

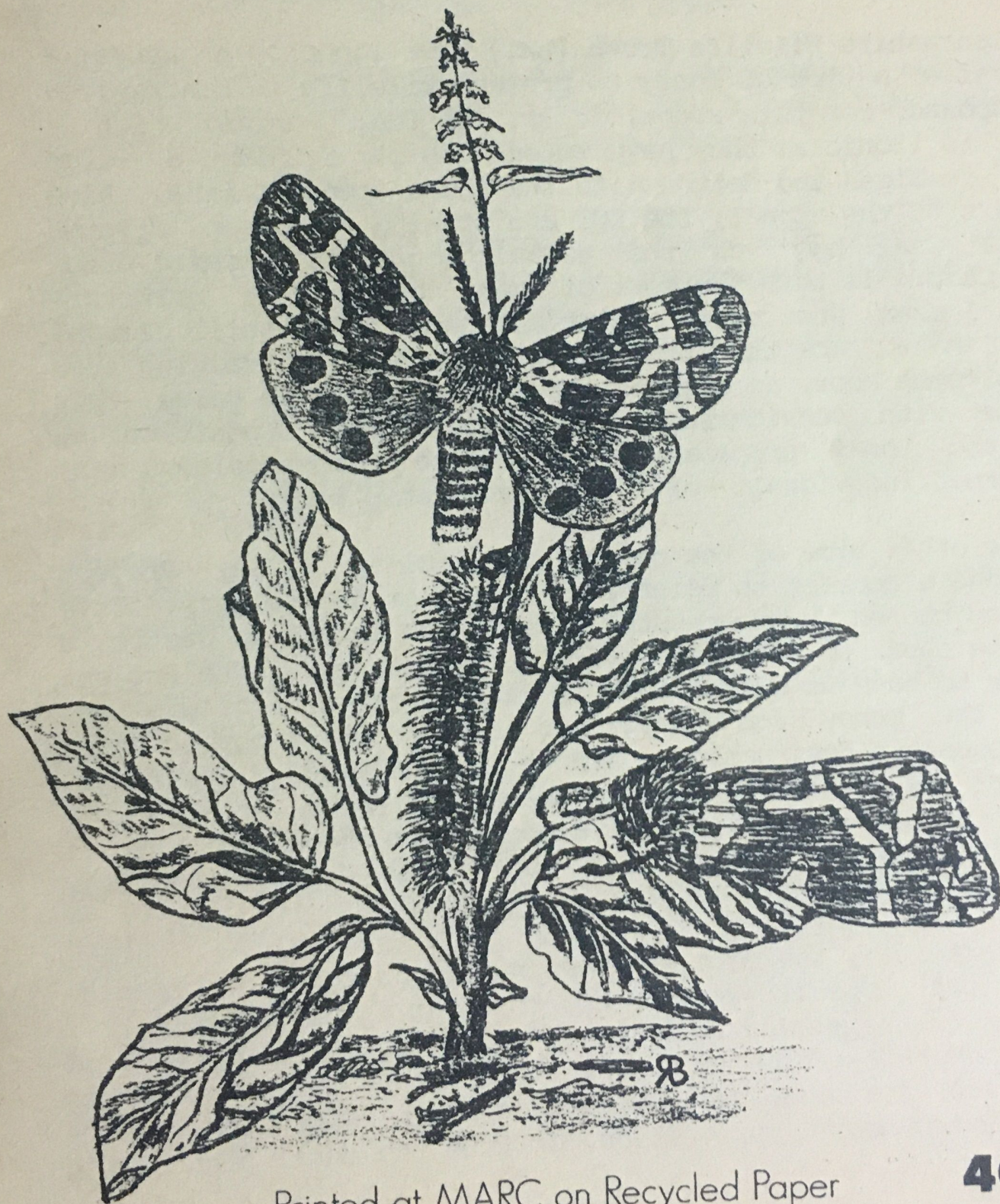


MANCHESTER WILDLIFE'S OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER

The **MAGPIE**

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Editorial

Editor's Office 437 7040

There is a problem which occasionally confronts us; that is, should we take money from anyone to fund our activities in the wildlife conservation movement? I am of the opinion that we should avoid being sponsored by organisations who harm the environment in the pursuit of their normal business.

The Lancashire Wildlife Trust (LWT) have launched an appeal * to raise a lot of money to protect wildlife in Lancashire. The sponsor for this appeal is British Coal Opencast which is a little ironic as they have intentions of ruining a large area in Wigan and Bolton with the Lomax opencast mine. Also as part of the appeal, the LWT are staging a "Green Krypton Factor Challenge" on the assault course at Holcombe Brook Army Camp. Is this the sort of image we should be cultivating? I mean, what next? Paintball games in Cotteril Clough! Some while back the army wished to extend its training area on Holcombe Moor, an area of outstanding wildlife value. This was met with considerable local, and other, opposition, as was the Lomax proposal. Is the chance of antagonising many concerned individuals worth the sponsorship money?

On the other side of the county, the Bollin Valley Project produced a booklet to celebrate their 21st Anniversary. This was sponsored by Manchester Airport who intend to destroy a sizable chunk of the Valley with a second runway. The Project appear to have no qualms on this matter; their attitude is, take the money from whoever you can, and still oppose their environmental destruction. Are we at Manchester Wildlife any better? We are taking part in the Global Forum celebrations which has received financial support from the airport and in 1990 they gave us a small sum, and other support, to help with our wildflower transplant.

