



Newsletter of the Manchester Wildlife Group

The Magpie

Number 3. Autumn
1986.

Our group is soon to take two important steps which hopefully will enable us to set up an urban wildlife project in Manchester with an office and paid workers. Firstly we are adopting the rules of the Urban Wildlife Group in Birmingham and registering our group as a company limited by guarantee. We can then apply for a Community Project scheme with the Manpower Services Commission which, if successful, will provide funds for a more extensive and efficient service than we can provide at the moment on a purely voluntary basis.

This does not mean that we can all relax! Any project is only as good (or bad) as its management - in our case the members who come to meetings. It will require more effort from all of us to make the scheme a success, but hopefully the rewards for working voluntarily for the group will become greater as we should be achieving much more for wildlife in our city than we do at present.

We have been given permission by Manchester Recreational Services Department to carry out a survey of the wildlife at Hough End Clough. Anyone wishing to help out on this please get in touch.

FREE TO MEMBERS !

(One Packet Included in this Issue)

WILDFLOWER SEEDS !

Think Green is a national publicity campaign aimed at highlighting environmental improvements in selected cities in November. One of these cities is Manchester (Hooray!) and as well as helping to organise the campaign we will be, amongst other things, unveiling our new wildlife gardening exhibition !

The Greater Manchester Countryside Unit is conducting a survey of amphibians and has asked the group to report any colonies we know about. If any of you have come across sites where frogs, newts or toads regularly breed - even if its only in your own garden pond - please let us know.



WILDLIFE GARDENING IN AUTUMN.

BIRD & BAT BOXES

If you haven't already done so, now is a good time for putting these up. Some boxes are available from the group at £2.00 each for members (£2.50 non-members) including instructions. If you already have bird boxes, clean out any old nesting material for next year. Check your bat boxes for evidence of bats in the form of droppings. Any discovery of bats or sightings anywhere in Manchester are worth telling us about as we are in touch with experts who are recording bats here often for the first time.

POND

Those of you with an established pond similar to the design recommended in our last newsletter will have to get your wellies on and yank out those weeds -sorry- wild plants that are getting out of hand. If you do have too much of anything interesting please get in touch so we can give them to a member with a newly established pond. Any pond will tend to silt up in the middle. Measure yours to see if there is at least two feet of water in the centre so tha frogs can hibernate there in freezing weather.

MEADOW

Late summer/early autumn is the best time to sow a meadow from seed. For best results the ground should have been prepared in mid - summer so that any weeds in the soil could be dealt with in time for sowing now. If you can't wait until next summer try this: Order your seed from a reputable merchant such as Emorsgate Seeds (Terrington Court, Terrington St. Clement, King's Lynn, Norfolk PE34 4NT). A 50 square yard patch costs about £12.00 to sow with seed. Make sure the mixture you choose matches the type of soil you have, whether the area is wet or dry and if in shade of an open aspect. Avoid areas used in the past for burning rubbish or infested with docks - the weeds will strangle your emergent meadow!

Eliminating weeds in your soil is the next step. Even if you do not object to weedkillers it is too late to use them, unless you can wait to sow the meadow in spring - by which time the effects should have worn off. The alternative is to remove the top layer of soil/turf and hand weed anything else which comes up before sowing your seed. The poorer and more weed-free the soil the better as your meadow is at its most vulnerable during its first year. Levelling the area is also advisable.

Following the instructions given by the seed merchant, sow the seed very thinly, making sure the flower seeds are distributed as evenly as possible. Rake lightly to incorporate the seed, stamp all over the area to firm the ground, and water well. If birds are a problem cover the area in taut netting or string to discourage them. Keep off your meadow until well into spring. Depending on the weather, you should see some seeds germinate before winter sets in. Remaining seeds will benefit from being subjected to cold temperatures over winter, and get a head start in spring.

Members Meetings Thursdays at 7.30pm

25 Sept 31 Stanley Rd Whalley Range
30 Oct 82 Crantock Drv Heald Green
27 Nov 1 Gaddum Rd Didsbury



MANCHESTER TREE PLANT DO.

In March I helped to plant trees and shrubs in an open area of Hulme, near a footbridge beside Princess Road, north of Bonsall Street. It was part of a City Council scheme which was originally intended to put 1000 trees in each of ten sites, although because of various problems planting did not take place at all of them. The scheme involved schoolchildren, and then on a Saturday the general public were invited to join in.

