

# YACWAG newsletter



**When YACWAG bought its very first field, Ten Acres, in 1999, we mistakenly thought it might become a safe haven for lapwings, even though they were already in decline. That hope was at the forefront of trustee Ken Blake's mind when he designed our first logo:**

two lapwings, the birds we hoped to welcome to our new field.

Lapwings were soon out of the frame but we did not change the logo design. Even when we no longer saw lapwings on Congresbury Moor, the emblematic lapwings remained, symbols of our faith and hope that small actions do make a difference for nature. We did not get lapwings but we provided a home instead for barn owls and kestrels!

Now over 25 years later we have taken the opportunity to review the logo to reflect our work for wildlife. After much discussion it was agreed that it was time to refresh the logo but that two lapwings should remain as a symbol of hope. We know that YACWAG land will always be there to bring hope to our communities and ensure nature is our neighbour.

The renewed logo adds freshness and colour, but the lapwings remain at its heart: symbols of resilience, optimism and belief in a thriving future for nature in Yatton and Congresbury.

*Archive photo: Five YACWAG Trustees in Ten Acres on acquisition, October 1999, Jim Ward, Win Lowman, Terry Garraway, Tony Moulin, Faith Moulin*



Our sincere thanks to the National Lottery who provided a Community Award of just over £10,000 to YACWAG. With these funds we have been able to refresh the logo (with thanks to Cloudbird Studios). You can see it above.

The award will also fund the re-designed YACWAG website to meet new standards of digital accessibility and inclusion for all and we look forward to sharing it with you within a few months.

Yatton and  
Congresbury  
Wildlife Action  
Group

registered charity  
no. 1076362

[www.yacwag.org.uk](http://www.yacwag.org.uk)

Newsletter  
September 2025

## DEADLINE FOR NEXT NEWSLETTER

**1st November 2025**

articles, photos,  
member contributions  
always welcome

[contact@yacwag.org.uk](mailto:contact@yacwag.org.uk)

## FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA

YACWAG is active on  
Facebook (a private  
group of nearly 900  
members, mostly local)  
and on Instagram

## USE THE EVENTS CALENDAR ON OUR WEBSITE

to find out what is  
coming up. The winter  
will bring talks, walks  
and work parties.

## YACWAG is changing

YACWAG has been growing - in many ways. We have modernised and digitised our membership system, we are now digitising our financial systems and are responding to new Charity Commission guidance on many issues. We are tightening up protection against cyber-crime, working on content for our new accessible website, streamlining our administration and getting volunteers involved in practical outdoor work. We are making more opportunities for members to meet each other and, thanks to Petrina Daws, we have a directory of contacts for key volunteers. A new YACWAG Volunteer Guide will shortly be distributed, providing in one handy place information for all our volunteers.

The new round of pub-based social evenings has proved a great success, and many members also recently enjoyed meeting like-minded people in Kingston Seymour thanks to Roland and Franky Griffin. We have created vacancies for new trustees so that we can recruit people from the community with the skills we need to take the charity forward in these challenging but exciting times. All this takes a great deal of time! Nature, meanwhile, is thriving on our reserves, and in spite of the difficult weather this summer we continue to help people know that *Nature is Our Neighbour*. We are shortly to hold a meeting of reserve wardens and would like to hear from any member who would be interested in hearing more about that outdoor role. We estimate there are now around 40 members with key roles in helping with essential behind-the-scenes work to run the charity. Could you spare a few hours a month to join that team? There are still many unfilled roles. Many hands really do make light work.

There will be some exciting news to share with you before the end of the year, and thanks to Emily Appleton and Carol Tennant there will be some YACWAG branded Christmas presents available for you to buy to support YACWAG, whether for other people or yourself! Keep an eye out for emails with important information around that subject in October. Every item you buy will support YACWAG's work - our unpaid workforce running the organisation ensures that money raised by our supporters is well-spent and goes a long way. Because we share the load we can do a lot without having to employ anyone. YACWAG needs a volunteer with financial expertise, however, and would be glad to hear from anyone who might like to be involved.

Faith and I have seen great changes since YACWAG began and we are privileged to have been involved for such a long time. The time is coming, however, when we will need to do a bit less so it is great that so many younger people are wanting to 'get a piece of the action'. *Action* has always been a key word for YACWAG. We will soon be advertising some important jobs that are essential for the future. Better still, we will be available to talk to would-be volunteers at the Meet the Clubs apple-themed event on Saturday 4th October (see page 3). It would be lovely to see you there!

