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GUILDFORD ENVIRONMENTAL FORUM

newsletter

March - May 2021

www.gefweb.org.uk



A word from our new Chair ...

Alastair Atkinson

Welcome to our first newsletter of 2021 and my first report as the new Chair for the Guildford Environmental Forum.

Like all of us, I am looking forward to a better 2021 than last year; as the numbers of vaccinated people increase and the Covid rates decrease it gives us hope that everyone can see friends and family again and life can start to return to normal or a new normal as soon as possible.

Everyone has been through a slightly different personal journey over the last year in how they have coped with the epidemic and they have their own stories to tell, both sad and inspiring. I think one thing is clear: the natural environment in and around Guildford has been working overtime in its support for the residents, and for some I expect it's been an introduction to some of the places others have known and loved for many years. I've never seen so many individuals and families out and I'm sure the countryside has been supporting both our physical and mental health. As we come out of the lockdown, this may be one positive feature of our collective experience over the past year, and an opportunity to promote long lasting change that is good for people as well as for our environment. It would be great for the GEF to increase its role as a champion of the place in which we live and get the new-found users of our green and beautiful spaces to continue to support and cherish what we have. So please keep an eye out for a campaign we will be launching shortly around this theme.

I feel really privileged to take over as Chair of the Forum, especially following Adrian who has done such a fantastic job as Chair and I'm really pleased that he has agreed to continue as Vice Chair. Huge thanks to Adrian for everything he has done, and continues to do for the Forum.

I have been a member of GEF for over 10 years and I look forward to seeing lots of you when we can start our talks again. By way of a bit of background and until that time I thought I would take the opportunity to let you know a bit about me. I love the outdoors and being surrounded by nature. I try to run every other morning around Pewley Down, St Martha's and Merrow Downs as it fills both my head and heart with happiness. I have loved experiencing the dark mornings slowing receding which has allowed me to experience some wonderful sun rises and listen to the changing voice of the wildlife



from the hooting owl during the dark to the full dawn chorus. In my professional life I have worked in the built environment for the last 30 years championing the creation of sustainable communities and supporting the transition to a low or zero carbon economy.

Going forward GEF needs to continue to do the fantastic work of championing Guildford's environmental issues as it always has done, but in addition we need to increase the number of people we engage with, and broaden our reach. We will continue to promote a greener Guildford and living a more sustainable existence in balance with the natural resources we have available and promoting a more equitable sharing of these with our flora and fauna.

We have set up two groups addressing Climate Change and Biodiversity issues as these are increasingly being interlinked at a policy and thought level. We will continue to push the Council to act more quickly on these important issues and provide the appropriate leadership. We are now looking to collaborate with a number of other local groups to ensure the environmental message is louder and can reach more people. Lastly we will be developing a number of campaigns on specific issues as well as having a stronger presence online with our new website and social media activity. It would be great to hear from you to understand what you feel passionate about, and how you would like to shape the future work of the Forum. Please get in touch on email, Facebook, or twitter.



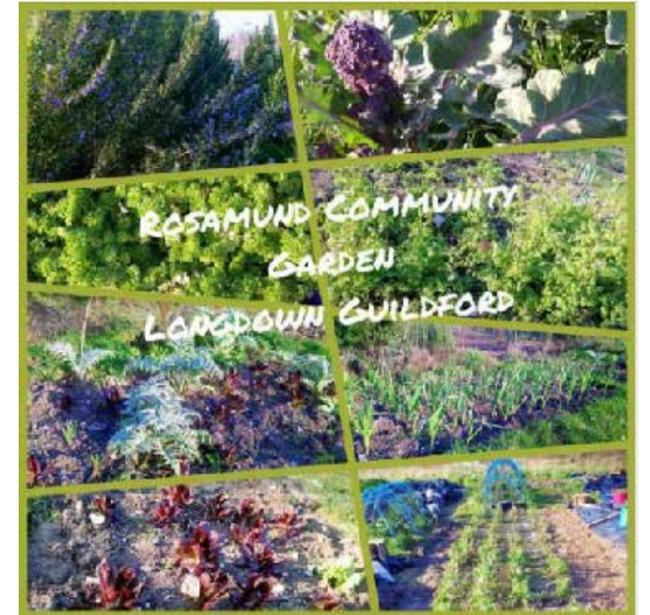
Rosamund garden and biodiversity updates - Helen Harris

Biodiversity:

Thank you so much to those who have come forward to join the Biodiversity team at GEF. The first meeting took place on 24th February, after this newsletter went to print, but we look forward to coming back to you in the near future with more news of our biodiversity programme as it takes shape.

Rosamund Community Garden:

We are pleased to report that Surrey Wildlife Trust have assessed the impact of grazing cattle on the structural composition of the Rosamund field very favourably, having visited the site in January. This is great news for biodiversity on the site and for the continuation of the grazing programme in future years.



We have also been approached by SWT to partner with them in their Empowering Communities Programme, by which the Trust aims to provide practical and strategic support to local community groups working to protect nature and habitats. We are delighted by this chance to work more closely with the Trust over the coming year in which they pilot the programme.

GEF SUBSCRIPTIONS REMINDER - Adrian Thompson

Subscriptions for the year commencing 1st April, 2021 are due on 11th April, 2021. The subscription rate is being maintained (now for over 10 years in succession) again at last year's rate of £10pa (£15pa for a household at one address). For all those who have completed standing order mandates and gift aid declarations, there is nothing more that you need do to renew your membership and we thank you very much indeed for completing both returns in the past.

The new "membermojo" software is now live and will automatically issue a reminder to all members who have not renewed their subscription by the end of April. For the few members who have not given us an e-mail address and who do not pay by standing order, then they will be posted a subscription reminder with this newsletter. We would be most grateful if your remittance could be returned to me by 31st March, 2021. We encourage members to pay by standing order as it reduces our administration hugely, but if this is not your preference, then please send me a cheque and the gift aid certificate and I will confirm receipt.

Please note that, having stepped down as Chair in favour of Alastair Atkinson, I remain the Treasurer and Vice Chair and can be contacted with any queries on adrian@lampcottage.net or by phone on 01483 222687.

