



*'On the second day of Christmas  
My true love sent to me:  
2 turtle doves  
And a partridge in a pear tree'*

## How are our turtle doves faring?

Your true love may have difficulty nowadays sending 2 turtle doves. **The turtle dove population fell by more than 90% between 1970 and 2009.** Changes in farming practices have contributed to this. The birds feed almost entirely on small seeds from wild plants, now scarce, which grow among crops. The RSPB are embarking on a programme with farmers to plant these seeds on their land. You can help by reporting any sighting by calling the Turtle Dove hotline: 01603 697527 or report by email with photos and details to [turtledove@rspb.org.uk](mailto:turtledove@rspb.org.uk).

Turtle doves are known as symbols of devoted love and, in spite of their place in poetic tradition, they are shot in huge numbers during their long migration between Europe and Africa. Their common name is taken from their gentle, purring song and has nothing to do with reptiles. The 'turr turr' call is one of the UK's most evocative summer sounds, but is becoming increasingly rare.



[www.operationturtledove.org](http://www.operationturtledove.org)

### Items of special interest:

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**Good news** for the turtle doves but not very good for ash trees. Oliver Rackham, a foremost expert on trees, puts the major threats to trees in this order: No 3, climate change, No 2, 'proliferation of deer and other animals,' and No 1, 'the globalisation of tree diseases'. (See page 2)

*Ash trees under threat* : When Dutch elm disease affected our elm trees, it changed our countryside forever, but the latest threat has the potential to be just as big. You know it's serious when it hits the national news for a prolonged period. The Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), one of the most characteristic and best loved British trees, is facing a deadly fungal disease, dieback of ash (*Chalara fraxinea*), for which there is no known cure. It causes leaf loss and crown dieback in affected trees, with lesions on the bark, usually leading to tree death. Millions of trees are thought to be at threat. It is hoped that some trees will prove to be resistant to the disease and these can be used in the future to produce hardy trees. Hard to imagine a summer without being able to look up and see the lovely tracery of ash leaves against a blue sky.

It's thought that it first entered the UK on nursery saplings, but has now been found at many sites on wild ash trees. Authorities were slow to respond to the threat. It's difficult to control as it is spread by leaf litter or is wind-blown. It has the potential to be a major disaster. Denmark has already lost 90% of its ash trees.

**With no leaves left on the trees, the best signs to look for are the lesions on the bark and die back.**

**It is illegal to remove infected material from a site. If you find any sick trees, please do not disturb the material; report the whereabouts to:**

**Dr Glynn Percival, Plant Physiologist**

Bartlett Tree Research Laboratory

Plant Science Laboratories, Harborne Building

School of Biological Sciences

Whiteknights

University of Reading

Reading, Berkshire.

RG6 6AS.

Call: 0118 988 3618

Email: [gpercival@Bartlettuk.com](mailto:gpercival@Bartlettuk.com)

Email: [jbanks@Bartlettuk.com](mailto:jbanks@Bartlettuk.com)

For more information, go to the Wokingham

District Veteran Tree Assn. website

<http://www.wdvta.org.uk> where there is a feature giving information on chalara.

<http://ashtag.org/>



## The Ash

The ash is nearly always the last tree to come into leaf.

According to an old wife's tale, witches eat the buds on Walpurgisnacht (May Eve) so the trees do not come into leaf until St. John's Eve (Midsummer Eve).

Ash is often the first tree to drop its leaves in the autumn. Its foliage is fairly sparse so a rich ground flora is able to grow up under native ash trees. It can bear up to 100,000 winged fruits on one tree.

Only the oak bears more lichens..

It is thought to have healing and restorative properties. In Scandinavia, it is known as *yggdrasil*, 'Tree of rebirth and healing'.

### John Evelyn's eulogy to an ash tree and ash-wood:

*'In short, so useful and profitable is this tree (next to the oak) that every prudent Lord of the manor should employ one acre of ground with Ash or Acorns to every twenty acres of other Land: since in as many years it would be worth more than the land itself'*

# Sibly Update - by Anne Booth

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Work to clear the area in Redhatch Copse for the mast compound and access track to be built re-started in late October. I received several calls from residents who were concerned about the size of the area cleared. The compound is to be 12m x 12m and the cleared area is about 40m x 35m. After my request to WBC to check on the work done, three officers made a site visit and declared that the contractors have followed what was agreed in the Management Plan for the site, which included removing sycamore (removal of this invasive species being part of that plan), and giving a reasonable working area for the construction of the mast.

Reading University have had to submit an application outlining the construction methods which includes protection measures for the Copse. This can be found at <http://www.wokingham.gov.uk/planningcontrol/planning/planningapplications/searchplanningapplications/> under C/2012/1889 should anyone be interested in the detail.



