

To be described as 'commonplace' seems to describe something as not being of particular importance, but what was 'commonplace' yesterday may be 'rare' today: take the house sparrow. Once almost invisible to our eye, now vanishing in thousands, there's a feeling of satisfaction to see it feeding in our gardens. Some harrumph at their rubbish sacks, left out overnight, being strewn over the street the next day by some 'pesky fox'. But it still gives most people a thrill when they glimpse that 'commonplace' animal, the fox, in their garden or street. To realise how what was once common quickly vanishes, read Alan's article on the yellowhammer, or *yellowammer* as he reveals to be the correct name, on p. 4. Not only birds or mammals can vanish from our patch, but also trees and wildflowers. It's a safe bet that many Earley residents, with their busy lives, take no notice of our old trees, and will only do so (and grieve over this) when they disappear. It's easy for some to disparage 'tree huggers', but to live in an area devoid of trees is a sad prospect. Thankfully, there is good news. We still have many fine trees in Earley, read p.5.

There are other good things to reflect on, such as the sightings by members of sparrowhawks. In the May issue of the RSPB *Birds Magazine* Simon Barnes makes the point that if you have sparrowhawks, those top-of-the-food-chain birds, "the place you are in is doing all right"; our gardens are part of this valuable 'place'.

All is not lost if vanished species can be reintroduced. We thrill to the red kite circling over our heads in Earley of all places, one of the most populated places in Wokingham District! We can enjoy the wild flowers introduced into the meadows of the Maiden Erlegh local nature reserve. But perhaps we need to value all the wildlife that graces Earley, not just the rarities. One of the best spectacles of the spring, except to those who hanker after tidiness at all costs, and costing not a penny, was the wonderful display of daisies, dandelions and buttercups on our road verges, followed by the taller wildflowers. Of course they will have to be cut down eventually, but for a few days they put on a lovely display.

Items of special interest:

Local connections with horse racing	p.2
Chico Mendes, green hero	p.2
A Trip Down Memory Lane	p.3
Disappearance of Earley yellow hammers	p.4
Notable Earley trees	p.5
Results of RESCUE litter pick	p.6
EEG Visit to GreenPark	p.6
News from the Reserve	p.6
News from Earley and beyond	p.7
Forthcoming events, etc.	p.8

**Get to know your Earley
Not a walk this time, but a gallop!**

'Maiden Erlegh' perhaps brings to mind the Nature Reserve, the school or a drive, *but a horse?* Ever thought why there's a road called Marefield near Laurel Park?



Meet *Maiden Erlegh*, a handsome race horse, standing 16 hands high, named after the place and title of his owner's stud. Read about the famous Maiden Erlegh stud, founded by Soloman Barnato Joel, fabulously rich owner of the Maiden Erlegh estate. Laurel Park is adjacent to the Maiden Erlegh Nature Reserve and is the site of the old paddocks. It can be accessed from Marefield, or off the Beech Lane entrance to the Reserve and has a children's play area. Read also of the tragic end of Maiden Erlegh, the race horse that is, on page 2.

(Photo courtesy of National Horseracing Museum, Newmarket. See their Horseracing History online feature on www.nhrm.co.uk. Try searching 'Soloman Joel'.)

MAIDEN ERLEGH'S HORSE RACING HISTORY

Fabulous Fortunes

Recent newcomers to Earley may not know of the Maiden Erlegh connection with some of our greatest racehorses. The Maiden Erlegh Estate was owned by Solomon Barnato Joel, who made an enormous fortune out of gold and diamonds through association with his remarkable uncle Barney Barnato.

Barney went to South Africa, penniless, at the time diamonds were discovered, sometimes performing on the music-hall stage and earning money through his entrepreneurial wits. Incredibly, by 1887 Cecil Rhodes and Barnato - both in their mid-thirties - controlled the world's two giant diamond mines. There followed a titanic struggle between the two until Rhodes by devious means bought Barney out. Barney was by now one of the richest men in the world but he returned to the music-hall and acted in a number of amateur productions in Kimberley.

