

Local group events

Looking back...

Blashford Lakes

The Dorset & West Hants Friends in Action group returned for a second visit to Blashford Lakes Reserve at the end of January. Following a cold morning's hard work cutting back laurel, an indoor picnic lunch plus a fascinating talk on swallows by Andy Lester, the highlight of the day for one of the bird-watching groups was a graceful performance over one of the lakes by a great white egret.

A Rocha New Forest is born!

Saturday 5 March saw the launch of the A Rocha New Forest Friends' group at the Countryside Education Trust's amazing Treehouse Study Centre (right) in Beaulieu. Group leaders David & Bronwen Bridges put together a wonderfully varied morning comprising a short Celtic-style act of worship, some 'ornitheological' reflections from group member

Douglas Marcuse, a talk from Andy Lester (ARUK Conservation Director) about some of A Rocha's UK and worldwide projects, and prayer in small groups for A Rocha's work. Finally, a guided walk around the ancient semi-natural woodland managed by the CET showed the area's range of habitats. Amongst various sightings were two pairs of hawfinches, positively identified by Andy.



'We're delighted that thirty people came to the launch,' says Bronwen. 'We intend to use the Treehouse as a base for future meetings, ideas for which include a pond-dipping event and some practical conservation.'

SO... watch this space! And contact David & Bronwen (thebridgesfamily@f2s.com) if you'd like more information about the New Forest group.

Looking forward...

Friday 24 June: Life, The Universe and Everything... an evening of exploration and discovery. David & Bronwen Bridges would love to see you at this next New Forest group event at the Treehouse Study Centre, starting at 6.30pm. Includes quiet meditation, walks, slide show, BBQ round an open fire, moth traps and stargazing! For programme and ticket information: www.cet.org.uk/adult_events

Saturday 30 July: Avon Heath Adventure. 9.30–11.30am. Come along for a morning of looking for elusive creatures with wildlife expert Dominic Couzens at Dorset's largest country park near Ringwood. There'll be birds, moths, lizards – maybe even small mammals – plus a bucket-load of bugs to admire and enjoy. Car parking (£3.50) and café on site. Contact David & Jean Morgan by 16 July to book (01202 883504 or david.morgan@arocha.org) Find out more about Dominic on www.birdwords.co.uk and more about Avon Heath on www.dorsetforyou.com/avonheath

You might also like to know about...

Bournemouth and Poole Big Green Fortnight, 20 May-5 June 2011 Two weeks of events to engage people in fun and exciting ways, offering family-friendly activities for residents, local communities, businesses and holidaymakers – all with the aim of reducing our carbon footprints and raising awareness of sustainable lifestyles. Find out more at www.bournemouth2026.org.uk/bgf/

Environment Sunday, 5 June 2011 A Rocha has for some years designated the first Sunday in June as Environment Sunday, which this year actually coincides with World Environment Day. To learn about the reasons for this, and to download materials for use at church, visit www.christian-ecology.org.uk/conservation-sunday.html

Creation Time, 1 September to 9 October 2011 If you aren't geared up for Environment Sunday, why not encourage your church to hold a service with an environmental theme during this period later in the year? You could use A Rocha's 2011 *Just Food?* Resource Pack (www.arocha.org.uk) and more resources can be found at www.ctbi.org.uk/542

John's slot



I like plants with a story behind them, or ones with unusual names or intriguing facts. A couple of years ago I acquired a goji berry plant. Now, you may have read or heard that its fruit is a 'super berry', and claims have been made – particularly in the US – that it is a cure for many ills. Because of this, plant breeders have taken legal action to ensure that no one propagates it without a licence from the company that introduced it. A gardening magazine I was reading recently claimed that the goji berry had another name, so I checked my reference books and the internet, and discovered that it had been introduced in the UK in 1730, when it was called the Duke of Argyll's tea tree (*lyceum barbarum*), also known as the Chinese wolf berry and the Chinese

boxthorn. Apparently the 3rd Duke of Argyll was a keen plant collector. He had two plants sent to Scotland from China, one a tea plant and the other a Chinese wolf berry, and their labels got mixed up. Furthermore, the same plant became naturalised in hedges in Suffolk and elsewhere, and therefore appears in my old wildflower book. So, you can't propagate and sell a goji berry, but a Duke of Argyll's tea tree...! And the next 'super fruit'? Could it be *rubus fruticosus*? (blackberry to you and me).

Hot (and very dry) off the press...

Andy Lester is alerting us all to the fact that the first drought warning for the summer has just been issued, with the Met Office predicting little or no significant rain for the Midlands, South and East until August. The implications for wildlife are potentially very significant, so here are his top five tips based on information currently circulating:

1) There's a huge shortfall of wet mud for nest-building, so swallows, house martins and swifts are struggling. Where possible, provide an **upturned bin lid with wet mud** – ideally off the ground if there is a cat/predator risk or on the ground if there is not.

2) If you have a pond, try to keep it **topped up with water from rain-butts or local streams**. Tap water is far from ideal, especially in areas where the water is chlorinated or fluorated.

3) **Focus watering attention on flowering shrubs**, especially those that the bees are using. By keeping them well watered, you can extend the flowering by up to two weeks. As everything is flowering at once, there's a risk of food shortages for bees from late June.

4) **Don't cut your grass**. Longer grass provides some soil relief against the baking and desiccating effect of the sun. Cut it and you may kill it.

5) **Avoid cutting back shrubs and bushes** as the shade will help keep the temperature in the garden more manageable. Water rather than cut where shrubs are looking stressed.

And finally...

If you have any relevant news/info about local events/website links/book or film recommendations/recycling or grow-your-own tips, etc, which you would like John & Jane to consider for inclusion, please contact us at jandjcribb@btinternet.com; 01202 883307.

Please contact David & Jean Morgan (david.morgan@arocha.org; 01202 883504) if:

- you would like any more information about the A Rocha local groups in this area;
- you would like someone to speak at your church about A Rocha and/or creation care.

More local group information is also available at www.arocha.org/gb-en/makeadifference/community/1464-DSY/6614-DSY.html