



Henley Wildlife Group

Newsletter 34
February 2012



For your diary

Sunday, 4 March; 10.00-12.00	Hit litter
The Wildlife Group is working on the Valley Road Chalk Bank as its contribution to "Hit litter". Sensible clothing. Tools, bags etc. to be provided. 01491 572668	
Meet at the entrance from Knappe Close. A Henley Town Council event.	

Tues March 13, 7.45 p.m. for 8 p.m.	Wild flowers and where to find them in the Chilterns
Gay Fallows(now Beattie) A talk, with over 100 photos The presentation, open to all, will include fascinating facts on name origins and culinary, medicinal and other uses of many of the 160 Chiltern wild flowers featured. Clive Ormonde-a member of the Group, who maintains our website and attends our work parties-contributed a number of the photographs. Gay's book, same title, will be on sale.	
The Barn , Henley, RG9 2AO (entrance via Kings Road car park.) Admittance £2	
Contact: Sheelagh Hill 01189 475441 /7780600740	

Saturday April 21 14.30	Flowercroft Wood Walk
A walk to see woodland flowers, including bluebells. Find out how a wood can be managed for timber production and wildlife. Three miles with one steep climb, no stiles. No dogs please.	
Meet: All Saints Church, Rotherfield Peppard. Car parking available. RG9 5JN Grid Ref: MR 714816	
Admission: Free	
Contact: Andrew Hawkins 01491 576929	

Thursday, May 17; 19.00-Dusk	Annual general meeting-HWG
As usual our AGM will take place out of doors, subject to the weather. The formal session will be brief, leaving time for a wildlife walk without obstacles.	
The Flower Pot pub' in Aston. Plentiful parking and seating in their garden. If wet, indoors.	

Saturday, March 10; 10.30-12.30	EARLY SPRING WALK AT MAPLEDURHAM
A leisurely general interest walk of about three miles, looking for signs of spring. No stiles, but it might be muddy in places.	
Meet: The car park of Mapledurham playing fields, off south side of Woodcote Road, Caversham Heights Grid Ref: SU 699758	
Contact: Alice Ayers 0118 92674	

Thursday, April 5; 10.30-16.00	Toads on the Thames
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An event for children on toads and frogs. Froglife will also run three pond dipping sessions (11.30am, 1pm & 2.30pm)	
Call 01491 415605 River & Rowing Museum	

Sunday, August 5, 14.30	Stoke Row walk
A general interest walk taking in the Maharajah's Well.	
Car park for the Sports Ground and Pavilion, Newlands Lane – signposted off the road through Stoke Row. Narrow lane to North between hedges where the road turns left, at SU685841.	
Leader: Sally Rankin	

Last half-year

Weather conditions

Apart from early February, the past six months have been extraordinary: the second warmest autumn and the warmest October day on record. All bar one of the top ten warmest years on record have occurred since 1997 and all the UK's top seven warmest years happened in the past decade. While some may question the causes, surely no one can now doubt the reality of climate change.

Talks

On the 11th October, John Morris of the Chiltern Woodland Project came to give the Henley Wildlife Group and some members of the public a talk on **Chiltern Woodland: their history and management, past and present issues as well as archaeological features and wildlife**. The event was held in the Barn near Henley Town Hall. 39 people attended, enjoying a drink and the chance to look at display material and books before the talk began. John illustrated his fascinating talk with photographs, extracts of documents, graphs and maps. A number of questions were asked at the end, reflecting the interest of the audience.

Work parties 9.30-12.30

As well as being excellent exercise, work parties are social, outdoor events, very seldom rained off. And they are not hard labour.

First Wednesdays each month, March-September	Mill Meadows
Maintenance of wildlife areas around the museum. Hand tools only.	
Parking in the River & Rowing Museum car	

park.	
Wednesday, 14 March	Valley Road Chalk Bank
Maintenance of wildlife areas on the Bank.	
Parking on the Wootton Manor estate or on Valley Road.	
Contact 01491 572668	

Housekeeping

Subscriptions

As the end of the current membership year draws near, we have 46 paid-up members. This compares favourably with 47 last year and 46 the year before that. A big "Thank-you!" to all our members for their valued support and contributions. We already have eleven paid-up members for the coming (2012-13) year!

Why not join the growing number of loyal supporters who have opted to pay by an annual standing order to the Group's bank account? If you would like to pay by this method then please complete a 'new standing order instruction' form. The form is available from your bank, or use the one attached to this newsletter. Include your name as the standing order reference and it will show up on our statement alongside your contribution, so we know who has paid. If you would like any assistance, please call one of the committee (See below).