Death by Drowning

Solomon Barnato Joel (Soly or Solly Joel), son of an East End publican, and an astute businessman known as the "Ace of Diamonds", had earlier joined his uncle in business. In 1897, they both headed home on an ocean liner; Barney, suffering from depression, either jumped or fell overboard. Although saved by a crew member, he did not survive: verdict 'Suicide by drowning'. Solly Joel and his brother Jack thereby inherited a considerable fortune.

The Founding of Maiden Erlegh Stud

Solly bought the Maiden Erlegh estate in 1903 and founded the world-renowned Maiden Erlegh Stud. He was in great competition with his brother Jack to breed winners for the big races, the latter achieving greater success with eleven Classic winners. However, Solly won the Ascot Gold Cup in 1906 with **Bachelor's Buttons**, and the 2000 Guineas, the Derby and the St. Leger with **Pommern** in 1915. Pommern was home-bred by Solly Joel's famous stallion **Polymelus**.

The Resting Place of a Great Stallion

Polymelus was named after one of the Trojan warriors killed by Patroclus in Homer's *The Iliad*. He was never

considered in the same class as the classic winners of his generation. At stud it was a different story, for he became the most successful British stallion of his era. He was champion sire in Britain on five occasions. He stood his entire life as a stallion at Solly Joel's Maiden Erlegh Stud, and Home Stud Farm was situated between the dead-end part of old Beech Lane and Marefield. The farm pond* is still there. During his first season at Maiden Erlegh, Polymelus suffered an accident when he fell over and severely injured his

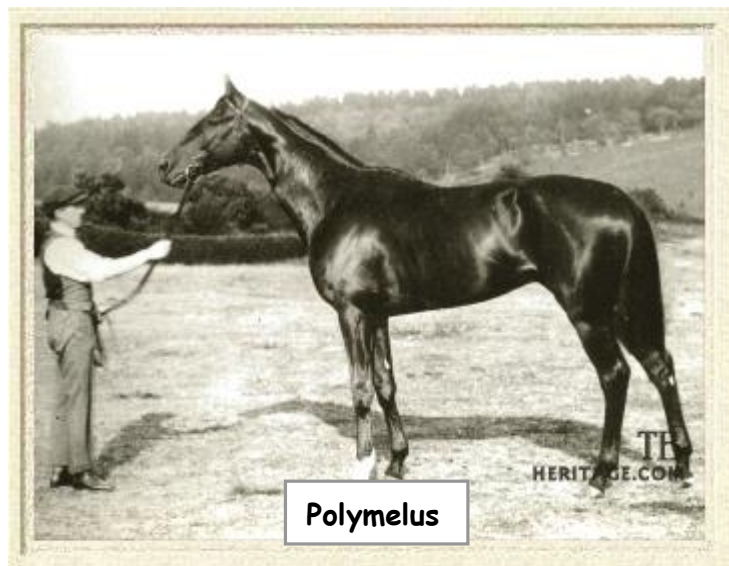


Photo courtesy of TBHeritage

pelvis. From then on, he required help to mount his mares. This old injury, plus years of suffering from rheumatism, led to the decision to humanely put him down at the age of 22 on March 24, 1924. He was buried at Maiden Erlegh. (*Could his bones still be there or were they excavated and moved? And what happened to the Equestrian statue excluded from the estate sale in 1932? Does anyone know?*)

Marefield and Laurel Park

So next time you pass Marefield or Laurel Park, and think you hear a horse whinnying, you'll know why!

Sheila Crowson

(*the pond is designated a Wildlife Heritage Site)

A leaflet for a walk round ME Reserve is available at EarleyTown Council, Radstock Lane.

As for **Maiden Erlegh**, he came to an untimely end. Foaled in 1909 and sired by **Polymelus**, in 1917 he was being shipped to serve stud duty at Claiborne Farm near Lexington, Kentucky. Sadly, the young stallion never reached his destination, as the ship on which he was being transported was torpedoed and sunk by a German U-boat off the Irish coast.

