Wildlife Gardening Forum

Newsletter June 2011

Sarah Raven – Patron of the Wildlife Gardening Forum

Sarah Raven, who attended and spoke at the November Forum Conference last year, has agreed to become a Patron of our Charity.

Sarah runs a garden and cookery school at Perch Hill[1], and is a guest presenter on BBC Two's *Gardeners' World*. She writes a weekly column for *The Daily Telegraph*. The late lamented gardener Christopher Lloyd, a near-neighbour of Sarah's at Great Dixter, described her as "really energetic and creative ... promoting a more dynamic and showy style of gardening than has been fashionable for many years".

Sarah in her natural habitat in the gardens at Perch Hill

Sarah's publications include *The Cutting Garden*, *The Bold and the Beautiful Garden*, *The Great Vegetable Plot* and *Sarah Raven's Garden Cookbook* which was named Cookery Book of the Year by the Food Writers' Guild in 2008.

Sarah became committed to garden wildlife, and especially pollinator decline, when filming "Rivers of Flowers", which the BBC screened in 2008. She is currently working (with Forum members) on a new three part series on promoting pollinators. '*Bees, butterflies and blooms*' should screen on the BBC later this year, and one of the programmes deals with garden pollinators and how to encourage them. Sarah was also the originator of the "Perfect for Pollinators" project described later in this newsletter.

June 8th Forum Conference

87 Forum members attended the recent conference at the Natural History Museum (NHM) where we heard six excellent talks in the morning, and could choose two out of five afternoon activities, mostly within the superb NHM Wildlife Garden. I will shortly be writing up the talks, and will send out the summary "proceedings" to all Forum members. Many thanks to Caroline Ware and her team at the Museum for a very successful day, and to all the speakers and contributors.

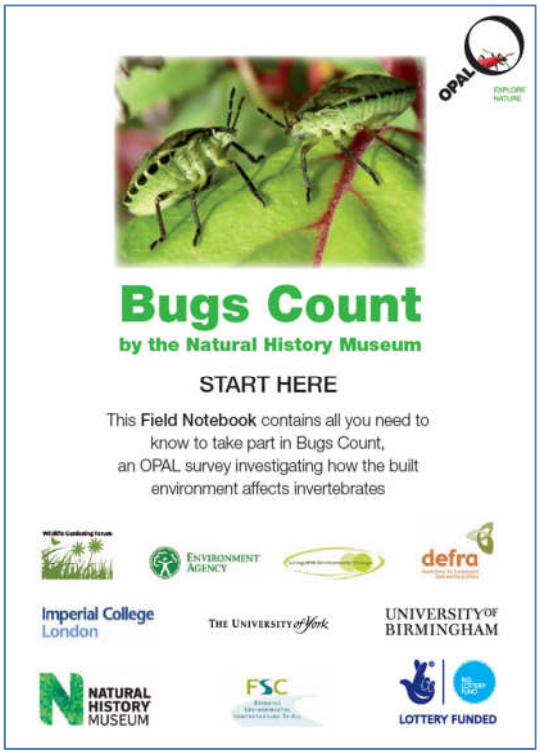
[1] Information from Wikipedia

Caroline Ware explaining the meadow area at the NHM Wildlife Garden

The **next conference** will be on November 23rd, at the Mayville Community Centre in London, the first Passivhaus community building in the country, with almost zero carbon emissions. It has two wildflower gardens, and bird and bat boxes built into the insulation fabric of the building. It forms part of a green corridor from Clissold Park, through the conservation area of Newington Green, Mildmay Road and Mayville Estate to King Henry's Walk gardens.

November's Conference will include a very brief Annual General Meeting of the Forum's charity, and will include workshops to debate opportunities, issues and our future priorities. If you would like to offer a talk (and haven't already told me!) or would like to suggest or lead a workshop topic, please contact me at wlgf@stephenmhead.com.

OPAL's new "Bugs Count" Survey



The new Open Air Laboratory project focuses on invertebrates in urban areas, and the Forum's Research Working Group played a part in the survey objectives and design (see our logo on the field notebook left). The project launched in the evening of June 8th at the NHM, just after our conference, and delegates had a chance to try the survey packs during the afternoon.

The survey has three main components. In "Explore Your Area" participants discover the different micro-habitats of their garden or school, and plan where to look for bugs.

