THE ESSEX FIELD CLUB

DEPARTMENT OF LIFE SCIENCES

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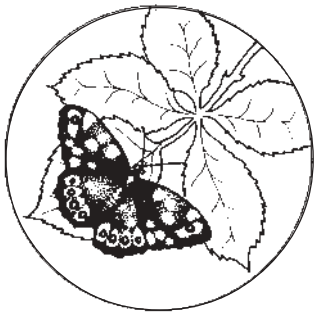

NEWSLETTER NO. 20 February 1997

WHY CONSERVE NATURE? by Ken Hill

Some thoughts to explain the title:

1. Destruction, once happened, may be difficult to correct or replace, in many cases it will be impossible, and we have no knowledge now of what may be required in the future.

2. Each species lost, impoverishes the living world, and denies to all the opportunity of enjoyment of the natural world by that bit more.

3. To keep a variety of wildlife. Farming systems rely on natural processes, e.g. seed germination depends on adequate water supply, warmth, day length. Many crops rely on Nitrogen fixing bacteria in the soil for that element, Calcium, Phosphorus, Potassium, Sulphur and Oxygen also. Oilseed Rape needs insect pollination, or there is no seed to harvest - insects too have their requirements, including NOT being poisoned by farm chemicals.

4. To maintain a pleasant environment for human enjoyment; one's own family, the community and the world at large.

5. To enhance the landscape with features that facilitate country pursuits and past-times such as riding, shooting, fishing, hill walking and climbing.

6. To retain our heritage as a living record of the evolution of the countryside, and man's ancestry. Fundamental, better than a museum record, tapes or books.

7. To steward the land, so that one can hand on a green and pleasant land to future generations. NO human being has the sole right to change the natural environment, we all hold it in trust, and have a duty to look after it properly according to the level of knowledge available to us. We have no right to bleed the natural resources for short term gain.

Modern technology has provided the knowledge and materials to change the environment and extract materials in large quantities, greater variety and more rapidly than at any time previously. The efforts involved in obtaining the Earth's wealth for our requirements have brought much loss to the natural environment with creation of waste tips and spoil heaps from mining and quarrying, huge areas of monoculture which have reduced availability of habitat to wildlife, vast areas of urban development and road

construction that have further reduced natural habitat, drainage schemes that have reclaimed marsh and estuarial lands for farming or factory development, and the applications of enormous quantities of pesticides, herbicides and fertilisers that damage indiscriminately both harmful and beneficial insects, making it necessary to develop further experience and technology to overcome some of the effects of what has been destroyed.

The sterility often remaining after drainage schemes, river channeling, urban sprawl, factory development, and various farming changes have been implemented, reduce both animal and plant populations, in some cases to a level where the ability to survive as a species is lost because species viability has gone for ever.

As the species causing disasters to other life forms, we do not know for certain, exactly what effects we are causing. We may very well wipe out a species which at some future date might be required because of its ability to provide a drug, or fulfil some other function, about which we have as yet no knowledge. Insect species are increasingly recognised and used in the control of pest species, as with the beetle that eats the mealy bug parasite of the greenhouse, ladybird beetles that predate on aphids, and the moth whose caterpillars eat and thus control the spread of prickly pear cactus in Australia. Some insect somewhere may be the control of the fly that spreads trypanosomiasis in domestic cattle in Africa, or perhaps a bacterium may be found to control *Anopheles*, the malaria carrying mosquito. If we carry on with no regard for other species, we may not be able to replace the potential benefit we have lost.

All life forms are to some degree inter-related, our domestic stocks and strains derive from wild species, and to maintain hybrid vigour, it is necessary to be able to mate back to the original wild stock at some time. The chain of life passes from vegetation living on soil minerals and organisms, via various herbivorous animals to carnivorous animals (some of which will prey on others). At any stage death may intervene, when scavengers, bacteria and fungi will begin the process of re-cycling the nutrient materials.

It may be a sobering thought that flies and beetles of various species often take an active and important part in the pollination of plants, as do some species of bats and birds and oppossums.

