



## **Wildlife Gardening Forum Newsletter**

**April 2011**

### **Froglife's Memories of a Wild Life project**



With UK wildlife in serious decline, Froglife's unusual new project could create a valuable record of how differently people felt about wildlife a generation or more ago.

'My Wild Life' will be gathering childhood experiences of wildlife and wild play and bringing generations together through sharing these memories. The project starts soon in Peterborough and will be rolled-out to Glasgow and London next year. It aims to bring young and old together at reminiscence events to share their experiences of the outdoors. Volunteers will receive training in interview and filming techniques so that stories can be captured, creating an oral history record in the form of a DVD.

Froglife would like to hear your childhood memories of wildlife and playing outdoors. If you have a story you would like to share with us, would like to be involved in a reminiscence event, or would just like more information on the project, please email [jodie.coomber@froglife.org](mailto:jodie.coomber@froglife.org).

Find out more about Froglife's My Wild Life project at [www.froglife.org/mywildlife](http://www.froglife.org/mywildlife)

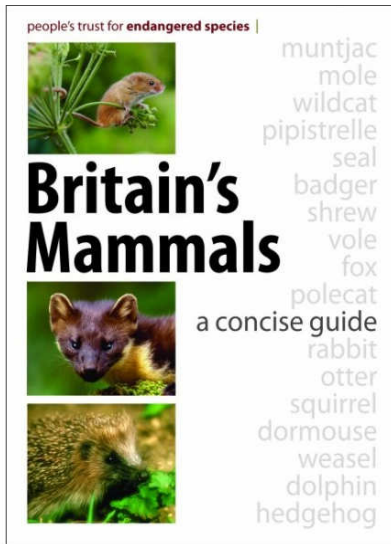
### **New reference book on British Mammals**

Hannah Stockwell of the Forum Member People's Trust for Endangered Species has kindly sent me a copy of "Britain's Mammals: a concise guide", written by David Wembridge and Clare Poland Bowen, and published by PTES and Whittet Books.

This is a *very* useful little book, which packs a great deal of information into its 90 pages. It isn't a massive academic tome with a chapter per species, and it certainly isn't a field guide concentrating only on identification. Each terrestrial mammal species (including all recently extinct and introduced species) has one full and densely packed page to itself, including a well chosen photograph and an up to date distribution map covering the whole British Isles. The main text gives a clear description with seasonal and sexual variations, a summary of behaviour, and an indication of the species' origins in the islands.

Additional paragraphs summarise vital statistics, diet, habitat, reproduction, predators, threats, conservation status and population size. To have all this to hand on one page is really useful, and must have required a lot of library research. Most readers will enjoy the "Did you know?" box at the end of each entry, which often describes

oddities of vocalisation or behaviour. For the mole, it refers to their unusually high haemoglobin levels to allow for poor air in their burrows. I would have been tempted to note that the mole was the only animal tasted by the great Victorian Zoologist Frank Buckland, which he considered utterly disgusting and unfit to eat.



My only – and very personal – niggle with the work is that it is “tough” on native status. The European hare is regarded as non-native (ie introduced) but it was of course common here in the last interglacial. If it didn’t get back again before the North Sea filled up, it must have been a close run thing. It is certainly a species which is completely appropriate for the British Isles, and to lump its status with Muntjac and Mink is not very helpful. I would rather it was treated as a re-introduced native. It is also a little quaint that the Orkney Vole *Microtus arvalis orcadensis* is described as non-native, because its ancestors probably hitched a ride with Neolithic colonisers. Its ancestral species *M. arvalis* was abundant in Britain in the late Pleistocene before being

clobbered by the last glaciation. But the Orkney Vole *evolved* on the Orkneys, and isn’t found anywhere else, so the expression non-native is downright bizarre.

I would also have liked the importance of the British populations of Chinese Water Deer to be flagged up a little more. It is listed as Vulnerable in the Chinese Red List, and the population in Britain is thought by some to exceed that of its native range. This is a case where a non-native “invader” deserves conservation protection here.

