

# EARLEY ENVIRONMENTAL GROUP NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 5 SEPTEMBER 2006

Earley - Old English 'Earnley' = eagle wood

**S**mall is beautiful so they say, and this might be applied to the millions of little creatures that actually keep our planet in good order. No less a person than Lord May, President of the Royal Society, stated that “arguably it's the little things that run the world, things like soil microbes. They're the least-known species of all. He also stated: “most conservation effort goes into birds and mammals – creatures like the panda, a dim, dead-end animal that was probably on the way out anyway” (*oh, dear!*). But he might just have a point. We are very selective in the things we like, and feel far more protective towards our garden birds, and exotic animals like tigers and pandas than, for example, the dung beetle, and we're not likely to get too excited by soil microbes, although perhaps we should. Many of us are not enamoured of insects (except perhaps the pretty ones like butterflies and moths), but two of our members, Stuart and Alan, find them fascinating, and maybe if you read their articles under “Incredible Insects” on pages 2 and 3, you'll feel more kindly to the tiny animals with whom we share our world.

## *Members' differing views on the direction of the Earley Environment Group*

We all have our particular interests and hobby horses. Many members like news of wildlife, others may be interested in the local natural and built environment, whereas others are very concerned about global issues - and some will be interested in all of these. We have tried to cover a variety of subjects through our talks, newsletter and website, and will continue to do so, but if you have a particular subject you would like to contribute to or have covered, we would like to hear from you. On the subject of wildlife, and trees in particular, please note we have **Jill Butler, Conservation Officer for the Woodland Trust** coming to give us a talk on Ancient Trees on Sept 21 7.30 - 9.00 at The Parish Room, Radstock Community Centre, which should prove very pertinent to the forthcoming Veteran Tree Survey project (see p.6).

Footnote: Good news – we recruited over 30 members at the Green Fair.

## Get to know your Earley



# bike ride round Earley

It is possible to find cycle routes in Earley for short spins on your bike with the family. The best guide to cycling in the area is the map produced by Wokingham District Council which shows cycle routes off carriage-way, as well as cycle routes on carriageway and also quiet routes. Depending on where you live in Earley, you may be able to join these up into a relatively safe circular tour.

On some of the off carriage cycle ways (those marked in red on the map), you will be travelling along the remnants of old, historic lanes (like Cutbush Lane), which were used by much earlier Earley people, either on foot, by horse or horse and cart.

If you would like a map, send a stamped addressed envelope to Cycling Map, 2 Reeds Avenue, Earley, RG6 5SR. or write to Wokingham District Council.

**Baffled by computers but would like to try them?  
Phone your local library or contact Earley Crescent  
Resource Centre on 0118 921 0555. The Centre is  
running courses in October and December**

# Incredible Insects

Returning to the **dung beetle**, an unlikely candidate for a popular protection society, without it the whole world might be up to its neck in the unmentionable! There are many species of dung beetle, but one, a roller beetle, has a very appealing courtship pattern. Following a romantic meeting at the dung heap, he doesn't bring her flowers but something that delights her even more – a large dung brood ball. They roll this away together, or, she, picturesquely, rides on it. It is then buried and they



mate, and then being a true gigolo, he clears off to find more partners to woo. She's left bringing up the family and, for an insect, shows commendable parental care.

“You'll have to slim, darling”

## The Leafcutter Bee

Take a closer look at one of the numerous wild rose bushes that grow in our area, and it will almost certainly not be long before you find that certain leaves have had oval or circular holes neatly removed from them. The example in the photograph was taken in late June, on the footpath that runs for a quarter of a mile or



so by the stream from Brookside Surgery car park into the woods. It is not, as one might at first suppose, the work of a hungry caterpillar but that of a most interesting insect, the Leaf-cutter Bee.

There are several species of **leaf-cutter bee** in this country, but the commonest is probably *Megachile centuncularis*. All are solitary, rather than social bees. The nest is built in some elongated cavity or other, either in the ground or decaying wood or in an old wall, but it is the bee's habit of filling these with cells made of leaves in which to rear the young that gives it its name. The female has strong mandibles and firstly uses these to cut out an oval section of leaf, almost always, it seems, a rose leaf, and then carries it back to the nest on the wing. It is quite a startling sight to witness this extraordinary aerobatic feat! Back at the nest, she rolls the leaf into a cylinder and then returns to the rose bush. Now comes the clever bit! The bee cuts out another section of leaf but this time it will be round, not oval, and is used to plug the far end of the previously-made cylinder. But in all the nests I've ever found, the end plug has been an almost perfect fit in what is invariably a very irregular shape. Unless I'm wrong, it seems that the bee can somehow memorise the exact shape and dimensions required and cut the leaf to exactly this shape, a truly incredible feat!