Finally, if you know of anyone in the Guildford area who would like to become a member of GEF for £10pa, then please encourage them to apply for membership. This is the very best way in which you could help GEF to grow in the future. We hope you are getting very good value for your membership of GEF.

Sea Level Rise

by John Bannister

Globally sea levels are rising and we have to remember that sea level rise is accelerating and will continue to rise for centuries, regardless of what we do.



Thwaites Glacier in western Antarctica is the size of the UK. Termed the "doomsday" glacier. Sliding into the sea at 3km a year - when melted, it will account for a 65cm rise in global sea level on its own.

As Professor Chris Rapley shows us in his book "2071, The World We'll Leave Our Grandchildren" (published in 2015, costing £8.99 and short enough to read in one sitting) the CO2 we have put into our atmosphere will stay around for many centuries. Global temperatures will go on rising relentlessly, ice will go on melting and sea levels will keep rising reaching at least 3m by 2071. Couple that with surging tides and pockets of low atmospheric pressure and many more people in coastal areas will be forced to move as they already are having to do. Communities in vulnerable coastal sites all over the world have had to adapt to SLR and for some time past now

Firstly, the main reason sea levels are rising is thermal expansion of the sea (most things expand when heated) due to man-made climate heating, because 90% of the heat generated by climate heating is absorbed into our oceans. Ocean heating and falling pH (increasing acidity) due to adsorption of CO2, (the main product of burning fossil fuels in cars and homes) is harming ocean wildlife as well, but that is a separate debate.

Secondly, ice that rests on land is also melting due to global heating in places like Greenland, Antarctica and glaciers in all the Earth's mountain ranges. This ice when it melts leads to sea level rise, unlike ice that floats on the sea such as in the Arctic. Loss of Arctic ice leads to other problems such as release of methane trapped in the Arctic tundra, methane being a far worse climate heating gas than CO2.

The collapse of a glacier in Uttarakhand in northern India in the foothills of the Himalayas has just hit the headlines because it caused massive damage and loss of life. This isn't an isolated incident, glaciers in the

Andes, Himalayas etc. are melting and depriving people of drinking water as well as contributing to sea level rise. Scientists are regularly monitoring these ice masses using lasers, radar and via satellites, but people have to take them seriously.

It is generally the case that countries poorer than the UK won't have the money to deal with climate heating and its consequences. The information on ice loss and sea level rise is gathered by scientists in many countries and shared between them and this is what the IPCC uses to make its reports on Global Climate heating.

Naturally not all scientists agree all the time. Historic sea level rise is mostly a known fact but predictions into the future, say to 2100, are made using models and the assumptions that go into the models vary. There is a catch up process happening all the time. Models are also used to look to the end of the 22nd and future centuries with possible heating as high as 4.5 deg C. Terrifying.

The latest IPCC report, which has generally erred on the more conservative side, gave a sea level rise of up to 1.1m above the average for 1986 to 2005 by end 2100. A more recent Danish paper from the university of Copenhagen said the IPCC had failed to use the best data and predicted a range of 0.63 to 1.32m by 2100.

Models are indicating global heating will continue into the twenty-second century and beyond with global temperatures steadily rising, ice continuing to melt most worryingly on Greenland and Antarctica and SLR increasing accordingly.

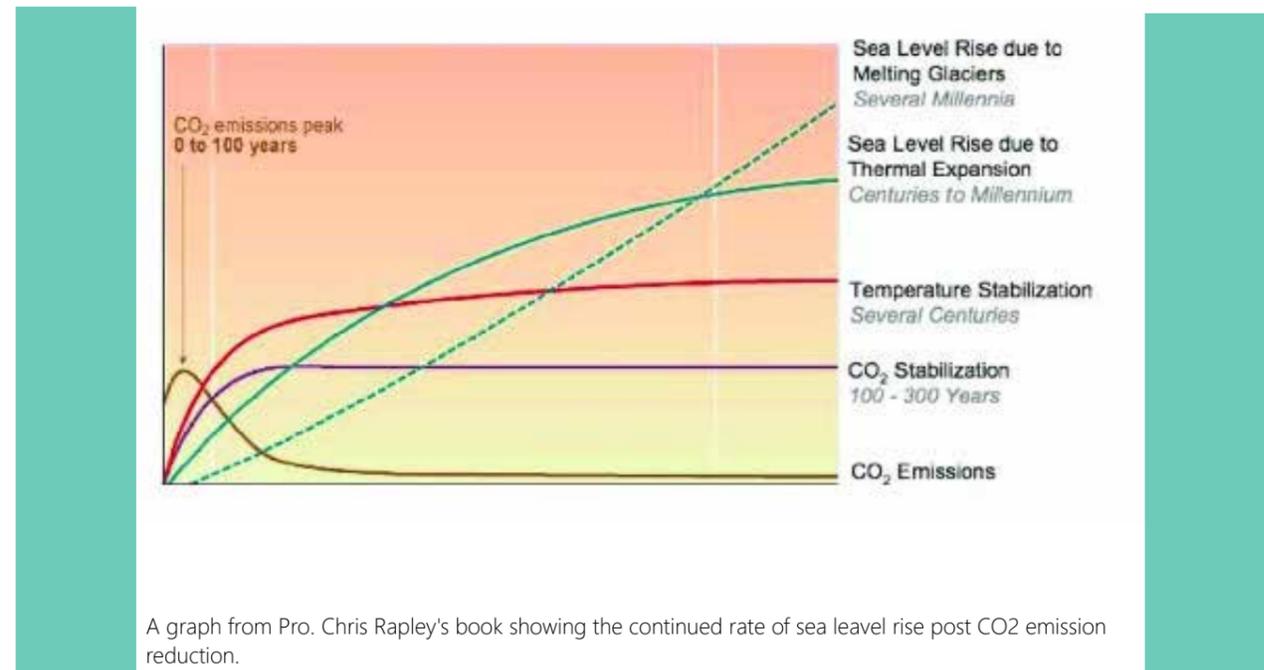
Scientists review these reports and, over time adjust

their predictions and what they are showing is that sea level rise has been accelerating and is far from "tiny". The UK is not exempt from the impact of SLR and in places like the Thames estuary, the Humber, the Mersey, the Severn and the east coast – alarming rises in sea level are already being experienced. Engineers are using this data to build better sea defences, including modifying yet again the Thames Barrier, to try and protect our towns and cities. Our young people who may be thinking of buying a house need to be aware

of SLR and how it is affecting the market and insurance policies.