GREEN HEROES

Chico Mendes Born: 15 December 1944, Xapuri, Acre, Brazil Died: 22 December 1988, Xapuri, Acre, Brazil

These bare facts don't reveal the tragic death of Chico Mendes, rubber tapper, union leader and environmental activist. Chico started work at the age of nine, rubber-tapping trees in the Amazonian Forest. When Mendes saw that large swathes of forest were being cleared to make way for cattle pasture and strip mining he encouraged the rubber tappers to work together to defend the forest and their livelihoods. He became the head of the rubber-tappers union, a charismatic leader of former debt peons: rubber-tappers, brazil-nut gatherers and petty traders who live in the far forests of the Brazilian state of Acre, on the border with Bolivia. He was frequently jailed, fined and threatened. In 1988 he led a winning effort to stop cattle rancher Darly Alves da Silva from deforesting a contested area. Stopping at nothing, the cattle ranchers had him assassinated on 22 December 1988, shot point-blank in the head and the heart. In 1990 da Silva and his son were sentenced to 19 years in prison.

THE PAST IS A FOREIGN COUNTRY

A trip down Memory Lane by Alan Broodbank, our Chairman (part 4)

The urbanisation of our part of Earley, or Little Hungerford to be more precise, has not surprisingly had a dramatic effect on the bird life. In stark contrast to today, it was much noisier at dawn than during the day, such was the intensity of the "dawn chorus". This would usually be triggered off by the first blackbird to wake up at first light; others would rapidly join in, including the many cockerels in the area, and soon the woods, fields and gardens would be a symphony of bird song. It seemed to reach a peak around April and May, and to lie in bed hearing four or five cuckoos vying with each other was a delightful experience indeed. Alas, they are only rarely heard here now, although the general decline of the species as a whole is probably as much to blame as the destruction of the local habitat. Most children, I regret to say, made a hobby of collecting birds' eggs, although there was a strict unwritten rule of "only take one, and none if there are three or less in the nest". This praiseworthy attempt at conservation evolved because we firmly believed that birds could count up to three - if the number of eggs fell below this figure, the mother bird would desert the nest. Anyone suspected of causing a bird to desert was vilified by his peers, the act being regarded as almost a crime.

In our gardens, house sparrows, starlings, song thrushes, blackbirds, chaffinches, blue tits, great tits, robins and hedge sparrows seemed to be the most plentiful species; the first three of these now unfortunately much less common than they were. One bird that seems to have disappeared completely from Earley is the yellowhammer (which was known locally as a "yellowammer"; it was actually spelt without an "h", and not just dropped as a result of careless speech, the spelling can be found in ancient bird books). These colourful birds used to perch on high places such as electricity wires or the tops of shrubs and sing their attractive song with monotonous regularity, which, to those with a fanciful imagination, sounded like "A little bit of bread and no cheese"! They used to nest in the grassy or brambly roadside verges along Cutbush Lane and Mill Lane, particularly favouring nettle patches, usually laying four eggs that had peculiar scribble-like markings. At that time the yellowammer would have had a strong claim to being Earley's emblem, so characteristic was it of the area, although the skylark would have run it a close second. In the hedgerows the most commonly-encountered nests were those of blackbirds, song thrushes, hedge sparrows, wrens and chaffinches, while greenfinches and bullfinches were by no means unusual.

Every winter's day, just before dusk, there occurred a remarkable ornithological phenomenon. If one chanced to walk along the main road in the vicinity of Earley station, there was a good chance that one would suddenly become

aware that the sky had darkened and of a peculiar sound like a rushing wind. One would look up to the sky at one's peril, because the sound was due to a truly gigantic flock of starlings, always flying north towards Woodley, although what their final destination was I don't know. It was impossible to make a meaningful estimate of the numbers involved, but when I say that the flock took up to five minutes to pass over some idea of its magnitude may be gained. It was certainly tens of thousands of birds, possibly even more.

Where all these starlings emanated from I can't say, but there was certainly a clump of oak trees beloved of them along Mill Lane. The racket emanating from these was tremendous, and they were something of a local landmark, being referred to by many as "The Starling Trees". Mill Lane was a favourite route for those who enjoyed nature walks, deservedly so, as the combination of mixed woodland, meadowland, cornfields, water-filled ditches and farm buildings guaranteed an abundance of wildlife. Among the more unusual birds that nested in the undergrowth by the hedgerows were the spotted flycatcher and whitethroat, the former usually in a hole in the remains of an ancient wall, the latter in low-growing brambles. Alas for these species, if not for the naturalist, weasels were also common and it was the exception rather than the rule for the eggs to remain intact and the young birds reach maturity. An ancient barn existed about a quarter of a mile before Sindlesham Mill, its main use apparently being to provide a nesting site for swallows, at which it was clearly very successful! I only ever saw one barn owl in the area, flying silently by day about a mile upstream of Sindlesham Mill, although tawny and little owls were common enough, as they still are. Rose Cottage, by the junction of Gypsy and Mill Lanes was in those days an uninhabited tumbledown shell. The thatch was in a terrible state, having been used as a nesting site by countless generations of house sparrows, and riddled with holes leading to their nests. (See article on yellowhammer next page)

Alan's account to be continued in our next newsletter.