The bee then puts in a supply of honey and pollen, lays an egg, and then repeats the feat of plugging the other end of the cell, thereby sealing it. Then she makes

another cell adjacent to the first one, end-on, lays another egg and so on until the cavity is full. On hatching, the bee larva has a ready supply of protein and energy-rich food. When new bees emerge they eat their way out: in common with many species of insect it is invariably the males that emerge first. Unfortunately I wasn't lucky in obtaining a photograph of this fascinating insect, but for a good picture please take a look at <http://www.bioimages.org.uk/HTML/P4/P49134.php> and see also EEG website>Insect details>Mason bees.

## A Spectacular Plant Gall

At this time of year **plant galls** (cecidia) are so numerous and varied that it is almost impossible to take a walk by a hedgerow and not notice at least a few varieties such as Oak Apples, Spangle Galls on oak leaves, Bigbud on blackcurrants, red 'Bean' galls on willow leaves and Witches' Brooms, like clusters of twigs, on birch, to name but a few. Galls arise as a result of an attack by a parasite such as an insect, fungus, mite, nematode (eelworm) or bacteria to which the plant responds by producing an abnormal increase in the number of cells around the area of infection, or by the cells themselves becoming abnormally enlarged. The gall is produced wholly by the plant alone: the parasite plays no part in it apart from providing the stimulus.

Some galls are not only extremely attractive to look at but have evocative names as well. The photograph is of a singularly beautiful gall that appears on wild rose in late summer and rejoices in the name of '**Robin's Pincushion**'. Examples can be found in most years in our area, the path that runs by the stream from Brookside surgery to the Woods being a particularly likely spot. It is caused by a gall wasp, *Diplolepis rosae*. The wasp lays its eggs in spring in unopened buds, and the plant responds by producing a mass of up to 60 chambers surrounded by a mass of green filaments, supposed by those of a fanciful imagination to resemble a pincushion! In late summer the gall assumes a beautiful red hue, sometimes orange and can be up to 10cms in diameter, after which it turns brown and forms the over-wintering and pupating quarters for the larvae, which emerge the following May. Other country names are Bedeguar gall and Moss gall and it was once supposed that the gall possessed medicinal properties - bedeguar tea was supposed to cure diarrhoea in cattle!

4<sup>th</sup> August

8<sup>th</sup> August



(Our thanks to Alan for the last two items)

## Earley's Noble Stag (Beetle)

(Our thanks to Stuart for this article)

At up to 75mm in length (3 inches in old money), the stag beetle, *Lucanus cervus*, is the largest beetle found in the British Isles. This formidable, though harmless, beetle is most commonly found in the South-east, numbers petering out towards the north and west.

You may be familiar with the silhouette of males in flight, and the lumbering females that are often found on footpaths through the months of June and July. The males readily take to the air in search of females; the females, though able, are less inclined to fly. In fact 80% of stag beetles seen flying will be male, and about the same percentage of those found crawling are likely to be female.

Females lay their eggs near decaying and soft wood, usually buried, and prefer the wood of deciduous trees. The larvae feed on this decaying wood and develop very slowly, as this is not a very nourishing resource. It takes from 3-4 years for the larvae to develop; they form a pupa in the autumn of the third or fourth year and emerge in the summer of the 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> year. As adults their life is brief and confined to the months of June and July, when high temperatures and humidity allow these large insects to fly.

On mainland Europe numbers of stag beetles are in serious decline and this species is now offered protection and listed on Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. This does not offer comprehensive protection, but does imply that the needs of these beetles are considered if they are present on a site intended for development.



In Earley we are blessed with a thriving population and they remain a common sight in most years. Over the last three years I have loosely monitored numbers from my garden in the north of Earley. This simply involves the marking of each individual that enters the boundary of my garden (measuring ca. 130' x 35') and releasing them thereafter.

