

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

info.chudleighwild@gmail.com

Chudleigh's bats and birds fascinate the crowds!



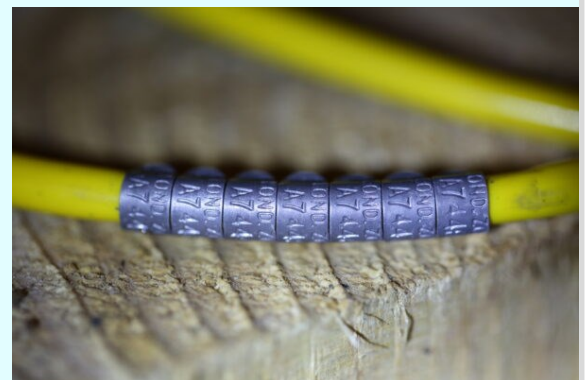
Yet again, our Community Bat Evenings brought in about 100 people over the two events on August 18th and September 1st. Thanks go to High-Line ecologist Mark Wills and his colleagues who, along with their nets and a harp trap, caught a variety of birds and bats that we were able to get a close look at.



There is nothing more exciting than seeing these creatures close up. Birds always seem much smaller than you think they are, and you can, of course, see so much more detail when you see them in the hand. Mark and his team are experienced bird ringers and Mark is licenced to ring both the birds and the bats he catches. Data collected from these bat

evenings is of great value in establishing where bats are, and what species can be found where. This and all the data that Chudleigh Wild collects is sent to the Devon Biodiversity Record Centre (DBRC) and is used to inform potential developers of any risks of disturbing these protected species.

Birds have been ringed for over 100 years and ringers send their records to a national database held by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO). Since the Ringing Scheme began, nearly 50 million birds have been ringed, which have generated over one million 'recoveries' (reports of dead birds or notable 'live' movements).



The Ringing Scheme, however, is about far more than just answering the question of where Swallows go in winter. With the data ringers are collecting being more and more accessible, thanks in large part to the advent of computers, they can do far more than just look at migration movements. In an era of increasing environmental change such as climate change and habitat loss, using ringing data to measure trends in bird populations is vitally important. One of the key things monitored by the Scheme is survival – quite simply the proportion of birds that survive from one year to the next. Even just a quick look at the numbers suggests that only one in 50 ringed birds is found dead, so large numbers need to be ringed to ensure that enough are subsequently found.





The Lark Ascending!

It is August, and we're hoping that our local contractor will come and bale our hay - despite our anxiety about the drought, we'd like just a couple more dry days so that we have enough reasonable-quality hay to feed to our cattle this winter! At around £50 per 'big' bale, we can't afford to buy it in, but making good hay and keeping Skylarks nesting here isn't easy! Modern farming has resulted in their numbers falling and now, across the UK, the Larks are '**descending**'...

When we arrived, 22 years ago, we were delighted to have these magical birds breeding here, but looking back, I realise that we didn't know much about their needs. Like most farmers who get payments for species-rich hay meadows, we had a 'hay mustn't be cut until after 15th July' clause - but were the larks, the grasshoppers and the butterflies consulted on this date? I don't think so, because, in order to breed, crickets and grasshoppers must have achieved sexual maturity, and in order to sustain their numbers, Skylarks need to average 2 clutches of chicks a year. Most years, if we cut our hay on the 15th July we would be making that vital 2nd clutch into 'skylark and grasshopper hay'! It is quite hard to know when the baby birds are independent, and can fly away from the mower as it storms around the field. The move to making several cuts of silage and hay has had as bad an effect on meadow life as pesticides!!!

Because we are so worried about the drop in Skylark numbers, we have come up with some extra ways to help them. We know that they are very vulnerable to predators, especially when sitting on a nest, so, before our hay is cut I ring fence a hilltop area of about 50m² in each field, using bright orange posts. This provides a refuge for Skylarks and the insects they feed on - the dense grass makes them less visible to foxes, badgers, crows and others. When we graze the hayfield's re-growth, the fence will protect the tall grass so that it is still there next spring - a safe nesting area. Each year I move the areas around a bit so that the flowers don't get swamped by rank grass.

