

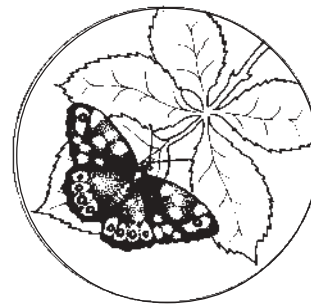
THE ESSEX FIELD CLUB

HEADQUARTERS:

THE PASSMORE EDWARDS MUSEUM,

ROMFORD ROAD, STRATFORD,

LONDON, E15 4LZ



NEWSLETTER NO. 2

November, 1991

EDITOR'S NOTE

Conservationists in Essex seem to be doomed to fight an endless battle against the motorway. Planners seem to go out of their way to favour Essex with their unending concrete ribbons. Some of their latest schemes involve the widening of the M25 with adjacent local roadways and, horror of horrors, a mooted M12 from the Ingatestone/Chelmsford area down to the M25. They don't seem to have settled on a route, but rest assured, wherever the pin comes down it will be extremely destructive.

Anyone who would like more information on the anti-road campaign should contact Eric Robinson, 32 Robin Hood Road, Brentwood.

As if that's not enough, we have the tunnel link re-routed and coming through, over or under the Rainham Marshes S.S.S.I. My advice to investors is don't buy B.T. - invest in concrete.

Thanks to the contributors to this newsletter. I hope members will continue to provide enough material to make this an informative, interesting and regular mailing.

Del Smith, Editor, 12 Tring Gardens, Harold Hill, Romford, Essex, RM3 9EP.
Telephone Ingrebourne 75555.

ESSEX NATURALIST

Members will be pleased to know that the last Essex Naturalist 'Essex Elm' (No. 10), written by Mark Hanson, has recently won an Essex Amenity Society Award. The book came second, winning a prize of £100 for the Field Club.

The money will go towards publishing the next Essex Naturalist due out later this year. This volume will be concerned with the history and ecology of Epping Forest. There are chapters on butterflies, higher plants, lichens, mosses, liverworts, bees, wasps and spiders with much about the history of the Forest. Mark Hanson is contributing many of the chapters, but specialists will also provide accounts of their own area of interest. Specialist contributors include Geoffrey Kibby, Professor D. L. Hawksworth, Ken Adams and Oliver Rackham. The book will be rather larger than usual, possibly around 190 pages, and therefore rather more expensive than usual to produce. In order to help defray some of the costs, a hard-back copy is being produced, priced at £16.50, available by prior subscription. Field Club members, as usual, will get a copy of the card-cover version 'free' with their annual subscription, but should any member require or would like the hard-back copy, this will be available (in lieu of the card-cover copy) for the extra £8.00. If any member would like the hard-

back copy would they please send a cheque for this amount to:-

Mr John Bath
34 Chestnut Avenue
Billericay
Essex
CM12 9JF

stating that it is for the hard-back edition of the Epping Forest book. Please include your name and address.

SOUTH-EAST ESSEX FOX WATCH. 22ND MAY, 1991

At approximately 7.15 p.m. I and a band of six hopefuls had settled into position in the hope of an entertaining evening watching a family of foxes.

However, as the cubs had been pretty elusive this spring I was a little apprehensive, but confident that one or more of the adults would show as normal.

Time passed with only the antics of numerous rabbits, amongst a fine display of Meadow Saxifrage, keeping our spirits up.

A cold one and a half hours later it was time to admit defeat - no Vulpine voyeurism tonight.

Half the 'watchers' departed and just before the rest of us did likewise an adult fox popped its head out of a bush some distance away.

That, I'm afraid was that. A rather disappointing evening, but you can't win them all.

