



## BADCOG NEWS.

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In these difficult and uncertain times this newsletter is breaking new ground in being produced in digital format only. Our normal hard copy delivery mode has been suspended until the crisis has passed.

Many of us will have been in lockdown or with minimal contact but I hope that has not stopped us observing nature whether it be in our gardens or while we are getting exercise. I hope some of you will have taken advantage of the extra leisure to record your observations. I will be happy to receive them for publication in future newsletters.

Always trying to find positives in adversity I wondered whether the current situation might be beneficial to nature. For example less traffic means less pollution and less road kill - particularly beneficial to frogs and toads at this time of year. Less footfall in beauty spots, national parks and nature reserves means less disturbance. There may be less shooting of birds in The Mediterranean so who knows, the migrant numbers may be up. Is moggy going to be indoors more with the family instead of raiding bird nests?

The shutdown has had a number of consequences for BADCOG activities both on and off our sites. Work parties have had to be cancelled and visits to Pensthorpe and The Little Ouse headwaters postponed. Our reserves will therefore be especially in need of our volunteers when work can resume, although in many cases this will mean deferring season sensitive work till next year.

Nevertheless I expect many people have found this enforced pause in our lives an opportunity for reflection.

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Holly Lane Pond 1983

I had one such opportunity when I cycled to Holly Lane Pond to replace the sign there. Sitting there in the sun I watched a pair of moorhen which had taken up residence and recalled what the pond had been like in 1983 and how it had been the catalyst for the formation of BADCOG.



Holly Lane Pond 2020

Since when our group went on to pioneer the concept of local wildlife groups and in doing so greatly enhanced the cause of wildlife and our appreciation of it.

The involvement of youngsters in natural history has always dear to my heart and this led me to foster this in my grandchildren. In the present enforced lockdown I have been composing wildlife quizzes for them and also set them a story challenge. When cleaning out my shed gutters I found earthworms among the decomposing leaves. I asked the grandchildren to tell me how they got there. There were imaginative answers. One delighted me particularly. It came from Malakai my adopted ten year old grandson in Zimbabwe. I have transposed it and included it in the newsletter. I hope it lightens the gloom.

Stay safe and stay well. David Pilch 9th April 2020

### **Hope for Red Squirrels?**

Some studies in Northern Ireland have shown that red squirrels are aware of the danger posed by pine martens whereas the greys, which were introduced from North America, appear to be naive to the threat.

Experiments at Queen's University Belfast have found that when pine marten scent is applied to feeding stations reds were more aware of the danger than greys and show more vigilance.

The greys seem to ignore the scent and carry on regardless and so are much more vulnerable to attack.

In England red squirrels only survive in the wild on the Isle of Wight, Brownsea Island, the Formby coast, the pine forests of Northumberland and parts of the Lake District.

The Wildlife Trust estimates there are 2.5million greys and 140,000 red squirrels in the UK.

## How the earthworm got to the roof by Malakai Pilch aged 10.

Once there was an earthworm. He lived in an underground burrow with his mother and father and his brothers and sisters.

*Series of drawings of the worm family talking to each other. This culminates in mother worm saying "Quit boasting", to which the reply is "You stay out of this Mom!"*



Anyway my name is Michael. My brother who says he's the oldest - well let me tell you a secret. He is the second youngest before my sister Emily. His name is Percy and he's a show off. My sister Susan is the oldest but she puts more attention on her reading more than her responsibilities.

One day when we were all at the dinner table Mom said to me "Make sure Susan gets out of her book". So I said "Susan get out of the book". Susan said nothing. "Susan, Susan, Susan", I shouted in her ear. "She's deaf". Still no answer.

"You wicked worm". I looked at my mother in astonishment. I won't forget my mother's face her eyes blazing with anger. "How dare you!" said my father his beard bristling like a hedgehog." What?" I said. "Get out of the house I never want to see you again".

So the worm went. He travelled for days.

One day I was on the surface of the soil when a bird flew down, a rather dirty bird, with flies all over and fleas on it too and looked moth eaten... "Hello" he said in a raspy voice. "Hello, come with me" and then the bird picked me up in his beak and flew high up in the sky. He dropped me when he was about 12 metres high. I fell on something soft and something crunchy. I knew it was leaves and soil. I felt dazed and tried to dig but it was hard and sharp. It was a gutter.

Then a head popped out and it said "Hello, what's your name? I am Ben worm". "My name is Michael worm." I said. Suddenly another head popped out and another and another 5, 10, 15 maybe 20. So this was my new life. One day an old man, well a bit older than middle age about seventy three or seventy four, he was cleaning the gutter. Don't worry we got picked up and put into the vegetable garden to help the soil. The end.

