



How to start this except to say that Christmas is almost upon us, but perhaps more important is whether participants in the December UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen can agree on how to tackle the climate change issue. It's asking a lot for such a disparate group of countries to agree on anything, it's not looking good, but hope springs eternal! We wish



them success.

This issue highlights the problems facing two wild creatures. If, like me, many years ago you remember watching, entranced, dolphins performing at the Windsor Safari Park you may now have cause to reflect on what this did for the dolphins (p.4). Another animal with different problems is the fox and you may be able to help here (p.4).

Not forgetting birds, you've probably seen local birds harassing our celebrity red kites; we have a two-parter by Ray Reedman on how birds use attack as the best form of defence. Let's not leave out the insect world - plan what to plant in the spring to attract lots of butterflies.

Reading about Earley's past is popular with members. You may have noticed the small building, originally the Porter Institute, a working men's club, in front of Earley St. Peter's school, Church Road. Opened in 1896 and paid for by wealthy Thomas Porter, who had lived in Earley for 35 years, it might surprise you to know how Mr. Porter came by his wealth. Page 5 has a completely different building to compare. David Smith remembers Christmases past and how we shopped before supermarkets and the internet. Finally, don't forget the EEG Christmas social is open to all on Monday 14th December (see p.8).

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Get to know your Earley

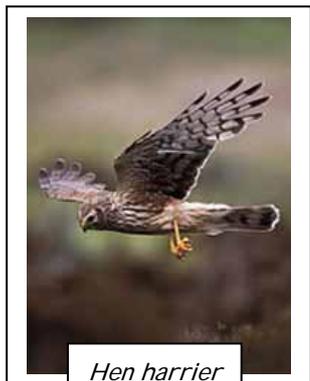
THE PORTER INSTITUTE (See also p.5)

The Porter Institute, Church Road, Earley
In 1895 a meeting was called to consider the erection of a club room and formation of a working men's club in Earley. Mr. Thomas Porter offered to pay the entire cost of the erection of the working men's club, which was later known as the Porter Institute. He had for 35 years resided at Erleigh Park House, Whiteknights Park, and was in possession of large estates in the West Indies. He had generously contributed towards the Earley St. Peter's church restoration fund, and to the cost of enlarging St. Peter's School. He originally gave a cheque for the Institute of £650 but it eventually cost him £924.15s.9d. and was formally opened on July 21st 1896, Mr. Porter laying the foundation stone. He died in less than a year, and was buried in the churchyard where other members of his family lie. It was eventually bought by Berkshire County Council for £8,750 and the Men's Club had to quit the Institute, but not before complaining it flouted the wishes of its benefactor. It is now part of Earley St. Peter's School.



When the best form of defence is attack (Part 1)

In September, two contributors to the newsletter referred to red kites being harassed in mid-air by members of the crow family. Carrion crows and jackdaws are particularly good at pestering birds of prey in the air.



Hen harrier

Birdwatchers learn to use such behaviour as a tool, since it can reveal something special: as well as the commoner species of raptor, I have located both hen harrier and merlin over Lavell's Lake in that way and would otherwise have missed both. But such behaviour can appear to be a very risky business, especially for the very much smaller jackdaw. In reality, the claws of the red kite, which lives more on carrion than by killing, are relatively harmless to a larger bird, so there is little danger to the agile attackers. But I have seen corvids take on other raptor species which are far better armed and far more skilled at killing. The attackers are not just foolhardy – crows are among the most intelligent of birds – they just have confidence in their own aerobic skills.

So what is behind this dangerous bravado? It is mainly that crows, like most other birds, are innately hostile towards raptors, which may threaten them or their offspring. The crows have no great chance of harming the raptor, but by harassing them they aim to move them on into safer air-space. In the New Forest, I once saw a territorial goshawk challenge a passing buzzard in exactly the same way. Mind you, it would be a foolish crow indeed which attempted to chase off a peregrine: this large falcon is a specialist in aerial capture and its "cruising for a bruising" flight usually creates significant panic and evasive action among anything smaller than a goose. Even the tiny merlin, a veritable bullet of a bird, can take prey larger than itself.