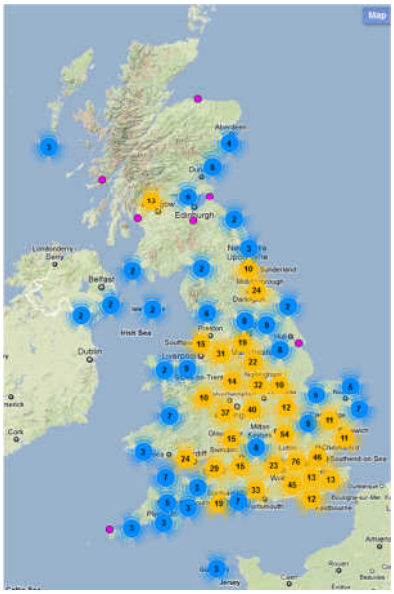
There are three "Timed Challenges". Each one is a hunt to find and identify as many invertebrates as you can in 15 minutes. You can complete as

many challenges as you like and they can be done in any order.

- Challenge 1 – Hunt for ground-living invertebrates on soft ground surfaces like soil, short grass and amongst fallen leaves and twigs.
- Challenge 2 – Search for invertebrates on human-made hard surfaces like paving, fences and the outside of buildings.
- Challenge 3 – Look for invertebrates on plants, including long grass, flowers, shrubs and trees.

The "Species Quest" survey focuses on six key species:

- Two-spot Ladybird *Adalia bipunctata* — Is this species declining?
- Devil's Coach Horse *Ocypus olens* — Is it doing better in rural or urban areas?
- Small Tortoiseshell *Aglais urticae* — Is it doing better in rural or urban areas?
- Green Shieldbug *Palomena prasina* — Is it species spreading north?
- Leopard Slug *Limax maximus* — Are gardens important for this species ?
- Tree Bumblebee *Bombus hypnorum* — Spreading colonist in Britain since 2001



Completed returns are sent back for analysis by OPAL, and rapidly appear on their excellent website (eg www.opalexplorenature.org/species-quest-map)

Survey returns are high after only 10 days, with over 105,000 "bugs"recorded

You can download the survey information and forms at www.opalexplorenature.org/bugscount

White Paper Mentions Gardens! Promises Money !!! *(Shock Horror)*

The new Government White Paper "The Natural Choice: securing the value of nature" appeared earlier this month, and is the blueprint for the Coalition's developing environmental policy. Its major themes include: Protecting and improving the environment, Growing a green economy and Reconnecting people and nature. The white paper mentions "garden" (including "gardeners, gardening" etc.) no less than 40 times. In particular the environmental importance of gardens is flagged for:

- Physical and mental health
- Gardens as a component part of a wider network of wildlife sites, farmland, forestry and urban parks

- Provision of ecosystem services
- Role in green infrastructure
- Role in sustainable drainage
- Importance to people – 87% of homes have gardens
- Importance for biodiversity
- Opportunity to add benefits by coordinating gardening efforts across neighbourhoods
- Contribution gardeners make to neighbourhoods
- Localism Bill will help community organisations to identify and bid for important green space and gardens should they come up for sale.
- Community right to Reclaim Land for (eg) a community garden
- Role in wider sustainability

All this is encouraging, but we await evidence of genuine commitment to improvement and tangible support for organisations such as the Forum which seek to deliver on these benefits.

The white paper ***does*** however promise something important for the Forum. It explicitly commits to "*provide funding to support the Big Wildlife Garden scheme"* which *"will support a major national competition for Wildlife Garden of the Year, open to homes, schools and communities. It will also develop a definitive online guide for wildlife gardening, providing advice for gardeners of all levels and abilities."* This is great news for the RHS/Wildlife Trusts coalition that has taken on the project, in which the Forum is a junior partner. How extensive the support will be has yet to be clarified, but we will report back in a newsletter when we know.

Meanwhile, over in Brussels…..

On 3rd May the EU published its latest environmental paper "Our life insurance, our natural capital: an EU biodiversity strategy to 2020", which you can find at: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/biodiversity/comm2006/pdf/2020/1_EN_ACT_part1_v7%5B1%5D.pdf

From the Forum's point of view, the paper is disappointing, strong on forestry, farming and fisheries, and wider ecosystem services and the linking of Natura 2000 sites to the wider countryside, but very weak on urban biodiversity and sustainability. I could only find two areas of interest.

TARGET 2: maintain and restore ecosystems and their services:

> Action 6: Set priorities to restore and promote the use of green infrastructure
> 6b) The Commission will develop a Green Infrastructure Strategy by 2012 to promote the deployment of green infrastructure in the EU in **urban** and rural areas, including through incentives to encourage up-front investments in green infrastructure projects and the maintenance of ecosystem services, for example through better targeted use of EU funding streams and Public Private Partnerships.

