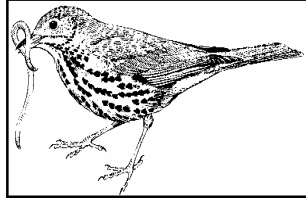
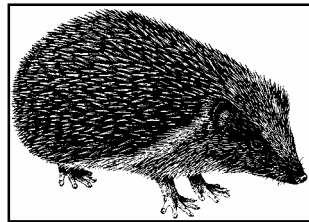


WILDLIFE FRIENDLY RULES

- ◇ Never use slug pellets as they poison birds and hedgehogs. It is these that are considered to have caused the national decline of the song thrush. A well balanced wildlife garden will attract animals such as frogs, hedgehogs and foxes that feed on your slugs.



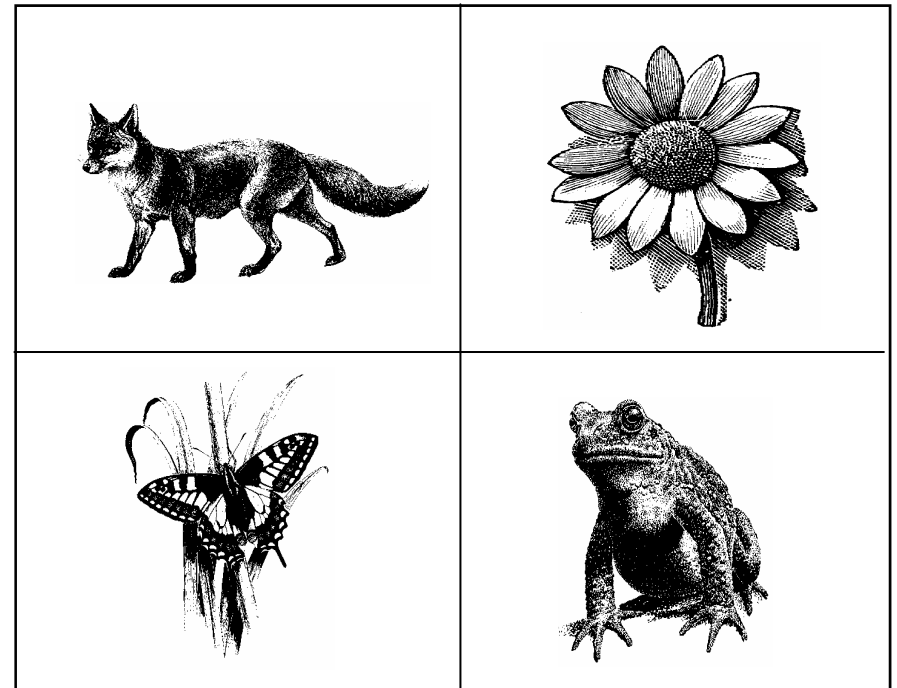
- ◇ When buying wild flowers and native species consider "local provenance" - i.e. where the plants have come from. Some wild flowers and shrubs come from Europe and when grown in this country their genetic form can mean you have, for example, flowers that should only be a few inches tall growing to over a foot in height!
- ◇ Never transplant plants from the wild - this is illegal. Also do not collect seed from the countryside.
- ◇ Do not take your excess frog spawn to countryside ponds - this spreads disease.
- ◇ Check garden bonfires before you light the woodpile in case it has become home to a hibernating hedgehog.
- ◇ Avoid using peat based composts.



