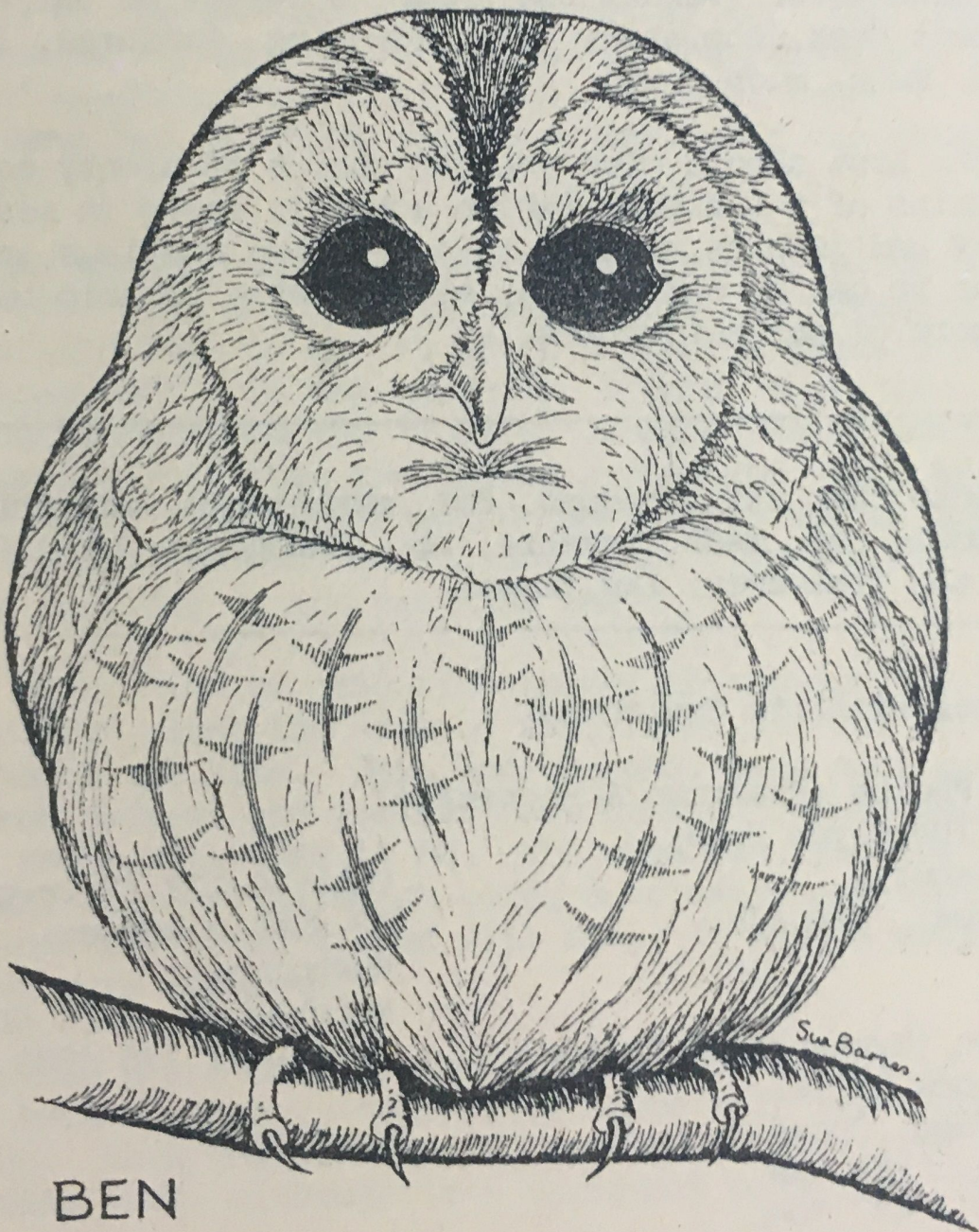




THE MAGPIE

Manchester Wildlife's Official Newsletter

Number 27 Summer 1993



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Editorial

Editor's Office - 437 7040

The more astute amongst you will have noticed that this newsletter is a little late; almost a month in fact. I don't know what you've been doing this summer but I've been rather busy. At least that's my excuse and I'm sticking to it. The inquiry into Manchester's Unitary Development Plan has started and a lot of preliminary work was required. More on that later.

Also in these pages: the report on our Winter Bird Feeding Survey, Manchester versus the shrub, a report on our events, Environment Week, the story of Pickering Pastures, and, as they say, much, much more.

Our Events List should give you the choice of plenty to do in what remains of the summer (which actually ended in mid-May), so do try and join us or come to one of our meetings and find out what we get up to; you may even be able to help out with one or more of our activities.

Please note that all cheques, for membership subscriptions etc., should be made payable to - Manchester Wildlife and sent to the Treasurer, Ian Brown. //

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Pickering Pastures

by Anthony Phelps

On Saturday the 29th of May, seven urban explorers took a train ride outside Greater Manchester to the Borough of Halton. Ian acted as guide, and we alighted at the station to the west of Widnes. As we wished to avoid walking along main roads, our route was along hedge-lined paths which took us through beautiful countryside, and we were fascinated by the plantlife around us - I even found a new plant for my "list", Black Bryony. Despite seeming endlessly comforting repetitions of "We're nearly there", mainly for the benefit of our younger explorers, we arrived at the Pastures. These are created meadows, separated into various types - Wet, Spring, Summer and "Control" meadows, and, near the entrance, a Cornfield.

The sameness of the various meadow types reinforced my belief that it's very difficult, if not impossible, to create a good meadow but I'd love to see it after a hundred years of traditional management. It was slightly ironic that the most interesting parts were the "Control" meadow, which seemed to be more species rich than the seeded areas, and the borders alongside the River Mersey which had quite a lot of species not found on the reserve, which shows the importance of a good river corridor in transporting seed.