TARGET 5: Combat invasive alien species (IAS)
By 2020, Invasive Alien Species and their pathways are identified and prioritised, priority species are controlled or eradicated, and pathways are managed to prevent the introduction and establishment of new IAS.

Action 16: Establish a dedicated instrument on Invasive Alien Species

16) The Commission will fill policy gaps in combating IAS by developing a dedicated legislative instrument by 2012.

From what I have seen on Exmoor, where great efforts in a protected landscape have failed to get on top of invasive Rhododendron and Japanese knotweed, target 5 will need a lot more than a "dedicated instrument" to achieve control or eradication by 2020. This target is however important in what it may eventually imply for the ability of gardeners to introduce new species which could prove invasive if they escape out of the garden.

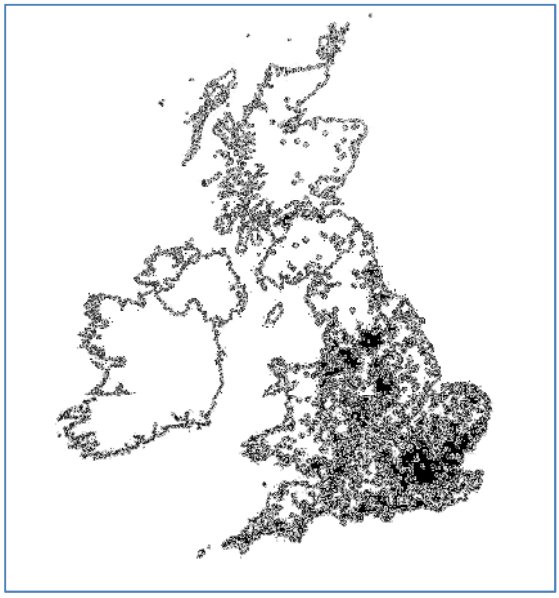
Perfect for pollinators

This new Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) project to create a flag or label for pollinator friendly plants was launched on 25th March at the Chelsea Flower Show. Forum Patron Sarah Raven approached the RHS with the innovative idea of flagging up for gardeners those plants most suitable for pollinators. The project fits in well with the RHS' Plants for Bugs experiment, although the current list (see www.rhs.org.uk/Gardening/Sustainable-gardening/pdfs/RHS_Polinators_PlantList_V1) does not incorporate results from the experiment which is still underway. The project has the support of the Horticultural Trades Association, and is raising interest in many big garden centres. The Forum's Helen Bostock was interviewed with Sarah Raven by Alan Titchmarsh on the BBC's Chelsea coverage, and the clip can be seen at http://vimeo.com/24388829

Amphibians and Reptiles in Gardens

The British Trust for Ornithology, working with Amphibian and Reptile Conservation and Froglife published in February the important report "An examination of reptile and amphibian populations in gardens, the factors influencing garden use and the role of a 'Citizen Science' approach for monitoring their populations within this habitat" (BTO Research Report 572) www.froglife.org/documents/BTO.pdf

Data were collected from 2009, by "Citizen Science" questionnaires mainly returned through the BTO Garden BirdWatch scheme, with a total of 3,806 responses, shown in the map below. Respondents provided data about their garden's characteristics and surroundings as well as the species records.



Geographical origin of the survey returns

As would be expected, common frogs were the most commonly recorded species in gardens (89%), with smooth newts in 45%, toads in 44%, slow-worms in 16% and grass snake in 13%.

Several interesting patterns emerged. In contrast to the BUGS studies working on small invertebrates, larger gardens generally supported more species of newts and reptiles. Likewise, permeable garden boundaries such as hedges were also linked with higher species occurences, while walls, buildings and fences were negative factors. The presence of garden ponds was a highly significant positive factor for all amphibians and the grass snake, and after the first year, pond age made little difference, but larger ponds were better than small ones. Goldfish in ponds negatively affected newt species, but were positively linked with toads.

The data showed that features such as veg plots, log piles, rubble piles and compost heaps were statistically positively correlated for all or most species. Surprisingly perhaps, there was no evidence that herbicide or pesticide use inhibited garden amphibians and reptiles, indeed use of herbicides correlated positively with most species, and slug pellet use was positively correlated with slow-worms.

The scale of the survey, with gardens in a great variety of settings, has allowed some comparison between urban and rural locations. Deciduous woodland and farmed grassland correlated significantly positive for all species, while most species were associated significantly with other rural landscape indicators such as mixed woodland, ploughed farmland, small water bodies and dry semi-natural grassland. By contrast, urban indicators such as roads, parks and continuous urban development were negative. It would seem that the more rural garden settings are better than the more urban, another aspect differing somewhat from the findings of previous invertebrate surveys.

