

November 2021

COP26: WHAT'S NEXT FOR US?

There's no escaping it. After the Glasgow conference climate change and the many inter-connected environmental impacts are an unavoidable reality and there's a growing urgency about doing something about it.

At WildCookham we have decided that we need to step a little outside our brief to get a discussion going in Cookham – about what we as individuals, as local groups and as a community can do about it.

We have created space on our website (www.wildcookham.org.uk)

where we can all put out ideas – large and small – and we'll be looking at whether we encourage others to help create a forum where we can join up all our efforts. Watch this space.



Thursday 25th November, 7PM

Pinder Hall, Cookham Rise

Join us at

Let's Celebrate!

Celebrate our wild gardeners - Hear about our successes and our plans – and hear local naturalist Brian Clews describe some of the rarer wildlife we find in Cookham

Register at www.meetup/wildcookham/

THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN: KEEPING UP THE PRESSURE

Lars Ahlgren, Lynne Peperell and Caroline Collins, our team working with the Parish Council's Neighbourhood Plan working party, continue to put in the hours to ensure that the plan places the required high priority on environmental aspects. The second consultation phase has taken place and comments from the public and local groups are being considered. We remain concerned that the traditional approach to neighbourhood plans fails to address the now urgent environmental issues which, given the 15-year term of the plan, should be front and central. We will keep up the pressure.

GARDENS GET WILDER

Despite the difficulties posed by Covid we held another summer Wild About Gardens season. With more than 110 gardens now in the Awards scheme we were delighted to have several gardeners come forward to upgrade their awards from previous years by adding new wildlife-friendly features to their gardens. The Awards are due to be presented at a meeting on 25th November. Meanwhile planning has started for the 2022 scheme: we aim to continue the push to involve gardeners right across Cookham with a further impetus for the Let's Bee Friendly scheme launched just as we went into lockdown last year. And there is the hope that, with the Borough's Biodiversity Action Plan being adopted soon, the scheme we have in Cookham and Maidenhead can form the basis for a borough-wide initiative.



OUR CHARITY STATUS CONFIRMED

WildCookham has been registered as a charity by the Charity Commission, adopting the Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) approach. We decided that this was a useful step forward for our group, giving us additional status and helpful as we look to raise funds for projects. It also places clear responsibilities on us and will ensure that we adopt appropriate disciplines in running and growing our group. As before we can receive Gift Aid payments from HMRC and our banking details have been updated to reflect the change. So click [here](#) or via the JustGiving link on [our website](#) will get through to the right place. The trustees of the charity include four of the current committee members plus Rosie Street, the head of the recently formed WildSL6 group of young wildlife enthusiasts which WildCookham has been supporting.

BATTLEMEAD – MOVING ON AT LAST!

The long-running saga that is the Battlemead story reached a key milestone at the end of October when the RBWM Cabinet signed off on the proposed footpath across the East Field. The path will open in the Spring through to late Summer: at the time of writing the precise dates are not yet agreed. We are not happy with the decision (in our view it fails to reflect the Council's own apparently strongly-held commitment to its own Environment and Climate Strategy, as well as several pieces of legislation and national guidelines) - but it's a decision.



WildCookham, with our colleagues at Wild Maidenhead, have since been busy supporting the Ecological Management Plan, as well as participating in discussions about different aspects of the site. A sizeable group of volunteers were on site at the end of October, working on maintenance work on the hedge that we planted more than two years ago. And we will be at work through the winter on further activity to provide screening for the path and fencing that will now cut the East Field in two. See more about [Battlemead on our website](#).

HANGING ONTO WILDLIFE

So much of our wildlife is disappearing (15% of all UK species are under threat of extinction) and it's difficult to know where to start. This summer WildCookham has been looking at three species – glow worms and swallows/house martins. We have shown an interest in glow worms over the years and this time we began a more methodical approach. It's just a start but it did reveal some of these extraordinary insects in previously unreported sites. Thanks to the support of local resident Jacqui Edwards we are now pulling the data together to feed into the UK national Glow Worm survey and we're also looking at what steps we might take to protect the existing sites (one of which is threatened with development) as well as making plans for a more thorough survey in 2022.



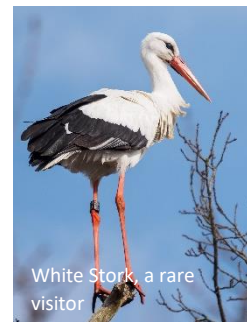
Thanks to Andrew Padmore for this great photo of mating glow worms

Swallows and House Martins are those symbols of summer and were always present – until recently, when loss of habitat (and reduction in insect populations) and nesting sites have put paid to much of the local breeding. WildCookham spotters spent time this summer logging their sightings of both species, as well as any nest sites. The record was a building in Cookham village with 21 Martin nests in use. The group is now looking at the data and researching possible solutions to the creation of new nesting sites, using artificial nests. Meanwhile, we call on anyone with nesting birds to do everything possible to avoid destroying the nest sites – and talk to us at wildcookham@gmail.com if you'd like advice on how best to keep and attract these birds.



RECENT ARRIVALS

Brian Clews reports: Cookham has an enviable record of occasionally attracting scarcer forms of wildlife, which during this year has included a White Stork (in fields beyond Long Lane), a Great White Egret (which took up residence at Battlemead for a while), and Cetti's Warbler, which also spent the summer along the White Brook. The rare Wasp Nest Beetle, hardly recorded at all in the Southeast, was discovered in Cookham Dean recently and the ever-scarcer Glow Worm has been discovered in new locations in the village this summer.