The problem is, the more environmentally damaging an organisation, the more likely they are to offer sponsorship to help "Green" their image. It is possible to raise finance from environmentally friendly sources, but not so easy. So what to do? Take the money and run, and so be in a position to finance environmental protection, or take the moral high ground

and remain poor and less effective. Am I being too fussy? We would have to draw the line somewhere; for example, sponsorship from Sainsburys would be over my dead body, but where should we draw that line? Let us know what you think.

And if you would like to take part in LWT's "Green Krypton Factor Challenge" on the 6th and 7th of August, phone the hotline on 0772 324129. MW has been invited.

* This will upset some in the wider environmental movement: one of the appeal's patrons is Kevin Smith Esq., B.A. (Hons.) Managing Director, British Aerospace, Warton.

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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Sparrowhawks, Magpies & Sweatshirts.

An article in the RSPB magazine "Birds" (summer 94) headlined "The Songbird Debate" explodes some myths about the reasons for the (perceived?) decline of our song birds. Sparrowhawk populations have recovered from their low levels of the '50s and '60s which were caused by pesticide poisoning and human persecution. Some people are concerned that the increase in

sparrowhawks effects songbird populations but research by the University of Oxford contradicts this. "It is an important biological fact that songbirds produce many more young each year than can be expected to survive; those taken by sparrowhawks may otherwise have starved over the winter. If the habitat is right the song birds will be there, irrespective of the number of sparrowhawks, which will not increase indefinitely, but will inevitably stabilise, at a level usually determined by the availability of food".

The same goes for magpies. The BTO and Sheffield University have discovered that, in general, songbirds increased most in areas where magpies increased most. Again, it is the HABITAT that is most important; if we keep it in good heart it will be good for birds, and, of course, other wildlife.

So now there is no excuse to prevent you from walking about Manchester with a Magpie plastered on your chest. You can do this by purchasing one of our wonderful corporate garments. There are a few left so rush in your order now to avoid being disappointed. Long sleeved cotton shirts are £6.50; T-shirts are £5.50 and 70% cotton sweatshirts are £7.50. Phone 437 7040 to order; you can collect at events or meetings or pay an extra £1.50 for package and postage. The shirts are really good value too! Network Northwest were selling their sweatshirts for £12 at the Victoria Station 150th anniversary celebrations. So be one of less than 50 privileged wildlifers and buy one of our shirts before it's too late. //

Bracken

by Ian Brown

For three years, from 1979-81, I did voluntary work for the RSPB at their Coombes Valley reserve near Leek. This was an idyllic way to spend a holiday; staying in an old cottage at the bottom of a beautiful wooded valley, isolated from the hustle of the modern world. Amongst the many and varied tasks to be carried out there were occasional stints of bracken pulling, both in the woodland and on meadowland. Unfortunately, I never found out the long term effect of this work but I notice that it is a task being undertaken by local volunteer groups and maybe my recent experience will be of some use.

About six years ago I started pulling bracken in a local wood which was completely swamped with the stuff; in high summer you could hardly see over it and in winter, and spring, dead bracken is not a pretty sight. I surmised that if the bracken was removed there should be no detrimental effect on wildlife and other ground flora would have the chance to flourish. I also surmised that the best procedure was to pull little and often; bracken leaves needs light to maintain a healthy root system; remove the leaves and the energy spent in producing them will not be replaced. An annual blitz will not solve the problem as, in no time, the bracken will be back as strong as ever. Start in early May and, once a week (or fortnight) pull as much bracken as you can manage in the time available. On the second visit there will be a little less to deal with so the area can be expanded and gradually increased throughout the year. There is no point in starting on a new area after August as the bracken will have already done its growing. How long does it take? Between three and five years, depending on the amount of shade, so it's a long term job and could take 10 years or more to complete eradication in anything but the smallest wood. Once the bracken is dealt with it would be a good idea to make occasional visits to make sure it does not reappear. The main thing is not to give up as the results are quite astounding. Ground flora, such as bluebells and wood sorrel, will expand in the extra light available; natural regeneration of trees will be encouraged; the wood will have a more varied appearance in spring and summer and look greener in winter. One problem: brambles will also flourish, but that is more easily solved.

In a wood the bracken must be pulled; cutting will not do as this will effect other plants. Pull up with as much root as possible and dispose of in dense piles on a place where there is no important ground flora (by a stand of nettles will do). The piles will rot down like compost but watch them in later years as they make very good wasp's nests. Small, loose piles will tend to dry out and could be a fire hazard. Wear gloves, to protect your hands from nettles and brambles, and a face mask, as there is a theory that bracken spores can be harmful to health. While you are there clear up any rubbish you find as this will help to improve the appearance of the wood and make your efforts even more worthwhile. And, happy bracken pulling: it's great fun if you don't weaken! //

Permaculture

The Gorton Forest Garden

by Spencer Fitz-Gibbon

The Greater Manchester Permaculture Group is establishing a forest garden on an allotment near Gorton Reservoir, which should be good news for wildlife and for ecology generally.

A forest garden is a small-scale intensive agroforestry system; in this case the site measures 20m x 30m. It is based on the ecological design principles of permaculture, and thus aims for high yield and low maintenance. The system aspires to eventually meet all its own fertility needs, thus requiring minimal energy input; and to use up all its product, as in permaculture terms an unused product is a pollutant.

