

WYCOMBE and SOUTH BUCKS  
**WILDLIFE NEWS**  
SEPTEMBER 2023



Photo of young Saffrondrop Bonnet (*Mycena crocata*)  
seen in Deangarden Wood on 17th September 2023

## Issue 102

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Wycombe Wildlife News is published 3 times a year to promote the Group and wildlife issues, and to inform members and the public of its activities.

Edited and produced by Roger Wilding. Proof reading by Frances Wilding. Illustrations by Frances Wilding.

Photograph of the Greek Dock was taken by Jim Wills, the photograph of the Wasp Spider was taken by Andrew Dodd, the photograph of the Black Arches moth was taken by Karen Roberts and the other photographs were taken by Roger Wilding.

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.

The task of producing the newsletter is becoming more difficult as very little material for inclusion is received from members other than those leading walks and other outdoor events. I tend to take responsibility for reporting on members meetings as this enables me to match the content to the space available.

I would certainly like to receive more items from members including wildlife sightings, especially unusual ones, as the existing sightings rarely cover more than a few gardens. If anyone has any ideas for changes to the newsletter to increase its interest, please let me know.

Roger

### **A once in a blue moon event**

I hesitated before deciding to include the photograph I took of the moon on 31st August 2023 in the newsletter, thinking that many of our readers might consider it inappropriate for a wildlife group's newsletter. I then recalled the fact that, in the past, Stan Armstrong, one of our members, who is a keen astronomer, had given an astronomy talk to us and that Angus Idle, one of our founder members, had also given an astronomy talk as part of a series of wildlife lectures organised by Wycombe Wildlife Group and the National Trust at Hughenden Manor.



My photo of the moon was taken on 31 August 2023 when it was a blue supermoon (being a full moon, a supermoon and a blue moon). A blue moon is not blue: it is just the term used to refer to a full moon which appears twice in the same calendar month due to the moon's 29.5 day cycle being shorter than the number of days in some months. These blue moons occur every 2 to 3 years.

When a full moon is at or near the closest point to the Earth, it is referred to as a supermoon. A blue supermoon is much rarer than a blue moon, and there can be a gap of as much as 20 years between them, although 10 years is the average.

The next blue supermoons will occur in both January and March 2037 so I will make a note of this in case (a) I am still living (b) I am still interested at the advanced age I will have reached by then, and (c) I can remember where I put the reminder note.

Roger

**Wycombe Wildlife Group is a registered charity No.1075175 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.

Resources permitting, helps manage local wildlife sites by undertaking practical conservation work and 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.

## Smalldean Lane and Park Wood walk on Thursday 25th May

This walk was led by Paul Bowyer who has provided the following list of butterfly and moth species he recorded on the walk.

### Smalldean Lane

#### Butterflies

Holly Blue  
Common Blue  
Orange Tip  
Brimstone  
Comma  
Red Admiral  
Duke of Burgundy  
Grizzled Skipper

#### Moths

*Pyrausta aurata*  
Burnet Companion

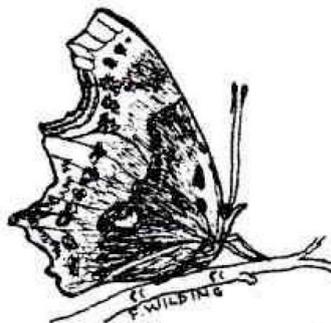
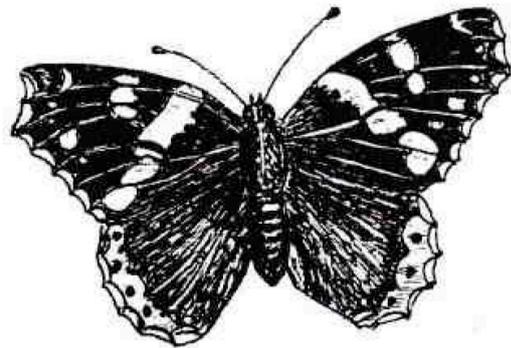
### Park Wood

#### Butterflies

Holly Blue  
Common Blue  
Orange Tip  
Brimstone  
Grizzled Skipper  
Dingy Skipper