The sparrowhawk, too, might kill a jackdaw, but only if it can mount a surprise attack under tree cover: up in the open sky it has no chance, so it will simply rise higher and higher, using its energy-saving "flap-flap-glide" technique to gain altitudes which over-stretch the range and stamina of the attacker. On the other hand I witnessed a total stalemate between a carrion crow and a kestrel, which lasted well over half an hour, while the raptor jinked and ducked with ease, and always within his chosen zone of activity. I am tempted at these times to feel that there is more than a bit of mischief and even humour in such persistent behaviour by the crows: several of the family seem to fly for the sheer joy of it and seem to relish such aerial jousting. It is a truism in nature that "play" activity trains in survival fitness. "Joyful" flight is particularly true of the jackdaw, chough and raven, the last of which is not averse to harassing eagles. *(Continued in next newsletter)*

GREEN HEROES: MARIANNE NORTH (1830-1890)

Never heard of her? You will if you know Kew Gardens. Marianne was in the tradition of the Victorian women travellers who ignored the restraints imposed on them. She was a talented artist who travelled the world. After her beloved father died she began in 1871 an incredible series of journeys at the age of 40, recording the world's flora. Her itinerary included *America, Canada, Jamaica, Brazil, Tenerife, Japan, Singapore, Sarawak, Java, Sri Lanka, India, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, the Seychelles and Chile*. This would be daunting today but one can only marvel at her ability to face the privations and dangers of such a project. She painted some plants new to science and frequently depicted the environment in which plants were found, enlightening the public in an age when photography was just beginning. She was acquainted with many of the famous experts of the day, including Sir Joseph Hooker, Director of Kew, and she met Charles Darwin.

Her legacy is over 800 paintings housed in a gallery built in Kew Gardens at her own expense. Apart from the pleasure the paintings give the viewer, what stands out overall is the astonishing dedication and achievement of the journeys by a woman alone in Victorian times, who enabled ordinary people to see exotic plants for the first time. *Abe Books website have used copies on sale at reasonable prices of Marianne North's "A Vision of Eden", recounting her experiences. The Gallery has been restored and re-opened in October. Check out the paintings on <http://www.kew.org/mng/index.html>*

MEMORIES OF MOVING TO EARLEY TO ESCAPE THE WAR IN LONDON: David as a young child moved to Earley to stay with relatives at No. 17 Salcombe Drive after the first bombs dropped on London.

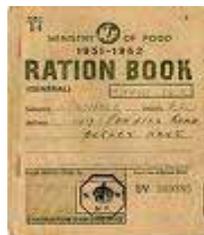
Journey back to a time before supermarkets and internet shopping

VISITING TRADES PEOPLE

I was entertained by watching the tradesmen call at the houses in the street. The Co-op milkman, the Co-op baker and Mr. Mason, the greengrocer had horses and carts. The Co-op vehicles were bright red but Mr. Mason had an open cart with a green tarpaulin roof which kept the boxes of fruit and vegetables and his scales dry. Mr. Lee, the fishmonger, had a small van and the Co-op butcher merited a large enclosed one. Nelson Ball, the coal merchant, drove a flatbed lorry. Sometimes a knife grinder on a tricycle would appear and sharpen knives in the street on a grinding wheel that rotated while he pedalled at a standstill. The Betterwear man on foot would knock on the door wearing a two foot square tray at waist level held up by a wide cotton strap round his neck. There was a neat array of household cleaning goods laid out on the tray.