John Wright

A BOTANICAL RAMBLE

Complete the story by filling in the various English colloquial names of the plants indicated by their initials! (Answers on page 6)

"Very early one morning, R..... (whose name means remembrance) set out for a walk. There was a beautiful sunrise, but in spite of this MG it was quite chilly and over her FPs she wore a LC together with one of her Hs Her WFs were held firmly in place on her golden LTs with a LH-P

There were very few people about so early in the morning, but she did meet a CS-.-. with a very black face and a shepherd who was looking for his SP which he had lost the previous evening amongst the sheep's S He was

anxious to find it quickly because the red sunrise had given him a SW that bad weather would soon arrive and it contained his M..... (mostly in P&H) and a B of K as well as his PMB She helped him to find it then continued on her way. She came to a steep hillside where, far above her, she could see Esau's younger brother's house; so she took a short-cut and climbed over J's L into a MS with the scent of wild flowers. Glancing at the SS she checked the time. As it was still early she decided to sit and eat her BC and drink her BW

By now, the clouds were beginning to gather so she hurried on past the bog, avoiding the DFT and past the gate where the old crone lived. She began to feel afraid as the clouds grew darker and she imagined she saw the WH coming towards her. She thought she could smell the horrible SH that the old crone always carried with her, then she saw CEs gleaming at her from the edge of the dark wood. She screamed in terror when she thought she heard the DHs ringing but then she heard the sound of HH and suddenly a GS galloped around the bend on a white charger and lifted her to the safety of his saddle. "Sit on my LL " he said, "and I will take you home." They galloped away, his faithful BH racing behind until they came to the castle courtyard where her sister BEM was waiting. She got down and thanked him for rescuing her. He replied, "KML " (which she did) and "FMN " (which she didn't) and then rode away. The two young ladies were very hungry by this time so they went indoors and were soon sitting down to their B&E which was followed by a bowl of C&C"

Colin Plant

BAT ROOST VISIT, 29TH JUNE, 1991

Ten members and friends met in Maldon on this wet Friday to count Pipistrelles emerging from a roost. It is at this time of the year that female bats gather together in nursery colonies for the purpose of raising their young. At this particular, isolated site, the bats start to collect in May and peak numbers are reached in mid-June. By late June, the total is usually about 150 less - these bats have presumably formed a separate colony elsewhere.

In 1990, this site held the largest colony in England - 1049 bats were counted in mid-June. This year the peak was 969 on 10th June. At the meeting, 831 bats were counted leaving the roost. These were all adult females, a higher total could be achieved in mid-July when baby bats were starting to emerge for the first time. In addition, four Brown Long-Eared bats were observed in a tight cluster in an outbuilding.

A third species seen was a captive Serotine. In this year's cold spring, 6 large bats (2 Noctules, 4 Serotines) have been found grounded. They have all been starving, probably as a result of the

poor weather between early April and June. This number is in marked contrast to previous years when very few 'large' bats have been found. The captive individual required the amputation of a wing since a cat had broken the upper arm and forearm. It is now apparently thriving in captivity, eating approximately 50 mealworms a day.

It was disappointing that such a successful meeting could not be attended by more members - of those present, only 5 were members of the Field Club.

John Dobson

BAT WALK, 12TH JULY, 1991

The annual bat walk was held again at Hanningfield Reservoir on a blustery, overcast evening. Attention was concentrated on the sheltered side of a conifer plantation, adjacent to the water. By 9.30p.m. the meeting had already been an entomological success with thousands of mosquitoes in attendance. Shortly afterwards, the first Pipistrelles were observed, followed by 6 Serotines which flew close to our heads until darkness, and the threat of the car park being locked, intervened. Again a successful meeting attending by 4 members and 3 non-members.

John Dobson

A LOST GEM

Early in 1990 I was given a small quantity of Corncockle seed (*Agrostemma githago*) which in late April I broadcast, scratching the soil a little to cover it. It was sown in a strip of unplanted land dividing potatoes from Linseed. (The Linseed is a new crop called Cambridge Blue, which on a June morning flowers only to disappear by midday and then repeat the process the following day.) The dividing strip is left to enable the potato crop to grow and then collapse without smothering the neighbouring crop.

It is always my intention to keep the strip clear of weeds, but I seldom succeed and last year was no different in this respect.

A small number of Corncockle seeds germinated and easily held their own against vigorous Redshanks (*Polygonum persicaria*), growing to a height of about 18 inches and flowering well into August. The seeds from that successful flowering I have planted this year in the same situation and with the same results.