The study was able to make some simple recommendations for gardeners to improve their plot for amphibians and reptiles:

A) Create habitat diversity:

- Allow part of the garden to become wild.
- Use hedges as barriers, in preference to fences or walls.

B) Create habitat features:

- Make a log pile.
- Make a compost heap (rather than a compost bin).

C) Dig a pond:

- Minimum size should be no less than 2m²
- Remove excess weed from ponds on an annual basis.

- Manage for wildlife.
- To encourage newt species, refrain from adding ornamental goldfish to a pond.

The report concludes that favourably managed gardens may be separated by unfavourable gardens, hazards such as roads, and artificial barriers like walls. Gardens have the potential to be good amphibian and reptile habitats, but that good management practice must extend beyond, as well as within the garden, for the potential to be fully realised.

This exemplary study proves the potential for soundly designed citizen science surveys on a large scale, and that the BTO Garden BirdWatch scheme could be an adequately sensitive mechanism for monitoring change in garden use by frogs, toads, grass snakes and slow-worms.

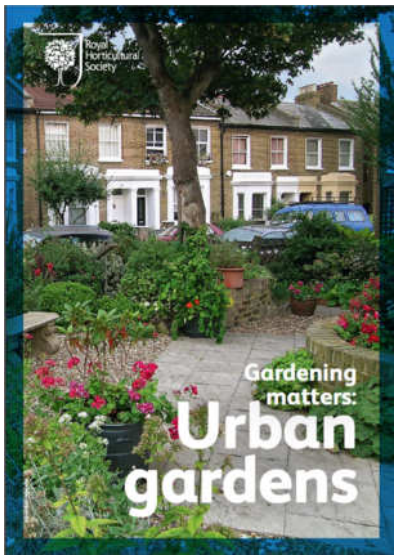
New Research Project - Urban Pollinators: ecology and conservation

Forum Member Mark Goddard is completing writing up his PhD at Leeds on landscape level garden biodiversity, while starting a new job on the Urban Pollinators project, which is led by Professor Jane Memmott of the University of Bristol in partnership with the Universities of Edinburgh, Leeds and Reading. What follows is the project description:

> Urban environments are growing across the UK, and perhaps surprisingly, flower rich oases in otherwise uninviting city habitats can support large numbers of pollinators. For example, 35% of British hoverfly species were found in a single Leicester garden and honeybees produce more honey in urban Birmingham than in the surrounding countryside. Pollinators supply a crucial ecological service, and finding ways to improve their lot is a major challenge.
>
> This project will answer three questions: where exactly is the pollinator biodiversity in the UK – urban habitats, farmland or nature reserves, where are the hot-spots of pollinator biodiversity in cities and what can we do to improve their diversity and abundance? To answer the first two questions the researchers will look at whole communities of bees, flies, butterflies and beetles that visit flowers, constructing food webs that describe the patterns of flower-insect interactions. To answer the third question they will add flower mixtures high in nectar and pollen to selected city habitats in Bristol, Edinburgh, Leeds and Reading and test whether this increases pollinator species richness and abundance.
>
> The research will provide the data that conservation practitioners working in urban habitats need to conserve pollinators. Seven practitioners are collaborators on the project and the research team will convey their results to the rest of the UK practitioner community via a fully funded practitioners' conference at the end of the project.

Gardening Matters

The RHS has released a new report “Gardening matters : Urban gardens” in which RHS scientist Tijana Blanusa has summarised a scientific review paper due to be published in Landscape and Urban Planning. You can find the report at: www.rhs.org.uk/Gardening/Sustainable-gardening/pdfs/RHS-urban-greening



It summarises the potential impact of the domestic garden on urban quality of life, and the ecosystem services they provide, under four main headings.

Gardens moderate urban temperature, providing summer cooling through shading and evapotranspiration, and reducing air conditioning energy costs. In the winter careful planting can provide shelter and some insulation, reducing wind penetration and heat loss.

Gardens should be permeable substrates, with soil and vegetation absorbing and delaying release of heavy rain, reducing flash flood risk. The trends of concrete and paving have been shown to increase flooding in Leeds.

Although domestic gardens can never replace species-rich semi-natural habitats, they are among Britain’s key nature reserves, and species including song thrush, frog and hedgehog are now more abundant in urban areas than in their former low-intensity farmland strongholds.