CELEBRATIONS IN WARTIME

Auntie Elsie was an excellent cook and made good use of the provisions we were able to get with our ration books. It must have been difficult for mums when providing eats for birthday parties. Jam sandwiches and a cake were luxuries. Mrs. Pickford once attempted lemon jelly with gelatine crystals



and lemonade. In Robin Bowie's opinion, it tasted like Vaseline. He was promptly sent home. The rest of us enjoyed the usual party games of Donkeys Tail, Postman's Knock, Musical Chairs and Pass the Parcel. The enterprising Mrs Pickford managed to

get a film projector and showed us a film about a deep sea diver whose air pipe was severed by an enormous shark. I couldn't sleep for weeks after seeing that.

Christmases were exciting with cards made at school and decorations made from coloured paper and a flour and water paste. We had an artificial tree and decorations that we had brought from London. I gratefully received any presents even if they were only cardboard soldiers for my fort. I mostly received money. Uncle Bob always gave us a turkey from the ones given to him by farmers. I came across one of them once in a darkened room. It had no feathers and I screamed with fright as I thought that I had found a body.

**Individuals can make a difference
A late recognition**

Two of our residents from Roman Way have certainly made a difference in Earley. Peter and Sheila Lumbar have for some time been cleaning up the litter and dog mess in Meadow Park, for the very worthy reason that they like to maintain a nice-looking local amenity for their neighbours and others. I imagine what Earley would look like if everyone took the same view! Not only do they tend Meadow Park but clear rubbish in Culver Lane allotments, keep the area litter-free and, well beyond the call of duty, Sheila sometimes cleans the toilets. Peter also picks up litter after football matches in Laurel Park - all this on a voluntary basis. They were very worthy recipients of the *The Service to Earley Awards for 2009* from Andrew Bradley, the outgoing mayor of Earley Town Council.



**CREATE YOUR OWN BUTTERFLY GARDEN
AND WATCH BUTTERFLIES FLUTTER BY**

Plan for spring now. Garden plants which may attract and feed butterflies and caterpillars. Plant in sun.
polyanthus aubretia wallflower thrift honesty
sweet rocket valerian bugle mignonette hebe
sweet william lavender catmint phlox hyssop
buddleia verbena echium cornflower heliotrope
goldenrod aster Michaelmas daisy sedum
spectabile french marigold holly ivy nasturtium
privet

Wild flowers greatly favoured by butterflies but some you may not wish to encourage!

primrose pussy willow dandelion campion
garlic mustard clover hawkweed lucerne
moon daisy hemp agrimony thistle bramble
marjoram field scabious knapweed wild grasses
stinging nettle

A visit to the wildflower meadow and butterfly garden near Instow Road in the Maiden Erlegh Nature Reserve will reward you on a sunny day in spring and summer. For lots of information go to:

<http://upperthames-butterflies.org.uk>



We love the idea of swimming with dolphins, but do they like swimming with us?

Many people understandably get pleasure from their close contact with dolphins, creatures that often feature in ancient myths and paintings. Arion, cast into the sea by pirates was rescued by a dolphin, attracted by his singing a song of praise to Apollo, and was subsequently delivered safely to land, but our current desire for close contact with dolphins can spell trouble for them.

Massacre: The fishermen of Taiji, south east Japan, have an uglier way of attracting dolphins. After the summer tourists depart, who come to witness the wonderful spectacle of the dolphins on their annual migration route along the coast, a flotilla of boats launch, the fishermen surround a pod of dolphins and bang on lengths of pipe attached to the boats to confuse the creatures. They round them up and leave them overnight in a cove to calm down, with nets strung to prevent escape. Representatives from dolphinariums then wade in and pick the best. The rest are then butchered by having their throats cut or a pike driven through their neck, turning the water red with blood. Taiji is the biggest supplier of live dolphins to seaquariums, dolphinariums and "swim with dolphin" programmes in the world. Although some dolphin attractions may breed their own, they need to buy new ones to widen the gene pool. One dolphin can fetch about £96,000. Add to this the involvement of the 'yakusa', the Japanese mafia, and you have a dangerous mix.