#### Moths

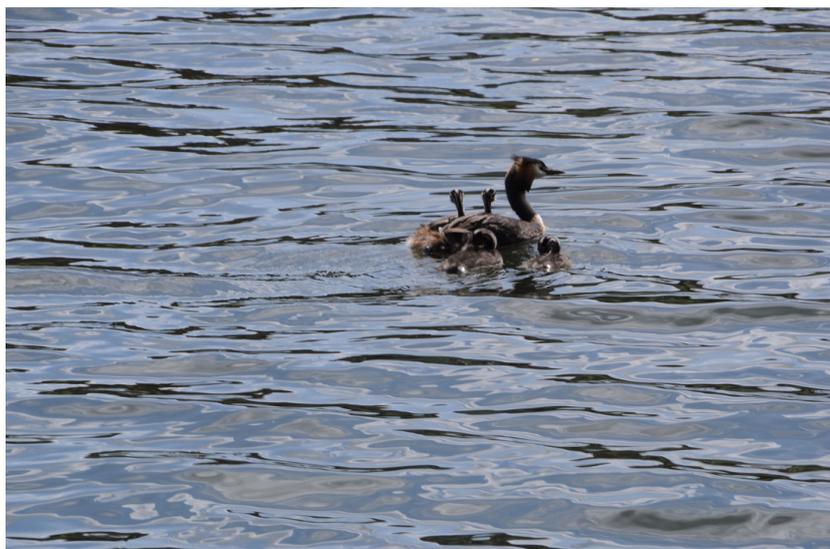
*Pyrausta aurata*  
Burnet Companion



## Marlow walk on 6th July 2023

Six members attended the walk at Marlow on 6th July 2023 which was led by Frances Wilding.

We met in Higginson Park and walked upstream along the Thames Path looking for plant species growing on the riverbank and in the edge of the riverside meadows as well as looking for and listening for birds. There was so much to see that we realised that we would not have time to get as far as Temple Lock and return via Pens Place and Lower Pound Lane as planned, so we walked back along the towpath to where a footpath turns off the Thames Path and joins Lower Pound Lane on the Marlow side of Pens Place. This path runs alongside a very attractive wetland habitat and we were pleased that we had decided to take that route. When we reached the junction of Lower Pound Lane and Pound Lane we went through a gate into Court Garden after admiring a number of cornfield annuals that had been sown in the grassland at the junction.



We turned into Higginson Park at this point and finished the walk near the car park. Frances and I were feeling hungry and decided to get something to eat and drink in the Court Garden cafe before catching a bus back home.

Over 40 plant species were seen on the walk as well as a few butterfly, damselfly and bird species including Cormorant, Stock Dove and Ring-necked Parakeet. The bird highlight was seeing a family of Great-crested Grebes with the youngsters riding on the back of the mother.

At one location along the Thames bank, Jim Wills spotted what he thought was a Greek Dock, an alien species which is gradually spreading out from London along river banks. He took a photo so that he could check the identifying features and subsequently confirmed that his identification was correct. An Internet search revealed that the species had been recorded along the Thames as far as the location where we saw it.

We all agreed that it had been an enjoyable and interesting walk.



Roger Wilding

## Wildlife walk at Henley on 10th August 2023

8 WWG members and friends gathered outside the River and Rowing Museum at Henley on 10th August 2023 for a walk I led around the Mill Meadows wetland area. We entered the wetlands, which are alongside the Thames towpath, by crossing over some quaint stepping stones above one of the many small waterways in the area.

There were pond skaters whizzing around the quiet surface of the water, and then we were in the midst of beautiful tall flowering plants, such as Hemp Agrimony, Wild Angelica, Purple Loosestrife and Marsh Woundwort.

The aromatic Water Mint was everywhere, and we found the dainty Marsh Bedstraw in several places.

We saw Square Stemmed St John's-wort, Yellow Loosestrife (not related to Purple Loosestrife), and Greater Birds-foot-trefoil winding its way through other plants.

Our two highlights were finding the uncommon Marsh Lousewort, with its finely-serrated leaves, and a huge Wasp Spider (*Argiope bruennichi*) in its web spread between the plants. This species is usually found around the south coast of England.



On our way back across the stepping stones, we noticed lovely round fruits on the Bullace plum trees, that will probably make some good jam for a lucky person coming along in a couple of weeks time!

