

**O**ur newsletter this quarter has something of a watery theme. We are fortunate to have several important water habitats in Earley. Several are man-made - Maiden Erlegh Lake, Whiteknights Lake and Marefield Pond; others are natural - small streams, the Loddon on our eastern boundary and the mighty Thames on our northern boundary. Some of these water features hardly rate a second glance from many residents, but are home to a diverse range of wildlife. In the past local people would have looked upon them as valuable resources for provision of water, food and income. Much of their value now is in the visual pleasure they give us, as well as supporting wildlife and providing the means for hobbies like water sports and fishing. Find out more about one of these water habitats, **the Loddon**, and read about the jewel in the crown, the **Loddon Lily** on page 2. Make a date in your diary for our talk on those helicopters of the waterways, **Dragonflies**, on Thursday, 19 April. And don't forget to join in our **Rescue litter project** on Sunday 11 March. With over 30,000 residents in Earley, there must be some who could help to make Earley a tidier place to live! (See Forthcoming Events, p.8).



### **A BUSY 2006**

We held our AGM on January 31<sup>st</sup> at the Interpretation Centre, Instow Road. Our chair, Alan Broodbank, emphasised the value of the group in making a positive contribution to Earley. This has included carrying out a Phase 1 survey of Earley's natural environment, practical assistance in improving Maiden Erlegh Nature Reserve, a litter project in Earley, holding walks and talks throughout the year, and generally informing Earley residents through the newsletter and the website. At present there is an ongoing project to map the veteran trees in Earley, as part of a District wide initiative. We aim to continue the good work by the group in 2007. We now have over 270 members. Our full programme of future events is on p.8.

**Are you a computer novice, or haven't got a clue? Pick up computer skills by contacting your local library, who run courses for people like you.**

### **Get to know your Earley**

#### ***Lower Earley Woods and Meadow***

Not an easy one, but for those who like to be pioneers! Starting at dead end part of Mill Lane (very near Sindlesham roundabout), find entrance to Lower Earley Woods and Meadows, sw of Rushey Way. Take time to read interesting information board. Carry on along footpath, small remains of old woods on your left; you will cross a couple of wooden bridges. (To continue, at the moment the only way appears to be passing through the new housing). Just after second bridge turn left at housing, then immediately right until main drive entrance to The Manor on left. Turn left down main drive back to open space. Carry on in westerly direction (right) across field next to housing; follow line of oaks (probably the ghost of an old hedgerow), until Paddock Drive. There is a gap through to the lane next to Paddock Drive, which is pedestrianised and was the old lane leading down to Marsh Farm and the Loddon. Take this lane (north) till you meet pedestrianised Gipsy Lane, another remnant of an old Earley Lane. Turn right onto lane, cross Kilnsea Drive at traffic lights and continue a few yards along old lane and turn right at Hawkedon Way Play area. Continue on path a short distance till first exit footpath on right, then continue along very long pedestrian footpath till you reach back of Hawkedon School. Keep going till you reach old Mill Lane, turn right, cross Kilnsea Drive and find end part of Mill lane where you started. A good circular stroll, off road, but some litter, traffic noise. Good luck!

# River Loddon, Lilies, Fish and Swans

## The Loddon

Earley is fortunate in having the River Loddon on its eastern boundary. Something to be enjoyed in the spring, as the trees are just coming into leaf, may be a pair of swans gliding into sight, gradually making their way downriver or, perhaps, early on an autumn morning, drifting along as the mist rises off the river.

**The Loddon's source** is what was once West Ham Farm in Basingstoke. It is fed by springs and flows, takes a north easterly direction, descending 47m and, after a journey of 45.2 kilometres, meets the Thames just west of Wargrave, having passed through Berkshire, Hampshire and Surrey.

**The abundant wildlife** in early times must have been a wonderful source of food for the very early settlers who arrived in the area, providing them with plentiful fish and wildfowl. A few hundred years ago the white tailed eagle\* would still have hunted over the marshy margins, and otters were seen up to the 1950s, and may now be returning. Until recent developments, Cutbush Lane, with footpaths leading off it to the river, marked the edge of the floodplain.