*Tony Moulin*

## Meet the Clubs in Yatton for Apple Day

On Saturday 4th October 10 am - noon YACWAG is joining with Yatton PACT to celebrate community and apples!

Yatton Partners and Communities Together (PACT) works to resolve safety issues in the community. From time to time they organise a 'Meet the Clubs' event to enable local voluntary organisations and clubs to 'set out their stalls' and show the community what they have to offer. Residents old and new can find out what opportunities are available on their doorstep. These events help make Yatton a more welcoming and more sustainable community.

YACWAG will be there with information about our vacancies for volunteers and to celebrate the apple, and orchards, for their health-giving properties for wildlife as well as people.

Come along to the Yatton Methodist Church and enjoy refreshments provided by Yatton Youth Club while you listen to a talk by Trevor on birds in orchards, take part in apple-themed games and competitions and children's crafts. There will be a display of local named varieties of apples. The event is free.



## The apple you eat is the landscape you create

We look forward to seeing you there. In the meantime look out for English apples in the shops and if your store of choice doesn't stock them speak up and ask for them. Apples are the most popular fruit in England but we need to fight back against imports and standardisation and create the landscape our ancestors enjoyed.

While English apples are in the shops go out of your way to buy them and enjoy the different flavours. Apples are part of our heritage and part of our culture. The loss of our locally distinctive cider orchards is tragic but every time you choose an English apple you help keep a lovely orchard in the landscape somewhere, not just for you but for all the associated wildlife too.

## THE 'CRIMINAL' BULLFINCH

Bullfinches were abundant in southern England in the 1950s-1970s and it is hard to imagine that they were regarded as a pest in commercial orchards and killed - even today commercial orchards can apply for a licence to kill them. It is all down to their diet including tree buds. In fact Henry VIII condemned their 'criminal acts' in orchards and a penny was paid for every bullfinch killed.

Males are easily recognised by their black cap, short black beak, black and white wings, white rump and bright pink breast. The female is duller in colour but still a beautiful bird. Numbers have dropped by 40 percent since 1970 but we are fortunate to still see them in Yatton and Congresbury including along the Strawberry Line.



*Male bullfinch by Mark Savage*



## Ten years of local bird data

### Trevor Riddle writes about changes in local bird populations, 2016 - 2025

The North Somerset Levels and Moors Spring and Summer bird surveys have been operating since 1995 and these notes look at the changes in numbers recorded over the last ten years by means of percentage increases or decreases and also the percentage increases or decreases measuring the 2025 count to the ten year (2015-2024) average. To compare our local results with national figures I have included the ten year (2014-2023) average results for England extracted from the British Trust for Ornithology Breeding Birds Survey.

There are nine survey areas each counted twice involving around 40 hours of observation effort each year. There isn't enough data to produce meaningful statistics for the scarcer species so the table on the next page includes the species for which a total of at least 250 birds were counted over the 2015 - 2024 period. The exception is Song Thrush - the data included is from more than 250 records for 2025 but only 230 for 2024.

**The Song Thrush  
numbers seem to be  
steadily increasing over  
the last ten years on the  
North Somerset Levels  
and Moors**



*Song Thrush by Emily Lomas*

Generally there are few surprises with most passerines (small perching birds) faring well but Swallows, House Martins , Starlings and Chaffinches showing declines.

Column 2. Percentage increase or decrease calculated from the North Somerset Levels and Moors Spring and Summer Bird Report.

Column 3. Percentage increase or decrease for 2025 compared to the ten year average (2015-2024)

Column 4. Percentage increase or decrease 2014-2023 nationally (England) reported in the Breeding Birds Survey produced by The British Trust for Ornithology.

