



NEWSLETTER

Registered charity no. 1076362

Barn Owls Breeding Success - Again!

Sue Lovesey joined Trevor Riddle and others when they went early in the summer to check up on how the barn owls were doing. Trevor has a licence and can look in the boxes. Normally the adult bird soon flies off when disturbed, but in this case the door to the box was opened and inside were four young and an adult owl. Sue was able to get this rare photo which shows two larger chicks and two small ones with an adult.



Unfortunately by the time Chris Sperring MBE came to ring the barn owls a few weeks' later, the younger owlets were missing. Two healthy chicks were ringed, the smaller ones probably having been fed to their older siblings. This points to an insufficient food supply. But having said that, YACWAG reserves had three breeding pairs of barn owls this year, and their seven chicks made a grand total of 58 young reared on YACWAG land since we started the project.

It was a bonus that Yatton Junior School pupils were able to visit one of our fields near the Strawberry Line in July, and watch Chris Sperring ringing the two chicks raised in that nest box.

The most important food item for barn owls is the short tailed field vole. Nationally speaking numbers of voles have been low this year, probably due to a late start to their breeding season caused by a cold Spring.



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Sparrowhawk

Suddenly he's there,
A black shape
Out of the sun.
We never saw him come.
But the small birds did.
The garden was empty;
Feeders hung deserted.

Victors cry *veni, vidi vici*.
Well, certainly he came;
But they saw; so who
Conquered?

They fled; he perched there
Preened himself, coolly
Surveyed the field of battle,
Where no victims lay.

Then, like black lightning
He was gone,
His shadow passed,
And he became
A fading memory.

Soon the small birds
Were back. The meek
Once more inherited
The earth.

Who dares wins, they say.
Who's scared loses, then?
Only sometimes?
Perhaps?

Brian Wilson, Spring 2015



*Male sparrowhawk watching and waiting on Higgy's shed roof.
Photo thanks to Higgy.*

Sparrowhawks - the facts

The sparrowhawk is a small to medium bird of prey, originally a woodland bird but now more often seen in suburban gardens and open landscapes with some trees. The females are much bigger than males; they weigh roughly twice as much as their mates. This means that a pair can hunt a wide variety of bird species (and they rarely predate anything other than birds) with the male using his speed to capture small prey and the females able to tackle collared doves and woodpigeons. Because of the size difference the female is the boss (this is the case with most raptors) and it has been known for female sparrowhawks to kill males!

Historically gamekeepers persecuted sparrowhawks as they preyed on young pheasants, but the species faced a worse problem in the 1960s and 1970s when synthetic organochlorine pesticides were introduced. Small birds ate treated seeds, sparrowhawks preyed on these birds, the pesticide residues built up and the hawks were unable to breed. In fact they were virtually wiped out in the arable lands of Eastern England. One gamekeeper said 'we have been popping away for years without much impact but the poison has exterminated all of them in a few years.'

With the banning of these pesticides the sparrowhawk and other species started to recover but by now garden bird feeders were becoming widespread and unsurprisingly sparrowhawks learned to exploit this food source which didn't, and in some cases doesn't, endear them to some householders.

The facts are that all predator numbers (including lions and tigers) are controlled by the amount of available prey, not the other way round. This is a law of nature and it is the reason that blue tits lay eight eggs, robins and blackbirds have three broods and that there is a surplus available to predators, while at the same time leaving enough young birds to sustain the population. Sparrowhawks (and all predators) look to use as little energy as possible in obtaining a meal so they target sick or injured birds or ones that are too slow to avoid them. Hence the fittest birds are left in the prey species' populations - *'the survival of the fittest'*. And young sparrowhawks that are unable to catch enough food starve to death, usually in their first winter when days are short, the weather is bad and prey is scarce.

Currently, there are estimated to be 28,000 breeding pairs of Sparrowhawks in Britain (about three or four of them in and around Yatton) making it the third most common bird of prey in the UK behind Buzzard (c 70,000) and Kestrel (c 50,000).

Trevor Riddle



Female sparrowhawk surrounded by feathers as she plucks the wood pigeon she caught and killed.

Photo: Tony Moulin

The History of YACWAG Part 8

North End Roundabout

By 2005 YACWAG was quite established in the community and very active, with at least a dozen or so committed volunteers taking on local conservation projects and learning new skills.