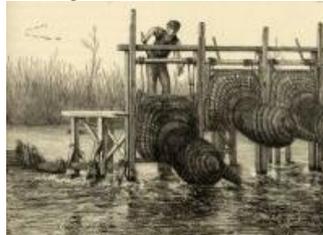
## The Famous Loddon Lily

Of our native members of the Amaryllis tribe (Amaryllidaceae) three occur either in or near to "our" area – the Daffodil, the Snowdrop and the Summer Snowflake. The last of these cannot be described as by any means common in England, although it is found occasionally in moist meadows, especially in the Eastern and Southern counties. Its chief stronghold, however, is probably the River Loddon, where the plant, often in large clumps, may be found springing from moist banks, often of slimy mud just a few inches above the water, and sometimes actually in it. Not surprisingly, therefore, the Summer Snowflake is known locally as the Loddon Lily, and specimens may be found along the banks of the river between Loddon Bridge and Sindlesham

Mill. A particularly good spot is the wooded area immediately upstream of Loddon Bridge on the Eastern side, opposite the garage – a pair of binoculars will prove handy unless you can find a way in or fancy a very cold and muddy swim! Another fine clump used to exist, and hopefully still does, by the very small weir just a few yards upstream of the hump bridge at Sindlesham Mill. Alas this area is now officially out-of-bounds, but it may still be possible to catch a glimpse by peering through the undergrowth.

The Loddon Lily is a perennial and springs from a bulb which, if left undisturbed over many years, will form into a dense clump. During the winter these may well be completely submerged in floodwater but the masses of

**In historic times** it supported the mill at Sindlesham, which still produced flour for Huntley and Palmers until the 1960s. The Museum of English Rural Life has a tanning hook, which is a crook-headed implement for pulling soaked hide from a lime bath in a tannery. This was obtained from Harry Grace, tanner at Tan Factory, Loddon Bridge. Willow was also grown and harvested to



make eel traps, or sent to London for basket making. This was sometimes grown on small islands (eyots) in the river. Eel traps were still in use up to the 1950s.

the 1950s.

**The change of use** of the Loddon has been dramatic from the time of Domesday, over the years providing food and employment for hundreds. Nowadays, it may be given only a passing glance by motorists as they speed along Lower Earley Way. It provides a good stretch of water for anglers, and walkers can enjoy the views from its footpath; it also supports a sizeable variety of wildlife. The Environment Agency keeps a check on its health. Its value to people is no longer what they can take from it, but how they can enjoy its tranquil presence. \* See Birds Britannica



narrow keeled leaves appear at the very start of spring. Very old texts say that the plant flowers in May but more recent ones say March and April, which certainly seems to be more accurate, at least in this area. Having said that, the accompanying photo was taken in late January 2007, when the buds were just bursting! No doubt the exceptionally mild winter (even Red Admirals are still flying!) has had a dramatic effect. In appearance, the Loddon Lily flower-spike, or inflorescence, resembles a bunch of large snowdrops with green-tipped sepals and petals, supported by a stem two feet or more high. The usual number of flowers on a spike is about half a dozen, which open in succession. Once open, the flowers do not fade rapidly, so it is often possible to find a spike

bearing six flowers or more in full bloom, a handsome sight indeed.

The vernacular name of Summer Snowflake seems curiously inappropriate for the Loddon Lily, as does the scientific name (*Leucojum aestivum*), even though it was given to it by the great Linnaeus, the “father” of biological nomenclature. Apparently, the generic name *Leucojum* is derived from two Greek words signifying a “white violet”. True, the Loddon Lily is white but there seems to be little resemblance between it and a

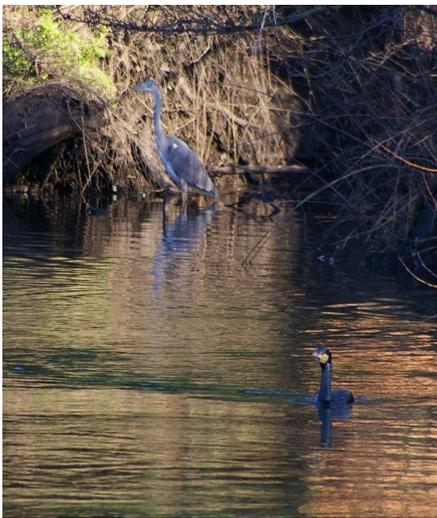
violet except, perhaps, its scent. Similarly, the specific name *aestivum* means “of the summer” yet the usual flowering months of March and April would not normally be described as summer months. At least there can be no doubting the accuracy of “Loddon Lily”!

