a balanced ecosystem.

The London Wetland Centre provides an extensive educational programme, catering for schools and visiting children. Activities on offer include pond dipping and various crafts, and bat walks take place every night at appropriate times of the year. Some 35,000 to 45,000 children a year visit the Centre.

Peter's talk was very much enjoyed by those attending, and it prompted a wide range of questions.

Spring walks

Millfield Wood walk

The walk around Millfield Wood on Tuesday 5 April, led by Roger Wilding, was enjoyed by the 11 who attended, and the weather was good. We met by the bridge over the Hughenden Stream at the entrance to the National Trust section of Hughenden Park, crossed Hughenden Road and made our way up Church Lane (now just a narrow footpath) towards Millfield Wood. On the way up, some deer were spotted on the chalk grassland below the wood.

We followed the marked trail around the wood, which is a BBOWT reserve and a SSSI, and although we found some interesting ground flora, including Wood Anemone (*Anemone nemorosa*), many of the plant species were not yet in flower.

Before returning to the starting point of the walk, we had a quick look around the chalk grassland on Millfield Bank, immediately below the wood. This is also a SSSI, on account of its species rich flora which includes Southern Marsh-Orchid (*Dactylorhiza praetermissa*), an unusual species for chalk grassland, and hybrids between that species and Common Spotted-Orchid (*Dactylorhiza fuchsii*). Although we were too early to see much of interest on the grassland, it provided an excellent viewpoint over Hughenden Park, and several people took advantage of the photo opportunities provided.

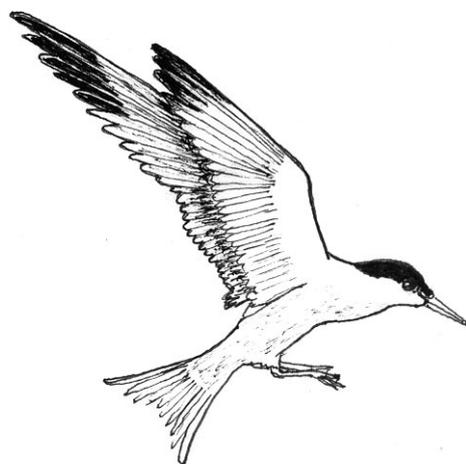
At the end of the walk, everyone agreed that it had been a good walk and that Millfield Wood and Bank would be well worth revisiting at a later date.



Bird walk at Marlow

On Wednesday 20 April, around a dozen of us, including one dog, met in Higginson Park in Marlow for a walk led by Frances Wilding along the Thames Path to the footbridge over the river just past Temple Lock, and back following the footpath alongside Low Grounds Farm and Pens Place. It was another lovely day for a walk, and there was plenty to see and hear. In order to finish the walk on time, it was decided not to continue to Hurley Lock as originally planned, especially as there was no guarantee that the refreshment hut there would be open.

On the outward walk we passed a couple of Egyptian Geese and a Cormorant, and heard a Mistle Thrush, Chiffchaff, Chaffinch and Blackcap. A Common Tern was also pointed out.



On the return walk, we saw a Ring-necked Parakeet and Lapwings, and listened to the songs of a Garden Warbler, Wren, Robin and Nuthatch. We were also thrilled to hear several Skylarks in full song. There were lots of Cuckooflower (*Cardamine bulbifera*) in flower and we also saw Marsh-marigold (*Caltha palustris*) and Dog-violets (*Viola* spp). Numerous other plant species, which were not yet in flower, were identified.

Our thanks go to Frances for leading this walk and helping us to identify the birds we could hear but not see. We look forward to more such walks.

Visit to Sands Bank and Wood

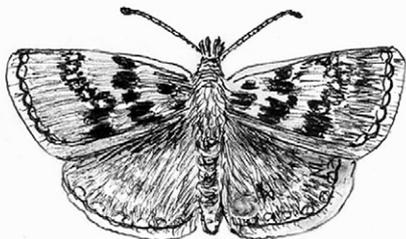
The third of this year's Spring walks was a visit to Sands Bank and Wood, a Local Nature Reserve, on Wednesday 4 May. Yet again the weather was excellent and we had 7 attendees.