It is a firm principle of permaculture that human needs must be met with minimum negative ecological impact, while also helping to create ecological benefits. Apart from the energy and pollution aspects already mentioned, this means producing things in a way that helps local biodiversity. For example, instead of using chemical pesticides, it will strive for integrated pest management. One aspect of this, at the forest garden, involves the creation of at least one pond, which will serve both as a breeding ground for frogs and toads, and also as a means of keeping the slug population in check* - helping raise the food yield with minimal effort, while benefiting wildlife.

Another wildlife benefit derives from the fact that there will be much more flora on the site than existed in its former guise as a largely annual-vegetable site. Twenty fruit trees and forty bushes have been planted, in such a way that they copy the layers of a natural forest. Once the trees are properly established other layers will be added, including a productive root layer, a herb layer and a creeping layer, so the whole thing will be stacked full of life - much of which will give products useful for people. Eventually we hope to establish bees on the site to increase the yield of the fruit trees and to provide honey; and of course a profusion of flowers (including wildflowers) will be needed for the bees.

As well as the above trees, a permaculture hedge has been planted. This is quite experimental, but will hopefully serve the multiple functions for which a permaculture design aims. It will sink more carbon than the old privets; will provide more habitat and some food for birds; and will increase the diversity of the site, as already the hedge contains a dozen species: hazels, crabs, medlar, honeysuckle, plum, dogwood, rowan and plenty of holly all blended in with the main plants of hawthorn and blackthorn. Again, once established, extra species will be added, including creeping plants, a herb layer (sorrel, spinach, Good King Henry?) and woodland flowers. So the hedge will also be productive of some food and fertility, and very attractive to look at.

Of course the birds won't be allowed to eat all the fruit, and we have to keep rabbits out of most of the site. But, in keeping with permaculture "zone planning" there is a "zone 5" which will be dedicated mostly to wildlife, with extra diversity built into it in the form of gorse (which both bees and rabbits will like - and potential vandals won't!), and wildflowers.

And anyway, the site is of course part of the local food industry. We don't think it would be possible to produce food in a much more environment-friendly way; and when permaculture catches on, including in our cities, it will reduce pressure on the countryside for food production. So in the long term, by the use of such methods, we should be able to turn vast areas of current farmland to wilderness.

* (Editor's note - my garden pond is full of frogs and the garden also full of slugs!)

Spencer Fitz-Gibbon is secretary of GM Permaculture and is editor of the Green Party Permaculture Group's newsletter, **Benign Design**; recent, and future, issues of which give details of the Gorton forest garden project. Copies of **Benign Design** 5, explaining the design and funding, will be sent to members of Manchester Wildlife for 50p from 21 Meade Grove, Longsight, M13 0SG (225 4863). (Send stamps, or cheques made payable to GPPPG please.) //

Birds

Manchester Wildlife Winter Bird Survey 93/94 by Janet Gorst

Another wet winter with never ending strong winds, although there was a short cold snap during February. But birds were much in evidence, both in numbers and variety. A total of 61 species were recorded in and around Manchester Wildlife members' gardens, or noted in the area.

BLUE TITS, GREAT TITS and COAL TITS were seen in most gardens feeding at peanut holders. LONG TAILED TITS were recorded in ten gardens. MARSH TITS were seen in Didsbury and Bramhall; a WILLOW TIT sighted in Heald Green. It's been the best year yet for BLACKCAPS; 12 were recorded, both male and female. One male was observed with a ROBIN, both 'fluffed' up against the cold, eating grated cheese. CHAFFINCH and GREENFINCH fared better this year in gardens but not abundant. BULLFINCHES seem in regrettable decline in our area. BRAMBLINGS were thin on the ground this year; only two sightings, a lone female was seen to spend most of its time with a chaffinch flock. Six DUNNOCK were noted in Heald Green and eight WRENS were seen in a Didsbury garden.

REDWINGS (50) made their annual appearance on Priestnall allotments along with GOLDFINCH (30), GREENFINCH (35), CHAFFINCH (30), FIELDFARE (1), GOLDCREST (4) and KESTREL (1). The writer noted 35+ BLACKBIRDS early in November in the Heaton Moor area; all appeared to be male. SONG THRUSHES, though thought to be in decline, out stripped MISTLE THRUSHES in members' garden this year.

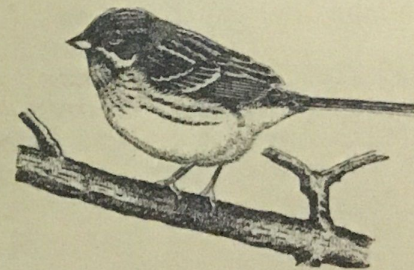
SISKINS were widely reported from South Manchester/Stockport; an astonished observer spotted 40, in January, clinging to every available peanut holder. 20 were noted in Didsbury and 12 in Heald Green & Timperley. Four SISKINS had to be taken into care after crashing into windows in high winds; all were released safely. REDPOLL appeared on the survey for the first time; two were seen with a SISKIN flock. Sixteen PIED WAGTAILS were seen in Didsbury Park by a MW member walking her dog. GREY WAGTAILS appeared in four gardens.

1000+ LAPWING and GOLDEN PLOVER were seen 'rising and flocking' above fields between Hazel Grove and Poynton in January. 100+ WHOOPER SWANS were seen moving over South Manchester in January.

A good find was a LESSER SPOTTED WOODPECKER in Timperley; four gardens held NUTHATCHES, TREE CREEPERS & GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKERS. One observer felt quite sea-sick after watching a GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER cling to a red peanut bag for dear life in gale force winds. A LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL skimming hedges, in March, was another eye-opener! 40 MAGPIES were observed in Crumpsall. JAYS also frequented gardens and JACKDAWS turned up in five. A real surprise was a PEACOCK and a MOORHEN in a Sale garden. A SPARROWHAWK and a grey squirrel, sitting side by side, on a fence, was a hoot!