Alternatively, you can pay your subscription by cash or cheque (made out to "Henley Wildlife Group") to the treasurer - Chris Bond, 47 St Andrew's Road, Henley on Thames, RG9 1JA.

Don't forget to talk to your friends about joining too. If you know anyone who would be interested in joining the Group and supporting our work in the town, please let them have the form that comes with this newsletter.

Bird Report 2010-2011

Ten years ago the Henley Wildlife Group organised a survey of the town's wildlife. A second bird survey, to assess the changes that have occurred during the ten-year period, was planned last year. We published our bird report last year. This is now available generally via the website. (<http://www.map-reading.co.uk/hwg/index.html>) Some hard copies may be available from members of the committee (see below).

The most notable increases were shown by red kite, buzzard, long-tailed tit, and jackdaw, whose sighting scores more than doubled. The most notable decreases were shown by goldcrest, green woodpecker, house sparrow, mistle thrush, and treecreeper.

Internet Connection

Please let us know if you are able to receive the newsletter by email: it's a lot easier and more efficient for both of us.

Help, Please

We are not yet having to turn volunteers away. You are extremely welcome at work parties, our committee, giving talks, leading walks or anything you feel would help.

Membership

Please tell your friends how much they would enjoy taking part in the Group, and encourage them to join. See the form at the end.

Group Activities

Henley Town Council

The Group acknowledges the help and support we receive from the Town Council and,

through them, from SODC, etc. They assist us with funding, on several significant issues and we greatly appreciate their help with our maintenance operations.

Mill Meadows

At the February work party on Mill Meadows, marsh marigold leaves could be seen just emerging from the soil and leaf litter so we look forward to an attractive display of their pretty yellow buttercup-like flowers before long. There were no signs of the fritillaries but they are very grass-like until they flower so it isn't easy to find them. There is a nice patch of brooklime on the river side of the tree line near one of the gaps and some of it is scrambling over a large fallen limb on the edge of the patch – not something you usually think of brooklime doing.

There are lots of mole hills on Mill Meadows at the moment, nearly all of them in our conservation area by the ponds. It is good to know that our areas are providing an excellent home for these creatures. Interestingly, there are very few mole hills outside our conservation area.

The town council has been cutting back some of the tall vegetation around the ponds for us, after which we rake up the debris. The idea is to let more light in to enable a wider variety of plants to germinate. It also removes the build up of thatch so that there is less to burn in case there is a repeat of last year's fire.

The Green Gym tackled the pond nearest the stream in January. As with the pond nearest the railway line last year, it was heavy work. The matted roots of the pond sedges made it very difficult but we were able to get out a lot. We now have more open water than for a long time although we left a good proportion of the pond untouched for the sake of the wildlife. Those who found the pond work too heavy cut back brambles for us, another useful task. We are very grateful to the Green Gym this work; also to the town council for their help.

The Open Spaces Society has introduced a new award, their Open Space award. Any activity or project which supports their aims can be entered, so we have entered our conservation areas on Mill Meadows.

Wildlife Trail Leaflet

The stocks of our wildlife trail leaflet are running low but we are hoping the museum (R&RM) will provide a reprint.

Valley Road Chalk Bank

There have been two work parties this half-year involving two people then five. Apart from the perennial litter pick, the vegetation has to be kept in check and the paths clear. More of the chain-link fencing has been taken down. (This should never have been erected in the first place.)

The chalk bank itself, left by building works about 30-40 years ago, is now almost completely covered with vegetation. There are some dangerous areas which have been brought to the attention of the council. We hope to have a Green Gym work party to cut back some of the ash and sycamore trees which are rising rapidly. We also cut back the bramble thicket at the Eastern end of the site.

Gillotts Field

David and Andrew attended in December. They planted three cherries and a Scots pine, picked up lots of tree tubes and cleared other debris. Large amounts of damage by rabbits ring-barking ash trees.

Toad rescue

The annual toad migration near the Henley Management College is now underway. Toad rescuers will be out, for about the next month, helping toads to complete their arduous journeys to the spawning ponds. They mostly move on warm wet evenings and helpers typically work from 6 - 8.30 p.m., carrying them across the road in buckets. More helpers would be very welcome. If you would like to help with these nocturnal activities please contact Alan Parfitt, alanparfitt@btinternet.com, tel. 01491 572660 or Angelina Jones, amtjones@googlemail.com, tel. 01491 574195

Wildlife trail

The town council, supported by SODC, plans to raise the level of signage around the town, including our Mill Meadows site. The wildlife group will work on the signs along the same lines as those that have been erected in the past, including the recent ones on the Chalk Bank and Gillotts Field.

