



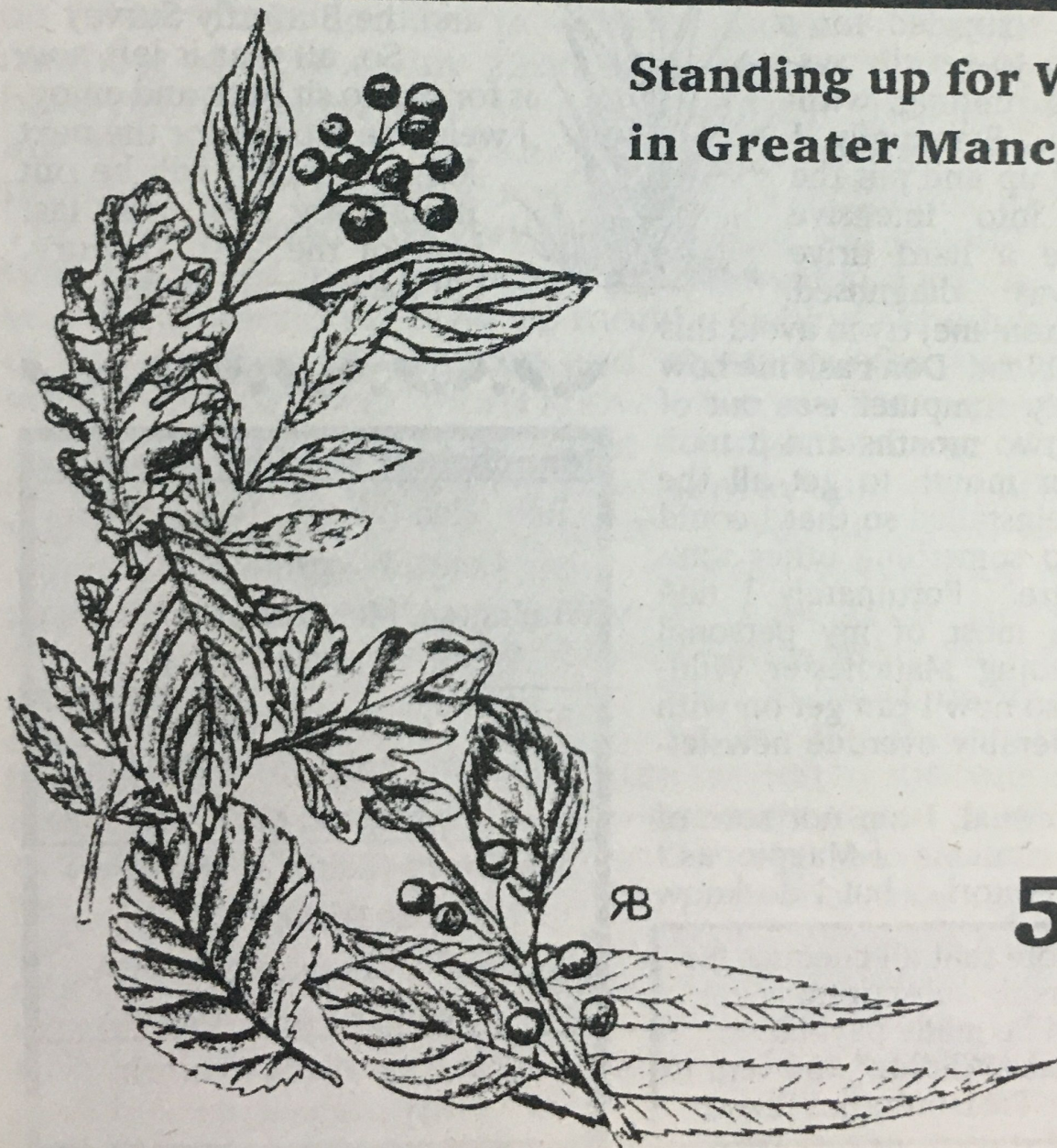
**"The Excellent Newsletter
of Manchester Wildlife"**

*John Vidal, Environment
Correspondent, The Guardian*

Magpie

Number 46 - - - - - Autumn 1999

**Standing up for Wildlife
in Greater Manchester**



RB

50p

Editorial

Send in
YOUR Story

Editor's Office 0161-437 7040

We missed summer, this year. It was quite reasonable, weather wise, but it was a very poor summer for Magpies of the newsletter variety. So we have decided to skip summer and pass straight on to autumn. Of course your editor has an excuse; my computer has been poorly. For the technically minded, it crashed and all files and folders disappeared from the hard drive. Thinking it was a software problem, I struggled for a while trying to get the system up and running; without success. Eventually, I had to give up and put the computer into intensive care where a hard drive failure was diagnosed. Take a tip from me; try to avoid this kind of problem. Don't ask me how but try. My computer was out of action for two months and it took me another month to get all the software reinstalled so that I could actually do something other than play solitary. Fortunately I had backed up most of my personal files, including Manchester Wildlife's stuff so now I can get on with this considerably overdue newsletter.

As usual, I am not sure of the entire contents of Magpie, as I write this editorial, but I do know

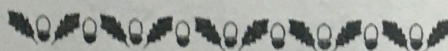
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there is quite a bit of stuff from Anthony; some controversial and, in the case of at least one article, unusual. There is an article on shooting birds in France and the inevitable stuff on recycling, mostly based around composting. There is a report on a Water Vole

Training seminar which was attended by Rob and myself. Some of our regular subjects will be covered, including Local Agenda 21 and the Butterfly Survey.

So, all that is left now is for you to sit back and enjoy. I welcome articles for the next Magpie, which will be out in January 2000, the last year of the 20th Century. Till then, good reading.



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News

by Witha Smallpea

Hillgrove Cat Farm has closed. About 800 cats were rescued, and placed in the hands of the RSPCA for treatment and rehoming. This farm bred cats for the vivisection industry, and there has been a major campaign, which you'll have probably noticed in the press recently, to close it down. Congratulations to all concerned in this campaign - this was the last cat breeding facility in the country, producing cats for laboratory testing.

Arthur's Wood and Cedar Wood

(Manchester Airport Runway 2, Phase 2). The protesters have failed in their attempt to fight the eviction order, and they can therefore be evicted at any time. The eviction was supposedly to start on Wednesday 15th September 1999, however, there was a "last chance to be good boys and girls and give up quietly" on Friday 17th, and the "powers of darkness" moved in on the morning of Wednesday 22nd September. As I write, the trees have been cleared of protesters, and the tunnellers are "preparing the entrance" of the tunnel for their attempt to empty it of protesters, and for some reason I've not heard any more news. The Under Sheriff was very boldly stating on Granada TV that he was sure he'd have control of the site within a week. The runway's completion is now 18 months behind schedule because of wet weather, the protests and "mysterious breakages of construction equipment" (don't know what you mean guv!).