We only have 6 small fields which are level enough for hay-making machinery, but 5 of these are 'hill-top' fields, which the Skylarks love. This year, as a result of our 'Skylark patches', we have had 5 breeding pairs and I've watched several young birds with their parents - as well as one adult that curiously watched me for at least a minute while it stood just 3 feet from me; a truly magical minute!

As an added bonus, we have had more insects this year than we've had for at least 10 years - though they are now suffering from the drought. Making hay late is expensive and risky, with shorter days, less settled weather and less nutritious hay. Our 'special management' probably costs us over £500 in lost hay and extra work, but we will happily give all of that if we can only keep on watching 'The Larks Ascending' at Deer Park Farm!

Audrey Compton (Deer Park Farm)



Motus Wildlife Tracking System



A large collaboration of scientists and conservationists have been working together to advance research into migratory bats and birds in the UK by building a network of receivers that can track them through the installation of tiny radio transmitters fitted to the animal. These transmitters weigh only 0.6g, so even very small creatures can carry them without detriment to their performance. When a tagged bat or bird passes within range of a receiver (2-15 km depending on the terrain and how high the animal is flying), the receiver automatically logs the presence and direction of flight of the animal. If there is a large network of such radio-receiving stations, we can detail their movement over large areas and timescales. This collaborative network, named **'Motus Wildlife Tracking System'** was designed in Canada and can provide researchers with valuable data on birds and bats such as migratory routes, lifespan, dispersal and foraging behaviour.

Imagine our excitement when 'Chudleigh Wild' was asked to help set up a project to track Greater Horseshoe Bats (GHB), around the Bovey Basin. The project, led by Professor Fiona

Mathews and funded by Sussex University, Devon County Council, and the other partners in the South Hams GHB Steering Group, will look at movements of bats from the cave-roost at Chudleigh Rocks and other roosts in the South Devon area.

Chudleigh Wild was able to point the researchers in the direction of possible good locations and to landowners willing to house one of the telemetry masts, or nodes. Chudleigh Wild's bat group has been using both hand held detectors (bought through a grant from Devon Mammal Group) and static detectors (loaned by DWT and the university) to trace the movement of GHBs around Chudleigh. We have shared our data with Fiona and her team and are very excited to see it put to good use.

Last autumn, several masts were erected in Chudleigh Parish, and during September/October eight bats were tagged, yielding very promising results. This year, Fiona, her PhD student Katie Allan and electronics wizard Alan Shuttleworth have been testing out the various bits of equipment. They have nearly finished putting up 12 masts in the area, as well as loggers at other known roosts, such as Buckfastleigh and Haytor, to see whether the Chudleigh bats travel to these more distant sites. This autumn and winter they will be tagging 15 bats. Very little is currently known about the movements of bats at this time of year, even though GHBs are known to wake up, feed and move location regularly throughout the winter.

Sue Smallshire





Action on Climate in Teignbridge

Wildlife Warden Scheme

By Flavio Winkler Ford - ACT's Wildlife Warden Coordinator

The climate and ecological crises are two of the largest and most pressing issues that we and future generations face. The UK's greenhouse gas emissions are measured against legally binding five-year targets, and we are projected to fail to meet the next two targets with current policies. We are also in the bottom 10% of nations for biodiversity intactness. This means that we, in the UK, need to do much more to avert these crises. Fortunately, there are things that everyone can do to help.

In 2019, Teignbridge District Council (TDC) declared a climate emergency and has since declared an ecological emergency. Also in 2019, a group of volunteers set up Action on Climate in Teignbridge (ACT). ACT's aim is to support people and organisations across Teignbridge to cut their carbon emissions and help wildlife to flourish, as well as work with TDC to ensure that its declarations are reflected in its policies, decisions and activities.