Photo: courtesy of RSPB Liverpool



Yellowhammer

Yellow(h)ammers in Earley

“A little bit of bread and no cheeeeeese!”

Bird-lovers may recognize this strange phrase as the imaginative description of the song of the yellowhammer. Few bird songs, with the possible exceptions of the skylark and pheasant, are more evocative of the rural agricultural countryside and it is therefore not surprising that before the massive housing developments of the 1960s, when much of Earley was still farmland, it was one of the most commonly-heard sounds in our area. Any high spot would do as a rostrum but a favourite one was the electricity cables that run alongside the older roads such as *Hillside* and *Silverdale Roads*, from where the song would be repeated with almost monotonous regularity, the songster often remaining in the same spot for half an hour or more before trying somewhere else. The first syllables are sung rapidly and on the same note before dropping three or four notes for the rather wheezy and drawn-out “cheeeeeese”.

Another name for the yellowhammer is the yellow bunting and, in common with all buntings, it feeds on seeds, especially grain. It is therefore hardly surprising that it was very common along *Mill Lane*, *Gypsy Lane* and *Cutbush Lane*, where such food was to be had in abundance from the adjacent fields. The roadside verges afforded many excellent nesting sites and I well remember finding a nest containing four eggs, with their peculiar hieroglyphic-like markings, in the verge by *Cutbush Lane*, only a foot or so off the ground, cleverly suspended between the stems of several stinging nettles.

Elsewhere in this issue of the Newsletter, in the “Down Memory Lane” article, I mention that locally the yellowhammer was often referred to as the yellowammer. This was what many of us considered to be the usual and hence correct name of the bird and used to spell it that way. It was definitely not the result of careless speech. One or two folk with enquiring minds have quite reasonably queried this statement but there are references in the literature which I think, prove its veracity, one of which I now possess. It is a very old book entitled *The Illustrated Natural History* (1862) by the Rev. J.G. Wood in which he too describes the yellowammer. He acknowledges the existence of “*Hammer*”, but considers it to be incorrect. He then goes on to explain that the word *ammer* is the German word for *bunting*. Sure enough, the modern German name of the bird that is the subject of this article turns out to be *goldammer*. Fairly convincing evidence, I’d have thought! As the Rev. Wood then goes on to say, “Prefixing the letter H to the word appears to be unnecessary, and even erroneous, as suggesting a notion which has no reference to any known habit or quality of the bird.”

If you wish to see or hear this attractive bird, you need travel no further than *Arborfield*, about 15 minutes’ bike ride down *Mole Road*. In the pretty lanes there, such as *Church Lane*, especially on a sunny summer’s day, you stand a very good chance of being treated to his characteristic song, albeit in competition with skylarks, pheasants, nuthatches, woodpeckers and many other song birds, not to mention the strong possibility of a buzzard or two circling overhead. A more pleasant way to spend a few minutes it is difficult to imagine! **Alan Broodbank**



Earley Environmental Group has bought one acre of rainforest

Renton Righelato, Chair of the Trustees of the World Land Trust, gave a very interesting talk to EEG on the work of the WLT, which purchases rainforest and hands it to local people to care for as a conservation area for local wildlife. Through the generosity of our audience we collected over £50, enough to donate an acre of rainforest to the Trust.

www.worldlandtrust.org

Photos of Ecuadorean birds by kind permission of Dave Brewer.

