



Being kind to the environment is far from easy. So much conflicting advice from experts can put your head in a spin. For instance, do you favour organic produce because it's kinder to wildlife, but ignore the carbon-polluting 'food miles' it may have clocked up? It's a delicate balancing act. Often for those on a tight budget, going 'green' can also be too expensive an option. The expressions 'green guilt' and 'green fatigue' have recently been coined. The amount of environmental information being churned out on the web, TV and in newspapers is proliferating, but we still seem to be stuck with the same problems – the rainforest disappearing, deserts increasing, the planet warming up at an ever-increasing rate, etc. As individuals we often feel powerless, but if enough people exert pressure, changes can be made. Governments have their part to play but, in the meantime, we can do our bit; recycling (see p.6), composting, buying local produce where possible, saving household energy (see p.8 'Talks'), etc., all tiny gestures that at least show a willingness to acknowledge the problems we face. And, of course, your garden can be a life-saver for all kinds of wildlife. Find out about the flowers that will help wildlife in your garden on p.2, and look at the Earley 'Wildlife Sightings' on p.4. Email members were asked in particular about visiting collared doves and mistle thrushes, as they were the chosen Birds in Winter, p.6 and the response was excellent. Apologies for any missed.

EEG Changes

We've had a change of Chair. **Stuart Hine**, who chaired the group for nearly two years has bowed out through pressure of other commitments. We owe him many thanks for chairing the group during its growing pains, and for all the time he has given to it. He is, glad to say, still a member and, hopefully, will from time to time give us the benefit of his immense knowledge of invertebrates. We welcome to the Chair **Alan Broodbank**, who worked for many years in entomology and ecology, particularly with regard to insect populations of grasslands. Alan has lived in Earley for many years, has a keen interest in the environment generally, and has been an enthusiastic member of EEG since its inception.



Warburg Reserve

Get to know your Earley and beyond

Previous newsletters have covered some local walks in Earley, which come more under the category of 'strolls'. For those who occasionally want to go further afield, there are attractive wildlife sites which may introduce Earley members to new vistas. Most people know Dinton Pasture, but what about a long walk to Lavell's Lake? (See page 6)

One site worth making the effort to visit is BBOWT's Warburg Reserve at Bix, SU 720 878. Cross Henley Bridge, turn right at main traffic lights in Henley, keep straight ahead and at end of the Fair Mile take the right fork (Assendon and Stonor). A few yards past the Rainbow Inn on left (recommended) take second lane on left signed Bix. (Bit tricky here. You pass a converted barn on your left). After a mile or so, when you come to a grassy T junction, don't take the sign for Bix but turn right. Then it's a long, winding single lane, ending at the car park (small donation welcome) for the reserve. In the middle of lovely countryside, it has a pretty picnic area to have your hot coffee or something stronger – your choice. The walks can be as short or as long as you prefer. Dogs have to be kept on a short lead. It has a small interpretation centre, and, usefully, a visitor's WC. If you're not a member, it's worth joining BBOWT to support reserves like these. Trust Head Office, The Lodge, 1 Armstrong Road, Littlemore, Oxford, OX4 4XT or Berkshire Office Tel. 01628 829574 email: info@bbowt.org.uk www.bbowt.org.uk
An off-road mobility vehicle ('Tramper') will enable visitors with limited mobility to access parts of the reserve which may otherwise be hard to get to.

Fancy a Computer Taster? Phone your local library for details of inexpensive beginner sessions starting in the New Year.

GARDENING FOR WILDLIFE

Once Christmas is over and life settles down to a familiar pattern, some thoughts may turn to the coming year in the garden. Gardens are becoming ever more vital, as so many wildlife habitats are disappearing. Back gardens are being developed, and front gardens bricked over for car parking. We are urged to plant wildflowers to attract wildlife and, while those with large gardens may have the space to create small hay meadows and nettle patches (in a sunny spot, please), others with small gardens have to be much more selective to achieve a pleasing effect nearly all summer.

The following are some cultivated plants recommended by English Nature (now no longer in independent existence but part of Natural England, see p.4).

