

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



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

December 15th 7:30 PM
in the Woodway Room, Chudleigh Town Hall

EVERYONE WELCOME



'Wings and Things'

After the (brief) AGM business, Chairman Dave Smallshire will display his collection of preserved bird wings, acquired from road casualties and natural death over 55 years. They include a range of species from the tiny Wren and Goldcrest to large birds like Red Kite and Great Black-backed Gull. Dave will introduce each of the wings, explaining how each species can be identified. At close range, you will be able to appreciate how birds' beautiful wing patterns are formed. Dave will also give you chance to try and identify each wing!



Foraging in Chudleigh

Do you know where there are free fruit and herbs in Chudleigh?

Chudleigh is blessed with lots of open spaces, footpaths and quiet lanes, so there are many opportunities for a quick nibble from the trees and hedgerows.



Sweet apples on Lawn Drive

Chudleigh Town Council and Chudleigh *WILD* have planted orchards with apples, pears and medlar trees. There are also Hazel nuts, if you can get there before the Squirrels. The apples and pears are probably past their best now, but great for eating or juicing in future years. Medlars are ready for harvesting and make delicious fruit jellies, an old fashioned accompaniment for cheeses and meat. With half of your fruit soft brown and nearly rotten, boil it up until soft, drain off the juice overnight and make Medlar jelly.

You will find Crab Apples in the hedges and next to the path at the Bridgelands Bridge end of Millstream Meadow Park. There are at least three varieties there, with another greener version on the roadside at the bottom of Lawn Drive.

Walking along the path from the Crab Apples, near the old community orchard, are some Filbert/Hazel nut trees. If you pick them while they are fresh and green they have a totally different taste from the dried ones - but it may be too late now.

Blackberries are in nearly every hedge, but you probably all have special spots for fat sweet ones. For a dark jam, a mixture of blackberries and elderberries makes a nice change. Sadly, we don't seem to see as many Elder bushes these days. They are not the most beautiful trees and the flowers have a rather odd smell, but you can harvest the flowers for cordial and champagnes in May and June and the berries for cooking and winemaking in August. There are bushes in Culver Green and Millstream Park, but perhaps we should plant more.



Medlars on Lawn Drive and in the Community Orchard



Crab apples near Bridgelands Bridge

Wild cherries and plums are around, but the trees are quite tall and birds usually get to the fruit first. Both can be delicious and very sweet.

We have planted herbs around the town, mainly because insects love the flowers and shelter under the leaves, and in dry stalks in the winter. Some of our flowering herbs are very beautiful, particularly Fennel, Rosemary and Thyme. You will find some of these at the Sensory Garden (under the Twin Oaks), in the Bat Garden (at the bottom of Rock Road), and on Culver Green. Herbs are easy to grow, so please collect cuttings or seeds. Have you tried frying Sage leaves and crumbling them over spuds, cooked veg or salads? Delicious!

Chudleigh *WILD* and the Town Council hope to continue planting food and wildlife-friendly patches in public areas. It's hoped that the parkland behind Palace Meadow will come into the town's ownership. Along with making this a more attractive community area and updating the children's play area, it could provide the opportunity to plant small patches of red, white and black currants as well as raspberries and gooseberries. None of these need much maintenance, so if local families are up for volunteering to look after them, it could be an exciting and stimulating area for us all.

So literally, FOOD for thought!

Oldway Batfields Reserve



In 2009 the fields at the bottom of Oldway were gifted to Devon Wildlife Trust, on completion of the Lower Trindle Close development. The land was given to mitigate the effects of building on an important commuting route for the Greater Horseshoe Bats. It was agreed that these fields would be grazed by cattle not treated with worming agents. The chemicals within them make cowpats sterile and therefore are not used by the many dung beetles that provide an important source of food for these bats. David Wilson Homes also fenced off and enhanced the hedgerow that the bats used, and planted a further parallel Devon hedge bank alongside. The area comprises a mixture of native trees and bushes and a great deal of bramble.