## **Scales and Justice – The Trouble with the Pangolin Trade**

### **Lee Coby**

*This century has seen consumer demand for sustainable production disrupt markets across the globe. Yet an enigmatic small to medium sized mammal called the pangolin continues to be taken from the wild at an unending rate. What is causing this destruction and can the pangolin be saved?*

There are 8 extant species of pangolin, four of which are found in Africa and another four reside in Asia. Though they vary in size, weight, colour and bone structure the 8 species share a curious morphology; the pangolin, a mammal, is covered in overlapping scales and this gives it the most unusual visage. The animal will curl into a ball when threatened and this defensive posture helps protect it against predation from other animals, such as big cats. It makes easy work of ants and termites as it has a tongue that is attached near the pelvis that it can extend to a length greater than that of its own head and body. Some pangolins live on the ground, others spend time in trees and all are well adapted to digging. Thought to have evolved around 80 million years ago, they are still somewhat understudied, shy beasts. Despite wide distribution, they are reticent creatures and exact population statistics are not easily discernible.

Hunted in the wild and also bred in captivity, the meat of the pangolin is eaten, the skin is used for leather products and the scales are used in traditional medicines. The animal's scales are keratinous; keratin being the protein that also forms human hair and human fingernails. The scales are used as an ingredient in Asian traditional medicines to supposedly improve blood circulation and to cure asthma and cancer and whatever else your local pangolin dealer might want to upsell. Of course broadly speaking, there is a well recognised dichotomy between scientific medicine and traditional medicine practices, yet the near annihilation of some pangolin species in recent decades necessitates that those claiming these medicinal properties owe the rest of the world sufficient warrant for their position.

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The pangolin is thought to be the most trafficked animal on the planet and stronger laws have been enacted to counteract illegal global trade. Almost every country on the planet is a Party to The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). In 2017, at the 17<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES it was agreed that all 8 species of pangolin would be included in Appendix I of the agreement. Up until this meeting several pangolin species (particularly the African species) were Appendix II only. Appendix II includes species 'not necessarily threatened with extinction, but in which trade must be controlled in order to avoid utilization incompatible with their survival'. Whereas Appendix I includes, 'species threatened with extinction. Trade in specimens of these species is permitted only in exceptional circumstances'.

Governments of the world show willing in this battle against pangolin extinction but enforcement is a huge problem. Much like the trades in rhino horn or tiger parts a strategy to upend this market requires skill, cooperation and honesty from different people operating in different places. These animals are notoriously difficult to manage in captivity which accounts for why so many are taken from the wild and also means that reintroduction programmes are invariably unsuccessful. They are also captured with relative ease and don't reproduce especially quickly.

Data shows that African pangolin numbers are now suffering to meet the demand in Asia. The education of those enforcing laws is required; this includes customs officers as well as those involved in prosecutions. Skills in identifying parts and derivatives are needed to be able to stop illegal specimens crossing borders. Putting an end to the demand for the parts appears to be the most daunting task of all. Again, education may prove to be the answer but quelling the want of traditional markets does not simply appear to be a case of waiving away superstitious thinking with the hand of science and reason. Something more integrative is most likely required, which would involve working alongside traditional medicine practitioners to put a stop to the illegal trades.

## The hierarchies on our bird-feeders

There are some advantages to the slower pace of life that we are currently obliged to follow and one that we are enjoying is to learn more of the habits of the birds on our bird-feeders. In the past we have glanced at the various birds as they use the feeders or bathe in the bird-bath but lately we have taken to following their behaviour more closely.

There is most definitely a hierarchy on those feeders, the blue tits, whilst most numerous are also the most easily muscled out of the way by almost any other bird; the coal tits always seem to treat the feeders as though on a smash-and-grab run, barely staying a moment after grabbing a seed.

The goldfinches however like to take their time and are rather selective as to which particular seed they will take, much to the pleasure of collared doves and dunnocks waiting below for the cast-offs.

We are fortunate to have a pair of nuthatches at the moment and there is no doubt that they consider the feeder as their private restaurant and even the goldfinches have to surrender their perch. Always fascinating to watch the nuthatch's ability to hammer the seeds whilst upside down, again scattering a shower of debris for the fortunate birds below.

The arrival of our great spotted woodpecker however trumps all others and his arrival always means that for two or three minutes he will have those seeds all to himself!

Peter Mackness

### Note

All BADCOG activities are currently suspended until further notice and will only resume once the current Government restrictions are lifted.