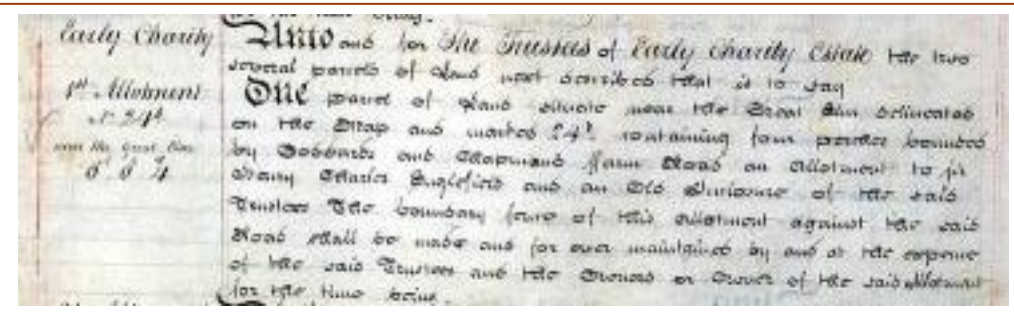
Top: Jocotoco antpitta, bottom Choco toucan

Earley Trees: Silent Witnesses to the Past

During an ongoing survey of trees* in our town, many old trees were discovered still standing; we are very fortunate, in an urban area like Earley, to have so many trees existing from the rural past. They may trace the line of an old field, an ancient lane, a local stream or mark the entrance to a now non-existent big house.

“Woodman, spare that tree!
Touch not a single bough!
In youth it sheltered me,
And I'll protect it now.”

A few will be particularly notable, and others will be known by a name given more recently by the locals. One allotment made to the Trustees of the Earley Charity by the Enclosure Act about 1820 makes mention of the **Great Elm** in the region of Elm Lane - “One parcel of land situate near the Great Elm delineated on the map and marked 24b containing four



perches bounded by Goddard and Chapman's farm road” . This road is now Elm Lane but the Great Elm is no longer.

* To join the survey, see page 8.

A couple of Earley's notable trees

A Younger Member of the Earley Tree Family – the Starling Tree

A younger veteran oak, but one that lives on in the memory of Earley children of the 1950s, who gave it their own unofficial name. It is remembered for the enormous flock of starlings that settled daily in its branches before taking off, as one, darkening the sky in late afternoon, for the roost in the winter months. It was probably part of the hedge that bounded the old Mill Lane, near Hawkedon School, where several other veteran oak trees still survive.



The Old Timer - the Gemini Tree

Anyone who has walked in Maiden Erlegh Nature Reserve will know the **the Gemini Tree** (Gemini being the Zodiac Heavenly Twins), and asked the question, “Is it one tree divided into two, or two trees joined at the hip? Research seems to indicate the name is also fairly recent, but is very appropriate, and the most popular assumption is that it is two oak trees which have grafted together. A real veteran, it may well be over 300 years old. It is situated near the Mawbray Close entrance to the Reserve on the boundary of ancient woodland, and is unmissable.



The benefits of trees

‘From renewable energy sources to flood protection, wildlife habitat, leisure, health and well-being, trees and woods provide critical benefits across all English regions – not least their role in creating the very oxygen on which life depends’, says the Woodland Trust, the UK’s leading woodland conservation charity.

SCOUTS GET INTO RUBBISH IN A BIG WAY TO MAKE EARLEY A CLEANER PLACE

In March EEG joined with Reading in the annual RESCUE project: RIVERS AND ENVIRONMENTAL SPACES CLEAN-UP EVENT

Report from our able organiser Jean Hackett.

There were 38 volunteers in the morning, including Cubs and Scouts from 84th St Nicolas: they collected around the Laurel Park football pitch, the pavilion area, and the footpath from Laurel Park to Maiden Place Community Centre, while a smaller 3rd group worked on the Thames Path from Kennet Mouth towards the Waterside Centre. The total haul was 46 bags of rubbish, including 8 of cans and plastic and 6 of glass bottles.

There were also 38 volunteers in the afternoon, including Scouts from 31st Earley St Peter's and 99th Our Lady of Peace, and they covered the hedge between Beech Lane and Rushey Way, the

Number of volunteers, 38 in morning and 38 in afternoon.

Sites covered: park, footpaths, cycleways, hedge line, Thames Path.

Sacks: total number 86 including cans & plastic 18, glass bottles 10.