	% from NSLM report	% vs 10 year average	% 2014-23 BTO
Species	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4
Canada Goose	200	7	26
Mute Swan	50	8	13
Mallard	-48	-23	-10
Wood Pigeon	0	10	-3
Heron	-30	0	-2
Buzzard	0	-15	7
Magpie	0	7	3
Jackdaw	-44	-35	12
Rook	86	-10	-4
Carrion Crow	-50	-37	2
Blue Tit	21	34	-7
Great Tit	8	0	-14
Skylark	650	51	14
Swallow	-7	-25	-48
House Martin	-13	-23	-44
Long tailed Tit	-8	-15	-9
Chiffchaff	150	104	39
Reed Warbler	50	75	21
Blackcap	60	48	17
Whitethroat	-6	-10	-18
Wren	67	40	23
Starling	-19	-27	-15
Song Thrush	100	88	18
Blackbird	-17	0	-10
Robin	41	30	15
House Sparrow	20	5	-12
Dunnock	52	33	-14
Chaffinch	-40	-20	-48
Greenfinch	133	128	-48
Goldfinch	-31	-27	15

Now a few comments on individual species: changes of more or less than 10 percent can generally be regarded as stable for the less common species due to the limited amount of data available.

Canada Geese are very successful breeders but there is some evidence that their increase in numbers has slowed recently. There has been a large number of Mute Swans for many years with lots of non breeding birds each summer. Mallards, our most common and widespread duck have declined nationally and this is reflected in our figures



**Woodpigeon numbers  
are surprisingly stable.  
Their major expansion  
probably occurred  
before 2016.**

It's surprising that our Woodpigeon numbers are stable, it is likely that their major expansion occurred prior to 2016. The amount of data for Herons and Buzzards is relatively small and both species are in the no change category albeit that our Herons must be facing increasing competition from Egret species. There is plenty of data for Magpies and their rating is also stable and this will I am sure cause comment and speculation. (Most country folk and quite a few town folk are convinced that Magpies are increasing but this isn't reflected in any survey that I have seen.) The increase of three percent recorded by the national Breeding Birds Survey is not statistically significant.

The survey doesn't track the Corvids very well, most of our Jackdaws are in the towns and villages and the survey areas are largely countryside. The ten years change figure for Skylark is a real anomaly, there was a particularly low count in 2016. That said they have been a reasonable improvement as shown by the increase against the ten year average. The reductions calculated for Swallows and House Martins reflect national trends.

The big winners are our common warblers, Robins and Wrens, particularly encouraging as these birds are mainly insect eaters. The Song Thrush numbers are based on limited data but they do appear to be steadily increasing.

Chaffinches have suffered from the trichomoniasis disease but Greenfinches have recovered from it and are present in record numbers locally and it seems from the national figures are doing much better here than most other places. After years of increase Goldfinch numbers are reducing and perhaps more competition from Greenfinches is a cause.

*Trevor Riddle*

## Insects are at the heart of it all

Insects are crucial to life itself and they make a good indicator of the health of our local environment. Although YACWAG does not have the resources to carry out regular insect surveys on all our land we always have our eyes open to new and interesting species and submit our records for entry on the National Biodiversity Network database. If anyone would like to help with this work please get in touch. Moth traps, wildlife cameras and other equipment are available on loan. If you see something interesting in your garden, please let us know via [contact@yacwag.org.uk](mailto:contact@yacwag.org.uk).



*Clouded Buff moth - photo: Richard Croucher*

YACWAG purchased wildlife monitoring equipment, including a number of moth traps, at least a decade ago with the help of a grant. With the increase in LED street lighting in the built-up areas, these are most successful out on our reserves in a dark location and now Richard Croucher has started regular monitoring of insects using a moth trap at Cobthorn Paddocks in Congresbury and at Maslens orchard in Kenn Moor Reserve.

Over 10 years ago Tony delivered a moth trap to Richard's house. He returned in the morning to look at the catch and help with the identification of over 20 species of moth. Richard continued with occasional trapping over the years, but it was not until this year post retirement that he has had the time to devote to more moth trapping in his garden.

Richard photographs the moths as he empties the trap and tries to identify them from the books, submitting photographic records to iRecord for confirmation. On 9th June he photographed a moth he did not recognise and could not identify with certainty and sent the photo to Ray Barnett, an entomologist who supports the work of YACWAG in monitoring insect life on our reserves. It was a Clouded Buff *Diacrisia sannio*. Further south into Somerset this is a species of Exmoor, the Quantocks and the Brendon Hills but although it was not a new record for this area it was the first time it had been recorded here since the 19th century!



### YACWAG members-only WhatsApp Insect Group

A WhatsApp group has been set up for those members who enjoy sharing insect sightings, photos and observations with like-minded people. If you have not signed up and would like to, please email [contact@yacwag.org.uk](mailto:contact@yacwag.org.uk).

