

Friday 22 September: European Car Free Day, in and around Broad Street, Oxford. See www.cyclox.org/documents/In_Oxford_without_my_car_s.pdf.

Saturday 23 September: *Climate Change: A Distant Threat?* day conference organised by Keynsham and Saltford Churches Together, 10.00am - 4.00pm, St John the Baptist Church and Hall, Keynsham (between Bristol and Bath). Cost £4 (concessions £2) including tea/coffee/biscuits. Further information and booking forms: Keynsham Parish Office (0117 986 3354) or see www.keynshamparish.org.uk.

Saturday 7 October: Oxfordshire's 3rd Local Environment Group Conference, 9.45am - 4.00pm, North Kidlington Primary School. For a booking form and information e-mail cynth@oncf.org.uk or ring 01865 407034.

Tuesday 10 October: Sage prayer meeting, 2.00 - 3.30pm, 14A Osler Road, Headington. Contact Jennifer Gunraj on 01865 768436 or richardgunraj@onetel.com.

Saturday 14 October: Sage work party, 1.00 - 4.00pm, Boundary Brook Nature Park. Variety of tasks to suit time and energy plus tea, cake and good company. Contact Clare Newgass on 01865 242588 or email can@freenet.co.uk.

Thursday 19 October: *Pipe Dreams*, 7.30pm, St Edward's School Hall, Woodstock Road, Oxford. () A hilarious, globe-trotting whodunnit by Riding Lights Theatre Company about what's going on with our water, unmasking a villain rather closer to home than we might like to admit. Contributions will be made to support WaterAid. £9.00 (concessions £6.00). National Box Office 01904 613000.

Saturday 21 October: CSV Make a Difference Day, 10.00am - 16.30pm, SS Mary & John Churchyard. We will be trimming and mulching conservation hedges, clearing litter, and planting native climbing plants and spring bulbs. Details on www.csv.org.uk/difference or from Ruth Conway on 01865 723085.

Saturday 4 November: Sage trip Westonbirt Arboretum, Gloucestershire, famous for its autumn colours. An all-day trip leaving Oxford at 9.30am. The adult admission rate is £7.50 but this can be reduced to £5 if there are 16 or more of us. Contact Caroline Steel on 01865 432600 or caroline.steel@ntlworld.com if you would like to come.

Tuesday 7 November: Sage prayer meeting, 2.00 - 3.30pm, 42 Morrell Avenue. Contact Clare Newgass on 01865 242588 or can@freenet.co.uk.

Tuesday 5 December: Sage prayer meeting, 2.00 - 3.30pm, 150 Leiden Road. Contact Caroline Steel on 01865 432600 or caroline.steel@ntlworld.com.

Saturday 9 December: Annual Green Fair at Oxford Town Hall. Sage will have a stall as usual. Volunteers needed! Contact info@sageoxford.org.uk.

Monday 1 January 2007: Sage New Years Day walk, Farmoor Reservoir, a great place to see winter birds. Meet at 150 Leiden Road for brunch at 11.00am. We will then make our way to Farmoor and walk for about 2 hours around the reservoir, returning to Leiden Road for tea and cakes (contributions very welcome!). Contact Caroline Steel on 01865 432600 or 07736 720964 or caroline.steel@ntlworld.com.

The newsletter of Sage, a Christian environmental group in Oxford

October 2006

www.sageoxford.org.uk

Christian conservation group works with Tibetan communities

The Tibetan Plateau is the highest and most extensive alpine region in the world. With an average elevation over 4000m above sea level, frigid temperatures and an arid to semi-arid climate, most of the region is suitable only for yak and sheep grazing. In the context of Tibetan culture and the broader socio-political realities of modern China, Plateau Perspectives has entered the scene as a Christian voice promoting good stewardship of creation and encouraging a practical concern for our neighbours. It aims to protect the unique biodiversity of the

Tibetan Plateau while improving health and education within the communities it serves.

Like Sage, Plateau Perspectives is supported by Christians who are concerned for God's creation. Since 1998 it has worked with Tibetan communities, NGOs, and the government. In 2005 it also began to cooperate with the Sanjiangyuan National Nature Reserve, China's newest and largest. A workshop on biodiversity conservation in the region around the headwaters of the Yangtze, Yellow and Mekong rivers, provided a solid foundation for future collaboration and involving local communities in the joint management of the reserve's natural resources.

The conservation value of the Sanjiangyuan region is indeed high. Not only are there many endangered species that Plateau Perspectives seeks to protect, including the Tibetan wild ass, snow leopard and black-necked crane, the ecological services provided by the vast grasslands and wetlands of the Plateau are critical for local herders and millions of people downstream. Plateau Perspectives current work is situated in the source area of the Yangtze River.

For more information, visit www.plateauperspectives.org. To discuss how you might become involved in this work, whether as volunteer, expert advisor or to provide support, please e-mail info@plateauperspectives.org.