The same is true all over the world, in Asia, the east coast of the US and many places you and I may have visited in the past. We read about encroachment by the sea in our newspapers practically every day.

We must use science to give the best information for the benefit of the general public not just to serve the agendas of thoughtless politicians.



A graph from Pro. Chris Rapley's book showing the continued rate of sea level rise post CO2 emission reduction.

New year new Website...

From running Zoom birthday parties to working from home, 2020 saw most of us stepping out of our technical comfort zones in one way or another. Amidst all this a small band of volunteers have achieved something truly wonderful on the technical front and have now delivered our fantastic new website.

A huge thankyou to Raymond who has managed our existing website for many years and to Richard and Ruth who have worked so hard on putting the new one together. If you have any questions or concerns about the new website get in touch with Ruth Bolton our Communications Officer.

You can find our new site here - <http://www.guildfordenvironment.org.uk/> We hope you enjoy it!

HOME LATEST NEWS USEFUL LINKS NEWSLETTERS CONTACT US ABOUT US

Upcoming Events

- FEB 8:00 pm - 10:00 pm
22 Magic of Heathlands - MERROW RESIDENTS' TALK VIA ZOOM
- MAR 7:30 pm - 10:00 pm
17 What Can Guildford Do About The Climate?
- MAY 6:00 pm - 7:30 pm
11 AGM
- MAY 10:00 am - 4:00 pm
29 Scything Course for Beginners and Improvers

Join Us

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Guildford
Environmental
Forum

The rurban fringe is a transition area between rural and urban areas where rural and urban land uses are intermixed often resulting in a range of issues at different scales.

The government during the coronavirus pandemic has encouraged people to walk in their local areas and as a result the rural - urban fringe (often part of the Green Belt) has seen increased footfall. In some locations this has increased levels of footpath erosion, especially in popular areas, which needs to be remedied with appropriate management strategies. In NW Guildford I have noticed increased volumes of litter - glass, plastic bottles and drink cans as well as paper and cardboard. My walks usually last about 2 hours and in that period of time I have been able to pick up and recycle bottles and cans enough to fill a good sized carrier bag. Other types of waste include bricks and timber often dumped near lay-bys. In one remote location, fly tipping that had destroyed the high amenity value of the landscape and was clearly going to be expensive to remove, was evident.

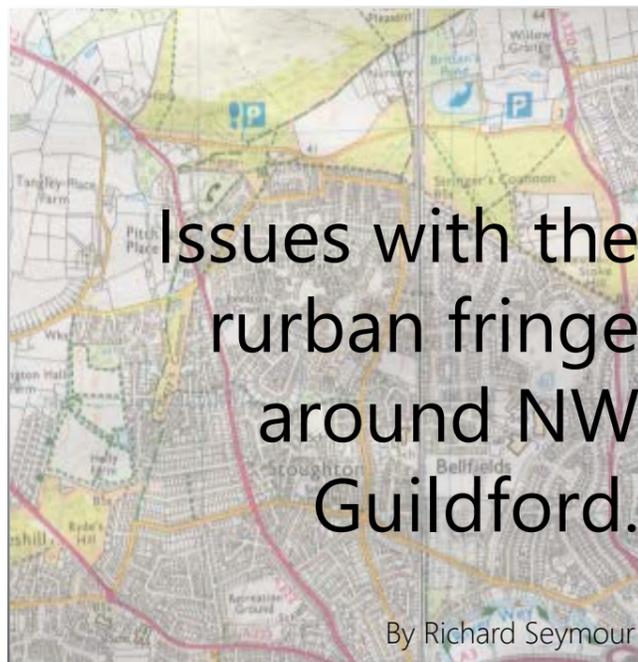
Boundary issues occur where back gardens are adjacent to common land and it is clear that people are dumping garden waste and other items in these areas. An issue that is evident here is the extent to which garden plants and shrubs such as Cyclamen, Spanish bluebells, laurel and rhododendron are spreading on to common land. Some of these species can have a negative effect on the local ecosystem since they are regarded as alien species

In contrast to this, some property owners have created their own recreation areas beyond their garden boundaries and impinge onto footpaths and common land. Whilst some people have been enjoying picnics others have been lighting fires causing heath and gorse fires in places such as Whitmoor Common.

Much of the area I have walked in is wooded and the understorey has grown well adding to the biodiversity of the area. The presence of boardwalks such as on



Whitmoor Common Boardwalk



Issues with the rurban fringe around NW Guildford.

By Richard Seymour

Whitmoor Common, Chitty's Common and the River Park provide brilliant access to areas with impeded drainage and are a valuable asset to Guildford's rurban fringe.

These are well maintained and from my experience, seem to be popular with local people especially children as they can get closer to wildlife. Other leisure activities are evident in the fringe area including fishing lakes, golf courses, rifle ranges, riding stables, diversified farms, football and cricket pitches as well as areas where children have created jumps for mountain bikes.

On Broadstreet Common and in other locations temporary traveller encampments have been problematic and local authorities have taken steps to block access points and remove rubbish that has been left.

Horsiculture is a process where horses are kept on agricultural land and because they are selective in what they eat the land tends to degrade over time. A consequence of this is the land becomes less valuable and is then suitable for other types of development such as housing.

Keens Lane in NW Guildford is the site of new housing developments on the rurban fringe. The removal of a mature hedgerow adjacent to the development I think was an unfortunate decision by the developers.

There are many wider issues associated with the rurban fringe such as urban sprawl, the Green Belt becoming a Grey Belt, loss of farmland, growth of unregulated businesses, trespass and vandalism. On closer examination the rurban fringe is a dynamic zone which seems to be increasingly under threat and clearly needs careful sustainable management.

Top tips for your litter pick!

With the long winter lockdown drawing on and set to stay in place for the foreseeable, for many of us the only source of entertainment has been our daily government sanctioned outdoor exercise. And if its running cycling or walking there's no denying the increased impact it's having on our footpaths and wild spaces.