Although not uncommon in our area, the Loddon Lily is in fact a rare plant found in few localities. Needless to say it should be treated with the utmost respect and, unless under immediate threat of annihilation from building

works etc, should be left undisturbed. If so, then hopefully this priceless member of our local flora will continue to give pleasure for many years to come, hopefully for ever.

Incidentally, the Loddon Lily is not the only plant to be given a name with local associations. There is also the Loddon Pondweed (*Potamogeton nodosus*) but that will have wait for another issue!

**Alan Broodbank**



**Fishing on the Loddon - a heron and a cormorant**

**Loddon Lilies**



### **Loddon Fish**

The Farnborough and District Angling Society fish the water from Sindlesham Mill to Loddon Bridge, and their website states, “This Farnborough AS controlled stretch of the River Loddon contains some of the best chub and barbel coarse fishing in the country”, and, it is “a truly superb water with two and a half miles of prime gravel river that fishes all season. They also provided us with the following information about the river.

“To my knowledge we as a society have fished the water for 30 years but my earliest recollection was about 1980 when the E A (Environment Agency) cleaned it out and it was more like a canal than a river. As can be seen it is now much changed. I have seen badger on the bank, cormorant in the water, and there have been a number of reports of mink. The fish are of the species you would expect, chub, roach, perch, pike, trout and barbel. David”. Their website is [www.farnborough-angling.org.uk](http://www.farnborough-angling.org.uk).

### **Loddon's Mute Swans**

A familiar, graceful presence on the Loddon and Thames, the swan is one of the largest flying birds in the world. A powerful throb can be heard as they fly overhead, and it's strange to think that for nearly 500 years this was virtually unknown. Once considered the property of the crown, which then granted rights of ownership (a very important

status symbol) to local dignitaries, the birds had their wing tips cut off on one side, leaving them flightless. Ownership marks were also cut into the beak (but no longer). They then graced the dinner table of the fortunate few with the prestigious meal of roast swan. Henry III's dining table in 1251 groaned with the weight of 351 swans.

Perhaps its desirable place on the table was due more to the status it bestowed rather than its taste, which has been described as 'fishy mutton'. We have the Swan Laws in historical times to thank for probably safeguarding these birds from becoming extinct in Britain, as happened elsewhere on the Continent, where there were no checks on hunting. Presumably the religious bodies at Reading and Sonning had their share of roast swan. Eventually superseded by turkey meat, there was no longer the desire to have ownership of swans, which led to less protection and a decline in numbers. After a gradual recovery, the next threat was more recent, from anglers' lead weights and

non-degradable fishing line. Following a ban on these, swan numbers have undergone a recovery. However, some still suffer from lead poisoning: they still face threats from overhead power lines, which they find hard to see, and endure vandalism. Although semi-domesticated, our friendly swan can show disapproval when it or its young are threatened by hissing, or 'busking' - that is, raising its wings, its neck drawn back and propelling itself forward in violent rushes. These beautiful birds mate for life. (Detail from 'Birds Britannica')



## Earley Veteran Tree Project

As mentioned before, we are hoping to map all the veteran trees in Earley, details of which will be passed to The Woodland Trust for their huge countrywide survey and to Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre. **Volunteers still wanted.** Two of our volunteers, Sylvia and Nigel Holloway, did an excellent job, recording trees in two of Earley's old lanes. Here's Sylvia's account of their experiences -

## NEW ITEM ON THE SHOPPING LIST – TREES

Sylvia Holloway

A new item regularly appeared on the shopping list during the Autumn - trees.

On the sunnier days when I walked from Radstock Lane to Asda, I made sure I spent a few extra minutes looking for veteran trees. This way, I gradually built up a sketch map of trees in the Radstock Lane/Elm Lane area. I also explored the footpaths, and worked out the course of the stream that runs from the start of Rushey Way to near Sibley Hall. This is the stream that feeds into the lake. Sheila Crowson supplied some old maps that further delineated the old course of the stream, as well as the old lanes. The area I eventually recorded was the two old lanes, Radstock and Elm, plus the existing part of the old stream. I



remember cycling through this area into open countryside in the 1960's. It was a liberating feeling to get right out into the countryside along the footpath that now goes to Asda.

