

Our Vision:

A Parish and its people that are enriched by wildlife, where people enrich the natural world and help to safeguard it for the future.

Our aims are to:

Share knowledge of 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.

Conserve and enhance our existing wildlife and local habitats, features and species populations, through working together and with others.

Survey & record what we have, holding and sharing our wildlife records with others.

Advise groups and individuals on biodiversity and land management for wildlife.

Monitor development proposals that may result in damage to important wildlife.

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, please contact chudleigh.wild@gmail.com

Could you be a parish Wildlife Warden?

We already have three Wildlife Wardens in Chudleigh, as part of 'Action on Climate in Teignbridge' (ACT's) Wildlife Wardens scheme, but we need more, to help support, protect and increase our Parish's wildlife and improve its chances of surviving the ecological and climate emergencies we face.

Wardens need to love wildlife but don't need specialist knowledge.

As a Wildlife Warden you will help the people in our community become more involved in the natural world, enhancing their physical health and giving them more joy and happiness.

Who can be a Wildlife Warden and what will they do?

Anyone who is interested in, or knowledgeable about, wildlife/ecology can become a Warden. You will:

- Commit to giving your Parish's wildlife several hours of your time a month.
- Look out for opportunities to protect, help and increase the wildlife in the Parish.
- Carry out practical work that will benefit wildlife.
- Either work in a team or possibly train to lead local volunteers on practical tasks (or you could call in specialists from the ACT Ecology Group).
- Send ACT and the Parish Council a brief, monthly account of what you have been doing, so we can all share successes and difficulties.

The ACT Ecology Group will provide free training in these areas:

- Identification of all types of wildlife
- Habitat management and connectivity: hedges, woodlands, meadows, verges and ponds
- Farming and wildlife
- Writing risk assessments – and working with them!
- Wildlife gardening
- Creating pesticide-free zones
- Carrying out desktop surveys
- Monitoring planning applications and developments

If you are interested in joining us, please get in touch for a chat and we will give you all the help and guidance you need and answer any questions you may have.

Contact: Sue: info.chudleighwild@gmail.com

Thank you: Sue, Tess & Vicci (ACT Wildlife Wardens)

Find out more about Chudleigh Wild on the Town Council website:

www.chudleigh-tc.gov.uk/chudleigh-wild/



Community Apple Pressing weekend

Yet again, on the weekend of 9th & 10th October, our intrepid apple pressing team turned up at the Community Orchard to share the proceeds of their scrumping with everyone. On this occasion, however, their handcart was carrying the newly acquired Chudleigh Community Apple Press!

While they picked, pressed and sieved the apples and offered the delicious juice to those who had come to watch the event, Chudleigh Wild volunteers were planting bulbs in the banks nearby, which we hope will provide a lovely show next spring.

Passers-by were invited to try the apple juice, while those who came along with bottles were able to take some home. A few people even brought their own home-grown apples to put through the new press.

The weather was perfect and everyone thoroughly enjoyed this annual event.



If you would like to join our team of volunteers, who carry out a whole range of tasks throughout the year, contact:
Sue Smallshire (*secretary*)
info.chudleighwild@gmail.com



Community Bat Evening

Due to the popularity of this annual event, Devon Bat Research and Conservation Group (DBRCG) offered to run two evenings in August for us this year in the Oldway Batfields Reserve. The weather was good, the bats were flying and over 100 people turned up over the two nights!



White-throat

Mark Wills, from DBRCG, holds a licence to ring birds as well as one to catch and ring bats. During the early part of the evening several birds were caught in the nets and Mark was able to show these to the visitors. They included Blackbird, Robin, Blackcap and to our surprise a Whitethroat, which is seldom recorded in Chudleigh. The birds were ringed and released straight away. Ringing is a valuable way of monitoring how birds are doing and where there are flying to and from.

Earlier in the day, trained volunteers had caught a variety of small mammals to show as well. These included Wood Mouse, Bank Vole and Harvest Mouse. These were shown to everyone in mammal tanks, where they had spent a warm restful day with plenty of food and water. They were then released back to where they had been caught.

