



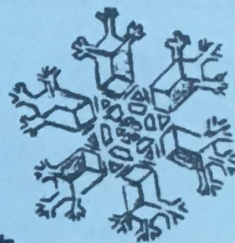
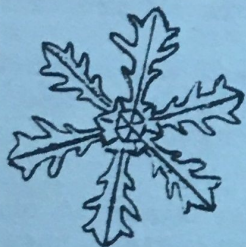
Newsletter of the Manchester Wildlife Group

The Magpie

Number 4. * * * * * Winter 1987

A Happy New Year to all our Readers

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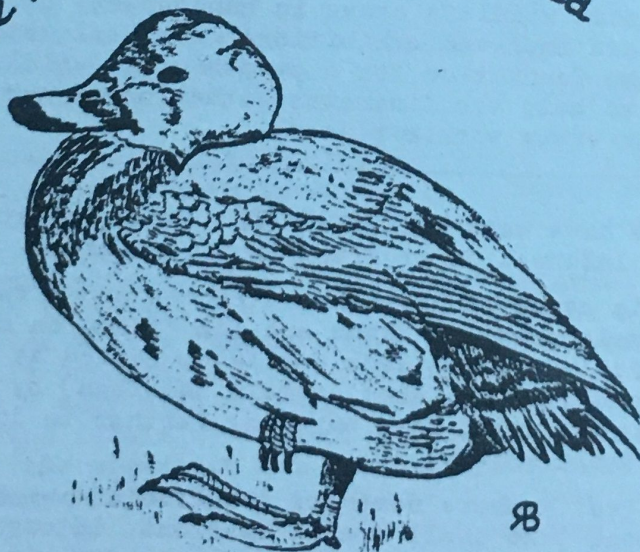
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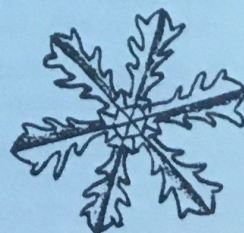
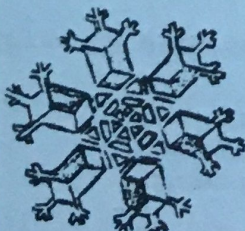
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An article on Ducks
and more



M.S.C. Scheme by Shaun Wilson

As our membership grows and our activities increase it has become obvious to many members that we can no longer deal with all the increasing workload on a solely voluntary basis. The only substantial funding available to small groups such as ourselves to employ workers is through the Manpower Services Community Programme. Under this we can apply for a scheme to last one year which will provide money for approximately fifteen workers (over half of these part-time). It would also provide funds for office expenses and running costs. At the end of the scheme we would re-apply, perhaps for a larger and/or different project based on the experience of our first year.

Although the application details are still being discussed the scheme will basically provide the following:-

- 1/ An office open five days a week and providing secretarial, book-keeping and other support.
- 2/ There would be one or two on the staff specializing in planning matters affecting wildlife in Manchester.
- 3/ Three or four of the staff would undertake survey work to determine the amount of wetland, woodland and meadowland in the City.
- 4/ There would be a staff of two or three to provide education and information for the community - both in and out of school - on wildlife in the City, wildlife gardening etc.
- 5/ It would be necessary to have at least two people to work on preparing exhibitions, publicity etc.
- 6/ Habitat creation and management of various wildlife areas and schemes in parks and hospitals which we have in mind would require an additional one or two specialist workers. We might even have our own landscape architect.
- 7/ A supervisor would also be needed to manage the scheme.

The area covered by this scheme will be the Manchester City District only; but of course members of the group can pursue their activities wherever they wish in Greater Manchester.

Although we will need to work hard to manage the scheme effectively, we should be able to achieve much more than we do at present. We should be better able to establish more wildlife areas in Manchester, provide a larger and much better newsletter and improved exhibitions; deal with more planning matters and in short lay the foundation for a proper urban wildlife group for the City. The scheme will also help the financial situation of our group as we will be in receipt of £100 for every worker placed.