Litter in the most beautiful corners of our countryside has long been a problem and if you're anything like me the glint of a discarded coke can, or the bright flash of a crisp packet can be really irritating. So why not channel that annoyance and add some purpose to your daily walk - turn it into a litter pick. Here are our top tips on how to do so safely and productively.

1. Be prepared: Keep a pair of gardening gloves and a bin bag in your day bag so if the desire takes you - you have everything you need.
2. Take a helper: Remember under current lockdown rules, if it's safe for you to do so, you can meet with one other for your daily walk, make sure you ask them to bring their own bin bag!
3. Your safety is the priority: It goes without saying, stay away from needles, human waste, unidentifiable objects and anything marked as dangerous. Also use your common sense, ask yourself can you safely get to it, pick it up and carry it? If the answer to any of these is no - best not to touch.
4. Recycle where possible: You've gone to the effort of picking it up take it one step further and put it in the right bin!
5. Flag anything dangerous: Fly tipping, electrical items or large dead animals should be reported to the landowner or local council.
6. We're all more aware of this now than ever before but - don't forget wash your hands when you're done!



Snowdays!

last month the monotony of lockdown was briefly interrupted by a glorious snowfall transforming our local landscapes



Saving Miss Tiggy Winkle: The plight of hedgehogs and how neighbourhoods can save them - by Sarah Davis



I wonder what Beatrix Potter would think if she was to walk through our British countryside today? Helen Beatrix Potter was born in 1866. A natural scientist, farmer and conservationist- the Lake District National Park is largely made up of land that she is credited with preserving. She studied a wide variety of subjects including fossils, insects and plants and was very respected in the field of mycology (the study of fungi). However she was not best known for her study of native wildlife, with painting and storytelling. Her trips to Scotland as a child and her settling of roots at 'Hill Top Farm' in the Lake District, saw her take keen interest in the countryside around her. She supported the National Trust and became a truly successful conservationist and author. Many readers here will be familiar with the endearing wildlife characters that she produced and although 'Peter Rabbit' was to be known all across the world, I always had a soft spot for the Hedgehog - Miss Tiggy Winkle.

Back in the 1890's the countryside was full of biodiversity, bursting at the seams with native wildlife that lived in hedgerow, woodlands, patchwork connected fields and ponds, rivers and streams inspiring poets, musicians, artists and writers like Beatrix. As a child I would read about Miss Tiggy Winkle before lights out and, as I lay in bed on a warm gentle May evening with the window ajar, I can still remember listening to the snuffling sounds of our garden Hedgehogs, running around in circles with their mating dance under the moon light.

Today with Hedgerows disappearing, pesticides flowing off the fields into the rivers and streams, development encroaching on our green belts, light pollution and fast traffic on the roads, Miss Tiggy Winkle has not been able to navigate by the stars, has not been able to breed due to a fragmented land, and has not been able to hibernate due to the need to constantly search for food. Beatrix Potter may well today be writing a story of how Miss Tiggy Winkle had to pack up her laundry basket and airer and leave the countryside in a state of urgency, searching for a new home, forced out of her natural habitat. A now displaced vulnerable animal.



It seems incredible that our much loved British hedgehog is now homeless and in desperate need of saving. It is estimated that in the 1950's there were thirty million Hedgehogs in the UK! Now, the best guess is that they are down to less than a million. They are declining in large numbers and fast.

Although woodlands, hedgerows, fields, marshes and ponds have been destroyed to make way for houses, factories and roads. There is still over a million acres of private garden in Britain. Any garden however small, countryside or city, can be made into a nature reserve. Not only do we create the biodiversity that is so needed, but in doing so we can also study the natural world on our own door step, improving our mental health and wellbeing.

A hedgehog can travel at least 2 miles a night in search of food and in the breeding season (May-Sept) male hedgehogs need to be able to travel far to look for suitable females. The UK is unusual in the fact we have so many gardens and for many of us we like to tend to them. This has never been more true than recently, during the COVID 19 pandemic. Currently



Survey Summary

Sightings - 8 houses (53%) saw hedgehogs

Connectivity - 12 houses said hedgehogs could

move from front to back garden, and 12 houses (80%) had at least one hedgehog hole in their garden boundaries.

Water - 12 houses (80%) . Very encouraging result and the water can clearly be used for all sorts of wildlife. Some gardens had small wildlife ponds and a few more neighbours had started to build wildlife ponds since the first lock down.

Food - 6 houses (40%) had left out food for the hedgehogs and usually the right sort of food- further information was given on food source when the survey results were sent back. In future conservation work on this topic we plan to give out more information on the importance of biodiversity in your garden to help enable a better sustainable food chain for the hedgehogs, encouraging wild flowers, pollinating flowers and plants, log piles, rotting leaves and compost heaps etc.

Habitat - Hedging = 8 houses (53%) so encouraging , although some were not diverse hedging. Log piles = 6 houses (40%) and 4 houses had compost heaps
Wild areas = 9 houses (60%)

Flowers - 12 houses (80%), we need to explain the importance of diversity here and for all seasonal pollinators. Some neighbours were trying to plant mini wildflower meadows since the first lock down.

people cannot travel far from their homes and are outside more in their gardens. With communities communicating more over the garden fence or on social media neighbourhood groups and with the arrival of spring bringing hedgehogs out of their hibernation, there has never been a better time to help. Local conservation is perfect for bringing people together in a 'COVID-safe' way.

One such project has been started where I live in a suburb on the edge of Guildford in a cul-de-sac with 47 houses. The houses were built in the 1930's and all have the typical long back gardens of that era, about a quarter still divided by hedging and the rest divided by mostly wooden fencing.

Our neighbourhood started talking about wildlife in the first lock down. Over the summer, residents started to notice when spending more time in their gardens that they could see some hedgehog droppings. A few neighbours had started to create Hedgehog highways. One family then decided to put in a few hedge hog homes and a feeding station. Soon they had two hedgehogs visiting their home. They posted this on the local neighbourhood Whatsapp group and it started to create some excitement. A private Facebook group was

created about the hedgehogs in our cul-de cac to get a feel for how many were around and to share information on how to help them. More people started to post on the page so we decided to discover more about our hedgehogs, see where the gaps were and how best we could keep and increase our hedgehog population.

