

## 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.org](mailto:info@chudleighwild.org)

## CHAIR'S CHAT

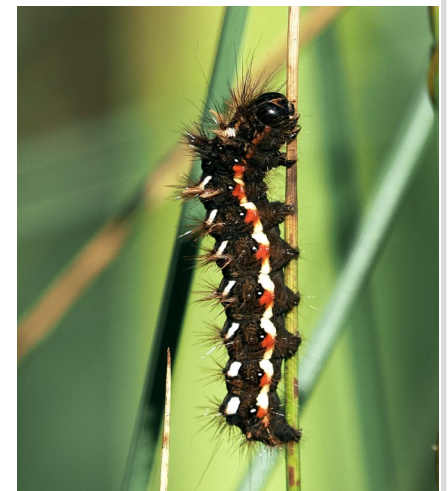


Well, the mild autumn weather seems to be dragging on. Okay, let's qualify that: between the deluges, we've had some lovely calm, sunny days when the remnants of summer's insects come out to play in the garden. Up to the end of October, there were four Field Grasshoppers (*left*) stridulating (chirping) in an arena based around one of the refugia (black plastic trays put

out for Slow-worms to bask under) by my pond. Watching closely, I could see that they periodically lunged at one another – presumably fighting for the attention of a female (although I couldn't see one). Even closer and my poorly-functioning ears could just about hear them too!

Up to four Slow-worms also used the trays in October, including two gorgeous, black-and-gold young ones, barely half the width of a pencil. A Speckled Wood was also seen basking, though on a wooden fence, and a Hornet patrolled frequently, no doubt looking for some tasty morsel. One day a lovely Knotgrass moth larva (*right*) climbed up to bask on some rushes.

Several species of hoverfly frequented the flowers, but I've given up trying to identify most! We've also seen the inevitable Red Admiral, Comma and Large



White butterflies, while a colourful Southern Hawker (*below*) spent ages injecting her eggs into a rotten log beside the pond. Some of those eggs may overwinter, while others hatch quite soon. There was certainly one small larva left in the water after we had given the pond a much-needed clean-out.



Such happenings need some focussed attention to find and enjoy: looking closely brings these little pleasures! But not everyone has a garden, or one that wildlife has been encouraged into for nearly 40 years. That's partly why Chudleigh Wild has been managing two of the wide verges in Lawn Drive in recent years: to showcase what passers-by might choose to do in their gardens to improve them for wildlife. Opposite the school, most of the grass is allowed to grow during the summer, as hay meadows used to be. It's an extension of the 'No Mow May' concept, allowing flowers to blossom and attract insects and spiders until cutting in July/August. Further down and on the opposite side of the road are two beds of flowers that are attractive to pollinating insects, such as butterflies, moths, hoverflies and bees. The grass around these verges is cut more frequently, in part for road safety reasons, thanks to the goodwill of Peter Warn.

*Dave Smallshire*

**Barbastelle Bat**



## Bat news

On 13 September, Chudleigh Wild held its annual community bat evening at 'Oldway Batfields'. Some 60 people gathered in the evening in the hope of seeing some of the bats for which Chudleigh is well-known. A team of licenced bat catchers and bird ringers had already erected mist nets and before dusk they were able to show the admiring audience Blackcap, Song Thrush and Robin in the hand. Children were given bat masks to colour in and later they munched on bat biscuits (no bats were hurt in the production of these!). Bat detectors were handed out so that everyone could hear the ultrasonic calls made by the various species.

The first Common Pipistrelles were picked up well before dark, so we saw them as well as heard their echolocation calls. Soon we were marvelling at the tiny size of these bats, after several had been extracted carefully from the nets. We had hoped to catch one of Chudleigh's specialities, the Greater Horseshoe Bat, but it was not to be. However, the detectors managed to pick up one Greater Horseshoe flying by, as well as several Noctule, Soprano Pipistrelle, Natterer's, Leisler's, Serotine, Brown Long-eared and Barbastelle – that's about half the species found in Britain!

The Barbastelle is a scarce woodland bat that we weren't expecting, but amazingly one was caught in the nets and everyone got close-up views of it in the hand. What a little Gremlin!

Our thanks go to Mark Wills and his team for a wonderful evening, and to our committee for helping to set up, remove the sticky cowpats and guide people safely along the lane.

If you haven't been to one of these family events, don't miss it next year!





## How are our hedgehogs doing?

Wildlife charities have launched the first national hedgehog strategy to halt the species' decline across the UK.

**The Peoples Trust for Endanger Species (PTES) and the British Hedgehog Preservation Society (BHPS) have just published a plan in response to plummeting numbers in native Hedgehogs. A 2022 report found that population had declined by 75% in rural areas since 2000.**

This has been caused by threats like habitat fragmentation, which, with all the construction of new housing in Chudleigh must have impacted them badly. A decrease in natural invertebrate prey, increased vehicle collisions, encounters with garden machinery, ponds and bonfires, exposure to toxins, like rodenticides, and genetic isolation have all taken their toll.

