

## COMING UP

Sunday 8th June 12 noon - 5 pm.

Know the Yeo. Free community family event on the Millennium Green, Congresbury, part of the Festival of Nature. Come along and find out about our living river. Make a willow bird feeder, enjoy nature trails and walks, ditch dipping and have a try at paddle boarding with Mendip Adventure. This event is part of the Festival of Nature in the West of England.

Saturday 14th June

Yatton Carnival - Parade 2.45 pm. Carnival in Hangstones, Stowey Road 3pm - late. YACWAG will have a stall with children's activities. The theme of the Carnival is 'All around the World'.

Saturday 21st June

Congresbury Village Fete 1.30 pm - 5 pm in St Andrew's Church Paddock. YACWAG will have a stall with children's activities.

Wednesday 25th June 7 pm - 9 pm

YACWAG Social at the Old Inn, Paul's Causeway, Congresbury. Come and meet other YACWAG members

**Saturday 5th July 4 pm-10 pm**

**YACWAG 25th birthday party and AGM at Claverham Village Hall. Don't miss family fun, bring your own kids' picnic from 4 pm; the AGM will be at 6 pm; food, displays, memories, entertainment, music, bar from 7 pm. We look forward to seeing all YACWAG friends old and new at this event.**

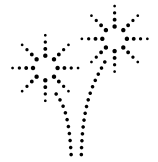
Visits to YACWAG's reserves to see the special interest are sometimes arranged at short notice. In order to avoid disturbance or damage to the wildlife, numbers are limited. If you would like to see the uncommon native Yellow



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## Extra Land for Nature at Cobthorn



*Pylons, new in 2021*

YACWAG is celebrating the purchase of another small piece of land to extend its Cobthorn Reserve in Congresbury. National Grid has now undergrounded the cables from the pylons shown on the left and Strongvox, the Furnace Way developer, was happy to sell the land on which they stood to YACWAG. Trees cannot be planted over or close to the underground cables but YACWAG will be able to strengthen the hedge along the footpath and thereby improve the corridor for bats navigating down to the river. This addition also makes available more land for grazing within the Cobthorn reserve and therefore will produce more food for insects, bats and birds.

YACWAG is grateful to Strongvox for their support with this purchase. Funding for the land was gratefully received from the Environment Agency and North Somerset Council as well as coming from YACWAG's own funds.

## WhatsApp Group for YACWAG Birders

A WhatsApp group has been set up so YACWAG members can share information about birds with each other. If you would like to join, please in the first instance send your mobile phone number with your name to [contact@yacwag.org.uk](mailto:contact@yacwag.org.uk).



## Instagram for YACWAG @yacwagofficial

Thanks to two new volunteers, Cerys and Jack, a new YACWAG Instagram account has been set up. Please use the account @yacwagofficial and sign up for the latest news and pictures from around the area. It is hoped that many of our younger social media-using supporters will start following YACWAGofficial but there are no age limits. Anyone can enjoy the photos! Thanks to Carol Tennant for her help in setting this up, and to Cerys and Jack for managing content for us.



## YACWAGger Profile - Julia Wallis

*Julia Wallis is known in Yatton as an electrologist offering permanent hair removal and skin care. She works from home and has her own skincare range for sale. Julia may also be familiar to social media users as an Admin of the popular Facebook group North Somerset Reduce, Reuse, Recycle promoting local environmental initiatives.*



Julia was born in Africa and her early life was spent running around barefoot in nature close to game parks with all kinds of animals. When she was seven she moved to the UK but her love for nature and being outdoors continued.

It is over 30 years since Julia moved to Yatton to a new house with three young children. The garden was a blank canvas and she set about creating her own paradise and sanctuary.

A few years later Julia began to notice hedgehogs around. She had heard that they were in decline and needed support. Then one December she found a baby one covered in ticks and turned to Prickles Hedgehog Hospital in Cheddar for support. It was a tiny female only five or six weeks old. Prickles kept it over the winter. In March they rang Julia and asked if she would like to release it back into her garden. She learnt from them how to look after wild hedgehogs; she made sure they could come and go as they wished, creating holes in the garden fences. That was the start of a lasting interest and commitment to local hedgehogs. She created well-hidden hedgehog homes in the garden and she support-feeds visiting hedgehogs - not every night as it is important that they also forage wild food - but she puts out dishes of water and every few nights wet cat food or dog biscuits. One early morning recently Julia saw another young female, her mouth full of leaves, heading for the border hedgehog house. She hoped love was in the air and there will be more baby hedgehogs on the way.