The airport want to "prune the tops" of some of the trees, and fell others to make their new runway safe - apparently they will get in the way of their radar. I was sickened to hear an Airport Suit talking on the TV the other day saying they were only going to "pollard and coppice" some of the trees. He obviously doesn't know the meaning of those two words! Kill would be a more correct term for what they have in mind, as most of the species they will find will not grow again when they've have their heads chopped off. The woods are owned by the National Trust (guardians for perpetuity?), who naturally caved in and signed over the rights for this work to be done by the airport's contractors. It is probably illegal for them to do this, although, unfortunately, this hasn't been proved in court. This is the second time that I've written about the National Trust, and their strange way of protecting land given to them in good faith for all of us to enjoy (see Magpie No 22, re: dynamiting cliffs). It would be nice if members of the National Trust sent back their memberships, and let them know that they cannot keep doing things like this.

How to Green Manchester

"The answer lies in the soil" (I can still hear Kenneth's Williams' voice saying those words. If you say "Who's Kenneth Williams?", I'll just have to get someone younger to non-violently thump you!). Well, the problem with most of central Manchester is that soil is getting harder to find, and I expect the poor plants are finding it hard too. The only "plant" that's growing well at the moment is the Greater Tower Crane! (once known as "Stringer's Trees") Some developers, and I'm sure some councillors think that the more cranes that "grow", the more prosperous the City will be. I just know that it means another patch of rough land where plants used to grow is lost to wildlife.

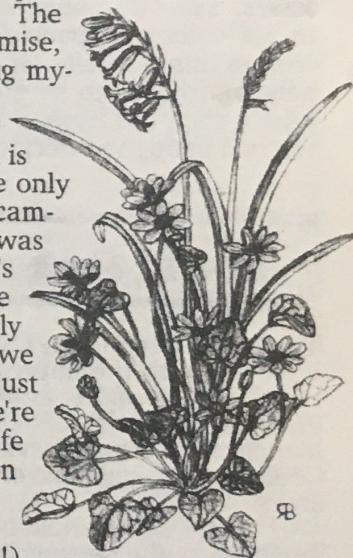
However there are things that can be done. I was told of a wonderful way of positively doing something. Find an empty property, and basically, do some gardening, it's as simple as that. Plant some trees, or even a nice native hedge (collect your seeds locally, and it won't cost you a penny either). Who knows ... when the property is eventually sold, the new owners may well think: "That's a nice tree/hedge/etc", and simply leave it. Your work will have been done! The good thing about this method is it is simple. Whilst you are working in the garden, as I found when working on pruning the orchard in Platt Fields Park (see Magpie No 42), nobody will question you. It seems that you can get up to almost anything in this country, and just be regarded as a legitimate workperson. Try it for yourself - I bet I'm not wrong. We might be able to reforest Manchester on the sly! As each journey starts with a single step, so each forest ...

I can recall some direct actions which have, sadly in some cases, only temporarily transformed patches of land. During an election a few years ago, when the "Fresh Air Now" party was standing, a patch of land was changed into something meaningful, and gave much needed enjoyment, exercise and empowerment to local people. I, myself, was involved in reclaiming a patch of land in Hulme (see Magpie No 45) into a park "for the people". That is still there, and is still unfenced. Even if the result is very short-lived, it will give people the idea that they can create wildlife areas for themselves - you don't need to ask for permission! The problem with asking permission is that you'll probably be refused, especially if you ask Manchester City Council, and your name isn't AMEC, Bellway or David Wilson Homes!

Other groups are doing their bit to "green Manchester" - there have been huge planting schemes in the Mersey Valley (one of The Co-operative Bank Woodlands), Highfield Country Park (part funded by Royal Sun Alliance), Matthews Lane, and Wigan Flashes. Most of these are large areas of old tipped land, or river valleys where local plans exist (supposedly) to prevent development. You can always join groups affiliated to the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV), who go out and do

conservation tasks, either mid-week or at the weekends. Some contacts are on the back of the Magpie if you'd like to get involved with one of these groups. The reason I am plugging the BTCV is that they provide regular opportunities for people to get involved in "hands-on" conservation, and you will also learn the correct ways of doing things too. Not all the tasks, however, involve tree planting. There is path laying, fencing, dry-stone walling, ditch digging, hedge-laying, balsam/knotweed/ rhododendron/any other invasive specie "bashing", and all the other things that are so much cheaper done by volunteers (there's cynical for you!).

These are some of the practical, hands-on approaches to "greening Manchester". The other ways are far less "sexy" - ie they take a long time, and you don't necessarily get your hands dirty doing them! I'm referring to campaigning to change laws, and persuade the powers that be to leave some land for wildlife, and not develop it all. The problem with this is that it can involve compromise, which is a dirty word to many people, including myself. Compromise, in its simplest form means that you often get left with a little strip of land after the development has been built. This land is mostly useless to the developers anyway, so the only people who have had to compromise are the campaigners who were fighting to save the land. It was both heartening and sad to note that the RSPB's Officer in Wales who was fairly recently the subject of a television documentary said exactly the same thing, and felt that it was time that we stopped compromising with developers, as we just keep losing valuable sites. It's not that we're greedy - far from it. Even the best of our wildlife sites don't actually have any proper protection (many years ago I coined the phrase "Sites Selected for Superstores and Industry" as a more accurate explanation of the designation SSSI!), and there is an annual list produced by English Nature of the losses and damage to such sites. If these are the "crème de la crème" of our British wildlife sites, heaven help the rest!



Manchester Wildlife, along with many other organisations both statutory and voluntary, including many individuals spent a long time sending in objections and comments to the last draft Unitary Development Plan, arguing for the designation of some patches of land in Greater Manchester to be changed for the benefit of wildlife. We, rather foolishly, thought that this plan would safeguard land from development if designated as "open space". How wrong we were. We noticed a strange designation of "white land", which we didn't really understand, but felt that, as this wasn't designated for development, that this too would, at least in the short-term, be safe. How wrong ... ditto ... At the present time, we're in two minds about

the UDP (or "Useless Democratic Process" as I coined it after the last farce! - see Magpie No 40). Firstly, is it worth all the time and effort to put in our objections and comments next time, knowing how little we managed to actually change things for the betterment of wildlife. We (actually Ian) put in, if I remember it, 147 comments, which was the most of any organisation/individual, and then Ian spent time at the Public Inquiry as well. If we do the same next time, we'll have to comment on far more areas (all the "white land" too!). Unless other people want to spend time helping out, I wonder if our resources will stretch to this commitment. Also, will it actually make any change on the ground? We have very limited resources as a group, and have to make sure that they are used in the most cost-effective fashion possible.

I think you can probably gather that trying to change legislation is a very long-term process, and with the rush for development, one fraught with losses. I feel that our energies can be more usefully engaged in practical things - changing people's attitudes by encouraging them to get out and change things locally. If enough people decide that they want their local neighbourhoods to be greener by getting out and changing them themselves, then the powers that be cannot fail to notice, and hopefully be worried enough to decide that that's the way they should be going too.