Just the other side of this rich border, in between the "concrete waffling" along the side of the river, we got to the "truth" about the site. Here, on the mud, were many species of Saltmarsh plants, and you may have guessed that this is what the whole site used to be. The area was used for tipping rubbish, despite Saltmarsh being a valuable and declining habitat, and when full, capped with clay. It was on this that the meadows were created.

So, I'm afraid a sad note to end on - the death of a rich saltmarsh because of our inability to cope with recycling our rubbish, and then the creation of another habitat type which doesn't quite work, although it's obviously well liked by dog owners. //

Members' Day 93

by Unity Kelly

This year Manchester Wildlife gave in to the "hide your AGM in an all-day event and pull in the punters" trend and came up with what we thought was a sure fire winner for members and kindred spirits. The organisation was meticulous, the advance publicity well targeted and Tom Waghorn gave us the lead spot in MEN's Day Out guide. The sun shone and Parrs Wood is a setting both idyllic and accessible. Our displays were colourfull and informative, the array of resources evidently struck a chord with our guests who got busy with pen and paper and the Bodger Brown "retrospective" of chairs, stools and wood turnery had people rooted to the spot in admiration indoors, and outside around the Bodger in action. Ben and George, the rescued owls were an added bonus, thanks to Brian, as well as the refreshments provided by Diana Downing and Janet Cuff, who also won the raffle! The main attractions were our two speakers who excelled expectations with the most splendid presentations. Jem Brown enthused us with his vision of a forest future enclosing and diversifying Greater Manchesters urban sprawl. George Barker not only came all the way from English Nature's HQ in Peterborough, on top of a week of urban ecology in Southampton, but treated us to the most thought provoking, informative and humourous world view of urban wildlife, culled from many years of involvement with the unofficial wildlife in towns and cities. Were it not for the long drive home, members of the audience would have carried on the discussions far into the night - it was that kind of talk (all on tape and transcribed) - but information has come back to everyone with a particular query or area of interest. So thankyou George for stepping into the shoes of our original speaker. To those of you who didn't make the effort (minimal in comparison) to attend, a metaphorical raspberry! It is the only day of the year when your overworked committee really expect your visible support and some show of strength to impress our visitors. Special thanks also to Chris Gordon from RSNC, Ann Coffey MP, Councillors Alison Firth and Keith Whitmore, Cathy Haynes (of the Mersey Environment Trust) and Eleanor Fidler (Stockport Leisure Services) for their presence. We had 17 members at the AGM, and that has to be a record!

//

Indecent Practices

No Shrubs Please - We're Mancunians

by Anthony Phelps

"The Shrub is dead.....". At least when that phrase is said of a monarch it is usually followed by another proclaiming long life. However, in Manchester there is a "virus" attacking the humble shrub, and it is fast becoming an endangered species. What is the cause of this demise?, I hear you ask. After extensive research, it turns out to be being endorsed by "Our Leader" of the City Council. It is a terrible sadness to think that 'society' has come to the point where the softening and humanising greenery of our city has to be ripped out because a minority of sick people find them the ideal place to hide bombs or to lay in wait for lone women. To my mind there ought to be a middle ground where innocent people can still walk the city feeling safe, but can also enjoy the wildlife which is naturally attracted to our shrubby oases.

A Hedge too Far

by Unity Kelly

In February Manchester Wildlife proposed "the largest" native hedgerow planting in Manchester, along the empty grass strip stretching 500 yards, from Barlow Moor Road to Nell Lane (on Princess Parkway), by the Seimens boundary fence. We hoped to plant, manage and ultimately lay the hedge as a future wildlife haven and intended to enter this project for the 1993 BT Environment Award. It would also have fitted in with Plantlife's "Hedge Across Britain"..... But we had reckoned without the Council's hedge unfriendly policy. The proposal was refused by Dr. Ted Kitchen, the City Planning Officer, "because of the perceived problems (and expense) of maintenance and litter collection associated with shrub and bush planting on public sites."

An "illuminating" meeting took place between Seimens, Red Rose Forest, CTAC and Manchester Wildlife which revealed some unusual approaches to landscaping! Suffice it to say, there will be no hedge, so passers by will still be able to admire the "concept architecture" of the Seimens site.

Hedges still imperiled as Bill is talked out

THE HEDGEROWS BILL was lost when time ran out during its Report Stage in the House of Commons on the 7th of May.

It followed the Osteopaths Bill, during which Michael Jopling and Nicholas Bosner did a lot of talking - leaving only one hour for discussion of hedges. They, plus a number of other Conservative MPs, had tabled numerous amendments to the Hedgerow Bill. The opposition had not put down any - it wanted the Bill to get through the Report Stage so it could have its Third Reading and pass to the Lords.

Michael Jopling, Nicholas Bonser and other Conservatives continued to talk during the Hedgerows Bill discussion, consulting frequently with County Landowners' Association & National Farmers' Union lobbyists. In the end time ran out and there was no vote. There will not be enough Parliamentary time now to get the Bill through, and a disillusioned Peter Ainsworth, the private member who's Bill it was, has given up. We (RSNC) wrote to Michael Howard, then Secretary of State for the Environment to say we want proof of Government commitment to hedgerow protection, in the form of legislation in the next session. When writing to your MP, please say how disappointed you are. (Reprinted from the Urban Wildlife newsletter.)