Unusual items: hub caps, bag of cement, garden chair, garden pot made from a tyre

cycleways from Beech Lane to Radstock Lane and the ETC offices to ASDA via Radstock Lane, and paths from Clevedon Drive to Dennose Close, Dennose Close to Sibley Hall and Beech Lane to Instow Road. They collected 40 bags, of which 10 were cans and plastic and 4 were glass and bottles.

Unusual items included 2 Ford hub caps, a garden pot made from an old tyre, a bag of cement, a plastic garden chair, 4 traffic cones and 2 golf balls. We decided to leave the lamp-post in Clevedon Drive, which seemed to have been knocked down by some vehicle for WBC to deal with.

We made note of some improvements we could make for next year, so I hope you're all putting the third weekend in March in your diaries now!

Jean

Our thanks to Jean for organising the event and to all the volunteers who turned out on an awful day weatherwise, including a number of hardworking children, who earned themselves a certificate. (Jean still has some to be collected).

News from Maiden Erlegh Nature Reserve:

Progress in revitalising the butterfly garden

The Wednesday morning work party of volunteers, under Grahame Hawker's supervision, are assisting with the creation of a revamped butterfly garden, including the provision of food-plants for every known species of British butterfly! (Find it at the western end of Instow Road, at the top of the Reserve wildflower meadow.)

Other activities: Clearing an area of cow parsley which was out-competing the wood anemones.

Resurfacing parts of the woodland footpath with gravel.

Planting (and subsequently replanting after vandalism) woodland hedgerows.

Hedge-laying (with CROW, Conserve Reading On Wednesdays)

To join the work party, phone Grahame on 07796170689



EEG's visit to GreenPark and wind turbine

On Sunday 11 May a group of EEG members visited GreenPark, the large business park in Reading bordered by the A33 and the M4, created on the flood-plain of the River Kennet. As it was Sunday, the area was completely deserted and we were able to wander the paths bordering the large expanse of water, and saw a variety of water birds, including great crested grebe, coot, moorhen, heron, and swans on their nest. More than 500 trees have been recorded on the site. It's a very attractive environment for the GreenPark workers. There are public footpaths through the area.

We visited the impressive wind turbine, where Ian Gough of the Wokingham Borough Council gave us an excellent talk. It's a second generation turbine, and was almost silent. It only took one day to actually erect the turbine, and it can supply enough electricity for 1000 homes. It feeds directly through a cable into the National Grid. Ian was very enthusiastic about the future of non-polluting wind energy.



NEWS FROM BEYOND EARLEY

Lake Natron, Tanzania: a disaster for lesser flamingoes? This shallow saline lake, less than 3 metres deep, is threatened with the possible development of a soda ash plant, a joint venture by the Tanzanian Govt. and Tata Chemicals of Mumbai. A proposed chemical plant and power station, using 650,000 litres of fresh and salt water every hour in pursuit of producing washing powder, would be a disaster for the flamingoes according to the RSPB, as Lake Natron is East Africa's only breeding area. During the dry season the high evaporation rates induce great salinity, favourable to salt-loving bacteria on which the birds feed, the synthetic pigments giving the birds their characteristic pink colour. Their deep bill is specialised for filtering tiny food items. What a tragedy for the world to lose the spectacle of seeing truly vast numbers of these colourful birds converging and feeding in such an inhospitable environment, so harsh that it supports no predators on the birds, making it a safe place to breed. RSPB *Birds* magazine estimates there are between 1.5 and 2.5 million lesser flamingoes in East Africa, and it is likely that every one of them hatched at Lake Natron.

No more green washing! Companies to tell all on carbon emissions: All quoted companies will have to detail carbon emissions from, for example, company cars, boilers and on-site equipment, in their annual reports. After pressure from back-bench MPs and NGOs like Christian Aid and WWF, an amendment to this effect was added to the Climate Change Bill. A representative of Christian Aid said that about 90% of current voluntary reporting was satisfactory, but it was vital to capture the last 10%.

NEWS FROM EARLEY and WILDLIFE SIGHTINGS

Alice Apr 5: A few observations: **fox** droppings in the front and back garden for the last three months or so; **song thrush** and **wren** song throughout the last two weeks; March 29, a ring-necked **parakeet** flew squawking across the garden (we've occasionally had single ones staying a few days in the summer); yesterday a **peacock butterfly** on the path; today, a wonderful aerial display low over the garden of two **crows** noisily mobbing two **kites** who weren't giving up easily, and when they eventually did, one came back almost immediately for a short while.