Anthony Phelps

Local Agenda 21 in Manchester

There was a report on LA21 in the spring "Magpie". We apologise if you were left with the impression of a lack of confidence in future developments. We're on the move with action going out to the community level. We, and other interested groups, have been attending meetings with Manchester Leisure Services to decide the way forward as regards the the Council's management of its land. This includes parks and river valley areas.

The actions taken by the Council, on their own land, are being discussed under several headings. For example; **bio-diversity**: how to improve it; **biomass**: how to make best use of it; **land management** and **pesticide use**. Each of these subjects were examined to decide what needs to be done to improve the situation; should the council be doing it (or an outside agency) and the best way to achieve the objective.

The first subject discussed was **biomass**. This is the use of anything which grows on Council land; from grass to trees. Grass, leaves and any other light vegetation could be composted. This would save outlay on fertiliser and peat. Any trees which need felling could be used for firewood, charcoal or even furniture. It was agreed that all materials should be put to best value use. The Council, being landowners, were in the best position to do the work but there could be some outside contracting. This would present opportunities to provide employment for local people.

There is a lot to discuss, and we are still in the early stages, so there will be a more comprehensive article about **Local Agenda 21** in the next "Magpie".

I know what Ian said in his last editorial, but I feel that there is some need to put a non-BBC (Biased Broadcasting Corporation) view on the latest test-site decontaminations. On Saturday 31st July 1999, there was an action to decontaminate one of AgrEvo's (a biotech company similar to Monsanto) fields of GM fodder Maize at Spital in the Street in Lincolnshire, which already has consent to be grown throughout the European Union. It was visited that day by around 80 white suited individuals. It was a very hot day, but within about an hour, most of the crop had been snapped or pulled up. Trying to get back to their vehicles, they were met by a rather surprised Lincolnshire constabulary. Linking arms, the group tried to leave together, but sadly, 46 people were arrested (including 6 from Manchester). The charge was "conspiracy to cause criminal damage" (as well as criminal damage itself), and they weren't bailed for 2 days (3 were detained, although 2 were later released on bail following appeal). The bail conditions were not to return to Lincolnshire, and not to associate with any of the other 46 (most of who hadn't met each other before the action anyway!). I've just read (SchNews issue 227) that 22 of protesters (including 5 from Manchester) have now had their charges dropped completely, and the others have had their conspiracy charges reduced to criminal damage and/or aggravated trespass. It is not yet known why the Crown Prosecution Service is continuing to charge some people and not the others.

The first misinformation was the farmers, who claimed the wrong crop had been targeted (as this wasn't one of the Government's farm-scale trial sites, and it has European consent, there is no need to inform the public or other farmers that GM crops are being grown). However, if this was the case, then damages would have been reasonably small (the farmer estimated £2,000). Funny that on the Sunday I heard the BBC announce that the damage to the crop was "half a million"! What would that make each can of sweetcorn cost? The BBC can't have it both ways - either they got the right crop, or give the correct market price for maize! What the authorities couldn't know was that the crop had been laboratory tested before and after the action - and it was definitely GM!

Why this action may well become a watershed in the campaign against genetics, is the politics behind it. Previous actions have been heavily policed, yes, but with surprisingly few arrests. However, the biotech companies aren't happy that they keep losing their crops (poor dears!), and put pressure on Jack "The Last" Straw to do something about it. He, therefore, instructed the police to come down heavily the next time, which they did. So, despite all their protestations about "serving the community and upholding law and order", the police are just puppets, instructed by another puppet in the control of large multinational corporations. Mind you, I thought that anyway! These biotech companies also wanted the Government to keep the next round of test sites secret, and put them under tight security. However, thankfully, they were recently released on the Internet, with their grid references. What we need is a large number of "ordinary" people to come out and show that they don't want these crops grown, won't eat them, and certainly won't buy any product that contains them. If thousands of people demonstrated in the fields, the police would find it hard to act as they did on the 31st! I find it hard to believe that, if none of the large buyers want the stuff, most of the large food processing companies won't use it, the majority of the people in this country don't want it (even our beloved MPs don't get fed in the House of Commons!), why grow the stuff. Just grow food we feel happy to eat - ORGANIC!!

8 When Will the Slaughter Ever End?

Millions of birds are under threat as France sets out to defy European laws this month, by allowing hunting to carry on at the start of the migration season. Many of the victims will be from species (like the song thrush shown in the inset) already suffering serious decline, mainly because of changing farming practices.

Under a 20-year-old European law, the hunting season is supposed to start in September and end on January 31st, just in time for the migration season. Last summer France defiantly passed a law, which extended the season from mid-July to the end of February. Now the birds are caught in the crossfire between Paris and Brussels, which will culminate in a legal battle before the European Court of Justice. Both the Hunters and Conservationists alike see the outcome as critical.

France risks a fine of £70,000 a day - the same penalty already imposed because of its failure to obey European laws and protect the rare Ortolan Bunting from hunters.

The powerful French hunting lobby has already handed in a petition of 1.4 million signatures from supporters of the season extension. France's equivalent of the RSPB, the LPO, is hitting back and has drummed up over 300,000 signatures for a petition calling for France to obey the European laws, and they are now working closely with nine other main European countries (including Britain) to gather more support.

Chris Harbard, of the RSPB, maintains that many British birds will be threatened if this hunting law is made legal, and that it will seriously weaken Europe's Birds Directive - one of the world's major pieces of conservation legislation. If France succeeds in its battle, then it is feared that other countries will use this success as an excuse to extend their own seasons, and this could mean that all migratory birds would have to run a gauntlet of hunters, right across southern Europe, from Greece to Portugal.

Michel Metais, director of the LPO, does not himself oppose hunting, but is opposed to the long extended season. Because of this, extremists have put up wanted posters of

him, declaring him a "pest".

British Environment Minister, Michael Meacher, agrees that Britain cannot condone breaches of international agreement, and has vowed to intervene in the dispute, to ensure that the laws be enforced.

During the migration season, birds will face a barrage of 1.5 million guns as they return from their winter homes. They include a hitlist of 64 species of songbirds, raptors, wildfowl and waders most of which are becoming quite rare.

Many summer visitors to our shores such as thrushes, blackbirds, skylarks, lapwings and oystercatchers, all which have traditionally found sanctuary in our fields, estuaries and gardens are likely victims, (the British public spend up to £80 million a year feeding wild birds). Also at risk are birds like fieldfares and redwings, which migrate back to Scandinavia after spending winter in our country.

Many of these hunters openly boast about their part in this slaughter. One individual has gone on record as saying that in May of 1938, he shot 654 turtle doves, in one day, (He would be lucky to shoot 30 these days!).

Thirty years ago, tens of thousands of song thrushes migrated per season, now that's down by a factor of ten, but the hunters are not really interested in the numbers game as they say there are many other species available for them to shoot!!

Another hunter boasted to killing over 300 thrushes in one morning, two years ago, then plucking his victims feathers, wrapping them in bacon, stuffing them with garlic and then roasting them for lunch!! He now admits that the numbers have declined drastically, but does not see the need for a lesser hunting season to let the numbers recover. (I hope he chokes....)