Minor gripes aside (such as the limited coverage of cetaceans) this is a very good book indeed, and I will certainly find myself referring to it a great deal. It is priced at £9.99 and available from [www.ptes.org/catalog.php?item=238&catid=Publications](http://www.ptes.org/catalog.php?item=238&catid=Publications)

## Scotland leads the way again: “Growing your own” report published

Catriona Morrison of Scottish National Heritage has sent me an important document “Grow Your Own: Working Group Report” collated by the Scottish Allotments and Gardens Society for the Scottish Government Food & Drink Directive. It is very encouraging that the project was led by NGOs and the public bodies are supportive but not leading. The full report, with a number of valuable summary papers appended is too long to include here, but is available at

[www.glasgowallotmentsforum.org.uk/Portals/0/Documents/Documents/GYOWG/Complete GYO report Feb 2011.pdf](http://www.glasgowallotmentsforum.org.uk/Portals/0/Documents/Documents/GYOWG/Complete%20GYO%20report%20Feb%202011.pdf)

I have taken the liberty of abridging and summarising the recommendations from the working group. While the emphasis throughout is on growing food, many of the ideas (especially the land banks and “meanwhile use” of development land) are of great interest from the urban conservation/wildlife gardening perspective.

## Recommendations from the working group

### Planning

- Hold a Conference involving planners jointly with the professional bodies to produce improved policies and guidance for GYO initiatives.
- Identify best practice food growing policies and procedures and encourage other local authorities to support allotments and community food growing projects and identify locations to meet community demand for growing spaces.
- Feed into consultation on Permitted Development Rights (due spring 2011).
- Planning policies should enable “meanwhile use” of land scheduled for development but delayed as allotment

### Legal

- Change laws and rules to specify a number of allotments per head of population and allow the Scottish Government to lease or sell land at less than market value for local GYO initiatives.



### Skills

- Local Authorities should consider training needs as part of their Allotment/Growing Space Strategy.
- Training should be certified, modular and progressive, with common standards, and resources supervised by a central organization.

### Community Land

- Establishment of a community land bank service for access to land for GYO initiatives and support for landowners and food growers.
- Government to examine land assets and determine what surplus land will be made available for local GYO initiatives using the Forestry

Commission Community Leasing Scheme as an example.

- Every local authority to produce a strategy for community growing

### Guidance

- “Allotments, A Scottish Plottolders Guide” covers the basic culture of allotment gardening and allotment law.  
[www.sags.org.uk/docs/ScotPlotGuide.pdf](http://www.sags.org.uk/docs/ScotPlotGuide.pdf)
- Production of landowners’ and land users’ guides
- Production of guidance on understanding soil contamination and how to grow on contaminated land.

## Funding

- Set up a “Soft Loan” scheme such as a Community Credit Fund for GYO initiatives and a register of funding streams
- Administrators of funds are trained and briefed on the needs and limitations of those applying for funds for GYO projects.

## New hope for Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS)

Pete Frost of CCW (and a Forum Trustee) has alerted us an important new Act that should facilitate conservation-beneficial SUDS schemes in England and Wales



*Augustenborg SUDS scheme – see below*

Wide adoption of SUDS in England and Wales has effectively been blocked by the Water Industry Act 1991 which required a drain to have a "proper outfall" before it could be connected up to the rest of the drainage network or taken on by the local drainage operator. Because grass swales and other SUDS techniques don't have any such outfall they could not be legally used without a huge amount of difficulty and legal advice - so most developers ignored them.

Scotland, the USA, Canada, the Scandinavian countries and just about all the other countries in the world had no such legislation so they all use SUDS extensively.

Schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 has brought England and Wales up to date and positively promotes SUDS. With luck this will mean an explosion in the number of flood control structures that look like wetlands, ponds, lakes and even public parks. See [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/29/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/29/contents)

Replacing a failed old-school piped storm water drainage system with a SUDS in Augustenborg, Sweden had some unexpected side effects - see box below