For more information contact:
Leicestershire County Council's Environmental Resources Centre, Heritage Services,
Holly Hayes, 216 Birstall Road, Birstall, Leicestershire LE4 4DG or ☎ (0116) 267 1377
Or **Stepping Stones C.M.P., Environmental Action, Sustainable Development Services,
Community Services Department, Leicestershire County Council, County Hall,
Glenfield, LE3 8TE or ☎ (0116) 265 7264**

Natural Oasis

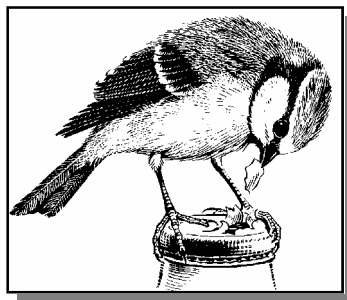
Wildlife and the Garden



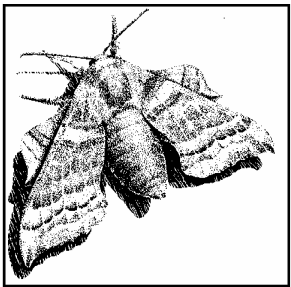
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NATURAL ENCOUNTERS

Wildlife and the natural world generate fascination in almost everyone. Encounters with wild animals and plants, from watching birds in the garden, to pond dipping for tadpoles or games with buttercups, are often some of our fondest early memories. The sounds of nature's orchestra, such as the dawn chorus or the buzz of insects around a herb-filled border, all bring the outdoors alive.



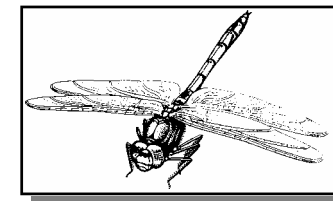
However, you do not need to go the countryside to experience wildlife. In Britain there are millions of acres of private garden, which are increasingly important in providing mini-habitats as sanctuary for our wildlife, while natural habitats are being lost in the wider countryside.



In 1983 in Leicester, a local conservationist reported she had recorded over 1,700 species in her 700m² garden over a period of 11 years. These include 354 types of flowering plants, 21 fungi, 330 butterflies and moths, 114 flies, 50 birds and five mammals.

THE POTENTIAL OF PONDS

Despite the decline of ponds in the countryside, the creation of garden wildlife ponds has provided a valuable resource for frogs, toads and common newts. They are also vital breeding grounds for many insects, such as damsel and dragonflies.

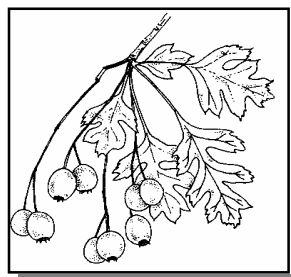
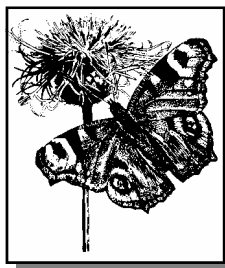


Ideally a wildlife friendly pond should have "shelving", giving areas of different water depth. The different depths allows a variety of plants to be grown, such as marshland plants that just like their roots to be growing in the damp soil at the edge of the pond (for example marsh marigold) through to emergent plants which grow in deeper water such as yellow iris. In the deepest areas, truly aquatic, oxygenating plants such as curly pondweed and plants such as the water lily whose leaves float on the surface can thrive. A gently sloping side will give visiting birds and animals easy access.



To help establish a new pond, add some sludge from a friend's or neighbour's pond and in this way introduce hundreds of pond creatures and plants. Not adding goldfish allows all the other native pond life, such as invertebrates and amphibians, to flourish.

- ◇ Leaving a hidden away corner of the garden, or an area behind the shed, for a small patch of nettles. These are good for adult butterflies such as the red admiral, small tortoiseshell, peacock and comma, which lay their eggs on plants. The hatching larvae then feed on the leaves.
- ◇ Planting butterfly-attracting and nectar rich, pink and mauve flowers in your borders, such as *Scabiosa*, *Aubretia*, *Sedums* and Michaelmas daisies.
- ◇ Planting late sources of berries and nectar for insects, such as ivy and pyracantha. Ivy is essential to the lifecycle of the holly blue butterfly that is now commonly found in Leicestershire gardens.



- ◇ Instead of a formal conifer hedge, or fence panels, use a mixture of attractive native species for a hedgerow such as hawthorn, holly, hazel, dogwood, wild privet and blackthorn. These provide colourful leaves, flowers and berries throughout the year and are often cheaper than ornamental plants.