I visited the site again in late August to have a look at the results. There were some healthy alders, hawthorns and birches and hardly any sign of intentional damage. However, there were quite a number of trees with no leaves, or with brown leaves, looking distinctly dead! Of course one expects some trees to fail, and at least with the whips (small trees) we were using there is a better chance of success than with standards. (See article on tree planting in this issue).

The City Planning Department is now preparing for another community tree planting in November, which is the best time of the year for planting trees. They have invited suggestions for sites and we have asked for areas in Alexandra Park and Hough End Playing Fields to be considered.

With the experience of the March event, the November tree planting should be a great success, creating woodland where before there was mown grass, improving the city's landscape more and more as the trees and shrubs grow and mature.

CHRIS DAVIES

(Chris is leaving the group soon as he is leaving Manchester at the end of the year. We wish him luck and would like to thank him for helping with the production of the Magpie.)

Since only two members entered our Wildlife Competition, (it is just as well we allowed members of the public to enter), we decided to change the way in which we carried out the draw. Correct entries were drawn out of a pot with the proviso that at least one of the winners should come from the Greater Manchester area. And the WINNERS are:

Marie McGoldrick of Reynell Road, Longsight

Mrs B.M.Davies of Guilden Sutton, Chester

For those of you who couldn't be bothered to enter here are the correct answers:

Meadow	Waterboatman
Alder	Insects
Nettle	Lungwort
Chaffinch	Dandelion
Hawthorn	Lavender
Evergreen	Iris
Stickleback	Fungi
Toad	Evening Primrose
Elder	
Ragged Robin	Goldfinch
	Reedmace
	Oxeye Daisy
	Urban
	Pond

The prizes of a complete set each of Longman's new nature guides will be sent to the winners as soon as they arrive from the publishers.



CREATING WOODLAND IN MANCHESTER.

Any piece of land which is left alone will revert to scrubland and eventually woodland. This leaflet shows the simplest and easiest ways to speed this process up. Firstly we show how to create an "instant" wood - an all at once planting of a mixture of native trees and shrubs. Beyond initial weeding, the planted area can be left to form a dense woodland thicket within only a few years. Pioneer trees (such as birch and alder) should start to grow above the shrubs, providing a variety of wildlife habitats ranging from low shrubs at the perimeter to taller trees in the middle. Oaks prefer shade to grow in and (with luck) any surviving oaks should be able to grow up through the canopy of the pioneer trees. It must be stressed that this is not the best way to create woodland, as it may never progress much beyond the "thicket" stage. However, an infinitely more interesting habitat is created than is to be found with mown grass and "lollipop" trees.

A far better woodland area can be created by extending planting and maintenance over many years, which is described next. This time each layer is established separately - first shrubs, then pioneers and finally oaks. The end result produces a balanced woodland and a richer wildlife habitat than the first method, but it does take regular and continuous effort over a 20 year period.

Finally the planting of a natural hedge is shown for schools etc that do not have space for a wood, but wish to create an attractive barrier and a woodland edge for birds, insects and mammals.

"Instant" Woodland If possible choose an area with some established trees and shrubs - they can be incorporated into the scheme. Avoid wet areas, shallow soil, steep slopes, frost - prone hollows and excessively polluted soils such as power station ash. Such areas need a different mixture of trees so seek advice if your patch has a problem like this. Make sure the site has no service pipes, electric cables etc underneath - or overhead!

Get rid of any sycamore or rhododendron - they will invade your wood and push out all the other species. Grassland should be mown and weeds ploughed up before planting.

In future, when starting woodlands from scratch like this, it is better to spray the area with a non - persistent herbicide in midsummer, raking off the dead weeds later on. Once your woodland is off to a good start no further chemical intervention is necessary!

No matter the size of your plantation, stick to this "recipe":

Shrubs	Trees
Hawthorn (Crataegus monogyna).....25%	Oak (Quercus robur)25%
Holly (Ilex aquifolium)..... 5%	Silver Birch (Betula pendula).....15%
Hazel (Corylus avellana)..... 5%	Alder (Alnus glutinosa).....15%
Elder (Sambucus nigra)..... 5%	
Bird Cherry (Prunus padus)..... 3%	

As all trees and shrubs are to be planted one metre apart it is easy to calculate the number required for any given area. Plant up the perimeter of your site with all the shrubs listed above, one metre apart, putting them in blocks of 5 - 10 of the same species. Now plant the centre with all the trees, one metre apart, in blocks of 10 - 20 per single species. Keep the shape of the wood and positions of trees and shrubs fairly uneven - don't plant in regimented rows.