Year	No. recorded	No. male	No. Female
2004	32	28	2
2005	16	15	1
2006	23	20	3

The numbers may surprise you but it just goes to show how many are out there; most are observed within a week of each other and represent the emergence of single cohorts in the immediate area. Much of older Earley was built to a density of 16 houses per acre. Their moderately large and now well-established gardens provide a prime environment for these beetles, containing many stumps and remains of over-mature fruit and other trees that provide for the development of their larvae. If the trend for much smaller gardens continues, and old Earley slowly redevelops on this basis, it is likely that the status of this beetle will become compromised still further. Encouraging them into your garden could not be easier; they don't demand much, just a bit of dead wood. Leave rotting stumps in place or, if it is in the wrong place, root it up and re-bury it in a more convenient spot. You can also shallowly bury medium- to large-sized logs from deciduous trees in a shady corner of the garden. Then sit back and look forward to your first crop of stag beetles in 4-5 years time. They're gorgeous!

### The ORACLE has spoken! We have now gained our first corporate member.

Oracle, the large software company in Thames Valley Park, has become our first corporate member and has agreed to give us valuable support in several environmental projects which we have in mind, for instance, creating a new hedgerow, and a wildflower area. They have also agreed to assist in producing the hard copies of our newsletter, and make available for meetings, should we wish it, a function room in their Thames Valley Park offices. Help is also offered in several other interesting projects, details of which will become available when plans are at a more developed stage. We look forward to an interesting and beneficial relationship with Oracle in the future.

### GREEN JARGON

**CARBON FOOTPRINT:** Carbon Footprint is a measure of the impact human activities have on the environment in terms of the amount of greenhouse gases produced, measured in units of carbon dioxide. Excess production of carbon dioxide, the main polluting gas, causes global warming. Your personal primary carbon footprint is the carbon dioxide produced by your travel and your consumption of household fuel. Your secondary footprint is that produced in creating all the other goods and services you consume. This is a very simplified explanation, but there are ways of reducing your impact on the planet. You can find how to calculate your carbon footprint, and how to reduce it on <http://www.carbonfootprint.com>. Details of a national environmental campaign are at <http://www.stopclimatechaos.org>



# A Look at Old Earley

## Maiden Erlegh, Sugar Plantations and Slaves

Over the centuries the Maiden Erlegh estate has had many owners. One of these in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century was William Mathew Burt, Governor-General of the Leeward Islands. There were many Burts in the Caribbean area from the 1600s. William Mathew Burt was born about 1727 in Elim-Saint Elizabeth, Jamaica, and died in 1781. His will dated 1776 shows that he owned Maiden Erlegh estate at that time. Like many estate owners of the time, his wealth came from assets overseas and was amassed through exploitation of people sold into slavery. In his will he refers to “**my personal estate in the said island of St. Christophers (St. Kitts) being the negroes and stock upon my plantations being considered affixed to and part of the freehold**”, a shocking reflection of the value then placed on human lives.

## A Glimpse of Maiden Erlegh Estate in the Late 18<sup>th</sup>

Century. (Extracts from his will)

### **“WILL OF WILLIAM MATHEW BURT, Esq., late Governor of his Majesty's Charibee Leeward Islands**

*This is the last will and testament of me William Mathew Burt of Maiden Early (sic) in the co. of Berks, Captain General and Governor of his Majestys Charibee Leeward Islands.....*

*I direct that she (Sarah, wife of Wm Burt) shall have the full and entire use and occupation of the house at Maiden Early aforesaid with the pleasure garden kitchen garden hot house and green house for one year rent free and also free of all taxes if my said wife shall chuse to live in it.....*

*... Where I have for some time been carrying on certain works at Maiden Early for the improving and butifng the same now my will is and I do hereby order and direct that the said works be carried at the expense of my said estates as proposed **under the***

**“I have for sometime been carrying on certain works at Maiden Early for the improving and butifng the same”**

*direction of Mr. M(?) Richmond of Paddington having a high opinion of his .(?)... honesty and abilities to execute the said works viz. finishing the cut now began at the back of the house down to the large pond and laying down the same with grass sods as done in the work already completed.....*