Efforts to save dolphins: Someone determined to save dolphins from this fate is Richard O'Barry, who was responsible in part for the popularity of the dolphin experience by training dolphins to play the part of Flipper. He bonded closely with the Flipper dolphins and it was the death of one of these that brought about his conversion to try to save them. At great risk to their lives a team of film-makers followed O'Barry to Taiji to film this annual slaughter. The resultant film is "The Cove".

The UK contributes to the misery

The UK contributes its bit to the misery suffered by dolphins. Our trawling nets frequently trap dolphins as by-catch, and they die either from thrashing about trying to free themselves, or drown. Fishermen don't set out to catch dolphins, and methods are being investigated to try to prevent this problem.

We no longer expect to see wild animals performing in circuses, so is it acceptable to see dolphins performing unnatural tricks in a dolphinarium? They are, after all, wild animals. As to swimming with them, the choice is yours to think about.

(Source of information: The Independent on Sunday, New Review, 11 Oct)

For information on O'Barry's campaign, www.dolphinproject.org. For further info:

www.dolphincareuk.org, www.wdcs.org

Footnote to the Green myth: a variation of the story claims that Arion reached land in Corinth carried by the hero dolphin, but that he forgot to push the dolphin back into the sea and it perished. Perhaps a moral somewhere there?

Some dolphin facts

- Free in the oceans, they swim 40 to 100 miles a day**
- Some divers from dive boats abuse the dolphins trust, harassing them and trying to swim on their backs**
- Chemicals in the oceans can cause health problems and blindness**
- A dolphin may only live to about 5 years in captivity compared to over 25 in the wild**
- Dolphins are voluntary breathers: they have to remember to come to the surface to take in air, it's not automatic, therefore they have to surface about every 10 minutes**



How you can help an animal in distress

A member has been visited by a **FOX** that looks to have **sarcoptic mange**. This is a nasty disease caused by the sarcoptic mite. If you suspect a visiting fox has this, contact the National Fox Welfare Society www.nfws.org.uk, tel: 01933 411966 where you can obtain free mange treatment, administered in jam or honey sandwiches. However, foxes do moult between April and October and a new coat should be visible with no bald patches. Visit the EEG website Mammals page, www.earleyenvironmentalgroup.co.uk, "Your Streetwise Earley Fox".

A house of the future?

A visit to a local "passive house"

Two EEG members were among a group, including Reading FoE and Reading Energy Pioneers, who recently visited an ultra-low energy house on the outskirts of Woodley. The house looks ordinary from the outside; the only hint of something unusual going on being the solar hot water panels on the roof. Behind the unassuming façade, however, the house is definitely an example of how to make "heat capture and storage" sexy!

Tony, the owner and builder, has designed and insulated the building to a very high standard to minimise thermal bridging and maximise air tightness. Walls contain 30cm of insulation (continuous across the boundary between wall and roof), with 40cm of insulation in the loft; windows are triple-glazed with shutters and four seals - the difference in noise when they were opened was really noticeable, and they had served a dual purpose by foiling a burglary attempt! Beneath the house is the most interesting feature: an "interseasonal thermal store" - basically, excess heat received during the summer months via the solar panels is pumped to a depth of 6.5m below the ground, where it can help keep the house warm in the winter.

Tony estimates that this "store" may reach as high a temperature as 20 degrees, at which point heat retention becomes a problem, rather than heat loss! Using the ground to retain heat in this way has been used on a larger scale at Drake Landing in Canada, where solar energy stored as underground heat is shared across the whole neighbourhood during the winter months (<http://www.dlsc.ca>).



Tony's house is otherwise heated by passive solar (light through windows), the bodies of the people living inside, and heat generated from electrical appliances and lighting. A computerised control system with temperature sensors inside and below ground is used to monitor and modify the system over time. Tony hopes the data collected and experience gained will help inform future "passive house" design in the UK. Other features of the house include: a heat exchanger where cold, fresh incoming air is warmed by stale outgoing air at a modifiable rate; solar water heating; and rain water recycling. Despite including luxuries such as fingerprint entry, integrated vacuum system, walk-in wardrobe, and full-size snooker table in the basement (where windows are angled to maximise light), the house cost about £250,000 to build including labour, showing that despite the size and high-spec, efficient ultra-low energy design needn't cost the Earth. **Ian Henderson**

For more information about the house, or to contact Tony, visit: <http://www.tonyshouse.info>.