Use only feathered whips approx. 2 years-old for both trees and shrubs. A whip will outstrip the growth of a larger standard within 2 years, forming a more natural shape as it matures. Standards attract vandalism whereas whips planted in groups grow unnoticed until established. Whips are cheaper, easier to plant, and stand a much better chance of surviving the planting process.

When planting, simply dig an adequate sized hole, place some compost at the bottom, place the whip in the hole and replace the soil. Firm down with your foot and trench well with a bucket of water. Use well - rotted farm manure or leaf mould - anything else will probably have too much nitrogen in it, encouraging weed growth. After planting, sprinkle the whole area with a layer of coarse bark chippings to suppress weeds.

In following years trample down weeds around your wood and water in times of drought.

However if you are sure you can commit yourself to a more ambitious project

Creating woodland with continuous management.

The mix for this woodland is a little different as no trees are planted until the shrub layer is established:

Group A shrubs

Blackthorn (Prunus spinosa)
Dogwood (Cornus sanguinea)
Guelder Rose (Viburnum opulus)
Field Maple (Acer campestre)
Elder (Sambucus nigra)

Group B shrubs

Hazel (Corylus avellana)
Bird Cherry (Prunus padus)
Wild Privet (Ligustrum vulgare)
Holly (Ilex aquifolium)
Hawthorn (Crataegus monogyna)

10% each of these shrubs should be used to make up the total mix. When calculating the number of shrubs to be used in your area remember that shrubs from group B need just over twice as much space as shrubs from group A, due to being planted extra 0.5 metres apart.

Preparing the ground etc as with the "instant" wood, plant all A shrubs around the perimeter, 1 metre apart, in blocks of 10 - 25. Then plant B shrubs in central area, 1.5 metres apart, in groups of 10 - 25. After planting, prune all shrubs heavily so that only 3 shoots are visible on each stem - this will encourage more vigorous growth.

3 - 5 years later, you should have a dense, closed canopy in which you should now plant equal amounts of the pioneer trees listed below:

Birch (Betula pendula)	Wild Cherry (Prunus avium)
Alder (Alnus glutinosa)	Ash (Fraxinus excelsior)

Planted in single - species drifts, 4.5 metres apart throughout the shrub area, these will gradually form a higher canopy above the shrubs. Tree whips will grow faster if the lateral shoots are trimmed back after planting.

Ten years later (!!) your woodland will have 2 distinct layers and conditions should be ideal for planting the climax species - Oak (Quercus robur). Plant throughout the central area of your woodland, clearing space as necessary, and within a few years you will then have a young oak woodland with a varied association of other trees and shrubs.

Continued maintenance of your woodland is essential in order to preserve its diversity, otherwise it will become so thickly wooded that its wildlife value will diminish. This is because many of the shrubs, small trees and woodland plants will have enough space and light in which to flourish - which adversely affects the many insects, birds and mammals dependant on such plants. Advice on woodland management is beyond the scope of this leaflet but please get in touch if you wish to pursue this subject further.

Planting a natural hedge.