Finally, gardens are a “public health service” for our cities. Physical health benefits include cardiovascular fitness from the physical exercise involved in most gardening, but the less tangible stress-release and psychological benefits are becoming increasingly clear. These benefits in turn lead to reduced crime and alleviation of attention deficit disorder symptoms in children.

The report goes on to discuss the how the management of gardens affects quality of life, concentrating on carbon emissions and water use. Many standard garden activities such as use of chemicals, peat, plastic structures, barbecues, space heaters and lawnmowers are significant carbon emitters. On the other hand garden soils are good at trapping carbon, and garden trees do the same in their lifetime. Surprisingly there are no recent data on water use in gardens, but it has been estimated that by 2021, up to 9% of household water use will be in the garden. The moisture of gardens however allows their important role in combatting urban heating.

The report recommends three areas where more effort is needed:

- More emphasis on protecting and enhancing gardens and green space in cities.

- Scientific research on gardening practices enhancing, urban cooling, insulation and biodiversity.
- Education and training to safeguard and develop horticultural skills.

Finally, the report suggests ten tips for gardeners. These focus on sustainability and ecosystem services, while the Forum's own ten top tips are more biodiversity linked, so the two sets make a valuable ensemble.

Gardening Matters: Ten Tips for domestic gardeners

1. Plant a tree to provide shade and evapotranspiration, to help cool the air in summer. Fast growing, deciduous trees that require little maintenance also provide maximum benefits in terms of carbon capture.
2. Plant a climber or hedge to provide shade and insulation for your house.
3. Minimise/avoid paving over large areas of your garden, and consider replacing existing impermeable paved areas with permeable surfaces, including vegetation.
4. Plant a variety of plant types and species to support a range of wildlife, *eg* a mix of trees, shrubs and flowering plants.
5. Grow perennial plants over large areas. As these grow in the same place year after year they minimize annual soil disturbance, helping carbon capture.
6. Consider reducing the area of lawn in your garden, replacing it with other permanent planting.
7. When renewing garden equipment bear in mind its energy and carbon efficiency.
8. Make compost and mulch, covering garden soil with organic matter such as bark to prevent evaporation of water.
9. Collect rainwater and use 'grey water' (previously used for washing dishes, baths etc. and suitable for small scale, short-term use).
10. Think 'right plant, right place' to minimise water use and maximise energy saving and energy capture.

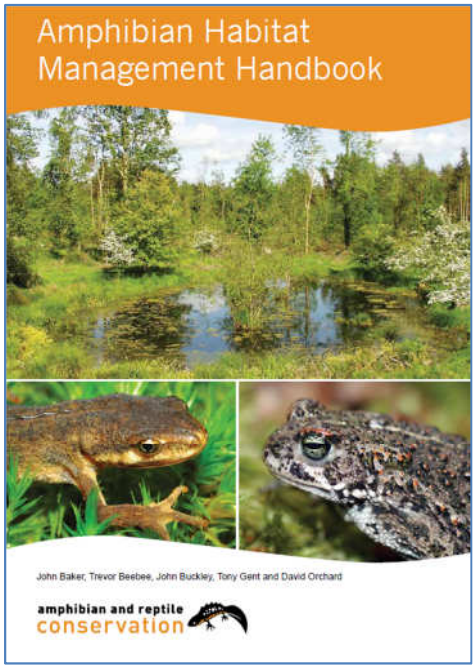
Froglife's Pond Booklet

Frog life have issued a new edition of their "Just add water" leaflet, describing how to make and manage a garden pond for wildlife. You can download it at: www.froglife.org/justaddwater/download.htm

The new booklet is attractive and very well illustrated. I have only two gripes. Although the text several time mentions the importance of shallow shelving areas, the illustrations consistently don't show them. The shallowest vegetated areas are where most life is found in ponds. While the text also mentions (minor) tap water problems with chlorine and chloramine, it doesn't note the real problems with nitrates and phosphates in tap water. Phosphates are routinely added at high levels to combat lead poisoning, and both act as nutrients to debase water quality and induce blanket weed and other algal growth people find unattractive.

ARC's Amphibian Habitat Management Handbook

This 70 page book was written by John Baker, Trevor Beebee, John Buckley, Tony Gent and David Orchard, and is an extremely authoritative volume of great value to professional conservationists and land managers. It reviews all the British species, Legislation and Policy, Pond creation and restoration, other pond species, diseases, translation and reintroduction. It also usefully reviews terrestrial habitat needs, landscape level ecology, and special habitats including gardens. There are also two special sections on the Natterjack. The book is very well illustrated and contains excellent further reading lists and references.