*.....Of my English personal estate which I will the timber on my estate at Maiden Early shall for the purposes aforesaid be considered as partly mortgage of all or sufficient part of my real estate in the said island of St. Christopher or by mortgage of my estate in England shall raise such sum and sums of money as shall be sufficient to answer the purposes aforesaid in paying all my just debts funeral expenses...” Will proved 1781.*

## What we can glean from the will

William M. Burt obviously had a great interest in the estate, even including instructions for further work in his will, since he talks of ‘**improving and butifng**’ it,. One wonders what the pleasure garden was like. Did he keep to the very symmetrical style or plump for the more modern style of natural landscaping? One also wonders what was grown in the hot-house. As he was born and spent considerable time in the Leeward Islands, maybe we can assume it contained some of the exotic plants from there. The ‘cut’ presumably was to be a grassy path leading to the ‘large pond’, which surely must be Maiden Erlegh Lake. He mentions ‘timber’ which must refer to the ancient woodlands surrounding the estate, parts of which still remain. It is believed that one hundred years later the Georgian house was rebuilt, incorporating remnants of the 17<sup>th</sup>- and 18<sup>th</sup>- century building, eventually to be demolished for development in 1960. It would be interesting to know if any of his slaves accompanied him to Earley. On 25 March 1807, the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act entered the statute books, but it still continued illegally in the Caribbean. Next year marks the bicentenary of the Act.

## **SOME OLD BERKSHIRE WORDS AND QUOTES**

**Vittles**            *food*

**The ‘darling’ small pig in a litter**

**Tarblish** meant *fairish*: ‘*Mornin’, Tom, ‘ow be?’ ‘Oh! I be pretty tarblish.’*

**Starlings** were shot by the owner of woods where they roosted in nut bushes and killed the bushes. The breasts, which were plump

**Athurt ther’**

**All of a caddle**

*over there*

*worried*

**and sweet, were put into a suet crust and boiled. Similarly, young rooks were shot in April and made into rook pie.** (*from Memories of Old Berkshire*)

## NEWS FROM BEYOND EARLEY

### HUMAN FOLLIES

**Anyone for a bowl of shark fin soup?** In a posh London Chinese restaurant it may cost you £80 or more, but some crassly stupid customers do order it. To get the fins, sharks are pulled from the water to have their fins sliced off while they are still alive ('finning'), and are then thrown back into the ocean to slowly die. The daft thing is the fin adds no flavour at all. Campaigners have had some success, persuading Disney to take the soup off its menu in its Hong Kong theme park; two top Asian airlines have stopped serving it, and more people are refusing it in restaurants. Many species of fish are now almost 'fished out', including our beloved cod, as well as trendy fish like monkfish. Perhaps TV chefs need some environmental education.

**It's not 'cool' to drink bottled water.** We are now drinking more than 2 billion litres of it annually. At an average of 95p a litre, it costs as much as petrol. A litre of tap water is umpteen times cheaper and, remember, whatever we think of the water companies, UK water is amongst the best in the world. The cost to the environment is high: billions of plastic bottles to be manufactured then disposed of in landfill sites (only about 10% are recycled), plus transport costs of whizzing bottles hundreds of miles from A to B. Our ancestors, often the victims of cholera, etc., must be turning in their graves at our disdain for pure tap water. It's accepted that sometimes it's necessary to buy bottled water when out on trips, but brownie points for those joggers who now use wrap-round bottles which, hopefully, are full of tap water or who refill old plastic bottles.

### "CLIMATE CHANGE IS HERE"

**At a public meeting of Friends of the Earth** in Reading on 29<sup>th</sup> June, representatives of the three main political parties, Royce Longton (Lib Dem Councillor, Newbury), Richard Benyon (Conservative MP for Newbury), and Martin Salter (Labour MP Reading West), were all agreed that climate change is here. They had various thoughts on how to tackle it, but agreed that to achieve results it would be necessary for political consensus from all the parties. Both the MPs said they would work towards this consensus in order to get a Bill requiring year-on-year emission reductions into the Queen's Speech. Read about it on [www.readingfoe.org.uk](http://www.readingfoe.org.uk). Also Stop Climate Chaos are staging a big event at Trafalgar Square on 4<sup>th</sup> Nov. Check their website.

