



It was mentioned in the last newsletter that the rare Yellow Bird's Nest (*Monotropa hypopitys*) grows in Lambridge Wood. This photograph of that species was taken there on 28 July 2019.

Issue 90
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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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Printed by: Greens, Lincoln Rd, 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.

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.

Although our newsletter is only published three times year, the time for preparing another issue always seems to come round so quickly. It has been my practice until now to include the copy date for the next issue on the front page of each newsletter and I have always waited until that date before writing any reports or articles, in the hope that someone else will submit something for inclusion. As this so rarely happens, I have decided not to publish a copy date and to prepare reports on walks and talks soon after they have taken place, making use of any information or photographs of the activities provided by others. I will, of course, continue to welcome items for the newsletter from other members.

Despite the lack of material for the newsletter coming from members, I consider it is important for Wycombe Wildlife Group to continue to issue its newsletter to keep its many members who continue to support us by remaining members even if they are unable to no longer take part in our activities on age or health grounds, or because they do not or no longer, drive. Our newsletters also provide a detailed continuous historical record of the Group's development from its formation in 1989 to date. Copies of all of our newsletters are now on the Group's website, and are available to all those with the means to access it.

Although I am happy to continue as Editor, I think it would be sensible to consider having a deputy who could take over the role if the need arose. The same applies to the roles of Chairman and Webmaster for which we were unsuccessful in seeking replacements at the recent AGM. Whilst both I and Malcolm Pusey have agreed to continue to perform these roles in the absence of anyone else willing to take them on, neither of us can carry on indefinitely.

The good news is that following the AGM, one of our members offered to take on the role of Treasurer, a vacancy that will occur from the end of this financial year. The bad news is that Inge Beck has said that she wishes to have a break from membership of the Programme Planning Committee and her Programme Secretary role at the end of this financial year. As this role has never been performed so efficiently as it has been since Inge took it on, this is a serious setback for our Group. If anyone feels they can help to ensure we continue to be able to organise an interesting programme of talks and other activities, please have a word with Inge or me to find out what the role involves.

Obituary

I was very sorry to hear that Pat Dancer, a long-standing member of Wycombe Wildlife Group, passed away on 21 July 2019, aged 94. When I last spoke to her about three months ago, she said that she was sorry that she could no longer support our activities, but added that she has always enjoyed reading our newsletter.

May to July 2019 walks

Walk to Munces and Hollyhill Woods on 17 May

This walk followed a short but interesting section of Wycombe Wildlife Group's Round Wycombe Walk. The 25 mile Round Wycombe Walk has been planned so that it can be undertaken in short stretches of around 3 to 5 miles, getting to the starting point and back from the finishing point using bus connections from and back to the town centre. The starting point for this walk was the Three Horseshoes PH at Burroughs Grove. Although it was perfect weather, only three off us turned up for the walk.

Our route followed the Chiltern Way as far as the small hamlet of Juniper Hill from where we turned right to follow a public bridleway which passes an entrance to the Woodland Trust owned Munces Wood and Kimber's Copse. Using this entry point to the site, the lack of trees must come as a surprise to most people used to visiting Woodland Trust sites. Having a large area retained and managed as chalk grassland, however, complements the site as a whole, by providing a complete succession from grassland to ancient woodland.

Before enjoying the grassland flora, we went over to the southern boundary fence to see if the conditions were clear enough to see Windsor Castle which, although about eleven miles away, can be seen quite clearly when the visibility is good enough. Unfortunately it wasn't on this occasion. After a quick look at the grassland species in flower, we walked through some of the older parts of Munces Wood



and admired the trees growing there which include some old Yews.

On reaching the northern end of the wood, we walked a short distance along a residential road to get to the north end of Marlow Bottom from where a public bridleway runs between High Heavens Wood and Hillgreen Wood on the left and Hollyhill Wood on the right. Although the route of the Round Walk continues to Hill Green from where a right turn leads to Old House Farm, we decided to take the path which follows the southern and eastern sides of Hillgreen Wood and comes out onto the path between Hill Green and Old House Farm. The path through Hollyhill Wood is not a public right of way, but visitors to the wood are welcome and seats are provided alongside the path in the NE section of the wood to allow people to sit and admire the secret of this wood - a number of stupas. These are buddhist shrines created by the former owner of this wood.