**Additional benefits from a SUDS Scheme “Ekostaden Augustenborg” in Sweden**

- Reconfiguration of public spaces between housing blocks has given residents opportunities to grow their own food in small allotments, and has created places for leisure and attractive areas for children to play.
- Biodiversity in the area has increased by 50%. The green roofs, predominantly the Botanical Roof Garden, have attracted birds and insects, and the open storm water system provides better environment for the local plants and wildlife. In addition, flowering perennials, native trees and fruit trees were planted, and bat and bird boxes were installed.
- The environmental impact of the area (measured as carbon emissions and waste generation) decreased by 20%.
- The participatory character of the project sparked interest in renewable energy and in sustainable transport among residents, after they heard about similar plans for other areas.
- Between 1998 and 2002 the following social changes have occurred:
  - o Turnover of tenancies decreased by 50%;
  - o Unemployment fell from 30% to 6% (to Malmö’s average);
  - o Participation in elections increased from 54% to 79%.
- As a direct result of the project, three new local companies have started: Watreco AB (set up by local resident and amateur water enthusiast), the Green Roof Institute, and the car pool established in 2000, which uses ethanol hybrid cars to further reduce environmental impacts

To summarise, the environmental improvements, enhancement of the built environment and empowerment of the local community have resulted in Augustenborg becoming an attractive, multicultural neighbourhood. Augustenborg is now seen in a positive light by most residents in Malmö and the Ekostaden project is considered to be one of the most far reaching sustainable urban regeneration initiatives in Sweden, and provides learning and inspiration for other areas.

<http://grabs-eu.org/membersArea/files/malmo.pdf>

As Pete Frost asks, in the 21st century why are we still wasting resources on single-function "grey" infrastructure like piped drainage when multifunctional green infrastructure like SUDS delivers so much more value for money?

## STEPPING STONES: Kent Wildlife Trust Gardening Awards.

Many thanks to Maureen Rainey of the Kent Wildlife Trust for sending this in, and my apologies for failing to include it in the last Newsletter.



2010 was another successful year for the Kent Wildlife Trust Gardening Awards. Of the 200 plus entries, about half were new to the scheme. All of the entrants were offered a visit by our team of Volunteer Wildlife Gardening Advisors who awarded bronze, silver and gold standards. In addition, the volunteers were asked to nominate particularly good examples for one of our top awards as follows:

No less than 8 separate award categories were available, each with its own award design



### BEST WILDLIFE BALCONY

Caron Blay moved into her flat close to Maidstone town centre in November 2009. There was no garden, just a one by two and a half metre bare concrete balcony. Caron immediately brought in pots and containers planted with buddleia, lavender and other wildlife friendly plants. She concentrates on drought tolerant plants to save water and even hangs buckets over the balcony railings to collect rainwater. She has

a friend with an allotment where she takes her compostable material and she uses the homemade compost in her containers. She has already been rewarded with visits from solitary bees, hoverflies and other insects. Tits and other birds regularly visit her feeders. Our Volunteer Advisor was absolutely delighted with Caron's determined enthusiasm which has created this green oasis.

### THE POTTED GARDEN WILDLIFE PROJECT AWARD

When the Potted Garden Nursery offered to sponsor an award for 2010, they wanted to highlight a project which would serve to encourage other people to garden for wildlife. What better than Mr Fray's allotment, which forms part of the Strood Hill

allotment complex. When our Volunteer Advisor visited in June, Mr Fray's plot was "alive with insects and vibrant colour from flowers interplanted with the vegetables". Mr Fray composts all of his waste and by careful management including companion planting and the provision of bird feeders and reptile refuges he has achieved an ecological balance without the need for destructive chemicals.

#### BEST SCHOOL WILDLIFE GARDEN

Hoath Primary School is second time winner of one of our top Awards. This year they have received the Best School Wildlife Garden Award sponsored by Kent Top Temps. Experienced Advisor, Bill Hickmott said that he had never before been to a school where there is so much enthusiasm for wildlife, gardening and other conservation issues. The garden runs around the perimeter of the playing fields. They have a pond, woodland area, bird hide and feeding stations, vegetable area with composting and flower borders. It was created 7 years ago by teacher Mrs Champion and some pupils. The current set of pupils continues the good work of their predecessors they keep excellent wildlife records, starting a new file each year.

At the award ceremony there were displays about the development of the garden going back to 2003 and presents for all of the adult helpers who had been involved with the project. One of Hoath's former pupils fourteen year old Ben Lawson has gone on to create his own wildlife area in his parents' garden. What a cheer he received when he collected his own Silver Award!