Interruption of the web of life often brings unforeseen results, as an example is the human introduction of the myxomatosis virus into the rabbit population. With little to keep them in check, the coarser plant growths began to suppress many of the grassland species, an example is the reduction of wild Thyme, which brought reductions in ant colonies and the eventual extinction of the Large Blue butterfly. We have a hazy notion of parts of the web of life - perhaps we always will do - it is therefore rash to enter on practices which have not been thoroughly investigated. Which bacteria/invertebrates/plants/animals do we eliminate and which do we cultivate?

In May 1973 the Rare Breeds Survival Trust was set up by some concerned people including some breeders of livestock, who realised that once the genes forming a specific breed had been lost, they had gone for all time. It has been shown conclusively that it is necessary to back-cross, that is to mate back from time to time to the original gene pool. It is also impossible to say what qualities may be required in a future generation of stock. It would be foolish in the extreme to lose the original gene base.

The monitoring and study of wildlife can indicate the state of our environment, the health

of our surroundings. Lichens are widely recognised to be indicators of pollution levels, many other life forms are also known to be indicative of deteriorating conditions, as with the increasing fragility of raptorial birds' eggs and the resultant decline in a species numbers through the uptake in the foodchain of farm poisons such as polychlorinated hydrocarbons and biphenyls.

Can we afford to lose ANY species? We have a duty to conserve life and the species the world contains, to hand on to future generations, the world we ourselves inherited and which we hold in trust for future generations. They will not thank us for a sterile world depleted to only a few species useful for food.

This is not to say that there must be no attempt to control vectors of disease, malarial mosquitoes, ticks carrying scrub typhus, black rats carrying plague, are examples, but we should be more aware of the consequences of our actions, and very careful before we exterminate a species. The natural world is the basis for life itself, the environment on which we too, depend.

Reference also to the N.C.C. leaflet "Why conserve wildlife?"

PROSPECTING FOR PLEISTOCENE MACRO-MAMMALIAN REMAINS AT WALTON-ON-THE-NAZE, ESSEX IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Introduction

Large fossilised mammal bones have been collected from Walton-on-the-Naze, Essex for more than 750 years. The majority of these bones were collected in the period 1800-1850. This short note reviews some of the manuscript and published accounts and details some recent finds which confirm the source of much of this material.

History of Collecting

1) Pre 1800. The chronicler Ralph, who was Abbot of Coggeshall, 1207-18 wrote "In the time of King Richard, on the sea-shore, in a village called Edulfinesses [Walton] were found two teeth of a giant, of such prodigious bigness, that two hundred of such teeth might be cut out of one of them. These I saw at Cogshal, and handled with great admiration". William Camden (1695 p. 351) also refers to bones of giants being found at Walton at the beginning of the reign of Queen Elizabeth (1558-1603).

2) 1800-1820s. In the *Gentleman's Magazine* for 1803 (part II p. 1075) is an account of the discovery, following the collapse of part of the cliff, of an enormous animal which measured 30 feet. Some of the individual bones were up to 6 or 7 feet in length. Mr. J.Jackson of Colchester removed one tooth which weighed 7 pounds, was of square form and had several zigzag rows of laminae. John Hanson of Great Bromley Hall wrote his memoirs for the period 1768-1822; part of these have been published (Brown 1972 pp. 59-60). He recollected in a note, sandwiched between 1805 and 1806, picnics to the shore at Walton where "at extreme low water of the spring tide, after a violent storm had washed away the sand and shingle, a great collection of antediluvian remains of animals of immense size and the tusks and teeth if the elephant and rhinoceros, of the horns and heads of deer of extraordinary dimensions embedded in one mass of the lower soil" were discovered. He added that due to the fragility of the bones and submergence by the tide