At the end of the survey, a WILLOW WARBLER was sighted in Mossley, a CHIFFCHAFF in Heaton Mersey, five TWITE on the Priestnall allotments and two BARNACLE GEESE heading north.

Finally, if a BLACK-FACED BUNTING, a FIRST for BRITAIN, can be found in Greater Manchester, not too far from many MW members' gardens, anything can turn up! So KEEP WATCHING.



BLACK-FACED BUNTING

Any interesting birds seen during the summer/autumn, please let me know. I'm sure I can find a small space in future Magpies for anything notable.

(If you would like a full list of the birds observed during the survey write to the editor enclosing two second class stamps) //

"We abuse land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect" Aldo Leopold

Is Green Boring?

by Tim Lepidus

Events and Other Matters

To start at the beginning. Our April social meeting at the Old Steam Brewery; no more or less successful, as a venue, than the Parrs Wood but it's noisy (opposite the Royal Northern College of Music and we get loud pop music!), so we're transferring to the White Lion on Liverpool Road. This will be convenient for Deansgate Station and G-Mex on the Metro, which is free if you have a train ticket. Next came Members' Day which was pretty much of a success, with a good attendance. A fine talk by Tony Bradshaw was supplemented by Basket (Ann Gill), Besom (Sarah Race) and Tent-peg (The Bodger) making and our usual exhibitions. The auction for the Bruntwood Meadows stool was a failure. There was only one bid, from the Bodger. We will have to think of another way to dispose of this beautiful piece of furniture. Thank you to those who assisted on the day but, next year, more helpers would be appreciated as those who ran the show, this year, felt shattered by the end of the day.

The Fletcher Moss Circular Walk, on May Day, was most enjoyable though poorly attended. The planted wildflower meadow suffers for lack of management while the "natural" wet meadow by the willow carr is over managed, ie. regularly cut, which is denying the Ragged Robin, and other plants which should be growing there, the chance to make a contribution to "Nature in the City". About six years ago we were told that this meadow was not being mowed but it has been, every year since. Manchester does not seem to have got the message about wildflower meadows. On a recent visit to Wythenshawe Park it was noticed that an area of grassland at the east end, which used to be left to grow, has been severely mowed. (Orange Tip and Green-veined White butterflies used to breed there; not any more they don't.) Meanwhile, Gibb Lane Wood suffers from neglect. The park is now a uniform green and that can be boring. Can it be that the council has too much money but not enough sense to spend it wisely? Does the order go out to burn some diesel: get out there and cut grass? This seems hardly appropriate when the main theme of Global Forum 94 is "Cities and Sustainable Development". Surely, a few splashes

of colour, in the grass, can't do any harm. There is one tiny area the mowers have missed but we're not saying where.

Stockport Council have a policy of creating meadowland. This has been implemented at Heaton Common and other suitable locations. However, the ever vigilant John Turner caught a council worker mowing a wet meadow on sloping land in the Goyt Valley, for no agricultural purpose. He reported this to Elaine Fidler at Leisure Services, and it was agreed that the meadow was in a "suitable location" and should not be cut regularly, in future.

Back to Fletcher Moss: we walked through the willow carr onto Millgate Fields, which is developing nicely. The old tip is subsiding in places, forming wetland areas with small pools. We did notice that the Lady's Smock on the exposed field bore no Orange Tip eggs but the same plant growing in the hollow, between the field and the carr, was covered with eggs. This demonstrates that butterflies prefer their food plant to be in a sunny, sheltered spot.

The following Sunday we surveyed the woodland on Kenworthy Fields, noting where the trees and other flora were growing so we can formulate a management plan. On our way to the wood we spotted a Speckled Wood butterfly at Chorlton Water Park (first sighting for the area). A week later was the Japanese Knotweed Bash at Hough End with only Unity and Charlotte Abbas attending (I was skiving at a craft show in Sheffield), but they managed to carry on the good work subduing this pestilent weed. Problem is, part of the waterside meadow has been taken over by cleavers: there's always something! It is interesting to note that a Brimstone butterfly has been seen at Hough End. Interesting, because some years ago we planted Alder Buckthorn there and Robert Goodden once said that if it's food plant is present then the Brimstone will appear: it seems to be working!

Then we had a Sunday off but the 29th of May saw us on the Disused Railway Safari; pity about the weather. This railway line runs from Chorlton to Debdale, via. Fallowfield and the "Highfield Country Park" in Levenshulme; a quite delightful "Green Corridor" with interesting flora along the banks. We are told that it is good for butterflies and 14 species have

been observed in the old Fallowfield goods yard, which is to have a supermarket (ASDA?) dumped on it (we really need more supermarkets!). This old railway has been designated as a leisure route in the UDP. Very little needs to be done to achieve this; some access but the ballast offers a very firm foundation for the path. Nature has already done the landscaping! We have heard that some local people think the cutting should be filled in (for safety reasons) so that those using it will be visible from the surrounding houses. This would ruin the interesting banks and to be fully effective all the trees would need to be felled. Such extreme measures have not been necessary in other parts of the country. It might as well be made into a road, with street lights and everything! The cutting is only shallow and more use should make it safer. If there is a perceived fear of danger on such places, then it would be best to use them in the company of friends rather than spoil a route which gives the impression of a walk in the countryside. Filling in the cutting would require thousand of lorry loads of spoil; just think of the environmental damage that would cause. Let us hope that wiser counsels prevail.