9



Yet another boasted of shooting turtle doves, and although admitting that it was illegal to shoot them, maintained that the French had shot the turtle dove for generations, and considered it his right to continue doing so!!!

The Express newspaper recently ran a series of articles on this slaughter, together with a petition to gather support from the British public to force France to comply with the European laws. I feel that we should add our support to the Express/RSPB's campaign, and help aid the French conservationists.

Mike Fisher

This article first appeared in the March 1999 issue of Bolton Conservation Volunteers News and is reprinted here with the author's permission.

Editor's Note - We had intended to send out a petition form from the R.S.P.B., but, because of our computer problems, the deadline has passed. However, if you have any views on the subject of the French shooting birds, why not write to your M.E.P. to tell them what you think.

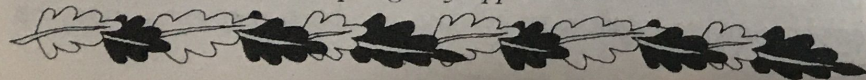
Can You Help?

Daytime rooftop assemblies of Lapwing and Golden Plover on commercial buildings.

We* are currently gathering information on rooftop roosting of Lapwing and Golden Plover on commercial buildings and the location of these sites. If you have any information regarding these assemblies, please contact:

Carol Entwistle *(Groundwork) Tel: (01254) 265 163

Your help is greatly appreciated.



EMPORIA STATE

by John Moore

This article appeared in edition number 56 of "Green Anarchist". You may recall Witha Smallpea's articles about the "Gandalf Trial" (see Magpie Nos 39, 43 and 44), and the hounding of the editors of this, and other publications, and the good news that all these people have since had the charges against them thrown out of court. This publication, although not generally available 'in all good bookshops', is worth looking out for, and reading. The articles within are both thought-provoking, and intelligent. I have obtained John's permission to reprint his article in the Magpie. Hope you enjoy it.

"The Crystal Palace is Dostoevsky's crowning symbol for the barrenness of industrial civilization ... In the Crystal Palace everything will be provided, man's every desire will be satisfied, he will be insulated from pain - but the more he becomes the automaton consumer the more he will also suffer from excruciating boredom ... The Crystal Palace is the supreme economic manifestation of the utilitarian, liberal-rationalist philosophy: and it is the bourgeois paradise" [John Carroll]

The Crystal Palace burned down, of course, in 1936. But like a phoenix, or dragon's teeth sown in the earth, it sprang up everywhere as the shopping mall.

May 1998

Earth First! Amnesiacs complain that council plans to build 18 multiplex cinemas plus 1000 rooftop car parking spaces on the vacant site of the Crystal Palace break the understanding that further building on the site would 'reflect the style of the original Crystal Palace'.

Welcome to the Milton Keynes of the soul.

In the hothouse environment of the mall, designer label commodities hold their grand parade, showing off their trophies, their human conquests.

During previous centuries millions died because of a wasting disease called consumption; in the present century millions also die because of a wasting disease called consumption.

In the emporia state, production is concealed, energy congealed, eyes sealed, and hearts annealed.

The UK shopping centre encourages inwardness. The elements and inclement weather conditions are banished, and the massed ranks of shops haughtily turn their backs on the hostile outside world. The chill wind gusting along the back alley should find no place here. And yet still the draught penetrates. For when shoppers look within they find a barren wasteland of commodities, and shiver as the wind howls through their empty souls.

Laughter is not permitted in the shopping mall, neither outbursts of joy nor corrosive mockery. Consumption is a serious business, and

misery finds a ready counterfeit in solemnity.

Some women refer, only half-jokingly, to the idea of 'retail therapy': shopping as consolation for the fact that domesticated life is sh*t. If you can't change yourself or your world, change your image, change your commodities.

Thirty years ago built-in obsolescence was condemned as a capitalist con; now both capital and consumers benefit from it. Capital maximises profit; consumers gain a pretext for consuming again and again.

Designer Labels

Identifying with capital, acquiring a corporate identity - even during leisure-time, labour's twin. Paying to act as a mobile advertisement and to extend capital's empire to all time and space. An acceleration of capitalist fashion: a desire to connect with the increasingly elusive moment by purchasing a brand new commodity. 'Brand' - a term used for the branding of cattle as property, or human flesh for penal purposes; also indicates a stigma, as in the phrase 'the brand of Cain'. Ever murdered your kin? Ever feel you've been shopped?

The Myth of Post industrialism

We inhabit the factory and the factory inhabits us. The clothes we wear, the food we eat, the buildings in which we live, work and die, the books we read, the media we ingest, the ideas we think - all are factory produced. And yet chaos is everywhere. Even as I walk through the barren waste of the shopping centre, I look up and see the sun boiling, the clouds scudding by, a flock of birds veering across the sky - and I feel the exquisite pulses, flows and currents that also flow through my body.

The Capitalist Imperative: Adapt or Perish

A third alternative: rebel!

August 1998

Shopping centre travel agency poster: 'Cut-price flights to the sun'.

Summer 1999

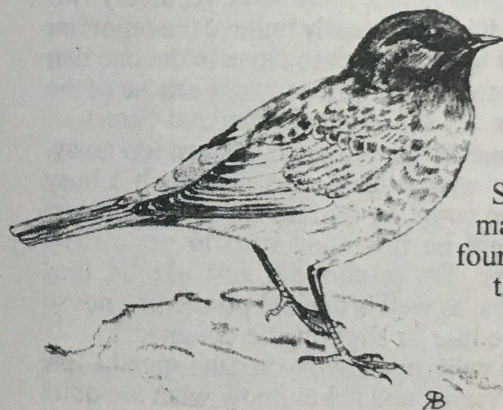
Total eclipse.

If you would like to obtain your own copy of "Green Anarchist", write to: the General Editor, GA, BCM 1715, London W1N 3XX. £10 for 10 issues, or £5 for 5. Suggestion: When writing to them, use a false name, or just your forename only, and use a PO Box or c/o address. Do not send cheques, but blank postal orders. Despite the court case failing, the "powers that be" (including Special Branch) may still be intercepting their mail.

My Best Sightings This Summer

People who find out I'm a birder always ask me "What is the best bird you've ever seen?" This is a difficult question for me. Do I say the rarest bird I've ever seen (Desert Warbler), or the most amazing sight I've ever seen (the huge flocks of wild geese at Caelaverock). My answer often doesn't come at all - as it's really a moveable feast with me - it isn't just the bird, it's how well it's been seen or other factors which make it memorable.

This Summer I got to "know" a new bird for me (called "a tick" if I was a twitcher!) - the Black Redstart (*Phoenicurus erythrogaster*). Each year only about 100 pairs come to this country to breed, making it reasonably rare. What makes it interesting is where they come to breed, and that's mostly city centres. Gaps in our buildings, or holes in brickwork mimic their natural breeding sites, which are rocky, mountainous areas. After the London Blitz, this bird moved into the bombed out buildings in quite large numbers. Now, opportunities are not so readily available.