and covering of sand and shingle collecting was not easy but as he employed a man "whose station was always on that beach" he was more fortunate than others. He concluded: "after keeping the collection 25 years, I have lately presented a large proportion of them to the Zoological Society and many are yet retained in my possession". James Parkinson was indebted to John Hanson for a view of his fossils, several correct drawings and a few specimens before he visited Walton. Parkinson visited Walton several times and mentioned finding part of an elk skull there in 1808 (Parkinson 1811 p.318). He added that "At Walton, by digging .... and by the action of the waves,,, the bones of several large animals have been discovered. These I have ascertained to belong to the ox, stag, Irish fossil elk, hippopotamus, rhinoceros and elephant...." (Parkinson 1811 p.366). He listed and described five hippopotamus teeth that he had obtained on his visits to Walton but did not state if they had been purchased or excavated by himself. One molar was figured by him (Parkinson 1811 pp. 375-6 and plate XXI fig. 1). Parkinson finally considered the deposit from which the bones came. He stated the bones he collected himself were found on the beach and others he was taught had come fom a blue clay but he doubted this because matter contained in the cavities of the fossils and the colour of the Walton bones suggested they had come from a calcareous earth similar to that in which elephant and hippopotamus bones from Kew, described by William Trimmer, had been found (Parkinson 1811 pp. 448-449). The auction catalogue of Dr. Henry Menish's musem included "a most singularly astonishing tusk and bones of an elephant found in the separation of a rock at Walton on the Naze, bythe enlightened possessor" (Kelham 1810). Lot 86 was described as a "matchless specimen of the tusk of a stupendous elephant, in fine preservation, the point nearly perfect, measuring in length 2 feet 2, and 13 inches in circumference, found in the separated rock, at Walton on the Naze" while lot 87 was two large and very fine grinders of the same elephant and lot 88 two more very fine elephant grinders and a tooth of a mammoth also from Walton.

3) 1830s and 1840s. Dr. James Mitchell (Manuscript Vol. V pp. 172-173) recorded that "fossil bones are found in great abundance by digging in the clay on the beach at Walton. When this place was visited on 24th December 1838 two lads were engaged one with a spade and the other with a pitch fork in search of bones. They said that they were often successful. An old man of the name of John Tyler residing at a cottage in Hall Lane employs himself in searching for bones. He had that very morning discovered the tusk of an elephant six feet one inch in length. He had discovered the other tusk some days before. He also had found a large vertebra. He had for sale a large store of bones, horns and teeth of the elephant, rhinoceros, hippopotamus, der, elk, ox and hyaena and of some other animals. In the interior of horns obtained by Mr. John Brown of Stanway were found valvata and planorbis recent fresh water shells. The old man said that the place where he found the elephant tusks was arable land about sixty years ago. It is now about 300 yards from the shore". John Brown collected from Walton in the 1830s. He stated (1845 pp. 523-524) that the deposit containing the numerous fossil bones of mammalia was at Walton Gap or Gass. His collection was examined, described and partly figured by Owen (1846 pp. 151-152; 247; 255-256; 260; 378-379; 390; 401-402; 410; 466; 489 and 510) and included hyaena, bear, tiger, mammoth, rhinoceros, hippopotamus, horse, ox, goat and deer. John Brown's manuscript entitled *A list of Fossil Mammalia discovered in the County of Essex*, which post dates 1846, is held in the Department of Palaeontology at the Natural History Museum. In addition Owen referred to a cranium with horn cores of a bison obtained by Mr. Warburton "from the fresh-water newer pliocene deposits at Walton" then suspended in the hall of the Geological Society of London (Owen 1846 p. 494). Owen stated the specimens obtained by John Brown came from "the till which forms part of the beach at Walton Naze on the Essex coast" (Owen 1846 p. 151). He later

referred to the remains as coming "from the lacustrine pleistocene bed exposed to the action of the sea on the coast of Essex at Walton" (Owen 1846 p. 247) and writing about mammoths "The village of Walton near Harwich is famous for the abundance of these fossils, which lie along the base of the sea-cliffs" (Owen 1846 p.255). On the Geological Survey 1" map (sheet 48 SE), surveyed by William Whitaker and published in 1876 "post glacial loam" is shown overlying London Clay along the coast at Walton between about TM 255215 and TM 260223. Whitaker (1877 pp. 17-18) briefly mentioned this loam or brickearth. Lydekker catalogued the collection of mammalian remains from Walton in the Natural History Museum. He lsited:- *Crocuta crocuta* (1855 I p. 73); *Bos primigenius* (1885 II p. 6,10,12,15,17); *Bison priscus* (1885 II p. 25); *Megaceros giganteus* (1885 II p. 85, 88); *Cervus elaphus* (1885 II p. 96); *Hippopotamus amphibius* (1885 II p. 280, 282, 283, 284, 285); *Equus caballus* (1886 III p. 80, 83, 85); *Rhinoceros leptorhinus* (1886 III p. 107, 109); *Rhinoceros megarhinus* (1886 III p. 117); *Palaeoloxodon antiquus* (1886 IV p. 129, 135) and *Mammuthus primigenius* (1886 IV p. 187, 202, 207, 208, 211). Sutcliffe *et al* (1979 pp. 9-10) reviewed the material from Walton. They listed hippopotamus; giant and red deer; ox or bison; narrow nosed-rhinoceros; straight-tusked elephant; mammoth; horse and hyaena, but concluded with a plea as to the "whereabouts of the lost interglacial site at Walton".

