



Sorry to have to bring the subject up, but this is at the request of Sir David Attenborough!



"We are a plague on the Earth. It's coming home to roost over the next 50 years or so. It's not just climate change; it's sheer space, places to grow food for this enormous horde. Either we limit our population growth or the natural world will do it for us, and the natural world is doing it for us right now." So said one of the most respected and trustworthy environmentalists, Sir David Attenborough (Radio Times 26 Jan).

Like most statistical data, UN World global population figures are not an exact science but make sobering reading: 3 billion in 1960, approximated at over 7 billion in 2013 and projected to reach over 9 billion by 2050.

Discussion of environmental problems seldom relates these to increasing human population. The appropriate cliché for human population might be "the elephant in the room", and at the increasing rate of increase there won't be room for even one of those! It's not a thing one introduces into informal gatherings without being labelled a 'doom-monger'. However, in Sir David's spellbinding speech to the RSA in 2011 (which should be compulsive listening for all our teenagers*) he suggests, *"But what can each of us do – you and I? Well, there is just one thing that I would ask. Break the taboo, in private and in public – as best you can, as you judge right. Until it is broken there is no hope of the action we need. Wherever and whenever we speak of the environment - add a few words to ensure that the population element is not ignored."* Hence this editorial.

More information is on www.populationmatters.org, of which Sir David is a patron. **Population Matters** receives no public funding. Membership is £2 per month or £22 per year, special rates for under 25s and over 65s, on web or ring 0208 1239116. There are local groups but none in Reading or near. To read quotes see page 6. *To see a video of Sir David's speech, click 'David Attenborough' on Population Matters website home page.

Items of special interest:

	Page
<i>Tree news - update</i>	2
<i>Firecrest</i>	3
<i>Trail Camera update</i>	4
<i>Local Environmental Group, Friends of the Earth</i>	5
<i>Green Heroes: Norman Ernest Borlaug</i>	5
<i>Population Matters: quotes</i>	6
<i>News from Beyond Earley</i>	7
<i>Wildlife Sightings and Garden Surveys</i>	7
<i>Forthcoming events</i>	8



Tree lovers heave a sigh of relief

There is a great deal of relief after the Government shelved controversial plans to sell off England's publicly owned woodlands to the private sector. The u-turn was made after 500,000 people signed an online petition against the unpopular proposal. Environment Secretary Owen Paterson announced that the nation's public forests would remain publicly owned and held in trust for future generations by a new public body. He said "Our forests and woodland will remain secured in public ownership for the people who enjoy them, the businesses that depend on them and the wildlife that flourishes in them."

Earley's efforts to increase tree cover

As reported in the December 2012 newsletter, Earley has gained several oaks to commemorate the Queen's Jubilee. Meadow Park in Meadow Road received one of these oaks.



Thursday 10 January
2013
Peter and Sheila
Lumbar, longstanding
neighbours of Meadow
Park, Earley, planting
tree 56 with Linda
Richardson, Deputy
Mayor of Earley Town
Council, other Town
councillors and staff,
neighbours and WDVTA
members. (See more
photos of tree plantings in
the photo gallery of
WDVTA website
<http://www.wdvta.org.uk>)

Admire trees? You might be able to help by just taking a walk, with your camera

The Wokingham District Veteran Tree Association are concerned, as we all are, at the threat to our ash trees*, and just how serious this is will not be known until spring, when the trees come into leaf and any symptoms become apparent. **The WDVTA** would particularly like to have pictorial records of our ash trees and their contribution to the landscape, in case we lose them.

How you can help: If you know of any nearby ash trees (veteran or not) please take photos of them - both as an individual tree and as part of the wider landscape. Then send any photos to datamanager@wdvta.org.uk. with a note where they were photographed. Elaine will be grateful to receive them.

The total of Earley veteran trees plotted on the WDVTA survey map stands at the amazing figure of 474. Go to the WDVTA website and choose 'Map'

*Ash dieback is caused by the fungus *Chalara fraxinea*. The disease causes leaf loss and crown dieback, often resulting in the death of the tree. It has spread across central Europe during the last two decades, causing widespread losses, including the loss of an estimated 60-90% of ash trees in Denmark.