We continued this walk, on the following Sunday, by visiting Highfield Country Park to see what wildlife we could find in the area; and what an area! Plenty of room; part old tip and part old farmland; old hedgerows, some tree planting and some natural regeneration. The meadows are a mixture; very fertile in parts, with strong grass growth, but there are areas with some good species diversity with one particularly fine meadow so care would have to be taken when any "improvements" are to be undertaken. Policy LL3 of the UDP designates this area as a "Country Park". Little need be done as regards landscaping; entrance points should be made secure to prevent unnecessary vehicular access, rubbish cleared and a small ranger service installed to manage and look after the site which has great potential as a wildlife and informal recreational area.

On returning home, a call at Heaton Common revealed Ox-Eye Daisy growing, as expected but, surprise surprise, Wild Pansy and Ragged Robin have also appeared as this is the first time the meadows have been left uncut so late. So is Green boring? Not with Manchester Wildlife it isn't. A little Pink, Yellow and white helps so why not come with us and find out. //

Tiger Country!

by Unity Kelly

One hot June afternoon, last year, going to the shops I spotted a large "Woolly Bear" caterpillar crawling purposefully away from a small garden to certain death on Gt. Western St. Some caterpillars become hyper active, just before pupation, and set off for pastures new regardless. I took "Woolly" home to our back yard, hoping to assuage its wonderlust with our choice selection of garden plants. The delightful Woolly Bear is, of course, the larva of the lovely Garden Tiger Moth, its resplendent scarlet, cream and brown colours, a beauty to behold. They feed on all kinds of common plants so I hoped it would settle in. For several days we spotted "Woolly" trundling round the raised bed, looking for a quiet spot to pupate?

On a mid-July evening I was enjoying the dusk and the scent of honeysuckle and jasmine when a beautiful adult moth hovered over the blooms. Yes, the first Garden Tiger I had seen since moving away from the Dales. Examination showed it was a large, hopefully, egg bearing female. In my childhood, even small London gardens had their Tigers and whole processions of woolly bears could be seen marching round our school playground. Maybe the bomb sites, with their abundance of docks, dandelions and nettles (which Landlife find so offensive), were ideal breeding grounds.

Imagine our delight when, this May, I spotted three woolly bears feeding voraciously on the foxgloves, and later on the bramble. One has now pupated and the other two are looking big enough to do likewise. Parasitic wasps permitting, will we have three Tigers in the yard, next month? //

Environment Weak

While this occasion is still celebrated in some parts of the country, Sheffield had a mass of event and it seemed to last a fortnight, in Manchester it passed almost without notice.

Nature Does It Better

by Daphne Laureola

Creative Conservation or Leaving Well Alone

A lively and indeed impassioned debate is taking place within the RSNC Urban Wildlife Partnership following the presentation of a paper by Grant Lucombe, Director of Landlife & Chair of the UWP Executive Committee, titled "Mandatory Wildflower Requirement". The "Mandatory" element refers to an entirely hypothetical proposal that this policy should be adopted by Government and local authorities as part of their contribution to the UK Biodiversity Action Plan. The idea seems to be that sowing suitable wildflowers should be implemented through a statutory funding requirement (0.5% of the budget of all "environmental" measures) and should therefore be incorporated into all kinds of landscaping activities over the whole of the UK with the "objective of enhancing the natural environment by replanting species poor habitats with richer, attractive wildflower landscapes".

At this point, Landlife's sweeping vision of drifts of Corn Marigolds, Ox-eye Daisies, poppies....(Landlife produce, market and "install" such wildflowers) was rudely interrupted by squeaks and grunts from other members of the UWP, as the ecological implications sank in. Thinks: what are the real ecological issues - and what messages would such a policy convey to both public and planners?

Ian Brown gives us a salutary pair of examples. On the banks of the recently upgraded A55 (North Wales) there are drifts of Ox-eye Daisies ("installed" by Landlife) which mask the raw blankness of the slopes and control erosion. It has been very successful and is quite spectacular for a few weeks of the year. But as anyone who has let Ox-eye Daisy into their garden knows, these are a robust and invasive species. On our favourite (only) Manchester Ox-eye Daisy bank, near Victoria Station, the vibrant azure stands of Vipers Bugloss only lasted one season and were swamped by the dominant species. Back on the road, the second example is the cutting on the approach to the tunnel, under the runway, at Manchester Airport. Thankfully, the banks of this cutting were not given the "easy to grow" wildflower treatment or subjected to the bizarre shrub mixtures, which are popular at the Airport and

elsewhere. What has colonised in just a few years? Common Spotted Orchid, Pyramidal Orchid, Marsh Fragrant and Bee Orchid (and many other plants). Leaving well alone (the 'no input option') was clearly the best practise there.

And here's the real source of contention. "Creative Conservation" has a feel good factor, as well as being good for business; and provides opportunities for people to get involved, have something to crow about, put in a brochure, and generally divert attention away from the environmental damage which generally precedes any decision to conserve, creatively or not. As a rule, the public, and more significantly the professionals don't get so carried away by a process in which nature has done the business for them and recreated an attractive and vital landscape with whatever species arrived and thrived. Prof. Tony Bradshaw showed us some beautiful sites, near his home in Liverpool, which nature had reclaimed at no cost and which are valued and used by local people. All kinds of "lesser" creatures, from insects to birds and mammals will also thrive on such sites.