David Apr 25: I spotted a **bat** flitting about at 2050 yesterday (24th April). I noticed it against the dimming sky from my kitchen window. (You may be interested to know that the *Daubenton bat* flies over the lake in ME Reserve, as well as possibly *pipistrelle* or *flittermouse* from German *fledermaus*, and *noctule*.)

Jean May 18: Last Tuesday evening, when Brian and I had a stroll round the lake (*Maiden Erlegh*), we saw a female **wood duck** with 13 very tiny but active ducklings. When we went back on Friday afternoon, there were only 12, and also a **Canada goose** baby. Today, there seemed to be only 10, though they don't stay with the adult, so one or two may have been exploring away from the main brood: even though they're tiny, they seem to half-fly, half-paddle across the water.

Edwin May 19: My family and I have been watching the ducklings over the past few days, too, though to judge from the proximity of the more distinctive males I took the ducklings to be mandarins rather than wood ducks. Yesterday morning I saw the following: 3 **mallard** ducklings (near the small island), 11 **mandarin** (or *wood duck!*) ducklings (previously 13, as seen by Jean), 1 **mandarin** duckling (previously 5 earlier in the week), 1 **Canada gosling**, plus the nearly fully-grown **Egyptian gosling**. They seem much later than last year's broods. Let's hope they will be more successful.

Alan May 19, a footnote on birds on the lake: I was standing by the weir when suddenly a **pike** leapt right out of the water by a good couple of feet in the middle of the flock. This was definitely a pike about 2 feet 6 ins long. Whether it actually took a duckling I can't be sure, but I reckon it was having a go!

Vivian May 20: We have a daily (evening) visit by a small vixen, who takes several mouthfuls of food which we leave out nightly (better than putting in refuse and land-fill!). It is presumably to feed her cubs, as we know they have a den somewhere beyond our garden. After grabbing food, she trots off with it then soon returns for more. She is very wary, and our little cat has chased her off many a time but, undeterred, she returns for more. Sometimes we have seen her with a dog fox, and twice in past couple of weeks have spotted just one cub. Vixen now comes within a couple of feet from conservatory window, a wonderful sight. A month ago, one of our cats brought in a robin, alas very much dead and headless; being a family who likes to "recycle", I tossed sad remains on lawn to provide food for any passing magpie. What we didn't expect, and my husband observed this, was for a red kite to swoop down later in day and carry it off! Red kites (usually one, sometimes a pair) are often above our garden, and currently a pair of crows who live nearby mob them. **May 22** Today a pair of swans flew overhead, one was a black swan!

Margaret and Gillian, two regular contributors of garden wildlife surveys: Our two regulars have filed their monthly surveys, recording many of the usual Earley bird inhabitants, one notable absence for April being the **house sparrow**. All the birds common to most gardens were present, plus slightly less regular visitors like **greater spotted woodpecker**, **goldfinch**, **song thrush**, **dunnock**, **heron** and **jay**. **Holly blue**, **orange tip** and **small white butterfly** were recorded, as well as the first **wasp** on Apr 16, **buff tail bumblebee**, **2 spot** and **harlequin ladybird**, and **pondskater**.

A delightful, hand-written, descriptive garden watch by an unknown contributor: March The sunshine has brought out the **Bees** and a lovely yellow **Butterfly**. **Blackbird** has made her usual nest, in a clump of ivy, and sitting on her eggs, with the watchful eye of father blackbird, who gets a bit hysterical every time anything moves around him. **Blue tits** have decided on their nest box and very busy making it cosy. The **jays** are quite regular visitors now. They know about the nuts in the hanging basket for the squirrels. One very large **wood pigeon** decided to eat 14 peanuts and some cake, and just about managed to fly into the tree. If anyone spots a **magpies'** nest looking very colourful, it would be pieces of my new door mat that he decided would put the finishing touches to his roof. It might even have a Welcome sign on the top!