Incorporation. We have sent our rules off to the Registrar of Companies and we will keep you all informed of progress in this matter.

Open Evening. This event in November attracted about twenty people and only one of them fell asleep whilst Shaun and Ian droned on about the joys of urban wildlife. A technicolour slide-show was later hailed as superior to that of a certain T.V. personality (who shall remain nameless) by someone who will also remain nameless, or he won't have anything further to do with the tactless author of this article (Shaun).

Northern Group. Yes! Members north of the Irwell - we have not forgotten you! Two intrepid members (who shall remain nameless, in case they change their minds) are even planning to set up a branch for members in the northern half of the city. Watch this space!

Meetings. These have recently been sparsely attended so please make an effort to get to any of the following:-

Thursday, 29th January at 7.30pm. 59 Park Road, Stretford.

Thursday, 26th February at 7.30pm. 11 Elleamere Road, Chorlton.

Thursday, 26th March at 7.30pm. 31 Stanley Road, Whalley Range.

* If you need a lift, we can probably arrange one there and back - please phone 226 2029 and ask for Shaun.

Ducks by Sue Chapman

After plenty of encouragement finally an article on ducks, or at least the most common duck in Britain and also worldwide, the Mallard. Because of its considerable adaptability to different habitats and diets it can be found in the remote Tundras of Russia, wintering in the Mediterranean or happily wrecking Shaun's pond in Manchester.

The Mallard's diet is mainly plant material from pond weed through root vegetables to grain. They eat plenty of insects in the summer and even molluscs and crustaceans.

What prompted my interest in the Mallard was the annual nesting of a duck on the millpond where I work. Each spring a pair arrive and soon the female is left alone to build a nest, as the male joins other males at a moulting site. The female lines her nest with down, usually in a hollow in the ground or a tree hole. She lays between 9-13 eggs and when the clutch is complete incubates for 22-28 days.

As the ducklings hatch they dry out and regain strength in the nest, imprinting themselves on their mother, so that they follow her in preference to any other duck. For the first few weeks the mother duck supervises the ducklings as they swim about and feed themselves.

She protects them under her body against wet weather, at night and at intervals throughout the day, until their own feathers have replaced the down, giving better protection against cold and wet.

Unfortunately where I work the ducklings each year have a very high mortality rate, falling prey to magpies and wet weather. Last year, after finding only 3 of 11 ducklings only just alive, the rest killed by the weather, we took them and dried them out in an oven, returning them to their mother, several times. Unfortunately the weather won each time and we finally decided to leave the mother one duckling and rescue the other two.

These two ducklings were taken to a farm, where they had a fun time in an incubator, watching T.V.! They grew inseparable, although still much wilder than incubated domestic ducks, and were finally released with the farm ducks where there was a plentiful supply of food.

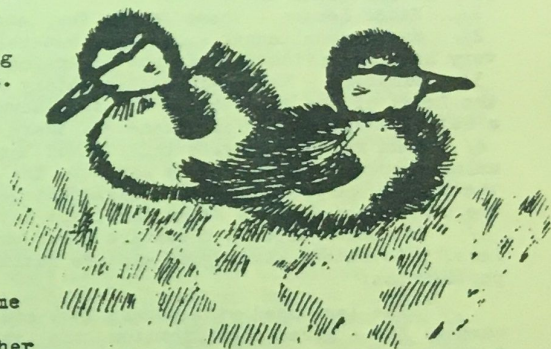
The ducklings settled away from the farm but returned for food until finally, one was eaten by a rat, and the other left. (The duckling remaining with its mother had died almost immediately.) It is interesting to note that to maintain a stable adult population, only one duckling from each clutch needs to survive and breed and a very high mortality rate is normal and probably necessary.

By late summer the female ducks join the males to moult and with fresh plumage are ready for the migratory and pairing cycle. Most British Mallards are residents and by autumn some of these residents will have formed pairs, whilst migratory Mallards wait for spring as the females migrate further south.