4) 1990s. On Friday 2nd August 1996 I visited Walton to take advantage of an exceptionally low tide. I first paid a visit to the Heritage Centre housed in the Old Life Boat House and was pleased to see on display more than twenty large pieces of bones, which included two elephant teeth. These had been found in May and June 1995 during the construction of the new East Terrace Breakwater which is almost opposite the museum at TM 260223. As the tide went out I searched the foreshore from the pier to the Terrace and was pleased to find at the eastern end of the Albion breakwater at TM 258218 a 30cm long fragment of a large limb bone and a small section of an elephant tusk which would have been about 20cm in diameter. It would appear the deposit containing the bones is still present but usually obscured by a thick cover of beach sand. This deposit contains hippopotamus and is presumably of Ipswichian Age (sensu Trafalgar Square). It would therefore be dated to stage 5e of the oxygen isotope record and be about 125,000 years old.

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W.H. George

ON MOTHS AND BEES ETC.

Mention was made in Newsletter No 19 of Elephant Hawk moth larvae found on Fuchsia. I have seen this a number of times although never as many as sixteen on one plant. Other members of the Lepidoptera have also happily taken to our garden plants. The Orange Tip butterfly *Anthocharis cardamines* lays eggs on Dames Violet *Hesperis matronalis* and other crucifers. Many moths are polyphagous but some have specific foodplants. Among these the Juniper Carpet, Blairs Shoulder Knot, Golden Plusia, Varied Coronet and Currant Clearwing have all adapted to cultivars found in our gardens.

This year I was pleased to find the small bee *Chelostoma campanularum* visiting the Nettle-leaved Bellflower *Campanula trachelium* growing near Manuden in N. W. Essex. As the name implies this bee is known to favour the Campanulaceae. A few days later I noted it visiting garden Campanulas in my own flower beds.

In the second article in E.F.C. Newsletter No 19 Peter Harvey mentions the scarce bee *Macropis europaea*, which is associated with Yellow Loosestrife *Lysimachia vulgaris*. This is indeed a rare plant in the county nowadays. Perhaps we should be looking for *M. europaea* on *Lysimachia punctata*, a very common garden plant of the same genus and of european origin. A long shot, perhaps, but the flight period and flowering times do overlap.

Similarly the search for the very scarce bee *Andrena hattorfiana* could include a look at the field trials of commercial seed firms in Essex. Acres of flowers attract many insects and the largest display of *Scabiosa* that I saw last year was in field trials near Colchester.

Surely there may be other interesting insects in our gardens. After all when we see bumble bees on our cultivated plants they have similarly forsaken their usual habitat for a source of nectar that we ourselves have provided.

Charles Watson

TWO RARE INSECTS FOUND IN 1996

A Solitary Wasp

On 19th July I happened to be working at the Priory Museum in Priory Park, Prittlewell, Southend. This is a half-timbered medieval building standing in the middle of a public park. It has a balcony from which one can closely inspect the structural timber. These dark-stained oak timbers are riddled with the past ravages of the Death-watch Beetle (*Xestobium rufovillosum*). During a short break from work I noticed several small black wasps busy flying to and fro from these sunlit beetle holes. They were obviously being used as nest holes for the wasp. Two specimens were taken and later tentatively identified as females of *Stigmus pendulus* [SPHECIDAE]. This was later confirmed by Steven Falk in November. *Stigmus pendulus* was unknown in Britain until G.W. Allen took specimens from Smarden in East Kent in August 1986. Later Mark Hanson took two females on Wanstead and Leyton Flats in Essex and most recently, records have come from a malaise trap in the grounds of Buckingham Palace (C.W. Plant - pers.comm.).