A most enjoyable walk was had by all, and the hours went by very quickly indeed.

Frances Wilding

## Moth Trapping

19th May 2023

This moth trapping meeting was held in Karen and Paul's garden in Flackwell Heath. After a chilly night with little cloud cover, we only had 7 moth species to show 8 wildlife group members. Amongst the moths were Flame Shoulder, Shuttle-shaped Dart and Light Brocade. Other insect species were caught including Cockchafers and Ichneumon Wasps. It was a convivial social occasion with lots of talk about wildlife.

20th August 2023

On the evening of 19th August 2 moth traps were set up in the garden of Lisa and Andrew Dodd next to the river Wye in High Wycombe. Before sunrise on the 20th August Karen Roberts and Paul Bowyer met Lisa and Andrew to identify the night's catch before showing the moths to WWG members later in the morning. We recorded about 140 moths of 35 different species.

Although not the most numerous, the Jersey Tiger moths took the eye with their vivid red hindwings highlighted by the moth trap light. This species, flies during the day as well and, in recent years, seems to have made a surge northward from the southern coast of England. Other migrant species seen were Silver-Y, White-point and Gypsy moth.



In late summer the yellow underwing moths are attracted to light in quite large numbers. We recorded 21 Large Yellow Underwings, 17 Large Broad-bordered Yellow Underwings and a single Broad-bordered Yellow Underwing. Other species recorded commonly found in gardens were Iron Prominent, Scalloped Oak, September Thorn, Common Wainscot, Black Arches, Willow Beauty, Orange Swift, Flounced Rustic, Pebble Prominent, Shuttle-shaped Dart, Vine's Rustic, Flame Shoulder and Double-striped Pug.

Left: Black Arches

There were some moths which are associated with water. The habitat of the Old Lady is documented as "riverbanks" and 2 micro moths, the Water Veneer and the Small China-mark are closely linked to water plants.

Thank you to Lisa and Andrew for their hospitality for this event.

Identification guides used:-

Field Guide to the Moths of Great Britain and Ireland – Paul Waring and Martin Townsend

Field Guide to the Micro Moths of Great Britain and Ireland – Phil Sterling and Mark Parsons

Karen Roberts

## Wycombe's Green and Pleasant Land

This was the title of a talk given by Roger Wilding at the members meeting held at Hughenden Valley Village Hall on Friday 22 September. Roger had given a talk with this title around ten years ago to The High Wycombe Society and it had been well received. As the talk had never been given to Wycombe Wildlife Group or to any other organisation, Roger offered to update the presentation as necessary and give the amended talk at a Wycombe Wildlife Group members meeting.

Roger started his talk with a photograph looking eastwards along the West Wycombe Road from the top of the tower of St Lawrence Church on top of West Wycombe Hill. The view extends as far as Wycombe Heights at Loudwater and our town is almost hidden by the woods and fields above the railway line west of Downley and the trees within West Wycombe Park and woods along Toweridge Lane on the opposite side of the main road. The view of the Desbrough Castle hill fort on the skyline also helps to preserve the relatively unspoilt views.



Before covering these areas, Roger referred to Widdenton Park Wood which is an interesting place and, being 100ft higher than West Wycombe Hill, stands out as a prominent feature when seen from the high land around Loudwater. It is an interesting site as there is an area of bog and a swallow hole on the top of the hill and there were active sand quarries on the Wycombe side of the hill. The sand was transported along the road from Lane End to the West Wycombe Road via the village which became known as Sands. I suspect there is still sandy soil in this location, but it has not been dug out for many years and the land probably creates a larger revenue from its current use as a shooting range which occupies the fenced off area on the east side of the hill.



Above: Photos of Widdenton Park Wood - one from alongside Wycombe Airpark and the other from the east side of High Wycombe

West Wycombe Hill is located where a number of mainly dry valleys meet, although the one that starts from beyond Bennett End can occasionally (at around 10 to 11 year intervals) become the source of the Wye chalk stream, causing extensive flooding along Bottom Road from Bennett End through Radnage and across fields all the way to Cockshoot Spinney, the recognised winterbourne source of the stream, just outside West Wycombe village.