Indeed, all the best wildlife sites known to Manchester Wildlife, in our urban areas, occur where nature alone has reclaimed the land, with the help of garden escapes, and great is the diversity of both plant and other life. The issue is not whether or not planned intervention could have enriched the diversity even further, but whether the planners and developers will allow these sites to survive at all. Fallowfield Railway Station and sidings, "Great Western Street Common", Pomona Docks, Paradise Basin are under threat or already destroyed.

The "Creative Conservationist" claims that bare sites (such as demolition sites) are unsightly because docks, thistles & ragwort - the early colonisers - are thought "Unattractive", and the resultant fly tipping reduces the value to wildlife. Far from it, all these plants, and many others which soon come in (clover, Evening Primrose, Weld, Buddleia, Reed Canary Grass, Willow, Golden Rod, to name but a few of our local invaders) are great for wildlife, especially insects and small birds. Rubbish is unsightly to us but it is of no consequence to wildlife, unless toxic. Neglected demolition sites have far more wildlife than the average park. - FACT.

And the speed with which sites can be transformed is almost miraculous. In fact it's because plant communities and their associated wildlife, which develop 'naturally', are more stable and diverse, and do not require intensive management to sustain them. Rubbish and other nuisances are a different problem. Urban Wildlife Groups should be educating everyone, especially planners and landscapers to notice and appreciate the complex webs of life that are to be found on almost any open space that is not mown grass.

Did you hear the first programme in the latest "Costing the Earth" series (Radio 4)? It was a lively discovery and celebration of neglected urban wildspaces in the West Midlands & an uninhibited swipe at that curse of the urban landscape the "corporate shrubbery".

There is a real danger that Creative Conservation, instead of just giving a "kick start" to productive natural processes as a much needed alternative to the conventional landscaping of topsoil, ryegrass and exotic specimen trees, will become a mechanism for delivering designer habitats based on a guaranteed to succeed flower mix. This would eliminate the very processes which bring about local ecological identity and damage the local plant gene pool. We could end up with the same standard flower mix as the new landscaping dogma, just as damaging to local ecology however pretty it may look in a glossy brochure. A limited range of cornfield annuals do not constitute biodiversity. The real and appalling decline of the rich texture of common species, out in the countryside, will not be redressed by tinkering with damaged landscapes but by reordering priorities in the countryside itself and in our own daily lives as consumers and car drivers. If Creative Conservation is used by planners to justify yet more habitat destruction, we could do biodiversity a serious disservice. This is a debate that will run and run (disperse widely). Do think about it and let us have your views. The editor can supply details of the reading list set out in brief below. Flowers in the Grass - English Nature; Urban Commons - Oliver Gilbert (EN); Wildflower Works - Grant Luscombe (Landlife).

Editor's Note: If the Bern Convention (protecting habitats of even quite common species) were properly adopted in British Law it would be a great help in maintaining biodiversity. //

ENGLISH NATURE MOVES IN

As we reported, in a previous Magpie, English Nature has been reorganised and we now have a North West Local Team. The area covered is, Lancashire, Merseyside, Greater Manchester, and the districts of Ellesmere Port, Neston, Halton, Warrington and part of Vale Royal within Cheshire.

On Wednesday the 4th of May there was a launch of this new region in Wigan to allow those concerned with nature conservation, in the area, to meet the new team. **MW** were there to sound out the set up and we are pleased that we now have an English Nature presence which is more accessible, though we are disappointed there is no officer with a direct responsibility for urban conservation matters.

The team is based at the Pier House, Wallgate, Wigan. WN3 4AL Tel. 0942 820342. The team manager is Robbie Bridson and the Conservation Officer, for Gr. Manchester, is Bernie Fleming.

Planning Matters

OPTING OUT

by John Anthony Turner

For four years I have been monitoring planning applications in Stockport, on behalf of **MW** and responding where necessary. I have also attended public inquiries including the A34 bypass and the M66 Denton to Middleton. At the AGM I tendered my resignation from this activity, not through any internal dispute with **MW**, but from being treated like a child, to be ignored at will by planners * and councillors, even though I have been right in what I said in responses and submissions.

Dealing with planning matters is a time consuming exercise. First you have to scan through the weekly planning lists and if a plan catches your eye, that could be environmentally damaging, you then have to study the details of the development at the planning office, check on policies and respond accordingly. On many occasions, the substance of what I have written has been diluted or left out of officers' reports to the planning committee. The most recent example was the

granting of a Safeway superstore adjacent to Quauffers night-club in Bredbury (supported by Quauffers who will gain access of Stockport Road West which has been previously denied).

The car park for the store will extend over a section of the Tiviot Dale disused railway line and would obliterate a pond where smooth and palmate newts breed, leaving only one pond in the area. The report was again biased, leaving out relevant Structure Plan policies on shopping, and the Council's own UDP policy on protecting disused railway lines as wildlife corridors was equally disregarded. A Tory and Labour coalition forced the plan through. The Labour Party's stand of the pretext that the store would generate employment seems unreal in the face of competition to the local shopkeepers, already struggling to survive from Sunday trading etc.

It is practices such as those above that brought me to the decision I announced at the AGM. I find the whole aspect of the political arena of party policies now totally unacceptable and conclude that what we need is a complete new system of government, both central and local, based on plain commonsense; for it is not commonsense to keep on destroying the environment and hope to survive ourselves. It was that learned character Rudyard Kipling, who said: "Ignorance is a major crime."