A Look at Old Earley

THOMAS PORTER OF EARLEY

Thomas Porter III was the benefactor who paid for the Porter Institute in Church Road (see page 1). His family's wealth was gained through ownership of plantations in Guiana. His grandfather, Thomas I, owned cotton plantations on the east coast of Demerara in the 1780s. His Demerara plantations bore the names 'Hope', 'Paradise', 'Adventure' and 'Enmore' - Enmore after his home parish in Somerset. He returned to England towards the end of the 18th century and purchased Rockbeare Court, near Exeter, where he settled and where his family grew up. In 1804 he was High Sheriff of Devon. Thomas Porter II, after the emancipation of slaves in British Guiana in 1834, was paid compensation by the British Government for 385 slaves on his plantation Paradise to the tune of £19,295 8 0d (a very considerable amount of money in those days), just over half as much as his brother Henry was paid for his plantation Enmore, also in British Guiana. He gave his estates [now growing sugar] to Thomas III in 1845.

Thomas Porter III [1813-97] was born in Rockbeare. He was baptised on 28 Nov 1813, educated at Eton and matriculated at Oriel College, Oxford, in June 1831. He served briefly in the Cavalry before going to Demerara in the 1830s when slavery was in the process of being

abolished. He spent 25 years running sugar estates there. He married Charlotte Wolseley, born Antigua, whose family also had strong connections with Guiana. Thomas, commonly referred to as Tom Porter, was a man of standing in Demerara. He was the Acting Stipendiary Magistrate when 79 of the 83 ex-slave shareholders appeared to sign the Articles of the Agreement for the local government of Victoria Village in 1845. In 1848 he was a local Director of the Demerara Railway Co Ltd: the original section of the railway ran through Enmore. In the 1840s and 50s he was a member of the Court of Policy of British Guiana ['parliament']. In 1855 he was a member when urgent debate took place about the threat from the sea due to lack of proper maintenance of the sea wall.

After various sales and purchases of estates, Tom and Charlotte left British Guiana around 1860. By the end of the 1880s he no longer had an interest in Demerara. In 1897 he left an estate with a net value of £252,145 [equivalent to £19,665,000 in 2006]. Charlotte died in 1906.

(Inf. from researcher John Platt)

(Footnote. Fantastic news! Norway and Guyana have come to an agreement that Norway will invest £150m to preserve Guyana's rainforest, which is larger than England. Britain initially considered it but dallied too long.)

NEWS FROM BEYOND EARLEY

ARE YOU CONSUMING THE TROPICAL RAINFOREST WHEN YOU EAT YOUR DIGESTIVE BISCUIT? Check the food label and see if it has 'vegetable oil'. This may well be palm oil found in thousands of our food products, the supply of which mostly comes from South-east Asia where countries are clearing thousands of acres of forest to make way for plantations. It is found in, amongst many things, chocolate, biscuits, cereals, soap, shampoo and also biofuel. Sainsbury has helped to found the Roundtable of Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) and last year the first certified sustainable palm oil arrived and Sainsbury's immediately started using it in fish fingers. They are planning to use it in many of their own products. Marks & Spencer's and Cadbury's are also making progress towards sourcing sustainable palm oil.