JOKE

Q. Why does a duckling walk softly?

A. Because it can't walk hardly!



Crumpsall Flora. One of our members has written a pamphlet on the wild flowers and grasses to be found in the Crumpsall area of the City, revealing a surprising diversity within a small area. Copies can be obtained from:- Diana Downing, 44 Cleveland Road, Manchester. M8 6QU. Price 50p each including postage.

Photographing Wildlife in close up

"A snapshot can be taken in 1/1000 of a second,
a good photograph can take hours."

Dr. Sean Edwards.

At the wildlife group's exhibition in Fallowfield, amongst the many good displays was a photographic sequence of a dragonfly undergoing metamorphosis. I thought there may be some of you who would like to know how this is done.

In the first part I will tell you how to get close to your subject.

CAMERA It is most convenient to use a 35mm single lens reflex (SLR) camera with through the lens (TTL) light metering. A manual system is easiest but if your camera is automatic, a manual override makes your task much simpler.

The actual make of camera you choose will partly depend on how much you can afford. Bear in mind that accessories for the more expensive cameras can be horrendously costly.

If you are a bit strapped for funds you can buy an SLR non-auto camera without TTL light metering which has lenses with a 42mm Pentax screw thread. For photographing in ambient light with this type of camera you will need a light meter but with full flash one would not be necessary.

MAGNIFICATION There are several methods of obtaining magnification in close-up photography. Here are a few.

- 1/ Macro lenses - these can be very expensive.
- 2/ Macro-zoom lenses - good for general photography but do not usually give a very high magnification without extension tubes.
- 3/ Diopters - these are supplementary lenses which fit on the filter screw at the front of the lens. There are some advantages to this method but you will need a set of diopters for each lens and there will be some loss of picture quality.
- 4/ Lens reversal - with this method the lens is reversed on the camera body using a special, inexpensive adaptor. The shorter the focal length of the lens, the higher the magnification. Disadvantages are that you can only focus by moving the camera and in most cases the light meter and auto aperture won't work.
- 5/ Extension tubes - these are tubes which fit between the camera body and the lens. This method gives good picture quality and was used to take the dragonfly photographs.

The lens used will depend upon how far away the subject must be from the camera. For a given magnification, the longer the focal length of the lens, the further away the subject will be. Probably the most useful focal length is 50mm, particularly for wildflower photography, when you can dictate the distance from your subject. This is useful, as once you have a standard camera all you will really need is a set of extension tubes. For photographing insects a longer focal length is desirable as you may not wish to be too close to the subject (you are less likely to scare the insect). As the dragonfly was about one metre away a 200mm lens was used.

CALCULATING MAGNIFICATION This is done by dividing the extension by the focal length of the lens.

$$(M) \text{ Magnification} = \frac{\text{Extension (X)}}{\text{Focal length (F)}}$$

Here is a table showing a typical combination of lenses and tubes.

Table 1.

	⑦	⑭	⑳	㉑	㉒	㉓	㉔
F mm	50	135	200				
	.14x	.05x	.03x	.28x	.1x	.07x	.42x
		.1x	.07x	.16x	.1x	.12x	.5x
				.18x	.16x	.2x	.64x
				.24x	.2x	.23x	.78x
				.29x	.23x		.92x
				.34x			

X mm

- ☐ Standard tubes
☐ Combinations

For example:- $\frac{(X) 50\text{mm}}{(F) 50\text{mm}} = (M) 1x$

A magnification of 1x is explained by the formula:-

$$M = \frac{\text{size on film}}{\text{size of object,}}$$

so that a magnification of 1x means that the image on the film is the same size as the object being photographed, or life size. For photographing the dragonfly I used a 200mm lens with a 46mm extension tube, giving a magnification of .23x or about $\frac{1}{4}$ life size.

It will by now be obvious that the longer the focal length of the lens, the longer the extension needed to obtain the same magnification. For example a 135mm lens would need a 135mm extension tube for a 1x magnification. For the same reason a 28mm wide angle lens would need a 28mm extension tube for the same magnification. The main trouble with using wide angle lenses in close up photography is that with the lens centre being further away from the film plane than its focal length, it means that on a high magnification the subject will not be in focus unless it is somewhere inside the lens. A good trick if you can do it.