I knew about them breeding in Manchester from the excellent publication "Birds in Greater Manchester (The Greater Manchester Bird Report)", and been told about them by Judith Smith (County Bird Recorder) for many years now, but never actually found them myself. I knew the area they frequented was near Dale Street car park, around the back streets near Piccadilly train station. In fact, two years ago, I spent nearly every morning, walking to work along my "desire

line" trying to locate them, but failed miserably.

On the 25th of May this year, I was walking along Farraday Street (one of many named after famous scientists - near Bunsen Street, and Newton Street), and heard this call. I knew instinctively that I've not heard it before, but it had a slight resemblance to Redstart (*Phoenicurus phoenicurus*), which I do know, and I knew that the bird had found me. All I had to do was confirm my opinion with a visual sighting. It nearly, but not quite, made me late to work, but I found this "dot" on top of a building on the corner of Farraday Street and Newton Street, but with my miniature binoculars and the bird's height (one of its favourite singing perches was the flag-pole on top of Newton Street Post Office!), I wasn't able to accurately confirm my sighting until a later time.

One day, I was near the junction of Brewer Street and Tariff Street, and met another suited gent (the only other person I have met birding, at 8.10 am, in those "seedy" back streets of Manchester). We chatted about the bird, and had excellent views of a female displaying on a chimney pot - with her characteristic bobbing, calling continuously.

My best sighting ever was on the 19th of July, when I found her on a low building near Little Pitt Street. She was flying between a few buildings, but always in view. Then she flew behind the building, and I found her on the back of a car in the car park beside the building and feeding on the ground.

I thought that the birds had finished breeding and left Manchester, because from the 19th of July I didn't have another sighting until the 3rd of September, when, again, I heard just one call, and found it on the remaining building beside Little Pitt Street. I nearly managed to get my binoculars focused in time, but it flew out of sight, and then I had to get off to work.

What makes this year so special is that there were reputedly two reports of this bird in Manchester (I didn't personally believe the report on Birdline that there were 3 - the other reported was so close to the one that I watched, that I feel somebody reported "my" bird as two, because of the distance between its singing perches) - the other in Portland Street. I cannot confirm this sighting, as whenever I am in town, it's just too noisy. I'd love to know how they can hear each other's calls near such a busy road. Judith Smith said she'd had to come on Sunday morning to locate it! I did hear that some birds might be finding it hard to get a mate because of all our extraneous noises. I'm certain that, just like us, they must be suffering from hearing losses, as well bronchial problems - not so much "a Nightingale sang ...", more like "a Nightingale coughed!"

Don't think that because you work in a town, you can't spend a few minutes each day and get excellent views, and get to know what are quite uncommon birds. Just keep your ears and eyes open, and always carry a small pair of binoculars in your briefcase/bag/rucksack, just in case.

If you'd like a copy of the annual report "Birds in Greater Manchester (The Greater Manchester Bird Report)", published by the Greater Manchester Bird Club - it really is a good read - not just lists of the birds recorded, but articles from birders and other information - contact Judith Smith, County Bird Recorder for Greater Manchester, 12 Edge Green Street, Ashton-in-Makerfield, Wigan WN4 8SL (telephone/answerphone: 01942 712615). Also, do remember to send her your bird records for next year's report.

Anthony Phelps

In the course of living our lives we create a lot of rubbish. We can reuse, and recycle, much of it. Cans, bottles and paper can easily be disposed of at local recycling centres but the most environmentally friendly way to dispose of organic rubbish is to compost it in your own garden. As my sister Petra said, in the spring Magpie, home made compost can be a success. The test with ash seeds failed, mainly because we forgot to water them. Independent tests, using the compost for both seeds and potting up, gave excellent results; plants grew at an amazing rate; maybe the mixture is a little strong. One slight drawback is that some "weed" seeds were present, mainly nettles, but these were easy to spot and remove. Larger scale composting would overcome this as more heat will be generated in the heap.

We have had some correspondence on this subject. Alison Hunt reports that according to her local councillor (Manchester), street leaves are classed as "contaminated" and end up in landfill or incinerators. I have asked, at a meeting with Leisure Services, the reason for this but have not, as yet, had a satisfactory answer. It is logical to assume that the presence of rubbish and contaminants, such as oil, could be the reason but, rubbish can be sifted out and hydrocarbons should be degraded by large scale composting (as pointed out by Kae Nicholson). Hopefully we will get to the bottom of this one because it is such a waste to throw away such a rich resource.

Composting Success

by R Gannick

Magpie No. 45 related the problems encountered by Kae Nicholson in getting acceptable compost from her "Green Dalek".

I, too, have such a compost bin in my modest urban garden and, after some initial problems, it is now yielding some good stuff, almost more than my adequately-planted plot can utilise. I have not tried it as a seed compost, but it is excellent for mulching, soil conditioning, shrub and general planting, and tubs (for example, re-vitalising an old container via a 50/50 mix of former contents to fresh compost).

In the early days, I took advice from the good folk at the Henry Doubleday Research Association, the outcome of which was to expect a longer "cold rot" system: the watchword is "patience", with this 'in at the top - out at the bottom' system. I use leaves,

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lawn mowings, hedge clippings and general garden plant waste; there's little input of kitchen waste, as I have a separate worm bin, but a little now and again may help. I introduced some worms and the occasional bit of food waste keeps them thriving. I use no paper or cardboard, other than the inevitable bits of kitchen towel, preferring to recycle these by other means. I don't think this type of container suits the "compost everything in one bin" approach.

There are two procedures which I have found beneficial: firstly, chop ingredients before input (I use a simple "shears in a bucket" method, and occasionally chop the contents if they are high in the bin itself); secondly, turning the upper contents at intervals (usually before the next 'load' is due to go in). This is simply mixing the contents in the bin, at a depth a fork can comfortably reach; I do not attempt to create layers of certain types of material, nor do I use any activator. I very seldom add water, as the decomposition process itself generates non-escapable condensation within the upper chamber of the plastic structure. The bin itself is relatively shaded, and I reckon a position in maximum sunlight would speed up the process, with less reliance on the "cold rot" system.

In summary, it's been a good acquisition and investment, far more accommodating and efficient than a former "boards and carpet" structure ever was. I hope these hints and recommendations prove helpful.

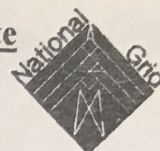
Editor's Note - This came to the office in the form of a letter and, as I assume that "R Gannick" is a pseudonym, was anonymous. It is not normally our policy to publish anonymous material but, as it is entirely non-controversial, and very helpful, I have made an exception on this occasion.

EXTINCTION IS FOREVER

The World Wide Fund for Nature is mounting a campaign to save threatened European Habitats. In particular they are trying to conserve areas, in Spain, which support the Spanish Lynx, of which there are only 800 remaining in the wild. If you would like to help them in this work, you may wish to send them a donation. To help you we have enclosed a donation form with your copy of "Magpie". Christmas is coming and a gift from you will be greatly appreciated, by both the **WWF** and the **Lynxes**.



