

Events and Activities 2015-16

The biggest event this year was *Know the Yeo* on Congresbury Millennium Green, organised jointly by YACWAG and the Rivers Trust and supported by Natural England, North Somerset IDB, Mendip Outdoor Pursuits, Bristol Naturalists and BRERC, and funded by Wessex Water. St Andrew's School had been working with the Rivers Trust to rear on eels in a tank which were released into the river on that day. St Andrew's School had also made attractive watery wildlife themed bunting. A great event with plenty of activities was unfortunately curtailed by a deluge.

Our annual bat walk on Cadbury Hill in May attracted a record 37 people.

New Year and May bird walks took place along the Strawberry Line. In September a Moth Walk using wine ropes to attract moths was also held on the Strawberry Line.

Several bat walks and a hedge walk were organised for new volunteers in Claverham as part of the Neighbourhood Plan surveys.

Higgy opened his garden for members to sample moths in his garden.

Social events included a Christmas skittles match and two fundraising quizzes at the Plough Inn. Twelve volunteers attended a day's First Aid training at Horsecastle Chapel.

YACWAG's Tree Dressing in Yatton, Claverham and Congresbury featured felt wildlife in the form of bunting.

YACWAG volunteers in 2015/16 completed over 850 hours of diverse practical work including hedgelaying, replacing owl boxes and maintaining our Jubilee trees. The majority of this work is on land other than our reserves: at Cadbury Hill, the Strawberry Line and St Mary's Churchyard for example. Many more hours have been absorbed with administration of the charity and the organisation of events. Although the majority of heavy work on our reserves is done by contractors, volunteers did deal with fallen trees and fly tipping at Littlewood.



Know the Yeo gave opportunities for people to learn about local wildlife



... and to enjoy their natural environment with a picnic



Volunteers learnt new skills with champion hedgelayer Malcolm Dowling

YACWAG has over 200 members; in recent years some of them come from more distant parishes and towns as the interest in our work has grown.

Tony Moulin, Chair, Yatton and Congresbury Wildlife Action Group

Working with Young People

A particular focus of YACWAG's work has been with the three local primary schools. At Court de Wyck School we gave advice about planting a wildlife friendly Prayer Garden and gave a talk about the myths and facts of bats. At St Andrew's we supervised the RSPB Big Schools Birdwatch and carried out a BTO Rookery Survey with a class of children. In the autumn term as part of Yatton School's Learning College we led six hour-and-a-half sessions on owls, bats, insects and other local wildlife under the Nature Detective banner, and thanks to Higgy, every participant received a certificate. We were also able to advise and help with the creation of a new conservation area at the school and provided a nestbox with camera beaming images straight into the classroom. A blue tit family moved in at once to the delight of the pupils.

In January we facilitated 1st Congresbury Cubs making nestboxes which were donated to YACWAG and Backwell Environment Trust (BET). 1st Congresbury Cubs and Beavers also helped with YACWAG's Tree Dressing Day in December.

In July volunteers assisted the Congresbury Youth Partnership with wildlife activities, making insect homes.

Working in Partnership

We achieve our objectives through working with others. During the year YACWAG worked with North Somerset Council's Youth Offending Team constructing and maintaining the popular 'sleeper' seats along the Strawberry Line. The Chair attended four meetings of North Somerset Council's Strawberry Line Management Committee discussing local issues and exploring long-term access improvements.

Our thanks to Andrew Hunt for clearing fallen trees and fly-tipping at Littlewood, and to Malcolm Dowling for his hedgelaying expertise at Cadbury Hill. We are grateful to Andrew Sheppy (Cobthorn Trust) and Alan Paynter for grazing on our reserves, and also to Green Mantle, contractor, for specialist services on our reserves. Working with North Somerset Natural Beekeeping Group we have placed three Warre bee hives on our reserves and we are grateful for their continued support.

