

C.R.O.W.

Conserve Reading on Wednesdays

NEWSLETTER

BOX 14. ACORN BOOKSHOP, 17 CHATHAM STREET, READING RG1 7JF.



no. 6

Affiliated to the BTCV

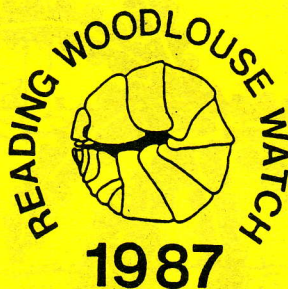
Every other Wednesday, whatever the weather, CROW carry out PRACTICAL CONSERVATION TASKS in and around the Reading area. There are usually two pick-ups from the front of Reading Railway Station: one at 10.00 am, and the second at 1.30. If you can only come for half a day, that's fine! Look out for a grey minibus with Berkshire Conservation Volunteers' stickers on the side.

WELCOME TO CROW'S SIXTH NEWSLETTER!...

Summertime is here again...? yeah, let's be optimistic! The type of tasks change during the summer months. We try to avoid disturbing the various wildlife habitats we have carefully conserved throughout the winter. We become very 'constructive' building stiles, fences and pathways with the occasional bout of scrub-bashing for those suffering billhook withdrawal symptoms!

July should not be dull with 'Berkshire Goes Wild' starting with an exhibition at the Greyfriars Centre on 8th-11th July and following on with 2-3 weeks of co-ordinated activities. We will be working at Devil's Dip Nature Reserve in Southcote on 8th July. So, if you were interested by the exhibition you could trot up and see practical conservation in action. Everyone is very welcome!

Looking forward to seeing you on task.



The Reading Urban Wildlife Group is conducting a survey of Woodlice in Reading. Despite being extremely common animals throughout the country there is little known about their ecology.

The Woodlouse Watch will begin by recording the different species about town with co-ordinated efforts from schools and individuals. There are 34 species found in the UK but up to now no proper records for Reading. If the survey is successful then later this year Woodlice will be used as lead pollution indicators. Woodlice do NOT bite and are really useful 'composters' in our gardens.

Further help is required on the survey and details, plus a FREE guide to identifying the 'famous five' (i.e. the most common Woodlice), can be obtained from Dr. Steve Hopkins. Dept. of Pure and Applied Zoology, University of Reading, Whiteknights Road.

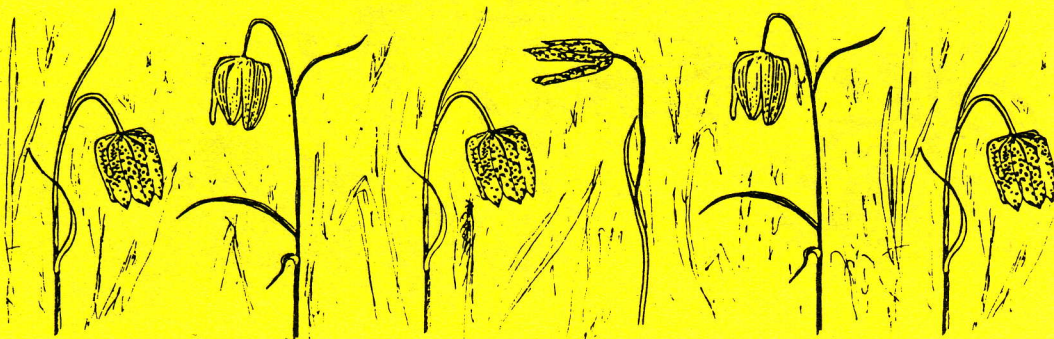


For the month of July the Berks, Bucks, and Oxon Naturalists Trust, (BBONT), is organising a variety of different events focussing attention on nature in the county.

There is to be an exhibition at the Greyfriars Centre in Reading, 8th to 11th July, with contributions from a number of local and national organisations. Even CROW gets in on the act, in conjunction with BeC and other conservation groups.

There will also be masses of separately organised field events throughout the county: watch local media for details nearer the time. As well as informing people, it is hoped that the exhibition will encourage people out into the countryside. Hopefully, the whole thing will get extensive coverage on local TV and radio as well as in the papers.

For more details, contact BBONT at 3 Church Cowley Road, Rose Hill, Oxford. OX4 3JR. Or Ian Francis, (BBONT's Berks Conservation Officer), on Reading 341721. (Dinton Pastures).



BACK TO SCHOOL

Very young conservers have been much in evidence this last couple of months starting with the task at Micklands Primary School. The school has the good fortune to own a copse at the edge of their playing fields. While the kids, (and teachers!) are developing their interest in wildlife and it's conservation, the wood is being enriched and an adjacent area given over to wild flowers.

We, with our many helpers, cleared some of the undergrowth, made habitat piles and dug a deep trench to create a damper environment. We were inspired by the enthusiasm of many of the children for practical work, especially cutting down trees. Potentially worrying, but they quickly learnt to distinguish between different types, and understood how and why we chose to fell particular ones.

For our help we were offered lunch. However, this was not akin to the school dinners of our childhoods, this was an amazing vegetarian buffet, (with sherry, sorry, orange juice). Much refreshed we spent the afternoon doing more of the same, and using the young tree trunks to mark out a wildflower meadow and a pathway through the woods. We also got to plant out a few things: primroses, violets, and foxgloves in a small glade. A very satisfying day.