SETTING UP THE CAMERA With close up photography using the camera hand held is not always successful. It is best to use a tripod which will operate close to the ground. Alternatively a bean bag can be used. (Very cheap this. Two pounds of dried beans - cost 60 pence. Just put them in a polythene bag and seal with tape. Prick the bag with a pin to expel the air.) If a long lens is used support it with a lens case for example. To dampen high frequency camera shake caused by shutter vibration, weigh down the camera. If nothing else comes to hand, use your hand. This should increase the sharpness of your photograph.

FOCUSING Set the lens at infinity and focus on the subject by moving the camera. If the subject moves slightly after initial focusing it is probably more practical to use the lens focusing ring. If the camera is close to the ground a right angle finder will make focusing easier.

APERTURE Set the aperture as small as possible as generally speaking the smaller the aperture the greater the depth of field. In any event f8 is probably the widest aperture you should use. For photographing the dragonfly I used an aperture of f11, which at a magnification of .23x gives a depth of field of about 10mm. This is not much so make sure that the most important parts are in focus. At a magnification of 1x and an aperture of f11 the depth of field is about 2mm. Getting tricky.

Cameras without auto aperture control or TTL light metering present a problem in that an external light meter must be used and the effective aperture created by extension tube length will have to be calculated. This is done by taking M, the magnification calculated from table 1. The effective aperture is then found by multiplying the aperture marked on the lens by M+1. Examples are given in table 2.

M	+1	=	X Marked aperture	= Effective aperture
1x	+1	2	f11	f22
.5x	+1	1.5	f11	f16.5
.25x	+1	1.25	f11	f13.75
.25x	+1	1.25	f16	f20

Table 2

The effective aperture shown in this last column will equal the aperture shown on the light meter.

SHUTTER SPEED This will be dictated by the aperture. This is one reason why it is not advisable to use a fully automatic camera, especially if it has shutter priority. Set the shutter speed which the chosen aperture dictates and after making sure the subject is in focus and in a suitable position; press the shutter. If the light is sufficient and the subject still, the shutter speed should be fast enough for a successful photograph. If there is not enough light a flash will have to be used. More of which in the next part.

If you do not understand anything in this article, please contact me on 437 7040 or write to 82 Crantock Drive, Heald Green, Ches. SK8 3HA, enclosing an S.A.E. if you want a reply. Better still enrol in Manchester University's extra mural studies course on plant photography which is run by Dr. Sean Edwards of the University Museum.

Jan Brown.

Doing Something in your Area - Shaun Wilson

Hough End was chosen to work on simply because it is in the middle of our "membership area". However, there is nothing stopping any member of the group selecting a site nearer to them, which they would like to see improved for wild-life. Perhaps there's an old pond nearby which needs rubbish pulling out, an area of mown grass that you would like to see managed as a meadow, or a nearby wood which needs rescuing from invading sycamore and rhododendron. If you're keen to tackle a patch like this, here are some basic do's and don'ts.

Firstly, find out who owns the land. Most parks, "amenity areas" etc. are owned by the local district council's recreation department. Areas near railway lines could belong to B.R. and hospitals etc. to the local health authority. The water authority (N.W.) has "permissive" rights either side of streams and brooks etc., and green areas near rivers are usually under the stewardship of a river valley scheme such as the Mersey Valley or Medlock Valley. Other large landowners are the church (disused churchyards), universities and similar establishments (sportsgrounds etc.) and a host of commercial and individual bodies. At this stage it is best to contact us (Shaun or Ian) so that we can help find the owner and/or visit the site to give you our (usually contradictory) opinions.

You've then got to contact the owner, outlining your ideas for the area you have chosen. If a local authority owns the land they may need to send your suggestions to their council committee for their consideration and they may ask you to survey the area first. A survey is always a good idea anyway, especially on sites with existing habitats - you need to know what is there before anyone starts messing about with it!