Local Agenda 21 UK Web Site
<http://www.la21-uk.org.uk>



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The Local Agenda 21 UK website, which has been sponsored by National Grid, has been up and running since October '98. It is proving to be a very popular site with an average of 1000 visitors per month. The site is there to support your work and we invite comments and suggestions as to how we can develop and improve it for that purpose. We have created a LA21 information point that people can use to get information and documents quickly and easily. If there is something you would like to see on the site, any documents you think would be useful or information you would like to post up please let us know.

On the site you'll find:

♥ a **what's new page** that contains:



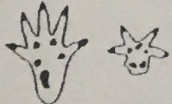
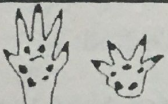
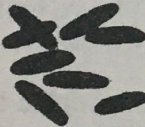

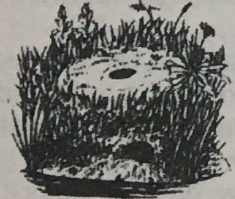


- ♥ the latest update and back copies.
- ♥ the latest mailing letter and back copies.
- ♥ a comprehensive list of developments.
- ♥ a list of forthcoming events.
- ♥ our free publications in downloadable format.
- ♥ a searchable UK map with LA21 contact details for all local authorities in the UK (if you would like to include information or make amendments please contact us).
- ♥ an equivalent world map with national contact details.
- ♥ a links and partners page with contact details, addresses and internet links for the LA21 Steering Group members and other partners.
- ♥ discussion groups, building on the success of the graffiti boards at the Bradford and Plymouth forum we have developed a discussion group for local agenda 21 co-ordinators so that you can discuss topics, network and exchange ideas on the internet (and by email if you are not connected). Passwords can be obtained from Rachel Butterworth (details below).

We hope that you will use the site regularly and that it will prove to be a useful tool in aiding your job.

Contact: Rachel Butterworth, tel. 0171 296 6599, fax. 0171

18 Water Vole Training Day by Ian Brown

Rob and I attended this event which was hosted by the Environment Agency. No, we weren't teaching Water Voles to jump through hoops but we were being instructed on the ways to identify these charming creatures and how not to confuse them with the Brown Rat. I would like to pass some of what we learnt, so that you may have a fair chance of positive identification. The chart below should be of some assistance.

Field sign	Water Vole	Brown Rat
Adult	 Body length 20cm, blunt chubby face and small round ears. Tail 10-15cm long (60% of body length) and covered in fur. Fur is typically rich brown.	 Longer and less rounded body, pointed muzzle, larger eyes and more pronounced ears. Tail longer (80%-100% of body length) and hairless.
Footprints	 Hind Foot Fore Foot Hindfoot: often overlap those of the fore; 5 toes, outer ones splayed; 26-34mm in length with 5 pads. Forefoot: 4 toes in a star arrangement.	 Hind Foot Fore Foot Hindfoot: larger and leaves a deeper impression; 40-45mm in length with 6 pads. Forefoot: broad in relation to its length - claws sometimes visible.
Droppings	8-12mm long; 4-5mm wide; cylindrical with blunt ends. Black/purple/green/brown in colour, odourless/faint musky smell. Found deposited at discrete latrine sites, at range boundaries, on platforms and wherever they leave the water. 	15-20mm long; 5mm wide; may be pointed at one end. Black/brown; unpleasant smell. Rarely deposited in neat latrines, often scattered along runs, ledges and on top of objects close to burrows. 
Burrows	 Burrow systems appear as a series of holes within 3 metres of the waters edge. Holes are 4-8cm wide, oval shaped and may have grazed lawns.	 Tend to be higher up the bank, away from the waters edge and grouped closely together. Holes are 6-10cm wide, may show a fan shaped spoil heap outside and linked by well trodden pathways.
Feeding remains	 Neat piles of vegetation, 8-10cm in length showing the marks of two large incisors. Found at burrow entrances, on pathways and platforms along waters edge.	Do not leave species characteristic feeding remains.
Burrows	Low tunnels pushed through vegetation, 5-9cm in width. Found within 2 metres of the waters edge, may branch many times leading to the water, burrows and favoured feeding platforms.	Found more out in the open, very noticeable. Link burrow entrances, are well used and usually bare of vegetation - may appear as depressions.

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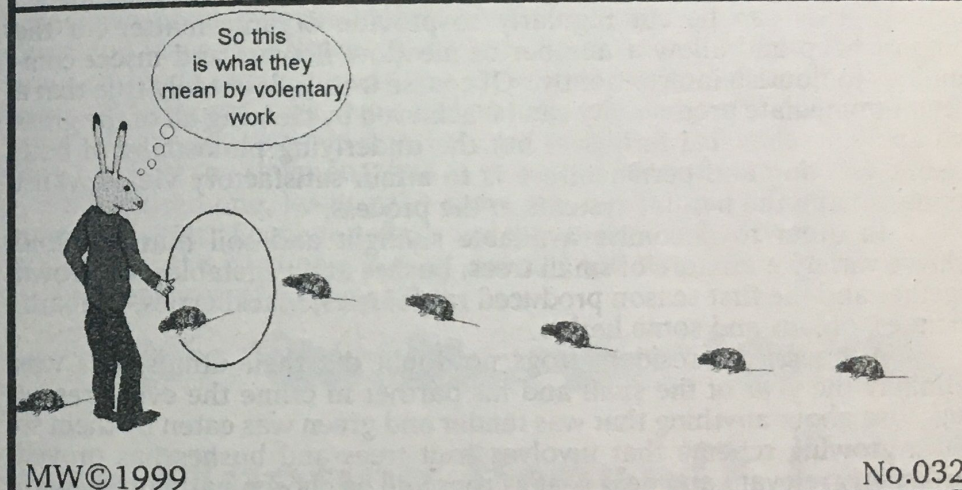
We were told that Water Voles have now become quite rare and their habitat is protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (revisited 1998). The Vole itself is not protected but habitat loss is probably the biggest factor in their decline. Mink, which have escaped or been released from fur farms, are also a great threat.

When looking for evidence of Voles, seeing one is unlikely. However, if you are lucky, another way to distinguish them from the Brown Rat is that the vole jumps into water with a characteristic plop; the Rat slides in. The evidence you are most likely to find is of droppings, footprints, burrows, runs and feeding remains as detailed in the above chart. Places to look are near water bodies, especially streams, which have tall, lush vegetation close to the water's edge.

If you think you have found Water Voles then it is best to let someone know, so they can be protected, and the best place to start is by phoning Gary Morris at the Environment Agency. Tel. 01925 840000. Happy hunting!