### EARLEY WILDLIFE SIGHTINGS

#### From Ray and Mary

Garden report: Birds feeding regularly at the feeders included a pair of **greenfinches** (on peanuts and seed), a pair of **goldfinches** (on nyjer). Both were clearly nesting somewhere nearby, and have ceased to visit since about the third week of June. Also visiting regularly are **robins, dunnocks, blue tits, great tits, blackbirds, house sparrows, collared doves and wood pigeons**, with occasional **starlings** and the odd **magpie**. Of particular interest were the regular visits made in June to the flower heads of red hot poker by **blue tits**, seemingly for the nectar-sacs at the base of the florets. In the past two weeks I have not seen anything of the **grey squirrel** that has raided the feeders only too often this year - but I don't think I have seen the last of it!

Butterflies so far have included **small white, comma, meadow brown** and **holly blue**.

#### From Fran

Have continued to see a **red kite** hanging around Lower Earley in amongst the houses, the last few months; apart from that, nothing to report

#### From Angela, 14 July 2006

We're seeing at least one **red kite** cruising overhead most days, and sometimes two. They were calling to each other today and taking advantage of the thermal air currents. Wonderful to see them so regularly. Does anyone know if they have nested in this area this year?

#### From Duncan, 18 July

It may be worth noting on the EEG website, or via email, that SuperPets on St Peter's Road (off the Wokingham Road) are now selling **wildflower** plug plants in mixed trays.

#### From Judith, 19 July

I had **blue tits** nesting in my garden, 11, Caraway Road, Lower Earley at the end of May in a nest box made by my son in Dinton Pastures approx. 18 years ago and never used before!! I saw Dad in and out with food, heard the babies but never saw them!

What can we do about all the **litter** in Lower Earley? I am encouraging my Brownie pack to pick up litter. I have just spent a weekend in Milton Keynes and found it to be litter free. (We hope to do a **big** litter pick-up project next year, following our pilot run earlier this year. Ed)

#### From Jean, 21 July

My **evening primrose** has produced an abundance of fresh flowers at every sunset (more than usual), followed by the added interest of a high number of visiting moths. Although all the flowers have withered by 10a.m. the next morning, I have another perfect performance to witness the next evening.

It's an unexpected delight in this otherwise rather difficult summer.

#### From Elaine, 24 July 2006

We have had quite a good spring/summer in Moor Copse Close in our garden. We've had lots of visits from adult **blue tits, great spotted woodpeckers, blackbirds and goldfinches**. Subsequently we have been visited by a young **goldfinch**, and are now having regular visits from a young **woodpecker** and young **bluetits**. The woodpecker we have been particularly thrilled by. My husband and daughter saw a **fox cub** during the day a couple of weeks ago and a few nights later I saw him wandering around in the Close.

#### From Kathryn 25 July

In May I went to empty my compost heap only to find that a **slow worm** has made its home amongst the top layers protected by the old carpet on the top. It had already left a shed skin so has presumably been there for a while. My garden backs onto the wild-flower meadow by the lake so it may have come in from there. A good excuse not to empty the compost!

#### From Nigel 30 July

**Painted ladies** have arrived at the butterfly patch by the lake. I saw two there on Friday 28 July.

#### From Alan

##### **A Wildlife Cameo!**

Autumn is traditionally the season associated with the appearance of fungi, and it was therefore a pleasant surprise to stumble upon the beautiful example featured in the accompanying photograph in the heat of the summer, in early August. I can't be 100% certain of the exact species, but I think it is probably **Polyporus sulphureus**, a bracket fungus that also has the weird and wonderful name of 'Chicken of the Woods'! Whoever thinks of these names! It infects wounds of trees, and in the example shown (which



is in my garden in Avalon Road), the dead tree stump does straddle the entrance to a foxes' earth; maybe it is used by them for sharpening their claws, or maybe they damage it in some other way? Note also the pretty silvery pastel green lichen growing on the trunk and the moss around the base. A robin nested in the ivy on the other side last year. As if that wasn't enough, the picture

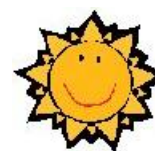
was taken at some risk to myself from the common wasps that are currently nesting in another hole under the stump and were very active at the time! A good example (or excuse!) of the benefits to wildlife of not keeping a garden too tidy!