#### KENT GOD'S ACRE PROJECT<sup>1</sup> AWARD

The thoughtful and imaginative planning which has gone in to the refurbishment of St Mary's Church burial ground, Frittenden has resulted in a tranquil and peaceful haven for both wildlife and people alike. The team of volunteers well and truly deserve being awarded the Kent Gods Acre Project Award. The project has brought diverse members of the community together, including the youth club, who carried out a number of wildlife surveys which are displayed on an information board together with the work of local school children. Our Volunteer Advisor commented that this was "an outstanding example of how a churchyard can be successfully and attractively managed for wildlife".

#### BEST DRAGON GARDEN

Kent Reptile and Amphibian Group are delighted to announce that the winners of the 2010 Dragon Garden are Tylden and Stephanie Reed. The Reed's garden was a fantastic example of how sympathetic management can achieve really positive results for reptiles and amphibians. A carefully managed wild flower meadow provides a vegetation sward that teems with invertebrates and small mammals. These in turn provide prey for a small number of adder. The adder is an uncommon<sup>2</sup> garden visitor and it was refreshing to see habitat enhancement work that was specifically undertaken to encourage a species of such conservation concern to KRAG. Strategically positioned piles of dead wood and nettle beds were found to support good numbers of slugs and snails - favourite food of the garden's ample slow-worm population. A small pond supports breeding common frog and smooth newt. These amphibians attract yet another reptile species to the garden - the grass snake. A

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<sup>1</sup> What a great name for a churchyard award [Ed.]

<sup>2</sup> Very uncommon – don't panic! [Ed.]

detailed journal logs all observations and each of the visiting species is carefully photographed and catalogued. Tylden and Stephanie's great enthusiasm for their garden and the wildlife it supports was truly inspiring.

#### BEST PRIVATE WILDLIFE GARDEN

Ann Smith has been a Gold medal winner for a number of years. This year her garden has been awarded Best Private Garden. Wild and cultivated plants intermingle happily in Ann's well designed and attractive borders. She makes her own compost and uses it to ameliorate the effects of the heavy clay soil. Ann has a relaxed and sympathetic attitude towards management which is quite obviously beneficial for wildlife but at the same time maintains good appearance and is productive for fruit and veg. She keeps a record of flora & fauna which includes over 100 wild flowers found in her garden. Recently she has been the instigator of a new community wildlife project involving villagers of all ages. We look forward to seeing this as a contender for our community award in future years.

#### BEST COMMUNITY WILDLIFE GARDEN

Goes to the residents of Windsor Court Retirement Flats. The gardens at Windsor Court include a large pond which attracts a lot of local wildlife, as well as a duck house built by resident Stan Tefner, 78. There are also four benches where many of the residents enjoy sitting and relaxing in the warmer months. The garden is overlooked by a large conservatory where the less able bodied of their members are able to watch and record the wildlife visitors. One resident, 72 year-old Joan Hollyer, is often found helping out in the garden. Joan explains: "Everyone who can help comes along during planting season to make the gardens beautiful. Afterwards we have a barbeque as a reward for all our hard work." The residents raise funds for the garden with a gardening money box kept in the residents' Lounge. "Everyone puts their coppers in," says Joan.

#### BEST WILDLIFE GARDEN IN KENT



Peter and Jenny Webb became volunteer advisors for the first time this year after previously being Gold Medal winners. They couldn't believe their luck when they discovered two very enthusiastic wildlife gardeners: Lesley & John Hukins of Wittersham.

#### *The Hukins' bird hide*

Most people buy a house and then create the garden, but Lesley and John saw the potential of the two acre site as a wildlife haven before the house existed. They lived in a caravan on the site whilst they built their house of wood and worked in the garden every day. Wildlife is encouraged in every part of it. They have an organic vegetable plot where they grow as many flowers as vegetables to tempt the insects. There is no need for pesticides



because the large wild bird population they have encouraged keeps the aphids at bay.



*Here is a photo taken by Mr Hukins from his hide*

All waste is composted and they collect rainwater for watering and to top up the two ponds which they dug themselves. They keep records of wildlife sightings and have even built a bird hide. Our Advisors are often asked for advice as to how the various entrants can further improve their gardens for wildlife – Peter and Jenny could not think of anything the Hukins could do to make their garden better than it is now.