Julia also got involved a few years ago in an attempt to get road signs put up to warn motorists of the hedgehog hotspot in Yatton. Several dead hedgehogs were found on local roads at that time and Julia was upset to think these were hedgehogs that had been feeding in her garden then getting run over. She thought she would do something about it.





So she started fundraising for signage. She raised money, attended council meetings to get their support and approached YACWAG. She researched and designed the sign on the left. It was agreed that if there was any shortfall in the money raised YACWAG would make up that deficit. Then Julia found out about the red tape around road signs.

The Department for Transport had an official design which could be used, but a lengthy form had to be submitted by North Somerset Council for permission. After some time and with a lot of prompting, at last the highways officer came back with the surprising news that if a hedgehog had not caused human injury Yatton did not qualify for official signage. The carnage of hedgehogs on the roads was not part of the criteria, there had to have been at least one accident in which a hedgehog had caused a human casualty. To their knowledge local hedgehogs had not contributed to road traffic accidents so no official signs could be erected.



Julia persisted with the council and handed over the money raised to cover the cost of unofficial signs. Disappointingly these were made of very flimsy material and did not last more than a few days or weeks.

In the last few weeks Julia has seen dead hedgehogs in the High Street in Yatton and in Claverham so the problem has not gone away but at least it shows that our area is still home to wild hedgehogs. Sometimes rescued hedgehogs cannot be returned to their place of origin and Julia says, "We are very lucky to have them around and I will continue to re-home any from Prickles when asked." She paused rescue during roadworks which she felt might put hedgehogs at risk, but is now continuing again.

Julia joined YACWAG in the early days to support work for nature in the community. She had heard about what was being done on the Strawberry Line and that land was being set aside for nature. She believes in the power of nature to heal us in so many ways and, like another 300 local residents, is a member of YACWAG to help keep our environment nature-rich. When I asked what she thought YACWAG would be doing in ten years time, Julia replied that she hoped people would be more environmentally sensitive in the future and that YACWAG would ensure that nature will continue to thrive locally.

*Prickles Hedgehog Rescue is run by volunteers. Donations and offers of support are always welcome. [www.prickleshedgehogrescue.org.uk](http://www.prickleshedgehogrescue.org.uk)*

Pat Moulin

# YACWAG Social at The Old Inn

YACWAG members are all invited to come along to the Old Inn in Congresbury on Wednesday 25th June from 7 pm. Following the success of our first 'new' social evening in Yatton, all are again invited to come and meet others in an accessible pub in Congresbury. Maybe there are things you are interested in finding out about wildlife in the area, or maybe you just like getting out and meeting like-minded people. Perhaps you would like to encourage your friends or neighbours to join YACWAG. Here is a chance in an informal setting with no agenda to just relax and have some of those interesting conversations that have to be cut short when they happen at the end or beginning of a talk or other YACWAG event. Tea and coffee are available as well as the bar.



## Coincidence in Claverham

YACWAG Trustee Jonathan Clayden and his wife Julie made a discovery in their garden in Claverham this May while weeding their vegetable plot. Julie is an insect enthusiast, so when Jonathan found the moth among the seedling broccoli plants he called her over to have a look. She was unsure so shared a photo with a moth identification group on Facebook. There was shortly certain confirmation that the moth was a Dewick's Plusia. Julie had never seen one, and neither had Jonathan. He had, however, heard the story of the first British record of this moth which was at Mill End near Bradwell-on-sea, Essex in 1951, as that was the village in which he grew up. The moth was named after Arthur (Bob) Dewick, a local landowner and naturalist. It was a new migrant at that time, but is now a resident breeding species. Jonathan said it was an enormous surprise to find one in his garden and lovely to have that Bradwell connection again to remind him of his childhood.



*Both photos above:  
Dewick's Plusia  
by Julie Clayden*

Jonathan and Julie also have another connection to the Dewick family, as some of their Alder Buckthorn plants - the food plant for the Brimstone butterfly - were donated to their Claverham garden project by Arthur's son Stephen.



# North Somerset Bat Survey

In the May issue of North Somerset Council Life magazine I noticed this....

“Welcome to the North Somerset Bat Survey! This project is part of the South West Wildlife Monitoring Project led by the Bat Conservation Research Lab at the University of Bath, working in partnership with BTO, North Somerset Council and the Avon Wildlife Trust. The North Somerset Bat Survey aims to gather spatial distribution data on bats across North Somerset to enable council planners to minimise the impact of development on bats and wildlife at large, whilst engaging the public with bat conservation.”