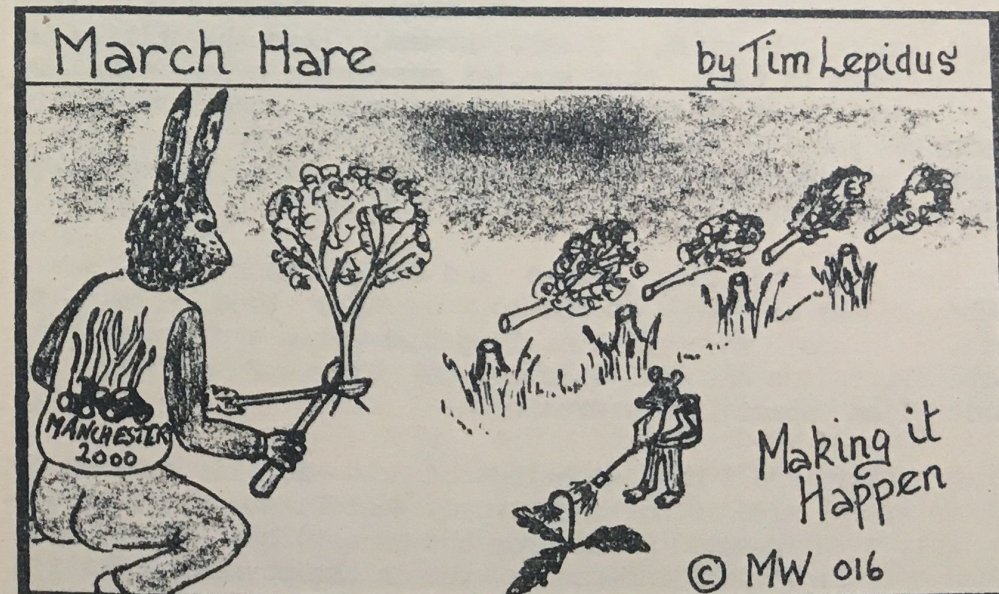
Nests Destroyed

During the height of the nesting season the hedgerow, along Stenner Lane in Didsbury, was savagely cut back and in the process, some nests, and their nestlings were destroyed. The hedge had become overgrown and was restricting access but any hedge management should take place in the autumn or winter so as to ensure that wildlife is not harmed. As it is, the killing of the birds is unlawful and we are considering taking action, through the courts. We are awaiting a letter from Mike Savage, Chief Mersey Valley Warden, who witnessed the aftermath. We will keep you posted on this matter. Hedges must be managed, to keep them in order and for the benefit of wildlife but please, anybody out there who must do this work, do it at the right time of year and if advice is needed, we are only a phone call away.

Rumour has it - that the route taken by the Olympic Committee was carefully sprayed to remove all traces of unacceptable vegetation, such as dandelions (homeless and hungry crusties, watch out - you could be next!). [Who says the Olympics will be environmentally friendly - Ed.]

Let us Spray - Spraying with herbicides is back in fashion - shrub eradication programmes have been spotted, all over the city; the worst example we were shocked to find was at Angel Meadow (Mount Street). An area of brambles and other shrubs was hacked down on the corner of Mauldeth Road West & Hough End Crescent (at Hough End Clough). This was an area where we, with the WATCH Group, had planted wildflowers (provided by the City Park Wardens) and the butchery was committed in the nesting season; the Council or their agents should know better. Also, if they are going to undertake "woodland management" they should learn how to do it properly. Many of the trees had branches removed by half sawing through then were snapped off. We had to tidy up after them.

What do we think of all this?



It would seem that an unholy alliance of the Government and the City Council will do little to save our hedgerows!

Have you heard the one about the Global Forum,
as it is known to those who think they are somebody.

Or the Glitzy Forum, to those who think it will help
improve Manchester's image.

Or the Gullible Forum to those who think it will be a
positive contribution to achieving Sustainable Development.

Or the Going, Going, Gone Forum, to those who think!

What is really happening? Global Folly!

URBAN WILDLIFE

by Anthony Phelps

I am fascinated by wildlife which has adapted to live in the urban environment. Some species, like Magpies and Starlings, are well known to "the man on the Clapham omnibus", although well worth observing. Others, however, have the ability to cause heads to turn. Many species are having a hard time in the countryside, where they are declining; Songthrushes for example, yet I am lucky to be serenaded by "my own" Song-thrush each morning at the end of my road, where it has found its urban home.

I work in the City centre and delight each time I see a Kestrel, but am always on the look out for that "flash of silver wings" when I'll at long last catch a glimpse of an urban Peregrine Falcon. This is the type of sighting in which I am especially interested.

Both Unity and I have sightings of Grey Wagtails feeding in urban areas; mine in Northern Grove, West Didsbury (admittedly only a few hundred yards from the Mersey) but a real treat when only five yards in front of you on the pavement. Unity's sighting is more interesting, as it is much further away from a breeding area (on rivers or canals) thus it is higher up on the "truly urban" sighting scale.

My Buzzard sighting over the City centre, and my Willow Tit sightings by the bus stop on Palatine Road also count as records which really gripped me (I almost missed my bus watching the Willow Tits!).

Please let me know of any unusual urban sightings you may have (location, species, date, time). Keep your eyes open; you never know what you may see.

* * * * *

From Unity - four Herons, flying over Whitworth Park and Broad-bodied Chasers (dragonflies) at a pond by the Old Abbey Inn in Hulme. Also Bullfinches nesting in Southern Cemetery, two fresh Red Admirals and a bat (first time sightings) in Ruskin Avenue and first confirmed sighting of Great Spotted Woodpecker in Platt Fields.

From the Abbas Family - A female Blackbird catching fish and Long-tailed Tit nesting in back garden.

From Janet Gorst - Comma Butterfly seen 9th March, Willow Warbler on 28th March, Bats on the wing seen 10th April and first Swallow on 9th March.

From Ian - Brimstone Butterfly on railway cutting south of Heald Green Station (first seen by Barry Shaw). Maybe it will find its way to Abney Hall where its food plant, Alder Buckthorn, awaits.

Editor's Comment - Peregrine Falcons in the City Centre? They have been seen, on more than one occasion. And, why not. The City is almost the ideal place for such a bird. What are the basic requirements for animals (including the human animal)? Clothing, shelter and food. Birds have feathers for clothing and some buildings are rather like cliff nesting sites which represent shelter. But what of food? Well there are a lot of pigeons, in cities, which should be an excellent food source for Peregrines. Maybe encouraging these birds would be a good way of keeping pigeons to an acceptable level. Why not ensure that buildings have suitable nesting sites and we could all enjoy seeing Peregrine Falcons when we visit the City centre.

Winter Bird Feeding Survey

by Janet Gorst

Heavy rain, a cold Christmas, awful gales, followed by frost and fog, and later unsettled and mild made up the mixed bag of weather during the winter.