## **“Nestworks” Wildlife/Arts installation on Bankside**

**51% studios** is an architectural studio based in Kentish Town, London. The practice was established by Catherine du Toit and Peter Thomas in 1995. The studio is known for producing projects which make the ordinary extraordinary. Their current project “Nestworks for the Urban Birds of Bankside” is running until 14th July 2011 at the Bankside Urban Forest in SE1 London.

In spring courting birds across the UK begin inspecting potential nesting sites. Informed and inspired by ornithologist Peter Holden of the RSPB (who set up the Big Garden Birdwatch in 1979), **51% studios architecture** has planted scores of ‘assisted readymades’ across the Bankside Urban Forest to increase the variety of nesting options open to them.



51% discovered that the standard hollow block used to build some of London’s most celebrated architecture is made from concrete and recycled wood shavings, a material that when used in nestboxes is proven to fledge more young than any other. Synergistically the interior block cavities are text book size for house sparrows, radically in decline in the area.

*Blue Tit leaving Nestworks Block at the Union Street Urban Orchard. Photo: Peter Thomas*

Nestworks, commissioned by the Architecture Foundation as a permanent legacy for the London Festival of Architecture, is at once a public project and a people’s project. A website showing locations and inviting nesting activity to be posted by bird lovers across the area launched on Valentine’s Day.

Further information. <http://urbanbirds.net/>

## **'In A Different Light' DVD-ROM guide to Garden Moths. *Special Offer for Forum Members***

Julian and Fiona Wormald of Llandeilo in Carmarthenshire are making their unique DVD-ROM guide to Garden Moths available to Forum Members at cost price.

'In A Different Light' was produced in 2008 and contains literally hundreds of excellent photographs of moths (and butterflies) visiting their garden, and the hauntingly beautiful surroundings of Carmarthenshire. The photographs are arranged on a diary basis, and include many micro moths as well as the more familiar "macros". There are also useful images of food plants.



So you've found a moth  
and want to know  
what it is...

The Wormalds have covered their production costs with sales to date, but still have a number of copies left, and would love these extra copies to have good homes, for a nominal amount, rather than gather dust with them!

If you would like a copy for £3.00 including postage and packing please contact Julian at [gellyworms@gmail.com](mailto:gellyworms@gmail.com) , or write to:

Julian Wormald,  
Gelli Uchaf, Rhydcymerau,  
Llandeilo, Carmarthenshire  
SA19 7 PY

Please mention the Wildlife Gardening Forum when you make contact, so that you get the discounted rate

Julian also comments:

"I've also got a lot more practical observations on useful plants, over the relatively brief section on this in the DVD ROM. In particular I've found that many cliff top flowers like thrift and sea campion are brilliant for moths, butterflies and bumblebees, and will grow almost anywhere in poor /no soil, if it's sunny...one of my favourite ideas would be distributing seed of these flowers for urban gardeners with block paving, to grow some insect friendly plants in city environments. I think even a few would have a huge impact, judging by how insects home in on them with us."

## Kids in the Wild Garden



Thanks from Richard Minter<sup>3</sup> for alerting us to this new book by Elizabeth McCorquod published by Black Dog Publishing in February 2011. It has 96 pages and 257 colour and black and white illustrations. It may be of great interest to teachers and parents.

The publisher says:

“Following the huge success of *Kids in the Garden*, *Kids in the Wild Garden* is a fresh and playful book brimming with colourful ideas, experiments, projects, recipes and games for children of all ages.

*Kids in the Wild Garden* is the ideal resource for adults and children who want to learn more about their environment. Through sight, smell, touch and sound, children will discover ways to interact with nature. Including easy-to-follow introductions to biology, botany and ecology, alongside informative facts, helpful tips and instructions for caring for plants and creatures, and step-by-step guides with bright, child-friendly illustrations and photographs. It is a lively book, ideal for children, parents, teachers and educational leaders. *Kids in the Wild Garden* will encourage children to explore and care for the environment and enjoy imaginative play in the open air.”

The book, normally £9.95 is on offer to BANC members at £5.97, a 40% discount. I am hoping Forum members will get a similar discount and am contacting the publisher on your behalf. If you are interested, email Jessica Atkins at [jess@blackdogonline.com](mailto:jess@blackdogonline.com) mentioning the Forum and ask if you can qualify for the discount. The publishers will send it to your address with an invoice.