Cultivated Plants for borders

Grecian windflower *Anemone blanda*

Aubretia *Aubretia deltoidea*

California poppy *Eschscholtzia californica*

Candytuft

Christmas rose *Helleborus niger*

Cosmos *Cosmos bipinnatus*

Evening primrose *Oenothera biennis*

Fleabane *Erigeron spp.*

Forget-me-not *Myosotis spp.*

French marigold *Tagetes spp.*

Globe thistle *Echinops ritro*

Grape hyacinth *Muscari botryodes*

Hollyhock *Althaea rosea*

Honesty *Lunaria rediviva*

Ice plant *Sedum spectabile*

Lenten rose *Helleborus orientalis*

Tree mallow *Lavatera spp.*

Michaelmas daisy *Aster spp.*

Mint *Mentha rotundifolia*

Perennial cornflower *Centaurea montana*

Perennial sunflower *Helianthus decapetalus*

Phlox *Phlox paniculata*

Poached-egg plant *Limnanthes douglasii*

Red valerian *Centranthus ruber*

Snapdragon *Antirrhinum majus*

Spring crocus *Crocus chrysanthus and hybrids*

Sweet alyssum *Lobularia maritima*

Sweet bergamot *Monarda didyma*

Sweet William *Dianthus barbatus*

Tobacco plant *Nicotiana affinis*

Wallflower *Cheiranthus cheiri*

White arabis (single) *Arabis alpina*

Winter aconite *Eranthis hyemalis*

Yellow alyssum *Alyssum saxatile*



For a free booklet on wildlife gardening, which also gives a list of **wild flowers** suitable for gardens. phone Natural England Enquiries on 0845 600 3078. for tips, try www.buglife.org.uk/html/gardens/gardens-index.htm

Autumn Wildlife in an Earley Garden

Dennis, one of our members, attracted wildlife to his garden with late flowering shrubs, particularly Mexican Orange Blossom, which provided an attraction for butterflies (and assorted bumblebees). See below his notes on some late wildlife which visited his garden.

Butterflies and Moths

In late September a hummingbird hawk moth visited several times - seen most years.

29 October: 7 Red Admirals and 2 Painted Ladies.

Painted Ladies not seen again, but a few days later a Peacock sunned itself for several days.

13 November: The Red Admirals (in gradually diminishing numbers) have stayed with us, with one seen today (a windy 13 Nov).

Birds

Have not seen kites or sparrowhawks from the garden for more than a month.

What better seeds to buy than Sutton Seeds, once a local company in Earley.

Address: Suttons Seeds, Woodview Road, Paignton, Devon, TQ4 7NG.

www.suttons-seeds.co.uk

Buy the new book published by the Earley Local History Group to mark the bicentenary of the firm, which was based in Reading and Earley until the 1970s. *Suttons Seeds*, price £14.99, is available from Earley Town Council offices. Radstock Lane. (A good Christmas present!)

A Look at Old Earley

Much of Earley may have disappeared under housing, but its past is there if you care to look. Some of the road names give a clue, like **Cutbush Lane** and **Gipsy Lane**, parts of which still give an impression of old Earley. One end of Cutbush Lane is in Shinfield, and one explanation of the name is an interesting one. The 1951 *The Berkshire Book* by Berks Fed of WI (originally pub. 1939, revised 1951) stated on p.195 :-

'SHINFIELD

*...In the map of the Lord of the Manor dated 1756 the present front garden of **Shinfield Grange** is marked as common land, with the name "**Bush Green**". Only one tree is marked on the green, and that is in the position of the very old whitethorn tree which still stands to the left of the drive gate. This confirms the importance of the thorn bush, which seems to have given a name to Bush Green and later to have been the origin of the name **Cut Bush Lane**, which had hitherto been **Gipsy Lane**.*

The story of the origin of the name "Cut Bush" is that the tenant of the small homestead farm behind Bush Green trained the thorn bush in the form of the Prince of Wales feathers. The tree, which appears to be well over 200 years old, still retains this shape. A further story is that the fame of this tree was increased when a jealous neighbour spoilt it by cutting it out of shape, and so providing the village with a notorious quarrel.

