

What have we done, where are we going?

Chudleigh Wild is now in its 7th year and I have been looking back at how it came about and what it has achieved in that time. I am also aware that many of the members who have taken leading rolls are ageing fast and need to step back and let others take the reins.

At the moment the committee has 11 members. We all bring different ideas to the table and, where possible, we share out the jobs. There are four named positions: **Chair, Secretary, Treasurer and Website Manager/Social Media.**

So what have we achieved since we started?

Early tasks included looking at **Public Open Spaces (POSS)** to see how they could be enhanced for wildlife. Lawn Drive, The Twin Oaks, the Cider Press and the Bat Garden on Rock Road were four of the early projects.

A team of **litter pickers** was soon set up: they work tirelessly to keep our town and its outskirts litter-free. We also have a team of **volunteers** who work to keep the POSSs tidy, clear the grass after mowing and work in the Batfields reserve.

Among our members we have a number of **ecologists and knowledgeable amateur naturalists.** We have therefore been able to survey the parish for potential County Wildlife Sites, rare and sensitive species, and any likely threats to wildlife from development, as well as taking part in the River Teign Restoration Project.

We have set up groups to encourage and help residents to enjoy the wonderful wildlife in Chudleigh. These include a **bat group** and a **wildlife WhatsApp group** to share any interesting wildlife sightings or to ask for identification of species.

We have set up a variety of **talks and events** and very popular **Community Bat Evenings**, which attract over 100 people of all ages each August. **Apple pressing** in the community orchard has also been a popular event.

This year we are working with a number of youth groups to help them to understand and enjoy the wildlife around them and who knows, they may even become a part of the Chudleigh Wild team in future years.

**SECRETARY
URGENTLY
NEEDED**

As Secretary, I will be standing down shortly and so we are looking for someone younger to take on this role. Emma looks after the website and social media and sends out the newsletter for us. The secretary's job, therefore, is setting up committee meetings, taking the minutes, fielding emails, setting up talks, and generally checking that everything is running smoothly. I edit the newsletter and am happy to continue doing so for the time being.

Without more help, Chudleigh Wild risks withering and dying.

Please contact me Sue Smallshire: suesmallshire@gmail.com



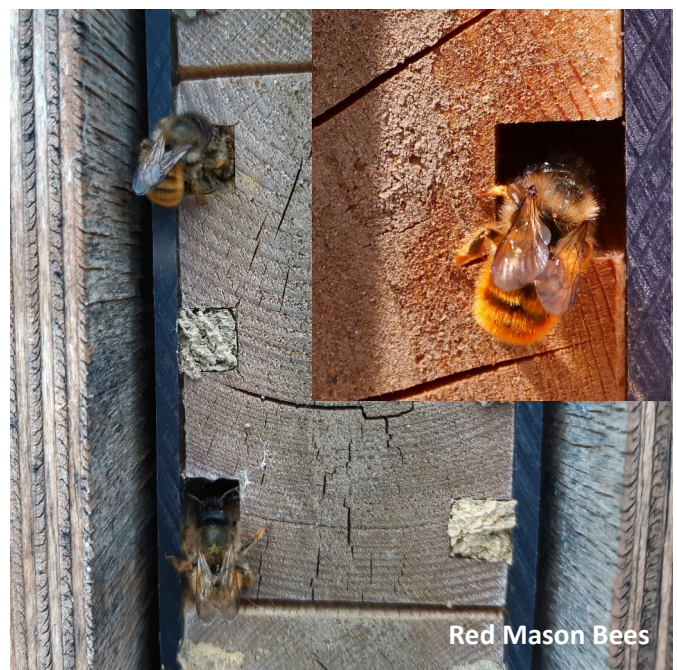
Chair's Chat

As I write, we're having our first rain for a month. I don't recall ever experiencing such spring weather conditions during my 70-odd years. A persistent north-easterly airflow brought warm air to the South-west, while the East Coast was decidedly chilly (and Mediterranean countries had storms and floods!). On the face of it, it's been lovely here, with prolonged and dramatic flowering spectacles of Dandelions and Hawthorns, for example. But where were the insects, many naturalists have exclaimed? Being cold-blooded, insects are very responsive to temperature changes, so why were most species strangely scarce? Was it the unusually cold April and/or the heavy, gusty downpours that preceded the drought?

I've been monitoring populations of breeding and wintering birds for over 50 years, dragonflies for nearly 40 years, and plant communities and rare butterflies for periods in the 1980s and 90s. What's clear is that much change is related to climate change, or at least changes in weather from year to year. In fact, what you end up monitoring with insects are the changes in weather from year to year; it takes maybe 25 years of careful surveys to work out when an underlying trend is real! I was recently involved in analysing over 1 million British and Irish dragonfly records for the 50-year period since 1970, to produce population trends. More species have increased than decreased and nearly all of these are thought to result from a warming climate—summer temperatures increased by almost 1°C during that half-century – with southern species moving north and upland/northern species retreating.