Firecrest

Regulus ignicapillus, Family [Warblers and allies](#) (Sylviidae)

This lovely little bird attracted admirers to **Whiteknights Park** in early February. It was spotted in an area of mixed woodland, along with other small birds, presumably hunting for tiny morsels like spiders, moth eggs and other small insect food.

Firecrests breed in the UK - mainly in south-east England - though only in very small numbers. Some

arrive from across the North Sea, along with goldcrests, and are easiest to see in autumn and winter. The bright orange centre is found in the males. The RSPB gives an annual figure of 80-250 breeding males. They weigh about 6g.

An earlier description

The delightful drawings come from an early 1900s book, *British Birds*, E.D.Cuming, pub. The Bodley Head Natural History, in which it is noted that ‘the illustrations do not aim so much at scientific accuracy as at giving a general impression of the character, habits, and appearance of the animal depicted. All the studies are drawn from life.’

The bird is named as the **Fire Crested Wren** (*Regulus ignicapillus*: C. L. Brehm, see below). The description includes: ‘Instances of this bird’s nesting in Britain are few. The last I can trace was recorded in 1906 by the Rev. D.D.Mackinnon who saw, near Portree in Skye, the hen sitting on her nest in a small fir tree about five feet from the ground. It was subsequently stated that three other pairs were nesting in the same neighbourhood. Mr. Mackinnon saw the bird sitting on the 19th May.’

In Wikipedia the Firecrest is described as one of the kinglet family. *Regulus* is a diminutive of *rex* (L), ‘a king’.



C. L. Brehm, b. 1787, was a German pastor and ornithologist. He accumulated a collection of 15,000 bird skins. After his death they remained in the attic of his house, were later discovered years later, and offered to Lord Rothschild and the collection went to his Natural History Museum at Tring. This is now under the control of the Natural History Museum.



Trail Camera Update (In the Night Garden)

Since my report in the EEG December newsletter I've often set the camera to record video and once it captured three foxes interacting in the garden just after dusk – there always seems to be one 'top dog'.



Two Zombie Foxes

In the winter months they often arrive just as it gets dark but also pass by throughout the night, as does one of the local cats. In the snow a fox visited both early in the evening and in the small hours of the morning.

While the ability to monitor night visitors is a key feature the camera also takes good daytime pictures and will detect fairly small animals such as squirrels and pigeons. So far no pictures I couldn't have taken from a window with a conventional camera but it may be fun to try to snap young blue tits leaving a nest box or similar unpredictable wildlife activity.



Seeking to optimise settings I've come across a website <http://www.ronburyswildlife.com/> that has a great deal of useful support information for my camera and some good pictures. **John Booth** (See the squirrel snapped by the trail camera on page 8).

Forthcoming newsletters will focus on local groups, which seek to educate and/or campaign for the environment. Our first is Friends of the Earth.

Friends of the Earth is an environmental campaigning organisation with a network of local groups and international links. They stand for: keeping the world beautiful; a good life for people; and a positive relationship with the environment.

The Friends of the Earth name came from the USA in 1971 and they started by taking non-reusable glass bottles back to Schweppes - in those days many other manufacturers sold soft drinks in bottles that could be returned to the shop and exchanged for a few pence 'deposit'.

Many other campaigns followed - on everything from 'Acid Rain' to 'Whales' by way of 'Striped and Spotted Cats' and 'Uranium Enrichment'. Current campaign areas include threats to bees, natural resources, waste management, and planning.



Energy policy has always been an area of action - originally opposing the proposed massive expansion of nuclear power in the 1970s. More recently campaigning has led to the Climate Change Act that has set UK policy on greenhouse gases.



Today **FoE** England, Wales and Northern Ireland is an independent pressure group with staff in London and in the regions of the UK, and is part of **FoE** International, a federation of environmental organizations in 76 countries. There are local groups in many towns and cities whose members both support national campaigns and get involved in local environmental issues.

Originally, adoption of 'equitable and sustainable lifestyles' was the aim and today the focus remains the same, made even more urgent by forty years' population growth and resource depletion, although there has been tremendous progress in science and technology, in public understanding of environmental impacts, in environmental regulation and in public and private practice. Who in 1971 would have predicted doorstep recycling collections?

FoE 'supporters' donate £3 per month and receive 'Earthmatters' magazine three times a year: www.foe.co.uk
Reading FoE is the nearest local group for Earley people and holds monthly meetings: www.readingfoe.org.uk.