I chose a sunny day or two to take digital photos of those trees that seemed to qualify for the survey. I then asked my husband, Nigel, to come and measure trees with me on a glorious Sunday at the end of October. We had a few battles with ivy and brambles, and he risked falling in the stream to do one measurement, but it was all quite enjoyable, and good exercise. We paced the distances between trees. We only encountered one or two problems over access, and these were rapidly solved.

The grid references for the trees were found during an evening using the

Magic web-site, and some extra information on locations was gained from Google Earth.

The spread sheet was completed on a horrible wet day, when a couple of hours engrossed in data entry was a good escape from wet and darkness. The data and digital photos were finally transferred to CD for EEG and the survey.

This was an interesting project to do during the autumn, fitted into the normal schedule in 1-2 hour slots, plus an intensive day of measuring on a sunny day. We found the scale and range of the activities sustained our interest over several months, and shopping was rather more interesting than usual in the initial stages.

(Our thanks to Sylvia for an entertaining look at her surveying experiences) Find Earley's trees on the BTCV map at [http://www2.btcv.org.uk/display/veteran\\_trees](http://www2.btcv.org.uk/display/veteran_trees). Zoom in and click on the tags. Photos will be added later.

## A Look at Old Earley

### Earley and the Slave Trade

#### March 25 2007 Bicentennial Anniversary of Abolition of the Slave Trade Act 1806

This did not mean the end of all slavery, but the slave trade: British captains caught engaging in the trade were fined £100 for every slave found on board. Ships in danger of being caught by the British Navy would have slaves thrown into the sea, rather than pay the fine.

There are two known Earley connections with the slave trade; firstly, Wm Mathew Burt, Governor-General of the Leeward Islands, owner of Maiden Erlegh House in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century (see Sept 2006 newsletter), whose will dated 1776 shockingly referred to "my personal estate in the said island of St. Christophers (St. Kitts) being the negroes and stock upon my plantations being considered affixed to and part of the freehold"; secondly, Lord Stowell (drinking partner of Dr. Samuel Johnson), of Erlegh Court, who sat as a judge for thirty years. He passed a judgment in the early 1800s which, simplified, meant that a slave could be free in England,

but if he returned to where he had been enslaved, for example the West Indies, he once again became a slave. After much campaigning by those horrified by slavery in the British Colonies, Parliament passed the Slavery Abolition Act in 1833 and this act gave slaves in the British Empire their freedom. The British government paid compensation to the slave owners. This involved many of 'the great and the good'. The amount that the plantation owners received depended on the number of slaves that they had. For example, the Bishop of Exeter's 665 slaves resulted in his receiving £12,700. Many fortunes were made on the practice of slavery.

### Timber from Earley in the 15<sup>th</sup> century

In 1410 St. Lau (w)rence Church, Reading was re-roofed with timber from Earley. The oldest roll of the churchwardens' accounts gives a list of contributors to the cost. One wonders which site the timber came from, and the logistics of moving heavy timber in the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

### SOME OLD BERKSHIRE QUOTES

'Talking comes as nateral to he as buttermilk to a litterin' zow' (*zow = sow*)

'Ther's a sight o' odds atween whoam-maade troubles and thaay as the loord zends; and whoam-maade wuns be nine out o' ten o' aal as comes to a man.' (*whoam=home, aal=all*)

### Good Fun for Everyone: Bird Box Building at the Interpretation Centre

RSPB member and nest box building expert, Mick, was ill at the last minute, but a Good Samaritan appeared in the shape of his friend, George, who on Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> Feb brought along ten of Mick's kits. Most people who had pre-booked were able to make their boxes with George's valuable help, and we had the cheerful company of at least half a dozen children who proudly took away their lovely bird boxes, with the promise that they will let us know if they get any occupants. Thanks to Anne for arranging this event in National Nest Box Building Week, and particular thanks to George who came at the last minute to stand in for Mick.