Devon Bat Group lent us 10 bat

detectors and, along with 8 of our own, we were able to give everyone a chance to listen to the bats as they began to emerge to feed.

It wasn't long before Mark had caught a Greater Horseshoe Bat, a rare bat that roosts in the caves at Chudleigh Rocks. This is one of Britain's largest bats and wowed everyone before it was released to carry on feeding. We also caught Common Pipistrelle bats and one of our cutest bats, the Brown Long-eared Bat.

There was a 'match the footprint' game to keep everyone amused while waiting for the bats to come out and plenty of our famous bat biscuits, which always go down well.



Harvest Mouse



Brown Long-eared Bat

All in all a great evening, enjoyed by both adults and children of all ages.

Our thanks go to Mark for giving his time and expertise and to all the volunteers who turned up to help. We'd also like to thank Emma, who has recently produced a professional video for us of bats being caught, ringed and recorded in the Batfields. This will appear on the website soon.

Thanks too to Devon Bat Group for the loan of their detectors.



Action on Climate in Teignbridge (ACT) news

What's farming really about?

On 8th October, over 60 students from Exeter College visited Chudleigh's Deer Park Farm as part of their 'A' level Environmental Studies course. Owners Audrey and John have opened their farm to the public on many occasions to show local people wildflowers, fungi, bats and a whole range of things that they are doing for wildlife. As part of the ACT initiative, Audrey heads up an environmental group and has trained over 80 Wildlife Wardens across Teignbridge.



Worksheets in hand, the students were asked poignant questions, like: is it an intensive farm; how have we made room for wildlife; and what is 'rewilding' and should we do it here? Audrey told them: "The farm's annual profit is about £5k. That has to 'pay' us for approximately 55 hours work per week (equivalent to £1.70/hr) and pay for re-investment in our business. What is the minimum wage for someone over 21? £8.91." This probably came as a shock to them all, given that for most of them, their exposure to the world of farming will have come through television and programmes like Countryfile.

The Basic Payment Scheme for farmers (£6.5k) is being phased out over the next four years. The Higher Level Stewardship Scheme, which has paid Audrey and John £12k pa for looking after and restoring the farms meadows and hedges, will end in about a year. They may get about £5k from the new scheme, which is aimed at paying farmers to create new wildlife habitats, but not so much to look after them. That will give them a loss of about £8.5k pa and no 'wages'!

The new Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS) will pay farmers for their role in providing 'public goods' e.g. things which are essential to life on this planet, but which farmers haven't been paid for in the past. This all sounds wonderful, but the Government haven't yet published payment rates for many of the possible options. Farmers (including Audrey and John) took part in consultations on how it should be set up and how it should work, and there was great optimism that the payments would make up for the loss of Basic Payments. But various studies are now showing that this is unlikely, and there aren't many options put forward that simply involve looking after what farmers have already created.

Having taken on board how farming works for most farmers and how badly farmers who are already making every effort to be environmentally proactive might fare, the students continued their very positive experience with a hedgerow survey, and talks by Flavio (Wildlife Wardens' Coordinator) and Sian (Senior Ranger for TDC). By the end of the day they knew a whole load more about animal welfare, food security, government legislation etc. and ELMS, which will give payments to help farmers to provide public services such as clean air, clean water, healthy soil, habitats that will prevent flooding, room for nature and, not least of all, the beautiful landscapes that we have all come to appreciate.



What are we doing to encourage wildlife?

The habitats we have created in and around the town have been wonderfully productive and produced a wealth of colour, as well as the buzz of bees and hoverflies, and are now supporting grasshoppers as well. The Yellow Rattle, planted in Lawn Drive several years ago, finally burst forth and we counted a large number of plants in the verges this year. This species will suppress the more aggressive grasses and allow more wildflowers to flourish in future years. Volunteers have worked hard to keep the area free of weeds and rake the grass up as soon as mowing has taken place. There have been many positive comments about the work we are doing to encourage more insects, a vital part of making our planet work. This has been an exceptionally poor year for insects of all kinds, because of the long period of rain and cold weather which brought a unusually late Spring.

