

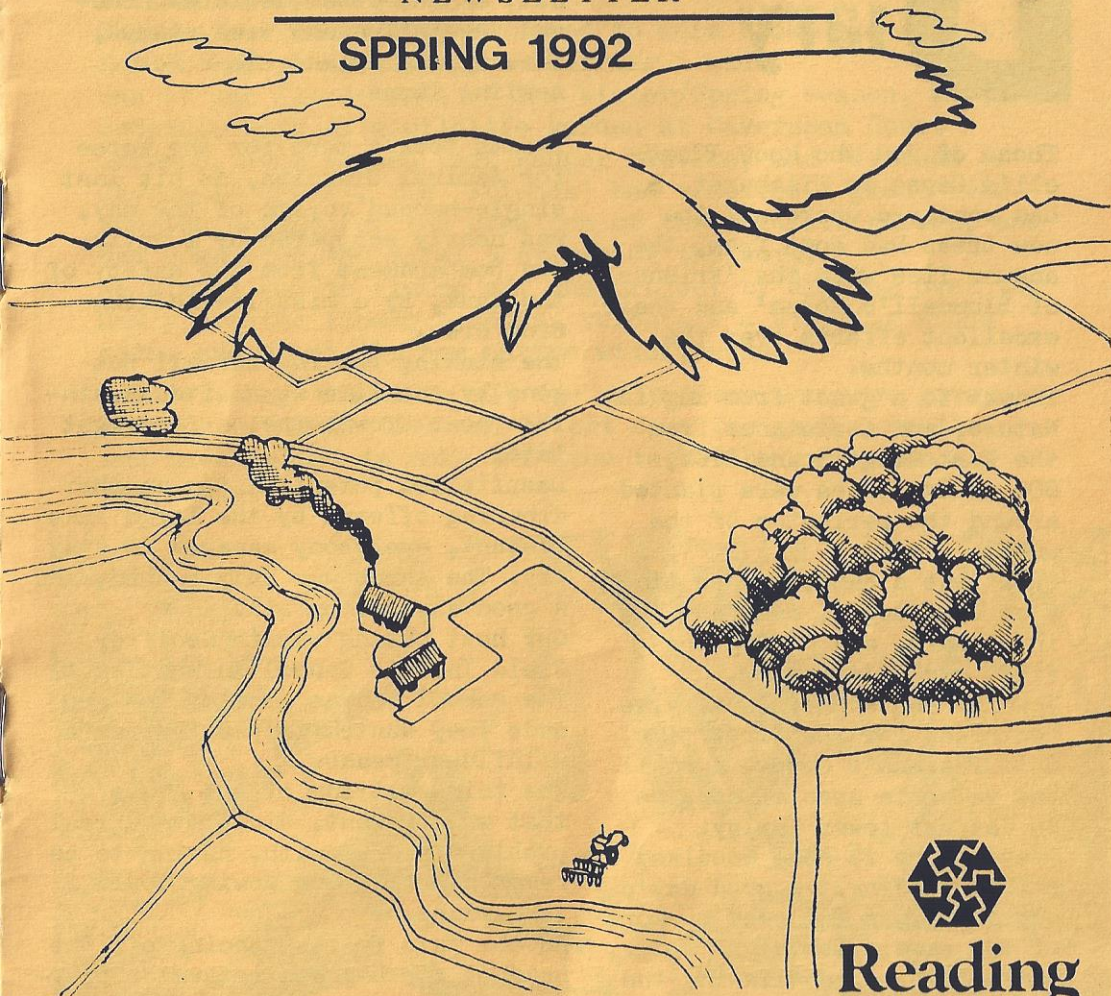
C.R.O.W.

Conserve Reading on Wednesdays



NEWSLETTER

SPRING 1992



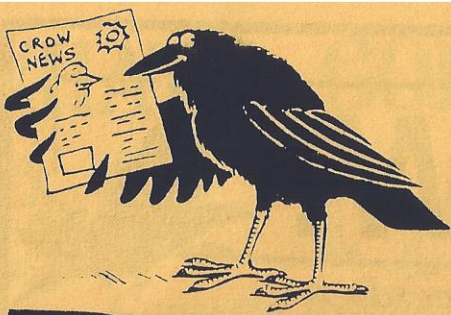
PRACTICAL MIDWEEK
VOLUNTARY CONSERVATION
WORK TO PROTECT
OUR LOCAL COUNTRYSIDE



Reading
BOROUGH COUNCIL



NATURE
CONSERVANCY
COUNCIL



Diary

Those of you who know Blundell's Copse in Tilehurst, & had wondered where all the new trees had come from, the answer lies with the 'Friends of Blundell's Copse' and their excellent efforts over the winter months.