(Safeways, in conjunction with Bredbury Hall/Quauffers, should therefore be added to the list of organisations to boycott).

* Editors' note: When I was monitoring planning applications in Stockport I did not once receive a reply from the planning department. Nor did they ever inform us as to the outcome of any planning application on which we had commented.

A VICTORY FOR COMMON SENSE IN MANCHESTER

A planning application to divert a footpath through a small woodland strip, in Northenden, between Roundwood Road and the Sharston Industrial Estate has been refused. We hope that our letter helped but the efforts of the local people were the main reason for the plan being dropped. The path would have badly effected the wildlife of the woodland. //

AIRPORT TRICKERY

Manchester Airport have been writing to their "colleagues" in the travel industry soliciting support for the second runway. The public inquiry starts on the 21st of June and the Airport say every letter to the inquiry will help, writing "As the Planning Inspector has stated that he will read every letter submitted to the Inquiry, it is absolutely vital that he is left in no doubt of the great depth of support that exists in the travel trade for Manchester's expansion. Your written support is an essential part in our case to the Inquiry." Well, two can play at that game; if you're against the second runway, at the airport, we are urging you to write in to the Inquiry to: Ms. P. Gillen, Department of the Environment, Sunley Tower, Piccadilly Plaza, Manchester. M1 4BE. Say how you object to loss of wildlife habitats in the Bollin Valley, especially woodland; mention the increase in road traffic and pollution, or anything else you feel strongly about; remember that every letter counts! //

CRIMINAL JUSTICE BILL

Some people think that we get a little hot under the collar at times but you should hear Billy Frugal, who writes on this subject in "Earthbound", Walk for the Earth's newsletter; to quote, "This bill seems so deeply evil, so deeply unjust that I have no words to describe how I feel about it. I could describe Michael Howard as a scum bag but that doesn't say the half of it." The bill would; * criminalise legitimate forms of dissent * undermine the right to peaceful public protest * breach international human rights law * You may not think that this affects you but, should you wish to demonstrate on the site of your favourite "nature reserve" to save it from destruction, or even go for a ramble in the countryside, your action would be criminalised. Why not write to Mr. Howard and your M.P. and let them know how you feel about this. //

MANCHESTER CRAFT CENTRE

A little hiatus here, as we wait for conformation of the insurance* but we are preparing our equipment, ready to move in when we get the go ahead. We will need volunteers, willing to help us run the centre, so if you are interested in country crafts and have time to spare, contact Ian Brown on 437 7040.

* just arrived.

MANCHESTER WILDLIFE AWARDS

The winner of the 1993 "Des Poiler Award" is Manchester City Council for the desecration of St. Michael's Flags (Old Mount Street). There is a special "Des Poiler of the Decade Award" which goes to Sainsbury's for their destruction of Bruntwood Hay Meadows, now well under way so don't be tempted to have a look; it's too horrible. There was no winner of the "Golden Magpie Award" as we couldn't find anything worthy enough. But keep looking and tell us of anything you find happening which is good for the environment in 1994. //

WANT TO BE A FILM DIRECTOR?

Do you have a camcorder? Would you like to help us by recording some of our events and projects on video? Some activities cannot be properly demonstrated on still photographs, only moving pictures will do. If you can help, phone Unity - Tel. 226 4583 - Your assistance will be much appreciated. //

Apparently, John Major thinks that the GATT Treaty will be good for the environment; silly fellow - More next newsletter

There is more news on the back of your Events List

March Hare

by Tim Lepidus

©MW019



Global Forum 94 - North West Focus

by Merton Niven

It's going to be a busy time with plenty going on to suit all taste and interests. The Global Forum conference is going ahead; delegates from many cities around the world are meeting with the main theme of: "Cities and Sustainable Development". We wish them well and hope that they will be able to solve some of our environmental problems. We should be able to give you a report on their deliberations. There are reports that the event has so far cost £3½ million, much of which will be wasted (You could keep Parrs Wood CRE going till the middle of the next century on that), so there is quite a story to tell. We have come to the conclusion that conferences are not a sustainable activity, though they do mean more business for the airport, hotels etc.

The other part of the "Forum", which included "ring fencing" Castlefield and erecting grand marquees, with very expensive stalls, has been shelved. **Instead the Voluntary Sector has gone "MAD"** and put on hundreds of events and attractions under the banner of **North West Focus** so it looks as though the occasion will turn out more fantastic than originally envisaged.

The festivities start at 12.30pm on Sunday the 19th of June with the "Alternative Transport Rally" in Albert Square. On the same day and Monday the 20th there will be exhibitions in the Town Hall. These exhibitions will transfer to the Campfield Market (corner of Liverpool Road and Deansgate) from the 21st to the 2nd July. For the rest of the events, get a copy of the "North West Focus" programme which should be available in Information Centres and libraries etc. If not, phone Jan Atkinson on 236 0868.

So what are we doing? - What aren't we doing? To start with, you could come to our **Social Meeting** on Tuesday 14th June at the White Lion in Castlefield and find out, but here's a brief resume of the highlights: After you've attended the "Alternative Transport Rally", why not join us on the **Pomona Docks Picnic**, starting by the YMCA Hotel and walking along the Bridgewater Canal; the orchids should still be in bloom. On Saturday the 25th June our **"Costing the Earth" Walk** starts at Bruntwood Meadows (Schools Hill/Kingsway, Cheadle) at 9 am. Try to come by public transport or get a lift, there's no room for car parking. The walk will proceed through Cheadle, Parrs Wood, Didsbury, Withington & Fallowfield to M/c Science Park on Pencroft Way in Hulme. There we will join with "Walk for the Earth" who are walking from London to Manchester to, amongst other things, highlight the Government's lack of commitment to Sustainable Development. We will then walk into Albert Square for the start of the Peace Festival.