**Thanks to all those members who contributed.**

## Veteran Tree Project

The Group will be embarking over the next few months on a special project to survey veteran and near-veteran trees in Earley. This is an extension of the survey already carried out in Wokingham Town, and is being supervised by the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers, who will enter it on one large database. It is hoped that in time the whole of Wokingham District will be covered by various groups. The project has the backing of Wokingham District Council and Earley Town Council.

It involves not much more than taking a measurement of the girth of the tree at a height of approximately 1.5m, and obtaining a grid reference; if it measures approximately 3m or more in girth, then it is recorded for the survey. We will be asking for volunteers to help with this. It will give you the opportunity to get out and about for a purpose and perhaps find trees in Earley you didn't know were there. If you think you could give up a small amount of time in the Autumn to help with this, phone 0118 962 0004 or 986 8260.



## Reflections on the effects of the extreme heat in July

### Is a heat-wave always bad for wildlife?

It's a very hot day as I look out into the garden. The grass is still yellow, the leaves on the trees are wilting, the water butt is almost empty and will probably stay that way for quite a while, and I'm about to start my thirty-minute task of watering the few plants I have left in the garden. These are just a few of the things most local people will recognise about the summer of 2006, which has been one of the hottest summers on record. I'm not coping very well with the heat, so how does this country's wildlife stand a chance?

A species that isn't coping so well is the **hedgehog**. Due to the effects of the hot weather, there aren't enough sources of water for them and they are becoming dehydrated and ill. To help them people can leave out water in a dog or rabbit bowl at ground level, as a saucer could easily be tipped over.

As well as the animals, the weather is also having an effect on the trees, flowers, rivers and lakes which are all being put under great stress by the heat.

One species of wildlife which is benefiting from the everlasting hot weather is the butterfly, which loves the warmth and sunshine. Findings show that five times more **Chalk Hill Blue** have been recorded than in an average year, with increases seen in the number of **Purple Emperor** and **White Admiral**. Insects in general are flourishing in this weather. While it has been a troubled summer for most wildlife, there are a few that can feel the benefits. However, the disadvantages will only increase if we continue to see this type of summer in successive years. Let's hope for more balanced weather over the coming seasons!

For more details visit the different sources listed below.:

<http://forests.org/articles/reader.asp?linkid=59176>

[www.butterfly-conservation.org/](http://www.butterfly-conservation.org/)

**Thanks to Shira for this article.**

*(One welcome winner was the hummingbird hawk moth, this year present in large numbers, and seen in several Earley gardens. Ed.)*



## NEWS FROM THE RESERVE

It has been a pleasure watching the families of waterfowl on Maiden Erlegh lake growing over the summer months. Early in the season came the four Egyptian goslings, which I understand to be a first at Maiden Erlegh (though they have been breeding at Whiteknights lake for the past 10 years). The two families of Canada geese came as rather a surprise, and, despite one gosling dying early on 9 have made it to (almost) adult plumage. Having watched the swans brood on the island, and fight off intruders respectively, it was good to see the cygnets hatch - although there were only three this year, in contrast to the seven or eight in 2005. Eggs seemed to be laid late this season, perhaps a reflection of the varying weather patterns, and though the number of fledglings has been lower, a greater number of chicks appears to have survived.



A brood of 5 mallards has reached a safe size and a couple of other single ducklings seem to be surviving. At least three families of mandarin ducks were born: broods of three, four and eight. The eight has fallen to five, but the others are still to be seen. Similarly there have been 3 elusive families of moorhen chicks and two, rather more prominent 'cootlings', growing up well. Perhaps the most charming sight a few weeks ago was that of the grebes carrying their four young on their backs. Now, elegantly striped, these youngsters are diving with the best.

To complete this brief survey, there have been 2 herons, and 3, if not more, terns have made their summer reappearance over the lake.

**Thanks to member Edwin, who keeps notes of his observations, and was able to provide this account of the annual 'hatchings' on the lake.**

### **ALL THOSE LOVELY DUCK EGGS PRESENTED AN IRRESISTIBLE CHALLENGE TO 'LOCAL FOX'**

**You won't believe this but we have such intelligent wildlife in Earley, one of our local foxes has taken to the typewriter and 'penned' the following letter to the newsletter:**

