

Chudleigh**Wild** Newsletter November 2020

Our aims are to:

Share knowledge on the wonderful wildlife in the Parish of Chudleigh.

Raise awareness through events and activities that involve and motivate the community.

Encourage positive action by local residents to attract and sustain more wildlife in the town and Parish of Chudleigh.

Work together and with others to conserve existing wildlife and enhance our local habitats, features and species populations.

Record what we have, holding and sharing our wildlife records with others.

Advise groups and individuals on biodiversity.

Be environmentally and socially aware and responsible in what we do.

Interested in joining us?

If you would like to be added to our mailing list, are interested in joining the committee, or would like to volunteer for any of the tasks listed on page 4, please contact Sue Smallshire:

suesmallshire@gmail.com

Hello to all our members:

Well here we are in another lockdown, but this gives us time to reflect on what we have achieved and the wildlife we have seen this year.

The March lockdown sent many of us out into the sunshine to work in our gardens and to walk and enjoy the countryside around us, and we had lots of interesting sightings of local wildlife. Thank you to all of you who posted you findings and sent in your records.

Dave Smallshire has made a list of all the species he found in the Bat Fields, off Oldway, but is also, with the help of you and our many and varied experts in Chudleigh, making an annotated list of all the records in the Parish. This will be displayed on the Town Council website in due course and will be available to anyone who is interested. If you, or anyone else you know, has records of the wildlife they have seen please send them to: davesmallshires@btinternet.com

What have our members achieved in 2020?

Along with the management of the various wildlife areas, such as the Bat Garden, Millstream Meadow, the Twin Oaks etc. all of which individuals continued to work in during lockdown, many more exciting things have been happening.

With the emergence of Hedgehogs from hibernation we were all keen to see them wake up and fatten up on the slugs in our gardens. Keen as always to attract them to our gardens and keep them off our roads, many of us have been feeding them.



Having raised awareness in the town of the plight of Hedgehogs on our roads, by erecting cute signs at various points, Jonathan Valentine has been, and still is, busy making these sturdy feeding stations and nest boxes for you to buy. The feeding stations are £25 and the houses £30. For further info. contact: 07989 421655



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Bats, especially Greater Horseshoe Bats (GHB), have been high on our agenda. The latest development on Station Hill has already impacted their flight paths and a small group of trained surveyors continue to monitor these important commuting routes. The new lighting on Station Hill has proved to be too bright for GHBs and discussions have been taking place with Teignbridge and DCC ecologists and planners to make sure that the recommended guidance is followed. This area of Station Hill was a traditional crossing point for the bats from Chudleigh Caves, but now light pollution prevents direct access to the Oldway Batfields reserve.



This reserve is specially managed by Devon Wildlife Trust and Chudleigh WILD to benefit commuting and feeding GHBs. We have been managing the green lane used as a bat flyway to keep it open, while the group of Dexter cattle that has been grazing the fields have done a good job of producing plenty of Ivermectin-free cow pats to encourage the dung beetles on which these bats feed.



Swift counts took place during lockdown and up to 20 were seen over Chudleigh, some nesting under the eaves of the Town Hall. None yet seem to be using the state of the art nest-boxes that were erected for them! They arrived slightly early on 28th April and departed later than usual on 18th August.

Sue and Dave Smallshire did however see a pair visiting, and hopefully breeding, in the apex of the roof of a house in Lower Trindle Close. It's encouraging to see Swifts at least investigating modern houses.

An apple picking and pressing day was organised last month. We were kindly loaned a press and more than 40 people, many of them children, dropped in to try their hand at extracting juice and to take some away to enjoy. We hope to make this an annual event as it was so popular.

We are hoping to plant a lot more trees, especially fruit trees, around the town this winter and put out a plea for donations to cover the first batch. We received an amazing £415 which has more than covered the cost of the first planting and will enable us to buy quite a few more.

Thank you so much to all those who contributed so generously.



Teignbridge District Councillors unanimously declared an Ecological Emergency on 30th September 2020. We are very keen to support them in tackling it!

ACT (Action on Climate in Teignbridge) was formed in 2019 to take local action to bring global change.

ACT has various sub-groups, including an Ecology Group. The Ecology Group aims to set up a volunteer, Parish-based, Wildlife Warden Scheme to help our wildlife increase and survive the Ecological Emergency and Climate Emergency. The Wildlife Warden Scheme will work closely with Teignbridge District Council to help achieve their biodiversity targets. A key part of the scheme will be to train voluntary Wildlife Wardens (WWs) who would like to improve their wildlife and habitat management knowledge.

A coordinator has been appointed for the WWs, several of whom have already undergone initial training. They will be giving a few hours each month to work with other local volunteers. The aims are to raise awareness of, and record, local wildlife, carry out practical tasks and monitor building development. They will work with WWs in other parishes and be able to call upon the many wildlife experts in Teignbridge to help and guide them. Chudleigh WILD will be supporting the Scheme and is looking for potential WWs to come forward. If you are interested, please contact Flavio Ford Winkler: flavio@actionclimateteignbridge.org

Dormice - vulnerable, but alive and well in Chudleigh!