Our **Sustainable Living Show** (at Parrs Wood) will not now take place as we have decided to attend the **Shades of Green Festival** at Salford University which takes place on Fri. Sat. & Sun. the 1st, 2nd & 3rd of July. This promises to be the environmental event of the decade (century?). There is a **Green Arts Festival** which takes place in the grounds of the University. The **Green North West Conference** takes place on the Friday when the Green North West Charter will be launched. The **Green North West Fair** (this is where we come in) takes place on all three days at the David Lewis Recreation Ground, Frederick Road, Salford. The M.C. for the Fair will be Trevor Harrison (Eddie Grundy from the "Archers") and each day will have audience participation entertainments and "Circus Sensible"; you can have a go at tightrope walking etc. There will be the Buckworth Steam Fair", animals (shire horses, birds of prey, sheep dogs, pony rides), archery, environmental games, woodcarving, bodging (and other woodland crafts), "Earth Willow & Fire" (Charcoal making, basketry, sculpture) and, as they say, MUCH, MUCH, MORE. An event not to be missed; and it's free. **The North West is Going Very, Very Green!**

HELP HELP HELP HELP HELP HELP

This is what we need - if you can spare some time to help us at our events, attending our exhibition, craft assistant or anything, phone Unity - 226 4583 or Ian - 437 7040 and we will find you a pleasant task. Also help needed at bodging demonstrations.



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. For **WATCH** events please contact Sue Sharples - Tel. 445 5659.

June 1994

Tuesday 14th **Social Meeting** - The White Lion, Liverpool Road, Castlefield (opp. Air Museum) Time 7.30 pm. Contact Ian Brown 437 7040.

Sunday 19th **Pomona Docks Picnic** - Meet 2 pm at Canal Basin, Castlefield (outside YMCA Hotel) - Walk along canal - bring your sun hats! 437 7040.
Global Forum 94 - North West Focus Events Start - Opening event is "Way to go", the Alternative Transport Rally from 12.30 - 9 pm. Find your own environmentally friendly and wacky way of arriving! Many events have been arranged by a variety of local groups. Publicity in press, information centres etc. For **MW** events contact Ian or Unity.
 Saturday 25th **Costing the Earth Walk** - From Bruntwood Meadows at 9 am to Abert Sq. via. (the late!) Abbey Pond at 12 noon. Contact Ian Brown 437 7040.

July 1994

Friday 1st **Shades of Green Festival** - A Green Arts Festival - A Green North West
 Saturday 2nd Conference (Friday) including the launch of Green North West Charter
 Sunday 3rd Green North West Fair, with crafts (inc. bodging) and displays. More information on reverse side. Contact Groundwork Trust (061) 746 9585

Sunday 10th **Urmston Meadows Walk** - Meet 2 pm at Torbay Road (off Stretford Road) Urmston. 115 bus from Manchester via Stretford. Contact 437 7040
 Tuesday 12th **Social Meeting** - The White Lion, Liverpool Road, Castlefield (opp. Air Museum) Time 7.30 pm. Contact Ian Brown 437 7040.
 Tuesday 19th **Strategic Planning Meeting** - Time 7.30pm. At the home of Unity Kelly 13 Ruskin Avenue, Rusholme. Contact Ian Brown 437 7040
 Thursday 28th **General Meeting** - Time 7.30 pm. At the home of Unity Kelly, 13, Ruskin Avenue, Rusholme. Contact 226 4583.

August 1994

Sunday 7th **Family Open Day** - Rixton Claypits Nature Reserve. 1-4.30 pm. Many activities - pond dipping, guided walks. Contact Mik Lees 777 9726
 Tuesday 9th **Social Meeting** - The White Lion, Liverpool Road, Castlefield (opp. Air Museum) Time 7.30 pm. Contact Ian Brown 437 7040.
 Sunday 14th **Green Fun Day** - Wythenshawe Park. 12.30 - 5 pm. We'll be bodging. More info. from the Park Wardens 945 8521.
 Monday 29th **Parrs Wood Family Fun Day** - At Parrs Wood Centre for Rural Education East Didsbury. Time 12 noon to 5 pm. Don't miss it!

September 1994

Sunday 4th **Hough End Clough Hay Cut** - Meet Hough End Crescent (South end of Alexandra Road South). Time 11 am. Contact Unity Kelly 226 4583
 Tuesday 13th **Social Meeting** - The White Lion, Liverpool Road, Castlefield (opp. Air Museum) Time 7.30 pm. Contact Ian Brown 437 7040.
 Sunday 25th **Pond Willow Coppicing** - Painswick Park, Wythenshawe. Meet 11 am in car park south of lake. Wear old clothes & wellies. Contact 437 7040
 Thursday 29th **General Meeting** - Time 7.30 pm. At the home of Unity Kelly, 13, Ruskin Avenue, Rusholme. Contact 226 4583.

October 1994

Sat/Sun 8th/9th **Mersey Basin Environmental Weekend** - Contact Unity Kelly 226 4583.
 Tuesday 11th **Social Meeting** - The White Lion, Liverpool Road, Castlefield (opp. Air Museum) Time 7.30 pm. Contact Ian Brown 437 7040.

P. T. O. FOR MORE NEWS AND INFORMATION