Comments from those taking part in the survey were a mixture too, if not a puzzle. "I've never had so few birds in the garden in the last 15 years"; "A disappointing winter"; "Bird numbers are definitely up on last year". However, 41 species of garden birds (plus 10 others) were recorded in and around our gardens.

Flocks of Tits were regular visitors to the bird table and hanging peanut feeders, along with one or two Nuthatches, parties of Long-tailed Tits appeared in numbers, eight were seen in a Heaton Moor garden feeding on grated cheese and a fat ball. Two Marsh Tits were reported from Didsbury and a single Willow Tit in Stretford. Goldcrests were present in larger numbers than last winter (only 1 sighting last year); two were seen flitting through a hedge on a late February afternoon. A large flock of Redwings (100+) were seen flying over Stockport during November, 40+ remained in that area along with aggressive Mistle Thrushes to plunder favoured Yew and Holly berries, numbers only dwindling when food ran out.

Blackbirds showed signs of having increased in numbers; 20 were reported from a Chorlton Garden. Song Thrushes, generally considered a common garden bird were fast disappearing, so it's nice to note that 12 participants reported sightings this year. Greenfinches and Chaffinches were thin on the ground, though a mixed flock of 40+ were seen during the cold spell in February, around the Priestnall allotments area. Goldfinches were observed in the Maine Road area and 30 were seen around Heaton Mersey feeding on weed seeds. Bullfinch sightings were confined to the Romily/Heald Green area; just a couple observed in gardens.

Over-wintering Blackcaps frequented the writer's garden, both sexes feeding on Cotoneaster berries and fallen pears. Another was watched in Chorlton, eating fat from a lamb carcass

put out for foxes. There was an influx of Bramblings and Siskins into many gardens, this year, but some participants saw neither. 25 Bramblings were sighted under a Beech tree in Romily; another 10 seen on a misty February morning, in a garden, feeding with other finches on bird seed and they were still reported around the Stockport area until as late as the 8th of April. Siskins were observed feeding with a mixed Tit flock from hanging coconut shells full of crushed pea-nuts; 26 were seen regularly, in a Didsbury garden, swinging from red pea-nut bags.

Corvids seem to be on the increase especially Crows and Jays, the latter recorded on most surveys; Magpies appear to be slightly down in numbers. (Ed. - I saw 24 crows by Bruntwood Lane with not a Magpie in sight.)

Sparrowhawks were observed up to their usual antics; one was seen to kill a white feral pigeon, another attacked, chased but fortunately lost a Great Spotted Woodpecker. An astonished observer spotted, through her window, the smaller grey-brown male Sparrowhawk perched on top of a hedge, possibly attracted by feeding Sparrows. A Green Woodpecker was heard briefly "yaffling" from a treetop in Heaton Moor in December and Great Spotted Woodpeckers have been heard, drumming. One or two have entered gardens for fat and nuts. Tree Creepers have been conspicuous by their absence; only a couple of sightings this winter. A sprinkling of Grey and Pied Wagtails have been noted; a solitary Grey Wagtail wintered on Priestnall allotments again.

On the last day of the survey, a Willow Warbler was heard in the Stockport area to herald in the Spring and the end of another Winter Bird Survey. Thank you once again to all those who participated. //

Editor's Note - The Survey covered Manchester City, Stockport and Trafford; let's make it a wider survey next time. We hope there will be a survey form included with the autumn "Magpie". If you take part, send results to Janet Gorst, not me, as it is possible for things to get lost in the mess of my office. A list of birds seen and highest numbers is available from me send s.a.e. marked, bird survey if you are desperate to know.

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Once again it's time to help earn the group some money. Yes it's true - by selling raffle tickets, we will "earn" a percentage of the profits from this nationwide raffle - the more we can sell, the more we will earn.

The tickets are 50p each, but the prizes are good; a car, a holiday to the Falklands, a weekend in Spain, a pair of waxed jackets and a Christmas hamper (plus 50 runner-up prizes).

You can get books of tickets from your Chairman at our events and meetings, or by post. I hope you will help us to raise a lot of money this year.

Pomona Docks

Manchester's Last True Wilderness

by Unity Kelly

Explore this fascinating and forgotten area before the developers turn it into a **** Theme Park (Dan Dare's Space City - we really need that!). Yet, not long ago, this was a hive of industry and a key link in the chain of supply from prairie or plantation to Manchester's tables. Since the Docks (1-4) were abandoned, the rubbish tippers have been busy in a big way and all kinds of unusual substrates have been created - and are now extensively and luxuriantly colonised by some quite bizarre mixtures of vegetation not known to any standard work of ecology. Evening Primrose, Snapdragons, Great Mullein, Jacob's Ladder, Sweet Rocket and exotic frilled and blotched Opium Poppies jostle for space with all the more usual colonisers of waste ground.

There are dry grassy meadows, mini-wetlands, steep banks of Ash, woodland thickets and hedges of Elder and Dog Rose plus reed and flag beds in the old dock basins, open water (smelly but popular with Mallard, Heron and Swan) and most remarkable a recreated shingle "foreshore" where two pairs of Little Ringed Plover have been in residence this summer. Lapwing nest on the clover and tussock "heaths", butterflies (Common Blue, Wall, Meadow Brown, Large Skipper) abound in the grassy

meadows; Centaury, Orange Hawkbit and Heartsease decorate the "heathland" and Bee Orchids are to be found along the woodland (birch/willow) edge and in the glades. Sparrowhawks and Kestrels, foxes, weasels and voles, and who knows what else, can also be spotted.