We saw the survey as a great opportunity not only to gather information but also to raise awareness of and promote good hedgehog conservation practices. It was great to see how a survey can create interest in the community - more residents started to put out hedgehog homes and feeding stations and through the survey were able to ask us questions about how best to support their new night-time visitors.

For centuries, the countryside has been a patch work of rough pastures, woodland and hedgerows, filled with things that hedgehogs need to survive: worms, slugs, beetles and nesting places: piles of leaves, fallen logs and brambly scrubland - difficult to replicate in



Meet the hedgehog

Order: Eulipotyphla,

Family: Erinaceidae.

Species: 17 species exist.

Current IUCN Red List Status: UK, Vulnerable.

Population Trend: falling in UK.

Distribution: Britain and rest of Europe,

except far north, across to Russia, absent from most Scottish Islands. Introduced to New Zealand.

Weight: 700g if healthy.

Life Span: can live up to 6 years.

Food: snails, slugs, caterpillars, beetles, earthworms, bird eggs, sometimes frogs, snakes and carrion.

Habitat: woodland, hedgerows, fields, parks, town gardens, suburbia gardens and country gardens.

Saving Miss Tiggy Winkle cont...

What can I do?

our gardens maybe.

- In your own garden a pile of sticks and leaves or an undisturbed compost heap will often be the more natural home that a hedgehog will seek out and will often choose it over what would seem a snug Hedgehog house.
- When planting flowers think of ones that will pollinate across the year to attract more insects.
- If making a pond, make sure you have gradient sides and a plank of wood for hedgehogs to get out , if they fall in.



Hedgehog pond ramp

- When planting a hedge, diversity and thickness is the key. Try 50% hawthorn (It offers flowers for pollinators, berries for birds, gives a dense good coverage for nesting birds and it's spiky to keep out larger predators) 10% guelder rose, also thorny with flowers and berries, 10% field maple, 10% hazel. Plant a double layer and have long grasses at the base for hedgehogs to use as resting places.
- Remember wildlife needs to pass through several types of habitat, for example a newt begins its life in the pond, but then it leaves the water, crawling through sheltering plants and tall grass, finally resting under a damp rotting log to spend winter. So it's important to provide variety of habitats.

What happens next?

Now that there is an interest, we will be pushing for more wildlife ponds, more connecting highways , log piles from fallen trees, diverse hedgerows and planting.

From February 2020 Surrey Wildlife Trust has launched a 4 year project to reconnect local communities with Surrey's Hedgerow Heritage and funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, they will protect 63km of existing hedgerows and create or restore an additional 6.5km of this habitat, benefiting at least 130 threatened species of plants and animals. Visit: www.surreywildlifetrust.org/hedgerow-heritage to learn more

In politics former Transport Secretary Chris Grayling has tabled an amendment to the Environment Bill, that would add hedgehogs to the list of protected animals under the Wildlife and Countryside Act . Placing legal obligation on developers to search for animals and take action to reduce the risk to them from building development.

Meanwhile, back in my neighbourhood we have continued to witness the growing interest and joy from residents as we discover more of what lives on our door step. A wildlife trials camera was given out on loan by one of our neighbours and each neighbour had a turn at using it for a week. Our resulting footage has been shared between us all and down loaded on to our social media. The night time camera has started to show us all this hidden nocturnal world. Our wilder gardens and wildlife ponds being visited day and night.

I like to think Beatrix Potter would be very proud of our efforts to create havens for wildlife in our gardens and in doina so protect Miss Tiaav Winkle.



Sarah Davis (GEF member and volunteer Conservationist)

Idling by Caroline Scott

You'd think in the midst of an ecological emergency, with frequent headlines about deaths resulting from air pollution, that idling would be a thing of the past. You'd think that sitting stationary, running your engine while the air around fills with toxins (around the equivalent of 150 balloons of toxic air per minute are emitted) would be considered anti-social behaviour. Sadly, it seems, the message is not getting through.

The past two hundred years have seen industrialisation across the world, with devastating consequences for clean air. Victorian Britain suffered with poor air just in the way that Asia does now. Air pollution was much more visible: factories belched out plumes of smoke, and coal miners found their lungs covered in coal dust. 21st century Britain suffers from an invisible type of air pollution. Most modern cars don't emit black smoke, but do release toxic air. Its invisible nature makes it all the more dangerous.

At present, it seems that people are often idling their cars out of habit. This could be while waiting for a parking space or while parked in order to keep the heat or air con running. Others idle their cars in the erroneous belief that the engine needs warming up (yes, turning the engine on can melt the ice on frost days, but this problem could easily be overcome with a pair of gloves and an ice scraper).

Why idling is harmful to health?

All petrol or diesel cars emit harmful gases, including nitrogen dioxide, carbon monoxide and hydrocarbons – all of which are linked to asthma and lung disease. An idling engine burns fuel less efficiently so a stationary car can produce up to twice the emissions of one in motion. The toxic gases produced are all concentrated in the same place, so localised air pollution is higher.

Pollution from your car affects you too

Air quality inside a vehicle is also an issue. Much like the misconception that SUVs are safer for those inside (even if much more dangerous to pedestrians than ordinary saloon cars) – air can actually be worse inside the car than out.

Humans like any other non-human animal have the same instinct for self-preservation. But idling is not a question of fighting for the last food scrap, or for the last drop of water, it's something that affects us all.

How best do we raise awareness?

Messaging to deter idlers varies, from a focus on self-preservation to threats of fines or attempts to invoke empathy: "no idling, young lungs at work". Appealing to the self-preservation instinct is the central idea to many climate change campaigns but to truly begin to regenerate the health of the earth, we need to start considering others more, and valuing all life on earth. As such more thought-provoking messaging is needed to shift attitudes and bring about behaviour change.

What's the law surrounding idling?

While idling is an offense, in practice fines are very rarely issued. Even if they are issued, fines (at £20) are too low to act as much of a deterrent. It seems there is also some confusion about what is and isn't allowed, or enforceable when it comes to idling.

When I contacted my local authority to report a car that had been parked for an hour with the engine running, their initial response was "what about the idling bothers you?" as if air pollution isn't a very legitimate reason. The responses I got varied between "sorry, we can't do anything" or (confusingly) "there's nothing illegal about occupied vehicles idling".