Wildlife News**Spring bird activity**

A sign of the coming spring: on fine days skylarks have been singing over fields near the church at Rotherfield Greys since January. Also in this area, the wildlife interest of the golf course between Greys and Peppard is increasing as the rough areas and the areas planted with trees about twelve years ago become more mature. The flora includes pyramidal orchid while birds seen include green woodpecker (frequently), yellow hammer and whitethroat.

Frogs, toads and other amphibians

Both our treasurer and our editor have observed the frogs (or toads?) in our respective ponds have been mating since last week. The group is disappointed that there is no such activity in our ponds on Mill Meadow. Newts have been found in one of the ponds and it was suggested that newts cannot co-exist with frogs and toads, and *vice versa*. Google tells me they can.

Links (ALL <http://www.>)

Green Gym	sonningcommon.btcv.org.uk/
Henley Wildlife Group	map-reading.co.uk/hwg/
Wildlife Trusts	wildlifetrusts.org/
Henley in Transition	henley-in-transition.org.uk/
Reading & District Natural History Society	rdnhs.org.uk
Natural England	naturalengland.org.uk
Chiltern Society	chilternsociety.org.uk/
The River & Rowing Museum	rrm.co.uk/
BBOWT wildlife trust	bbowt.org.uk/content.asp?did=23914
There is a BBOWT walk at Mapledurham	

on Saturday 10 th March	
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Contacts(all01491):

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Sheelagh Hill **PR**
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PAYING BY STANDING ORDER

Paying by standing order

The Group has a new bank account. The foremost advantage of this is that enables you to set up a standing order instruction to pay your subs, cutting out the hassle of writing cheques or delivering cash to the treasurer each year. With the previous account, if you paid by standing order, the money would be credited to the account with no mention of from where it came! Now, if you include your name in the reference on the form, it will show up on our statement next to your contribution.

If you would like to pay by this method then please complete a 'New Standing Order Instruction' form. The form is available from your bank, or use the one delivered with this newsletter!

To complete the form, follow these instructions:

- Enter the name of your bank or building society at the top of the form
- Fill in the details of your account in section 1
- In section 2:
 - o The name of the organisation you are paying is 'Henley Wildlife Gp'
 - o The payment reference should include your name, such as 'Fred Bloggs subs'
 - o The sort code of our bank is 60-10-35
 - o The number of our bank account is 13160273
- Enter the frequency and amount in section 3. For example
 - o Payments to be made yearly
 - o Date and amount of first payment: 01Apr11, £5.00
 - o Leave the date and amount of ongoing payments blank, so that the payment is the same each year
 - o Tick the box for 'Until further notice'
- Sign and date the form in section 4, then deliver it to your bank or building society.

Please join us and help improve Henley's wildlife

The main aim of the Henley Wildlife Group is to improve Henley's open spaces for wildlife and people. We have an agreement with the Town Council to manage some areas on Mill Meadows for wildlife, and we have returned a small part of the Meadows to wet flower-rich meadow and reed bed, an example of the type of vegetation which would once have been common along the banks of the Thames. We manage other wildlife sites in Henley such as Gillott's Corner Field.

Many lovely wetland plants grow on Mill Meadows but they need a more natural environment in order for them to flourish. Increasingly threatened plants such as **Cuckoo Flower**, **Ragged Robin** and **Marsh Marigold** grow on the Meadows, and Southern Marsh Orchids used to grow there. A wildlife area has enabled these plants to spread, and it provides a home for a variety of invertebrates, and a good feeding place for many resident and migrant birds.

The Henley Wildlife Group organises meetings and work parties to care for the conservation areas in the town and anyone with an interest in nature conservation is welcome to come along. A newsletter is circulated to members advertising the dates and times. The group is affiliated to BTCV (the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers) and the Oxfordshire Nature Conservation Forum.

For more information about the Henley Wildlife Group contact the chairperson on Henley 578 633.

Please join us and complete the coupon below, returning it with the membership subscription (≥£5 annually on the 1st of April) or a standing order mandate--to the treasurer: Chris Bond, Corner House, 47 St Andrew's Road, Henley-on-Thames RG9 1JA

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____



British Trust for Conservation Volunteers

An independent group affiliated to the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers
a registered charity