DWT are now responsible for managing the area, along with their many other reserves. As they rely on a small team of volunteers to do this sort of work, Chudleigh *WILD* offered to take on the task, with some help from DWT members when needed. We have an enthusiastic band of volunteers, but with the warm, wet weather we have had lately, the vegetation has grown at an alarming rate. Recently the DWT volunteers did a sterling job managing some of the habitat. BUT there is a great deal more to do. It's essential that we keep the bat flyways open so that they can continue to use this route out from the caves at Chudleigh Rocks to their feeding grounds.

If you fancy coming along during the winter to help with your secateurs, hedge trimmers and bow saws, we would love to see you. We work on occasional Sunday mornings and always have tea/coffee and cake to spur us on. Work has to be carried out between November and February, to avoid disturbance to nesting birds and Dormice.

YES, we do have Dormice! According to Peoples' Trust for Endangered Species (PTES), Hazel Dormouse (*Muscardinus avellanarius*) populations are suffering an alarming decline. Perhaps the most elusive native British mammal, their numbers have plummeted by 70% since 2000. The key factor in their decline is the loss of the scrubby under-storey in woodlands where these arboreal creatures live and feed, but the problem has been compounded by climate change, according to conservation scientists.



Dormice hibernate for up to six months in nests below ground, but milder winters mean they are increasingly emerging from hibernation when there is no food available. Between 40% and 70% of Dormice die during hibernation. With their caramel fur, big black eyes and furry tail, the Hazel Dormouse is a flagship species for the conservation of many woodlands. Its presence is an indicator of wider animal and plant diversity and woodland health.

A spokesman for the PTES said "If the decline continues at the same rate, in another 30 years Dormouse populations will have fallen by 94% since 2000, which we simply cannot let happen."

In August this year, we invited people to learn about and see first hand the bats that use this area. Licenced members of the Devon Bat Conservation and Research Group came along to catch, record and ring some bats. Both children and adults were delighted to see bats close up, along with several bird species that were also caught.

Sue Smallshire

If you would like to volunteer in the Oldway Batfields Reserve contact: info.chudleighwild@gmail.com

Did you know ...



Carbon Cutters

Action on Climate in Teignbridge

VEHICLE EXHAUST IS TOXIC

**Please turn off your engine
when stationary**

Air pollution can be 3 times
higher inside your car



@MumsforLungs   

www.mumsforlungs.org

MUMS
FOR
LUNGS

Different posters highlighting
NO CAR IDLING

will be displayed around the town and
flyers will be available in the old
telephone box alongside Chudleigh *WILD*
information.

Want to get involved by making your own
poster to be displayed? It would be great
to get a selection of different images ...
especially from children!

Posters designed by Emma Smith & 'Mums for Lungs.'

As Chudleigh develops there is an inevitable
increase in traffic, particularly around the
town centre and school.

There is one easy thing that residents can do
to help prevent the resulting increase in air
pollution ... air which we and our children
breathe.

**WHEN PARKED OR WAITING,
PLEASE TURN OFF YOUR ENGINE**

It might be invisible, but car
exhaust fumes contain Benzene,
Soot, Carbon Monoxide and
Carbon Dioxide Particulates.

KILL YOUR ENGINE



NOT THE AIR

**2 MINUTES IDLING IS EQUAL TO 1 MILE
OF DRIVING.**

Contact Barbara Steele, barbarasteele974@gmail.com
(Volunteer Wildlife Warden, Action on Climate in Teignbridge)

Two of our Committee members sadly missed

John Whetman



John was born in Dawlish in March 1937. The absolute core of John's life was growing things, such as the early strawberries that were sent by train to London, where they sold in the 1950s for £1 a dozen! He had a public school education, but would have much preferred the co-ed grammar school in Teignmouth. In the summer holidays, he would camp with friends at Shell Cove, Dawlish, and mess around in a little sailing boat, catching fish or crabs for supper.