Once we do resume our conservation work, we will be able to use these new rakes (right) which have been funded by BDC and arranged by Councillor Justin Thomas.



## Ten brain teasers about British trees [this first appeared in the Broadleaf magazine].

1. Which tasty tree became famous thanks to a eureka moment in 1666? its seeds have since been sent to space.
2. Born in 1723 Major Hayman Rooke retired to Nottinghamshire and became an antiquary. Which tree has immortalised him?
3. Which nursery rhyme has its alleged origins in a tree which still stands in a Yorkshire prison yard where female inmates and their children once danced at exercise time?
4. Thought by some to be Britain's oldest tree what surprising occurrences befell Perthshire's Fortingall Yew in 2015?  
A) It was struck by lightning  
B) Part of it changed sex.  
C) It became home to a parakeet nest.  
D) It was used as a polling station.
5. Which landmark tree first appeared as a gift in 1947, but was criticised for being 'thin and droopy' last December?
6. The most remarkable tree in British sport, the St Lawrence Lime died in 2005, making headlines as far afield as Australia, South Africa and the West Indies. Where did it stand?
7. Which famous fruit bearer has its own blue plaque, has been cloned at Nottingham University and appears in a stained glass window at Southwell Minster?
8. In 1833 six farmhands met under a Dorset sycamore and changed history. It still stands but they ended up in Botany Bay. Who were they?
9. It is Britain's third most common pub name, a London tube station and has been eight Navy warships. Which historic tree?
10. A former Woodland Trust tree of the Year, the Hadrian's Wall Sycamore has been dubbed 'the most famous tree in Hollywood' thanks to its role in a 1991 swashbuckler. Which movie?

### Answers

1. Newton's apple tree.
2. The Major Oak.
3. Here we go round the mulberry bush.
4. B) part of it changed sex.
5. The Trafalgar Square Christmas tree from Norway.
6. Inside the boundary lines at Kent County Cricket Ground.
7. The original Bramley Apple tree.
8. The Toppiddle Martyrs.
9. The Royal (of Boscobel) Oak.
10. Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves.

### **Main Work Party Reports**

**Mar 07 – Walsham Fen** – Area A – cleared area around pond using brushcutter and scythe Area D/E – West end boardwalk – Sallow cut back using chain-saw. Area A2 – Sallow cut back using chain-saw. All cut vegetation raked and cleared to spoil heaps.

**Mar 21 – Holly Lane Pond** – Annual maintenance carried out. Main roadside hedge trimmed—roadside bank scythed – some dogwood cut back. A bough of goat willow at back of pond hanging low over water cut down. All cut vegetation and timber raked and cleared to spoil heap.

### **Additional Work Party Reports**

**Feb 14 – Howes Meadow** – Area C – south bank of stream cut and cleared to west end of area.

**Feb 22 – Lingwood Pond** – Fallen tree into pond at the east side - removed branches from pond, cut and removed top branches, all small growth placed on heap ready for collection, larger timber to a tidy pile.

**Feb 27 – Lingwood Pond** – Fallen tree chain-saw used to cut up trunk which was then removed to the bank using a rope.

**Feb 29 – Lingwood Pond** – Fallen tree – cut through the roots with an axe – more work required to remove the stump.

**Mar 09 – Walsham Fen** – The area to the left of the main entry point cleared up – usable timber removed and remainder to wood pile.

**Mar 14 – Walsham Fen** – Part of the area in front and to the north of the hide mown.

**Mar 19 - Walsham Fen** – Completed the mowing of the area started on the 14<sup>th</sup>. Area A1 – east of boardwalk to pond dipping platform mown, leaving good access to spoil heaps.

**Mar 25 – Walsham Fen** – Area A2 + 20% of A1 south of pond raked and cleared to spoil heaps.

**Mar 26 – Walsham Fen** – Area A1 – 30% of area raked and cleared to spoil heaps.

**Apr 01 – Lingwood - Hedge Planting – Peter’s Wood Area Footpaths** – Glyphosate sprayed around newly planted hedge plants and trees.

**Howes Meadow** – Area B north west corner -Glyphosate sprayed round blackthorn and also the newly planted oak in the north boundary hedge.

**Apr 04 – Holly Lane Pond** – New BADCOG sign put up.

**Apr 13 – Jary’s Meadow** – East meadow – two fire sites burnt.

### **A new and exciting record.**

This rather looking tatty butterfly is a Large Tortoiseshell seen at Buckenham Woods on the 23rd April. A very rare sighting in Norfolk or even the UK! Photo: Hans Watson