It's no wonder that 60% of drivers don't even know that idling is an offense.

What can be done?

It falls to local councils to decide on how best to approach idling. Some councils place anti-idling signs that threaten fines. Others run "idling action events" where drivers are approached to politely request, they switch off their engines, leaving passers-by the daunting task of asking drivers to switch off and hope for cooperation. Given the sense of entitlement that some drivers have it takes a bold person to challenge a driver and for central government and councils to be tiptoeing around, sends entirely the wrong message.

Nonetheless, there is some sign of progress. In 2017, the government published the Clean Air Plan which encourages local councils to create "clean air zones".

The Plan highlights the dangers of nitrogen oxide; and recommends that anti-idling policy guidance should be re-examined to assess whether higher fines and stricter enforcement mechanisms should be used. This still leaves a lot of lee-way and has resulted in some councils side-lining the problem. Cutting down on totally needless emissions would be an easy win when compared to the much more complex task of reducing traffic.

The next best hope is awareness campaigns. With growing numbers doing the school-run, this is something schools are already trying to address. Some schools have introduced measures such as drop off zones, to counteract the spike in pollution during drop off and pick up times, although ultimately the best outcome obviously would be for children to walk, scoot or cycle to school.

A shared space, a shared atmosphere

As a society – we must start thinking about our shared responsibility for clean air and a healthy planet. The idling phenomenon shows us all too clearly that we must move away from thinking only about our own comfort and convenience, or not thinking at all. We share the earth with other living creatures and plant-life and they too need clean air to thrive.

If you enjoyed this article you can read more of Caroline's work at <https://regreentheplanet.blog>

Practical ideas for increased tree planting in Guildford

by Adrian Thompson

The Guildford Environmental Forum (GEF) supports the aim of Surrey County Council (SCC) to plant 1.2 million trees in Surrey by 2030. This article looks into some of the issues involved and provides a range of suggestions and ideas for our readers. If you would like to know more about this SCC strategy, we recommend that you read SCC's full tree strategy where you can find some very helpful information at <https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/people-and-community/climate-change/what-are-we-doing/new-tree-strategy>.

In summary, trees play an important role in sequestering carbon dioxide, as well as supporting adaptation to the impacts of climate change, through shading and flood prevention. They can also provide significant benefits in terms of air quality, biodiversity, health and wellbeing, education and the economy. This is a true win-win option that we can all support. We are fortunate that Surrey already has enough trees to equate to 24% tree cover, which is the highest in the UK.

However, as a whole the UK has only 13% cover compared with an average in the EU of about 35%. Our trees are also under threat from diseases such as ash die-back and the ash tree alone accounts for approximately 14% of total broadleaved standing volume in Great Britain. Elm trees largely disappeared from our countryside some 50 years ago, so we need to replace dying trees so as to ensure a net gain over the next 10 years.



Here are some suggestions for every one of us to help achieve this net gain, whatever our circumstances:

1. Follow the 10 golden rules of tree planting (<https://www.kew.org/read-and-watch/10-golden-rules-for-reforestation>), which are:

- Protect existing forests first. Keeping forests in their original state is always preferable; undamaged old forests soak up carbon better and are more resilient to fire, storm and droughts. "Whenever there's a choice, we stress that halting deforestation and protecting remaining forests must be a priority," said Prof Alexandre Antonelli, Director of Science at RBG Kew.
- Put local people at the heart of tree-planting projects. Studies show that getting local communities on

board is key to the success of tree-planting projects. It is often local people who have most to gain from looking after the forest in the future.

- Maximise biodiversity recovery to meet multiple goals. Reforestation should be about several goals, including guarding against climate change, improving conservation and providing economic and cultural benefits.
- Select the right area for reforestation. Plant trees in areas that were historically forested but have become degraded, rather than using other natural habitats such as grasslands or wetlands. Use natural forest regrowth wherever possible letting trees grow back naturally can be cheaper and more efficient than planting trees.
- Select the right tree species that can maximise biodiversity
- Where tree planting is needed, picking the right trees is crucial. Scientists advise a mixture of tree species naturally found in the local area, including some rare species and trees of economic importance, but avoiding trees that might become invasive.
- Make sure the trees are resilient and can adapt to a changing climate. Use tree seeds that are suitable for the local climate and how that might change in the future.
- Plan ahead. Plan how to source seeds or trees, working with local people.
- Learn by doing. Combine scientific knowledge with local knowledge. Ideally, small-scale trials should take place before planting large numbers of trees
- Make it pay. The sustainability of tree re-planting rests on a source of income for all stakeholders, including the poorest.

A Mockery of Health and Safety - by Micheal Tanner

2. If your resources and/or time are limited there are imaginative ways to play your part. A local scheme can be found on <https://www.thefriendlyforest.co.uk/>. We were unable to celebrate our golden wedding due to COVID last year, so we planted two delightful trees in our garden and have registered those plantings to support this excellent local charity.

3. If reducing your carbon offset was one of your New Year resolutions, then join us in supporting a charity. In Cumbria, where tree cover is less than 10%. By fencing in a disused mining valley, our partner charity is currently protecting large numbers of local native trees which are being supplied free of charge by the Woodland Trust. Many of the trees will grow as a result of regeneration once the sheep are excluded from the area and not able to eat off all the new young seedlings.

4. Join the Woodland Trust (<https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/press-centre/2020/11/free-trees-to-fight-climate-change/>) and support a local initiative.

5. Encourage your local Council to get involved. In November, I approached the East Clandon Parish Council with a short proposal and the initiative was approved on 4th February, 2021. We hope to start modestly, but improve habitats in the long term.

6. Support GEF by renewing your membership and encouraging a neighbour or friend to join, too. Last year, just before lockdown, local volunteers, especially many from XR Guildford, helped to plant 150 new trees in a day in the hedges surrounding the Rosamund Community garden. These are thriving and adding to the local biodiversity.

7. If you have something more ambitious in mind, our family and friends found that buying a neglected field and planting some 1,250 trees in it was one of the most rewarding and healthy projects that we have ever undertaken. In line with item 1. above, it helped that the project earned a significant net profit over the period involved (see p4 for the full story on <http://www.gefweb.org.uk/GEF%20news%20Sept%202014.pdf>).