On leaving Kelly College in 1955 he was required to spend two years in one of the armed forces: John joined the Devonshire Regiment and was trained at Exeter Barracks. This was during the 'Cold War' era and his regiment was sent off to Luneburg Heath, a 20 minute march away from Russian soldiers on the East German border. John obtained a good degree at Reading University, then worked for a while with MAFF's National Agricultural Advisory Service in Essex. He soon came back to Devon, going into partnership with his father. From 1969 they moved gradually into growing scented Dianthus Pinks; he was on various RHS Trial Committees and various selection groups, where he was known to some as 'Mr Pink'! He built what was probably the first polytunnel in the UK; their crops grew faster and better and the nursery was soon transformed. In the 1980s, he used electron-microscopy to develop virus-free stock, producing rooted cuttings that sold in their millions all

over the world. Around 2008 he started a 10-year stint as Treasurer of the Chartered Institute of Horticulture. John wanted more young people in horticulture and helped to launch the Young Horticulturalist of the Year competition.

He met Audrey (Compton) and in 2000 they looked for a house with some land where they could help wildlife to thrive. They fell in love with the 100-acre Deer Park Farm, on the western boundary of Chudleigh Parish, and thus began 23 years of farming and encouraging wildlife, especially flower-rich meadows. Hundreds of people visited the farm every year, school children, families and many other groups finding out about wildlife and nature-friendly farming.

Everything that John did for wildlife was driven by his regret for the losses caused by intensive farming, climate change, pollution and politics. He lobbied government and industry for a better environment and a fairer, more caring world. He became an enthusiastic member of Action on Climate in Teignbridge (ACT), being part of the ACT Ecology Group, and dedicated himself to its Wildlife Warden Scheme, becoming one himself. He was a keen botanist, loved all wildlife and was deeply committed to his voluntary work with the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG), Devon Wildlife Trust and the Devon Hedge Group (he was a very enthusiastic hedge-layer).

John was an active member of Chudleigh *WILD* and helped and advised us on the management of the Oldway Batfields Reserve, along with the other areas we look after. His knowledge and advice were invaluable and will be sorely missed.

Dave Smallshire





Rod Blackshaw

As some of you will already know, sadly Rod died in August after losing his battle with cancer.

Rod joined Chudleigh *WILD* at its inception and became Treasurer soon after. He was a very enthusiastic and committed member of Chudleigh *WILD*, giving advice and helping at many events. Rod was very knowledgeable about many issues and passionate about the environment and the challenges that it now faces.

He had a full and varied academic career in many areas relating to agriculture, zoology and the environment, having obtained his PhD in agricultural zoology and soil biology at Newcastle University. Rod was recruited in 1981 to initiate a research programme in soil zoology and crop protection for Queen's University in Belfast and the Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland. In the course of his 15 years in Northern Ireland, he became an acknowledged expert in his field. Among other things, he was the first scientist to recognise the potential of the New Zealand Flatworm to attack our native earthworms and his studies on this topic were recognised internationally.

In 1996 he moved to Plymouth University, where he held various roles over the next 18 years. His happiest time there was as the Dean of the Faculty of Land, Food and Leisure, based at the beautiful Seale Hayne Campus. He became Professor of Agricultural Zoology at Plymouth University and was a very well respected scientist both nationally and internationally.

At various times he was also Director of the MAFF South-west Regional Food Technology Transfer Centre and the Director of the Centre for Agricultural and Rural Sustainability.

Rod undertook a variety of voluntary roles. He became a member of the UK Advisory Committee on Pesticides and served as Deputy Chairman until this year.

Rod was also involved in local issues and he chaired the Teignbridge District Council Strategic Partnership, serving as a board member on the Devon Strategic Partnership. He was the Chair of the Standards Committee for Dartmoor National Park and an Advisory Board Member of the Wren Trust.