These higher temperatures have led to dramatic changes in the ranges of birds, such as the Firecrests that have colonised Chudleigh; dragonflies, butterflies and moths across Europe and elsewhere; and marine creatures that find our warming seas more to their liking. Such changes make life interesting for the wildlife enthusiast, but let's not overlook the dark shadow that climate change is casting over our amazing planet.

Enough of the doom and gloom – what's done well out of the spring drought, apart from flowers? Here I'm going to rely on local intelligence, and especially my garden experiences. If bees were in short supply, then 'my' Red Mason Bees hadn't heard the news. Last year's cocoons started hatching in late April, but it was another 10 days before the bees laid their first eggs. Things really got going at the middle of May and within a week the 'observation house' was full: all 24 holes had been capped with mud and inside were 276 cells, each with an egg and its cache of pollen. A second, smaller house had most of the 70-odd holes plugged by early June, by which time the larger holes from the summer bee house insert had been filled. (This bee house is a solitary bee observation nest box made by Nurturing Nature – see <https://nurturing-nature.co.uk/product/award-winning-solitary-bee-observation-nest-box/>).



Much to my surprise, the cavity at the bottom of the bee house, where cocoons are put in early spring, was colonised by nesting Red Mason Bees: they constructed mud cells several deep at the back! So, our efforts to encourage solitary bees sees to paid off, big time.



A Carder Bumblebee feasts on Yellow Rattle

I've also been counting flowers this spring. After peaks of 730 Dandelions and 162 Lady's Smock (Cuckoo-flower) in late April, over 300 Yellow Rattle plants came into full flower – we've been waiting patiently for the seeds we sowed in previous autumns to germinate and have been overjoyed at their numbers and more importantly their suppression of the grass growth (they parasitize grass roots). I'm also proud – as many Chudleigh residents could be – to have a Nationally Scarce plant



The rattling stage - the pods open up to shed their seeds

thriving in my lawns: the Corky-fruited Water Dropwort, which also goes under the equally long-winded scientific name of *Oenanthe pimpinelloides*! Forty of their tall, white umbels are now head and shoulders above the other lawn plants.



Thick-legged Flower Beetle

Standing so tall and conspicuous, they have attracted insects aplenty. Most conspicuous were the shiny green Thick-legged Flower Beetles. If you look carefully at my beetle photo you can also see a tiny brown blob to the right of the flower beetle. I thought they looked familiar and lo and behold they were, although I was used to seeing them inside the house: they were Carpet Beetles! I know them as the parents of the 'Woolly Bear' larvae that I have sometimes encountered in my collections of miscellaneous animal remains. They are known to be the scourge of museum collections and, yes, I admit I've lost bits of carpet to them too, in those places that the vacuum cleaner rarely gets to! Now I thought I knew all about Carpet Beetles, but I've never noticed

them on flowers before. Checking the literature, I find that the natural haunt of the larvae is birds' nests, where they help to biodegrade the debris. You learn something new every day! Now I understand their natural role in the environment, I can forgive them for eating a bit of my carpet.

All of our lawn flowers have, of course, been made possible with 'No Mow May', which for us continues into August, with some random simulated cow-munching and very occasional 'drunken mowing' to diversify the sward without damaging the wildlife that lives there. This includes grasshoppers, butterflies, moths, bees, hoverflies, beetles and Slow-worms, to mention a few. And no doubt many more that I've yet to identify!



Carpet Beetles

Chudleigh's Public Open Spaces

- managed for insects, birds and bats

We are very lucky in Chudleigh to have so many charming open spaces, all with different characteristics. Over the last few years, Chudleigh Town Council and Chudleigh WILD have co-operated in managing these areas for wildlife.



Lawn Drive

Here we have broad verges with long grassy patches that are cut once a year. Other areas are cut 4 times a year and the grass is raked up and removed. This, along with the successful planting of Yellow Rattle, has reduced the strength of the grass growth, allowing other flowers come through, including the signature plant of the Parish, Corky-fruited Water Dropwort! There is a mix of self-seeded annuals and vigorous perennials in four flower beds, providing flowers with nectar and pollen through the year, to attract the insects that act as pollinators and are food for our birds and bats.

A number of us have tackled the wildflower beds in the verges on Lawn Drive on a few occasions this year. We've encountered waterlogged clay where you can't shake the roots free, and now

baked hard soil where the fork won't go in! Jobs here range from strimming, raking and collecting grass, to removing encroaching grass and reseeding and replanting naturally-occurring wildflower plants. We hope you can see the progress we've made, and of course anyone is welcome to put in a spare hour if you have one, or just come down with a watering can. The beds need quite a bit of ongoing maintenance and we've been delighted to have Molly Mahy clocking up some voluntary hours with us towards her Duke of Edinburgh Award. Although a lot of the plants are drying out and seeding early, we know the birds and beasts are enjoying them and hope you are too! If you're interested in helping us please get in touch with Chudleigh WILD, or email me. *Amanda Cole* (amandacole1953@gmail.com)

The Bat Garden

Near Chudleigh Rocks, where our Greater Horseshoe Bats can be found, a horseshoe-shaped bed has been planted with flowers that attract moths at night and a lovely carved oak bat seat gives tranquil views towards Palace Quarry. It's hoped that the Bat Garden provides food for the bats in spring and summer. It is planted up with summer jasmine, single roses and honeysuckle for evening fragrance. The shallow soil on limestone seems to promote very vigorous comfrey, Michaelmas daisy and knapweed. The noise of buzzing bees gets loud in spring and summer with many different species. We have planted two Small-leaved Lime trees to complement the old oak, and are letting the hedges grow tall.