Dragonflies have also featured among the rarities: Variable Damselflies are only to be found in 2 or 3 locations in the county and Widbrook Common is one of them, a good breeding season being monitored there. Similarly, our locale has



tended to be one of the few holding the delightful White Legged Damselfly. And, to add to that, the even rarer Willow Emerald Damselfly, a very recent colonist to UK, found its way to a local pond and bred in small numbers, again the first records for the Thames Valley. Cookham also had the first regional records of the dainty Ivy Bee, but that

has been spreading very successfully since. So, eyes akimbo – anything might turn up.

BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN – ALMOST THERE

We have continued our work as members of the Borough's working party developing a Biodiversity Action Plan. Working with the other six Windsor & Maidenhead 'Wild' groups we have prepared a comprehensive set of projects aimed at delivering significant biodiversity gain, though there is still work to be done on some aspects. We hope to see a draft soon which we deem to be 'fit for purpose' and which can get Council approval. We expect then to be involved in many of the projects, requiring us to step up to the mark with expertise and 'arms and legs'. The Plan, building on a plan developed by Wild Maidenhead, will be a template for us all to follow and will determine much of our future activity. The development of an appropriate plan has also been called for by the Inspector deciding the fate of the Council's Borough Local Plan.

If you want to see the overall RBWM Environment and Climate Strategy, of which the BAP will form part, you can see it [here](#).

*Can you help in some of WildCookham's work?
See the item at the end for details.*

NATURE NOTES

Derek Tyler has kept the focus on our waterways with recent tests of water quality (a mixed bag of results but generally water quality in the waterways tested was OK). Good to see that the Marsh Meadow pond, for which we are now responsible, had a good result....Talking of water quality, we also tested the quality of the pond in our Harris Woodbridge Reserve where Mike Day continues his great work maintaining and enhancing the site. The pond water study showed a distinct improvement since we got involved and did work last year to clear the pond and introduce new plants....Our Water Vole Re-introduction project is going into the quieter winter period (they don't hibernate but they do slow down). Monitoring of local Mink continues with just one sighting recently. We'll be looking for more volunteers to help with monitoring the vole progress next Spring.... We are working on a new project with the Parish Council. It's at the Alfred Major Recreation Ground where we will be creating areas of wild flowers to encourage our insects and the nature revival that follows from that.

OUT AND ABOUT

It's been getting easier to bring together groups to experience our local nature. Brian Clews has been busy sharing his 'What's About?' walks – at the Odney Club and Strande Water - while Andrew Padmore introduced a group to the wonders of our local fungi, finding some 40 different species on a recent walk. Look out for these events: numbers are usually limited and places get snapped up quickly.



Some of the 40 or so fungi spotted on a recent WildCookham fungi foray

MOOR FACELIFT

WildCookham volunteers were out on Cookham Moor in October, part of the on-going project with the National Trust to bring more biodiversity to our local Commons. Over a weekend, and a few extra hours, the team, led by John Southgate and Derek Bond, mowed, scarified, raked and sowed. We have put in a mix of wild flower and appropriate grass seed – and now we wait. We hope to see some results next Summer but the real benefit may take a few years to come through. Thanks to the volunteers who helped with this.



WE KEEP GROWING

Our Facebook members continue to increase in number. It now tops 780, a near 25% increase in the past year, and around three times the number when Covid struck. The engagement is great with lots of photos being shared and local residents bringing their nature queries to the site. Keep it coming!



YOUNG WILDLIFERS MAKE AN IMPACT



The Borough's young wildlifera, WildSL6, who are closely affiliated to WildCookham, continue their great work and managed to gain three grants for local projects – involving Furze Platt and the Cookham Brownies. They are also helping with some of our survey work and generally contributing to our activities. If you're on the young side, or know of have young people who may be interested (that's really anyone in their 20s or late teens), contact WildSL6 at info.wildsl6@gmail.com.

THANKS FOR JUST GIVING

Thanks to all those who have started our using our JustGiving account, which makes it easy to make donations, including contributions for any events attended. Our finances are OK at present, though much of the money is linked to specific projects. Any further contributions to the general fund will help us take on more projects and engage with more local people. Just go to <https://www.justgiving.com/wildcookham>.

YES, YOU CAN HELP

If some of the things we are doing make sense to you, we'd love to hear from you and find ways that you can get involved – giving as much or as little time as you want. Please contact us at wildcookham@gmail.com. There's work for everyone. We're currently looking, in particular, for help with the admin/group secretary role and with marketing/communications: please contact us for a chat. But, whatever your background/skill/interest you can help. Email wildcookham@gmail.com.

**If you care, can you help?
Contact wildcookham@gmail.com**

WildCookham is a community group focused on discovering, celebrating and supporting biodiversity in Cookham, Berkshire, UK. We care about our local wildlife, sharing our passion and knowledge in a practical and engaging way. Charity number: 1193867

Find us at:

Website: www.wildcookham.org.uk

Facebook: www.facebook/groups/wildcookham

Meetup: [www.meetup/WildCookham](https://www.meetup.com/WildCookham)

JustGiving: <https://www.justgiving.com/wildcookham>

Email: wildcookham@gmail.com