After leaving the peaceful Hollyhill Wood, we were soon confronted by the noise of the traffic on the M40 motorway on the opposite side of the valley. Turning left at Old House Farm, a bridleway took us down to a road tunnel under the motorway. From there, the bridleway continues along the north side of the motorway to the road bridge between Booker and Wycombe Airpark: this is a noisy path to walk along although there is a good range of wildflowers to admire on the way. On this occasion, however, we finished our walk where a path to the right leads to the road between John Lewis and Asda, close to where the 32 bus provides a regular service to the town centre. The bus connection was not needed on this occasion, however, as the finishing point of our walk was within a short walking distance from the homes of the participants.

Visit to Sands Bank LNR on 28 May 2019

This visit was arranged partly because Sands Bank is an excellent site for wildflowers and invertebrates and partly because the Round Wycombe Walk is planned to pass by the top NW corner of this Local Nature Reserve. This was another occasion when the weather was good but the attendance was low - only Paul and I turned up. The highlight of the visit was the sighting of an Adonis Blue, which was a surprise, but its identification was confirmed by the photograph below.



Unfortunately an out of focus distant photograph I took of an unidentified small Fritillary species, which appeared briefly before flying off and not returning, was not good enough to confirm its identity. In fact Paul described my photo as the worst butterfly photo he had ever seen. He was pleased with my photo of the Adonis Blue, however, which clearly shows the fine black wing lines crossing the outer white fringes and just entering the body of the wing.

Amongst the daylight-flying moths we saw on the walk was one of the longhorn micro moths *Adela croesella*.



Other Lepidoptera species seen on the walk were Dingy Skipper, Holly Blue, Common Blue, Small Blue, Peacock, Brimstone, Speckled Wood, Small Heath, Burnet Companion and Cinnabar.

Gomm Valley visit on 15 June 2019

This event was arranged for two purposes. One was to provide members with an opportunity to walk around the BBOWT Gomm Valley Nature Reserve which is adjacent to the planned route of the Wycombe Wildlife Group Round Wycombe Walk when a right of way is established as part of the development of the Valley. The second reason for the walk was to point out where in the valley the changes will take place and the areas that will be retained and, in some locations, enhanced to provide a biodiversity gain.

Whilst accepting that the overall appearance of the valley will change, it is realised that its status as a reserve site for housing makes the loss of some of the unspoilt countryside inevitable. At least the latest proposals will have some positive outcomes such as retaining the areas on the site with the greatest ecological value, extending the existing hedgerows, and increasing the areas of grassland.

This was the first time I had visited the Gomm Valley SSSI for several years and, whilst I appreciate that the scrub removal and the subsequent on-going grazing by horses was aimed at improving the chalk grassland habitats, I was very surprised at the large quantity of horse dung allowed to accumulate on the nature reserve. I would have thought this would enrich the soil and be detrimental to the chalk grassland flora.

Unlike the other two walks reported on, this walk did not present any problems for any participants arriving

by car as there was plenty of parking space near the railway bridge. Only 3 members came on the walk, however.

The floral highlight of the visit was the opportunity to admire the few but perfect Bee Orchids (*Ophrys apifera*) seen. These clearly showed their long-stalked pollinia, which fall forwards on their stalks, onto stigma, to cause self-pollination if insects fail to carry out this task.



Walk at Moored Common on 22 June 2019

This was the best attended walk in the May to Aug 2019 programme and it proved to be an interesting walk which was enjoyed by those who attended. We met by the Prince Albert pub

in Fingest Road, Frieth, and did a circular walk around Moored Common covering some of the damp and dry habitats and some of the open woodland areas.

The Common is an unusual habitat in our area because its soils are acidic rather than alkaline, and this results in the presence of flora which are not usually found in the Chilterns. The main floral attractions during our visit were the Heath Spotted-orchids (*Dactylorhiza maculata*) and Southern Marsh-orchids (*Dactylorhiza praetermissa*) which were at their best. We also saw Ragged-Robin (*Lychnis flos-cuculi*).

When we reached the point on our walk where we needed to turn back to return to our starting point, Elaine and Richard Bird invited us to take a slight diversion to visit their nearby smallholding. Everyone took up this offer and it provided an interesting addition and finish to what was a very enjoyable morning.



Ragged-Robin and some of the orchids which we saw during our walk around Moorend Common

Visit to Black Park on 10 July 2019



Only 4 members turned up for the walk at Black Park where it was hoped to see some of the woodland butterfly species that can be seen there. The target species for the walk was the White Admiral, but although we found plenty of Honeysuckle, its larval foodplant, the butterfly did not put in an appearance during our walk. We did see a Purple Hairstreak, however.

After the walk, I still had some time left on my parking ticket, so I took a brisk walk around the lake before returning home. Black Park does have a good diversity of habitats including heathland, and it is well worth a visit at any time of the year.