The Bat Garden, Palace Road





Cider Press roundabout

Cider Press on Market Way

This used to be a fairly boring turning head, with low growing conifers. Now there is a variety of dense vegetation with Ox-eye Daisies, Viper's Bugloss and ornamental grasses. The Town Council paid for professional part-time help, but are unable to continue doing so. We need voluntary help again, unless we can find a gardener to take over this small patch of Highways land.



Culver Green and the Twin Oaks

Both of these park areas have large mature trees, open grass and patches and are managed for wildlife, thanks to Barbara Steele and the Shantymen. They are a haven for birds and Hedgehogs, underpinned by insect-friendly planting in both the Sensory Garden and the Old Boule Piste.



Cricketfield Lane corner

Millstream Meadow/Cricketfield Lane corner

This is a lovely example of how local residents can take over the management of a small patch of Highways land. Previously unmanaged, this corner of rampant bramble now looks beautiful, with lots of insects nectaring on the Cornflowers, Corncockle, poppies and Ox-eye Daisies.

Palace Meadow Park

Managed by Teignbridge DC at the moment, this area is likely to come into the ownership of Chudleigh Town Council at some future point. This will be another opportunity for more biodiversity enhancement and to make a fun and stimulating place for our children to play and discover.

There are many other patches around the town ready for such a transformation. The Town Council is working with, and supporting, Chudleigh WILD, but we really need the help of residents and our volunteers if we are to continue supporting Chudleigh's biodiversity. Is there an area near you?

If you think there is a wasted area of land near you and you would like to discuss how it could be used to enhance wildlife contact: chudleigh.wild@gmail.com



Open Gardens 2023

The sun shone on both days and record numbers of people visited the 12 gardens that were open over the weekend. They enjoyed some stunningly beautiful gardens as well as cake, cream teas, ice creams and various other items for sale. Participants reported record donations for their charities, so, all in all, a fantastically successful weekend. Thanks go to Emma Smith, assisted by Vicci Camm, for taking on the running of this year's event.



Ticket sales raised £1,188, which will be shared out amongst the charities, and Guide Dogs for the Blind, FORCE, Rowcroft, Homeless in Teignbridge Support, Alzheimer's Society, RD&E's Kidney Research Fund, ACT Wildlife Wardens and Chudleigh Wild all benefitted from the individual donations raised.

Chudleigh Primary School were unable to join in at the weekend, but held their own event the following Saturday. As last year, their wildlife area was an impressive array of flowers and vegetables and was buzzing with excited families enjoying the drinks and homemade cakes on offer. The pond provided fun for both children and adults as they poked around with nets, to see what they could find.

Well done Mud Club!



Useful things to know

Jargon Busting - the Environment Act (2021)

This recent legislation provided a framework for environmental protection and brought some new jargon into the world of development planning, including:

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

BNG will be phased in from this November. It requires new projects to ensure that habitats are at least 10% better for wildlife when construction is complete.

Biodiversity Metric

This is a measure, in 'Biodiversity Units', of the wildlife value of the site of a proposed housing development. Developers have to demonstrate that their plans will increase the Biodiversity Units of the whole site.

Biodiversity Offsetting

Planners and developers can compensate off-site for the impacts on biodiversity associated with a new construction site. To achieve this, a 'Conservation Covenant' can be agreed between a developer and a 'responsible' conservation body.

Green Infrastructure (GI)

This comprises strategically planned natural, semi-natural and artificial environmental features (e.g. hedgerows). Similarly, 'Blue Infrastructure' includes flowing and standing waters.

Local Nature Recovery Strategy

In England, local authorities have to map habitats and identify opportunities to improve sites or to better manage them for wildlife.

For more information check out the link below:

<https://www.endsreport.com/article/1732807/environment-act-2021-45-things-need-know>

The Countryside Code

The Countryside Code is a set of guidelines designed for use by both the public and land managers across England and Wales. It is titled as a guide for enjoying parks and waterways, coast and countryside. It was established in 2004 as a relaunch of the **The Country Code**, which existed since the 1930s.

Perhaps we should remind ourselves of the recommendations, so that we can share them with our families and others, if we think they may not quite understand how fragile our environment is.

[The Countryside Code \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/91222/countryside-code-2020.pdf)





IT'S CARNIVAL TIME AGAIN!

July 15th

This year, we are entering a walking float, to celebrate the wildlife of Chudleigh

Come and join us, dressed as anything with a wildlife theme: badger, frog, tree, flower, anything at all.

Let's celebrate!

Contact Sue at info.chudleighwild@gmail.com for further