The garden advice is understandably quite limited, and notes that urban habitats as a whole are not naturally ideal for amphibians, although individual gardens can be extremely good. A more widespread management of gardens with amphibians in mind would be very desirable. Ponds should be gently sloping, well vegetated and without fish. The rest of the garden needs suitable management, ideally with long grass and dense vegetation. Compost heaps and log piles are desirable. You can download a copy from Amphibian and Reptile Conservation's website at:

http://www.arc-trust.org/downloads/FINALLORES-J.pdf

People's Trust for Endangered Species and the British Hedgehog Preservation Society join forces to launch *Hedgehog Street.*

The account here is taken from the project's press release for the project launch on 1st June.

Hedgehogs are instantly recognisable and much loved creatures. All the more distressing then that a new report *The State of Britain's' Hedgehogs* [2] provides definitive evidence that their numbers have declined by at least a quarter in the last 10 years – confirming their status as a conservation priority species. *Hedgehog Street* aims to empower whole communities, encouraged by volunteer Hedgehog Champions, to take small steps to improve their neighbourhood for hedgehogs in a bid to create a giant patchwork of hedgehog-friendly areas across the British Isles. You can find the campaign at www.hedgehogstreet.org

[2] www.britishhedgehogs.org.uk/SOBH2011lowres.pdf

As PTES Conservation Officer and campaign organiser Laura Bower explains:

> *"Twenty three million households have access to a garden in the UK covering around 433,000 hectares. Reaching a modest 0.1% of these could lead to the creation of a hedgehog refuge larger than the Sherwood Forest National Nature Reserve. We are looking for enthusiastic volunteers to become hedgehog champions in their local area. We will help them encourage their neighbours to take action for hedgehogs in their gardens or communal green spaces."*

Last autumn PTES and BHPS enlisted the help of 15 volunteers as local champions to trial *Hedgehog Street* around the country. Since then, these first recruits have been encouraging their friends and neighbours to undertake simple conservation tasks such as creating hedgehog houses, as well as keeping diaries, taking pictures and hosting events to see how best to spread the word and build community involvement. Having fine-tuned the logistics involved, the campaign is now set to be rolled out nationwide, but it needs plenty of people power if it is to truly make a difference.

Why are hedgehog numbers plummeting in the UK?
The reasons for the decline in UK hedgehog numbers are complex, but are thought to be associated with the loss of hedgerows and permanent grasslands; the intensification of agriculture and larger field sizes; while the use of pesticide reduces the amount of prey available in the countryside. Also badgers are a natural predator of hedgehogs and they will actively avoid sites where badgers are present in large numbers, an increasing problem because there are fewer areas for hedgehogs to take refuge in. Urban and suburban areas are becoming increasingly important for hedgehogs, but the move towards tidy, sterile gardens has also contributed to their demise. As Fay Vass, CEO of BHPS elaborates:

> *"Gardens have become far too tidy in recent years, paved over for parking, or enclosed within impenetrable fences and walls. Hedgehogs typically travel about a mile each night in order to gather food and search for a mate, so they need the freedom to move between different areas. Artificial barriers such as solid fences and walls prevent movement around their home range. Furthermore, loss of natural habitat means there is nowhere for them to forage or hibernate. Relatively simple actions will ensure success for the survival of these increasingly threatened creatures."*

In the early part of the last century, hedgehogs were abundant throughout Britain, with an estimated population as high as perhaps 30 million in the 1950s. By 1995 it was estimated to be about 1.5 million (1.1 million in England, 0.31 million in Scotland and 0.145 million in Wales). The new report shows that recent surveys in urban and rural areas continue to indicate falling numbers of hedgehogs.

How can people help?
The short answer is by taking part in *Hedgehog Street* and generating a groundswell of support amongst the neighbours in your street, estate or communal grounds. Information packs about how to take part are available from the website www.hedgehogstreet.org and these are crammed with ideas on making your own garden and neighbourhood more hedgehog-friendly.

The wider campaign is also underpinned by a programme of practical research projects, funded by PTES and BHPS over the next three years, to further scientific understanding about the causes for the decline in hedgehog numbers and most importantly what can be done to reverse the threat to this iconic species.

Wildlife Gardening Project North Wales Annual report 2010-11

Anna Williams has sent me this brief update from Wales. You can contact her at annawilliams@wildlifetrustswales.org

"The Snowdonia Wildlife Gardening project became the North Wales Wildlife Gardening project in 2010 when we won the Big Lottery's People's Millions vote and funding. Iwan Edwards joined the Loggerheads office and worked with volunteers helping 26 schools and 2 community groups create wildlife and allotment gardens in NE Wales.