The small house which forms the central portion of the Grange bears the date 1665 and was occupied by the tenant of the Homestead. On the opposite side of the road is Brown's Green, with a pond formed by a gravel pit. Among the gypsies who lived there were famous barefist prize-fighters, and after these contests had been made illegal, members of the London sporting world arranged for fights between London prize-fighters to take place at Brown's Green, a large number of people driving down from London for the contests...'

Two hundred years does seem a long life for a hawthorn but often, with history, there is a grain of truth in these tales. Does anyone know any more on the origin of Cutbush Lane? (In Berkshire dialect a thorn-tree is a thamin-tree)

Here's a couple of Berkshire sayings to throw into your conversation -

'Tis waaste ov soap to lather an ass'

'Tis a wunnerful thing to be a schollerd'

JOIN OUR EARLEY TREE HUNT



DO YOU LIVE IN CONYGREE CLOSE? You might like to know



Conygre means rabbit-warren, and in a map of 1756 a field north of Cutbush Lane was called Coney Gree

We announced the purpose of this survey in our last newsletter. Amongst our 'natural' assets in Earley are numbers of old trees, many of them oaks, some of which are 300 years plus, 'reminders' of the rural past. The UK holds about 80% of ancient trees in Europe, and we need to cherish and nurture them. We anguish over old buildings being pulled down, but often show little regard for trees, which are sometimes considerably older.

A survey of trees in the whole of the Wokingham District is being implemented, and is being organised by the *British Trust for Conservation Volunteers*. EEG has taken on the job of surveying Earley, and some members have already begun recording our veteran trees, trees with a girth of 3 metres or more.

If you can help, please contact us. A small area will be designated, which has to be walked over, and any trees of 3m or up, measured at a height of 1.5m. These are then marked on a map and details recorded on a field sheet. Training will be given.

Data will be archived by the *Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre*, and also given to the *Woodland Trust*. The BCTV will eventually put maps of the areas covered on their website, showing the location of the trees. Ring 0118 986 8260 or 0118 962 0004 for information.

Join us today, and do something for the environment, as well as enjoying some fresh air and exercise

DADDY-LONG-LEGS

not the musical, the crane fly, or the harvestman, but the spider now living in your home. (Also known as the Cobweb, Cellar or Vibrating Spider.)



Courtesy of P.R. Harvey

Noticed the increased population of a thin, very long-legged spider in your home, and perhaps a decrease in those large ones that have us jumping on the sofa when they scuttle across the carpet? Once a cellar dweller, in the last ten years or so *Pholcus phalangioides* has taken up residence in our houses, originally in the south, but now present in the Midlands and moving north. Its increasing presence is probably due more to central heating than global warming. If you don't like spiders, you might take a more sympathetic view if you know something about this one. It hangs upside down in a rather untidy web, usually in corners of walls or the ceiling. On its menu are some of our least favourite minibeast 'lodgers', such as the big hairy house spider (possibly welcomed by some, but source of arachnophobia in many of us), mosquitoes and other small flying insects. It regulates the number of these, and so rids us of our unwanted guests; woodlice also seem to be a favourite meal.

It catches prey, often much bigger creatures than itself, by whipping out silk threads and lassoing them. It then bundles up the unfortunate victim, finally sinking in its very poisonous fangs. Be thankful these are too weak to penetrate human flesh! As usual, the male plays a supporting role to the diva females, and has to beat a hasty retreat after mating, if he doesn't want to become the main meal on the menu. It's rather ironic that, although this spider may desert its own web if the web becomes dirty and spin a new one, it often ends up in the vacuum cleaner of an even bigger house-proud predator!

NEWS FROM BEYOND EARLEY

Sad, bad news: In spite of the emphasis in the media on the environment, and the take-up by politicians of 'green' credentials, the sad, bad news is that the new agency, **Natural England**, which from October 1st replaced several other bodies including **English Nature**, has less money in the pot than the previous combined budgets. That means less money for environmental projects, and the cuts may last several years.

Good news: The beautiful, iridescent **blue banded demoiselle damselfly**, which can be seen flying over local waters, is doing well. It's made a good recovery from its decline in the 1960s and 1970s and is now heading out from its southern base to north, east and south west England

EARLEY WILDLIFE SIGHTINGS – A terrific response. Thanks to everyone who replied to my email. Some arrived just a bit too late to include.