This presents a chance for anyone to take part in a bat survey for a single week (6 nights) over the summer, without standing in the middle of a field for half the night. Using loaned bat detectors, data can then be uploaded, analysed and used to help planning decisions. I've enrolled to do it because:

1. I help look after Cobthorn Reserve and am interested in how many of which species we are attracting
2. I will get summary data feedback which will inform any planning application for housing in the fields adjacent to the reserve

To take part you register for a pre-determined 1 kilometre square as a survey area, then choose a recording location within that area. Book, collect and return a bat detector from a hosting centre (Yatton Library is one of the centres you can collect a detector from and their staff can help you).

To participate, you'll need a few things:

1. A smartphone or tablet equipped with a Bluetooth chipset of version 4.0 or higher.
2. A desktop PC or laptop running on at least Windows 7 or Apple OS X

10.10 (or later versions).

3. A reliable internet connection for uploading data.
4. Up to 30 GB of hard drive space to temporarily store data before uploading from the SD card.
5. Ideally, a bamboo cane or post onto which you can affix your detector >1.5 m above the ground.”

For full details visit <https://www.batconservationresearchlab.co.uk/north-somerset-bat-survey>

Graham Lovesey

## Rare Bat Found in YACWAG Bat Box

Sam Olney, Tim Clark and Sarah Dale are all members who are professional ecologists generously volunteering with YACWAG in their spare time, including monitoring YACWAG bat boxes. Bats are fully protected in law and must not be handled by anyone without a licence, nor can places used by roosting bats be disturbed.

Sam, Tim and Sarah all got very excited when checking boxes on the Strawberry Line south of the old station site at Congresbury. Inside one of the dome-shaped ‘woodcrete’ boxes was a rare Bechstein’s bat that has very seldom been recorded in North Somerset and never before found roosting in a bat box. Sam was able to return to the box later and under the Vincent Wildlife Trust licence he was able to put a tiny radio-tracking device onto the bat so more could be understood about its movements over the next few days.

If you are interested in knowing more about bats and have not done so already, adding ‘bats’ to your list of interests in your YACWAG membermojo account profile will get your name and contact details added to the bat group so you hear of any planned bat events.





## Slow Worms in Compost Bins



*Photos by Claire Kinsella*

Claire Kinsella sent an email about the behaviour of two slow worms in her compost heap at the end of April. She had found a large grey slow worm with its jaws around the head of a smaller, slimmer brown slow worm. These are the normal colours for male and female slow worms and it was a rare opportunity to see them mating. Claire said the pair had been together like this for hours. In fact the male is hanging onto the female to prevent her escape and slowly manoeuvring her into the desired position.

It was also good at about the same time to receive the photo on the right of a mature male slow worm on the top of the compost bin in YACWAG's Stowey Reserve. Lucy Robertson, who is a candidate for the Duke of Edinburgh's Gold Award, is monitoring wildlife for us in the reserve over a 12 month period, and was able to snatch a photo before the slow worm slithered back into the vegetation.



### **Deadline for next members' newsletter 1st September**

Your articles, poems, observations, photos and

anything else you would like to share are very welcome.

**Please submit to the editor via [contact@yacwag.org.uk](mailto:contact@yacwag.org.uk)**



## The Quest for Dragons and Damsels



*photo by Jack Davidson*

YACWAG members had the opportunity to learn about dragonflies and damselflies from two experts in May. Jon van Gowler, who is part of the Avalon Marshes recorders' group, gave a very informative and enjoyable talk thanks to Horsecastle Chapel, and then the Somerset County recorder, Chris Cardno, led a guided walk on Biddle Street SSSI two days later. Azure, Common Blue and Large Red Damselflies, Beautiful and Banded Demoiselles were seen, as well as Scarce Chasers and Hairy Dragonflies.



*Large red damselfly*



*Hairy dragonfly*



*Banded demoiselle*

## Spring Stroll at Cobthorn Reserve

Tony and Faith Moulin led a general nature walk at Cobthorn Reserve to show members the delights of spring in the reserve. The group of about a dozen had an interesting amble around the two fields, seeing the fresh new leaves and blossom on trees planted only in January this year and observing all the work that has been done in the past three years to turn the land into a space for nature.