Thanks to a grant from English Nature, and assistance from the Park Rangers and BTCV, 800 native trees were planted around the perimeter of the wood.

CROW lent a hand, trench planting on a soggy, overcast day in January, and hoping the frost wouldn't return.

Towards the end of January, we ventured, for the first time, into Pearman's Copse, a small but valuable area of coppice in deepest Lower Earley.

(Yes! There is some woodland still standing.) A good day's coppicing was followed by more of the same a fortnight later, at Moor Copse, continuing the work we started here last year. February saw us really pushing the boat out, at the Loddon

Reserve in Twyford, as 17 brave souls set sail in the good ship 'Crow', a collapsible dinghy affair of rather suspect buoyancy. The reason for this nautical exercise, the efficiency of which would have put the SBS to shame, lay in the work site being an island in a flooded gravel working.

The Grebes looked on with interest, as the assembled crew removed vegetation and tree stumps, leaving the island clear for nesting Terns.

Events took a turn for the worse for Admiral Sixsmith, as his last single-handed voyage of the day, was nearly scuppered by a mutinous bombardment from the safety of the bank, by a missile-wielding Crow crew.

The sinking feeling had all but gone by the time we visited Heathlake near Crowthorne, a fortnight later.

Despite the potential for another drowning offered by the large lake present, everybody managed to stay dry. The scrub was duly bashed, and a good day had by all.

Our next outing was to Geoffrey Field Infants School in Whitley. The school had an area of the grounds they wanted to plant-up as a wildflower meadow.

The thick matting of rye grass that was present, did prove a real problem to deal with, having to be removed before any sowing could take place.

As the rain fell, bouncing off the head of the hapless rotavator operator as he staggered from one area of quagmire to another, the children gazed curiously from the shelter

of their classrooms, clearly intrigued by the sub-aqua proceedings going on outside. By the end of the day though, the area had been cleared of the rye grass, and the turf used to construct a bank, that will eventually be planted with wildflowers.

The school will complete the project, once the ground has had a chance to dry out, and the meadow will become a very valuable outdoor classroom.

Nobody was fooled by our April 1st excursion to Basildon Park, near Theale. This beautiful National Trust estate is well worth a visit, as is The Holies, another NT site further on at Streatley.

The weather thankfully returned to more Crow-like conditions for an enjoyable day spent clearing a ride.

One of our final tasks of the Winter/Spring season, was to complete work on a wildlife garden at Caversham Court Gardens, home to the Park Ranger Service, and 'Friends of Caversham Court'. The 'Friends' had received a grant from English Nature for the creation of the wildlife garden, and had completed the first 3 stages of the work.

We simply had to finish off the project by digging over the newly created flower borders, reinstate a stepping stone path, and plant the new native wildflowers.

Lastly, many thanks to all the volunteers who have given so much of their time and effort over the past 4 months, and have helped to make the Crow tasks the great success they were.



Woodworks

March 11th saw the 'Friends of Blundell's Copse' host a woodland Open Day. It was organised by the Berkshire office of the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers, and aimed to highlight the work of the 'Friends' group and to celebrate the success of the BTCV Million Tree campaign.

Traditional woodland crafts such as bodging and hurdle making were demonstrated, and visitors well catered for with a barbeque buffet available.

Guided walks were led through the wood, explaining their ecology and the flora and fauna it supported.

CROW were present, demonstrating the traditional woodland management technique of coppicing.

Coppicing is the method of periodically cutting a small tree, producing many shoots which can be used, once the right size, for a variety of products, such as chairs, hurdles and besoms.

Originally, back as far as Neolithic times, the wood was grown for fuel and tool handles, though the main reason for continuing the technique today, is to reduce competition between trees, to diversify habitat, and to provide nesting sites for birds and cover for animals. Not all trees are suitable for coppicing. Oak, Ash and Beech for example, are best left to grow into standards, with the bulk of the coppice being made up of Hazel, Alder, Willow and Hawthorn.