YACWAG had led a scheme and raised money from grants and local business sponsors to enhance the very bland 'boring' roundabout at the junction of Arnolds Way with North End Road, and volunteers were struggling to maintain the plants we had put in a couple of years earlier. North Somerset Council Highways Department had not been at all keen on volunteers being involved in 'gardening' on roundabouts and put as many obstacles in the way as possible. The young crab apple trees we had planted were constantly strimmed at the base by contractors, and the remaining portion of Somerset style walling had collapsed. Thanks to the support of local stonemason Sam Powell, some of our volunteers learnt how to repair the wall (and it must have been a good job because it is still standing!) This is all quite topical now that the bulbs planted there by YACWAG and the Rotary Club have been destroyed by Bloor Homes. The two organisations are working together to try to make sure that the new enlarged roundabout is restored to its former condition. In due course a larger roundabout will take its place and it is hoped that YACWAG will have some input into the landscaping.



Hedgelaying

Hedgelaying skills were also being brushed up on Congresbury Moor during this period. A grant was obtained and a training course was available free of charge to the general public. One of the attendees was Malcolm Dowling from Claverham, who in his retirement took up the old craft in earnest and is now doing it professionally as well as in competitions. He is a county champion and comes along to train and assist YACWAG whenever we have a hedge to lay. There will be more hedgelaying at the foot of Cadbury Hill this year, so if you want to find out more, please do join us.



Local Hero

It is always rewarding to have one's voluntary efforts recognised and 2005 saw a local ITV initiative to find 'Local Heroes'. Tony Moulin was nominated and brought YACWAG to regional notice in a couple of local television snippets. The award provided YACWAG with a cheque and Bob, Win, Faith and Tony enjoyed the fun of a champagne breakfast in Bristol for the award ceremony.



Perhaps this is what kept Tony going, as the workload for YACWAG increased at this time because of the opportunity to acquire more land. YACWAG has an Acquisition Policy clarifying the priorities for land purchases. This states that the land should ideally have a designation, such as being on Site of Special Scientific Interest. This is important to funders like the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Kenn Moor Reserve is Born

In Yatton there was great consternation about gypsies being encamped without planning permission on the SSSI off Kenn Moor Road, close to the rear of Bramblewood houses. By the beginning of 2006 the council had done what it could to persuade the gypsies (who had bought the land and had water and telephones installed) to leave. YACWAG was then approached by local residents who were negotiating to purchase the land and donate it to YACWAG. Eventually, just before Christmas 2006, a consortium of local residents raised the money to enable YACWAG to purchase the land and manage the two fields for nature in perpetuity.

YACWAG volunteers had a lot of work to do. The small bare field nearest the road was cleared of rubbish, spread with topsoil which had been scraped off and dumped in the larger field, and sown with a special SSSI wild flower mix paid for by Natural England. Thanks to Andrew Sheppy, grazing was introduced to the larger field. During the clearing up a volunteer found the one and only great crested newt ever found on a YACWAG reserve.



Volunteers shifting soil at Kenn Moor Reserve. The great crested newt was torpid in the soil.

The field is now managed as rough pasture and is home to overwintering snipe (one year reaching 150!)

Otter News from Gill Brown

Otters in North Somerset have gone from strength to strength.

Since the YACWAG otter group was founded in 2012 the numbers on the Land Yeo, our most studied river, have increased dramatically. At least three litters of cubs have been born and at one point there were seven otters, two females with cubs and a male, visiting the same stretch.

I regularly hear reports of otters seen on the Kenn, Nailsea Moor, and Backwell Lake, as well as my own stretch of river. The latest confirmed sighting (a female and three cubs) came from a trading estate in Weston. They are also breeding in the Portbury area and have been seen by birders at Portbury Wharf Nature Reserve.

More relevant to YACWAG, evidence of a female with a young cub was found close to the Strawberry line early this year, and Faith found a clear otter footprint on Ten Acres in June during a water vole survey.

We have several members who carry out monthly surveys, but 'casual' observations are also welcome. I am happy to look at photographs of 'poo and prints' and can usually tell if an otter is responsible. I even came home to find a 'sample' in a plastic bag hanging on my door handle once! Thank you to everyone who has contributed records over the years.