Have been worried about one **fox**, as she looks as though her jaw has been put out, her teeth are sideways on. Wonder how many cubs this year, last year 4 to each vixen; one baby who lost her mum was very tame. It's amazing, they are usually on time in the evenings for their dog food, otherwise they dig up the garden. Family of **field mice** sitting in the nut container, and where have all these **pigeons** come from? **April 2:** one **Admiral butterfly** and 2 **white ones**. **Woodpecker** on the fat balls.

Thought I would write down a few bits from the garden having a large garden, lots of trees etc. So quite a collection of wildlife.

LOCAL FORTHCOMING EVENTS

June 22 (Sunday) Grahame Hawker will lead a tour of Maiden Erlegh Nature Reserve from 2 - 4 pm.

Meet at the Interpretation Centre in Instow Road. Take Chelwood Road off Beech Lane, first left into Instow, follow right-hand bend to next corner. Centre situated next to woodland.

July 13 (Sunday) Walk around Pamber Forest and Silchester Common. Leader Alan Broodbank 2 - 4pm. A

walk which Alan describes as a treasure trove of wildlife, and hopefully the chance to spot some rare butterflies. **How to get there:** From Shinfield take the A327 southbound as far as the roundabout junction with the B3270 Lower Earley Way (just before the bridge over the M4). Take the third exit on to the B3270 and continue as far as massive roundabout over M4, taking the 2nd exit on to A33, signposted "Basingstoke". After 0.3 mile turn right at roundabout, signposted "Burghfield & Mortimer". Continue for about 3 miles as far as T junction/roundabout and turn right, signposted "Mortimer Common, Padworth & Aldermaston". Continue for 1.2 miles into Mortimer village, then take left turn towards Silchester & Aldermaston (N.B. large red brick church on left). After 1.1 miles, turn left into Church Road, signposted "Silchester". After 1.2 miles, turn left into "Little London Road". After 0.2 mile, turn right into Pamber Road (by Calleva Arms pub), then left into Dukes Ride. Suggest parking on the right, adjacent to woodland. For help ring: 07796170689

August 2 (Saturday) Green Fair. Maiden Erlegh Local Nature Reserve. 10 am- 3pm. Going from strength to strength. It's always sunny! Visit the many stalls, including EEG, with all sorts of goodies and information. Situated on the green in Reserve at the Beech Lane entrance.

September: Hedgehog box making. Details to follow.

October: Talk on Birds by Ray Reedman. Details to follow.

November 18 (Tuesday) Peter Baveystock, Waste and Recycling Manager, Wokingham Borough Council will give a talk to answer all those queries you have on waste and recycling. Start 7.30 to approx. 9.15 at Function Room, Maiden Place Community Centre.

December 15 (Monday) EEG Christmas social. Details to follow

BITS AND PIECES

Congratulations to the following Wokingham schools who have achieved a Bronze award in the Eco Schools International Award Programme which includes Hillside, one of our Earley Schools: Highclose School, Oak Tree Day Nursery, **Hillside Primary**, Ryeish Green School, South Lake Primary, The Bulmershe School, Hawthorns Primary and The Piggott School.

The Annual Reading Waterfest is being held at Kennetside by the canal on June 21. Friends of the Earth's tombola style stall will feature their campaign Summer of Agrofuel Action. Be informed on palm oil/biofuel/deforestation/orangutan. It aims to be child-friendly, and look out for those orangutans on the loose!

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 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, or send her an e-mail.

Can you offer active help to the Group? Phone 0118 9620004 if you can. If you have no expertise and would like to get involved, you may be able to give practical help. We also need people with some expertise to undertake surveys of small habitats in Earley. To join the Earley Veteran Tree Survey phone 0118 9620004. (Recorder's training session on Weds 25 June at Dinton Pastures.e-mail bkstagles@ntinternet.com)

SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL SHOPS

The True Food Co-op, Silverdale Centre :There is now a True Food Co-op operating in Earley. Their aim 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 now every Friday, 5pm to 8. 15pm. They have a website giving details 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 janet@pETFayre-reading.co.uk.

No Page Unturned: A new bookshop in Earley, 3 Maiden Lane Centre. Emily will get any book you need in 24/48 hrs, 5% off for EEG members Phone her on 0118 966 9351 or e-mail emily@nopageuntuned.org.uk. Visit her pleasant premises and browse. New and second-hand books, wrapping paper, audio books, etc.

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