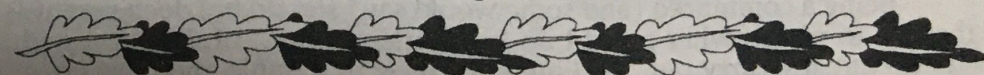
March Hare

by Tim Lepidus



More Local Agenda 21 in Manchester

Recently arrived at the office is a copy of the Local Agenda 21 - A Strategy for Manchester - Draft. Methinks we have been here before! If you would like to obtain a copy, contact Annette Birch, telephone 0161-234 4681. You will be able to make comments; as we will be doing. The deadline is the 30th of November so if you want to help shape the future of Manchester you had better get cracking!



20 Digging Deep

by A. B. Troot

Towards the end of last summer Manchester Wildlife and MERCI (Manchester Environmental Resource Initiative) decided that we would go into the allotment business together, they providing the site and ourselves the labour, as they were snowed under with work. At first viewing the task looked really daunting as the state of the area looked like something the SAS could do their basic jungle training in, but armed with a long handled slasher the head high weeds and shrubs were cut down so that the root clumps of the really obstinate perennials could be dug up. The exceptions to this however were the clumps of bramble which were retained, as the overall aim was not only to create a productive organic permaculture plot, but also to co-exist with the local wildlife as much as possible.

Various beds were then dug from the remaining turf for future crops as in contrast to most conventional systems the intention was not to dig over the entire site leaving a large acreage of bare soil; the thinking behind this being that to do this is not only enormously time consuming but also provides an incredibly enticing clean slate for weed seeds and allows moisture to evaporate rapidly during dry conditions. Also the remaining grass can be cut regularly to provide organic matter for the compost heap and allow a number of meadow flowers and insect communities to flourish intermittently. Of course it is undoubtedly true that a greater immediate productivity can be achieved by clearing all of the grass and applying chemical fertilisers but the underlying philosophy of both organic growing and permaculture is to attain satisfactory yields whilst not destroying the natural systems in the process.

In order to maximise available sunlight and soil nutrients and achieve variety a mixture of small trees, bushes and vegetables are grown together and the first season produced raspberries, blackberries, rhubarb, potatoes, onions and some herbs.

Although the resident frogs no doubt did their utmost this was definitely the year of the snail and his partner in crime the ever present slug. Just about anything that was tender and green was eaten by them so that a growing scheme that involves fruit trees and bushes has proved particularly relevant and next year's crops will be chosen particularly with this in mind.

Planet Pledge 2000

by M.T. Glass

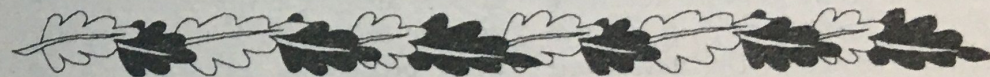
'Planet Pledge 2000', a government inspired project, aims to encourage over a million people/individuals, families and other groups and organisations, to pledge one or more of fifteen actions which include such things as waste reduction, saving energy, travelling responsibly etc. For example if everyone in the country fitted energy saving light bulbs in their homes the country and the planet would save £500 millions worth of energy each year.

Being a committed (and some would say I should be) deep greeny, I thought to myself what could I do in addition to most of the suggested actions I already carry out. As I am not averse to a tipple and have done

a little home brewing I thought I could pledge to produce at least one half of the wine I consume; and when you think about it there are a number of compelling environmental benefits in doing so. If you set it against say, a bottle of wine from Italy, it means that for a start it won't be transported across Europe with all the transport pollution damage that would otherwise occur. The fruit, if you collect for instance elderberries or blackberries yourself, will be organic whereas nearly all commercial wine grapes are regularly drenched in pesticides and fungicides. In addition the vineyards are monocultures which have replaced the indigenous flora and fauna.

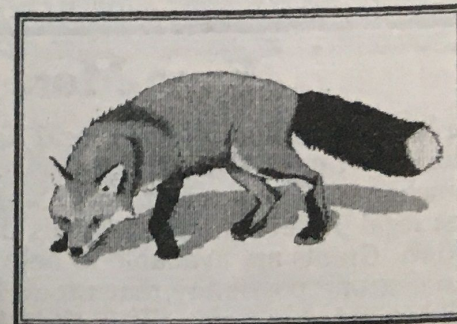
The recipe below has many variations around which you can vary the strength and dominant flavouring. For instance quite a number of old hands at home brewing reckon that combining two or three main ingredients is better than using just one berry or fruit, however I have had good results using both methods.

To make a gallon of red country wine you will need to pick about 2½ lbs. of elderberries and about 1lb of blackberries. Dissolve a Kilo of sugar in 4 pints of boiling water, and pour it over the crushed fruit. Leave to cool, then add a teaspoon of nutrient, the same amount of citric acid a heaped teaspoon of pectic enzyme, and a working Bordeaux yeast culture. Cover and leave to ferment on the pulp for five days, stirring daily. Then strain off into a demijohn and top up to the shoulder of the jar with cold water. Fit a bored cork bung and airlock, which is then half filled with water. Leave the must to ferment out; usually for three to four weeks. Now 'rack' off the sediment, that is siphon off from the original demijohn into a sterilised one, leaving the sediment behind and adding a crushed campden tablet. Leave for about another month and then rack off again into bottles; the hard part is then resisting the temptation to drink them for another three or four months!

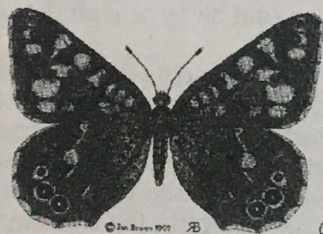


Fox Hunting Banned? by Witha Smallpea

The Government has announced that they are to make the hunting of foxes by hounds illegal very soon. This was one of their pre-election Manifesto pledges, which I, and probably you, thought they'd conveniently forgotten about. Let's hope their words amount to actions this time. Write to your MP and make sure s/he votes for the ban.



A strange year for butterflies, 1999. Hardly a Painted Lady (I didn't see any in Britain) and very few Red Admirals until late in the year; good numbers were seen in October. The good news is that Holly Blues are back in force and the Speckled Wood could be seen almost anywhere. Both these butterflies were hardly seen, in this area, before 1991. The Holly Blue was first seen, in the Mersey Valley in April 1991 and, despite a slight decline a couple of years later, it can now be seen in almost any suburban garden. The Speckled Wood is probably the most consistently common butterfly in our area and I see it on almost every occasion I go looking for butterflies. It is rarely present in great numbers but, from April to September, it always seems to be about. One advantage the Speckled Wood has over other butterflies is that it over-winters both as larvae and pupae. The pupae versions hatch first, followed by the larvae versions, so that each leapfrogs the other leading to



a continuous presence during the breeding season. Keep a look out for them, next year, they are very common in gardens.

The Manchester Wildlife Butterfly Survey progresses, though we could do with more reports, especially from new sites. I have decided that, when the report

is published, it would be best to distribute it on CD-ROM. There are two main reasons for this. Firstly, I have a CD-writer on my computer, so it is actually possible. Secondly, paper publishing is quite expensive, and potentially wasteful, as it is difficult to judge how many copies to publish. With a CD, all that needs to be done, when a copy is ordered, it to zip a computer file onto a CD and pop it in the post. The material cost is about £1. The report can be written in the three most popular word processing programmes so most people with a computer, or access to one, will be able to read the report.