Although the unusual weather conditions this year had made it difficult to get the timing right for our walks, in this case we timed it perfectly. Several people had thought that the Bluebells (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) we were hoping to see in Sands Wood would probably be over, and a photograph taken by one of our members of the Bluebells there a few weeks before the walk supported this view, but we were lucky - the display was wonderful. We also saw large quantities of Goldilocks (*Ranunculus auricomus*) in the wood and a number of the typical woodland spring flower species, including Barren Strawberry (*Potentilla sterilis*).

There were huge numbers of Cowslips (*Primula veris*) on Sands Bank and Paul Bowyer pointed out three species of butterfly that he had expected to be present on the site - Grizzled Skipper, Dingy Skipper and Green Hairstreak.



Above: Grizzled Skipper
Below: Dingy Skipper

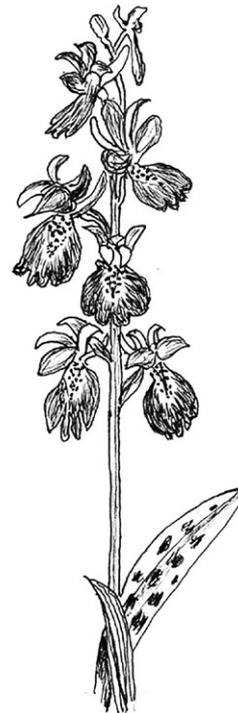


From the top of Sands Bank, the footpath links between Round Wood, Sunter's Wood, Hellbottom Wood and towards Lane End were pointed out, with the comment that the area offered many opportunities for future walks.

Spring walk at Holtspur Bank

This year's Spring wildflower walk at Holtspur Bank was led by Derek Bourne on Sunday 8 May. The sun shone once again and around 20 people supported this Friends of Holtspur Bank event. The weather brought out the butterflies and we saw a large number of Orange Tips and Holly Blues, plus a few Brimstones and a Speckled Wood.

There was a good range of flowers to see, the most interesting ones being Goldilocks (*Ranunculus auricomus*), Coralroot (*Cardamine bulbifera*) and Early-purple Orchid (*Orchis mascula*).



One bonus sighting on the walk was a large, fairly untidy nest high up in an oak tree. The bird occupying the nest remained completely motionless inside whilst we looked up at it, but the unmistakable tail sticking out of one side of the nest informed us it belonged to a Red Kite, so we quickly moved on to avoid causing any stress to the bird.

Four walks all in perfect weather - will our luck hold for our planned summer walks? We will have to wait and see.

Post- AGM member update

The future of WWG

The following decisions of the Executive Committee (EC) on the options, identified as a result of member group discussions at the 2015 AGM and subsequent consultations, relating to the future of WWG were notified to the members in a presentation by James Donald at this year's AGM before the start of the formal business meeting.

It was felt that the present position did not warrant folding the Group, and the remaining trustees could continue to adjust as they have done to date, although this does not solve the longer-term problem. It had been decided that seeking a regular turnover of trustees would not help address the current situation, and the option of doing nothing, hoping something will turn up, is what we have been doing for years with no acceptable result.

No acceptable options were perceived for amalgamating or linking with another body at this stage, and the EC had decided that recruiting external trustees was not a direction in which the Group wished to go. The option of becoming unincorporated (i.e. ceasing to be a charity) was looked into as a possibility, but this would result in the loss of Gift Aid income (although recent budget changes might result in more members paying insufficient tax to be able to sign up for Gift Aid). If our charitable status was given up, it would be irreversible, as only relevant organisations with an income over £5,000 a year can now be registered. As our Constitution requires the Group's assets to be reallocated to another relevant charity on de-registering, pursuing this option would not necessarily benefit any organisation taking over the responsibility for running WWG.

Members were informed that consideration had been given to other options arising from member consultations for overcoming the difficulties in recruiting new trustees. It had been suggested that the term "trustee" might be a turnoff for some, so WWG would be using the term "Executive Committee member" instead where possible. Being a registered charity, however, all elected EC members would still need to be registered with the Charity Commission as "trustees". It was pointed out that the trustee responsibilities for a small charity such as WWG

are negligible compared with those relating to large national or international charities, and the responsibilities for ensuring WWG pursues its charitable aims in accordance with the Group's Constitution are shared by all the elected trustees. The EC normally only meets three times a year and its policies, which set out the direction of the Group and authorise what EC members can do, are reviewed annually to ensure they remain valid and fit for purpose.

