

# ONGAR WILDLIFE SOCIETY

## *An Occasional Newsletter*

September, 2006

### **Number 11**

The summer seems to have flown by! I hope you all enjoyed the holiday season, and it will not be long now before our winter meetings start. OWLS met on several occasions during the summer months. The AGM in June was enjoyed by everyone. The afternoon was sunny and warm, Anne and Rob's garden looked beautiful and the setting was ideal for the picnic. The business of the AGM did not take long and all Committee members were re-elected for 2006/2007. Following the picnic Rob set us all thinking with a quiz or two.

### **Sunday, 23<sup>rd</sup> July – BIRD RINGING**



Following on from the talk in April by Jacqui Clark from the BTO on the value of ringing for bird conservation, on a hot and sunny July day very early in the morning several members arrived at Repentance Cottage for a bird ringing demonstration by Tony Harbott. The nets were soon set and it was not long before a juvenile Blue Tit and Great Tit flew into one of them. After careful extraction of the birds from the net, the procedure of ringing commenced. Tony explained that ringing was necessary in order to monitor movements and numbers of species of birds.

During the morning a total of 22 birds were ringed – a Blackbird, Song Thrush, Greenfinch, 2 juvenile wrens and several Blue Tits and Great Tits – juvenile, and adult male and female. We were shown how to tell the sex and age of a bird by its plumage. Each bird ringed was recorded in a book giving the number on the ring, the age of the bird if possible, the date and time of the ringing, and finally the bird was weighed. The bird was then set free, some of them flying straight off but it was necessary to place the young wrens directly into a nearby hedge, their normal habitat. One Great Tit voiced its disapproval at being handled but generally speaking the birds appeared not to be stressed by their experience.

As the morning was so hot, by about 11.00 a.m. birds were beginning to settle down for their siesta so the nets were removed and we finished the morning with coffee and a chat. It had been an informative morning and quite an experience to watch the procedure of the ringing.

We wish to thank Tony Harbott and Albert Phillimore, both licensed bird ringers, for their organization and assistance.

### **WOODLAND TRUST NEWS**

If you are a member of the Woodland Trust you will know that the Trust have recently purchased 100 acres of land near Theydon Bois. This land is unplanted and the Trust need to raise £150,000 for the initial site workings and tree planting. It is an exciting project for the Trust as the area is so near to London and it is important that this land remains undeveloped and available for the movement of wildlife and for the enjoyment of local people. The site is situated on the left-hand side of the B172 when travelling from Abridge to Theydon Bois just before the M11 passes over the B-road.

If you want to become involved individually then please contact John Brown, MICFor., Regional Development Officer, The Woodland Trust, 1b Tenter Lane, Finedon, Wellingborough, Northants, NN9 5JH or Tel. 01933 681295. No decision has yet been made as to whether the tree planting will be carried out by volunteers but it is expected that volunteers may be used during National Tree Week which is in November, so if you want to help get in touch.

### **YOUR FAVOURITE TREE**

More news about trees: The Epping Forest District Council are asking individual persons and Societies e.g. The Ramblers Association, Wildlife Societies, to vote for their favourite tree in the area. A photograph of the tree and a short note of why you think the tree is a major contribution to the landscape within the District should be sent in to Mr. C. Neilan, Planning Department, Epping Forest District Council, Civic Offices, High Street, Epping CM16 4BZ. The entries will then go before a panel of judges who will chose on merit fifty trees which will then be listed and preserved for the future. Entries close December 2006.

### **TREE AND HEDGE SURVEY**

Moves are afoot once more to commence this survey. At present a Steering Group is being formed to discuss the Ongar Tree and Landscape Strategy organized by the Assistant Landscape Officer of the Epping Forest District Council. It is hoped that this survey will be able to progress from here and that our members will be able to participate in this exciting project.