Duncan: It's been very quiet on the bird front in our garden so far, which might be owing to the continued summer and the abundance of food from natural resources. It has been a good year for tree masts, especially oaks. Apparently, **wood pigeons** can eat up to 50 acorns a day! We have a regular pair of **collared doves** in the garden, we also had a **goldfinch** on niger seed a few weeks back. A solitary **goldfinch** is unusual as they normally flock at this time of year.

Roy (Corner of Meadow Rd and Roman Way): **Blue tits** have been occupying the box in my garden for a week now, we see one coming and going in the mornings but don't know whether it is one of a pair, neither do I know whether it is normal for them to shelter in this way as the weather gets colder. This summer has seen **collared doves** daily in the garden but lately not so often. One **spotted woodpecker** has visited this week.

Suzanne: Sightings this week in back garden of a flock of **long-tailed tits**, **blue tits**, **great tits**, **robin**, **dunnocks**, **wood pigeons**, **maggies**, **crows**. Last few months, all the above plus **green woodpecker** at front of house and **red kite**. We had a pair of **collared doves** last

year but they have not been back recently. Our **blackbirds** seem to have died or gone elsewhere since the summer when we had a family nest in the garden. No sightings of male or female. Rather sad.

Michael: Have seen **collared doves** in garden here from time to time, plus the occasional **kite** overhead - no doubt seen by many! Have also recently seen **hedge sparrow** at bird table. At this moment there is not a single bird in the garden, despite cat being indoors, up against the radiator!

Brian and Jean: Last Friday (3rd Nov) we sat in our living-room and watched a **sparrowhawk** devour a **collared dove** in our garden. After which, I don't seem to have seen many of them around. Rough area, Earley. p.s. The collared dove had flown into our patio window, prior to being eaten. Whether it had done this accidentally, and as a result the sparrowhawk had caught it while confused, or whether the sparrowhawk had driven it into the window, I can't say. All we heard was the bump, and sometime later watched the feast.

Ray and Mary: Things very quiet in our garden in recent times. We have maintained a small amount of feed, in order to maintain some continuity, but it has been very slow uptake. **Robins**, **blue tits** and **great tits** seem to have been in place, but few **blackbirds**, no **wood pigeons**,

no **finches**, no **dunnocks**, and only the occasional **collared dove**. (As for **mistle thrushes**, that would be a cause for excitement!) There has been far too much food in the countryside proper. We have seen one **hedgehog** (in late September) and, mercifully, only the odd **grey squirrel**.

Butterflies dwindled to zero in the garden by the end of August, though plenty still about elsewhere. Rather a good season to be going to look elsewhere, in fact!

Judy: We regularly have **collared doves** visit my feeding tray in the back garden of 3 Loxwood, Earley. Not seen any **thrushes** though.

Kathryn: We have a pair of **collared doves** in our garden in Beech Lane and saw a **kingfisher** sitting on the green netting over the reed beds at the Lake early Nov.

Sue R.: We have **collared doves** in our garden alas no **mistle thrushes**. A vast number of **house sparrows** possibly about 30 or so, it is difficult to count them. They thrive in a huge mass of jasmine, ivy, honeysuckle, clematis montana and kerria which is all muddled up together and they fly in and out. It is like an enormous hedge which is ideal for them. Plus wild bird food essential for their survival, particularly now, and water for drinking and washing!

Trisha: We have four to six **collared doves** visiting our bird table most days - they queue up on the garage roof for their 'turn'. In summer we have also had our bird of prey circling lazily overhead, which looks very much like a **red kite**. It circled over our garden as recently as Sunday (6th Nov) but am still trying to photograph it. In the spring we had the unusual sight of a **pheasant** (female) outside the back door. I think the poor thing was lost and very frightened. Last I saw of it, it hopped up on the fence and over next door. No **thrushes** of any kind but **crows** (or **rooks** as there's more than a couple) seem to have returned to the trees in Raggleswood Close.

Elaine: What I have noticed is the lack of **blackbirds** around my garden. I am hoping they haven't caught some virus or parasite. It would be interesting to know if anyone else has noticed anything about the blackbirds.

Richard: We have **collared doves** in the garden (Cutbush Close) every day. I didn't realise they were unusual!