The woodlands on the south side of the A40 valley were covered, including those near Towerage and around Sands and Booker where public rights of way enable them to be accessed and enjoyed. Roger pointed out that there is a shortage of joined-up wildlife corridors around the Cressex area, but pointed out that wildlife can make use of private gardens, tree belts and the public footpaths through the Cressex Business Park to provide wildlife corridors. The Chairbough Local Nature Reserve and nearby public recreation areas certainly help wildlife to move around this area.

The hillsides on the left of the A40 into High Wycombe support flower-rich wildflower meadows with a woodland background as far as the outskirts of the housing areas which cover the hillside up to Downley. The older part of Downley has a large common and extensive woodlands which provide plenty of scope for walks to Naphill Common and Bradenham or down through woodland to Hughenden from where there are old tracks such as Church Lane, leading to and passing the entrance to Millfield Wood and the adjoining Millfield Bank, an interesting BBOWT reserve, and Boss Lane from which there is access to an interesting wood owned by the Woodland Trust called Gomm's and Bubbles Wood.



Left: Millfield Bank below Millfield Wood

Right: Gomm's and Bubbles Wood



The decision to develop Gomm Valley received a lot of public opposition. Roger said that when it was decided that the site, which was one of Wycombe's "reserve sites" for housing, would be built on, he referred to the location as "the last undeveloped valley along the A40 corridor". Following a long period of consultation and consideration of the various development proposals, it has been decided to reduce the number of homes to be built on the site and to retain 69% of the valley undeveloped. This will provide areas of biodiversity interest and public access through the valley, enabling much of its wildlife interest to be retained and made available for recreational use. New tree planting, the creation of wildflower meadows and a wetland area are now planned, and it has been calculated that there will be a 35% net biodiversity gain. Yes, there will be a lot of new housing in the valley but the BBOWT Nature Reserve will remain untouched, existing private woodland on the site will become accessible and Wycombe Wildlife Group's 20 mile Round Wycombe Walk can pass through the valley. The current temporary route of the Round Wycombe Walk, which uses existing public rights of way through Ashwells, Beacon Hill and Wycombe Heights, will remain as an alternative route to the future Gomm Valley route, as the views from both locations are superb.

Roger said he had recently visited Keep Hill Wood and Deangarden Wood, and was pleased to find that the large number of houses that have been built on the Pinetrees development and on the former farmland south of Deangarden Wood has had no adverse effect on the woodland. The effect of development on the Terriers Farm site is more worrying, as the nearby public rights of way, including Ladies Mile, are becoming rather overgrown. Roger mentioned a plant called Pink Purslane (*Claytonia sibirica*) that is very rare in our area and used to grow in a single location along Ladies Mile, adding that it now seems to have been lost.

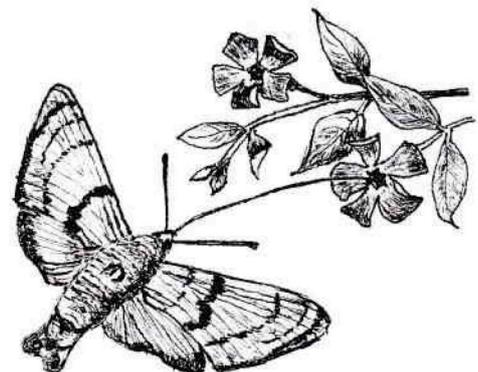
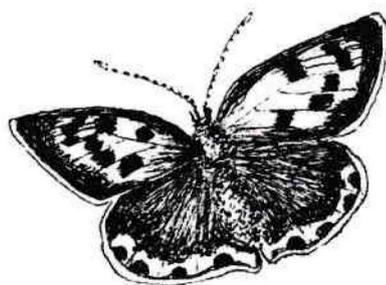


The talk finished with a distant view from the high land on the east of Wycombe looking westwards at the M40 motorway cutting on the Chiltern Escarpment. The creation of this cutting split the only National Nature Reserve that can be seen from High Wycombe in two and everyone was horrified at the time. Although the cutting is now regarded as an important geological site, the decision to allow the cutting to be created shows that not even a site with the highest level of protection is ever completely safe from development.