If permission is granted you can then plan your scheme in greater detail. Again we can help advise on this, and your local authority will probably offer professional help if a piece of their land is concerned. However, professionals are very good at devising massively expensive schemes which could be difficult to finance and will deteriorate rapidly if left unmanaged. It is best to start with a simple scheme which will be of benefit to wildlife even if maintenance is low or non-existent. The cheaper the project the more likely it is to be funded and the quicker it will happen.

The following are basic ideas for typical sites found in the city.

1/ Mown grass areas. Sometimes these can be left to grow and then cut only once or twice a year so as to encourage wildflowers in the grass to grow and flower. A similar stretch in Hulme had over a dozen species in its first year of this kind of management. Any meadow area needs to be mown regularly around its edge to give a neat appearance. Native trees and shrubs can be planted; especially around the boundaries of a site, as a visual screen and rich "woodland edge" habitat. A pond is a nice feature for any scheme but care should be taken to make them as shallow as possible (in case anyone falls in). A large pond of regular shape, say 20 ft. square or more, will enable the use of a new liner material called "Rawmat" which seals itself no matter how often it is punctured. It can be buried under 6 inches or more of soil as further protection.

2/ Derelict land. By this we mean land on which buildings once stood. Usually these sites are earmarked for development and so anything here will be short term. One idea would be to sow such a site with cornfield annuals. This would be done in spring or autumn. A variety of poppies, corn marigold, field pansy, corn cockle and cornflower etc. will come up on poor soil. Ploughing every autumn will ensure flowering in successive years.

3/ Established woodland, wetland or meadowland. Be very careful about such areas - it's better to leave well alone rather than barge in without any idea of what you are doing. Surveys of such habitats are essential so that you are aware of what is there to begin with. We can advise on this and maybe local enthusiasts' groups can help here. Here are some basic do's and don'ts for such areas.

Woodland. Such patches that exist in Manchester are usually full of invasive species such as rhododendron and sycamore. These tend to squeeze out the more interesting native trees and shrubs. So by clearing the invasive

will also create woodland glades encouraging the growth of other layers of plants. However, where a wood is predominantly sycamore, it would be inadvisable to fell them all at once as it is much better than no wood at all! Don't "tidy" woods as dead wood and logs are very valuable for woodland creatures and fungi. Try to ensure a variety of flowers, shrubs and trees at different layers by careful thinning and planting. Spring is the best time to see what native plants are present in a wood - perhaps some can be introduced to uninteresting patches. Wetland. Again, knowing your pond well is essential. Some ponds in Manchester are coked with rubbish and devoid of native plants. Clearing such areas of debris and introducing plants such as marsh marigold will undoubtedly help. Established ponds will only need a sensitive amount of thinning to retain a diversity of plant life.

Meadowland. Many grass areas in Manchester are not mown and will eventually revert to scrub and woodland. Such patches can be cut in midsummer and autumn to create a more diverse habitat for flowers and insects to colonize - however other parts should be cut at different times of the year to suit the life cycle of different plants and animals.

Well, I hope this gives you some idea of what you can do on your doorstep. Remember we can only advise and help organise publicity and workdays, the lion's share of the workload organising a scheme in your area is up to you. If you feel you can take on such a task please get in touch.

Tree Plant 86 by Buck Thorn

More than a dozen of our members turned out to plant 1000 trees and shrubs at Hough End playing fields alongside Mauldeth Road. After a disappointing turn out from the local residents on the first planting day, a second week-end planting encouraged about 10 local people to help put in the trees. Three youngsters in particular worked virtually non-stop! Only native trees and shrubs were used, the idea being to underplant the existing standards so as to create a natural woodland edge in the years to come. Unfortunately some whips have been vandalised (by children attending a local private school) or stolen (by an adult who was not local and apparently quite well-off). We expect to lose about 30% of the trees because of vandalism, bad weather etc., but even if half are lost there should be enough surviving to provide a good woodland thicket for birds and other wildlife. This will be a great help to nature conservation in an area which is otherwise almost entirely devoted to football.