Rod was a man of many interests. He was very musical and was a good singer of folk songs. He was a member of The Chudleigh Shanty Men and also wrote songs for various local events. One of his passions was amateur dramatics and he was an active Board Member of Chudleigh Amateur Dramatic Society, both performing and writing productions. When he retired, he took to playing the ukulele and mandolin with great enthusiasm and began writing his own tunes. He was a member of Chudleigh Mummers for many years and could be seen every Boxing Day, in his role as the Doctor, outside the Town Hall and in various local hostelries, raising money for local charities.

Rod loved rugby union, both as a player for local sides and as a supporter for Ireland and England. He was a regular spectator at international matches at Twickenham and Lansdowne Road. He had also been a member of historical re-enactment societies: with his English longbow he was an enthusiastic archer and had a full suit of armour especially made for him: this took pride of place in his house! Rod could be persuaded, after a drink or two, to put on his suit of armour, although in recent years it became a bit snug!

Another of Rod's passions was his narrow-boat and he spent many happy hours with Ursula exploring Britain's canals. When they moved to Cheshire recently, they were able to transfer their boat to the Cheshire canal system, so Rod was still able to enjoy it during his illness.

Rod was at his happiest singing a good song with his friends with a pint of real ale in his hand and he will be greatly missed by all his friends in Chudleigh for his knowledge, enthusiasm and his sense of humour. We should remember him with a smile on his face and a mischievous twinkle in his eye.

Keith Benyon-Tinker

CHAIR'S CHAT (November 2023)

This piece is going to be unashamedly self-indulgent! 2023 is proving to be my *annus horribilis*. In March and April, I was determined to make my already-four-times-delayed trip to the Antarctic and South Atlantic islands and I very nearly made it, but falling down an escalator at Heathrow and breaking my wrist put paid to that. The Antarctic element of the trip was rearranged for October-November, but a seven-week, near-hell experience in Torbay Hospital with a sepsis/*E. coli* infection put paid to that. I was finally discharged, feeling very weak, but at least alive, at the beginning of October. So, I've had plenty of time to contemplate my life to date and to tentatively think ahead to what comes next.

For these reasons, my only notable wildlife sighting in Chudleigh recently has been the Hummingbird Hawk-moth that came to see me (well, the Buddleia flowers really) during my first venture back into the garden. Others members have reported seeing this migrant moth around Chudleigh in recent weeks.



Even before I went into hospital I had started trawling through my memories and digital images, extracting a series of images that illustrate some of the highlights I've experienced around the world since wildlife grabbed me firmly as a teenager in the 1960s. I didn't do this with a PowerPoint talk in mind, but purely as a means of distraction from the horrible events taking place. Unfortunately, evidence of the first 35 years of events was trapped in the attic (in the form of slides, many some of which have gone mouldy) and more recently camcorder footage.

What I do have, though, are dozens of notebooks in which all my sightings are logged. I've bored Sue and a few friends and family members with these images of my highlights, and I wondered whether Chudleigh *WILD* members would be interested in sharing my wildlife highlights. So, watch out for this talk coming in the New Year.

Also in the attic were some large, sealed plastic bags with 'bird wings' written on the outside. I've just checked them over for damage by invertebrates, but they are all in a good state. Fifty-five years ago, I stretched out and air-dried the wings of a Pheasant and a Black-headed Gull that I found as road traffic casualties. Remarkably, these are still in perfect condition; many other wings have been added to my collection over the years. I've used these at times as an aid to bird identification in evening classes and bird club gatherings. They are fascinating to see at close range and show us the sort of characteristics that are usually looked for by bird ringers. Sadly, the accompanying 'other bits' of the birds have not fared well and a few years ago I had to dispose of many skulls and feet that had been attacked by carpet beetles and mites.

Anyway, I'm inviting you to see them for yourselves at our forthcoming AGM. Rather than have a formal talk, on this occasion we can bring some pre-Christmas drinks and mince pies and wander around a series of table exhibits

Dave Smallshire