Conclusion

Planting trees or supporting tree planting schemes is one of the most constructive ways of tackling both the Climate Emergency and the challenge of biodiversity loss. Do not hesitate to contact me (adrian@lampcottage.net) if you have an idea or project you think that GEF can help with in mind.

Of the many roads which serve Guildford there is one, a major trunk road (the A31, Farnham Road) which starts virtually on central Guildford's railway bridge and continues for 60 miles towards the south west of England, finally disappearing near a doctor's surgery in the Dorset village of Bere Regis. As one would expect, it carries a wide variety of traffic, ranging from bicycles to the largest trucks and coaches which use the UK's major roads. Many of these large trucks are heading for key ports, Portsmouth, Southampton, Plymouth or for Motorways which serve towns and cities to the west and north.

If an analogy helps, think of a gigantic bottle with a ridiculously narrow and short neck attached to a base of gargantuan size and uneven outline. Having said that I will focus on that part of the bottle's neck about 1 and a half miles long which starts at the 40 mph sign near the junction of the A31 with Scillonian Rd. and climbs steeply as far as Down Lane which, for a few hundred yards is the slip road connection with the A3 (Guildford and Godalming Bypass). Beyond this slip road junction the A31 continues south westwards along the crest of the Hogs Back, where permitted speed changes from 50 to 60 mph.

I have known this short stretch intimately for very many years, and experienced it as pedal cyclist, car driver, bus passenger and used its single macadamized 'pavement' as a pedestrian frequently and in all kinds of weather, in daylight, at night, in fog, snow, gales and wind and continue to do so. I know every yard of its perilous pavement, every bend of its steep ascent and headlong descent, and every ivy-weighted tree and bush on its southern side which snatches at your car mirrors; every branch, every collapsing fence, every earth and weed encrusted patch of pavement on the northern side which severely diminishes your foot space in places to as little as a couple of feet, every untrimmed shrub which hides what lies ahead on the same pavement and strikes you in the face on a dark night. Dickens himself would have a field day in describing such horrors were he still here, and would have needed no artistic hyperbole. And somewhere, certain persons and institutions would be on the end of his toasting fork.

My point is, of course, what I imply in the title above – to focus on the deadly dangers here to those inside or outside vehicles, whether they are on road, pavement or simply crossing it to reach all the inviting countryside to the immediate south of the road (including the North Downs Way.) I have supplied photos and diagrams to assist the reader. To be precise, my main aim is to underline the urgency and the priority of the matter.



Pictures by Michael Tanner. Left to Right: Safe for pedestrians? Increase speed here?, Accident black spot, Blind bend.

Records of accidents on any road are held by the Highways authorities and the number of fatalities and variously graded injuries are available to the asker. I have seen the bouquet of roadside flowers, the shattered fences, the bits of bumpers and rear lights in the pavement litter, like anyone, and am appalled by the potential for disaster which this stretch of road nurses.

Long term planning has no doubt got this stretch in its sights, but a number of life saving alterations can and should be put in place NOW (meaning within a month or three.)Any action will of course cost money and I am well aware of the cost of altering even such'simple' things as road markings or traffic signs. The real cost of No action is something I prefer to leave to an actuary. How should one assess the loss of a limb or the traumas of a fatal collision.

Years ago one of my own children miraculously escaped injury and death when crossing this stretch with his bike. It was only a wheel which was buckled, only an inch or two which saved his legs. An old lady had been coming round the first bend in her car. Just one small incident in, I guess, a long list of such incidents, many never recorded.

In the remainder of this article I will adopt a more compact approach by listing the specific dangers of this stretch of road and the causes of these. Sometimes an immediate remedy will suggest itself; sometimes there is an obvious long term solution; sometimes the reader may groan and lift his hands to an indifferent sky, as he recognizes the enormity of the mire we are sinking into because technology and science have once more given way to expediency and short term 'economics'. Maybe, Covid and Climate Change will encourage different attitudes and allow fundamentally different kinds of solution in this case and many comparable.

The Dangers

1. The narrowness of the road and the gross neglect of the pavement on its Northern edge.
2. The three blind bends on this 1 1/2 mile stretch.
3. The steepness of the descent and its vision-affecting undulations.
4. The highly inappropriate signalled speeds or lack of signs

5. The highly inadequate provision for pedestrians wishing to cross this stretch at the established places.
6. Failure to control the bushes and trees on the south side which stand on a metre high earth bank constantly shaved by trucks.
7. The failure to recognise that this is NOT a road passing through open countryside but that a residential area immediately abuts the entire length of the stretch on its northern side. Children and adults on foot use the pavement mentioned to get to the town and the County School, that is if they are willing to brave the perils of using the pavement in its current condition. People living in these abutting houses and gardens intermittently see their fences destroyed by vehicles out of control , especially at the top of the ascent approaching the slip road.

What needs to be done immediately

1. Take action with speeds and the neglected pavement. All stated speeds should be reduced by 10 mph and the positioning of some signs altered. There is actually one 50 mph sign (for increase of speed!) into a blind corner concealing the slip road junction.
2. Take action with the antediluvian traffic filter arrangement opposite the slip road at the top of the ascent,
3. Absolutely forbid any overtaking, even and especially of cyclists,
4. Clean up the overgrown pavement and trim back shrubs. Regularly check the conditions affecting this pavement. Currently, it is virtually suicidal to walk it at night.

And in the long term

County and Borough must already see that the widest and longest trucks cannot safely use this stretch as it is, with the dangers listed above,

They will need to put into action fundamental alterations and alternatives, both very expensive and in some quarters, unpopular. Guildford's traffic situation at its centre has been an enormous problem. But having a basic principle is the start. Economies are false if they ignore the value of human safety. Here is one very good example of the potential for setting an example.

Continuing our series on this essay from last quarter, Caroline Scott prefaces the next two extracts of **Charles Eisenstein's essay: Extinction and the Revolution of Love.** [Read the full essay here](https://charleseisenstein.org/essays/extinction-and-the-revolution-of-love/) https://charleseisenstein.org/essays/extinction-and-the-revolution-of-love/

Extract 3 - Carbon counting vs a living planet

Eisenstein here asks why we are always trying to quantify nature – or attempts to segregate it and establish some kind of priority action list. He talks of carbon reductionism, and why that is not the way to understand the complexities of the living planet.