Three of these localities, Smarden, Priory Park and Buckingham Palace are large mature gardens. At Smarden a specimen was taken at a wooden post containing old beetle borings. On the continent where it is also rare, it has also been recorded from holes in the stems of, for instance, bramble. The cells constructed along each tunnel are provisioned with aphids.

A Bee-fly

On 4th August I led an Essex Field Club meeting to Cudmore Grove Country Park, Mersea Island. This was a hot sunny day and several insects of note were recorded. Whilst walking along the sandy strand edged with Shrubby Seablite and also, incidentally dotted with people sun bathing and eating lunch, I noticed what I immediately recognised as a beefly.

It was hovering a few inches above the hot bare sand. Beefly, it certainly turned out to be with the gorgeous name of *Villa modesta* (BOMBYLIDAE). This was the first Essex record of this distinctive fly since F. Smith recorded it from Southend (Verrall) in 1870.

Villa modesta is a nationally uncommon species of coastal dunes but quite widely distributed around the whole coast as far north as the Firth of Tay. Recent records are from Cornwall, Isle of Wight, Norfolk, Cumbria, Isle of Man, Mid Glamorgan, Dyfed, Lothian and Tayside. There are also a few inland records on sandy heathland. Little is known of the life history of this interesting fly. All British Bombylids are internal parasites of other insects. The common pattern-winged beefly (*Bombylius major*) is familiar in our gardens in early spring and parasitises the larvae of solitary bees. The only record of *Villa modesta* being reared from a host is that of Colonel Yerbury rearing an adult from an unspecified moth pupa found in sand at St. Helens in the Isle of Wight (around 1900).

Only a few weeks after the visit to Mersea Island, Laurence Watts, a local naturalist, showed me slides of unidentified flies he photographed on sandy ground at Bawdsey Point, north of Felixstowe in Suffolk (11th August). Again, these were *Villa modesta*. At this locality several males and females were observed. Laurence spent some time photographing and watching the females apparently egg-laying into hot bare sand. This behaviour has been noted before, both in this species and other Bombyliids. Egg laying was obviously assumed at first but it now turns out that the female is actually collecting sand particles which are stored in a chamber in the abdomen. The grains stick to the minute eggs, making them heavier. This allows the female to flick its eggs a much

greater distance, which is the way in which many members of this family (including *Bombylius major*) lay their eggs. This behaviour no doubt explains why no eggs have ever been found from this species. The behaviour has been termed ‘sanding’.

If you venture on sand dunes in 1997 keep a look out for this fascinating fly. It is quite distinctive, resembling the Common Beefly but without spotted wings. The body is hairy, brown and blackish. Females have paler bands on the abdomen. Males are much darker, the main part of the abdomen being black bordered by chestnut brown. At the tip there are two conspicuous white patches. Unlike the common Beefly, *Villa* has a much shorter tongue or proboscis and does not hover in front of flowers.

Yerbury, J.W. (1900)	Proc. Ent.. Soc. London p.22-23
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Drake, M (1996)	*Villa* and *Thyridanthrax* ballasts their eggs. Larger Brachycera Recording Scheme Newsletter No. 14
Oldroyd, H (1969)	Diptera Brachycera. Hndbks for the Ident. of Br. Insects Vol. IX pt. 4.
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Roger Payne

A SECOND ESSEX RECORD FOR THE RARE CHRYSID WASP *Chrysis gracillima*

The national importance of the East Thames Corridor in south Essex for its assemblage of rare and scarce invertebrate populations has become increasingly apparent over the last few years. I visited yet another exciting Thames Terrace gravel site several times this year. Along the side of the footpath that runs past the site there are a number of dead trunks, possibly of Elm. At one of these I collected several chrysid and solitary wasps. This included two females of the Nationally Vulnerable (RDB2) chrysid *Chrysis gracillima*, its probable host *Trypoxylon figulus* and the Nationally Scarce *Microdynerus exilis*. The only other county record for *Chrysis gracillima* is of a single female collected at the Broom Hill site near West Tilbury on the 15th June 1993 (see Newsletter No. 8, p.5).