A cutting rotation of 7-25 years is usual, and there are some fine examples of coppice to be found throughout the Chilterns.

As its name implies, any 'Copse' should have evidence of this form of management, though the practice is only recently being re-established in Reading's woodlands as part of wildlife conservation work.

Despite being criticised by some people, who mistakenly see it as vandalism, the benefits of coppicing are clear, and it remains an important factor in the appearance and function of the woodland environment around us.

diG

iT!



Whether you have a private garden or country estate, whether you want to improve your school grounds or your local park, creating a wildlife garden is an easy and rewarding way of encouraging wildlife onto your doorstep.

A surprising diversity of wildlife exists in urban areas, though most of it still relies on 'green pockets' amongst the concrete sprawl for its survival.

By planting the right kind of shrubs and flowers, a whole new perspective on the term "wildlife" is opened up.

Just because you don't see badgers and foxes running round the garden doesn't mean it doesn't support wildlife. Beetles, spiders, butterflies, bees and birds; they all form part of the wildlife mosaic.

By creating specialised habitats such as wet pools, ponds, log piles and rock habitats, a great diversity of animals can be encouraged. Simply revising the mowing regime of the garden lawn will produce impressive results.

Native wildflowers can be introduced into your garden to go some way towards compensating for their decreasing numbers in the countryside, and can produce displays to rival any exotic plants.

For excellent advice on creating a wildlife garden, or for simply investigating the potential for your existing garden, 'How To Make A Wildlife Garden' by Chris Baines (Elm Tree books) is recommended.

You could also get some ideas by visiting the recently created wildlife garden at Caversham Court Gardens in Church Road.

Remember though, it is illegal to take plants from the wild. Pick up a seed catalogue, or visit your local garden centre.

Happy gardening!

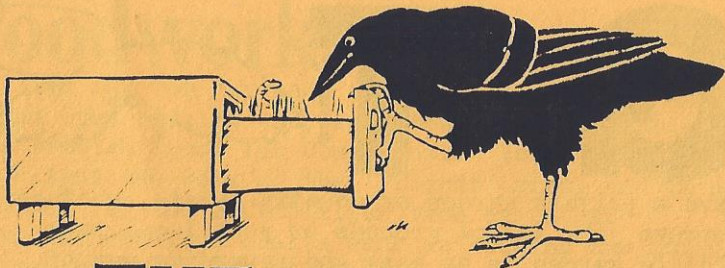
all change!



Please note that the pick-up from the railway station on task days has changed. The pick-up is now at 9.30am, not 10.00am as before, and the minibus will now be at the 'set down' point on the other side of the station from the main entrance.

Please call us (477917) beforehand if you intend to meet the minibus at the station so we can look out for you.

You could alternatively meet us at Caversham Court in Church Road Caversham, at 9.00am.



AS THE Crow FILES

We were truly under inundated with entries for our fabulous 'Spot The Fish' competition in our last issue.

Hundreds of you got the answer right, but only three remembered to enclose the £17.50 entry fee.

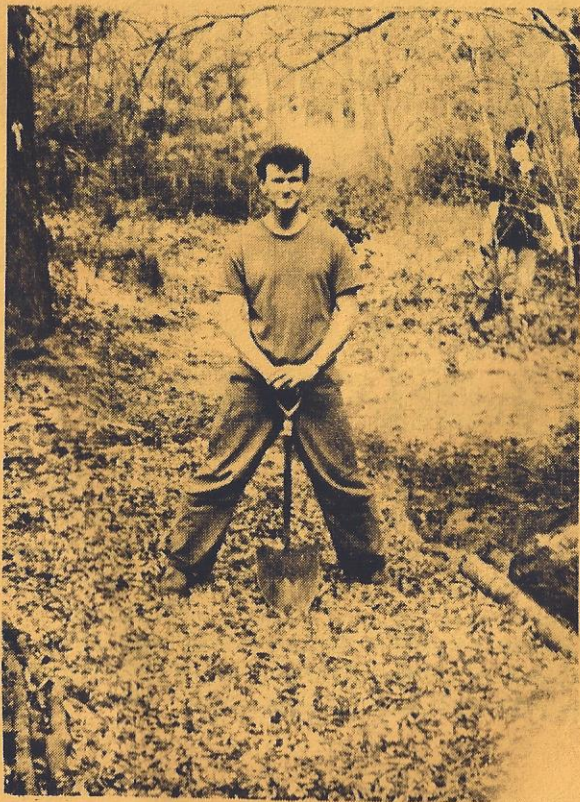
The 3 lucky names were put into the Crow hat, and we can now exclusively reveal the winner's name.