Anna Williams and Anna Budesha covered NW Wales. We provided hands-on teacher training days for 40 schools in Conwy. The training was followed by site visits to all schools and 3 celebration days with pupils to share experiences. In total we worked with 64 schools in Conwy, Gwynedd and Anglesey. We gave advice, produced designs, helped construct 2 ponds, 5 willow tunnels/domes, raised beds, numerous bug hotels and planted 150m native hedge (900 trees). We also supported 10 community groups with various activities.

Anna Williams organised the Wildlife Garden Competition with a record 56 entries in 4 categories. Anna Budesha worked with volunteers running 10 Wildlife Garden Open Days (attended by 535 people) with activities for children. Treborth's new pond and wildlife garden (financed by our project) was officially opened. We provided a show garden at Llangollen, Rhuthun and Anglesey shows and wildlife garden activity days at Wrexham Food festival, Loggerheads, Toyota Eco Day, Pensychnant, Pentre Mawr Park, Abergele and Eirias Park in Colwyn Bay."

Anna also sent a link to a brilliant clip of her colleague Iwan Edwards' work in N E Wales creating a community garden in a very deprived estate in Wrexham. The 3 minute clip is on http://www.s4c.co.uk/clic/e_level2.shtml?programme_id=495144092 starting at 4.54 on the counter. It is in glorious Welsh, but you can bring up English subtitles by clicking on the "S" button

"Brown lawns are cool" Don't water established lawns

Tim Mudge, CEO of the Turfgrass Growers Association has sent the Forum their guidance notes for gardeners in times of drought. You can access this and other advice from www.turfgrass.co.uk – click on Knowledge Base.

"Our message to homeowners is not to worry if your lawn goes brown during the summer. Going brown is the natural survival mechanism of grass. When water is in short supply grass responds by shutting down. The brown colour shows that it has stopped growing until more favourable conditions return. Grass is

remarkably resilient, and as long as you follow a few basic rules, most lawns will recover completely when the rain finally arrives."

The Turfgrass Growers Association also offers the following management tips for drying lawns:

- Increase your mowing height to 35-40mm – this creates deeper roots and more shade and shelter from high temperatures
- Keep mower blades sharp. Blunt blades bruise the leaf causing the plant to lose more water
- Try not to concentrate wear in one place – move barbecues and toys like slides around
- There is no need to feed your grass as it won't be growing during hot weather
- Avoid blanket weedkillers as they may damage the grass – use a spot weedkiller if necessary
- Apply a light dressing of compost to help keep moisture in the soil and protect the grass from high temperatures
- Scarify your lawn once a year to remove matted and dead growth. If it is allowed to build up, it acts as a barrier to rainfall

Garden Design Courses at the Centre for Wildlife Gardening

There are still some places left for Saturday Garden Design School courses with wildlife in mind, run by the London Wildlife Trust's Centre for Wildlife Gardening in East Dulwich. The courses provide an in-depth look at garden design with a bias towards wildlife friendly features through classroom learning, discussion and hands-on work.

The courses will look at the principles of wildlife friendly gardening, garden assessment and survey, developing a design concept, drawing a design, deciding on garden features and materials and preparing an effective planting palate for all areas in your garden.

The courses are being held on Saturday 25th June, Saturday 23rd July and Saturday 20th August 2011, and run by Elaine Hughes, Landscape designer, London Wildlife Trust's Expert Gardener and RHS Gold Medal award winner for London Wildlife Trusts 'Life Cycle Garden' Hampton Court 2009. The cost is £40 and places are limited to 12. Advance payment secures a place!

Call 0207 252 9186 or email ehughes@wildlondon.org.uk for more information and to book a place. Alternatively you can send payment with details of your preferred course and your contact details to Elaine Hughes, Centre for Wildlife Gardening, 28 Marsden Road, London SE154EE. (Cheques payable to London Wildlife Trust)

PLANT-LORE ARCHIVE

Roy Vickery, who led walks around the Natural History Museum's Wildlife Garden at the Conference on June 8th, would be delighted to receive any memories or stories of traditional plant use Forum members may have. A selection of the information received will be added to his website www.plant-lore.com [*well worth a visit- Ed]* and thus be available to people who want to hold similar events.

Roy Vickery holding forth at the Forum Conference in the NHM Wildlife Garden

P-LA has developed from a 'Survey of Unlucky Flowers' which was conducted in the early 1980s. It covers all aspects of the folklore and uses of plants, and seeks information on traditional beliefs concerning plants, local plant names, herbal remedies, wild plants gathered for food, plants used in children's games, traditional times for sowing and harvesting crop plants, and plants used in customs or religious festivals, etc.