Barring a major pollution incident, the biggest danger to otters in our area is from the motor car. Although individual deaths are sad, especially for the volunteers who retrieve corpses and arrange for their transport to Cardiff for post mortem (thank you Claire Shellis!), they are not a major cause for concern.

More worrying nationally, are the calls from some anglers and fishery owners to legalise the culling of otters. Unsurprisingly fishing lakes are honey pots, but killing one 'problem' animal would not be a solution as another would claim the unoccupied territory, and be removed, until the local population was severely depleted. Undoubtedly otters do cause a significant loss of income for unprotected still water fisheries, but non-lethal ways of reducing predation can be found if conservationists and anglers work together. The owners of one fishery I know of have installed a relatively unobtrusive electric fence around their coarse lake and stock pond. The main trout lake is still unfenced as the otters seem to prefer perch, which breed there in abundance, to trout. As I write this approach is working well for both otters and anglers.

I have written two articles about our local otters, one is published in Nature in Avon Vol. 74, and the other in the July issue of Earthlines Magazine. A series of video clips from my trail camera can be seen on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/user/Gillydomouse>

YACWAGger Profile - Irene Mills

Irene has a scientific training and background and is a practical person, enjoying hands-on work with YACWAG. She enjoys occasional workparties on the reserves and carrying out wildlife surveys. Although she is not gregarious by nature Irene likes being with the like-minded people she meets at YACWAG's small-scale events.

When did you become interested in nature?

I was interested in nature as a child because of my Dad's interest. He used to point everything out to me when we went for walks, for example in Epping Forest. I always had animals at home as pets.

When did you get involved with YACWAG?

I moved to Kingston Seymour in 1999. I was living alone and was looking for opportunities to join in with people who were interested in nature. I joined Avon Wildlife Trust and YACWAG was just starting up so I joined them too. I have the very first YACWG newsletter. I was interested in the local environment. I didn't do much with YACWAG to start with – I am quite shy– but I did go on the odd guided walk on the Strawberry Line and got to know people. When Daniel Hargreaves came along in about 2005 I became interested in bat work and got involved with the background computer analysis work using an Anabat. This kind of work suits my scientific background.

What activities do you enjoy with YACWAG?

I play an active part in the bat group and also carry out my own surveys in Kingston Seymour.



Wood mouse

more mammal trapping with Richard, and I am looking forward to doing more now that YACWAG has invested in some more equipment because Emma has moved away (with her traps!)

Because of the small mammal trapping I became interested in dormouse surveying and went out with Sarah Dale inspecting tubes and boxes on Cadbury Hill. I then went out with Gill Brown to Backwell and Towerhouse Wood and she let me do some of the handling. Since then I have also been out with the Avon Wildlife Trust surveyors in Kings Wood, aiming to get enough experience to get my own licence. I got the two separate references

I have also developed a stronger interest in small mammals. I have always liked small furry creatures, having had hamsters, guinea pigs, etc as a child. I joined in some small mammal trapping sessions with Richard Croucher and Emma Koblizek a few years ago and found I liked the scientific side, being a willing scribe. The animals are caught in specially designed Longworth traps using a strict protocol to avoid harming them. Live trapping can provide useful data about what is living on the nature reserves and the health of the population. This has gradually led me to do



Irene using a bat detector

necessary and it took me six months to fill in the Natural England form but I now have a dormouse licence and can carry out surveys on my own. I have extended the dormouse survey on Cadbury Hill and also put up some of my own tubes in Kings Wood. The licence allows me to survey dormice in the whole of North Somerset. I would really like to find dormice on Cadbury Hill and would like more people to be involved in both the dormouse surveys, and also the small mammal surveys, so it is not always the same few people going out doing the work (and having all the fun).

This year I have also been lent a moth trap. This has been very good for lifelong learning. We need to keep the brain working as we get older and I am learning new skills through moth trapping. It is very interesting and very satisfying that I can now identify some of the more common moths.



Large yellow underwing

Irene Mills Interview Continues:

What do you like about YACWAG?