In October 2020, ACT launched its Wildlife Warden Scheme. Volunteer Wildlife Wardens are provided training in various areas, including species identification, recording wildlife, and how to lead groups of volunteers. They have been involved in a variety of projects, such as creating and managing wildflower meadows, planting hedgerows and orchards, recording wildlife and habitats, promoting wildlife gardening, writing articles for parish magazines, commenting on planning applications, signing up to citizen science schemes, holding information stands at events, creating nature trails, improving public spaces for people and nature, and so much more! We encourage Wildlife Wardens to do what interests them and support them with any ideas that they have. There are now roughly 100 ACT Wildlife Wardens across 38 parishes. Many work together and have formed friendships. Inspired by the success of the Wildlife Warden Scheme, ACT has recently launched a volunteer Carbon Cutters Scheme for anyone who wants to work in their community to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

It is hard to choose example projects that Wildlife Wardens have been involved with, as there are so many good ones to choose from. Here are a couple of recent projects.

Peter Chandler, our Wildlife Warden for Exminster Parish, collected 200 saplings from the Woodland Trust. These were a diverse mix of native broadleaved species. He invited children from Exminster Community Primary School's Eco Team to plant the saplings along bunds at a new housing development. Once grown, the new saplings will form a hedge, which will provide shelter and food for many species, and will also help to reduce flooding and sequester carbon. The children enjoyed planting the saplings and, in doing so, learnt about their importance and why they should be protected and cared for.

17 Wildlife Wardens received training from the Devon Biodiversity Records Centre (DBRC) in how to survey Unconfirmed Wildlife Sites. These are sites that have been noted as potentially good for wildlife but have never been surveyed.

Surveyors record all plant species found, and they also take various other measurements so that the DBRC has a good idea of the habitat quality. If the site is considered in good condition, it becomes designated as a County Wildlife Site (CWS). This does not legally protect the site, but gives it recognition, and CWSs need to be taken into consideration by planning authorities. These surveys also provide a good picture of the state of wildlife habitats and how well-connected they are.

Four Wildlife Wardens from Chudleigh have trained to take part in the River Teign Riverfly Project. They have been out dipping in the River Teign and Kate Brook to count and identify species of riverflies that are particularly good indicators of water quality.

You can find out more about ACT, and sign up to our newsletters, on our website <https://actionclimateteignbridge.org/>.

Emily Marbaix, one of our Wildlife Wardens, has even made her own podcast series (<https://anchor.fm/emily-marbaix>), where she speaks a bit about the scheme and anything to do with wildlife.

If you would like more information on the Wildlife Warden Scheme, please visit this part of our website <https://www.actionclimateteignbridge.org/>.

Do contact me if you are interested in joining the scheme, or if you have any questions:
flavio@actionclimateteignbridge.org



RIVER TEIGN RESTORATION PROJECT

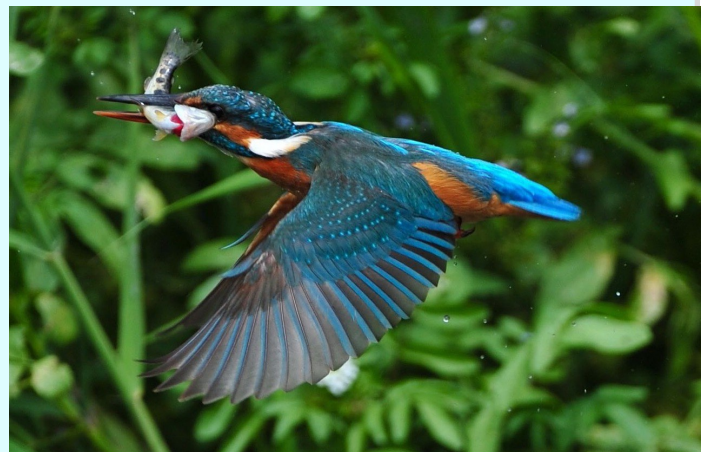
Trained members of Chudleigh Wild continue to carry out Riverflies surveys in the River Teign and the Kate Brook. We are becoming more confident and quicker at identifying the various species and are now planning to take on additional survey work.

We will be walking the whole length of Kate Brook from September, to look for signs of anything that

might be affecting the condition of the water, e.g. run off from adjoining land, pollution incidents, tipping, eroding banks etc. We will also look for anything that is preventing the water from flowing, such as rubble of a fallen tree. It's really important that we monitor regularly to maintain the condition of the stream, which appear at present to be very good. We will also be looking for signs of Trout, Otter and birds such as Kingfisher, Dipper and Grey Wagtail.

