

Wildlife Gardening Forum Newsletter February 2010

Do send me news of your organisation's events, surveys and successes for incorporation in our newsletters. With 2010 the International Year of Biodiversity, we should all be shouting as loudly about garden wildlife as we can. Steve Head

The Wildlife Gardening Forum on Radio 4

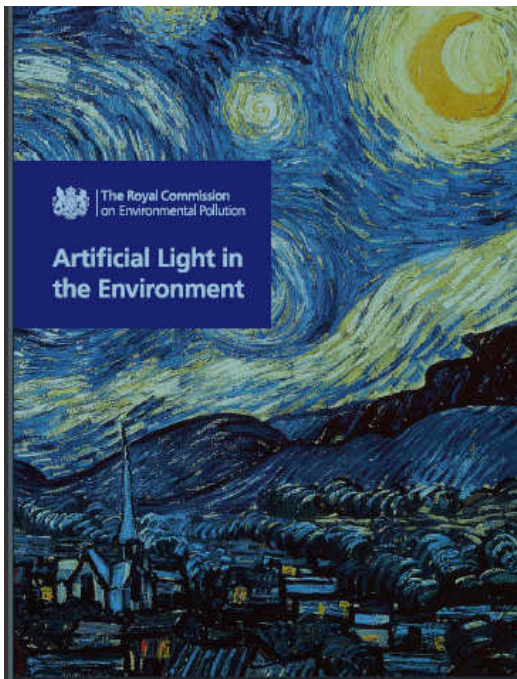
When Brett Westwood, BBC Radio 4 "Nature" programme presenter and producer came to speak at our November conference, he recorded a whole programme on Wildlife Gardening, with Paul Evans as presenter. The programme was broadcast in January, and is still available to listen to at:

www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/b00pxmcr/Nature_Series_4_Wildlife_Gardening

Next Wildlife Gardening Forum Conference

We don't have a firm date for this yet, and are still looking for a potential sponsor. However, we would like to have a conference in May, based at the UK Biodiversity Centre at the Natural History Museum in London, with a detailed look at the museum's superb Wildlife Garden in the afternoon. We would like to celebrate the 2010 Year of Biodiversity by basing a session in the meeting around the importance of gardens in sustaining biodiversity. If you would like to contribute to this theme, or could suggest a colleague who could, please let me know.

Plea for research on the effects of artificial light on wildlife



The Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution has released its report "Artificial Light in the Environment". Section 4 concerns impacts on organisms and ecosystems, noting that there are good reasons to expect artificial light to affect plants through day-length and tropism effects. Light would be expected to "disturb the normal routine" of animals – even to the extent of migrating birds colliding with lighthouses and lit office blocks. Street lights may give a competitive advantage to pipistrelle bats which feed around lamp posts at night, reducing numbers of lesser horseshoe bats. Low pressure sodium lighting however inhibits moths from flying and so feeding and breeding.

The strongest conclusion was the paucity of research information about the effects of artificial light on wildlife, despite strong reasons to expect impacts, especially on night flying insects. The commission recommends that the NERC should lead a pilot research programme.

The full report is available at:

<http://www.rcep.org.uk/reports/sr-2009-light/sr-light.htm>.

OPAL Water Survey *(from the OPAL website)*



The third National OPAL survey launches in May 2010, and involves the study of pollution in the freshwater environment.

Good water quality is essential for the many animals and plants that live in and around our lakes, ponds and rivers. Unfortunately, water is easily affected by pollution from agriculture, waste we throw away, and even pollutants in the air.

Amazingly, we still know very little about the health of the water in many of our lakes and ponds, especially the small ones. By taking part in the OPAL water survey, you'll help scientists learn more about water quality across the country.

Animals living in the water can tell us a great deal about how polluted it may or may not be. Some species will struggle to survive in polluted waters, while others are more tolerant.

By telling us what life you see in your local pond or lake you'll discover more about the water's health and contribute to valuable scientific research. The survey will also include simple tests for water clarity and pH, which can give us more clues about the water quality.

More information is at www.opalexplornature.org/?q=WaterSurvey

Gardening makeovers blamed for rise in orphaned hedgehogs

Edited from a report in the Daily Telegraph, 11 Oct 2009

Gardens and allotments are usually a haven for hedgehogs but householders are spending more time tending their gardens during the economic downturn, making it harder for the animals to find enough food.

A steep increase in the number of hedgehogs being brought to sanctuaries this summer has been reported by animal volunteers. Dr Toni Bunnell, who runs a sanctuary in York, has taken in dozens of baby hedgehogs this summer, many more than usual, and blamed the rise on the increased in interest in gardening, especially where makeovers have been carried out.

“The improvements they have made to their gardens have had a huge impact. People are setting their fences right down to the ground so there’s no way the hedgehog can go through from one garden to the next. That reduces the number of gardens they can go to and feed in. The problem now is garden makeovers. In the past people have maybe put out a few flowers. Now they are having the whole garden demolished. Everything goes – trees, shrubs, the lot. We are getting lots and lots of mother and baby hedgehogs disturbed by bulldozers – the mother can make off but the babies have to be rescued.”

Lorraine Jackson, who runs the Hull Animal Welfare Trust’s Hedgehog Hospital, said: “The makeover programmes on television have a lot to answer for.”

When she releases hedgehogs into established gardens after they have been nursed back to health, she makes sure the animals are offered food daily until they can fend for themselves. In the past most hedgehogs were able to support themselves almost immediately but over the last two years they have remained dependent on feeding stations and are staying around and eating the food. A lot of the gardens are tidier than they used to be and have decking and gravel introduced.