Sue G.: I regularly get **collared doves** in my garden, in Lower Earley. No **thrushes** so far. I have seen **mistle thrushes** in the University grounds, and once on the grass verges on Wokingham Rd near Earley station.

Kate: Two **collared doves** visit my garden every day. Last month a **woodpecker** came one afternoon and pecked away at my apple tree trunk. It took me by surprise. It was unmistakable with its bright red underside. I was really pleased to see it. We live in Springdale, so I suppose we are quite near to the lake.

Sheila: In first week in Nov astonished to see a female **pheasant** crossing Hartsbourne Road. Was it seeking sanctuary in wildlife-friendly Earley, or a spectre from the pheasantry that used to be on the south of Wokingham Rd. between Three Tuns and Station?

Jack: We have a pair of **collared doves** visiting regularly, and sometimes a second pair (Whitegates Lane).

Jean: We live on Raggleswood Close and at this moment as I look over the close (with five mature oak trees)

I see 11 **pigeons** & 13 **magpies** (this year's young) feeding on the grass and 3 resident **crows** calling from the top of one of the oak trees. We do have a number of young **collared doves** who come regularly to feed beneath the feeding **goldfinches** in my garden. The usual number of **blackbirds** has reduced this autumn but I certainly have a pair feeding in the garden. I have had 4/5 **starlings** return to feed this week. No **thrushes** of any sort, unfortunately.

Alan: We have seen **collared doves** (27/10 and 05/11) in our garden, but no **mistle thrushes**. 10 **long-tailed tits** seen by our neighbour at one time. **Sparrowhawk** seen over the lake last week. Also **Egyptian geese** have returned to the lake, albeit briefly. Wife **Elaine**: the odd **mandarin duck** in the last couple of weeks has returned to lake. Also, we have had two or three **jays** in the garden in recent weeks.

Mark: I have plenty of **collared doves** every day, though these are now outnumbered by **feral pigeons**. I haven't seen a **mistle thrush** in the garden since we moved here in '97 but have seen and heard them singing in Fairview Avenue. My garden birdwatching highlights of 2006 have included our first **brambling** last winter and a possible female **yellow warbler** (very rare American vagrant) seen on 20th April with binoculars. It had the same size and structure as a chiffchaff but was a uniform bright lemon yellow colour. I found a good match with photos of female YWs on the internet. Other notable local birding events include regular kills by **sparrowhawks** in our garden and my brother in Delamere Road has up to 14 **reed buntings** in his garden and bird table every winter. NB I have put most of these sightings on www.berksbirds.co.uk.

Paul: No unusual sightings recently, but I regularly get **collared doves** in the garden. They seem to be able to manage to land on my feeders and I often have up to 6 of them in a tree and on the feeders.

Charles: No **mistle thrushes**; **collared doves**, yes, plenty of them in the summer, up to 18 around the feeders, of which the sparrowhawks took full advantage. This month only 4 to 6 doves appear each day to use the feeders with the sparrows.

David: Greetings, in Egremont Drive we are getting regular visits from the following: 6 **sparrows**, always together and always 6, 1 **chaffinch** with white legs and feet, 1 **robin**, 6 blue tits, 4/6 **great tits**. Today in particular, we have had two visits from a **mistle thrush**, not sure if it was the same one each time and mid-afternoon we had 2 **collared doves**. The doves have been rather scarce lately.

Pat: We live at Andrews Road (near Maiden Erleigh Lake). There are quite a few **collared doves** in the woods around the lake and I noticed 2 in our garden during the week.

From another Pat, returning from holiday: Even before we went away we only had a lonely **blackbird** chomping on the berries of our **Pyracantha** and a few **blue tits** and a family of about 8-10 **long-tailed tits** one weekend. In

Lanzarote where we have just been, they are over-run with **collared doves** - regularly we could see between 15-20 from our terrace just across the way.

Angie: With regard to your mail, we live in Porter Close and have seen a pair of **collared doves** in our garden for the last few years. However, we have noticed that they

seem to have disappeared over the last few months. Will let you know if we see them again.

Chris: A pair of **collared doves** but no **mistle thrushes**. Plenty of **goldfinches**.