Whilst planting on the final Sunday, two teams of Gaelic footballers and their supporters turned up for a match on an adjoining field. The pressures on our planting strip became evident, with cars driving onto the grass verge and one flying tackle ending up in a patch of junipers! Since then the Recreation Department has put in a row of wooden posts between the woodland strip and the road. This should prevent car owners motoring onto the verge.

A lecturer in Town and Country Planning at Manchester University has taken an interest in Hough End and aims to encourage some of his students to plan a more ecologically diverse area between our woodland strip and Red Lion Brook, than exists at present. We will be contributing to this and if the council take it up, the existing football pitches will be re-located elsewhere. This should not be a great loss as we have observed that, at week-ends, of the thirty plus pitches on these playing fields, the maximum in use at any one time is six.

Anyway, a big thankyou to all who helped with the tree planting and if someone offers you a juniper which "fell off the back of a truck", Please let us know.

For further information on any of the topics discussed in this newsletter:
Contact Ian Brown (437 7040) or Shaun Wilson (226 2029).

Uncle Idiot investigates

In response to the flood of mail we have received concerning your wildlife gardening problems, I decided, as I had plenty of time, to answer all letters pending in this issue of the Newsletter. So here goes.

Dear Claire,

You wrote, wishing to know what kind of wild plants would be suitable for growing in a window box or hanging basket. The main thing is to keep to small plants with plenty of flowers, then choose ones which like sunny or shady conditions depending on where they are to be situated. Woodland plants will obviously do best on a north facing wall but it is worth trying others.

The main advantage with wildflowers is that they are hardy, so you should be able to have plants in flower for most of the year. The plants can be grown in your garden or in pots and transferred to your box/basket when they are about to flower. When they have finished flowering and before they set seed they can then be transferred to the garden to make way for later flowering plants. Most wild plants will stand this transplanting.

Here is a short list of plants you should find suitable.

Plant	Colour	Flowering	Height	Habitat/Situation
Snowdrop	White	Jan-Mar	6-10 in.	Woodland/Shady
Sweet Violet	Purple	Jan-Apr	$\frac{1}{2}$ -2 $\frac{1}{2}$ in.	Shady
Wood Anemone	White	Mar-Apr	6 in.	Woodland/Shady
Primrose	Yellow	Mar-May	to 6 in.	Woodland/Shady
Germander Speedwell	Blue	Mar-Jul	4-12 in.	Open, wet or dry
Petty Spurge	Green	Mar-Nov	to 12 in.	Rough ground/Open
Heartsease	Variable	Apr-Sep	2-12 in.	Almost anywhere
Thrift	Purple	May-Aug	to 16 in.	Coastal/Open
Bugle	Blue	May-Jul	4-12 in.	Short grass/Open
Thyme	Pink	May-Aug	to 3 in.	Short grass/Open
Shining Cranesbill	Purple	May-Aug	Creeping	Anywhere
Clustered Bellflower	Purple	May-Sep	6-8 in.	Calcareous downs
Common Milkwort	Blue	May-Sep	2-4 in.	Rough pasture
Common Rock-rose	Yellow	Jun-Sep	2-12 in.	Calcareous soil/dry
Maiden Pink	Deep pink	Jun-Sep	6-18 in.	Dry banks
Common Centuary	Pink	Jun-Oct	2-12 in.	Dry grassland
Eyebright	White +	Jul-Sep	5-10 in.	Anywhere
Ivy	Green	all year	Climbing everywhere	

Most flower families have something suitable amongst their numbers. You can vary moisture conditions fairly easily in a window box by watering. In a hanging basket try lining with polythene, with a few holes in it, for damp or hessian for dry. Water with ice cubes in the warm weather. Put the small plants in front. All the plants listed can be obtained from other members or grown from Seed.

Please let me know how you get on as other members might be interested.

Best wishes, *Uncle Idiot.*

P.S. If you would like a more comprehensive plant list or any further information, please write to me at 82 Crantock Drive, Heald Green, Cheadle, Cheshire. SK8 3HA

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.