[I see it is already available on Amazon – Ed.]

## Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust Open Gardens Scheme



To celebrate their 50th anniversary, Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust are coordinating a programme of open gardens throughout Spring and Summer 2011. The aim of the open gardens programme is to raise awareness of the Trust, the importance of gardens as a resource for wildlife and to raise funds as part of their 50th anniversary appeal.

<sup>3</sup> Editor of ECOS Magazine for the British Association of Nature Conservationists. Excellent bodies both - see [www.banc.org.uk/Links/index.shtml](http://www.banc.org.uk/Links/index.shtml)

The open gardens programme will consist of several events hosted at large gardens throughout the counties. The key events will be quite large scale and will be run by HIWWT staff and volunteers. The additional open gardens which they are inviting you to be part of will be smaller scale, local fundraising events which will be provided with some support from HIWWT staff in terms of advertising, providing posters and fundraising tins.

Please come along and support the Trust by coming to an open garden event in your area. Click on the links below for further information about each of the events or download the full programme.

[http://www.hwt.org.uk/data/files/Wildline/110201\\_programme\\_poster\\_nr.pdf](http://www.hwt.org.uk/data/files/Wildline/110201_programme_poster_nr.pdf)

*Programmes of Open Gardens specifically chosen/volunteered as good examples of wildlife gardening practice would be a really excellent way of getting the message out at a local or regional level. If you would consider opening your garden at some stage on behalf of the Forum, please contact me at [wlgf@stephenmhead.com](mailto:wlgf@stephenmhead.com)*

## **Petition against scrapping our climate and countryside laws.**

The Forum isn't a political body, so it in the spirit of giving **all** administrations a good dig about supporting the Environment that I pass on details of this petition, kindly forwarded by Fern Alder.

Aware that almost all aspects of "red tape" regulation and planning control are under new scrutiny the petition commendably simply asks:

To David Cameron, Nick Clegg and the Coalition government,

### **Look after our countryside and our environment. Don't scrap the laws which protect them**

- Laws to protect British wildlife, tackle climate change and promote a clean environment aren't "red tape"
- Keep your promise to be the "greenest government ever": make protecting our environment and countryside a priority

Public disquiet about the floated "sell-off" of forest land certainly had an impact, and the campaign has so far 29,866 signatures towards its target of 40,000

You can sign the petition at:

<http://www.38degrees.org.uk/dont-scrap-environment-laws>

### ***And Finally. Mrs Tiggywinkle Poo Pong Parasite Probe***<sup>4</sup>

Forum Member Dr Toni Bunnell writes “In case anyone is interested in hedgehogs and ticks, and the relationship between them, I have had a paper published:

The Fecal Odor of Sick Hedgehogs (*Erinaceus europaeus*) Mediates Olfactory Attraction of the Tick *Ixodes hexagonus*. *Journal of Chemical Ecology*: **37** pp34-37 (2011). You can read the summary at [www.springerlink.com/content/av702g64464mjt77/](http://www.springerlink.com/content/av702g64464mjt77/)

Toni and her co-authors investigated whether health status of hedgehogs is correlated with parasitic tick burden, and whether chemical cues linked to the health of the hedgehog influence their attraction of the tick *Ixodes hexagonus*. A ten year ecological survey involving 226 wild hedgehogs showed healthy animals were much less likely to carry ticks than unhealthy ones.

Behavioural choice tests demonstrated that ticks preferred the faecal odour from sick hedgehogs to healthy ones. This study implies that it is the attraction to faecal odour that causes higher tick burdens in sick hedgehogs. Ticks would benefit from this preference by avoiding the stronger repulsion mechanisms of healthy hosts, and so it is possible that ticks potentially choose their host based on odour linked to the host's health status.

We know little about host-parasite interactions, and research like this could be very helpful in managing threats to declining garden species like the hedgehog.

***Please send all your news, observations, concerns and comments for the next Newsletter to Steve Head at [wlgf@stephenmhead.com](mailto:wlgf@stephenmhead.com)***

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<sup>4</sup> I'm sorry Toni, I just couldn't resist it