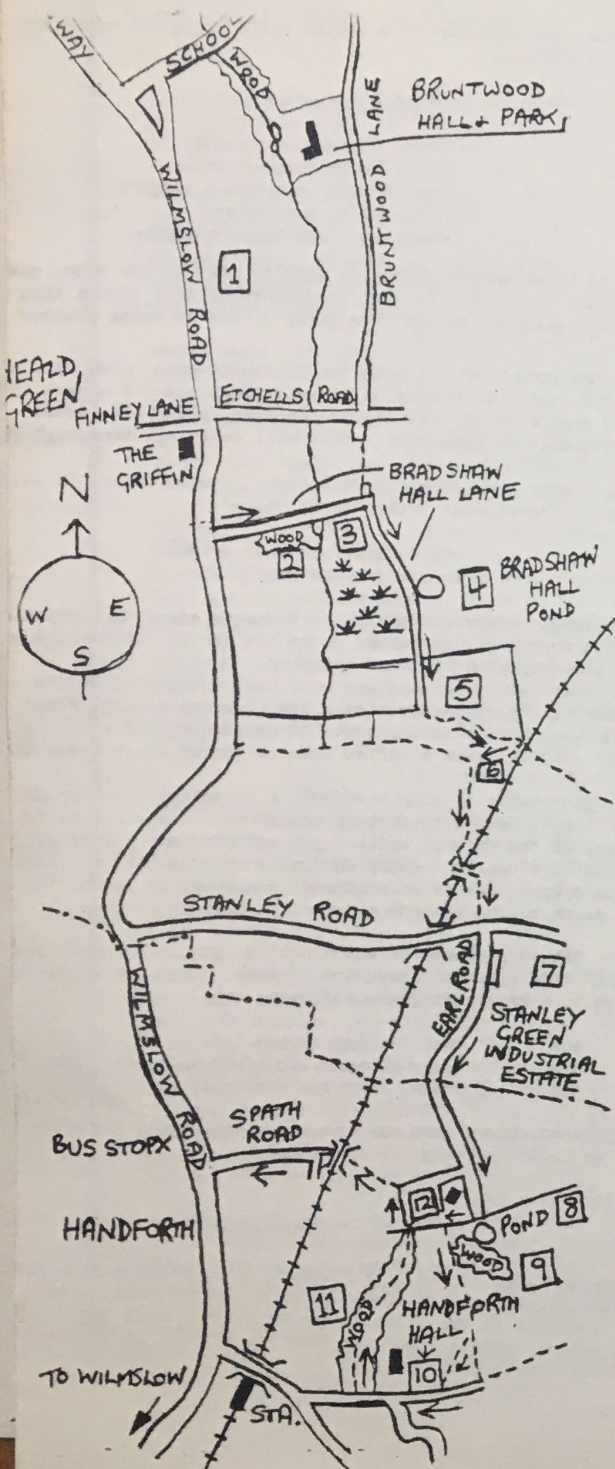
Ground preparation and planting details are much the same as recommended in the "instant" wood section. This time, however, plant the whips in line at a rate of 5 hedge seedlings to a metre using the following mix:

Hawthorn (Crataegus monogyna)	60%	Holly (Ilex aquifolium)	5%
Elder (Sambucus nigra)	20%	Wild Privet (Ligustrum vulgare)	5%
Guelder Rose (Viburnum opulus)	5%	Hazel (Corylus avellana)	5%

Once established, prune back hard to stimulate growth and after 5 years begin clipping once a year, or layering every 7 - 10 years.

SHAUN WILSON

(Parts of this article are to be included in the City Planning's information pack for schools etc involved in Tree Plant 86, which is probably going to be an annual event. section on hedge planting is of interest to the wildlife gardener, but it is not recommended that the woodland planting schemes should be used in gardens. If you want to put a tree in your garden the following species are good for...



FOOTPATH ---
DIRECTION TO FOLLOW →



WOOD



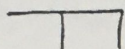
WET MEADOW



POND



POINT OF INTEREST



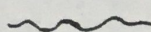
FIELD BOUNDARY



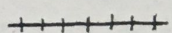
NOTABLE BUILDING



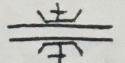
DISTRICT BOUNDARY



STREAM



RAILWAY



BRIDGE

This walk is of three miles in length and was taken in mid-August in moderate weather. If you have a favourite walk in the Greater Manchester area which is good for wildlife why not write an article for our newsletter?

WILDLIFE WALK 5: SUPERSTROLL OR SUPERSTORE?

For the walk in this issue of Vaggle I thought I would take you away some open countryside, part of which is threatened by plans to build three superstores. There are 10 such sites in and around Greater Manchester and four of these are on the south-east side of the county.

To approach the area in question it is best to proceed south along the A34 Kingsway from Parr's Wood. As we pass Bents Hill on the left the road changes name to Wilmslow Road.

1 From here to Etchells Road the land on the left is the first site for a proposed superstore. We will not walk this area as there are no public rights of way but it is nevertheless a very pleasant area of open countryside. Carry on through the traffic lights at Etchells Road and turn left immediately after the pelican crossing into Bradshaw Hall Lane. This is where our walk starts.

2 Along the lane there is a small wood on the right which is interesting but not unusual. With a mixture of trees including oak, horse chestnut, sycamore, beech and willow. There are flowering plants such as hedge bindweed, candytuft, dog-ear, nettle, willowherb and yellow iris in the marshy area. In the spring there are masses of lesser celandine but unfortunately no bluebells or primroses.

Moving on from the wood there is a slight dip in the lane where it crosses a stream.

