



ANNUAL REPORT

March 2016 - February 2017

VOLUNTEERS - working hard

In the 12 months covered by this report, YACWAG volunteers clocked up over 1,100 hours of practical work to meet our objectives, including over 45 workparties.



Hedgelaying on Cadbury Hill February 2017

MONEY MATTERS

During the year covered by this report, YACWAG's income totalled £10,252 and a total of £10,920 was spent - £4,451 on reserves management. Restricted funds contributed to information signs on Cadbury Hill and three trees in St Mary's Churchyard, Yatton (thanks to a Jubilee tree grant from Co-op Community Fund which had been received in 2012).

Another Extraordinary Year of Achievement

This year in particular, working with other organisations and groups has been a theme of YACWAG's success. It is heartening to know that the group's efforts are recognised and respected by its partners. A highlight of the year was our first land acquisition for five years, thanks to the bequest by Harry Hailes.

From a wildlife perspective, three pairs of barn owls bred on YACWAG's reserves during the year. This is significant when the threatened status of this species is considered - there are only about 4,000 breeding pairs in the UK. YACWAG is grateful for the continued support of the Hawk and Owl Trust in the person of Chris Sperring MBE.



Children from Yatton Junior School visited YACWAG's Footmead reserve to see the ringing of the owlets.



YACWAG worked with Yatton and Congresbury Parish Councils, Natural England and North Somerset Council to produce information on the biodiversity of Cadbury Hill. A second board covers the archaeology.

FUNDRAISING

YACWAG'S fundraising included three general knowledge quizzes at the Plough Inn, Congresbury, thanks to the quizmasters Chris Jackson and Graham Lovesey, and especially to the landlord. Thanks to Faith Moulin and Higgy a new initiative, 100 calendars featuring YACWAG reserves and wildlife, were sold.

Thanks to the work of Chris Barrington, a grant of £2,415 was received from Bristol Airport for bat surveying and monitoring equipment. Photo below shows Pip, Gina and Win using one of the new bat detectors at Blagdon Lake.



GOVERNANCE

The Executive Committee (Trustees) met three times during the year and have adopted a five-year plan which will be reviewed annually. This will assist with strategic thinking for securing the future of YACWAG. Topics for discussion included development of the website, an online payment system and celebration of YACWAG's 20th anniversary in 2019. In the autumn the Website Management Group started working on a website update with the assistance of Mark Stanford.

The committee considered North Somerset Council's invitation to assist with mitigation for the Greater Horseshoe bat at Cobthorn Way, Congresbury.

TRAINING

YACWAG members visited Portbury Wharf Nature Reserve for training in water vole surveying. Thanks to Sarah Dale for leading.



TOOLS MAINTENANCE

Bob Lowman spent 20 hours last year servicing and cleaning the YACWAG tools after workparties.



WORKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

YACWAG continued to work with St Andrew's School, Congresbury and Yatton Schools. At St Andrew's, Trevor Riddle and Sue Lovesey supervised the RSPB Big Schools' Birdwatch and also carried out a BTO Rookery Survey. YACWAG volunteers also assisted with the refurbishment of the school pond, which included a planting of native plants.

In July volunteers assisted Congresbury Youth Partnership with a Summer Activity Day excursion to view the wildlife on YACWAG's Congresbury Moor reserve.

In the Autumn term under the Nature Detectives Banner, Tony and Faith dissected barn owl pellets with the Yatton Junior School Learning College and Gill Brown taught the children about otters. Chris Barrington led a bat walk on Cadbury Hill for Congresbury Guides.



Chris with Congresbury Guides

Work experience was provided for an agricultural college student and opportunities created for a Duke of Edinburgh Award candidate to complete the required number of hours of community service.



LAST YEAR'S EVENTS

Last year the Cadbury Hill Family Bat Walk in May was attended by 39 people. In September there was another bat walk at Blagdon. At the Annual General Meeting, Gary Barker was the first recipient of the YACWAG Chairman's Award for outstanding help and support (photo left). Tree Dressing Day involved members in knitting leaves to highlight the importance of trees in a visual way. (Photo left shows Bob and Graham decorating a tree in Yatton precinct.)



A winter programme of talks was well attended; members enjoying Neil Aldridge's wildlife photography at Kenn Village Hall, Higgy's talk in Congresbury on local wildlife watching and Daniel Hargreaves' talk in Claverham Meeting House to launch the 2017 bat project. (Photo left.)



Working in partnership with Yatton Horticultural Society YACWAG organised an Open Gardens event with four wildlife gardens on show. YACWAG gave advice to Cadbury Hill Management Committee of the joint parish councils of Yatton and Congresbury. A walk on the Strawberry Line was arranged for Keynsham Avon Wildlife Trust group, and an evening walk to New Croft for the Cheddar Somerset Wildlife Trust group.

PROTECTING LOCAL SPECIES

Much of the Chairman's work in 2016 was to ensure that nature conservation, habitats and protected species have been taken into account in local plans. YACWAG volunteers have been participating in working groups in Claverham, Congresbury and Yatton to develop Neighbourhood Development Plans giving evidence to support policies geared at protecting the local nature and countryside. YACWAG made objections and comments to North Somerset Council (NSC) regarding a number of development proposals in Yatton and Congresbury.

A brief YACWAG survey in May demonstrated that access to the countryside to sites such as the Strawberry Line and Cadbury Hill was important for the majority. Specifically YACWAG provided information and data to NSC to produce technical planning guidance for development for Greater Horseshoe and Lesser Horseshoe bats.

Surveys were carried out for the National Bat Monitoring Programme in Claverham and Congresbury.

Chris Sperring helped with ringing three broods of barn owls on three of YACWAG reserves, one in Congresbury and two in the parish of Yatton.

Annual bird surveys were carried out on the Strawberry Line and at YACWAG's Littlewood reserve.

YACWAG continued to work with Avon Wildlife Trust and the landowner at Kings Wood monitoring bats and dormice.



*Sleepy dormouse in Kings Wood, Congresbury.
Photo: Joe McSorley, Avon Wildlife Trust.*

NATURE IS YOUR NEIGHBOUR

YACWAG was glad to raise awareness in the community of the need for nature conservation. Stalls and displays at Yatton Summer Show and Congresbury Fete as well as at St Mary's Church Arts and Crafts Fayre promoted the message that Nature is Your Neighbour.

LAST BUT NOT LEAST - SPECIAL THANKS TO..

The following have particularly supported and helped YACWAG's work in the last year: Andrew Hunt, Malcolm Dowling, Trevor Richards, Chris Sperring, Green Mantle and the late Andrew Sheppy.