Ruth: I was lucky enough to see a pair of **kingfishers** on the north side of Maiden Erlegh Lake one afternoon in September.

THEY'RE NOT RARE ANYMORE: Romeo and Juliet, our resident **COLLARED DOVES**, sit and wait patiently every morning on the bird table for breakfast. They don't take flight when approached by John, who has a one-sided conversation with them. In the members' responses above, they're present in virtually every Earley garden. Although common now, it's strange to think that in 1954 there were none in Britain, and they created great excitement amongst 'twitchers' when they arrived in Norfolk in 1955. Now, just 50 years later, there are about 200,000 pairs. Happily, they haven't ousted other native birds, fitting nicely into a vacant niche, exploiting our homes and gardens, and enjoying the year-round cover of conifers. Lacking 'celebrity' birds in our small garden, we're very happy to see them.

They pair for life and are enthusiastic breeders; they vigorously see off bigger birds from their nest. They may produce four sets of twins a year, explaining their extraordinary success. After taking advantage of the seed on offer in our gardens, they, like other pigeons, regurgitate a 'pigeon milk' to feed their young.

Their only problem in our garden is the wood pigeon, an overweight bully that ousts them from the bird table - a bird that Dominic Couzen writes, with a tinge of envy, 'is devoted to loafing, preening and sex.' Sheila

Birds in Winter



(Source: Dominic Couzens "Secret Lives of Garden Birds" and Dairy Diary "Favourite Garden Birds")

With Christmas approaching, we may be thinking of where to get our holly. With this in mind, I asked email members if they have seen any **MISTLE THRUSHES**. Apparently not, but perhaps you have a better chance if you have a holly bush full of berries. The mistle thrush will take up residence near one and guard it from all comers, with a strong 'dog in a manger' attitude, (perhaps 'dog' should be 'bird'). To the annoyance of all those smaller birds drooling at the thought of luscious holly berries, the m.thrush will not eat them, foraging around on the ground, saving the berries for a possible famine later in winter. So perhaps we can thank this bird for still having berries on the bush at Christmas.

A LONG WALK TO LAVELL'S LAKE

Liz Wild recently took a long walk of between six and seven miles from Maiden Erlegh Reserve to Lavell's Lake, The full walk can be seen, with a list of birds, on the EEG Website. Picking it up from the traffic lights crossing by the George Inn, cross Wokingham Road, turn right and immediately after crossing Loddon Bridge turn left onto the footpath between the Loddon and the Showcase cinema.

Keep on this path next to the Loddon, passing under the rail (watch out for traffic) and A329M bridges. Cross the Loddon via a wooden bridge, turn right to follow the other side of the Loddon, passing beneath the Bader Way. Re-cross the Loddon at the next wooden bridge, turn left. At this point choose one of two paths running parallel, one next to the Loddon and the other between the Loddon and White Swan Lake (gravelled). Pass the reed bed at the north end of White Swan Lake and continue on gravel path to the end of Heron's Water (on the right). At the T-junction turn right. After about 40 paces take a left turn onto path to Sandford Lake bird hide. After visiting the hide retrace your steps to the junction but this time go straight on, keeping Sandford Lake on your right. Turn right onto Sandford Lane and almost immediately turn left into Lavell's Lake. Follow the path straight ahead and where the path forks take the right-hand one that leads to Teal hide. On leaving Teal hide turn left at the first opportunity and follow the grass path leading onto a bark path beneath some power lines (path runs parallel with Sandford Lane). The path changes back to grass and where it meets asphalt turn left to Tern hide (look at the bird feeders through the fence on the left next to the hide).

After leaving Tern hide turn right at the junction for a short distance and about ten metres beyond a bench turn left (before reaching the bark path). Cross Sandford Lane and go back into Dinton Pastures. At this point there are two alternatives for the return walk. 1) Turn right and follow the footpath round Sandford Lake to meet with the path you arrived on and retrace your steps back to Maiden Erlegh. 2) Turn left (longer route) until the footpath diverges, turn left over a small wooden bridge and immediately right onto the gravel path and follow the edge of Black Swan Lake. When a T-junction is met turn right and follow this path, keeping Tufty's Corner on the left and White Swan Lake on the right until you reach the wooden bridge crossed earlier. Follow the same route back to start, but in reverse. For those who do not mind the noise of the A329M and a lot of mud there is a shorter route back via Tufty's Corner. Turn left on leaving Tufty's Corner and follow the Loddon on the opposite side from the outward walk. This route eventually meets up with the other (first) wooden bridge that crosses the Loddon.