He is Mr R. Haworth, from Caversham, who wins £500 of traditional woodland products and a day's conservation work with Harry the Happy Haddock. Commiserations to the unlucky losers, but here's your chance to try again!

For this issue's competition, we've borrowed an idea from another publication, and are having a Caption Comp! To be in line for one of the top prizes of dinner for 2 at Lentil-U-Like, and a broken mug handle, simply send us your caption to the photograph on this page.

Entries close on 15th June 1992, and must be accompanied by a cheque for £25.00, or a large bowl of fruit, whichever is the cheapest to post. Winners will be announced in the next issue.

Relatives and former work colleagues of the featured volunteer are encouraged to enter under assumed names.



MAY 16th-24th Environment Week

16th Open Day at Caversham Court, Church Road.

Exhibitions of Park Ranger work and other conservation activity. Guided walks around the gardens.

JUNE 3rd Guided bird walk at Thames Prom. Meet at top of Cow Lane (opp Cardiff Road) 6.30pm. Please book on 461638

8th-14th Berkshire Bat Week

8th Bugs Bees and Butterflies. Guided walk at Southcote Watermeadows. Meet end of Circuit lane. 6pm. Please book on 461638.

13th Bat Walk at Southcote Watermeadows. 9pm. Please book 461638.

26th Nightwalk. Walk at McIlroy's Park and woods. Meet in Tylers Rest car park off Norcot Hill. 9.15pm. Please book on 461638.

By now you're probably thinking, what a wacky newsletter, with faintly amusing graphics and fabulous spelling, but who exactly are these CROW people and what do they do?

Conserve Reading On Wednesdays is a group of local conservation volunteers who work at a variety of sites in and around Reading, to protect and improve the countryside and open spaces.

We work closely with the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers and Reading Borough Council's Park Ranger Service.

The work we do includes coppicing, hedgelaying, tree felling, pond clearance, and scrub control.

We meet on Wednesdays (see task diary on back page), with a minibus pick-up from the set down point at the rear of Reading railway station, at 9.30am. Please let us know you're coming. You could alternatively make your own way to the work site and meet us there at around 10.00am. We may also be able to pick you up en route.

We provide all the tools, as well as light refreshments.(tea, coffee etc.) You'll need a packed lunch, and don't wear your best clothes!

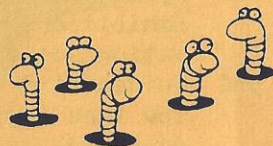
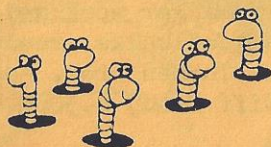
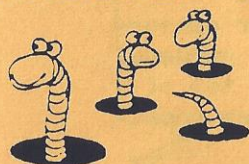
So, why not come along and join in? Get a bit of exercise and help improve the local countryside at the same time!

Gigs!

who? why?



WHAT'S GOING ON ?



Conserve Reading on Wednesdays

WORK PROGRAMME - SUMMER 1992



Wednesday 13th May

EDGEBARROW WOODS, OWLSMOOR

We'll be constructing edging and laying woodchip surfacing on a bridleway through this important heath and woodland site between Sandhurst & Bracknell



Wednesday 20th May

BLUNDELL'S COPSE, TILEHURST

Bridge building and possibly boardwalk construction across the stream that runs through this remnant of the woodland that once covered West Reading



Wednesday 10th June

NINE MILE RIDE, BRACKNELL

Rhododendron control in the woods near The Look Out



Wednesday 8th July

BASILDON PARK, Nr THEALE

A return to this beautiful National Trust estate to the west of Reading where we'll be doing tree work



Wednesday 5th August

MAIDEN ERLEIGH WOODS

Pulling up young Sycamore seedlings as part of the work programme of the Friends of Erleigh Wood

Please phone for further details nearer the date(s)
Conserve Reading On Wednesdays, c/o Caversham Court
Gardens, Church Road, Caversham, Reading RG4 7AD

Tel: Richard (0734) 477917 or BTCV (0628) 771189