I see YACWAG as very much a local organisation. I like the local area and want to know more about what we have here. YACWAG has a big role to educate people to appreciate nature, especially children who don't get many outdoor opportunities nowadays.

What should YACWAG be doing in the future?

I think it is important for us to protect what we have. The threats to the environment from development are very serious. The Government is very short-sighted and not protecting the environment for us so YACWAG needs to be a strong voice to protect nature locally.

I would like to see YACWAG acquire more land if possible. I realise this is very difficult because landowners will sell to developers unless they are very morally inclined towards the environment. But we should be vigilant for opportunities.

I wouldn't like to see YACWAG get too big and top-heavy. I would hate to see the organisation focusing on fundraising like so many conservation charities.

I think it is important to continue to 'do things' with nature in a practical way and not get distracted by administrative matters.

I feel that we need to get people out onto our reserves more or members will drift away if they are not involved. One of the needs is definitely for more activities and events at weekends when people are free.



Hedgelaying on a YACWAG reserve - there will be more opportunities to help this winter!

YACWAG Bat Group Wins Airport Funding

A public bat walk on Cadbury Hill at the beginning of May led by Sarah Dale and Chris Barrington attracted a record number of 39 participants! A range of bats was heard including Lesser Horseshoe bats which flew over the A370 from their roost in Kings Wood. The popularity of the evening pointed to a need for more bat detectors to bring people closer to bats, as well as more advanced equipment for YACWAG's 'citizen science' project with Greater Horseshoe bats. YACWAG has since been working to secure extra funding for both kinds of bat work.



*Face of a Lesser Horseshoe bat
Photo thanks to Daniel Hargreaves*

Chris Barrington was successful in obtaining a grant for YACWAG of £2450 from Bristol Airport. This will be used to buy user-friendly bat detection equipment so that people with no experience of bat work can take part in a specific project to monitor Greater Horseshoe bats around Cleeve, Wrington and Kings Wood.

An application has also been made to the Co-op Community Fund for more entry level bat detectors. These are ideal for school groups and other young people and will mean that when we take out such groups, we will have sufficient equipment for everyone to enjoy the experience of listening to bat calls.

YACWAG Bat Walk with 2nd Congresbury Guides

Do you remember the unseasonably cold evenings of early May? Not ideal conditions for a successful evening spotting bats, you might think, but you'd be wrong! Such chilly weather failed to cool the enthusiasm of ten Girl Guides from 2nd Congresbury who, together with their leaders, a couple of parents and Chris B, Tony, Gary and myself spent an enjoyable evening on Cadbury Hill detecting bats.

First, the Guides were captivated by the dead (killed by a cat,) brown long-eared bat that Chris cleverly used to illustrate his introduction to the bat kingdom; all of us were astounded at the number of bat species worldwide – more than 1200; and we were then very pleased to learn that our local area is one of the best in the UK for almost all native bats.

Very soon bat detectors were switched on, frequencies selected and, as we set off up the hill, the clicks of the first soprano pipistrelle were heard. 'Was that it, was that really a bat?' several girls excitedly asked. A pair of eyes, much sharper than mine, actually spotted the bat in the darkening sky above the trees. By the time we'd gathered under the huge, veteran oak everyone had picked up several soprano pipistrelle bats and was changing frequency in order to pick up bats 'chatting to one another' as Chris put it. This was more of a challenge because, in cold weather, bats prioritise finding food over communication.



As we headed back down the lane frequencies were changed again, so that if by any chance the rarer Lesser Horseshoe bat was passing, it would be detected. And it was, much to the girls' continued delight. Once out of the trees and onto the open grassland, most Guides handed back their detectors and crowned a fun evening by rolling or racing down the hill to the car park.

Sue Lovesey

Yatton Living Churchyard Project changes direction. You can help!

Disappointed by years of insensitive grass-cutting by contractors, but equally [inspired](#) by a wildlife project at Dundry churchyard, the Yatton Living Churchyard Project is moving on.

The project will aim to introduce more plants for pollinators into the churchyard. These will be flowering plants known to be attractive to bees, butterflies and other insects. Ideally these will be longlived perennials which retain their leaves through the winter, remaining 'tidy' and suppressing weed growth. (They will also provide some cover for invertebrates, amphibians and reptiles.) Importantly, the result should be low-maintenance and reduce dependence on strimmers for the management of old graves.