EVER WONDERED WHAT HAPPENS TO YOUR RECYCLED PLASTIC?

Read what Anne Booth found out

PLASTIC RECYCLING

However hard we try it seems impossible to avoid buying things in plastic containers. In Wokingham District we are at least able to put our plastic bottles (without their tops) in the recycling black boxes. I asked the Council's recycling and waste manager Peter Baveystock for more information on why only bottles are collected.

"The cans/plastic bottles and paper/card have to be kept separate in the two boxes because they go into a split two-compartment vehicle.

The cans/plastic bottles are taken to Grundon at Beenham where the steel and aluminium cans are taken out by magnet and eddy currents respectively. The plastic bottles are sorted by hand into the two types which are PET (fizzy drinks bottles) and HDPE (bleach, washing-up liquid, softener bottles and plastic milk containers).

The plastic is sent on to various plants and recycled as follows:

- PET - is cleaned, flaked and turned into polyester fibre and made into fleece materials.
- HDPE - is also cleaned and flaked and is moulded into things like dustbins, compost bins, buckets and the black recycling boxes."

(The melting point of plastic - around 180C - is too low to ensure that all bacteria, moulds, viruses, etc.

<http://www.sita.co.uk/what-we-do/recycling/recycling-process/plastic>

<http://www.recoup.org/business/default.asp>. You may like to write to Wokingham District Council and request they do more to increase in particular the types of plastic they recycle; other authorities do more. (Glass bottles take up to 1 million years to biodegrade, and plastic bottles never do. Source: The Independent)

are destroyed. This means that the plastic can't be re-used for food containers.)

"The reason we only include PET and HDPE is that all plastics have to be separated back to their individual polymers as they can't be recycled mixed. We have markets for PET and HDPE, but none for yoghurt pots, which are polypropylen, or margarine tubs, which are polystyrene. Neither can we accept Tetrapak which is virtually indestructible. Recycling is very important to the Council and the environment, but only if it is separated!"

You may wonder why, as many other sorts of containers are made from PET & HDPE, these are not allowed in your black box. The problem arises in the sorting process as there is no failsafe method of separating, for example, a fruit container made from PET and a seemingly identical one made from a different plastic. Bottles are nearly always made from either PET or HDPE and the ones that aren't are easily distinguishable.

The Council say that it tries to ensure that the plastic is treated in processing plants in the UK, but it is likely that some of the plastic bottles we put in our boxes end up in the Far East and Asia for turning into various consumer goods which are then shipped back to Europe.

It's good to know that some of our household waste plastic is recycled but, as with everything else, the best solution would be to 'Reduce' or 'Re-use' before resorting to Recycling

GREEN JARGON

MICROGENERATED ENERGY IN THE HOME: Microgeneration refers to various systems that generate electricity and/or heat on a small-scale from a low carbon source. The following are some of the systems suitable for domestic dwellings. Solar thermal provides hot water for a domestic property. The sun's warmth falls on a collector on the roof, which heats cold water and returns it to the hot water tank. Although it only provides hot water when sunny, that energy is stored in the hot water tank for future use. Some Earley houses have this system installed. Photovoltaics: PV systems convert sunlight into electricity using silicon cells. Again, this works best in bright sun. PV cells generate DC power which requires fairly expensive equipment to convert it to 240volts AC electricity for home use. Micro wind: wind turbines use the wind to move their blades. This movement is converted to electricity using a generator. All these systems need suitable locations to work properly. The expense of installation involves a very long pay-back time, but it is mooted that micro-generation can add value to your property if and when you sell it and, if you can afford it, serves the environment well by not adding to carbon pollution. <http://www.dti.gov.uk/energy/sources/sustainable/microgeneration/index.html>

For an explanatory leaflet, which also details other systems, write to Thames Valley Energy, Liberty House, The Enterprise Centre, New Greenham Park, Newbury Berks RG19 6HS, phone 01635 817 420, or email info@tvenergy.org

LOCAL FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Earley Environmental Group AGM followed by a talk by Jan Haseler on **"THE BUTTERFLIES OF THE HARRIS GARDEN"** (Whiteknights Park) on **Wednesday, 31 January 2007** at 7.30 p.m. at the Interpretation Centre, off Instow Road (See attachment on AGM).