But of course, no one in authority has ever thought to survey this area (was it part of the Phase 1 Survey). It was really only by chance (on the trail of the Bridgewater Canal Marsh Orchids) that **MW** has taken to rambling around this amazing place - alien, and yet familiar. I was reminded those bits of neglected agricultural land on the edge of villages in the South of France or even Crete. To the planners (& developers) it is just "derelict land", somewhere to put a money making scheme and "sell it" to the planning authority or the public as yet another answer to our urban problems. How shortsighted - right in the heart of industrial Manchester/Trafford/Salford is a priceless asset - wildlife; rich open space for all to enjoy - but it's free, so look no further for an overriding reason to turn the area into that epitome of the ersatz experience - the Theme Park. //

Carlei the Sparrowhawk

or Networking in Action
by Ian Brown

Now follow me closely, this is a little complicated! John, son of Sue Barnes (**MW** member), heard a screech of brakes in the road outside his home. Looking through the window, he saw a car move off and a Sparrowhawk hopped up onto the garden wall. He, and his mother, went out to have a look. The bird could not fly and looked to be injured so they tried to catch it. Being unsuccessful, Sue rang me (brother of former) and I thought that I knew someone who knows "a man that can", so a quick call to Unity and I had the phone number of Brian which I gave to my sister, who had by that time caught the bird, as it got stuck, trying to get under a gate. Brian came to the rescue and found that it (the bird) had an old injury and was suffering from malnutrition, as it had not been able to feed properly. Brian took it home, fed it and repaired the wing damage. Brilliant, as within a fortnight the Sparrowhawk, by then officially named 'Carlei' was released at the Parris Wood Centre with the press (Metro) in attendance. //

Rubbish

by Ian Brown

Murphy's Law - Our version of this law is "If an organisation or person tips rubbish on an open space, they will do so on the most sensitive place possible". I was inspecting a pond, in Moss Nook, on a proposed development site. It was not easy to dip, because of floating grass and submerged branches, but I found a newt and some frogs. Having completed my task I decided to see if the Broad-leaved Helleborines were showing in a nearby wood. On arriving I found, to my amazement, rubbish piled on the spot where the plants grew; fence rails, an old stile, pallets, a tarpaulin and a sign belonging to "Murphys" obviously left behind by contractors working on the airport rail link. Annoyed, I decided something must be done as the Helleborines would soon be attempting to flower. I phoned British Rail; not their responsibility. I phoned the Council; could be their responsibility but it would take some time to find out. However, they offered to provide a skip, free, if we would fill it. So this is what we decided to do. The press were contacted, so as to highlight the problem of fly tipping and Anthony, Unity and self set to and cleared the wood. The plants were indeed trying to emerge and should now be safe, at least until the next threat. Murphys said, "it wasn't us, honest!".

Rubbish Kills - Isn't it appalling the way some people strew their unwanted trash on our precious open spaces. Maybe they would think twice (assuming they think once) if they realised that they could be committing manslaughter. Fanciful, you may think, but not necessarily so. A few years ago, some boys were drowned when the boat they were in was swept downstream from Platt Fields, in a flash flood, and became stuck in the culvert upstream of Hough End Clough. An inquiry found that rubbish had filled the culvert, downstream of the Clough, and this caused the water to back up filling the upstream culvert to the roof. Maybe the culvert should have been cleared but it is the thoughtless action of the litter louts which is the real cause of the problem. Even something as small as a discarded cigarette packet can find its way into a local stream. Many such small items can accumulate and cause a blockage and could lead to a similar incident. **So Think Before You Litter**



Butterfly Survey 93

by Ian Brown

As Peter Hardy noted, in the East Cheshire & Peak District Branch Butterfly Conservation News of May, there was a very good start to the year, as far as butterflies were concerned. Most of the early species seemed to do well, particularly the Orange-tips and Green-veined Whites which were to be seen anywhere the habitat was remotely suitable. Small Tortoiseshell, Peacocks and Commas also thrived as did Holly Blues and later Common Blues.

Then the wheel fell off; summer seemed to finish around the beginning of June. There have been a few good days but it's most frustrating trying to dodge the showers. However, during the occasional sunny periods, Skippers and Meadow Browns were out in force; Brimstones have even been seen in the Mersey Valley, one at Lower Hardy Farm. So do not despair, if you are taking part in our Butterfly Survey, keep trying, there will be some good days to come and plenty more to see.

Don't forget to send in your reports at the end of the season and they will be added to our survey report which will be out soon. When will this be?, I hear you ask. One problem is that as soon as we publish, the report is out of date but the longer we wait, the more complete will be the coverage; it's a matter of balance. I think the best way is to take records from '91, '92, '93 (and possibly '94) and consider them as records 'after 1991'. This should give us a meaningful coverage. Once the report is published, it should be possible to issue supplementary sheets to update it. As far as the site reports are concerned, we now have a good number and these are already being used to defend sites where thriving populations of butterflies are found, and that's a good start. //

Odds and Ends

Global Forum '94 - This event was launched with much hype and a slick photo-video show at Manchester Town Hall. The Great Hall was packed and Sir Gil Thompson chaired a panel of those who, we assume, knew something about the subject. The Golden Leaf (from the Tree of Life) was delivered to the event, by hand, from Rio, where the Earth Summit took place. So what's it all about? The theme of the Forum is sustainable development in cities as envisaged in Rio's Agenda 21. One got the impression that some of those present thought that sustainable development included building lots of offices and superstores and expanding Manchester Airport. Maybe it would be better to use the phrase "sustainable society" and in future look for a city where we produced locally to meet local need. If the event comes off, in June 1994, we will see what those in authority have in mind.

The Manchester Plan - The public inquiry into the Manchester Unitary Development Plan is now in session. We have started to give our evidence on our objections, with more to come. The Council have plans to develop even more of our precious open spaces. To justify this they claim that between 1982 & 1991 there was a 116% increase in open space in Manchester City, and they have produced a table to prove it! We will be looking into this and shall be asking some very searching questions later in the inquiry.

As Seen on T.V. - John Houfe and Ian Brown (and our display on Sainsbury's Bruntwood Hay Meadow destruction) put in an appearance on the Channel 4 programme "Our Back Yard". This was filmed (by Observer Films), at the inaugural meeting of the National Sensitive Sites Alliance, which took place in Sheffield in February. The film was broadcast in April.