“More and more hedgehogs depend on the food left by people. That tells me their natural food supply isn’t there. A hedgehog will need something like 10 reasonably sized gardens to find enough food to survive. I’ve been getting a lot of people coming to me with rescued hedgehogs telling me their neighbours have just had a makeover.”

Fay Vass, of the Hedgehog Society, said that when people put in or repair fences they should leave a five-square inch gap so that the animals can travel between gardens.

She said that garden makeover programmes on television have had a big impact on hedgehogs over the last 12 years. Not only do they make it harder for hedgehogs to move about but also limit the supplies of slugs, snails, caterpillars and other invertebrates that they eat.

New Field Guide to Amphibians and Reptiles

Adapted from ARC’s Frogpage newsletter Autumn/Winter 2009

**BRITAIN'S
REPTILES and
AMPHIBIANS**



Howard Inns

“Britain’s Reptiles and Amphibians” is written by Howard Inns, Trustee of the Forum Member ARC (Amphibian and Reptile Conservation), in an engaging style that communicates effectively with both newcomers to the subject and more experienced herpetologists alike. The text is clear and simple, yet informative, and layout has been designed to communicate the large amount of information effectively. For example, if you were unsure of the difference between a male and female common lizard, or of the difference between a smooth/palmate newt larva and that of a great crested newt, this

book has the photos to show you.

The photography is excellent. Many of our native species are difficult to find in the field and these photographs are probably the nearest most people will get to knowing what some of these animals look like. Most people will never see a smooth snake eating a common lizard, a grass snake shedding its skin or two male adders competing for a female – so it's great to see them here.

The guide also includes non-native species and escapees that may be encountered, and some useful information on species classification and conservation.

So far the book has 100% 5-star review rating on Amazon. It can also be ordered from www.arc-trust.org/shop/books Proceeds from sales support Amphibian and Reptile Conservation.

CULTIVATIONS Meetings on horticulture and social wellbeing

The charity Cultivations will be holding twelve focus meetings across England and Wales in 2010. The meetings will raise awareness about the health, social, environmental, educational and economic benefits of encouraging people to become involved in any form of horticultural, environmental or conservation activity. Cultivation's overall aim is to ensure greater understanding of the benefits of engaging with nature, a more effective provision of service and greater opportunity for re-engaging excluded and isolated people within their own communities.

The meetings will demonstrate how such involvement enhances, improves and increases an individual's sense of place, personal awareness, health and well being. Attendees will examine issues concerning poor mental health, anti social behaviour, isolation and exclusion. They will also look at the challenges encountered during the process of re-engagement in the community and consider the health, social, educational and vocational opportunities that horticulture and environmental activities can provide.

Successful inclusion is achieved by creating opportunities for participants within the wider community. Horticulture and environmental activities are used as the main focus in promoting well being, collaborative problem solving, skills transference, choice, ownership and responsibility.

Venues:

South Wales: Wednesday 17 March 2010, Swansea Guide Headquarters, Swansea

Mid Wales: Thursday 18 March 2010, Llanidloes Community Centre, Llanidloes

North Wales: Friday 19 March 2010, Ffordd Las Community Centre, Rhyl

North East England Wednesday 14 April 2010, The Wilton Centre, Long Newton,
Stockton

York and Humberside Thursday 15 April 2010, Jubilee Community Centre,
Wakefield, West Yorkshire

North West England Friday 16 April 2010, Ince Community Centre, Ince, Wigan,
Greater Manchester

East of England: Wednesday 26 May 2010, Moreton Hall Community Centre, Bury St Edmunds

East Midlands: Thursday 27 May 2010, Greenway Centre, Nottingham

West Midlands: Friday 28 May 2010, Sandwell Valley Park Farm, West Bromwich

June Dates for venues in the South – see Cultivations website.

All meetings will run from 10.00 – 15.30 hours, and cost: £35 per delegate.

Refreshments and a buffet lunch will be provided. To book a place please contact Lynda 01766 590388 or visit www.cultivations.co.uk and book on line

Insect Pollination

Issue 348 from the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology, published in January 2010, deals with worries about pollinator decline.

Insect pollination contributes an estimated £400m per year to the UK economy, with honeybees and wild bees being the most important, but both have declined greatly in recent years, threatening future pollination services. Pests and diseases have affected honeybees, and we need research to improve treatments and breed in resistance. The decline in wild species is attributed to a growing shortage of suitable food plants and nesting sites.

The report advocates large scale establishment of wildflower meadows, up to 2.5% of the agricultural landscape, and the inclusion of clover in grass leys. The report also suggests that urban green space managers should drop the “lawns and lollipops” approach, and include wildflower areas in amenity grass.

The full report is available at: www.parliament.uk/documents/upload/postpn348.pdf

Latest statistics from the Big Wildlife Garden

The Big Wildlife Garden (www.bwg.naturalengland.org.uk), guided by the Wildlife Gardening Forum, continues to expand. On 10th February, it had 1,424 members, whose gardens total 792.26 hectares (*averaging c.1.3 acres ? – is Blenheim Palace signed up ? Ed*). The target sign-up is 10,000 gardens by June this year, so please pass the word on to as many people as you can.

Within the garden certification scheme, there are now:

- **229** Bronze gardens
- **292** Silver gardens
- **107** Gold gardens
- **28** Green gardens (the highest level)

We are hoping that there will soon be more space about the Forum on the BWG website. Natural England staff are very grateful for the advice Forum members gave in the November Workshop.

Please send all Newsletter material to
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