The point was also made that members can help in many ways other than becoming an EC member, and steps have been taken to identify tasks which contribute to the running of WWG. Short-term commitments and offers of help can be accommodated as opportunities arise, and it is hoped to develop mechanisms for sharing knowledge of tasks undertaken to avoid a vacuum caused by a key person leaving suddenly. Mention was made of the use of Facebook, posters and email communication to advertise recent events: the point was made that more could be done, if a Publicity Officer could be appointed to deal with the increasing workload.

WWG's finances

James Donald also consulted members at the AGM on options for addressing the likely on-going year on year increasing deficit caused by the increasing costs of the newsletter, hall hire and speaker fees. He added that the Group had sufficient reserves that would prevent this becoming a serious problem in the short term. The result of the consultation was strong support for taking some action to address this matter and support for reducing the level of reserves. There was strong support for retaining the current number of meetings and support for investigating the possibility of finding cheaper venues. We received mixed comments about speaker fees, with suggestions for considering having more in-house speakers. There was little support for increasing entrance fees for meetings, and although more members opted for, rather than against, charging fees for outdoor events, there were several reasons put forward for not going along this direction. There were fairly even views on increasing subscriptions, and little support for ceasing to produce a printed version of the newsletter. Some fundraising ideas were put forward and these will be considered.

The 2016 AGM

Although WWG's Constitution stipulates that nominations for the Executive Committee should be received 7 days in advance of the AGM, it is possible to seek nominations at the AGM prior to the election of EC members if the number of vacancies exceeds the number of nominations received. As our Constitution allows up to 10 EC members and the 5 existing members had offered to stand for re-election, offers to stand for EC membership were sought from the members present. Peter Osborn said he would be willing to stand for election and he and the five existing EC members were nominated, seconded and elected. Subsequent discussion with Peter, indicated that he would very much like to assist with publicity tasks and this is really good news as publicity had been identified as one of the key issues affecting the future of our Group.

How members can help WWG

You don't have to be an Executive Committee member to help WWG. Here are just a few ideas for your consideration:

- Help distribute posters;
- Take photos of Group activities for publicity use;
- Help man a WWG publicity stand at local events;
- Give a short talk at a members' meeting;
- Help with hand deliveries of printed newsletters;
- Submit articles for the WWG newsletter;
- Help look after WWG's wildflower garden at Hughenden Manor;
- Help with conservation tasks such as cutting back overgrown scrub and raking strimmed grassland;
- Help on joint tasks with other groups with similar aims;
- Help with wildlife surveys;
- Raise plants to promote wildlife gardening or to raise funds for WWG;
- Help WWG to keep in touch with members who do not or cannot attend meetings;
- Note wildlife sightings and submit them to WWG for newsletter, website and records purposes;

If you are interested in any of the above, please let us know.

Why do some members not come to our events?

This is a question we plan to ask the members concerned during the coming year and hope to find answers to.

Although we would like to see more of our members attend our events, we do realise that many are members of other organisations and activities often clash. We also realise that some of our longer-serving members do not drive at night and do not always feel they want to go out on a winter's evening.

We very much value the support we receive from members who help us with their membership subscriptions and realise that many are content to remain members even if they cannot actively support the Group. We are aware that some members are happy just to be kept informed of what we do by receiving our newsletter, either by email or in printed form. As you will have seen from the previous page, our active members are very supportive of the newsletter, including the printed version.

If we find that some of our members who cannot get to our meetings at present, would like to attend some of them if someone could collect them and take them home, we would like to try to arrange for other members to give them lifts if this proves possible. With this in mind, it would be extremely helpful for members who are in a position to give a lift to other members when it is convenient for them to do so, would let Karen Roberts, our Membership Secretary know on 01628 526225.

Thank you

I will finish this member update by thanking James Donald and all who have helped him with his project of looking at the longer term future of WWG. Although progress is bound to be slow, I do feel we are starting to move in the right direction and that, with your support, our Group will achieve an acceptable outcome to the administrative and financial issues that we have raised.