A CREATURE THE STUFF OF NIGHTMARES! *Fish-eating worm invades aquarium*: As staff in a Hull aquarium were about to transfer coral to another display case a 3 ft worm shot out from underneath, hatched unbeknown to staff. A large predatory polychaete worm, it can sometimes grow to 9ft. *Eunice aphroditois* sounds attractive until you find that it's also called the Bobbit worm, so christened by the female's unfortunate habit of biting off vital parts of the male and feeding it to its young. It can inflict a sting causing permanent numbness in humans, so they say. The Hull staff have given it the chummy name of *Barry*. Forget "I love all nature". If you search Google images, you'll find this worm very hard to love. Take my advice, *don't go there!* (Footnote: *Aphrodite was the goddess of love, beauty and raw sexuality. The nature of her birth relates well to the worm.*) To learn more about our own benign earthworms and the Earthworm Society of Britain go to <http://www.opalexplornature.org/?q=EarthwormSociety>.

EARLEY NEWS and WILDLIFE SIGHTINGS

Some very personal AUTUMN garden notes from Val, who gets so much joy from nature

Where has the summer gone? Still have lovely sunshine. The foxes are well, and look very healthy, they have their peanuts put out in five places on the grass, but very good and do not fight over them, they sit there like little dogs. The Cornish seagull, call it that, looks like the type you see at the sea that pounces on the ice cream you are just going to enjoy, put some food on roof for her, lovely looking bird with those large feet and huge beak all golden yellow; the other day such a strange noise on the roof, and there she was with baby, demanding more food. The kite is back again, only one so far; away feeding on the ploughing fields so I heard.

The bird table has been a mass of blue tits and great tits so all the nesting boxes had been used, also quite a lot of finches.

The old crow has been busy raising young ones as well, so keep her fed as she makes such a noise and frightens the heron away from my pond, or wakes me up to do it.

Seem to have a lot of baby fish this year; if they go on like this they will be like sardines. My old koi died, he used to munch the little ones up.

I think the wood pigeon must be the greediest bird around. They just dive into the food and stay there till it's all gone. I did notice that they peck each other if another one arrives, but if the stock dove or ring dove arrives they do not take any notice.

Putting the kitchen light on, saw a huge spider making her web outside, she was very busy. Now I wondered if she went on doing it in the dark, but when the light went out she stopped. When you kill a fly, always put it in the nearest spider's web and see them dash out and wrap it up.

When people complain the foxes rip the bin bags, all you have to do is to spray TCP or something over them or, if they dig holes, do the same.

Have just looked out of the window, not one bird to be seen. There must be lots of little eyes looking out of the bushes, as a sparrowhawk has just landed on the archway by the bird feeders, so will take a brave little feathered one to come out, or hunger pains. What a lovely looking bird the hawk is, but such little, thin legs.

Oct. 10th: Invasion of ladybirds in the sunshine onto my own room and into crevices. Wonder if that is going to be their home for the winter. Also butterflies making most of the sun.

Squirrel not seen so much as next door has a large walnut tree so plenty of food. Hope everyone had a lovely summer and enjoyed the gorgeous colours of autumn. **Val**

AUTUMN WATCH, Earley from Edwin

What was it? About the size of a rook, but ... no, it was dark brown, not black. Besides, it didn't have a long beak! There it was, a large brown bird patrolling the newly flattened earth on the 'Green Fair' field. It had a hunched, solid look about it. Startled, it bounced away from me, its wings outstretched, and flew up to a nearby branch. A bird of prey, surely? Its head was smaller than an owl's and its overall size (though big) didn't compare with the four acrobatic red kites conveniently swooping just above. I moved to get a better view and the bird flew up to the ridge of roofs along Beech Lane. It was a perfect spot for visibility, but stark against the afternoon sun. I walked on to Beech Lane and it flew back to the trees at the head of the lake. The tips of its wings were fringed and the undersides were blotched with faint pale patches toward the end. Minutes later it moved

again, its legs dangling, to another tree. Three magpies protested with chattering and screeching, and a crow joined them in the treetop, but the big bird was unperturbed. Though perfectly still, it was just too high up to get a close look. It was dark brown overall, and had a slightly mottled texture, but nothing as distinctive as stripes. What was it? A sparrowhawk? Perhaps. Eventually it flew off towards Redhatch Drive, flying low with its broad wings flapping in a leisurely manner, unhurried by the crow that followed it and unconcerned about the perplexed man it left behind (*see below for answer*).

