

Achievements and Performance 2017/18

YACWAG's financial position remains healthy with a small surplus being achieved in the year despite delays in the receipt of agri-environmental payments. Extreme wet weather conditions did, however, disrupt the planned programme of conservation work, particularly ditching, for the second consecutive year. The bad weather in the spring also probably accounted for the lack of breeding success of any barn owls on YACWAG land.

Regrettably during the year work with the Cobthorn Trust had to cease due to the tragic death of its director Andrew Sheppy.

YACWAG members maintained a high level of commitment to practical conservation work in the two parishes. Over 1,000 hours of work was carried out on YACWAG nature reserves and the Strawberry Line and Cadbury Hill Local Nature Reserves. Regular activities have included checking bird and bat boxes and associated maintenance and bird surveys.

A hedge laying training course helped with the completion of a three year project to restore an outgrown hedge at Cadbury Hill.

Tree maintenance work was carried out on open spaces owned by both Yatton Parish Council and North Somerset Council. YACWAG volunteers also helped with a pollinator project in Saint Mary's Churchyard and at the Yatton station garden.

YACWAG volunteers also worked alongside students with special needs from Weston College providing them with outdoor work experience at two locations.

A programme of winter talks proved very popular with over 150 people attending presentations on owls by Chris Sperring, the YACWAG Otter Group by Gill Brown and Trendlewood Park, Nailsea, by Andrew Town.

The annual Family Bat Walk took place on Cadbury Hill in May with 22 people attending and there was also a butterfly walk in July on the Hill. Trevor Riddle led two bird walks giving members the opportunity to visit our reserves and to learn more about the birds of the Strawberry Line. Additionally he organized two outings to watch wetland birds – one to Shapwick Heath and one to West Sedgemoor.

Sarah Dale established a new project to monitor dormice in woodland near Cleeve with surprising first-year success in establishing the presence of this rare species in a new location.

A Greater Horseshoe Bat mapping project was established attracting 35 volunteers at its inaugural meeting led by Daniel Hargreaves. The project was assisted by a grant from Bristol Airport to provide bat recording equipment. The work was followed up with a Bats R Us event at Cleeve Village Hall in October with over 50 people attending including representatives from Wrington and Cleeve Parish Councils. YACWAG also received a Co-op Community Fund grant to provide 15 new 'entry

level' bat detectors to enable young people to listen to bats. The new detectors were trialled by a group of Congresbury Cubs on a bat walk on Cadbury Hill led by Chris Barrington. YACWAG contributed to the North Somerset Council technical guidance for Greater Horseshoe Bats, and the supplementary planning document was adopted in January 2018. Members also participated in the annual National Bat Monitoring Project with surveys taking place in Claverham and Congresbury.

A tree dressing event was held in both villages carrying on the tradition of previous years.

A Bat Cave stall was very popular at the Yatton Schools' summer carnival with a live bat on show in June 2017. This was followed by the Hungry Caterpillar stall at the Congresbury village fete.

Saint Andrew's School participated in the WWF Walk for Nature and raised over £1700 for the work of YACWAG. Trustees attended two assemblies, firstly giving a talk about the work of YACWAG and then later to thank them for their tremendous fundraising efforts. YACWAG had been at the school earlier in the year to take children out counting rooks' nests, also to help them participate in the Big Schools Bird Watch, and to carry out maintenance work on the Jubilee Wood planted by YACWAG in 2012.

YACWAG provided four sessions for the Learning College at Yatton School, giving the children a walk on the Strawberry Line, helping them with their conservation area and checking the bird boxes in the school grounds, presenting information on otters and a session dissecting and analyzing YACWAG's barn owl pellets.

The charity has provided comments to Yatton and Cleeve Parish Councils relating to numerous planning applications which have had implications for the protection of bats. The chairperson gave short presentations to both councils on the new technical guidance being produced by North Somerset Council. YACWAG has also provided comments to the Yatton Neighbourhood Plan.

The AGM in May 2017 concluded with a walk to visit Harry's Plot - a small portion of a field off Claverham Close bequeathed by the late Harry Hailes.

A lot of behind-the-scenes work was carried out by volunteers to refurbish the YACWAG website and provide an online payment system. Further work was necessary to upgrade our financial control systems and policy reviews.

YACWAG is grateful to all its members, volunteers, sponsors and supporting organisations in helping it achieve so much in this past year. Special thanks are due to Steve Devine for providing replacement grazing on Congresbury Moor with rare breed Dexter cattle. Our thanks also to Andrew Hunt for his assistance with field management and to Green Mantle and Trevor Richards with scrub management on the Strawberry Line and Malcolm Dowling with hedge laying at Kenn Moor.