Could anyone who regularly walks Kate Brook, or has an adjoining property, please report back any sightings of Otter, or the above birds by emailing us on our website.

<https://www.chudleighwild.org/>



From brambles, to buzzing and beautiful

Overgrown with brambles and not a flower in sight, a little corner of Chudleigh has been transformed, providing a wide array of pollinating flowers. The mammoth task of tackling the 'thorny' issue, clearing the vegetation and digging over the ground was led by Phil, who together with Ian & Lynn spent many hours to get it back to something that would once again be attractive to both residents and wildlife. When it was ready Liz, from Gill's Greengrocers, very kindly provided a host of wildflowers that would nourish and allow all that buzzes to flourish.

The sun and heat of this summer did raise a question as to how the new plants would cope. As the picture shows, nature loves a challenge and has provided a new, food rich habitat for many insects and bees, next to the wildlife corridor that runs down the lane to the old bridge over Kate Brook.

Thank you to all concerned for showing us how a rather untidy corner can be turned into an attractive spot that we can enjoy and where bees and other insects can thrive.

Already other spots have been earmarked for a makeover: a corner at the bottom of Coburg Crescent and the corner at the top of Oldway.

If you live near a spot that you think could be better managed for wildlife, do let us know, and if it's suitable, we can help you to make better use of it by giving you advice and plants to fill it.

We mustn't underestimate the value of this sort of work. Every grassy space, however small, if managed in this way, is helping to create stepping-stones for wildlife across our town.

Let us know if you and your neighbours could take on an area like this one in Millstream Meadow. It's a fantastic transformation.

Well done!



Chair's Chat



I've just watched a young Blackbird bashing the daylight out of a Slow-worm and then gulping down the still-wriggling reptile. It was a one of this year's crop of Slow-worms and on the edge of my recently-mown lawn. For the third summer, we have left our lawns unmown since April, allowing 57 varieties of wild plants to flower and set seed. Insects certainly appreciated the absence of regular passage by a deadly machine (i.e. my lawnmower). An Orange-tip butterfly laid eggs on Cuckoo-flower in May, while in July and August several Meadow Browns, Gatekeepers, Ringlets and Speckled Woods laid eggs among

the long grasses, of which there were a dozen different species. After a spectacular early blaze of Dandelion flowers, July brought a flush of Cat's-ear flowers and a record 17 flowering Corky-fruited Water-dropworts, a nationally-scarce Teign Valley speciality that persists in some of Chudleigh's lawns. All three of these plants are deep-rooted perennials and therefore well-adapted to drought, such as we experienced in August; they provided great natural nectar sources when many lawns and grasslands were desiccated.

Common Blue butterflies, Six-spot Burnet Moths, Scarlet Tigers and Jersey Tigers also found suitable larval food-plants to breed on, and I watched a small population of Field Grasshoppers grow through several moults to maturity, the males then giving they lazy summertime chirps and the females laying eggs into bare ground. We monitored 'our' Slow-worms as they basked under two black plastic trays laid on the edge of the lawn. There were often between four and six individuals, including a deformed one we named 'Lumpy' (perhaps a cat casualty) that made it into its third summer. Sadly, the Grass Snake didn't make it into its fifth summer and for the first time since I installed a pond 32 years ago Frogs failed to breed. Maybe the large population of Palmate and Smooth Newts had something to do with that, as we have often seen them eating frog spawn and tadpoles. It makes me wonder whether, with the best will in the world, we can sustain populations of Frogs and other wildlife in suburban gardens, or whether they act as ecological 'sinks', sucking in the surrounding wildlife rather than boosting it.

Which brings me back to the Slow-worm that provided a meal for a hungry, and no doubt puzzled, young Blackbird. Managing a lawn as one would a traditional hay meadow, with a late summer cut, surely has to be good for wildlife on balance. But managing land in a particular way is bound to have its winners and losers. The loss of short grass that a frequently-mown lawn provides will not benefit birds like Blackbirds and Starlings that collect earthworms and leatherjackets, respectively, for their young. At the scale of our town, though, there is a great variety of wildlife just waiting to be discovered. Please enjoy it!

Dave Smallshire