**"Who's been after my eggs? –Well, my duck eggs. I found a nest of some good-sized white duck eggs near the lake. I had an odd one or two. Then I hid another one or two in various gardens for my midnight snack, having carried them carefully across the field and under the fence. One I had on a lawn and left the shell on the grass, punctured here and there, and cleaned out. Another I buried in the garden, but when I came back for it later it had been punctured, and most of the 'yummy' yolk had spilled out. I took it away to finish what was left. Another, a soft shelled one, I carried with great care to another garden to hide for the time being. But it was found and put on the rubbish heap. It must be those humans. And they don't even want to eat them. I could have enjoyed them otherwise, – please.**

**Spring 2006  
from Beech Lane, near the Lake**

**Your local fox"**



(This letter was received by Royal Mail 30 June (not April 1<sup>st</sup>!) addressed to the EEG Newsletter. "Would they be tufted duck's eggs?" a postscript asked. Probably not, as these are greenish or olive brown. Let's hope 'Local Fox' doesn't go hungry in the coming months.)

## LOCAL FORTHCOMING EVENTS

**"The Value of Ancient Trees in the Landscape"**: On Thursday, 21 September, 7.30 to 9.00/9.30 p.m., Jill Butler, Conservation Officer of The Woodland Trust will be giving a talk for EEG at the Parish Room, Radstock Community Centre (next to the school). Jill is a very interesting speaker with a fount of knowledge on ancient trees and woodlands in this country, and in Europe. Bearing in mind the ancient trees still thriving in Earley, this should prove of particular relevance to us. Entry free, everyone welcome. It would help if you rang 0118 9620004 to say you will be attending.

**"Islands Around Britain and Their Wildlife"**: On Friday 20 October, 7.30 Beryl Hulbert is giving a talk for BBOWT at Radstock Community Centre, Radstock Lane. Admission is £2.00, includes refreshments. Same price for members and non-members.

**"Fungi"**: On Saturday 21 October, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Gordon Crutchfield of the Thames Valley Fungi Group is leading a Berkshire Biodiversity Course on identifying fungi for surveys or cuisine, with both indoor and outdoor sessions at Sandhurst Community Hall. Course free of charge.

**"Renewable Energy for the Home and Community"**: On Wednesday 15 November, 7.30 - 9/9.30 p.m. Ian Bacon of the Thames Valley Energy Agency will be giving a talk for EEG at the Trinity Church Room, Chalfont Close on renewable energy. (Asda entry. from Chalfont Way. Church Room as you turn right into Asda site) All welcome, entry free.

**And don't forget** – On the second Thursday of each month the Berkshire Moth Group meets at the Interpretation Centre, Instow Road, Earley everyone welcome. [www.berkshiremothgroup.co.uk](http://www.berkshiremothgroup.co.uk). The meetings start at 7.30 p.m. Meeting dates 14 Sep, 12 Oct, 9 Nov and 14 December, and **National Moth Night** is Saturday 23 September 2006: venue to be announced. Ring Grahame Hawker for information on 0118 986 8995 or 07796170689 nearer the time. Again, everyone welcome.

### **Bits and Pieces**

If you want an interesting morning on **Sunday 3 Sept**, you could go along to the O2O 10K race, starting at 9.00 a.m. at the Thames Valley Park (near the Wokingham Waterside Centre). To park comfortably, arrive earlier. The race route takes runners from Thames Valley Park, home of race sponsors Oracle Corporation, to The Oracle Shopping & Leisure complex in the heart of Reading town centre and back. In aid of Childline. [www.readingo2o10k.com](http://www.readingo2o10k.com)

Websites for children: [www.bbc.co.uk/nature/reallywild](http://www.bbc.co.uk/nature/reallywild) and [www.epa.gov/globalwarming/kids](http://www.epa.gov/globalwarming/kids)

Website for wildlife gardening: [www.wildaboutgardens.org](http://www.wildaboutgardens.org)

EEG Committee Members can be found on [www.earleyenvironmentalgroup.co.uk](http://www.earleyenvironmentalgroup.co.uk) under Contacts, or phone 0118 962 0004 for details.

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](mailto: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](mailto:e.a.wild@reading.ac.uk).

### **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 appear every 2 weeks at the Silverdale Centre on the second & fourth Fridays 5pm to 8.15pm If you're interested they have a website giving dates

[www.truefood.coop/truefood.html](http://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](mailto:enquiries@petfayre-reading.co.uk).

**Our thanks to the Oracle Corporation, Thames Valley Park, for printing our newsletter**