Another member in the media is the ubiquitous "Hedgehog" Hugh Warwick, who has been seen on the BBC 2 Natural History Unit programme "Nightwatch" and heard on Radio 4 in "Costing the Earth" and the Natural History Programme. Not to be outdone, John Houfe has recently appeared on North West Tonight; we

hope you didn't blink. This was part of a feature highlighting the Council for the Protection of Rural England's launch of their campaign "Lost Lands". They say that the North West has lost an area of open land equivalent to, "half the size of Greater Manchester". The main culprits are (you've guessed it) roads, offices, houses and superstores. The CPRE say that derelict land should be used for development. They were looking for a good example to launch their campaign so naturally they came to us, and we were able to oblige with the perfect example; the A34 by-pass at Cheadle, with office development on Cheadle Royal land, the Sainsbury superstore on Bruntwood Hay Meadow and Housing on the fields to the south of Bradshaw Hall Lane. Ian was at the public inquiry so John personfully stepped in and performed excellently, both on television, GMR and possible other radio stations.

Floral Folly - You may not have seen it but surely you have heard about it. Yes, it's the biggest flower bed in the world and should be visible from the moon, through a telescope - though there's no one up there at the moment. Nearly 200,000 plants make up the Olympic symbol and a mile of wood was used to separate the colours. 250 tons of gravel was needed for the white bits; one is tempted to ask how much of Derbyshire has been devastated to provide this material. Hopefully the vast amounts of peat used did not come from our vanishing peat mosses, but from a sustainable source. Promoted by the horticultural industry and the £500,000 cost being donated by North West business, "it won't cost the public a penny". Where does NW business get their money from? "The public". /

Abbey Villa

**Pond With a Future??
by Unity Kelly**

This little pond, on the edge of Hulme, tucked between the Victorian Old Abbey Inn and the Greenheys Business Centre and surrounded by Lego lookalike Science Park units, has had a chequered history. Once upon a time most of south Manchester was a productive bog - Moss Side, Rusholme, Withington..... Brooks and ponds abounded. Farming and industry cleared and drained most of the boggy bits. The water table dropped and housing filled in most of the open spaces; streams were

culverted. Then, about 20 years ago, a water pipe burst and a pond was formed in a marshy hollow. In the Greater Manchester Council era of conservation and habitat creation the pond was given a plastic liner and the pipe allowed to continue its supply work.

The surrounding meadow was planted with wildflowers but, unfortunately, is now mowed to within an inch of its life, but some flowers struggle to survive. There seems nothing much to tempt amphibian and aquatic life: but wait! The pond is teeming with newts; frogs breed, birds come to bathe and drink and, this year 6, yes 6, species of dragonfly have been seen, all are certainly or probably breeding. Ask any of the local children who now regularly visit the pond and they will describe, in their own words, the behaviour of the newts, the different dragonflies including "the bright blue one with a body as big as my finger," (a 9 year old); *Libellula depressa* the Broad-bodied Chaser. This species is widespread (but declining) in the south and midlands and in "good years" will extend its range colonising, for preference, young ponds. It may be resident or just drop in casual-like but, after a few years, disappear as suddenly as it appeared. This seems to be the first record for Manchester and must have come in from sites to the south - Etherow Valley and Middlewood Way ponds perhaps.

What an asset for inner city Manchester! I have met keen and observant children from 6 local primary schools (in Hulme and Moss Side) at the pond. This is what environmental awareness is all about. Ian discovered that the UDP had plans for this pond (LWT decided, back in 1990, not to use an EN grant on this site for this reason) - you've got it; pull the plug on the pond and build more Science Park units. There is plenty of unused land and unlet Science Park development - so why fill in this little patch? It is possible that, through MW's evidence and Ian's representations at the UDP inquiry, there might be a reprieve for the pond. We are prepared to make a fuss about this one and will gladly offer to do the necessary work to maintain and improve the area and, most importantly, persuade the Council to implement a wildlife friendly mowing regime. //

Useful Contacts

Insects Peter Hardy - 969 4771 (evenings & weekends)

Birds RSPB Stockport - Tony O'Neill - 962 2449

RSPB Manchester - Simeon Rydz - 434 2720

Bird of Prey Rescue - Brian Wilcocks - 945 3831

British Trust for Conservation Volunteers

Sale & Altrincham - Shelagh Aston - 275 3146 (day) 928 2223

Salford & Trafford - Brian Taylor - 872 7640 (day)

Stockport - Kim Porter - 0625 874729 (weekends & evenings)

Cheshire Wildlife Trust

North Group (Trafford) - Liz Blackman (Chair) - 962 6748

Stockport & Tameside - Rhian Law (Secretary) - 0663 743070

Wilmslow Group - Tony Browne - 436 1761

Lancashire Wildlife Trust

Bolton Wildlife Project - Annie Surtees - 0204 361847

Manchester Friends of the Earth - 13 Paton Street - 236 4155

Friends of the Mersey Valley - Ann Buckingham - 881 1814

Mersey Valley Wardens - Sale 905 1100 - Chorlton 881 5639

Manchester City Conservation Officers - 273 5843

Elaine Norsworthy - Countryside! Officer

Graeme McVitie - Woodland Officer

Manchester Wildlife is a networking organisation - You are included on our contact list; are we included on yours? Other groups might like to come to a similar arrangement!

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APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

Name (Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms)

Address

Postcode

Phone number

Subscription rates

☐ Family membership £6

☐ Individual membership £4

☐ Reduced membership
(Senior Citizen, Unwaged, Under 16) £2

☐ Schools, Groups and Societies £6

☐ Please send me details of Life Membership

☐ I enclose a donation of £ which I understand
will go towards the funding of local nature and
conservation work.

☐ I am interested in sponsoring a Newsletter and/or
leaflet. Please send me further details.