The new site is near Gravelpit Farm between East Tilbury and West Tilbury villages in Thurrock. Although much of the site is evidently the result of past gravel workings, the presence of a rich flora and abundance in parts of the site of plants such as Lady's Bedstraw *Galium verum*, Subterranean Clover *Trifolium subterraneum* and Wild Clary *Salvia horminoides* suggests that the workings are very old and that some parts are remnants of the original grassland.

Further specimens of what I believe were also *Chrysis gracillima* were flying round a dead tree within the main site itself. Already a few brief visits have turned up other rare invertebrates such as the bee *Andrena labiata* (Nationally Scarce, Notable A) collecting pollen from *Geranium* flowers and a single siting of the impressive robber fly *Asilus crabroniformis* (Nationally Scarce Notable B) resting on cow dung.

Peter Harvey

HOW USEFUL ARE WILDLIFE CORRIDORS?

My thoughts and reservations on wildlife corridors are based on my knowledge of invertebrate populations and the restriction of many species to very small areas within sites.

Invertebrates often have very specific habitat requirements, e.g. bees may need south-facing slopes to provide a warm microclimate, areas of bare ground for nesting, flower-rich areas for foraging and many species even need specific plants to provide pollen. Solitary wasp species also have different requirements, for example nesting habits may demand different kinds of dead wood or various sandy, chalky or clay substrates. Spiders often have very specific habitat requirements, ranging from pioneer habitat such as open ground to scrub, ancient woodland, leaf litter, old grassland, heathland, etc. Many invertebrates have particular prey requirements and so will only be found where these occur. The unfolding of the ecological requirements of the Large Blue butterfly (too late to save it from extinction in Britain) illustrates the complex needs of many invertebrates, yet in most cases we know very little about these needs.

Many of the scarcer and more restricted invertebrate populations do not seem to be able to move from one site to another easily. For example we have in Essex examples of species of spider which are widespread in some southern counties but which survive in our county apparently as relic populations. This seems to be a result of the extent of habitat loss and fragmentation that has taken place, particularly to old grassland and heathland.

It seems logical to me that a wildlife corridor will only be useful to those invertebrates that can find their habitat requirements within it. Migration along the corridor will depend on these habitat requirements being available at a number of places along the corridor close enough to allow natural movement. This is evidently particularly important when suitable habitats are not available outside the corridor because the surroundings are developed for industry, housing or intensive agriculture. The value of wildlife corridors is therefore likely to be limited by the habitats available within it. A variety of habitats will help species to survive and move on as natural succession makes one part of the corridor unsuitable. But even when the corridor contains a variety of habitats, succession will inevitably take place and open areas will soon disappear. Grassland areas will scrub up, their flowers will disappear and open sunny areas will become shaded out. Once this happens I would suggest the value of the corridor to many invertebrates is lost. The problem is compounded because wildlife corridors are usually very narrow strips of land and open areas will disappear much more quickly than in most other wildlife sites. Management will be needed to maintain the variety of habitats and this has far-reaching implications for wildlife trusts and local authorities. Maintaining the value of many corridors is likely to be difficult because the rate of succession will make frequent management work necessary and access along the length of the corridor may well be difficult.

I therefore believe that it is very important to be realistic about the value of wildlife corridors. We should not assign too much importance to them in wildlife planning and Local Plans without careful assessment and a recognition of their limited value and dependence on management. The future of nature conservation within the county depends not only on the identification and protection of sites of nature conservation importance but also on the survival and adequate management of intervening habitats to maintain variety.

Wildlife corridors demand just as much ecological understanding as any wildlife site and should be the subject of detailed survey work for invertebrates and other kinds of wildlife. I would welcome further comments and discussion on the value of wildlife corridors in the Newsletter.

Peter Harvey

RED CAGE FUNGUS APPEARS IN BRAINTREE

In mid-September 1996 a specimen of fungus was shown to Jeremy Ison by a member of the local council, who had received it from a resident of Braintree. Mr Malcolm Lockwood of 17 John Ray Street had found it growing in his garden at the end of a row of runner beans. Jeremy thought it was the Red Cage fungus *Clathrus ruber* and told Tony Boniface, who contacted Mr Lockwood and went to photograph another specimen on 5th October 1996.

