



# Teenage Ornithologist Aims to Attract North African Rare Species to Hale Barns

St. Ambrose College's eco warriors are trying to attract the rare birds that migrate to Britain in the peak month of May.

Inspired by passionate young ornithologist Thomas Diffley, who has a life long fascination with our feathered friends, the College's Eco Committee has designed and built a series of special bird boxes to be located in the secluded woodland areas that adjoin Hale Road.



From left to right: Marika Richardson, Alfie Pickles, Niall Henderson, Corey Wilkinson, Thomas Diffley, Nevan Kiernan, Connor Lawler, Gary Blaylock and kneeling Jonathon Hughes.

Thomas, 16, first started birding aged just five-years-old with his grandmother Jennifer Ruscoe in their back garden in Timperley and now travels the length and breadth of the country with groups from both the RSPB and the WWT watching and recording rare birds.

An ardent environmentalist, Thomas said: "We have to maintain our local biodiversity. Birds such as a the pied flycatcher from North Africa and Central Spain have been migrating to Britain and Northern Europe in May probably for thousands of years, but now with global warming, pollution rocketing and a significant decline in their natural habitats, we want to create an environment that will enable them to survive after such a long journey."

He added: "If we don't act now to maintain our unique biodiversity, we are going to face increasing problems with the loss of numbers and the extinction of species and nature's interdependency and seasonal cycles will be destroyed."

He continued: "This is a small project, but it is better than doing nothing and from a small project, bigger ideas may follow."

"We are very fortunate at St. Ambrose to have the grassland playing fields to attract a whole range of thrushes and tits and the woodland areas for the warblers, pied flycatchers and all sorts of different rarer birds."

He concluded: "I have always been fascinated by the immense beauty of our bird life. For example you look at a waxwing and you think it might just be a plain coloured bird, but look more closely and you see is a pale pink with flecks of gold and a waxy like covering and you ask yourself, why has nature created that special mix."

The bird boxes are just one of a number of different projects being undertaken by the Eco Committee at St. Ambrose. Among their ideas they grow their own vegetables to be used by missions in Manchester for the homeless and are now looking to plant fruit trees for the same purpose.

Corey Wilkinson, 15, said: "We were only too delighted to get involved when Thomas came to us with his ideas and thanks to our DT teacher Mr Blaylock, we were able to build some special bird boxes to Thomas' specifications."

Corey added: "We also want to develop our market gardening project and contribute the fruit and vegetables grown to the food banks and their kitchens so they can be used to teach people of limited means to eat more healthily and cost effectively."

Teacher Marika Richardson, who supports the College's Eco Committee, said: "This generation is finally beginning to recognise the value of long term planning to conserve our wonderful natural resources and we have all learned so much from Thomas and his knowledge and passion for birds."