This was but the last of several treasured moments with the wildlife of Earley this autumn, and after the non-descript weather of much of the summer, it has been a lovely season. Ushered in with bountiful rose hips the Indian summer in September and October left us with an abundance of leaves in glorious hue. The dappled vistas of the woodland in Moor Copse and The Wilderness were cast into pointelistic variegation, and though the evenings have now drawn in, we have had some beautifully bright sunshine.

This combination of sunlight and early evenings has made it a good time for observing the bats that depend on water-borne insects. My son and I spent several sessions on the banks of Maiden Erlegh Lake watching bats as they flew through the dusk against a backdrop of darkening blue. Back and forth they went, in and out of the shadows in an instant, but clear when silhouetted against the cloudless sky. We have

seen four at a time and doubtless many more when all are taken into account.

Another, perhaps less endearing, mammal has drawn notice to itself this autumn: a rat can now be seen from time to time scampering along the edge of the lake, by the reeds near the feeding station. Take a look to the left when you are feeding the ducks and you'll see a hole in the netting by the waterline. The rat is through it in a second so you'll have to keep your eyes peeled.

The usual birds are still on the lake: Canada geese, mallards (the drakes back in their masculine winter plumage), the delightful Carolina or wood duck, the solitary swan, coots, moorhens, the heron, and up to three cormorants drying their outspread wings in the island treetops. A flock of black-headed gulls have replaced the migratory terns. And one bird has made a welcome reappearance after an apparent absence of many months. I am thinking of the grey wagtail. This rather confusingly named bird can be seen by the weir, a flash of its distinctive yellow plumage in undulating flight as it flies out over the lake, its tail bobbing up and down when it perches on one of the many fence posts by the reed bed.

Edwin A.R. Trout

(The mystery bird has been identified by Grahame Hawker, Head Park Range, as a buzzard, possibly after earthworms, which has been visiting the Maiden Erlegh Reserve grassy area recently levelled with soil near the Beech Lane entrance, so keep a look out. First red kites, now buzzards, what's next? Sea eagles? Dream on!)

Visit from a cheeky **RED KITE**

Preparing to land



Touchdown



Take off



Photos courtesy of Joe Dray

RED KITE TALK: We had an excellent talk on red kites by Colin Clews on 17 November which was well attended, and may possibly repeat it again sometime next year for those who couldn't attend this one. Watch out for future events.

Notable items from our regular garden survey contributors:

Ann, August: 2 foxes late at night on road, chiffchaff, gt. spotted woodpecker, 6 house sparrows, goldfinch, 16 starlings

Gillian, late Sept: After a quiet period in late summer, the birds are returning to the garden: tits, blackbirds, dunnock, chaffinch, greenfinch and song thrush. The wood pigeons and magpies never left. In October: red admiral, speckled wood, assorted harlequin ladybirds. Bat over back garden.

Margaret, October: 14 long tailed tits, handsome pheasant strolling across lawn, heron keeping an eye on pool, green woodpecker first time on back garden, grey dagger caterpillar indoors, dead hornet, buried it! Common toad under large piece of slate.

LOCAL FORTHCOMING EVENTS

- December:** Monday 14th December **EEG Christmas Social, 7.30 p.m.** at the Interpretation Centre, Instow Road, Earley. All welcome. Music, Christmas refreshments. Earley's Got Talent so anyone is welcome to offer a song, recitation, etc.
- January :** Monday 18th January **EEG AGM , 7.30 p.m. followed by talk by Ornella Trevisan - 'Environmental Education - Importance, Implications and Urgency'**, Function Room Maiden Place Community Centre, Off Kilnsea Drive, bear to right, second car park.
- February:** Monday, 15th February **7.30 p.m. 'Shinfield Wind Farm'** talk by **Tom Brinicombe**, Function Room, Maiden Place Community Centre, as above
- March:** Sunday, 21st March will be the Wokingham Borough Council **Campaign against Waste** litter-pick: 2 sessions: 10 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. and 2 to 4.30 p.m. Register participation with **Jean** on (0118) 986 1115
- April:** Wednesday, 21st April, **7.30 p.m. 'Grasshoppers and Crickets'** talk by **Adrian Hickman**, Function Room, Maiden Place Community Centre
- Further details of walks and talk in 2010 to be given in next newsletter.**