This relation of the Stinkhorn is a rare visitor to southern England and has only been recorded 62 times in the British Isles before 1995. It is a Mediterranean species which may be taking advantage of the warmer climate of recent years. Readers should watch out its mesh of lattice-like red spongy arms. Like the Stinkhorn it grows from an egg and attracts flies with a foul smelling mucilage

Tony Boniface

CHURCHYARD RARITY

On a visit to Dovercourt on 14th September 1996 I found what appeared to be an *Agaricus* species in the churchyard of the local church. However it had white gills and turned out to be *Leucoagaricus subcretaceous* (Bon in Bon & van Haluwyn). The fungus is illustrated in Fungi of Switzerland Volume 4 by Breitenbach and Kranzlin. Its identity was eventually confirmed by Alick Henrice and now resides in the herbarium at Kew. It appears to be a new record for Essex. It was growing in short grassland near the church, demonstrating once again the value of our churchyards as a refuge for fungi.

Tony Boniface

WHATS ON: ESSEX FIELD CLUB

FEBRUARY

Saturday 8th **General Meeting 1410**. "The Ice Age in East Anglia" talk by Gerald Lucy at 3.00pm. Red Cross Hall, London Road, Chelmsford (car park entrance in Writtle Road).

Sunday 16th **Bird Group**. Visit to Bradwell Bird Observatory by courtesy of the Essex Birdwatching Society. Park at TM 024078. Meet at 9.45am. Details from John Bath (01277) 651890.

MARCH

Saturday 15th **Annual General Meeting 117**. Red Cross Hall, London Road, Chelmsford (car park entrance in Writtle Road) at 3.00pm followed by address by Vice President Colin Plant on an insect topic.

Sunday 23rd **Bird Group**. Woodpecker search in Weald Park. Meet car park by cricket pitch. TQ 574940 at 10.00am. Leader David Williams (01245) 225119.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE NEXT NEWSLETTER

Please send contributions for the next Newsletter, due out early May, to the Editor, Mr Peter Harvey, 9 Kent Road, Grays, RM17 6DE by the end of March. Remember that the production of the Newsletter depends on contributions from members. I am sure that many members must have news, observations or the results of fieldwork that would be of interest to others. If text has been typed on a PC computer then a disk with the file would be very helpful.

ESSEX FIELD CLUB NOTELETS

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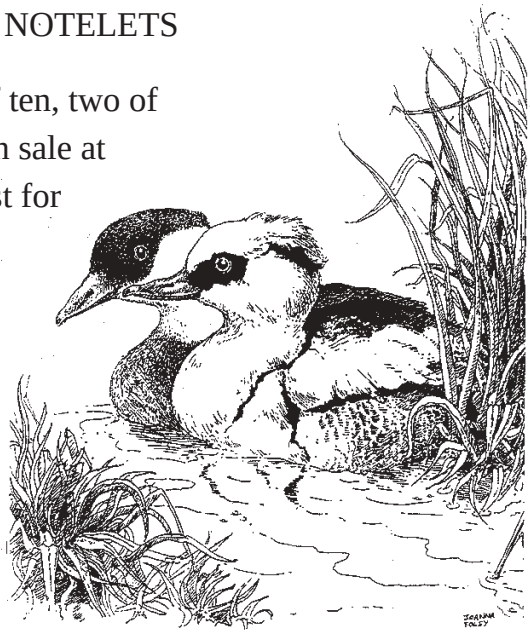

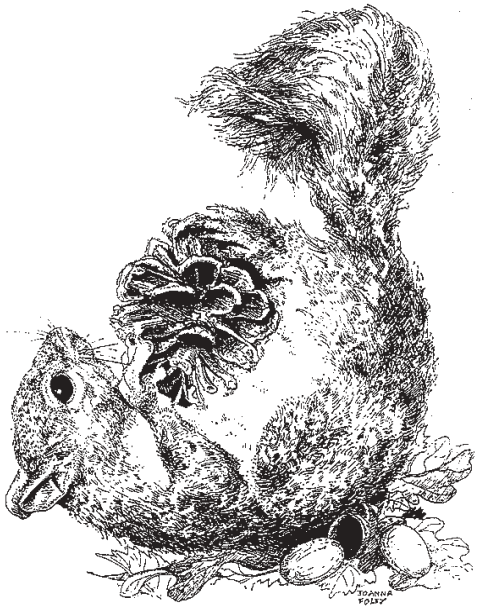

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