"BUILD YOUR OWN BIRD BOX" on **Sat Feb 17th between 1 and 4 pm** at the Interpretation Centre, Instow Road, Earley. A hands-on session to make your own bird box. **Children welcome.** Cost £5, all proceeds to the RSPB. Please phone Anne Booth on 0118 986 8260 or e-mail booths@clara.net to book a place.

"RESCUE": **Date to be announced, but probably March 10/11.** Next year Earley will again be joining in with RESCUE (Rivers and Environmental Spaces Clean Up Event). This is a huge event, which each year sees thousands of people helping to clean up the Kennet Valley from Hungerford to Reading. EEG will again be running events in Earley, so please join in and do something for Earley, making it a more beautiful place to live. Watch for updates.

DRAGONFLIES In **April** we will arrange a talk on dragonflies, to be announced.

Also details in our next newsletter of **NATURE RAMBLES** for **May, June and July**, and of course the **GREEN FAIR** as usual in **August**.

Bits and Pieces

TALKS: We had two excellent speakers in the last quarter. **Jill Butler of the Woodland Trust** gave us a very motivational and interesting talk on **'Ancient Trees in the Landscape'**, which was of relevance to those who have offered their help in the Veteran Tree Project (see p.3). The attendance was disappointing, considering the number of old trees in Earley.

Gabriel Berry from the **Thames Valley Energy Agency** gave a very enlightening talk on different systems of renewable energy, for homes and in the community, a very complex business. TVE's general Web page is www.tvenergy.org/grants.htm, but he highly recommends www.lowcarbonbuildings.org.uk, where you can read about the technologies and sizes covered, as well as the accredited products and installers. This also gives help on applying for grants and eligibility criteria, such as owning the building and doing the home energy survey. The best place to start on the site is to click 'About the grant programme' on the left-hand menu, then select 'Stream 1 - householder frequently asked questions' (direct link: www.lowcarbonbuildings.org.uk/about/hfaqs).

DO YOU WANT TO REDUCE YOUR CARBON FOOTPRINT? On Monday 11 December at 7.30 at Wokingham Council Offices, Shute End, there is to be a carbon rationing public workshop. All welcome. For information ring 0118 977 0046, email robincsc@hotmail.com, website www.carbonrationing.org.uk.

Why not give a Christmas present to the Earley Environmental Group? We want to keep membership free, but do have minor outgoings: for instance, expenses to speakers, hiring venues etc. If members gave a small amount, this would be a good kick-start for the forthcoming year. Any donations should be made out to Earley Environmental Group and sent to Liz Wild, EEG Treasurer, 50 Kenton Road, Earley. With thanks.

UNWANTED CDS: Want to know what to do with those **freebie CDs** attached to magazines etc. you don't want? Collect and send them to The Laundry, CD Recycling, Lauren Dean, London Recycling 4d North Crescent, Cody Rd, London E164TG. www.thelaundry.biz. You pay postage.

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

Any **comments or contributions to the newsletter** to:

sheila.crowson@ntlworld.com or 2 Reeds Avenue, Earley, RG6 5SR.

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.

SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL SHOPS

The True Food Co-op, Silverdale Centre

There is now a True Food Co-op operating in Earley. Their mission 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 on the second & fourth Fridays in the month, 5pm to 8.15pm. They have a website giving dates 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 enquiries@petfayre-reading.co.uk.

Our grateful thanks to the ORACLE Software Corporation, Thames Valley Park, for reproducing our newsletter. Oracle is one of several big global companies at TVP, which is a pleasantly landscaped business park on the site of the old Earley Power Station. There is public access to the attractive waterfront, near the Water Sports Centre, and you can take a riverside walk to Sonning, visiting a very interesting wildlife reserve on the way.