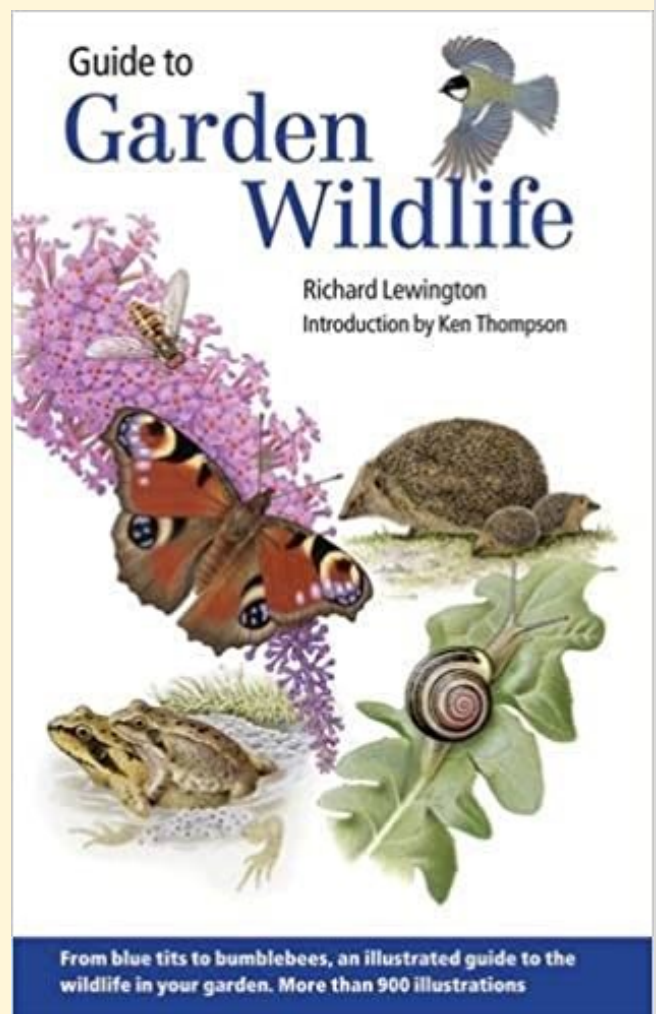
Many Chudleigh residents have been proactive by supporting our 'Gardening for Wildlife Project' and there is no doubt that the nectar-rich plants they introduced to their gardens will have helped our bees, butterflies and hoverflies to survive. Over 80 signs were distributed and we hope to encourage many more people to join in during the coming spring.

The loss of wildlife corridors is one of the most damaging factors affecting our environment. By allowing insects, birds and other animals to move from one garden to another, we are in some way offsetting the damage that has been done by the huge increase in housing in recent years. By planting trees and bushes and the right sort of native plants, we are providing food for insects and birds. If we can leave small gaps in our fencing to allow Hedgehogs, Frogs, Newts, Slow-worms and other animals to move around, our combined Chudleigh gardens will become an extended nature reserve.

A wildlife garden can be both beautiful and very satisfying as you begin to notice the increase in birds, insects and other wildlife. It can provide a tranquil space for all the family to enjoy. If you want to learn more about what you find, I can highly recommend Richard Lewington's beautifully illustrated 'Guide to Garden Wildlife'.

This and many other books on garden wildlife are available to help you and your family learn more about what you are helping to protect.

Sue Smallshire



Who's eating my Sparrows?

If you've noticed, as many of us have, an explosion of birds around your feeders and something large flying through, it will almost certainly be a Sparrowhawk. There is a healthy population of Sparrowhawks around Chudleigh and a healthy population of Sparrows too, which suggests that nature is keeping the balance just right. Sparrowhawks will catch a range of birds, from tits to doves.



Sparrowhawk

Another link in the food chain is the Kestrel. This amazing bird, that we used to see so commonly hovering along roadsides, is not doing so well. Kestrels feed mainly on small rodents. It is thought that rodenticide poisoning from eating dead and dying rats may be the cause.