Hibernating Dormice

The Hazel Dormouse, our native Dormouse, is hard to see in the wild. It spends half the year hibernating and when active is strictly nocturnal, living above ground in trees and overgrown hedgerows. It was once more common, but is now patchily distributed in the southern half of England and Wales.

It is very distinctive, and very cute, with orange brown fur and a bushy tail.

In June, I decided to put up some monitoring tubes in the Batfield reserve. Almost immediately I found a distinctive nest. Jonathan Valentine stepped forward and made us ten state of the art nesting boxes. As I hold a Natural England license to survey for this species, I was able to check them monthly throughout the summer.



Dormouse found in box 4

I was disappointed to find that by the beginning of October, when Dormice would traditionally be thinking of going into hibernation, there were no further nests. Imagine my delight when, on the 5th November, I made a final check and discovered four nests, two of which contained lively Dormice. This is very late in the season, but then Autumn is much warmer these days.

Sue Smallshire



The Chudleigh Hog Blog

This week has been extremely busy for most hedgehogs rescue centres. Here at the Chudleigh Hog we have been receiving hoglets from Chudleigh, Kingsteignton, Kingskerswell, Bovey and Newton Abbot. The poor little ones at the moment are all below 250g and unlikely to survive the winter outside without intervention. They arrive cold and full of internal and external parasites.



Chudleigh is very lucky to experience such high numbers compared to the rest of the UK and there are many things that you can do to help them.

If you have hedgehogs in your garden, please help them to fatten up. You can leave cat meat or biscuits for them and some fresh water.

If you see a hedgehog out in the daytime, please phone it in to your local rescue centre. There are three nearby, including one here in Chudleigh. Pop your hog in a high sided box somewhere warm and offer a little water.

If you see baby hedgehogs (hoglets), please seek advice as anything smaller than 350g needs to come in now as the weather changes.

Leave the piles of leaves in your garden, they attract insects that feed your hogs!

The British Hedgehog Preservation Society has lots of info on their website:

<https://www.britishhedgehogs.org.uk/>

You can find me on Facebook as The Chudleigh Hog @chudleighhogblog Tel. 07852513636

Claire Larkins

What do our volunteers help us to do?

If you or your family would like to get involved in the many and varied tasks we carry out, we would love to see you. It's a good opportunity to catch up with friends, to meet new ones and to involve your family.

Activities include:

- Litter picking - always plenty to do.
- Habitat management - of our wilder spaces and verges.
- Insect friendly planting - in various areas around the town.
- Wildlife surveys - orchid counts, bat surveys and many others.
- Community allotment - tree nursery and propagation area for bushes and insect-friendly plants.

If you want further detail or would like to join in any of these activities, please contact Sue Smallshire:

suesmallshire@gmail.com



South Devon Bat Care ... and wildlife recovery centre?



South Devon Bat Care, based at a local farm in Chudleigh, is run by Kelly Gayler. She has been very busy looking after young and injured bats for some years, but this year she has received and rehabilitated more than 150 injured birds and mammals.

Leviathan, the Serotine Bat, was flapping on the floor and couldn't fly. He was uninjured, but exhausted and starving. Over the next few weeks he barely moved but ate more mealworms than Kelly had ever seen a bat eat! Now, plump and healthy, he struggles with his flight. Kelly hopes that when her 'flight pen' is built, this will help him to learn to fly.

Bones the Tawny Owl was found abandoned by the side of a road and no nest could be found. He arrived weighing 100 grams and was hand reared and taught to hunt and become wild and independent. He has now been released from a safe aviary in Haldon Forest. He was spotted a month after his release near the aviary so Kelly is very confident that he is doing well.



Shauna the Wood Pigeon was found behind the Globe pub in Chudleigh after a stormy night. She was freezing cold and soaking wet. She was hand reared on formula. Pigeons become very friendly and attached to their carers, so once she was fully weaned and confidently flying, she went into the pigeon aviary to meet new friends and learn to be a pigeon. She has now been successfully released with a flock of Wood Pigeons.



Mustane the Weasel was found on one of the main paths at Parke, Bovey Tracey, where he just sat looking at passers-by. A couple tried to help him but a dog attacked and shook him. The tiny Weasel was stunned and unconscious, so they rushed him to South Devon Bat Care where he was warmed, given some rehydration fluids, puppy milk, pain relief and a warm heat pad. Over the next few weeks he started eating various meats, like mice and chicks, and learned to hunt for himself, play, stash food and build dens. He spent some time in a 'soft release' pen being fed until he was released. He returned for a few days to get food from his pen until he was ready to go off on his own.

You can learn more about Kelly's amazing work and how to donate to South Devon Bat Care on her Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/southdevonbatcare>

Contact: southdevonbatcare@gmail.com