## **Wildlife sightings reported June to end of September 2023**

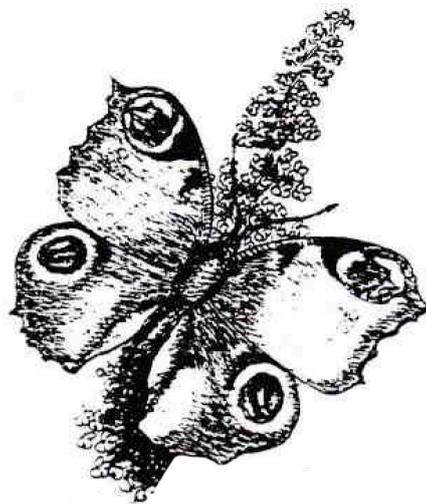
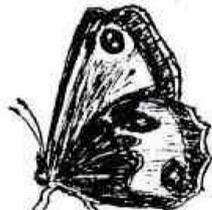
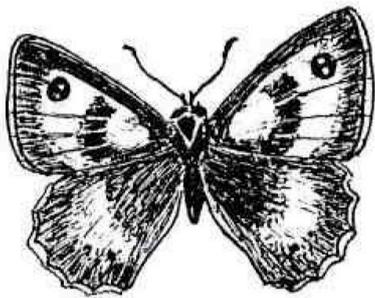
### **Sightings from two Deeds Grove gardens:**

- |              |  |
|--------------|--|
| 1 June       | Starling babies have suddenly taken over the garden again. Common Blue in garden         |
| 2 June       | Young Great Tits, Blue Tits, Robins and Blackbirds all around the garden                 |
| 3 June       | Second batch of young Starlings in the garden  |
| 6 June       | Young Goldfinches in garden  |
| 8 June       | Lovely plump young Song Thrush in the bird bath in garden and a Stock Dove in the trees. |
| 15 June      | Greenfinches wheezing, Stock Dove calling and Swifts screaming                           |
| 3 July       | Cinnabar Moth in garden  |
| 9 July       | 2 young Jays in garden   |
| 20 July      | Hummingbird Hawkmoth, 2 Gatekeepers and 1 Small Copper in garden                         |
| 21 July      | Stock Dove calling   |
| 21 August    | Common Grasshopper, Speckled Bush Cricket and a Jersey Tiger moth in garden              |
| 6 September  | Blackcap bathing in dew on the lawn  |
| 8 September  | Plump young Song Thrush in bird bath   |
| 25 September | 3 Chiffchaffs near house   |



### Sightings from a Downley garden:

25 June	3 Scarlet Tiger Moths
26 June	Scarlet Tiger Moth
28 June	Scarlet Tiger Moth
6 July	Scarlet Tiger Moth
9 August	Red Admiral, Peacock and Brimstone
10 August	Red Admiral, Comma, 2 Brimstone and Gatekeeper
13 August	Gatekeeper
16 August	3 Red Admirals, Comma, 2 Brimstones and Gatekeeper
23 August	2 Red Admirals, Comma, Gatekeeper, Jersey Tiger Moth
25 August	Brimstone Moth





Photograph of an Ochre Spreading Tooth fungus (*Steccherinum ochraceum*) taken by Roger Wilding in Deangarden Wood on 17 September 2023.

### Contacting Wycombe Wildlife Group

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Website: [www.wycombewildlife.org.uk](http://www.wycombewildlife.org.uk)

### Joining Wycombe Wildlife Group

To join our Group, please complete a copy of the form on the right and send to

The Membership Secretary,  
15 Cherrywood Gardens,  
Flackwell Heath, HP10 9AX

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

### Please enrol me as a member of Wycombe Wildlife Group

Name .....

Address .....

.....

Telephone .....

Email .....

EITHER Payment by bank standing order

To ..... Bank

..... Branch

Address.....

.....

NEW standing order instruction:

**Account to be debited** (your account details)

Sort code .....

Account number .....

Account name .....

**Beneficiary bank and payee details**

Lloyds, 27-31 White Hart Street,

High Wycombe, HP11 2HL

Sort code 30 99 50 Account number: 69994368

Account name: Wycombe Wildlife Group

**Payment details**

Amount of payment: £6.00 Six pounds

Frequency: Annually

From:

Number of payments:

Until further notice

Signature

Date

**OR Payment by cheque or cash**

I enclose cheque/cash for £7.00,  
payable to Wycombe Wildlife Group.