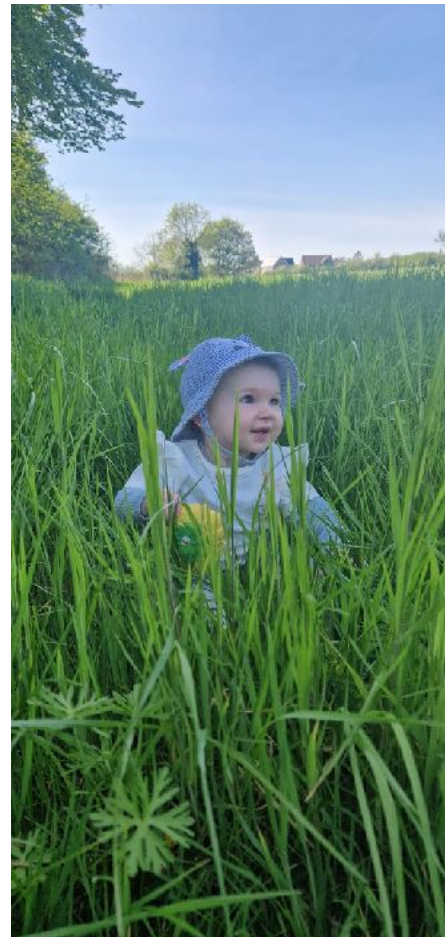
*Bluebell and dogs' mercury at Cobthorn*



*Cuckoo flower (Cardamine pratensis) at Cobthorn*

Highlights of the afternoon were seeing bluebells and dogs' mercury coming up in the bottom of the hedge that was laid during the winter, and a late flowering clump of cuckoo flower. This is the larval food plant of the orange-tip butterfly and to show their appreciation one or two of them provided a fly-past.

The walk was well received by members separated in age by about 80 years. There was a nice lot of standing around and even sitting in the long grass. It was good to mix up the generations and everyone enjoyed time in nature in the sunshine. Tony and Faith will keep an eye on the forecast and arrange, again at short notice, a Summer Stroll at Cobthorn Reserve on a Sunday afternoon in the next few weeks.



*Pippa in Cobthorn Paddocks*



# The Density of and Numbers of Bird Species on the Strawberry Line LNR and Littlewood

The May issue of British Birds journal contains an interesting article: '*Four decades of bird community change in two lowland English woods*' - authors: Robert J. Fuller, C B Henderson, and Chas A Holt.

The paper details surveys over four decades at Bradfield Woods in Suffolk and Sheephouse Wood in Buckinghamshire. Bradfield Woods cover 63ha, are managed by the Suffolk Wildlife Trust and are a National Nature Reserve. Sheephouse Wood is privately owned, covers 51 ha and is a SSSI.

As the title indicates the surveys show considerable change in the species using the woods and they also provide details of species densities in the woods, with calculations of numbers of territories per 10 hectares (ha).

This led me to seek to compare the density values with those for the Strawberry Line LNR and Littlewood as I could extract the necessary data from the relevant YACWAG bird surveys. The two woods in the British Birds paper are very much larger than our Reserves: The Strawberry Line covers 8ha and Littlewood just 2ha. The Strawberry Line isn't a woodland of course albeit there is scrub woodland at Yatton Junction and the hedges are developing more into woodland as time goes on. I have endeavoured to align the species as far as possible, so just true passerines have been included in my calculations from the YACWAG Reserves.

It should be noted that in woodland more birds colonise the edge than the centre so our Reserves have the major advantage of a higher proportion of woodland edge.

## **Bradfield Woods Suffolk, 2017**

23 species with a total density of 63 bird territories per 10ha.

## **The Strawberry Line 2017**

22 species with a total density of 78 bird territories per 10ha.



**Sheephouse Wood, Buckinghamshire, 2015**

21 species with 60 bird territories per 10ha.

**Strawberry Line, 2015**

19 species with 84 bird territories per 10ha.

**Littlewood, 2015**

15 species with 130 bird territories per 10ha.

The Strawberry Line has more diverse habitats than a woodland hence the large number of species in relative size terms compared with Bradfield and Sheephouse Woods.

There are 25 nestboxes in Littlewood and ten at Yatton Junction on the Strawberry Line and the boxes will have enabled more birds, almost exclusively Blue Tits and Great Tits, to breed there. The smaller size of our reserves makes survey work more straightforward and, while some birds will always be missed on survey, more are likely to be missed at the bigger woodlands.

Trevor Riddle