George with some of the children

Interesting Websites: <http://berksbirds.co.uk/surveys/buzzardandredkite2006.asp> If you want to read a report by Berkshire Birds of their Red Kite and Buzzard Survey. Also [www.tvenergy.org/grants.htm](http://www.tvenergy.org/grants.htm) [www.lowcarbonbuildings.org.uk](http://www.lowcarbonbuildings.org.uk) [www.sust-it.net](http://www.sust-it.net)

## NEWS FROM BEYOND EARLEY

**A waste of lives:** The Independent newspaper has lately been running a campaign against waste. According to the newspaper, the plastic packaging for your sandwich today may end up in a few weeks time in a small, remote village in the Chinese province of Guangdong, a province promoted for its tourist attractions. There's nothing attractive about the small village. It's where most of our supermarket plastic bags end up, amongst other items, creating pollution on an intolerable scale, causing toxic river sludge and air, and blighting the health of children. We send not only our plastic but paper/cardboard, steel and old electrical goods to China. There are supposed to be safeguards, but these are often circumvented. China is hungry for raw materials and we want to get rid of our waste, so it seems a sensible arrangement. You might question whether it's sensible to send our rubbish so far across the planet, to blight poor people's health, so we can buy cheap consumer goods. The moral drawn from this seems to be: "Don't create the waste packaging in the first place."

## EARLEY WILDLIFE SIGHTINGS

**Liz: 5 Feb.** I saw my first bumble bee of the season on Saturday! I keep peering into my pond waiting for the frogs to start spawning.

**Ray: 9 Feb.** **Crocuses** were out last week and Mary actually saw a **bumblebee** (probably a white-tailed) on the wing during yesterday's snowstorm. Our feeders - we have niger, sunflower, peanuts, fat, seeds and scraps - were quiet in January, but colder weather recently has brought regular visits by Great, Blue and Long-tailed Tits, up to five Goldfinches, a few Greenfinches, Chaffinches, Blackbirds, Robins, Starlings, Collared Doves and Woodpigeons. Blackcaps, both male and female, have been intermittent, preferring pyracantha berries to feeders. Redwings have also just started to come to cotoneaster and pyracantha berries, with three this afternoon. House Sparrows have become very scarce, with a maximum of three and then only rarely. Unusually, there have been no Dunnocks. A Song Thrush has been in intermittent song somewhere nearby, but has not been seen. Magpies have been very few. Squirrels have been regular, but less troublesome, partly due to relatively impregnable feeders.

**Pat: 9 Feb.** With regard to wildlife, we had a **Red Admiral butterfly** which landed on our Cut Leaf Birch tree about three weeks ago now; I had to call my husband to come and see because I thought he wouldn't believe me. The **snowdrops** are all out (gorgeous) and the two Viburnums are not far off flowering (they should not flower until May and June). One is *Carlesii* and the other *Davidii*. Not many birds about at the moment, except a **wren**, **robins**, an occasional **starling**, **blackbirds** and blue tits (very unusual) although I did hear a Greenfinch this morning. We did have a whole family of Long Tailed Tits before and just after Christmas - but nearly all of them boycotted our garden for the Great Big British Garden

**Now for some good news for two of our insects, both of which have fascinating life cycles:**

The National Lottery has come to the rescue of the **barbed red ant (*Formica rufibarbis*)**, which is one of our most endangered species. Apart from the Scilly Isles, only one site exists of this ant in Britain at Chobham, Surrey: the ants form colonies which are either wholly female or male, and unfortunately at Chobham there is one nest of females, so you can see the problems. The Zoological Society of London has scooped a Lottery grant to start a breeding programme for these ants and hopes to establish more sites in the wild. Well, if you can't save an ant, what can you save?

A real success story for the **Large Blue butterfly**, once considered extinct in Britain, and a globally threatened species. This remarkable butterfly spends the larval stage of its life in an ant's nest, where it feasts on ant grubs, and pupates, and it has to be one particular species of ant. By establishing nests of this favoured ant, along with favourable plant food habitats, an amazing 10,000 Large Blues flew last summer in Britain. This success is due to dedicated people and grant aid.

Birdwatch, little rascals!!! Maybe I'll see more this weekend as I am not working either day.

**Jean: 10 Feb** We have had **bees** intermittently on our wintersweet since New Year's Day, including during this last cold spell. We also saw a **ladybird** and **sweet violets** in bloom 2 weeks ago, just outside Aldworth, as well as **snowdrops**, **crocuses** and the odd **daffodil/jonquil**.