Having said all this, Chudleigh residents have been very active in working to protect our local Hedgehogs. Reminders to motorists are in place all across town and many of us feed, water and house them. We have also provided release sites for injured, sickly and abandoned baby hogs. **But this alarming data on their decline means we mustn't be complacent.**

The PTES strategy aims to act as a framework and reference point for all actions relating to hedgehogs in Britain, to encourage a joined up approach across stakeholders and sectors. It's designed for conservationists, local councils, farmers, land managers and central government, but there are many ways in which the public can also contribute to supporting hedgehog populations, especially ahead of hibernation.

Creating 'Hedgehog Highways' is of major importance. Putting 13 cm x 13 cm holes in or under the fence to connect neighbouring gardens will allow them to move between green spaces, searching for food and shelter. With connections in place, we can also provide water and places to rest, such as leaf and log piles, or a Hedgehog house, as well as checking for Hedgehogs before lighting bonfires or strimming.

**Keep up the good work!**

**Press release:**

<https://ptes.org/press-release-first-ever-national-hedgehog-conservation-strategy-launched-by-leading-wildlife-charities>

**Strategy:**

[Britain's first National Hedgehog Conservation Strategy - PTES](#)





## Westpoint's FARMWISE event

Chudleigh Wild & ACT Wildlife Wardens get Primary School children involved with nature.

Early on October 8th, Tess, Audrey and Vicky set off for Westpoint and the annual Farmwise day. Every year around 1,500 excited children spend a day finding out how their food is grown, how farm animals are looked after and how our wildlife fits in. The children move around the many stands in groups of about 15, stopping for about 10 minutes to find out key facts.



We had put together an activity about trees - their seeds, nuts and fruits, plus some really important stuff about how trees help us: taking in and storing carbon dioxide, producing the oxygen we need to survive, capturing the sun's energy (that ultimately gives us our food), as well as providing wonderful habitats for the wildlife we all love.

We asked the children to tell us what trees do - and it was great to find that quite a lot of these 9-10 year olds knew a lot. Then we gave each of them a postcard with pictures of a tree, its flowers and fruits and asked them to take one of its fruits/nuts from one of our baskets - we had acorns, crab apples, maple 'helicopters', conkers

and hazel nuts. They just loved feeling the different textures and enjoyed the absolute beauty of acorns and conkers! For me, the best thing of all was when a 9 year old boy thoughtfully stroked a hazel leaf and said 'If I dyed my hair green, could I catch the sun's energy too?'

An absolutely exhausting day, but very worthwhile!

Learn more at:

[www.devon.gov.uk/news/primary-school-children-get-wise-about-farming/](http://www.devon.gov.uk/news/primary-school-children-get-wise-about-farming/)

**Audrey Compton**





## Shocking revelations about neonicotinoid pesticides

I hope you will forgive me for raising this controversial matter again, but, having watched the recent YouTube presentations by Prof. Dave Goulson (University of Sussex), I learned a lot more about the impact of neonicotinoids on our wildlife, especially our declining insect populations. I was also alarmed to see the results of data from our waterways, showing high levels, both from our drains and from dogs, most of whom have received flea treatments containing this dangerous substance. Although we can't separate out the various sources of this water pollution, it's evident that we are endangering even further both our terrestrial and aquatic insects.

If, like me, you don't fully understand the implications, I recommend you watch this extremely well presented talk.

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=JZ37CUnxfY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JZ37CUnxfY)

Watch this until the end and you will find that Dave has some very positive ideas on how we can help to offset the impacts ourselves, as well as some very strong messages to government.

*Sue Smallshire*

**Nov. 22nd at 7.30 pm in the Woodway Room**



## Let's support our wildlife this Christmas

We're not suggesting a slap up dinner for all our garden beasties, although I dare say extra bird/Hedgehog food would probably be more than welcome.

Most of our wildlife organisations have online shops, and, instead of agonising over a present that may well end up in a charity shop, as a raffle prize, or be given away next Christmas, have a look to see what's on offer.



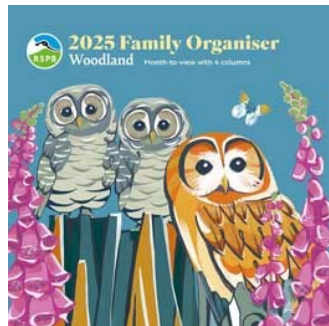
This great kids T-shirt from the **Butterfly Conservation Shop** is amongst a number, both adult and children's, along with other accessories.

<https://butterflyconservationstore.com>



This delightful Otter Tote Bag is for sale on **The Mammal Society** website shop, along with T-shirts, hoodies, posters and great mugs.