The ponds in our garden support a large population of both Palmate and Smooth Newts and we have watched them gobble up our tadpoles, even before they hatch from the spawn. As the number of newts went up, so the number of dragonflies went down; we think that the newts were snacking on the juicy dragonfly larvae that lurk at the bottom of the ponds. Then suddenly, three years ago, a Grass Snake appeared, then re-appeared the following year. Guess what? Suddenly there were less newts and hopefully more dragonfly larvae will survive and we will see more adults emerging next spring. It makes you realise that nature's food chain can keep everything in balance when it's working properly.

Food chains are important because they show the intricate relationships in ecosystems. Each organism fills a specific niche in an ecosystem and depends on something else for survival. The food chain is made up of four main parts – **the sun, producers, consumers and decomposers**. **Producers** include all green plants, that use energy from the sun to make food. **Consumers** do not make their own food, but eat other plants or animals. **Decomposers** break down dead plants and animals, as well as the waste of other organisms.

Sadly, too often, humans have interfered with this natural food chain by eradicating species, hunting them to extinction or introducing non-native species into the countryside. All of these factors have upset the balance of nature over the years.

Sue Smallshire



Chair's Chat

I'm really not very fond of spiders. I'm not alone in this, of course, but as a naturalist I can appreciate their place in the web of life and marvel at their abilities to spin intricate webs. I love those nearly calm autumn days when the air seems full of gossamer threads and dispersing spiderlings that drift down to tickle our faces. Such was the case for the Chudfest day in September, when the wildlife exhibits on our stand were joined by lots of 'money spiders'. I'm fine with spiders when they're that size – it's the bigger ones that make my spine shiver. There's good sense in humans being inherently wary of potentially lethal animals (think poisonous snakes, big cats), but other phobias are less rational: moths, birds, crane-flies, slugs, worms ... I once met someone who couldn't bear to be near a dragonfly!

I once held a (tame) tarantula and I've even 'fished' wild ones out of burrows in Costa Rica (okay, with a long stick and a pounding heart), and occasionally I've been tempted to get up close to one with a camera. Such was the case in August, when Wasp Spiders appeared for the first time in long grass in the Oldway Batfields Reserve. These striking spiders from southern Europe first appeared in the south of England a century ago and have spread during the last 50 years as far north as the Midlands. They reached south Devon over 30 years ago, but I'd never seen one in Chudleigh until this year.

Female Wasp Spiders are large and colourful, as the accompanying photo shows (males are small and brown). They build orb webs low down among grasses and specialise in trapping any grasshoppers and bush-crickets that hop into them. One area of the Batfields has hundreds of these 'hoppers', including Long-winged Coneheads, which also colonised south Devon around the same time as Wasp Spider. The webs have a distinctive pale zigzag of thick silk down the lower section, the purpose of which is unclear, and after mating a prominent silk egg-sac appears in the web. For such a large, impressive spider, they can be surprisingly difficult to see as you walk through long grass. My daughter and I managed to find just four Wasp Spiders, but I bet there are others there, and elsewhere in the Parish. How about checking tall grassy areas next summer?

Wasp Spider



Great Green Bush-cricket



Talking of 'hoppers', old age (and maybe loud concerts) have reduced my ability to hear high-pitched noises, such as some bush-crickets. However, bat detectors can pick up these, as well as small mammals and even some moth species that emit ultrasonic calls to confuse bats that might try and capture them. I recall hearing the large Great Green Bush-cricket stridulating loudly from the scrubby embankment as I drove along the A38 past Chudleigh in the 1980s, but I've not been able to hear them in recent years unless I'm within a metre or two. So it was intriguing that bat detectors we've put out in recent weeks have recorded lots of bush-crickets, including Great Green, in the Kerswell area and possibly Sickie-bearing Bush-cricket in two town gardens. The latter is a newcomer, recorded from only a few sites in southern England, but it has yet to be confirmed in Devon.

Dave Smallshire