"Much of the exclusivity of the environmental movement stems from the reduction of "green" to a function of carbon accountancy – a dangerous simplification that leaves out the beings, including human beings, who seem not to "count." After all, what has been othered, excluded, and devalued more than nature herself? To value nature's beings in terms of carbon, a measurable quantity subject to the customary cost-benefit analyses, is not a very big departure from valuing her beings in terms of money. Everyone and everything left out of that valuation will come back to haunt us, because the truth is that all are important in maintaining conditions for thriving life."

Extract 4 – Renewable energy – will it cause more harm than good?

This part of the essay reflects on why what we might see as solutions to the climate crisis, will only worsen the ecological crisis by continuing with ecocide.

"What is devalued when we count carbon? What is not counted? Well, ecosystems for one. To scale up "green energy" technologies such as solar panels, batteries, wind turbines, and electric vehicles would require a vast expansion of mining. Does the reader understand what a major mining operation looks like? It isn't an innocuous hole in the ground (...) each takes a bite out of forests and other ecosystems, poisons water tables, and generates vast amounts of toxic waste. Each generates untold social misery to accompany the ecological misery, and a geopolitics just like that of petroleum extraction. One need look no further for an example than the whitewashed coup in Bolivia, which possesses enormous reserves of lithium that the ousted president, Evo Morales, had planned to nationalize."

The other main renewable energy technologies – hydro and biomass – are, when produced at industrial scale, perhaps even more ecologically horrific than mining, leaving dislocated people and destroyed ecosystems. This cannot be what we environmentalists have in mind: to convert Earth's biota into fuel and her rivers into power plants.

Those who care about this earth, I beg of you: be careful what you ask for. Be careful of making the wrong demands – the too-small demands that actually change nothing and might cause more harm than good. Beware of the go-to solutions that your pressure and your urgency invite. Some of them may be solutions that exacerbate the problem, solutions that are acceptable to established power because they bear no threat to its foundations.

Read a book or article lately that got you thinking? Watched a film or documentary that had an impact? Please send your thoughts, reviews, and recommendations to elliekatemorgan@gmail.com and you might spot it in Culture Corner.

Please make sure the subject of your review has an environmental or conservation theme and keep your submission to 200 words max. Many thanks!

Dark Waters a review by Catherine Scott

Dark Waters is an eco-thriller that dramatizes the true story of how chemical company, DuPont, for decades hid the use of a toxic chemical used in the manufacture of Teflon. The film begins with Wilbur Tennant (played by Bill Camp), a farmer from a rural community in West Virginia, approaching big time lawyer Robert Bilott (Mark Ruffalo) for help when he sees how his cattle are covered in abrasions and are becoming deranged. Wilbur is certain the local creek is being contaminated by DuPont's landfill site.

The story unravels one of the biggest environmental scandals to take place in the US in recent history. The David and Goliath struggle is central to what often happens with cases of environmental pollution. DuPont uses every means possible to silence Tennant, and then Bilott. Their ability to buy the goodwill of the local community through the promise of new employment, perks and the upgrades to the town's creaking infrastructure, are all part of the game. No one in Parkersburg, West Virginia imagines that the apparently benevolent employer, could be capable of poisoning their water supply.

The story is also a reminder that, in our globalised world, we often forget the toll our consumption habits take. Most of what we buy has to be mined from somewhere, and manufactured somewhere, and eventually gets disposed somewhere. While this is clearly an egregious example of environmental pollution, it nevertheless highlights the issues toxic industrial waste.

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Guildford Environmental Forum aims to improve the environment in and around Guildford for wildlife and for people and to build a sustainable future.

Join us in our work for the town and have this newsletter posted or emailed to you four times a year. Forum membership is only £10 per year or £15 for a couple, while for age 21-25 it's £5 and for under 21s it's free. New members are warmly welcomed.

Please contact Adrian Thompson on 01483 222687 or email adrian@lampcottage.net



CALENDAR

All the forum's meetings are open to the public.



Wednesday 17th March at 19.00 - "What Can Guildford do about The Climate Emergency?"

What are the facts? What can we do? Guildford Environmental Forum, in collaboration with The Guildford Society and Holy Trinity AmenityGroup (HTAG), resume the series of public meetings on this issue in the town centre. Henrietta Stock (GEF and AI Gore's Climate Reality Project) will present the facts, and we will discuss what the people of Guildford can do about climate change.

1900 to 2100. Please e-mail Charlie Meakin (c.meakin93@gmail.com) to receive a link.

Monday 29th March at 19.30, Surrey Wildlife Trust – Wetland project.

Zoom recording of Glen Skelton's presentation, which covers our local rivers such as the River Tillingbourne and the work done by volunteers to improve the local biodiversity. First shown on 29th January, 1930 to 2100.

Please e-mail Charlie Meakin (c.meakin93@gmail.com) to receive a link.

Tuesday 11th May at 18.30 Guildford Environmental Forum AGM.

Talk by Mike Smyth, Chairman and Founder of Wey Valley Solar Co-operative. "The Future for Solar Energy in Guildford" Mike will cover the trends in solar generation, microgrids and renewable heat and discuss how, with Co-operative and Community involvement, supported by Local Council initiatives, we can make a real impact here in Guildford. 1830 to 2100.

Please e-mail Charlie Meakin (c.meakin93@gmail.com) to receive a link

Saturday 29th May Scything Course for Beginners and Improvers

Mark Allery is back again to teach us. Learn or improve your scything skills while managing our grass at the Rosamund Community Garden. Everything is provided, including refreshments, but please bring a packed lunch and wear suitable clothing. Cost £35 per head, discounts available.

1000 to 1600. Meet at Rosamund Garden, top of Longdown Road, GU4 8PP Park along grass verge.

Please register with John Bannister on 01483 570468 or 07443 914347 to discuss arrangements.

Guildford Environmental Forum's newsletter is published in March, June, September and December.

Please send contributions for the next issue to Ellie Morgan (details above) by 10th May 2021.

The views expressed in this newsletter are strictly those of its contributors and Guildford Environmental Forum.