NORTH SOMERSET NATURE NET

YACWAG representatives have met with other environmental groups based in the northern part of North Somerset with a view to creating a network which will provide support and create a louder voice for nature locally.

The intention is to share expertise, experience and ideas; to share physical resources; to create joint events; to facilitate opportunities for joint publicity for nature conservation and more effectively lobby for biodiversity within North Somerset.

The network is building slowly and to date includes Backwell Environment Trust (BET), Nailsea Environment and Wildlife Trust (NEWT), Friends of Stockway North, Friends of Trendlewood Park, North Somerset Pollinator Project, St Georges Flower Bank and YACWAG.

All local conservation groups are welcome.



Placing the Warre bee hive at Littlewood. No honey will be taken from the bees but they will be enabled to live naturally and expand their colonies. Thanks to Andrew and Janice Hunter for their help.

Protecting Local Species

BATS

In July 2015 YACWAG completed ten years of surveying for the National Bat Monitoring Programme Field Survey for the Bat Conservation Trust. This survey has established that the rural landscape around Claverham is the top site for Serotine bat in the South West and within the top five in the country.

Our Autumn 2015 bat box check in Littlewood produced a new record for the site: the Natterers Bat. About ten were found in a bat box.

We have been providing data and information to Natural England and North Somerset Council to help produce planning policy and guidance for the Greater and Lesser Horseshoe Bats.



Work continues on monitoring the Nathusius Pipistrelle Bat at Blagdon.

*Photo left: face of possible Nathusius Pipistrelle,
Photo courtesy of Daniel Hargreaves*

OWLS

Unfortunately no Tawny Owls were reared on our reserves during the year. The Barn Owls fared better with ten chicks reared: four on the original site at Ten Acres, Congresbury Moor, and three at Littlewood. The box at Footmead had its first breeding success with three owlets raised there.

Kestrels also raised two chicks in their original site on Congresbury Moor.

Our thanks to Chris Sperring MBE for ringing the young birds.



Chris Sperring with Iris and owlet at Footmead July 2015.



Young barn owls waiting for their leg bands to be fitted.

BIRDS, OTTERS, DORMICE

YACWAG recorders were busy collecting data through regular surveys. Annual bird surveys were conducted on the Strawberry Line and at our Littlewood reserve. The Christmas bird survey drew a good response from 61 residents. YACWAG has continued to work with the landowner at Kingswood monitoring bats and dormice.

Volunteers regularly carried out otter surveys in the district, successfully finding otters in the Congresbury area. YACWAG made representations to the National Grid Planning Inquiry regarding mitigation for otter habitat and generally regarding the impact of construction on the two local SSSIs. Three hearings were attended by the YACWAG Chair.



Annual Report

March 2015 – February 2016

Registered charity no. 1076362

YACWAG has had an exceptional year developing and increasing its schools work and responding to community concerns over the threat to the local natural environment because of unprecedented levels of speculative development. Volunteers have been engaged in ecological surveying, providing advice and support to individuals and community groups. In consequence interest in YACWAG's activities has grown in terms of volunteer participation and further raising public profile. YACWAG's work was recognised through the North Somerset Hero Awards in November 2015.

YACWAG remains financially robust with sufficient reserves to meet contingent liabilities and further its charitable objectives. A balanced budget was achieved with over £6000 spent on the key objective of maintaining local nature reserves.

The Executive Committee took the decision to register with the Official Custodian for Charities, a function of the Charities Commission, to act as our holding trustee. This will simplify administration and reduce costs in the future.

The Committee is grateful for the support of members, local communities and partnership organisations throughout the year.



Children from St Andrews School Congresbury took part in the BTO Rookery Count 2016 thanks to Trevor Riddle and Sue Lovesey



Tony Moulin collected the North Somerset Mercury Environmental Hero Award on behalf of YACWAG in November 2015.

"Everyone benefits from the work of YACWAG whether they realise it or not. It is a truly local intergenerational organisation." Claire Payne, Congresbury Beavers