I've had a look at these documents and it does appear that there are strict conditions on how the work is done, which we hope will be adhered to. **ANNE BOOTH**  
*(The University has a lot to live up to, having recently been awarded the Green Flag for the Whitenights campus, which was judged to be one of the best open spaces in the country, so we can have high expectations of their treatment of Redhatch Copse. Ed.)*

## TREES IN EARLEY IN COMMEMORATION OF THE QUEEN'S JUBILEE YEAR

As some trees are felled, thankfully others are being planted. In commemoration of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, Wokingham Borough Council, in collaboration with Wokingham District Veteran Tree Assn (master-minded by Barbara Stagles, WDVTA Jubilee Trees coordinator), are to undertake a programme of planting 60 specimen-sized English oak trees at appropriate locations across the borough. The following planting ceremonies will take place and everyone is welcome to attend:

**Rushey Way – 12.30pm 4<sup>th</sup> December (2 trees in grass verge in front of Loddon school playing fields)**

**Elm Road – 11am Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> December (1 tree in grass area on the bend where a great Cedar of Lebanon once grew and was felled by a big storm)**

**Avalon Road – 2.30pm Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> December (1 tree on the grass circle within the roundabout)**

**Sol Joel Park – Still to be decided (2 trees)**

The trees were bought from Barcham's nursery, Cambridge in June. They are between five and seven years old and will be almost four metres tall when they are planted. Contractors will be planting the trees for two to three weeks starting in National Tree Week (24 November to 3 December). Each tree will have a numbered commemorative plaque to display and will be recorded in the Woodland Trust's Royal Record.  
(Right: Barcham's Nurseries)



## Stalwarts of the Wednesday volunteer work group in Maiden Erlegh Nature Reserve



*What's happening here?  
The prize (with tongue in  
cheek) - free lifetime  
membership of EEG,  
newsletter and entry to all  
walks and talks.*

Suitable captions to our Chair Alan,  
alanbroodbank@yahoo.co.uk.

## Have you seen any?

WINTER BIRDS : Redwings are the smallest thrush species you're likely to see in the UK and they can be easily identified by their orange-red coloured flanks. Only a handful of Redwings live and breed in the UK all year round, so



the annual arrival of wintering birds from Scandinavia and Iceland is a welcome treat for birdwatchers.

These cold weather visitors are a bit darker than the resident Redwings and tend to be slightly bigger with longer wings - possibly to cope with the extra distance they travel. Look for them on trees and shrubs with winter

berries, especially hawthorn and mountain ash. (Source: UK Safari)

## Let's not forget the insects at this time of year



You may find a delicate lacewing in your house. It's probably *Chrysoperla carnea* looking for somewhere to hibernate. Once inside it slowly changes from green to pink or straw coloured. The larvae are used in many countries to control aphids on valuable crops, as well as controlling the aphids in your garden, so be kind to it.

(Source: UK Safari)

# *In appreciation of Nature*

Well done, the children of Aldryngton Primary

Aldryngton Primary School, Earley recently held a House Photographic Competition in which pupils entered their own photos, which had to portray their photographic vision of Autumn. As members of EEG, Anne Booth and I were invited by Aldryngton head teacher, Elaine Stewart, to judge the entries. What a difficult job! The standard of the entries was so high that it was difficult to choose the winners. In fact, all the children who entered were winners because they won a point for the house they represented, and the top winners were presented with certificates at a special morning school assembly. There will be an exhibition of all the entries in order for parents to see what a high standard was achieved. First place entries are shown below. Sheila Crowson



Lower School – Poppy Wood



Middle School – Sandy Totolici



Upper School equal first: Zoe Wicks



Upper School equal first: Tom Robinson

Whilst on the subject of photography, here's how to do night photography when you're tucked up in bed.....

The last newsletter had an extract from an article, *'In the Night Garden'*, by John Booth on the fun he had with a trail camera. Just to remind you, at right, a young fox in the garden which the camera captured at dawn.. John's full article follows .....





## NEWS FROM BEYOND EARLEY

### Drastic reduction in the numbers of honey and bumble bees

The Environment Secretary Owen Paterson is looking into the possibility of banning controversial neonicotinoid pesticides. This could mean the loss of millions of pounds for multinational companies who manufacture neonicotinoids which have been cited as the possible villains in the piece. Farmers would also have to find alternative means of protecting their crops. But DEFRA have to consider the mounting body of research implicating neonicotinoids in environmental problems, especially the widespread declines of honey bees and bumble bees, needed to pollinate so much of the world's vital food crops.

### Top Animals in the Firing Line: Nagaland, a North Eastern state of India, was once the scene



of bloody battles in WW2. It now sees massacre on a huge scale of the beautiful Amur falcon, which migrates from southern Africa to Mongolia and eastern China, and back, every year, an extraordinary round-trip of some 14,000 miles. It stops en route in NE India and Bangladesh to fatten up, an unfortunate turn of phrase, since it is estimated that 120,000 to 140,000 birds are being slaughtered in

Nagaland every year during their passage through the state.