Butterfly walk at Stoke Poges Memorial Gardens on 13 July 2019

Paul Bowyer undertakes this event each year on behalf of the Friends of Stoke Poges Memorial Gardens, and WWG members are welcome to attend. The butterflies likely to be seen on this walk are ones that often appear in our own gardens, but this event does provide an opportunity to enjoy the well maintained and interesting gardens which include rock gardens, water gardens, formal borders, trees and shrubs and wildflower areas.

The butterfly species likely to be seen on this walk are fairly predictable, and Paul usually says at the start of

his walks there how many species he expects to see, and he is usually right.



Holly Blue



I also visit these gardens when Bucks Fungus Group undertakes a foray there. The total number of species found varies but is usually around 60 to 80 and includes a number of Waxcap species, including the Pink Waxcap (*Hygrocybe calyptriformis*) on the mown lawns, and Bird's-nest fungi (*Crucibulum laeve* and *Cyathus striatus*) on the wood chippings on the fishing platforms next to the lake.

Making space for invertebrates

No matter how small or large the size of your property, it is easy to find space for a purchased or self made home for beneficial insects. As well as the simple insect homes designed for small and medium sized gardens, it is interesting to see some of the more elaborate structures that have been created in large gardens open to the public.



A possible interesting new local plant recording project

A recent exchange of emails has resulted in an idea for a possible interesting project which could make a valuable contribution to meeting the aims of our Group.

The idea stemmed from an email from Phillip Pratt who is not a WWG member but was on the committee of the former BBOWT (South Bucks) Region with which we arranged joint meetings prior to taking responsibility for running the meetings at Holtspur when BBOWT (South Bucks) ceased to exist because the vacant Chairman post could not be filled. Philip is now very involved in the Military Orchid

management at BBOWT's Homefield Wood nature reserve. He is also very supportive of the campaigns relating the benefits of managing roadside verges for both flora and fauna.

Phillip's initial email notified me that he had seen some Indian (Himalayan) Balsam plants alongside The Rye, adding that he was struggling to find any because someone keeps pulling them out. I thanked him for informing me of the balsam plants on The Rye and added that they had already been earmarked for removal as part of a Revive The Wye balsam bashing programme that I had arranged.

I also expressed interest in the wildflower survey work he had been undertaking, mainly in the local urban areas, suggesting that it could possibly form the basis for a wider project involving more people, perhaps by involving local organisations such as WWG.

The result of the above exchange of emails is the following article which Phillip has written and sent to me for publication in our newsletter, an action which I am delighted to take.

“I thought that I would like to see how many species of wild plant I could find as I went about my regular activities. This has meant looking in gutters and drains, at cracks in pavements, on walls and around the edges of car parks, as well as the more usual verges, fields, woods and riverbanks. Mostly this has been in and around High Wycombe, West Wycombe and Marlow. I have seen species that I have never really taken notice of before, and seen familiar species at various stages of their development. It has also been interesting to see how individuals of the same species vary according to their growing conditions.

It struck me that I was finding a surprising variety of species within High Wycombe, species that were often flowering weeks in advance of plants in rural areas. Examples include Annual Meadow-grass at the base of one of the stone spheres in the High Street, Lesser Swine-cress creeping onto a tennis court, Buck's-horn Plantain at a pedestrian crossing, Smith's Pepperwort on the verge in front of Aldi, and Prickly Lettuce in a planter outside Sainsbury's.

Some sites are temporary. This may be because they are left derelict before building work begins, or arise from disturbance during, for example, road

building, and will revert to grass and the occasional Daisy when regular cutting commences. Two such sites have yielded many records this year, including a Green Hairstreak butterfly, but are very unlikely to do so in future.

It can be frustrating when you see an interesting plant or group of plants, then find at the next visit that the area has been cut or sprayed. Perhaps it's part of plant spotting in an urban area, seeing what survives in what can be a hostile environment.

Wild flowers have been sown or planted, as at the University and various locations along the Wye. Personally, I think that if a species has survived over several years it is a valid record, and a note can be made if it is known that the area was seeded or planted.

I will certainly continue making notes for my own interest, but I hope that we can bring together the efforts of others for a wider benefit.”

I am sure that many of our readers will see the value of others helping to increase the information that Phillip is gathering by his own observations. I would be pleased to hear from any of our readers who would like to support a wider project by offering to undertake occasional plant surveys in locations convenient to them. Whilst this is aimed at urban rather than rural areas, any plant records are helpful in furthering WWG's knowledge of what grows where in its area of operation. Whilst the creation of local records will be of benefit to WWG, it remains important to notify the Bucks and Milton Keynes Environmental Records Centre of sightings likely to be of interest.