After a crop of Potatoes, the land is not ploughed so that any tubers remaining are exposed and hopefully killed by frost, after which the woodpigeons get a free meal.

The next crop is winter wheat, which, unusually, was not sprayed with the autumn herbicide normally applied to kill Blackgrass (*Alopecurus myosuroides*). It does in fact also take out most seedling weeds.

Because the land was not ploughed and hence the seeds inevitably buried, a small number germinated and survived until I saw them in late spring, just in time to avoid spraying them with a herbicide which I use primarily to control Cleavers (*Galium aparine*).

What I found most interesting this year, was the greatly increased vigour of the plants, no doubt because they were autumn germinated. When I first saw them there was no doubt as to their survival potential as the plants were the same height as the wheat and all season they maintained their position, flowering much earlier so that they had fruited before August ready to be harvested with the grain and consequently mixed with it for the next crop.

In the past this posed great problems because the seed is poisonous and no doubt too much in the grain would make it unsaleable. The farmer lost not only through poisonous contamination but also from severe competition to the crop from the growing plants.

The Corncockle's present scarcity is probably due to modern seed cleaning techniques which take most, if not all, of the weed seed out of the grain before it is sown. Because it does not require a dormancy period before germinating, the reserve of the seed in the soil is probably very low compared with plants like the Poppy, which has a vast and long-lived soil population. But the most important single cause of the decline of these plants is the great efficiency of today's herbicides which readily kill the young plants. I can clearly remember the early days of modern weed control, when every product seemed to claim good control of what are today's rarities such as Cornflower, Venus' Looking Glass and, indeed, the Corncockle.

For both the above reasons I do not expect to see more than the occasional plant in my crops - thankfully.

David L. Bloomfield

WHAT'S ON

Fri. 22nd Nov. General Meeting 1364. "Owls" Talk by Phil Eckett at Merrymeade Conference Centre, Sawyers Hall Lane, Brentwood at 7.30 p.m.

Sat. 14th Dec. Botany Meeting. Identifying Lichens by John Skinner at Southend Museum. Bring specimens for identification. Meet 1.30 p.m. Phone John Skinner, Southend 330214 for details about car parking.

Thurs. 26th Dec. Boxing Day Ramble. Marks Hill and the Plotlands. Meet Westley Heights Country Park, Car Park TQ 682867 near Crown Public House at 11.00 a.m. 21/2 or 41/2 miles depending on the weather. If wet, boots necessary.

NEW MEMBERS

Since the last Newsletter, the following members have joined the Club.

We wish them many happy days with us.

Mr Amy	Wickford
Miss D. Howard	Chelmsford
Miss E. Rothney	Loughton

Mildred Parker

FOR SALE

National Geographical Magazines - 115 copies dated between 1951 and May 1961, including 28 maps. Offers to Sheila Lewswell, 0277-353917.

Rosemary	R
morning glory (bindweed)	MG
flannel petticoats (hoary mullain)	FPS
lady's cloak (lady's smock)	LC
bonnets (columbine)	B
white frills (daisy)	WF
lady's tresses	LT
lady's harpin (field scabious)	LH
chimney sweeper (ribwort plantain)	CS
shepherd's purse	SP
sorrel	S
shepherd's warning (scarlet pimpernel)	SW
money (yellow rattle)	M
pennies and half pennies (yellow rattle)	P&H
bunch of keys (cowslip)	BoK
poor man's baccy (coltsfoot)	PMB
Jacob's ladder (Solomon's seal)	JL
meadow sweet	MS
shepherd's sundial (scarlet pimpernel)	SS
baley cake (shining cranesbill)	BC
beth wine (black bindweed)	BW
devil's fly-trap (sundew)	DFT
witches broom	WH
stinking hellebore	SH
cats' eyes (herb robert)	CE
death bells (snake's-head fritillary)	DH
horses hooves (marsh marigold)	HH
gallant soldier (kew daisy/common daisy)	GS
lap love (bindweed)	LT
black horehound	BH
blue-eyed Mary	BEM
kiss-me-love	KML
forget-me-not	FGMN
bacon and eggs (greater birds' foot trefoil)	H&E
collins and cream (great hairy willowherb)	C&C