GREEN HEROES: Norman Ernest Borlaug (March 25, 1914 – September 12, 2009), 'father of the Green Revolution'.

He was an American agronomist, humanitarian and Nobel laureate who has been called "the father of the Green Revolution". He is one of six people to have won the Nobel Peace Prize, the Presidential Medal of Freedom and the Congressional Gold Medal and was also awarded the Padma Vibhushan, India's second highest civilian honor.

Borlaug received his Ph.D. in plant pathology and genetics from the University of Minnesota in 1942. He took up an agricultural research position in Mexico, where he developed semi-dwarf, high-yield, disease-resistant wheat varieties. During the mid-20th century, Borlaug led the introduction of these high-yielding varieties combined with modern agricultural production techniques to Mexico, Pakistan, and India. As a result, Mexico became a net exporter of wheat by 1963. Between 1965 and 1970, wheat yields nearly doubled in Pakistan and India, greatly improving the food security in those nations.

These collective increases in yield have been labelled the Green Revolution, and Borlaug is often credited with saving over a billion people worldwide from starvation. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1970 in recognition of his contributions to world peace through increasing food supply. Later in his life, he helped apply these methods of increasing food production to Asia and Africa. . (Wikipedia)

POPULATION MATTERS : QUOTES

Kenneth Boulding – economist 1910 – 1993

(President Kennedy's Environmental Advisor 1966)

“Anyone who believes in indefinite growth of anything physical on a physically finite planet is either a madman or an economist.”



Jacques Cousteau – conservationist 1910 – 1997

“We must alert and organise the world's people to pressure world leaders to take specific steps to solve the two root causes of our environmental crises — exploding population growth and wasteful consumption of irreplaceable resources.

Overconsumption and overpopulation underlie every environmental problem we face today.”



Norman Borlaug – “father” of Green Revolution 1914 – 2009

“The green revolution has won a temporary success in man's war against hunger and deprivation; it has given man a breathing space. If fully implemented, the revolution can provide sufficient food for sustenance during the next three decades. But the frightening power of human reproduction must also be curbed; otherwise the success of the green revolution will be ephemeral only...Most people still fail to comprehend the magnitude and menace of the ‘Population Monster’.”



Robert McNamara – President of World Bank 1916 – 2009

“Short of nuclear war itself, population growth is the gravest issue the world faces. If we do not act, the problem will be solved by famine, riots, insurrection and war.”



Spike Milligan – comedian 1918 – 2002

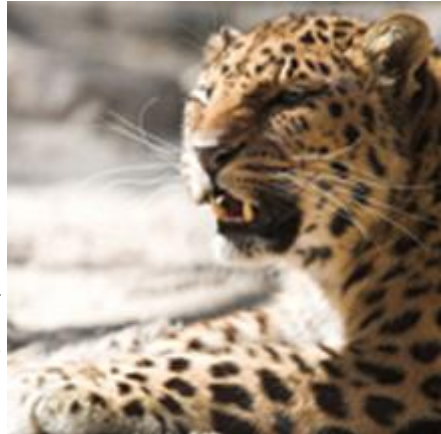
“Overpopulation is a serious issue. The human race will soon have to get used to 12 in a room.”



These messages come from the grave, as all the above are now dead, but the messages need to be heard by the living, particularly the young who will have to make an informed choice about rearing families in the future.

NEWS FROM BEYOND EARLEY

Caucasian Leopard: A bit of good news; its presence in Armenia has been confirmed. Conservation efforts to protect habitat for the endangered Caucasian Leopard in Armenia have been rewarded. Results of genetic tests show that the leopard is present in the Caucasus Wildlife Refuge. World Land Trust (WLT) is supporting conservation work in Armenia, but time is running out. Donations can be made to the [Caucasian Leopard Appeal](#) on the WLT website or by phone 01986 874422. WLT patrons Sir David Attenborough, Chris Packham and cricketer David Gower.



WWF's Earth Hour 23rd March at 8.30pm: At 8.30pm on 23rd March hundreds of millions of people will turn off their lights for one hour, on the same night, all across the world in a huge, symbolic show of support. WWF want us to focus on the kind of energy we use and understand the need to move away from dirty fossil fuels onto clean green renewable energy. Pupils of local school Hillside Primary have signed up for it. Website: www.earthhour.wwf.org.uk.