### **OWLS AT RUTLAND BIRD FAIR**

Saturday, 20<sup>th</sup> August 2006, overcast with the prospect of rain. Not ideal weather for the Ongar Wildlife Society coach outing to the Rutland Bird Fair. However, suitably prepared, forty-four members and friends, mostly first-timers, arrived through narrow lanes close to Rutland Water.

The Fair was a surprise to those on their first visit. Lasting three days, the Fair occupied six large marquees housing about 300 trade stalls. There were further marquees offering almost continuous lectures on birds and bird watching. One marquee was dedicated to art, the art of the bird, with paintings, woodcarving, sculpture, and engraved glass. There were the usual opportunities at Rutland Water for observing birds, either from hides or from a boat.

The Fair catered for all interests from the garden watcher to the international bird sleuth. The trade stalls offered huge variety. You could buy garden bird food, sometimes quite exotic, bird feeders, clothes for watching birds in comfort, binoculars and telescopes, and books for reading about birds, again in comfort. You could organise a holiday to watch birds, and not just in England, the Orkney Islands or Spain, but in Gambia, Ethiopia or the Falkland Islands, for example, and wherever you intended to go you could buy a book on the birds of the locality. The Fair also highlighted interesting areas for new technology; portable logging MP3 players; global position systems; next boxes with internal cameras; bat detectors (yes, some mammals do get a look in!), with sophisticated systems costing more than £3,000. For anyone with an interest in birds, a great day out!

### **RUTLAND WATER RESERVOIR**

If you chose to visit the hides of Rutland Water there was plenty of opportunity to watch the waders, ducks and maybe even Ospreys. Lagoon No. 1 provided a large hide and indoor viewing area with the use of a telescope for the Osprey nest. In May 1999 a ringed male released as a juvenile from Rutland Water in 1997 returned to the reserve. More male birds arrived and in 2001 the birds gained a mate. The three eggs in a nest near the reservoir subsequently hatched and the first Osprey in central England for 150 years was born. The breeding male returned on the 24<sup>th</sup> March this year and with his mate of the previous three years raised three healthy chicks in 2006. A total of 14 osprey chicks have now fledged from nests in Rutland since 2001.

Lagoon No. 2 and 3 provided another Osprey hide as well as a Shoveler hide, a Grebe hide and several more. In these hides you could also see many Little Terns, Cormorants, Geese, Grey Heron, Lapwings, Water Rail, Crested Grebes and Little Grebes, Coot etc. and the shrill whistle of the Kingfisher prepared you for his fast flight across the water.

### **COUNTRYCARE 20 NOT OUT.**

In April 2006 Countrycare entered its twentieth year. Initially set up to run for three years, to achieve a score is very commendable!

In April 1986 a few staff in Epping Council's Planning Department conceived the idea. With partnership funding from the Countryside Commission, one member of staff, Andrew Graham, was appointed Countryside Manager. The group has grown over the intervening years. A look at the current activities, and an examination of many local stiles and footbridges, for example, will indicate the valuable achievements of the group towards our pleasure in the countryside. Congratulations to Countrycare!

## FUTURE PROGRAMME

A reminder of the winter programme:

Monday, 18<sup>th</sup> September – **Tollesbury Wick Nature Reserve** by Jonathan Smith.

Monday, 16<sup>th</sup> October – Restoration of our Woodlands by Simon Leatherdale.

Monday, 20<sup>th</sup> November – Bees and Wasps of Essex – Peter Harvey.

Monday, 11<sup>th</sup> December – End to End – The Flowers of the Mediterranean by  
Dr. Peter Brandham.

NB. add: venue

The Committee hope to organize a trip to Tollesbury Wick Nature Reserve at a later date, so make sure you do not miss the introductory September talk.

### **OWLS Committee**

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Tanya Welford (Secretary) Tel. 01277 363947

John Turnbull (Treasurer)

Allan Cook (Programme Secretary)

Anne Brooks

Richard Cook

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