**Angela: Feb 10.** I've just walked round the lake and been admiring the newly hatched **Egyptian geese goslings!!!** There are 8 of them this morning. There was only one adult around on Thursday, so presumably they hatched out either yesterday or earlier today. A fellow dog walker told me they hatched on April 1st last year - she was certain of the date because of visitors she had staying at the time. Is February 9th / 10th a record, I wonder?

**Geoffrey & Olive: Feb 12.** We have seen **bumble bees** on our winter flowering LONICERA and have noticed that **not many birds** are coming to eat the food we put out for them, presumably because there is plenty natural food around for them. We do get the occasional visitor keeping their territory.

**Edwin: Feb 13.** You may well already have this, but there are now eight **Egyptian goslings** on Maiden Erlegh lake; I saw them yesterday on the larger island with the two adults. One of the goslings jumped in and swam, though the others stuck to the bank. **Feb 19.** We enjoyed the nest box session on Saturday, even if it was not quite as planned! My son Richard was very excited to find a prodigious number of frogs mating in the shallow pond in the woods downstream of the lake.

**Elaine** also reported seeing a large amount of frogspawn and activity on pond on Feb 28.

**Mary: Feb 13.** **Egyptian geese**, early hatchings. I saw 2 on Southlake today. 6 of them hatched a few days ago there.

### Brief Encounter in the Reserve

Walking through the reserve woods the other winter's day, I came across a figure standing absolutely still, gazing at one of the beautiful old oak trees in Old Pond Copse. "A wonderful structure," he remarked. This seemed an odd way to describe a tree, but we struck up quite an interesting conversation about trees and later, sitting on the bench by the feeding station at the Lake, he quizzed me about the state of my planet. "Tell me about your planet," he said. By now the uneasy thought crept in that I was probably in the company of an eccentric or, worse, a nutcase, but not wishing to be impolite I decided to humour him and play along.

"Well", I began, "it's very beautiful. It's known as the Blue Planet, you know". "Yes," said he, "I can see it from space. You're very lucky. We on our planet are very interested in your activities on the Blue Planet, particularly your way of whizzing around on four wheeled things or flying through the air. How do you do that?"

I was feeling a bit out of my depth but patiently tried to explain how we used long-dead plants to make fuel to help us do this.

"How novel," he said, "but what happens when you run out of these?"

"Oh, easy," I replied, "you just use living plants instead."

"Can you grow enough of these?"

By now I could not easily extricate myself from this rather ridiculous conversation, so I went on. "The easy answer is, yes, we just clear land and grow huge plantations for this purpose," I replied confidently.

He looked thoughtful. "Where we are in space, sometimes we see massive smoke coverage on parts of your . I suppose this is what you mean by clearing land and growing huge plantations?"

"Exactly," I answered.

"What are you burning, then, to clear the land?"

"Forests that have been there for a long time, where hardly anyone lives, except for some animals, and a few people."

"Ah, yes, animals," he commented, looking very thoughtful. I was beginning to feel a bit piqued by his questioning. He wasn't looking too impressed by my explanations.

"Are these animals no use to you, then?" he asked.

"Not really. We need this living plant fuel for us to have a reasonable life on our planet. We'd find it hard to exist without it. How could we move our four wheeled things, as you call them, or make all the things we need without it, when the dead plant fuel runs out? Besides the dead plant fuel is causing us lots of problems." I was beginning to feel on the defensive.

He asked me what sort of things we really needed for ourselves which were so important, as if he didn't know!

I listed all the things in the average home, and the need to keep updating our possessions because they're always being improved.

"I'm sure that's very important, to keep replacing them," he commented, rather drily, I thought.

"You mentioned problems", he queried. "What sort of problems?"

"Well, I'm no scientist," I began, "but lots of them say that using dead plant fuel is making our planet warm up."

"Well, isn't that to the good? It seems a bit chilly here today."

"It seems, no, according to the experts." By now I was beginning to think I'd played this game long enough; apart from getting rather cold, and a bit challenged by his questioning and, deciding the explanation could take more know-how than I was capable of, I thought it was time to move on without appearing rude.