<https://mammalsocietyshop.org>



And then there's the RSPB shop with a whole host of wonderful bird themed gifts.

<https://shopping.rspb.org.uk>

These fun Pin Badges are on offer at our **National Amphibian and Reptile Charity**, along with some lovely children's books and much more.

[www.arc-trust.org/Pages/Shop](http://www.arc-trust.org/Pages/Shop)

A fabulous Mini Beast Hoody features with a host of wonderful gifts from **The Wildlife Trusts' Shop**, and will help to support our own DWT.

<https://thewildlifetrustsshop.com>



And of course, let's support our local businesses this Christmas.

We are so lucky to have two wonderful gift shops, cafes, pubs, restaurants and food shops, as well as the fabulous Chudleigh Fair and Late Night Christmas Shopping.

The date for your diary is:

**Thursday 5th December**



## Bats and Station Hill



We don't know exactly how long the Greater Horseshoe Bats have been roosting in the caves in Chudleigh Rocks, but they have been monitored regularly by Ecologists David and Colin Wills for over 20 years. Their counts have shown that, although numbers have fluctuated during this time, the totals have not shown a decline up to this point. They are rare in Britain, having suffered a catastrophic decline. They are Red Listed and fully protected by law.

One of our largest bats, they travel long distances to find the large moths and dung beetles that form their diet. They emerge at dusk and use tree lines and hedgerows to commute, thereby

avoiding bright lights. Most bats avoid lit up areas, but Greater Horseshoe Bats seem particularly averse to artificial lights. We know, from historic research, that our Chudleigh population has several preferred routes from the caves. One of their major corridors has been across Station Hill and along a tall hedgerow, enhanced in mitigation for recent housing, which we refer to as the 'Bat Run'.

Chudleigh Wild bat group have been following the movements of the bats for some years now and were particularly alarmed by the drop in numbers, declining to none, using the Bat Run after the new street lights were installed on Station Hill. This is not an isolated incident. Greater Horseshoe Bats in many parts of the South West have been negatively impacted by street lighting and there is ongoing research into what type of lighting is most acceptable to them.

For 3-4 years we have been campaigning with the Highways Lighting Officer to get the Station Hill lights changed, and at last it has happened. In July, the 4,000 Kelvin lamps were removed and changed for 2,200K lamps. We met recently with the lighting engineers to see if there was any noticeable difference since these changes, and to our delight we had one Greater Horseshoe Bat pass. The engineers were genuinely interested and concerned, and asked to be notified of any further developments and of any research that they could follow regarding bats and lighting. They explained that technology had advanced and warmer lights were becoming more reliable and affordable, but were less energy efficient, so not used universally. New developments will be supplied with 3,000K as standard and rural lighting should be warmer at 2,700, but in special circumstances, e.g. near environmentally sensitive areas, 2,200 K lamps can be supplied.

**On October 21st, some of the bat group took their detectors down to Station Hill and were delighted to get six Greater Horseshoe Bat passes. These lamps, which produce softer, warmer light, do seem to be acceptable to the bats.**

## Two recent apple celebrations around town

### Gappah Farm's Orchard Day

Organised by the farmers and supported by the Bat Conservation Trust's 'Connecting People with Landscapes' project, 81 adults and children collected apples, pounded them to a pulp in buckets with wooden stakes and then put the pulp through presses to make very tasty juice. It was a sociable occasion, with lots of farm and apple chat. We arranged a bug hunt for the children, who certainly found amazing numbers of slugs and worms!

There was more grown-up interest in the beautiful lichens on the old trees. We were lucky enough to have two lichenologists, who identified them to species level and recorded them for the Devon Biodiversity Records Centre and British Lichen Society.

Lichens are beautiful, fascinating, don't move or die back in the winter, so are very pleasing and satisfying to study.



Funded by the National Heritage Lottery, 'Connecting People and Landscapes' brings together farmers, landowners and communities across the South-West and beyond to create more resilient landscapes in the face of changing climate.

*Tessa Frost*

### Chudleigh Apple Pressing Day

Last Saturday, October 19th, a merry band of volunteers picked apples from our orchards and their gardens and wheeled them up to 1 The Square for the annual apple pressing day. Hosted by Migs and her team from the Baptist Church and masterminded, as always by the intrepid 'Old Men of Chudleigh' (as they like to call themselves), a large number of people gathered to help pulp and press the fruit and to produce some fabulous juice. The result was around 100 litres of apple juice, which people were encouraged to take home with them. The left-over juice was then taken to CHUDFridge, for others to enjoy.

There was apple bobbing, apple printing and colouring for the younger children and an interesting display on why we shouldn't mind sharing some of our apple crop with birds, mammals and insects.

Thanks go to the Baptist Church for offering their garden, which was an absolutely ideal spot and brought in a large number of people.