3 On the right there is a wet meadow where are growing meadow buttercups and rushes. In early summer it is full of lady's smock and consequently orange tip butterflies. Unfortunately this field is on the line of the A34 by-pass so in years to come there may be no more lady's smock and no butterflies. I did see a kestrel, above the field, which should still be around when the road is built.

Continue along the lane and follow the right hand bend.

4 On the left is a largish pond which is becoming overgrown. Willow and even grasses are encroaching and in need of clearance before the pond completely dries up. Many common birds can be seen here and on a fine summer day swallows and house martins feed over the water. A mallard raised ducklings here this year. Plants include marsh woundwort, bittersweet, ragwort, greater reed-mace and yellow iris.

5 On down the lane to the open field. At the entrance look for the Macoles-field hills in the south-east corner and head in that direction. There is a good variety of wild plants in this meadow. Black knapweed, hawkweeds, clovers, vetches, selfheal, coltsfoot, gorse, broom and sneezewort to name but a few. A brief sunny spell whilst I was crossing this meadow brought forth a good number of butterflies; small whites and green-veined whites, but particularly meadow browns. In a good summer a greater variety could be expected.

This area including the pond and most of this meadow is the site of another proposed development of superstores and an industrial estate or houses.

When we reach the south-east corner of the field we come to the railway, which is one of the corridors which allow wildlife access to the built-up areas.

6 Here we turn right and walk by a hedgerow where foxgloves grow in the bank. Cross the stile on the left by the gate-way. If you have walked far enough by this time, take the west path to Wilmslow Road and back to Bradshaw Hall Lane.

To continue take the lane to the south over the railway bridge to Stanley Road. Turn left, then right down Earl Road.

7 On the left is plot 2 of the industrial estate, one of the nine derelict sites here. In early summer the meadow here is full of ragged robin. At this time of year it is full of wildflowers which will attract butterflies and other insects in a good summer.

Proceed down Earl Road to the end where you will find a pond of a most pleasant aspect.

8 This is well worth a look as there are whirligig beetles and many other insects, most of which I was unable to identify. There was also a moorhen and the pond has great potential and could support toads and great crested newts.

The pond and most of the fields to the south are the site of another proposed superstore plan with parking for 2,500 cars which would be a shameful waste of such pleasant countryside.

Turn right at the pond and then left over the stile with the blue post. On the right is growing large-flowered hemp-nettle and many other flowers found commonly on disturbed ground.

9 On the left of the path is a wood with two overgrown ponds, which is a pleasant spot. Continue down the path in a southerly direction.

10 At the end of the path is Handforth Hall, a half timbered building well worth a look. On the rough ground to the east of the hall I saw a pair of Common Hawker Dragonflies and a few butterflies. Earlier in the year there was an old door here, under which were some toads.

Turn right down the lane and across the stream go through the gate on the right, into the woodland.

11 Here there are many woodland flowers in late spring including dog's mercury which is supposed to indicate well established woodland. The problem is that this wood is becoming overgrown with sycamore, which should be cleared to open up the canopy. This would give the native trees and the ground flora a better chance.

Walk along the path to the end of the wood and then along the road.

12 On the right of this road there is a waterlogged area where many water plants grow. On a fine summer day swallows and house martins feed on the many insects that breed here.

Where the road bends right, go diagonally left across the field to the railway bridge. Once under the bridge, turn left onto the road, then immediately right down a pathway which leads to Spath Lane. Turn left here and go to Wilmslow Road where you can catch a bus back to Heald Green.

While you wait for your bus you may wish to consider the fact that if the developers have their way a lot of the countryside over which you have just walked will be destroyed by the building of superstores.

Fortunately Nicholas Ridley, the Secretary of State for the Environment has put a freeze on all 10 superstore developments, which hopefully means that they cannot be approved without a public inquiry.

Jan Brown.

Manchester Wildlife Group aims to protect places of wildlife interest and provide new wetland, woodland and meadowland habitats in our gardens and local neighbourhoods. At present we depend almost totally on our members' subscriptions to cover our running costs. Members receive the Magpie quarterly and can get help and advice with their wildlife gardens. If you want to know more about the group please contact Shaun Wilson at the address below. Articles, letters etc. are also always welcome.

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While every effort has been made to make sure that information given in the Magpie is correct, the group cannot be held responsible for any mistake in the text. Likewise any person undertaking any project based on information from this newsletter does so at their own risk.