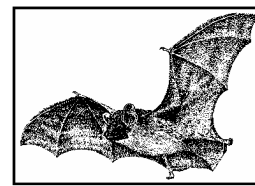
Under-plant the new hedge with suitable shade-loving wild flowers such as sweet woodruff, violets, wild arum, wood anemone, lesser celandine, ferns and dead nettle.

- ◇ Using attractive native climbers such as honeysuckle, sweet briar or ivy to screen and cover structures whilst providing food for wildlife.

WILDLIFE IN THE GARDEN - NATURAL NEIGHBOURS

Gardens are important in providing a complex matrix of suitable mini-wildlife habitats throughout the seasons.

Spring is marked by new growth and the emergence of dormant plants and animals. As the weather warms, the first flowers and shoots appear, attracting animals to feed. A bonanza of insects feed on the nectar, helping to fertilise the flowers so that fruit and seed are produced to create next year's plants. Birds sing to attract mates and are busy nest building, often using nest-boxes where provided. Robins and blackbirds can have up to four broods in a year, if conditions are good, and a blue tit brood can consist of 12 eggs.



In summer, when the days are long and sunny, animals and insects are most active and the garden is at its most abundant. Bats can be seen shortly before dusk, feeding on moths attracted to lights in a garden or hunting for insects over ponds. Summer visitors, such as swallows and swifts, may be seen flying high over gardens. Night time will often reveal the snuffling sounds of a hedgehog in the garden and scent marks left by foxes indicate this mammal has visited.

In autumn, as the days grow shorter and cooler, animals get ready for the forthcoming coldness of winter by stocking up on the plentiful food in preparation for hibernation or the harsh times ahead. This is when squirrels can be seen burying nuts throughout the garden.



Providing shelter for the winter will help a wide range of animals in your garden. Dead vegetation and a pile of logs left to rot down can be host to a whole range of invertebrates. Fascinating varieties of fungi will soon start the rotting process and all of this in turn

attracts frogs and newts to shelter and feed. Other plants such as mosses, ivy, etc will grow on the pile, which will be home to wood boring insects. The damp spaces beneath the logs are favourite places for many creatures including rusty coloured centipedes and shiny black millipedes.

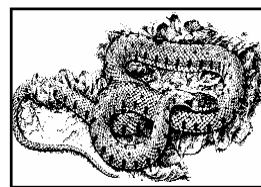
Hedgehog boxes can be put in an undisturbed corner of the garden, or suitable hibernation sites created with a pile of leaves and twigs. As winter progresses, berries on shrubs are depleted - but you may notice snowberry bushes have the most left as they are least favoured by birds!



WILD TIMES IN THE GARDEN

Attracting wildlife to the garden does not mean compromising on gardeners' horticultural skills or overall tidiness. Small scale projects can be harmonised into a wider garden, bringing greater overall interest. Much can be done to attract a range of wildlife throughout the year - even if you live in the heart of a built-up area. Projects you undertake could include:

- ◇ Providing a regularly filled bird-bath for birds to bathe and drink.
- ◇ Providing nest-boxes for bats and birds to compensate for a lack of local natural sites, such as holes in old trees.



- ◇ Creating a compost heap for disposal of garden waste, which also provides a home to a wealth of creepy crawlies and worms, as well as larger, scarcer reptiles such as grass snakes and slow worms.
- ◇ Leaving a natural border of longer growing grass and piles of leaves next to boundaries to provide shelter and food for amphibians, insects, spiders and small mammals.
- ◇ Leaving lawns to grow between March and July. This can see a return of wild flowers, such as low growing birds-foot-trefoil, clover, rosette species such as plantains and sometimes treats such as cowslip and yarrow. To create a more meadow like area, wild flowers such as common knapweed, ox-eye daisy and field scabious can be planted into the grass and left to set seed.