A BRIDLEWAY NEAR BINFIELD

A damp and dismal April morning, heavily overcast. I have second thoughts and I check that I have a complete set of waterproofs. I sign on at Wessex House at the right time (!) then hurry over the road to the pick-up point. This week I am accompanied by Rowan and Laurel, (four and two respectively). When the minibus arrives they climb in, excitedly.

We stop on the verge of a fast country lane, and find a muddy track winding off beside a recently laid hedge, (I have learnt to recognise this sort of thing). Very sticky mud about six inches deep. Laurel wants to go home. Rowan nearly falls into a ditch. There are about seven of us altogether, so we unload masses of billhooks, saws, loppers and slashers, plus the tea things of course. We collect dead twigs and branches to start a fire in the middle of the ribbon of mud. Nothing as cheering on a drizzly morning as bright flames. After five minutes the first attempt dies amidst much smoke.

Bracknell Council's Footpath Officer arrives with his dog and chats. He helps build another fire and this time we succeed, soon having a firey volcano of crackling branches. The children play with the dog.

Meanwhile, the others have been hard at work: one or two with slashers clearing nettles and the like, followed by others with saws and loppers, cutting down tall thornbushes. Half the width of the bridleway is impenetrably covered with dense bushes, cutting out all the light to the ground. We remove everything as far as the boundary drainage ditch, now a black stagnant puddle lurking beneath the undergrowth. Gradually we progress along the path. Rowan beats nettles enthusiastically for awhile, Laurel, under close supervision, throws sticks on the fire. At teabreak they hand out the biscuits, never mind the muddy fingers.

After lunch everyone sets to with gusto and we clear a surprising amount. Now the sun will get in and dry the mud, and a tractor can clear the drain. We let the fire die down and look at the fruit of our labours. It will be an interesting visit in the Summer to see the results.



EUROPEAN YEAR OF THE ENVIRONMENT

'Aye, 'aye, what's all this then...?

The British government has shown it's miniscule concern for the environment by agreeing to the European Year of the Environment. With a minimum of funding, a committee of worthies is hoping to stimulate a range of activities within three broad catagories: Nature conservation; Control of pollution and wastes; and improvement of urban dereliction, all under a logo symbolising a partnership between industry and nature.

So where does CROW fit in? Well EYE is trying to foster activities from the largest of organisations to CROW sized groups and individuals. CROW have, and will work on sites covering each of the three broad categories. We also get loads of free stickers and a chance to use their logo. - So here it is:



CONSERVATION COURSES

Berkshire Conservation Volunteers, (BeC), are running weekend courses, you've probably, (or perhaps not?) missed the last one on coppice woodland habitats. The next one is in August on ponds and wetlands.

For more details contact Ewen, on Bracknell 59338.



WHAT ELSE?

JUNE

- 21st Warburg Reserve Open Day. North of Henley, 2.00-4.30pm.
- 21st BeC Bridleway clearing, Hazelwood Lane.
- 28th BeC Mystery task, Dinton Pastures Country Park.
- 28th R.U.W.G. City Safari, from Earley station at 2.30pm.

JULY

- 5th BeC Lily Hill Park, building sleeper bridges.
- 12th Devil's Dip Open Day. 10-5.00 (R.U.W.G.)
 - 11.30 Creepy Crawleys.
 - 2.30 Guided nature walk of Prospect Park.
- 12th California Country Park Open Day. With BeC, ditching and bridge building.
- 12th A Walk Around Sulham Woods. Meet 2.30 at top of Sulham Hill. GR 647 745.
- 18th R.U.W.G. Bulmershe Day. 10.30-5.00pm with guided walk at 11.30am and pond dipping for the kids at 2.00pm.
- 19th BeC at Aston Upthorpe. Ragwort pulling.
- 25th "Kennet Valley and Canal". Meet at "Cunning Man". GR 681 707.
- 26th BeC at Edgebarrow Woods. Footpath work.

AUGUST

- 1st&2nd BeC Ragwort pulling at Chilbolton Common.
- 9th BeC Footpath work in Lily Hill Park, Bracknell.

OTHER GROUPS: Berkshire Conservation Volunteers. (BeC).
Tel: 874034. 664686

Reading Urban Wildlife Group. (R.U.W.G.)
Tel: Trish on 68341.

WORK PROGRAMME

BULMERSHE POND	10th June	Putting in some fence posts and transplanting some reeds.
DINTON PASTURES	24th June	Work on the wildlife garden.
SOCIAL	7th July	A mystery tour out of Reading to a non-task site. Will include (many) stops for refreshment. Meeting 7pm at Palmer Park, (near the bottle banks). Book early to avoid disappointment!
DEVIL'S DIP Southcote	8th July	Planting, weeding and grass cutting.
RUSHEY WAY POND Earley	22nd July	As above. Part of 'Berkshire Goes Wild'.
BROADMOOR COMMON	5th August*	Scrub clearance.
UFTON COURT	19th August*	Preparing a marshy area on the edge of a pond.
NORTHGROVE WOOD	2nd Sept.*	Weeding between the trees we planted earlier this year.

*Morning pick-up only.



If you want to come along...then wear old clothes, wellies or strong boots, a packed lunch if you intend staying the whole day, and either waterproofs or suntan lotion depending on the weather! It's a help if you phone beforehand, especially if you want to be picked up at lunchtime. If you can't reach us then come along anyway!

We provide...drinks, transport, biscuits, tools, any training required, mud and brambles where possible, and enlightening, garrulous conversation. It's slimming, it's muscle building, it's ideologically sound, it's more didactic than a dole queue, more mediciferous than meditation,..... it's on wednesdays, it's..... whose got my dictionary? ...See you there!

CONTACT No's

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