I rose and said, "It's been very nice to talk to you. Perhaps we'll meet again," which was a blatant lie, since I was having serious doubts about the mental stability of this stranger.

He said, "It depends how I'm fixed and when I'm next here. I think I'll stay here awhile and take in the view. We don't have such attractive views on our planet. It's been very interesting meeting you. There's a lot more I'd like to know, but good luck with your living plant fuels, oh, and with the problems you mentioned. Hope you can solve these quickly."

At that I rose and hastily started to walk off, relieved at quitting his company. I left him sitting on the bench and turning to say goodbye, found he'd vanished!

## GREEN JARGON

**BIOFUEL:** Biofuel is considered important for the future as an alternative to fossil fuel. Biofuels are liquid fuels of plant origin - including bio-diesel (from vegetable oils) or bio-ethanol (from fermentation). They can be manufactured from many sources, for instance, wheat, sugarbeet, palm oil, soybean, rapeseed oil, even waste chip oil. The govt. has said that 5% (by volume not energy content) of all motorcar fuel must come from renewable sources by 2010. Sounds simple - switch from fossil fuels to renewable biofuels - problem solved. Well, no. Like all environmental matters this one is highly complex. Biofuels could be beneficial to the environment by releasing over time less greenhouse gases than fossil fuels, but there are downsides. Agricultural practices used to make biofuels use a lot of fossil fuels so at present a biofuel delivered 'at the pumps' will not be carbon-neutral. Competition for land for growing biofuel crops, which may displace other crops, could lead to dearer food for some, and increased demand for the necessary crops could distort world markets; it could mean destruction of the rainforest, in south-east Asia to produce palm oil, and of the Brazilian rainforest to produce soybean. Rare species like the orang-utan may suffer from our rush to obtain green energy. As with all environmental problems, there are hundreds of conflicting opinions on how to deal with it. Careful consideration is needed to make sensible decisions, and to prevent some individuals and corporations seizing on biofuels as a way of making big bucks with no benefit to the environment.  
<http://www.carbontradewatch.org>

### Notes from a Grumpy Old Environmentalist:

Why do magazines sent by post have to be wrapped in thin plastic film? They never used to be.

I hate free CDs given away with some magazines. Unwanted CDs are hard to dispose of.

Why don't plastic containers specify what kind of plastic they're made from on the label? It's almost impossible to read it on the bottom of the container.

## LOCAL FORTHCOMING EVENTS

### March: RESCUE weekend, Saturday 10 and Sunday 11 March - YOUR TOWN NEEDS YOU!

EEG will be holding litter-picks in Earley and Lower Earley as part of this nationwide event on **Sunday 11 March**. We expect to meet at 10 a.m. for distribution of equipment and instructions, and collect for about 2 hours; in the afternoon, we will meet in a different area at 2 p.m., and collect for about 2 hours (venues will be decided according to need/volunteers). I should like to collect glass, and cans and plastic bottles, separately from the rest of the litter, but if this proves a problem, help in sorting the bag contents at the Interpretation Centre would be welcome: perhaps anyone who feels unable to walk around picking up rubbish might like to volunteer for this? More details will be available nearer the time, but if you have any queries or wish to volunteer, please contact me by phone on **986 1115**, or by e-mail: [jeanh149@btinternet.com](mailto:jeanh149@btinternet.com).

**April: DRAGONFLIES** On **Thursday, 19 April** Des Sussex had agreed to give a talk on these fascinating creatures. This will be held at the **Parish Room, Radstock Community Centre** (next to the school). Radstock Lane. **7.30 to 9.00 pm**.

**May : A LOOK AT WHITEKNIGHTS AND ITS FLOWERS** Join us on a walk on **Sunday 20 May**, when Renee Grayer will give us the benefit of her knowledge of Whiteknights and its flowers. **2 - 4 pm**. Meet at Pepper Lane entrance.

**June: A WALK FROM EARLEY TO DINTON PASTURES** Join the group on a walk on **Sunday 24 June**. **2-5pm** starting at the George, Loddon Bridge, hopefully ending up in time for tea at the DP cafe.

**July: A GUIDED TOUR OF M.E. RESERVE** Grahame, Senior Park Ranger for ETC knows it like the back of his hand and will tell us all about it. **Sunday 15 July, 2-4pm**, meet at the Interpretation Centre, Instow Road. The Interpretation Centre can be found by taking Chelwood Road, off Beech Lane, then left into Instow Rd.