EARLEY WILDLIFE SIGHTINGS AND GARDEN SURVEYS

We have had updates for several years now from our members who regularly contribute garden surveys, to whom we owe a big thank you. They diligently supply facts and figures which will be of interest to refer to in the future. The same core list of resident birds feature in almost all the surveys, but looking at the mammals, love it or hate it, the squirrel appears consistently. Of course, this is not the much loved red squirrel of Beatrice Potter books, Squirrel Nutkin, but the grey squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*).

Gillian in her survey for October 2012 comments:

Oct 5: The squirrel gnawed off 3 feet of sunflower stalk and proceeded to eat the seeds from the head on the lawn!

Oct 7: It has now had the heads off 4 more. What a feast.

Some facts you may not know about the squirrel cavorting in your garden :



Grey squirrels are notorious for displacing red squirrels in European woodlands. They out-compete the much more attractive native reds for food, feeding more at ground level and being able to digest acorns, which the reds can't. They also carry a deadly pox virus which does not affect them. Grey squirrels were introduced to the UK from the USA in the late 19th or early 20th century. They're now widespread throughout England south of Cumbria and Wales, and common in local pockets in Scotland. They are absent from the rest of mainland Europe, except for small localised populations in Italy. (Photo by John Booth)

LOCAL FORTHCOMING EVENTS 2013

Sunday, March 24

HELP! Litter Clean-up: (Huge Earley Litter Pick) Join the annual Earley Litter Pick. Two sessions, 10 a.m. to 12.30p.m. and 2.00 p.m. to 4.30 p.m. Everything provided. **Contact Grahame Hawker on 0118 986 8995.** Meet at Interpretation Centre, Instow Road. Show your community spirit and join in.

Monday, April 15

Do Garden Birds Earn Their Keep? a talk by Melanie Orros of Reading University 7.30 to 9.30 p.m. Function Room, Maiden Place Community Centre, off Kilnsea Drive. Come and hear about scientific research carried out by ecologists at the University of Reading showing that feeding birds in your garden can lead to a fall in the numbers of aphids.

May/June: At the moment tentative arrangements are being made for a nightjar walk with Ray Reedman in late May/early June, and a dragonfly walk in June/July. Please check for details on posters on local sites and in the press.

Bits and Pieces

Maiden Erlegh Nature Reserve experienced a major sewage spill in the middle of the Reserve in February. Very little sewage reached the lake, but much of it did enter the stream. Thames Water are planning how to replace the damaged pipe. This will be a big operation and will probably require the level of the lake to be lowered. Update in the next newsletter.

Living Record is designed to encourage people to record the wildlife they see around them by making the process quick and easy. It provides a personal record system for each participant and shared distribution maps to inform and inspire. To find out more <http://www.livingrecord.net/news/1109.cfm>. Also check out our March 2012 newsletter on the EEG website.

EASI (Earley Adopt-a-Street Initiative) would like more volunteers. Help keep your street clear of litter.

Everything provided. Phone Brian Hackett on 0118 986 1115 or email ask.mera@btinternet.com.

Can you offer active **help to EEG**? If so, phone 0118 962 0004 or go to the website. We would welcome more member involvement. If you have no expertise and would like to get involved, you may be able to give practical help. Perhaps help with distributing the newsletter hard copies, or maybe you have graphic design skills (for occasional posters, leaflets), computer skills, any other skills to offer.

Join the **EEG Yahoo Group** and post your wildlife sightings and messages. You'll find a link to Yahoo on our website.

EEG Committee Members can be found on 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 or 2 Reeds Avenue, Earley, RG6 5SR. We would welcome short contributions from members to the newsletter.

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 at liz@helva.plus.com. Please inform

SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL SHOPS

The True Food Co-op, Silverdale Centre : There is now two True Food Co-ops operating in Earley, their most successful market. Their mission is to take low-cost organic food out to the people, bypassing the supermarkets which charge a lot for organics. They hold Earley market at the Silverdale Centre on Fridays, 5 to 8.15 p.m. and Lower Earley Market, Trinity Church, Chalfont Close, Earley RG6 5HZ (next to Asda store) Saturdays 12noon to 3pm. www.truefood.coop .

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 926 6512, e-mail sales@petfayre-reading.co.uk or go on the comprehensive website www.petfayre-reading.co.uk

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