



## EARLEY TOWN COUNCIL

### Biodiversity News

As part of the Town Council's commitment to protecting and improving the local environment, officers have been carrying out activities and projects that will help the Council and others to improve the biodiversity in Earley. Our Wednesday Volunteers have assisted the staff on many of these activities.

Recent actions have included:

- **Botanical Survey work** – studying and mapping areas at the Nature Reserve to identify existing plants and plan future sowing. Changing sowing methods to improve success rates and encourage self-seeding.
- **Hedgehogs** – working with a volunteer from the Earley Repair Café to make and install two hedgehog houses at ETC sites. Joining the British Hedgehog Preservation Society's 'Heroes Roll of Honour' by affixing 'look out for hedgehogs' reminder stickers to all ETC strimmers and cutters.
- **Owl Boxes** – With assistance from ETC's tree surgeons, three owl boxes were erected at MELNR and have been a great success with two tawny owls taking up residence. 'Our' owls have proved very popular, their photographs appearing in local and national press and they've even been the subject of a Radio Berkshire segment. In late summer we plan to put up owl boxes in Redhatch Copse, ready for owls looking for new winter homes.
- **Desilting Works** – A major piece of work was carried out, desilting the silt entrapment pond at the Nature Reserve. Excavations were 8-9 feet deep and approximately 100 tonnes of material was removed from the pond and placed in adjacent areas. The Rangers will be investigating the reinstatement of the old reed beds that were planted there many years ago and wildflower seed will be sown on the silt that was placed in other areas.
- **Bat Boxes** - The Rangers have produced a GPS map showing the location of all known ETC bat boxes, 12 have been identified. We are working with the Berkshire Bat Group, a licensed organisation, to arrange for regular surveying and monitoring to be carried out. This will identify any further actions ETC can take to improve bat habitats on its sites.
- **Coppicing** - Assisted by the Wednesday volunteers, the Rangers coppiced hazel and holly in an area of MELNR to open up the woodland and allow bluebells and red campion to grow. The coppiced hazel was then woven into dead hedges adjacent to footpaths to protect habitat from people and dogs. The public response to this activity was very positive.
- **Tree Register** – We have created a spreadsheet to record every new tree and plant we plant. This will detail the species and location and will cover all Town Council sites.
- **Hibernaculum** – The Rangers have created two new habitats for reptiles and invertebrates, these are called hibernaculum. They will assist us in monitoring the presence of a wider range of species at the Nature Reserve.