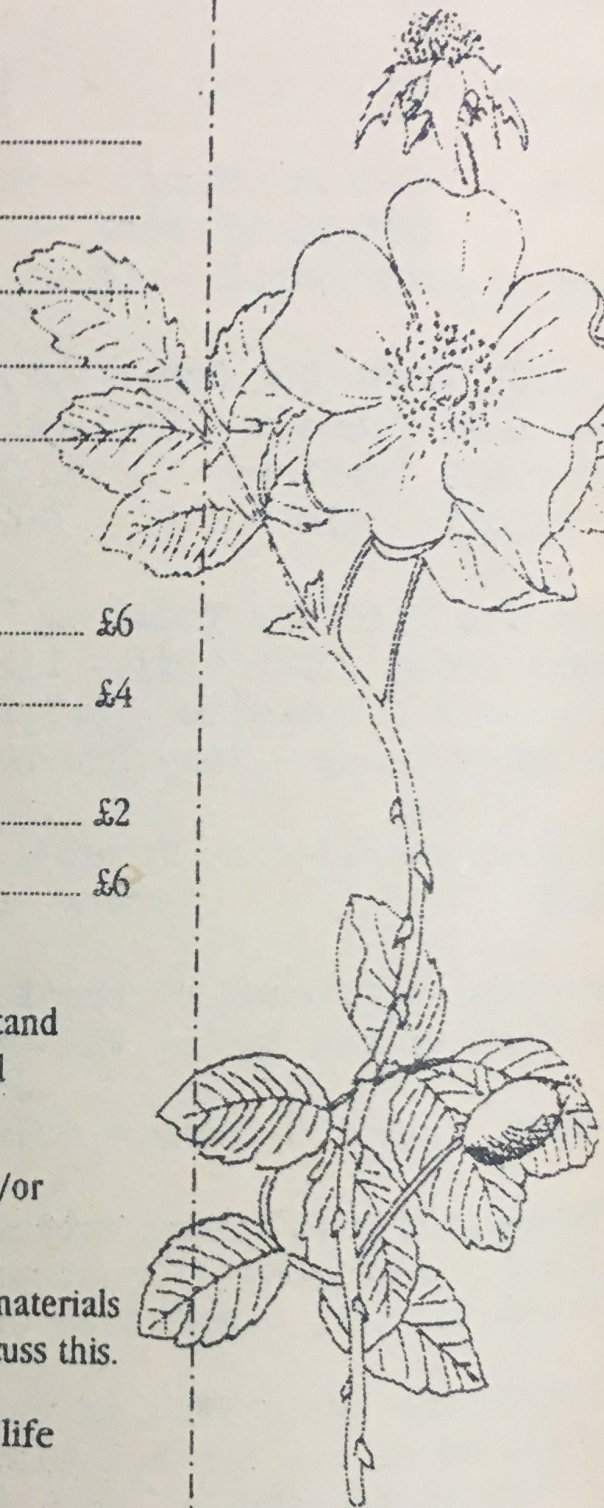
☐ I may be able to sponsor tools, trees or other materials
in exchange for publicity and would like to discuss this.

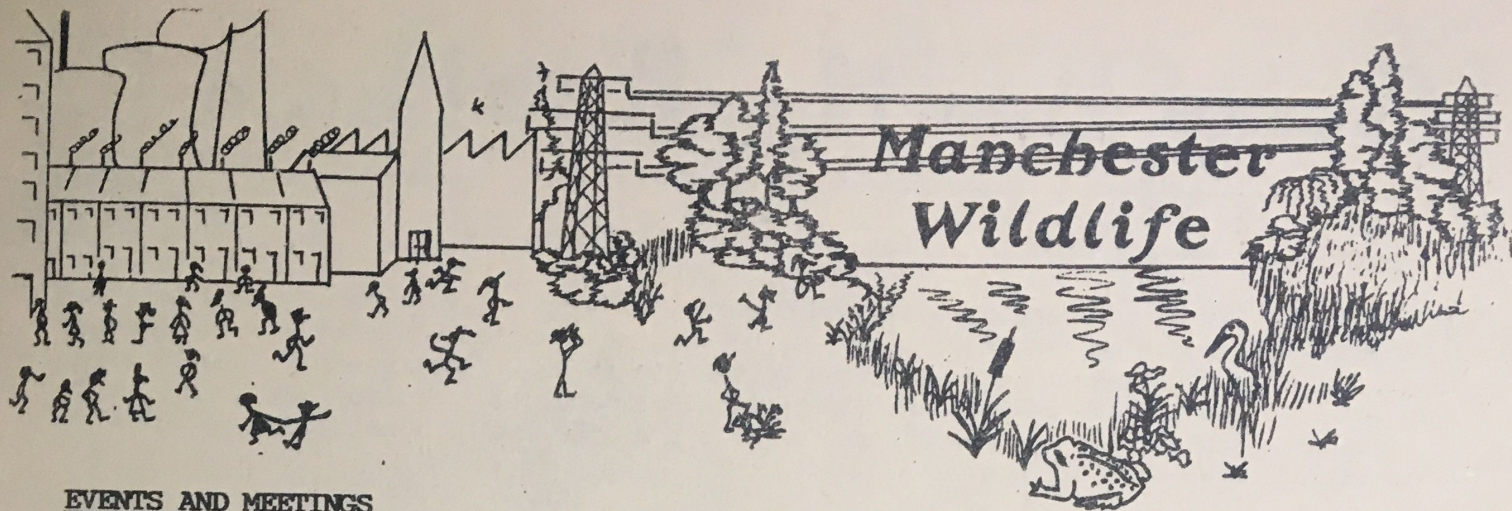
Please list your particular interests in Wildlife
and Conservation -
.....

Please send completed forms with cheques made
payable to Manchester Wildlife
to:

Ian Brown
82 Crantock Drive
Heald Green
Cheadle
Cheshire SK8 3HA

*Space here for Sponsor's
Name + Logo + Phone No.
Inquiries to Editor - 061 437 7040*





EVENTS AND MEETINGS

Please try to take part in as many events as possible. It is best to phone the contact to make sure there are no alterations.