**August: GREEN FAIR** **Saturday 4 August** Our usual fun day at Maiden Erlegh Nature Reserve. It gets bigger every year. 10am-3pm.

**Dates and subjects for EEG talks in Sep, Oct, Nov to be announced in the next newsletter.**

### Berkshire Biodiversity Courses (All courses free but £10 deposit required)

**Birds for Beginners:** Saturday 14 April 2007, 11am-4pm Dinton Pastures Country Park. **Wild About Gardens** Saturday 21 April 2007, 10am-4pm Dinton Pastures County Park. **Identifying Minibeasts** Saturday 16 June 2007, 10am-4pm Sandhurst Community Centre, Sandhurst **Ponds:** Saturday 14 July 2007, 10am-4pm Binfield Memorial Hall, Binfield, Bracknell.

**Practical woodland management** Saturday 8th September, 10am-4pm Prospect Park, Reading.

Contact Lindsay Watts Tel- 01865 788309 email- [lindsaywatts@bbowt.org.uk](mailto:lindsaywatts@bbowt.org.uk) if you would like to book a place. People will need to give their name, address, email, phone and a £10 deposit cheque (payable to BBOWT). This is the address they should send it to: BBOWT Course Bookings, Freepost OF2051, Oxford, OX4 4BR

### Bits and Pieces

We enjoyed a lovely presentation at our AGM on January 31<sup>st</sup> by Jan Haseler, who knows so much about the butterflies in the Harris Garden, Whiteknights Campus. The garden's different habitats are very attractive to many insects. To join go to website [www.friendsoftheharrisgarden.org.uk](http://www.friendsoftheharrisgarden.org.uk) or write to David Hewitt, 11 Wellington Avenue, Reading, RG2 7BP

**EEG Committee Members** can be found on [www.earleyenvironmentalgroup.co.uk](http://www.earleyenvironmentalgroup.co.uk) under Contacts, or phone 0118 962 0004.

For **Wildlife Survey Forms**, go to the website or phone Earley Town Council 0118 986 8995

**Comments or contributions to the newsletter** to: [sheila.crowson@ntlworld.com](mailto:sheila.crowson@ntlworld.com) or 2 Reeds Avenue, Earley, RG6 5SR.

If you know anyone who would like to **join EEG**, **membership forms** are available from Earley Town Council, 0118 986 8995, on the [website](#) under Downloads, or send an e mail to Liz Wild [e.a.wild@reading.ac.uk](mailto:e.a.wild@reading.ac.uk). Please inform Liz if you intend to change e-mail or address at 50 Kenton Rd, Earley RG6 7LG.

Can you offer active help to the Group? Phone 0118 9620004 if you can. We need people with some expertise to undertake, surveys of small habitats in Earley, or do a hedge survey, or be able to give occasional help. 9620004

### SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL SHOPS

**The True Food Co-op, Silverdale Centre** :There is now a True Food Co-op operating in Earley. Their mission is to take low cost organic food out to the people, bypassing the supermarkets which charge a lot for organics They hold markets at the Silverdale Centre on the second & fourth Fridays in the month, 5pm to 8.15pm They have a website giving dates [www.truefood.coop/truefood.html](http://www.truefood.coop/truefood.html)

**Pet Fayre 9 Maiden Lane Centre Lower Earley** : A small independent shop, with bird feeders of all kinds, a variety of bird feed, large bags of which the shop is willing to deliver locally, or pick it up in your car from the back of the shop Tel 0118 9266512, or e mail [enquiries@petfayre-reading.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@petfayre-reading.co.uk).

**Thanks to ORACLE** for reproducing our newsletter on recycled paper. Oracle is the world's second largest software company, situated at Thames Valley Business Park in Earley. Oracle UK is environmentally accredited to the ISO14001 standard which confirms Oracle has considered and acted against its environmental impacts. As part of their corporate social responsibility they support a number of local groups, including us. They have offered to co-operate with us on a number of future joint projects, which we haven't yet been able to pursue. They have given us valuable support in reproducing the hard copies of our newsletter in colour, as well as printing off posters, and membership leaflets for us to distribute to libraries and the like.