The results of a change of grassland management

Wycombe District Council, in its wisdom, decided not to close mow all the grass on Tom Burt's Hill this year. This resulted in a wonderful display of outstandingly beautiful chalk grassland flowers carpeting the once boring green desert, and the hill has been alive with bees, butterflies and hoverflies.

Wide paths have been cut through the grassland in places, so that one can wander through the flowering meadow and admire the scene from all angles.

The display included the largest patch of Wild Thyme I have ever seen, and Dwarf Thistle, Common Knapweed, Ladies Bedstraw, Harebell and Burnet

Saxifrage, to name but a few, are all blooming profusely.

If you have not done so this year, make a point of visiting this public open space next Summer.

All this flowering grassland is not the result of any seed sowing or planting, but a natural flowering of perennial plants which in previous years have been mown off before they could reach maturity. I very much hope that this practice will be repeated each year and delight many more people.

Frances Wilding

Garden tweets (May - August 2019)

A white tailed Blackbird was in a fight with a younger female - had to separate them.

The young birds, I find, are not so good at steering as their older relatives, who have got used to the garden. A young Starling, who had been bathing, flew straight for a window pane, and left a wet splodge, but it was OK.

We have had a lot of amusement from a visiting (I hope!) Ring-necked Parakeet. It has tweaked the metal cap from our fat ball feeder, and climbed inside to get to the feast. It had only its tail sticking out of the top. It did this repeatedly, although I systematically made it harder each day just to test it. Unfortunately the young Starlings were looking on and learning, although they were not as dexterous. Five times I had to rescue Starlings stuffed down and well and truly stuck in the feeder.

The garden seems full of insects, mainly different species of Hoverfly: I plant mainly single flowers which contain nectar.

My tiny new pond has already got lots of “creepy crawlies” in it. Very quick to colonise.

Our young Blue Tits are putting in an appearance, after about 10 days of hiding shyly in the bushes. They are finding their way around the garden, and have the courage to enjoy their communal baths in the bird bath, and also flitting around in the dew on the lawn. A very pretty sight.

We have a “garden take-over”. The young Starlings (30+) empty 4 bird baths every day in their enthusiasm, and eat an enormous amount of food. They are clamouring from every tree.

Baby Goldfinches, Robins and Dunnocks all on the lawn this morning (2 July). We have a huge amount of fledglings this year.

A juvenile Starling has been picking up twigs and dead leaves. I wonder if it is practising for the Spring. (10 August)

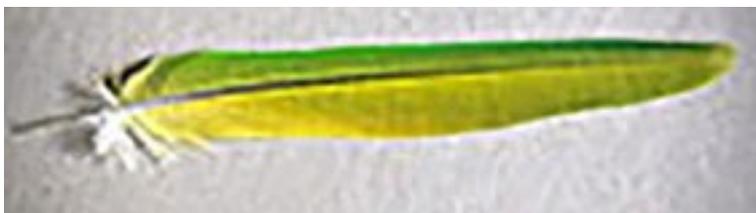
This is the time of year when young Blue Tits come into the house through the open windows by accident as they are looking for little insects around the frames. (20 August)

A mother Goldfinch and her three babies were visiting the bird bath together. The adult was having a good bathe, but the young ones were reluctant to venture in the water. Their behaviour was similar to toddlers visiting a swimming pool for the first time.

Now, in late August, the Robins are starting to sing their new, rather wistful songs.

There have been a great many tweets this time, obviously due to a very successful breeding season.
Frances Wilding

I am pleased to report that the Ring-necked Parakeet referred to in Garden Tweets has now ceased to be a resident in our garden, although it visits from time to time. It did leave us the following memento of its prolonged stay however.



Other reported wildlife observations around our area

Several Skylarks singing either side of the green road at Naphill. A beautiful chorus. (May to July)

Swifts flying over Deeds Grove, High Wycombe (10 May)

Small Copper in a Deeds Grove garden (22 May)



Family of Pond Skaters happily whizzing around on the water in the flooded subway under Abbey Way, High Wycombe (16 August)

Young Grey Wagtail in a Deeds Grove garden (22 August)



Jersey Tiger moth found inside a car at Holtspur when the back door was opened a few days after a trip to the West Sussex coast. The moth could have got in the car at Holtspur or it could have hitched a lift from the coast. (29 July)

Heron flapping slowly amongst the traffic in Oxford Road, High Wycombe whilst being mobbed by Gulls. It seemed disorientated but managed to get away safely.



Young Stock Dove landing in The Rye Dyke. After flapping about, it managed to take off, spraying water as it went.