August 1993

- Sunday 15th **Green Fun Day - Wythenshawe Park** - Plenty of activities, events and stalls. We will be Bodging. Time 11.30 am to 5 pm.
- Monday 30th **Family Fun Day - Parrs Wood Centre for Rural Education** - A great day out for all the family. Plenty of interesting things to see and do. Stalls, animals, crafts; we'll be bodging again. Time 10.30 to 5. Contact Unity Kelly 226 4583.

September 1993

- Thursday 2nd **RSNC Education Seminar 1993** - Hosted by Cheshire Wildlife Trust at Reaseheath, Nantwich. WATCH Day on Saturday. An opportunity to take part in this annual gathering. Interested - Contact Unity 226 4583.
- Sunday 5th **Hay Cutting at Hough End Clough** - Meet at Hough End Crescent (South end of Alexandra Road South). Time 11 am on. Wear old clothes and strong footwear. Bring your own food. Contact Ian Brown 437 7040.
- Sunday 12th **Bodging with Oldham & Rochdale Groundwork** - An interesting event in the Ashworth Valley, Rochdale. Should be plenty going on. For more details contact Martin Riley (Groundwork) 0706 360111 Ext. 3306.
- Tuesday 14th **Pub Meeting** - Parrs Wood Hotel, Junction of School Lane/Parrs Wood Road, East Didsbury. Time 7.30 p.m. Contact Ian Brown 437 7040.
- Friday 17th **Urban Wildlife Partnership; Annual Conference** - "Breaking Down Barriers". The conference will be in Luton. Interested? - Contact Unity 226 4583. Travel bursaries available.
- Sunday 19th **General Meeting** - Time 7.30 pm. Place to be arranged. Contact Ian Brown 437 7040. If you would like to host this meeting, or a later meeting, please get in touch.
- Thursday 30th

October 1993

- Sunday 3rd **Reddish Mini-wood** - Hay cutting day. Time 10 - 4. For directions contact June Greaves 432 6475.
- Sunday 10th **Abbey Villa Pond Clean-up** - Meet at the Old Abbey Inn, Pencroft Way Greenheys, Hulme (west of Dental Hospital, Lloyd St.North). Time 11-2 pm. Wear old clothes and wellies. Contact Unity 226 4583.
- Tuesday 12th **Pub Meeting** - Parrs Wood Hotel, Junction of School Lane/Parrs Wood Road, East Didsbury. Time 7.30 p.m. Contact Ian Brown 437 7040.
- Sunday 17th **Painswick Park - Meadow Mowing** - Meet at Transplant Site (for directions Contact Ian 437 7040.) Time 11-4. Wear old clothes.

A REPORT ON OUR EVENTS IS TO BE FOUND OVERLEAF

Working for Wildlife in Greater Manchester
 - Manchester Wildlife is a Member of -
 - The Urban Wildlife Partnership -



Events You May Have Missed

A report on our Members' Day is already included in the "Magpie".

On the 9th of May was our annual **Hough End Clough - Tidy-up**. Six members turned out for this event and though we managed to do a lot of work more bodies would have been a great help. Much rubbish was cleared and taken to the tip at Nell Lane (where it should have gone in the first place); we left the Clough looking immaculate. We also cut down a ton of Japanese Knotweed, which was thirsty work, but at the end of a hard day, we had the satisfaction of a job well done.

Environment Week! - How was it for you - Did you see it? Did you feel it, smell it, hear it, taste it? Answers on a postcard, please! Manchester City Council opted out of the responsibility of promoting Environment Week, this year. We were busy doing what we do, normally; to us, every week is Environment Week! On the 22nd of May we attended the Didsbury Festival. This is a big attraction and was a successful first appearance for Manchester Wildlife. We put on a display of Bodging, which drew the crowds and sold a reasonable quantity of wildflower seed. On the 29th of May we made an epic journey to Pickering Pastures and this is fully reported in the "Magpie".

The 6th of June saw us on our **Angels from Paradise** urban safari. This was well attended by members and public after good media publicity. We have a full report in from Unity but this is too long for the current "Magpie" and will appear in the autumn issue. You will be able to read it in the comfort of your living room reflecting on the lazy, hazy, crazy days of summer!

On the 12th of June we walked to **Poynton Coppice** via the Middlewood Way (after a train journey to Rose Hill Station). Joined by some members of the Manchester Friendship Club, we found that the Middlewood Way was Roses, Roses, all the way. There were also some interesting wildflowers but the weather did not encourage the butterflies or dragonflies to put in an appearance. We met Middlewood Way Ranger, Stuart Bardsley, who kindly gave us a conducted tour round Poynton Coppice. This is an attractive woodland where management work is being carried out to make it even better for wildlife. The highlight of the day was when we saw a meadow on the woodland edge which was so full of orchids it was almost indecent; outrageously luxuriant is the only way to adequately describe it.

The 20th of June saw us at our third annual **Orchid Spot**. About 8 members and Countryside Unit representative, Ali Glaisher, were at Painswick Park in Wythenshawe to count the orchids which were amongst the many plants moved from the path of the Airport Terminal 2 access road. There were about 150 orchid spikes in 1991, 300 in 1992 and 410 this year. The transplant seems to have worked, at least so far as the orchids are concerned and there has been no damage to the site. The majority of "created meadows" don't usually work but the meadow at Painswick Park is doing well because the site was prepared by the removal of top soil which discourages over strong grass growth because the fertility is low. This allows the soil to become rapidly colonised by regeneration from the originally translocated plants. The meadow now looks most attractive and should look even better, next year.

We apologise to members for the fact that some meetings and events have not been advertised but this is because the newsletter has been delayed. The year's events and meetings were advertised on our 1993 Calendar which was issued with the autumn 1992 "Magpie". If you wish to know what is going on or would like more details; phone the editor. You will have noticed that; pub meetings are on the 2nd Tuesday of each month and the General Meetings are on the last Thursday of alternate months, starting in January.

Just when you thought it was safe..... Lower Hardy Farm was thought to be safe from the "Road Across the Mersey" - then along comes the Metro Link. More in the next "Magpie"!!