Birds are caught in nets spread across the birds' roosting sites and sold alive for food, and some killed to be eaten locally. Observers note that far more are killed than needed to fulfil local demand and assume there must be external markets. India, as a signatory to the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), is duty bound to prevent this massacre, provide safe passage, as well as draw up appropriate action plans for the long-term conservation of this bird.

**The WWF is on the prowl – to recruit dogs to save tigers!** They estimate only 3200 tigers are left in the wild. We all know the useless trade of tiger parts for 'magic' medicine and decoration. WWF want to recruit and train sniffer dogs to sniff out tiger parts and catch those who do the trading. Stop the sale and kill the trade. Whatever they raise can be doubled over the next few weeks by some generous donors. A donation would make a good Christmas gift for someone with a love of wildlife! Or perhaps it could be in memory of 'an absent friend'.



[http://www.wwf.org.uk/how\\_you\\_can\\_help/donate\\_now/stop\\_illegal\\_wildlife\\_trade\\_tiger/?pc=DJT004001](http://www.wwf.org.uk/how_you_can_help/donate_now/stop_illegal_wildlife_trade_tiger/?pc=DJT004001).

### EARLEY WILDLIFE SIGHTINGS AND GARDEN SURVEYS

Two observations from members too late to include in the last newsletter.

AUG 29<sup>TH</sup>, Tony White: Our daughter helped bring 9 painted lady butterflies into Lower Earley over the summer thanks to the Insect Lore butterfly garden product. *(Well done, Tony's daughter.Ed)*

SEP 28<sup>TH</sup>, Robert Weston: My daughter and I were happily clearing some old planks of wood from an area on our allotment, when she suddenly squeaked with delight. She'd come across a medium sized toad. As the area we were clearing was going to be very disturbed, we relocated the toad further down the allotment next to some logs, nettles and brambles which will remain undisturbed.

We were delighted to find a toad on our allotment and it adds to other wildlife we have there - some more welcome than others! We regularly find lizards in the summer, frogs, many birds (including a cuckoo this spring), rabbits, mice, rats. This week there was evidence of a return of deer. (*Shows the value of allotments to wildlife.Ed*)

On October garden surveys:

**Gillian** noted "*The birds are back – lovely to see the flash of the jay's wings.*"

**Margaret** heard, "*local foxes barking and howling at 03.35 for 20 minutes.*"

### LOCAL FORTHCOMING EVENTS 2012/13

**Monday, 17<sup>th</sup> Dec** *Earley Environmental Group Christmas Social*, at 19.30 to 22.00 at the Interpretation Centre, Maiden Erlegh Reserve, Instow Road. Come along to celebrate the season with music, food and a quiz. Contributions of food and/or drink would be helpful. All welcome.

**Monday, 21<sup>st</sup> January** 19.30 to 21.30, Earley Environmental Group AGM at Function Room, Maiden Place Community Centre, off Kilnsea Drive, followed by talk by Martin Sutton on the *Maiden Erlegh School weather station and online reporting of weather by the students.*

**Wednesday, 13<sup>th</sup> February**, 19.30 to 21.30, *Take a closer look at walls*, a talk by Kit Brownlee, Function Room, Maiden Place Community Centre, off Kilnsea Drive

**Sunday, 24<sup>th</sup> March**, *HELP (Huge Earley Litter Pick)* our annual litter pick. This is in two sessions: 10:00-12:30 and 14:00-16:30. Meet at the Interpretation Centre at Instow Road for each session. Contact Grahame Hawker, 0118 986 8995.

**Monday, 15<sup>th</sup> April** 19.30 to 21.30, *Do birds earn their keep?* A talk by Melanie Orros of Reading University, Function Room, Maiden Place Community Centre, off Kilnsea Drive

**Check website and posters for more details**

#### Bits and Pieces

EASI (Earley Adopt-a-Street Initiative) would like more volunteers. Help keep your street clear of litter.

Everything provided. Phone Peter Soul, 0118 926 4997, or email [peter@petersoul.co.uk](mailto:peter@petersoul.co.uk).

Can you offer active help to EEG? If so, phone 0118 962 0004 or go to the website. We would welcome more member involvement.

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](http://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](mailto:sheila.crowson@ntlworld.com) or 2 Reeds Avenue, Earley, RG6 5SR. Short contributions welcome 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 at [liz@helva.plus.com](mailto: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 an e-mail.

#### 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, 5 to 8.15 p.m. They have a website giving dates [www.truefood.coop](http://www.truefood.coop).

**Pet Fayre 9 Maiden Lane 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 926 6512, e-mail [sales@petfayre-reading.co.uk](mailto:sales@petfayre-reading.co.uk) or go on the comprehensive website [www.petfayre-reading.co.uk](http://www.petfayre-reading.co.uk)

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