So now I must get down to my winter work on compiling the report.

Even More Good News

We have heard that a **LNR** (Local Nature Reserve) is to be established at Chorlton Water Park. This is the first such designation for the City of Manchester. Some might say "about time"! **LNR** designation gives the area legal protection and involves the setting up of a management committee. Grants are available to help in the setting up of **LNRs**. There is also a strong possibility that Broad Ees Dole (north of Sale Water Park) will be given **LNR** status.

November 1999

Saturday 20th - "Into the Millennium - Bird Trends into the Next Century" - Conference at Rivington Barn, near Bolton. Organised by the BTO and the RSPB Bolton Group. Contact: Judith Smith - Tel. 01942 712615.

Saturday 20th & Sunday 21st - North West Bird Fair - at Martin Mere (Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust) - \$.75 for non members. Tel. 01704 895181

Thursday 25th - General Meeting - Time 7.30pm at the One World Centre (Friends Meeting House basement), Central Street, Mount Street, Manchester. Contact Ian Brown 0161-437 7040.

December 1999

Sunday 12th - Winter Wildfowl Watch - at Chorlton Water Park. Leader: Anthony Phelps. Meet in the car park at 10am. Contact: Ian Brown - Tel. 0161-437 7040.

Tuesday 14th - Social Meeting - Time 7.30pm at the Old Monkey Public House (upstairs lounge), junction of Portland Street/Princess Street, Manchester. Convenient for Piccadilly Gardens Bus & Metro Station. Contact: Ian Brown - Tel. 0161-437 7040.

Sunday 26th - Boxing Day Walk with the Mersey Valley Wardens - Meet at Simons Bridge, Didsbury. Time 11am. Details from the Chorlton Water Park Visitor Centre. Tel. 0161-881 5639.

January 2000

Tuesday 11th - Social Meeting - Time 7.30pm at the Old Monkey Public House (upstairs lounge), junction of Portland Street/Princess Street, Manchester. Convenient for Piccadilly Gardens Bus & Metro Station. Contact: Ian Brown - Tel. 0161-437 7040.

Sunday 23rd - "Red Lion Ramble" - Meet at Hough End Crescent (south end of Alexandra Road South) by the Clough at 11am for a walk following the course of the Red Lion Brook until it joins the River Mersey (returning to Hough End Clough). No more than 5 miles. Bring Waterproofs and good walking footwear. Leader: Rob Allen. Contact: Ian Brown - Tel. 0161-437 7040.

Thursday 27th - General Meeting - Time 7.30pm at the One World Centre (Friends Meeting House basement), Central Street, Mount Street, Manchester. Contact Ian Brown 0161-437 7040.

February 2000

Tuesday 8th - Social Meeting - Details as for 11th January.

March 2000

Tuesday 14th - Social Meeting - Details as for 11th January.

Some of you will have noticed that the artwork in Magpie 45 could have been better reproduced. This was because of a slight error in the setting up of the printing machine. I will try to do better this time. No guarantees! The photograph of Abbey Pond was particularly bad; an unrecognisable black hole. I will try to reprint this in the next Magpie.

Editor

A Carillion by any other name would still smell of Tarmac!

Useful Contacts

RSNC, Urban Wildlife Partnership.	Chris Gordon, 01522 544400
English Nature.....	NW Regional Office, Bernard Fleming, 01942 820342
Cheshire Wildlife Trust.....	North Group, Trafford, Liz Blackman, 0161-962 6748
	Wilmslow Group, Tony Browne, 0161-436 1761
	Stockport and Tameside, Eric Stead, 0161-494 9130
	Bolton Wildlife Project, Mick Weston, 01204 361847
Lancashire Wildlife Trust.....	
Medlock & Tame Valley	
Conservation Association.....	Mildred Burlinson, 0161-330 2721
BTCV.....	Salford & Trafford, Val Sutton, 0161-872 7640 (day)
	Sale & Altrincham, Shelagh Aston, 0161-860 6910
	Bolton, Rick Parker, 01942 817302
	Bury, Lawrence Kitchenon, 0161-796 6404
British Trust for Ornithology.....	Greater Manchester Recorder, Judith Smith, 01942 712615
Red Rose Forest Team.....	Jane Whitaker, 0161-872 1660
RSPB.....	
	Bolton Group, Tony Johnson, 01204 468850
	Manchester Group, Simeon Rydz, 0161-434 2720
	Stockport Group, Tony O'Neil, 0161-223 8987
Advice on Birds in Distress.....	Irena Zalasiewicz, 0161-763 5146
Bat Groups.....	South Lancashire, Angela Graham, 0161-797 4745
	Cheshire, Mike Freeman, 01606 41581
Butterflies/Moths.....	Barry Shaw, 0161-491 0753
Mammals/Insects.....	Bolton Museum, Steve Garland, 01204 522311
Amphibians/Ponds.....	Dave Bentley, 0161-724 8602
Mersey Valley Wardens.....	
Croal/Irwell Valley Wardens.....	Sale, 0161-905 1100. Chorlton, 0161-881 5639
Stockport Countryside	Nicky Greek, 01204 571561
Ranger Service.....	0161-477 5637
Trafford Council.....	Roz Park, 0161-912 4174
Manchester Sustainability Group...	Adrian Pearce, 0161-234 4594
Manchester Recycling Officer.....	Pete Stevens, 0161-234 4629
Stockport Recycling Hotline.....	0161-474 4747
Manchester FoE.....	0161-834 8221
Networking Newsletter.....	Michael Bane, 01457 871609
Visions Community Design.....	Judith Mottram, 0161-834 6309
Bolton Greenwood Group.....	Ian Brown, 0161-437 7040 - Mike Fisher 01204 574457

Manchester Wildlife is a networking organisation. You are included on our Contacts List, are we included on yours? Please inform us if any details are incorrect.

You are welcome to reproduce anything contained within "The Magpie", with an acknowledgement.

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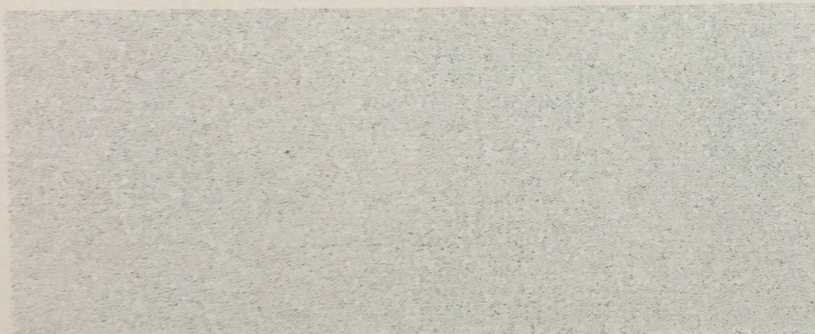
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