How You Can Help

1. Join us on the last Saturday of the month for a little work, then coffee and cake in the Chapter House. It's not strenuous, work at your own pace. Ideal for people who enjoy gardening.
2. Adopt an untended grave. Volunteers can prepare the ground and you can do a bit of weeding and dead heading next summer, or if you prefer, you can plant it up yourself and then tend it.
3. Give us some suitable spare plants from your garden, things that are bee and butterfly friendly. We would like things like lungwort, creeping comfrey, Welsh poppy, hardy geraniums, ice plant, marjoram – nothing too tall. Also we plan to plant up some of the gravelled graves, so alpine plants like thymes, stonecrops and other ground-hugging succulents would be very welcome.

Please get in touch if you would like to help. Faith Moulin.

Managing YACWAG Reserves the Green Way

Much of YACWAG's manual conservation work is now undertaken for us by Green Mantle Limited, a conservation organisation run by Patrick Vincent since 1992. Patrick and his team are getting to know the land we manage as we engage him year on year to carry on the good work he and his team have started, restoring habitats and helping us micro-manage our small reserves.

A mark of Green Mantle's success is that they have worked for some clients, e.g. the National Trust and the Longleat Estate at Cheddar Gorge, for all of those 24 years. During that time, Patrick's work has transformed the Gorge, bringing back wild flowers that were being choked out by invasive scrub and trees.

With a wealth of experience of managing different habitats for large clients like Avon Wildlife Trust, Butterfly Conservation, Natural England, Buglife and the Woodland Trust, Green Mantle gives YACWAG outstanding value for money as the work is carried out efficiently and sensitively. It is also less harmful to the wider environment as Green Mantle's brushcutters and chain saws utilise plant chain oil and clean-burn 2 stroke oils. Patrick is always willing to give us the benefit of his advice and exceptional knowledge.

Recently, Patrick has teamed up with Davies Ecology Limited, a Bristol based ecological consultancy. 'The two businesses are highly compatible', Patrick explained; in the winter months Green Mantle has plenty of work to keep their team of employees busy, but in the summer when conservation work dries up, Green Mantle staff can now go and assist with ecological surveys. This enables them to remain employed throughout the year. 'The emphasis of the business has changed,' Patrick said, 'I now regard Green Mantle as a professional training organisation. To date we have now helped 86 young people to advance their chosen careers in conservation, providing that essential first step, tailoring the workload to suit their experience and advance their existing skills. 'Unusually, we take pride ourselves in losing our best members of staff. This is because they go on to better things – some of them into jobs where they can employ us!'

For the past three years Patrick has also run Bushcraft courses at Avon Wildlife Trust's Folly Farm. He enjoys the challenge and fun of giving tired office workers and school groups a new experience in the open air and restorative environment at Folly Farm.

One Green Mantle regular on YACWAG work is Michelle. A former car insurance worker, Michelle left to study for a degree in Environmental Science and find a job in nature conservation. She was a volunteer with Goblin Combe Centre, Avon Wildlife Trust, and for Somerset Wildlife Trust where she worked on a project mapping hedgerows in East Mendip. Michelle began working for Green Mantle three years ago, and for the past year has been the Team Leader. She said, 'I enjoy working on the YACWAG sites because we can complete a project and really see the difference we have made. It is nice to go back the next year and see the benefits of what we have achieved.'

This autumn the team is being joined temporarily by Joe Hunt, a YACWAG member from Claverham who is studying on a foundation degree in British Wildlife Conservation at the Royal Agricultural University. As part of his course, Joe was required to complete 30 days of volunteering or work experience with a conservation organisation. Fortunately, Patrick has been able to provide some opportunities for Joe, including some of the work on YACWAG reserves!

We are grateful also to Joe's Dad Andrew, who has kindly assisted us with some tractor work.



Photo shows Patrick, Michelle and Joe on the Strawberry Line discussing the work to be undertaken this autumn.

