

C.R.O.W.

Conserve Reading on Wednesdays

NEWSLETTER

BOX 14. ACORN BOOKSHOP, 17 CHATHAM STREET, READING RG1 7JF.



No.7

Affiliated to the BTCV

Most Wednesdays, whatever the weather CROW carry out PRACTICAL CONSERVATION TASKS in and around the Reading area. There are usually two pick-ups from the front of Reading Railway Station: one at 10.00 am, and one at 1.30 pm. If you can only come out for half a day that's fine! Look out for a grey minibus with Berkshire Conservation Volunteers stickers on the side.

WELCOME TO CROW'S SEVENTH NEWSLETTER!

With summer fading fast, welcome to CROW's autumn newsletter. Over the summer months, to avoid disturbing wildlife, the work programme is a bit restricted. But know, as the leaves start to fall and the blackberries ripen, CROW can be seen launching itself with renewed enthusiasm, saws, spades, sandwiches and kettles, into unsuspecting local ponds, woods and wildlife areas.

We have a busy programme lined up, with tasks ranging from footpath work and school nature areas to pond clearing, tree planting and coppicing..... so why not make Wednesdays a day to get out into the fresh air and do some good leisurely, healthy work Everyone is welcome!

Looking forward to seeing you on a task....

CONTACT No's

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NATURAL HISTORY COURSES

Reading university is running several one term, day or evening courses including: Intro. to Nat. History, Intro. to Ornithology, Birds in Winter, Flora of the Thames Valley and Chilterns, Field Ecology, Fungi, Butterflies, Birdsong etc etc ... For details, phone the centre for extramural education on Rdg. 875234



CONSERVATION COURSES IN BERKSHIRE

Coming Soon: Ponds (Ecology and Management), Basic Tree Felling, Introduction to Conservation, Hedgelaying and Tree Planting Details through CROW or Tel. Rdg. 668636

OTHER LOCAL GROUPS: Berkshire Conservation Volunteers (BeC)

Tel: Rdg 874034 or 668636

Reading Urban Wildlife Group. (RUWG)
Tel: Trish on Rdg 68431



POND DIPPING AT RUSCOMBE

Having worked at Ruscombe Pond (Twyford) during the winter, removing overhanging branches and dredging out silt, dead leaves and other debris (including old bicycles, fence posts and a dead tortoise) we decided to go back and make sure our efforts had not been in vain.



We assembled on the pond side one Monday evening in June, equipped with nets, trays and identification guides. The first thing we noticed was the height of the water, which following a wet spring was encroaching onto the grassy margins of the pond and had completely submerged what had been a fire place in winter. The removal of overhanging branches had let in more light and a rich flora had developed in a shallow sheltered area behind a small, dense reed bed. Freshwater Crowfoot and Starwort were both common, the latter forming large beds in the deeper centre of the pond, which we had dredged. Emergent plants included Water Plantain and Purple Loosestrife.

The pond was divided into sectors and after haggling over who should sample what, we started pond-dipping in earnest, and found that after five minutes intensive sampling, we had caught enough animals to occupy us for the rest of the evening.



The most abundant animals were the Lesser Water-boatmen, medium-sized streamlined insects with large eyes and long legs. These with their larger cousins the Backswimmers were the most numerous predators caught. We also found many Water Hog-lice, which look like aquatic Woodlice and feed on the debris at the bottom of the pond. In the water column large numbers of Water-fleas were caught, together with the ghostly Phantom-midge larvae, a colourless predator which hangs in the water column, bouyed up by kidney-shaped airsacs in the abdomen and feeding on plankton. The most productive areas were the weed beds, which yielded Snails, Flatworms, Leeches and an enormous, evil-looking Dragonfly nymph.



In all twenty-one types of animal were found, compared with just a Water Hog-lice and Blood Worms before work began. Of these twenty one types of animal, eleven were carnivorous, and in order to support so many predators, the pond must be very productive.

As we trooped happily into a near-by pub, we were able to reflect on a job well done and the amazing fact that no one had fallen in. All in all it was a very successful and enjoyable evening.



WORK PROGRAMME

September 16th	Ruscombe Pond	Pond clearing and willow suppression
September 23rd	Kennet Valley Primary School	Finish digging out a pond, and putting in a pond liner.
September 30th *	California Country Park	Footpath work and/or Fencing
October 7th *	California Country Park	Continuing the previous task
October 14th	Micklands Primary School	Working in the school copse and nature area
October 21st	Malden Erleigh Woods	Clearing scrub prior to tree planting
October 28th	Dinton Pastures Country Park	Coppicing Alder
November 4th *	Ufton Court	Woodland Improvement
November 11th	Malden Erleigh Woods	Coppicing
November 18th	Dinton Pastures Country Park	Coppicing Alder around one of the lakes
November 25th	Holybrook Island	Scrub clearing and tree planting
December 2nd	Malden Erleigh Woods	Tree Planting
December 9th	Holybrook Island	Planting Alder trees

* Morning Pickup Only



If you want to come along ... then wear old clothes, wellies or strong boots, a packed lunch if you intend staying the whole day, and either waterproofs or suntan lotion depending on the weather! It's a help if you phone beforehand, especially if you want to be picked up at lunchtime. If you can't reach us the come along anyway!

We provide ... drinks, transport, biscuits, tools, any training required, mud and brambles where possible, and enlightening, garrulous conversation. It's slimming, it's muscle building, it's ideologically sound, it's more didactic than a dole queue, more mediciferous than meditation, it's on Wednesdays, it's who's got my dictionary ? ... See you there!

