

# The importance of a name

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Do you know the names of your friends at school? Or in your office? At work? Mostly you will, perhaps not at first in a new position, or where there are many many people - you won't know them all. My 'office' (and 'school') is sometimes the garden or orchard. One of my interests is nature. So I count plants, trees, birds etc. among my friends, and try to know their names.

At the beginning of October I put together a quiz, in case the Ecowalk after the Family Service was rained off. I gathered 32 specimens of common trees or plants with their seeds or fruits, their harvest, and laid them out in the Committee Room, each with a number. About 7 or 8 people or families tried to do it, and the winning adult and child each got a bottle of apple juice.

It is not always easy to identify something 'out of context', but I was a little disappointed at the adult scores, but quite impressed by the children. I will try another one in January, when we have the next Ecowalk, but when there may be little to see outside. Perhaps we should put up some bird feeders to attract whatever is hungry....

This - is our planet – we need to save it. We can all start in small ways, every one of us, loving and caring for our birds, our plants, our trees, our insects – as we would care for our families. It is our planet, our responsibility – and joy. To do this it is a real help to know what, who, we are looking at or caring for, then we can discover what are their needs, their problems. Much is already known. There is a lot of information available, but we need a name to be able to source the right answers, to open the door to all the information out there.

Butterflies are beautiful in the sunny summer weather, like mobile flowers, but in their earlier stages of life they need caterpillar food plants. If we can identify the variety of butterfly we can discover its favoured plants. The butterfly's name leads us to some plant names. Slowly a web of nature begins to

build up. We look more carefully, and then we see – magical things.

Hedgehogs are under threat. Their numbers are reducing at a frightening rate. What can we do to help them? One small thing we can do for them, if we have even a tiny garden, is to leave a nice deep pile of dry leaves untouched in a quiet corner, where they could curl up and hibernate for the winter. We can be too tidy for nature's creatures.

For me, one of the most magical things is the germination of a seed. From a tiny smudge of matter, a living plant can grow, even a tree. And the life cycle of butterflies is another. From egg, to caterpillar, to chrysalis, surviving the winter months in one of those stages, and then, at the appropriate time in the summer, there is this transformation into a delicate creature of great beauty.



Have you ever looked at the tiny scales on a butterfly's wing? It is a precise and colourful mosaic, and the reason a newly hatched butterfly is so brilliant is because all its scales are there, intact. An 'old' butterfly of the same species can look quite drab, because many of its scales have gone, been damaged or dropped off. In January I will bring my binocular microscope and some bits of butterfly wings so you can look at them.

I never did Higher Certificate/A levels, nor did I go to university, but John and I both enjoyed evening classes, and we never stopped learning. Now, so much more fascinating stuff is becoming known each year, especially in the sciences. Did you know that flowers can boost the sugar content of their nectar when they hear the buzz of a bee? Wow! I learnt that a few weeks ago. What similar gems of information can you discover?