Tales of the 'Moth Men'

Higgy: *"Hi mate, great weather, do you fancy a mothing session on Friday night?"*

James: *"Yes great mate, can't wait!"*

Friday

Higgy: *"Sorry mate, It's absolutely typical! The weather is terrible, rain and wind! We'll have to cancel our trap tonight again!"*

As many of you will know, James Brine, Tony Moulin and I set up a new 'Moth, Butterfly (& insect) Group' for YACWAG at the start of this year. This group was designed to get out into the villages of Yatton and Congresbury and YACWAG reserves to start building a picture of the area's moth and butterfly population. To date this hasn't exactly run as smoothly as it could have, especially weather wise, and therefore our records aren't quite where they should be for the year!

The concept of the group takes us back to Backwell Environmental Trust's ten-year anniversary event, where James and I volunteered to do a moth trap on their reserve at Backwell Hill. This event has a lot to answer for as it was extremely windy and the small trap that we took with us didn't fill either of us with much confidence of a successful trap. Relaying our concerns to the organiser and suggesting an early start the next morning we were informed that someone would be staying on site overnight and had a camping stove! Well for two growing lads like us this was just too tempting to resist and we returned the next morning at 4.30am complete with a pack of a dozen pork sausages! Getting our priorities right we ignored the moth trap and chucked our bangers into an old dirty saucepan. Unfortunately, with no oil the bangers broke up and stuck firmly to the bottom of the pan half cooked! A flippant comment from James led to the now famous 'Moth Men's Breakfast'. To cut a long story short we failed miserably that day with only six moths in the trap and having very narrowly avoided food poisoning we spent the next two hours chasing spiders, beetles and any other bugs that moved just to have something to show the paying public.

Despite our disastrous start the 'Moth Men' had truly evolved and we sold the idea of our new 'dream mothing team' to Tony who supported the idea fully and even wanted to be involved. (He doesn't know about 'Moth Men's Breakfasts' yet!)

In true team spirit a 'training' trip out to South Somerset was arranged to go and see the Large Blue butterfly which was once extinct in this country but has been reintroduced at suitable sites, two in Somerset. James and I set off early (in the rain) and within 30 minutes found ourselves behind plates of bacon, sausages, eggs and all the other trimmings that come with a real 'Moth Man's breakfast'! Now I don't want you all to think that we don't actually ever see any moths or butterflies, so I'm happy to report that we did have a great trip with both recording lifetime firsts in the form of: large Blue and Grizzled Skipper! On the way back we stopped off at Priddy Mineries on the Mendips to see the Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries (SPBF) that reside there (in fact the only place in Somerset that I am aware they breed). To cap off a great day James recorded his first SPBF and Chimney Sweeper Moth that again can only be found on certain sites such as this. I think that we can all agree that this was a very successful and worthwhile 'training' trip!?! Due to our success we are looking at repeating this trip in September after the Adonis Blue! (If you fancy tagging along just let me know as you are more than welcome to join in with our 'mad mothing capers'!)



Photos by Higgy : from left to right: Grizzled Skipper, Large Blue and Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary

Back to reality! This year has seen our arranged mothing events cancelled one after the other due to inclement weather on the day! Becoming completely frustrated by our bad luck we finally had a lovely hot sunny Saturday in July that seemed perfect for moth trapping, so I quickly got on the phone...

Higgy: ***"Hi mate fab day really hot and still, it should be cracking for mothing this evening, do you fancy doing a trap in Littlewood?"***

James (very excited) : ***"Oh yes mate can't wait it looks superb we should have a trap full tonight! "***

Higgy ***"Great, I'll pick you up at 9pm and I reckon we better pack the sunscreen and cold drinks it's so hot!"***

I duly picked up James and we loaded the car and bumped our way down the track beside Littlewood. It was a lovely evening and we watched the Rooks come into roost from our position at the bottom of the track so as not to disturb this fabulous spectacle. Now in high spirits we unloaded the car and set out a large white sheet to reflect the light from the small trap that we had borrowed for the evening.

Higgy: ***"Drat the light's not working!"***

James: ***"looks like a bad connection"***

45 minutes and two phone calls later, we had a working moth trap...