Dr Marc Foggini, Plateau Perspectives



Black-necked crane (*Grus nigricollis*), in the Plateau Perspectives project area. (Photo: Marc Foggini)

Have we already reached peak oil?

Energy is the ability to do work. It is used in everything we do, and comes from a variety of sources. The world of the 21st Century is thoroughly dependent on oil and natural gas for a large portion of its energy needs. Gas is used for heating, industry, electricity generation and fertiliser production. Oil is used for transport, plastics, pesticides, medicines and much more.

When will the world run out of oil and gas? Not for hundreds of years – but this is the wrong question to ask. When will the world no longer be able to increase the production rate of oil and gas? Probably by 2010, if it hasn't reached this point already. The point at which production can no longer be increased is known as "Peak Oil". Oil

production in the USA peaked in 1970, as predicted by M King Hubbert, the renowned Shell geologist. UK oil production peaked in 1999 and has recently been declining at around 10% per annum; UK gas production has also peaked, in 1999, and has been declining at around 5% per annum. Since the mid-1980s the world has been discovering less oil than it is using, and it is now only a matter of time before global production reaches its peak. After the peak, there is expected to be a plateau, followed by a decline of a few percent every year. However, accidents, weather and politics can change all this without warning.

We have huge amounts of infrastructure dependent on oil and gas, and it will take a long time to rebuild them – the time to start is already long gone, but if we act fast the problems can be mitigated. The consequences of not acting will be disastrous.

For more information, please visit www.powerswitch.org.uk, or email mike@powerswitch.org.uk

Dr Mike Pepler PowerSwitch

A version of this article with full references appears on the Sage website, www.sageoxford.org.uk.



Free insulation for Oxford over-60s

The sustainable energy team at Oxford City Council are now able to offer free cavity wall and loft insulation to anyone over the age of 60 who lives in Oxford City. This offer is open to everyone who either owns their own property or privately rents and is not means tested.

Cavity wall and loft insulation not only save you over £200 a year on your energy bills, but also helps to keep your house cool in the summer and warm in the winter. If you qualify or know of any one who qualifies please let Laura Thompson know. Her

contact details are as follows: Laura Thompson, Assistant Sustainable Energy Officer, Oxford City Council, Ramsay House, 10 St Ebbes Street, Oxford, OX1 1PT. Telephone 01865 252197, fax 01865 252344 or email lthompson@oxford.gov.uk.

There is also more information about the benefits of different types of insulation and the various grant schemes available on the City Council's website at www.oxford.gov.uk/environment/insulation.cfm.

Sage represented in Prague conference

The Theology of Creation Care: Christian Environmental Stewardship was the title of a major conference held in August at the International Baptist Theological Seminary (IBTS) in Prague in collaboration with the European Christian Environmental Network (ECEN). A major aim of the conference was to look at how environmental concern might be integrated into the curricula of theological colleges. Nearly forty delegates from across Europe attended the conference, and Oxford was particularly well represented. Martin Conway led the workshop on Mission, Ruth Conway was an ECEN facilitator, and contributed various small presentations,

Paula Clifford spoke about Christian Aid's work amongst the poor, Margot Hodson was in charge of organising the four workshops, and Martin Hodson gave a talk on the Certificate in Christian Rural and Environmental Studies (CRES), and led the session on web resources. It is hoped that the materials produced by the workshops will be assembled into one document which can then be sent to ECEN, and used to inform the European Ecumenical Assembly next year in Sibiu, Roumania. The Rector of IBTS, Keith Jones, produced a brief report, which can be found at www.sageoxford.org.uk/ibts06.htm.

Averil's ecohouse wins Ethical Award

Congratulations to Averil Stedeford, who has won the award for "DIY Project of the Year" at Observer Ethical Awards, for her ecohouse project in Headington. The project has previously featured in *Sage Words*, and is covered extensively on the Sage website at www.sageoxford.org.uk/ecohouse.htm.

Averil, who was presented with the award at a glamorous ceremony in June, said she would put the £1000 prize money towards a wind turbine on her roof. Details of all the awards, including pictures of Averil mixing with the stars, can be found at <http://observer.guardian.co.uk/ethicalawards>.



Evening prayer completes walk

Eight of us gathered at Bridge House, Shillingford on 9 September and had delicious home-made teas prepared by Philip and Rosemary. Well stocked up, we set off for a lovely evening's circuit walk down the Thames through Benson and Warborough. We enjoyed some river wildlife, did some gentle wild flower identification and had a good taste of blackberries, cherry plums and damsons we found along the way. The sun was going down, with a beautiful light through the clouds over Wittenham Clumps, and we were soon aware of noisy swifts out swooping for their supper, and then a few bats on the path back to Bridge House.

We said evening prayers together by warm candlelight in the chapel, using the Northumbria Community Daily Office, and left carrying prayers for Philip and Rosemary and Bridge House, particularly for health, energy, and the replenishment of their hen-stock! It was good to share a little in the feeding - physically, spiritually, and through enjoying creation using all our senses.

Clare Newgass