The following **Reading and District Natural History Society** talks may be of interest (meeting Pangbourne Village Hall, 7.45): Tues 5th Jan **Beavers, Derek Gow**; Tues 19th Jan **Eels - a threatened species, Dr. Brian Knights**; Tues 2nd Feb **A botanist's view of a tourist destination - the Canarian flora, Frances Watkins**; Tues 16th Feb **Swift conservation , Edward Mayer**; Tues 2nd March **Glow-worms , John Tyler**

WANTED, Website Manager: After several years of dedicated work on the EEG website, we regret to say our current website manager, Paul Beckett, is giving up in the next few weeks for reasons of personal commitment. He created the website and apart from giving his own time and maintaining it to a very high standard, he also contributed various items and photos. The hard work has already been done, and upkeep of the site does not involve a large amount of work; it can take as much or as little of the time you may be able to spare. The website is currently hosted by fasthosts.co.uk on a windows server. It is written in relatively simple .asp code with a small amount of javascript. There are ODBC links to a small access database that stores the websites events data. If you can offer help please contact Paul on paul.l.beckett@ntlworld.com. Also see the EEG website, www.earleyenvironmentalgroup.co.uk.

Bits and Pieces

EEG Prize - Top Litter Pickers: EEG received an award for picking up the most rubbish on the **Love Your Borough** clean-up day, presented by Wokingham Borough Mayor, Barrie Patman, so thanks to all those participants who helped so magnificently. We received butterfly nets and magnifying glasses, plus a nice certificate. Without denigrating the enthusiastic help from everyone, perhaps next year we could come lower down in the order because Earley people drop less litter!

Can you offer active help to the Group? Phone 0118 962 0004 if you can. We would welcome more member involvement. **If you have no expertise and would like to get involved, you may be able to give practical help.** Perhaps help with distributing the newsletter hard copies, or maybe you have graphic design skills (for occasional posters, leaflets), computer skills, any other skills to offer.

Join the EEG Yahoo Group and post your sightings and messages. You'll find a link to Yahoo on our website.

EEG Committee Members can be found on www.earleyenvironmentalgroup.co.uk under Contacts, or phone 0118 962 0004

For **Wildlife Survey Forms**, go to the website or phone Earley Town Council 0118 986 8995

Comments or contributions to the newsletter to: sheila.crowson@ntlworld.com or 2 Reeds Avenue, Earley, RG6 5SR. We would welcome short contributions from members to the newsletter.

If you know anyone who would like to join EEG, membership forms are available from Earley Town Council, 0118 986 8995, on the [website](#) under Downloads, or send an e-mail to Liz Wild e.a.wild@reading.ac.uk. but after Dec 22 liz@helva.plus.com

Please inform Liz if you intend to change e-mail or address at 50 Kenton Rd, Earley RG6 7LG, or send her an e-mail.

A respectful reminder: A member recently observed that some dog walkers ignored the messages in certain areas of the Maiden Erlegh Nature Reserve to keep dogs on a lead. She had also experienced problems with dogs' mess. Before a torrent of complaints arrives from dog owners, who we know care passionately about their pets, it is acknowledged that only a few are causing the problem.

SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL SHOPS

The True Food Co-op, Silverdale Centre : There is now a True Food Co-op operating in Earley, their most successful market. 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 Fridays, 5pm to 8.15 pm. They have a website giving dates www.truefood.coop

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, e mail sales@petfayre-reading.co.uk or go on the comprehensive website www.petfayre-reading.co.uk

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