Wildlife observations - January to April 2016

The following sightings are the only ones submitted by members for this issue:-

January 2016

20 th	2 young Blackbirds	Higginson Park, Marlow	SU848862
20 th	50+ Redwings	Near Pens Place, Marlow	SU843853
25 th	Red Kite carrying item of prey	In garden near to centre of Wycombe	HP13 6PY
27 th	Cherry Plum in full blossom	Deeds Grove garden	HP12 3PA

February 2016

2 nd	First Red Admiral	Deeds Grove garden	HP12 3PA
25 th	Siskins	Along Wendover Way	SU872924
26 th	Chiffchaff calling	Near Pens Place, Marlow	SU843853

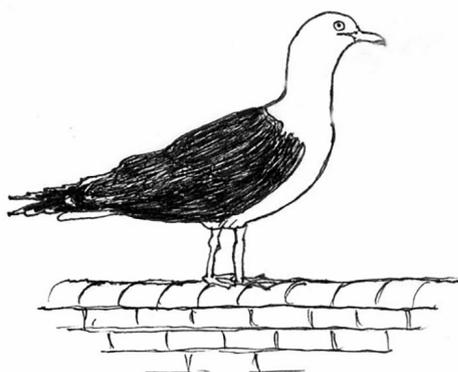
March 2016

15 th	Redwings still at Marlow	Near Pens Place, Marlow	SU843853
22 nd	Siskins	Deeds Grove garden	HP12 3PA
29 th	Reeves's Pheasant (male)	Flackwell Heath garden	HP10 9AX

April 2016

8 th	3 Willow Warblers	Along Wendover Way	SU872924
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Garden tweets



When I go out into the garden early in the morning to feed the birds, a veritable queue of my feathered friends is waiting for me, it being the breeding season. The Blackbirds and Robins don't even bother to wait for my hand to withdraw from the feeding stations. It really is a case of 'the early bird that catches the worm'.

The next ritual is putting the dregs of our porridge out on the lawn for them - the Blackbirds have always been keen on that, but this Spring we have been amused to see two Robins, a House Sparrow parent and no less than four Herring Gulls and a Lesser Black-backed Gull. Whereas the Sparrows and Robins peck daintily at the mixture and take it to feed to their babies, the Gulls just gulp it down in one go, and 30 seconds later there is nothing left. (The Gulls do regurgitate their food for their youngsters.)

Our garden birds certainly present a great source of amusement.

Frances Wilding

An almost unbelievable decision

Being a member of Plantlife, I regularly receive details of that charity's wild plant conservation campaigns. A recent appeal, entitled "Forget me not", is aimed at raising awareness of the fact that exploring nature and discovering wild plants are experiences which create wonderful memories for children.

I was shocked to read that the campaign had come about as a result of a number of words being omitted from the latest edition of the Oxford Junior Dictionary, as they had been considered no longer relevant to children today. It is difficult to imagine children growing up unaware of the existence of acorns, adders, beech, buttercups, catkins, cowslips, dandelions, ferns, fungi, hazel and hazelnuts, heather, herons, horse chestnuts, kingfishers, magpies, newts, otters, poppies, primroses, starlings, thrushes, violets and willows (just some of the words which have been omitted from the Junior Dictionary).

I suppose we can blame Health and Safety for the disappearance of "conkers", but the disappearance of "holly" and "ivy" could impact on Christmas cards and decorations, and presumably at least one Christmas carol will become obsolete. I suppose the omission of "ash" is based on the general view that this species is doomed and "blackberry" might well get a new entry as a type of mobile phone, along with other more recent words considered more relevant to today's children, such as "broadband" and "cut and paste".

In my opinion, "cut and paste" should be applied to the Dictionary decision makers responsible for this madness. They need to be replaced by persons who appreciate the value that nature has in the development of healthy and active children, and in the creation of wonderful memories that encourage children to inspire the next generation when they grow up.

Roger

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Subscription £6 per annum, if paid by Standing Order, or £7 per annum, if paid by cash or cheque.

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Sort Code: 402417 Account number: 92116685
Account name: Wycombe Wildlife Group

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Amount of payment: £6.00 Six pounds

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