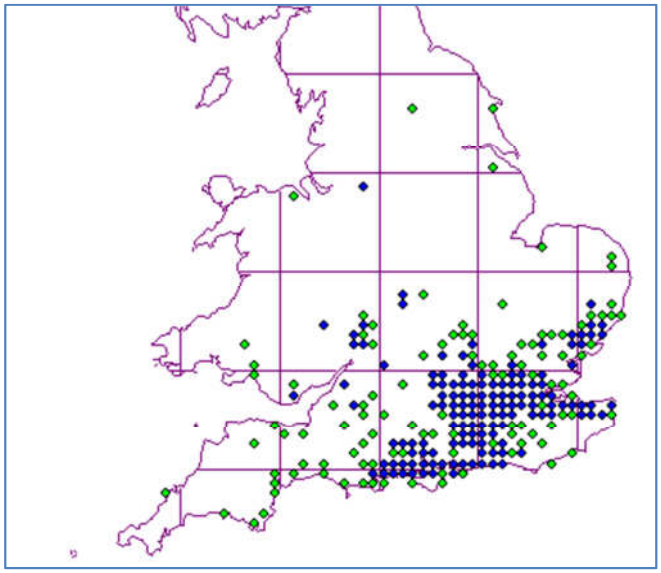
Any information, no matter how widespread and well-known it might be, will be gratefully received. Please send your memories to: Roy Vickery, 9 Terrapin Court, Terrapin Road, London, SW17 8QW, or vickery330@btinternet.com.

Third Great Stag hunt report available

Nida Al Fulaij of the People's Trust for Endangered Species has alerted us to the results of the third Great Stag Beetle survey, published this month.

The third Great Stag Hunt ran throughout 2006 and 2007. We received an astounding 4,300 records online and a further 3,000 were posted into us. 650 photographs were uploaded, which was really useful in confirming outlying populations.

The core range of the species appears to be stable and be broadly similar to that seen before. The pattern of distribution is broadly the same as that seen in 1998 and 2002, with hotspots in the Bournemouth, Ipswich and London areas.



Distribution map:
Green dots 1998/ 2002
Blue dots 2006/07

The populations in Cardiff and the Severn Valley are still present and there seem to be slightly more records for south Oxfordshire than there were previously. Of particular interest are the records, backed up by photos, of stag beetles in Bristol, Bath, Hereford and from Stockport in Cheshire. The records from Stockport came from an urban garden. The owner of the house reported that he had male and female beetles in his garden over a period of about 10 days at the end of May and start of June 2006. This would appear to be one of the most northerly confirmed records we have for this species in the UK, which is fantastic.

Away from the core population we are still seeing a scattering of records as we did in 2002 and 1998. As long as we continue to see some records in the general "fringe" it indicates the population distribution has not contracted. However if we started losing these fringe records then this might be the first indication of a decline, which does not appear to be the case.

You can access the full report at www.ptes.org/files/1446_gsh_final_report.pdf It includes much additional useful information on activity times, predators and other aspects.

Putting local wildlife on the map

Norfolk Wildlife Trust's award-winning wildlife surveying toolkit is now fully available online, meaning a wealth of invaluable recording resources can be accessed at the click of a mouse button.

It took three years' work and the input of 70 experts to create *Putting local wildlife on the map*, a comprehensive guide to wildlife surveying techniques aimed at individuals and community groups. The toolkit was refined through a series of trial surveys in three areas across Norfolk and is now available, in its entirety, on NWT's website.

The original hard copy of the toolkit was a partnership project with Norfolk Biodiversity Information Services (NBIS) and generously financed by the Heritage Lottery Fund. The toolkit received a Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) Norfolk Award on 11 November.

The online toolkit is available at www.norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk/surveys.aspx As Gemma Walker of the NWT said "With *Putting local wildlife on the map* now available online, we hope that people will get out and survey their local wildlife in 2011. In its online form the toolkit becomes an ever-changing resource which continually updates and improves as information is added by those using it"

The site contains survey methodologies and forms for surveying key wildlife groups including amphibians and reptiles, birds, fungi, invertebrates, mammals and plants. Habitat survey instructions include churchyards, coast, habitats, hedgerows, meadows, ponds and woodlands. Other sections provide general information, risk assessment and projects for young people. While there are no specific sections on gardens, there is a wealth of information on the website for people wishing to study their own and other peoples garden habitats and species.

Please send news of your organisation's reports, surveys and events for the newsletter to Steve Head at wlgf@stephenmhead.com