WHHHOOOOOSH HHHH!!!!!!..... Higgy & James ***"Arrggggggggg!"***

The biggest gust of wind you could possibly imagine promptly blew our reflective sheet over the car and into the field of cattle that were watching our antics with some amusement! The gust then knocked over our newly mended moth trap! James then bashed his arm on the gate (***"Oh drat!"***) and I stood in a fresh cow pat! (***"Oh drat!"***)

An almighty thunderstorm complete with torrential rain immediately followed this initial huge gust of wind. Like drowned rats we quickly packed up our gear (not having caught a single moth!) and climbed back into the car soaked through to the skin! We had a brew out of my flask and after an hour of torrential rain we gave up and drove home! On the way home across Kenn Moor we saw so many moths in the headlights that I'm sure they were laughing at us.

Despite our continued bad luck and poor timing with the weather we have managed to get a few traps in over the summer and have actually managed to record several new species, which is promising. The best event was on a warm still 27th August when we caught over 500 moths, 350 of which were Large Yellow Underwings!

Common Emerald moth

Photo: Higgy



Lime Hawk moth

Photo: Higgy

As we have had varied success in getting out this summer I am keen for members to send me their local butterfly and moth sightings/records for this year. I can then start mapping our local populations. Please still record with BRERC as normal, or Butterfly Conservation - this is just for our own local records. I am particularly interested in records from Congresbury as we haven't yet trapped there.

Records to be sent via email: higgy50@hotmail.co.uk Photos of anything that you're not 100% sure of are welcome and I'll try and help with identification if the quality of the picture is good enough.

I now have a good slice of Yatton covered for trapping locations but I'm actively looking for a few locations in Congresbury/Claverham/Kenn/Kingston Seymour where we could potentially trap and see what is there. If you can help please let me know.

Higgy

Two Marsh Award Winners in the Marsh!

The Marsh Christian Trust gives awards to honour people who make the world a better place. They have many categories of award. In 2011 Tony Moulin received the Marsh Award for Wetland Conservation. In the photo on the right he is with Andrew Sheppy, the winner of the 2016 Marsh Award for Conservation in Genetic Biodiversity.

Andrew has a herd of Dexter cattle, some of which can be seen on YACWAG's Congresbury Moor fields from the late summer into the autumn. Andrew founded the Cobthorn Trust and started breeding Dexters in 1976 and since then the Trust has carried out significant work on the history and genetics of the breed. YACWAG is grateful for Andrew's help with grazing as under our Higher Level Stewardship agreement we receive additional payments for using rare breeds.



Grazing our fields is important to keep the grass in good condition. The Dexters, being small and light, are ideal on the heavy clay soil as even in the wettest seasons they do little damage. The grass is left with tussocks through the winter, providing habitat for voles and invertebrates.

We are sorry to hear of the deaths of two people who helped YACWAG in its formative years:

Keith Hall. with his wife Lynn, gave enthusiastic support to YACWAG and made many of our wooden nest boxes, including owl boxes, which they helped to erect. Through their company Specialised Nestboxes, Keith and Lynn went into local schools in partnership with YACWAG, making bird boxes from Keith's well thought-out kits suitable for children. They also ran evening sessions for local scouts, guides and sometimes attended local fetes and shows. Keith will be sadly missed by the local wildlife fraternity, especially for his cheerful enthusiasm.

Doris Stockham, the widow of a GWR railway driver, joined YACWAG in our very first weeks. She was very supportive of our work to reclaim the Strawberry Line as a route for people, whether on foot or bike. Until she became too frail Doris loved to walk along the line, remembering her husband chuffing along in the little tank engines that brought cargoes of strawberries from Cheddar in season. When she got tired Doris was delighted to rest on one of the original benches made from railway sleepers, and later sponsored one in memory of her husband George. Doris, until recent times, was active in local churches and community - a lifelong supporter of the Guiding Movement.

YACWAG IS NO LONGER COLLECTING PRINTER CARTRIDGES FOR RECYCLING, BUT WE HAVE SOME PREPAID ENVELOPES SO YOU CAN SEND THEM OFF. Thank you to all who supported this fundraising over the years.

YACWAG IS ALWAYS INTERESTED IN YOUR WILDLIFE SIGHTINGS, PLEASE LET US HAVE THEM VIA THE WEBSITE: www.yacwag.org.uk.

If you enjoy a chat about local wildlife, join our Facebook group.

To get in touch, contact Win Lowman on 01934 833596 or by email to:
winlowman@hotmail.co.uk.