## Why is YACWAG making a new website?

Thanks to funding from the National Lottery, we're excited to be designing a new website for YACWAG that will be fully inclusive and accessible to all.

### What does 'accessible' mean?

Accessibility isn't just a "nice to have" - it's essential. Around 1.3 billion people globally live with a significant disability, representing one in six people worldwide and also impacts many within our community - whether as members, volunteers, supporters or benefactors.

By making our website accessible, we will ensure that everyone can connect with us equally, removing unnecessary barriers and creating a truly welcoming space. Accessibility benefits all users, not only those with disabilities - for example, clear headings make information easier to find, while good colour contrast improves readability for everyone.

Key accessibility features we're focusing on include:

- Easy-to-read text and colours so words are clear for everyone.
- Descriptions on images so people using screen readers know what's being shown.
- Clear link labels (no more "click here"!) so it's obvious where each link will take you.
- Simple headings so it's quick to find what you're looking for.
- Making these changes means YACWAG can reach more people, communicate more effectively, and reflect our values around inclusion and equality. It also helps us meet recognised standards such as the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG), ensuring we are up to date and forward-looking. As a charity this is a vital step.

These changes will make a big difference - not just for people with disabilities, but for anyone who visits our website. It's all about making our online space welcoming, inclusive, and informative for our whole community.

*Carol Tennant*

## Do you have IT skills and a little time to spare?

We are looking for volunteers with some basic IT skills who could commit a few hours each month to support the delivery and maintenance of our new website. Full training will be provided. The role would provide an opportunity to work as part of a team and get more involved in helping YACWAG to run more efficiently so we can do even more for wildlife in our community.

Please contact us to find out more by emailing [contact@yacwag.org.uk](mailto:contact@yacwag.org.uk).



## Celebrating twenty-five years!

Thanks to all who came to Claverham Village Hall on 5th July to help us celebrate the YACWAG quarter-century.

We were delighted to welcome new member Tessa Munt MP and her husband for the occasion, which included family fun and games, superb refreshments and a musical end to the evening kindly donated by Paul O'Donnell.

At least 45 members attended the charity's 25th AGM - including four of its remaining founding trustees. The business included a motion to remove parish council representation from the board of trustees and this was unanimously passed by members. This change will enable YACWAG to involve two new trustees from the community in line with Charity Commission requirements for more representative trustees. If any member would like to help the charity as a trustee, please email [contact@yacwag.org.uk](mailto:contact@yacwag.org.uk).



## A Scilly Pelagic

*Young YACWAG members, brothers Rowan and Milo Peters, have become seasoned and enthusiastic birdwatchers. Some of you may have met them on one of Trevor's bird walks. They had a very exciting trip during the summer to see seabirds off the Scilly Isles that rarely come to land. This is known as a 'pelagic' tour.*

At 5 pm we pulled away and cruised out of the harbour. Very soon a large group of gulls started to inflate at the back of the boat. Manx Shearwaters streamed past to their nests on Annet, and the odd Fulmar started to appear.



*Fulmars by Milo Peters*

We left St Mary's behind us, keeping St Agnes and Annet to our left and eventually the western rocks to our right. Soon land was a long way away. The swell started to increase and our sea legs had to be put into action. Gannets gracefully glided all around us, so many in every direction.

We were three quarters of an hour in when the first shout, "Great Shearwater!" came. And as well as great excitement, a panic set in. "Where, where, I can't see it!" In the end everyone managed a far-off view of its arcing shear before it disappeared over the horizon.

After an hour we stopped all engines and drifted, and we stayed adrift for the next three hours. This was the point that the 'chum' started to be thrown out. (Chum is a foul-smelling liquid to attract the birds.) A feeling of nausea welled up for some. But we soon got used to it and the focus of the birds and our sublime surroundings brought our attention away.

Then the Storm Petrels started to come in. Most stayed further out, however some would come a few feet from the boat. Like butterflies they fluttered over the swell. White flashed on their underwings. It was a magical experience, a privilege to see them so close.

Now the Great Shearwaters started coming closer in, their beautiful plumage showing in full glory. They had these strong, powerful shears, which so close were awe-inspiring.



*Great Shearwater by Milo Peters**Arctic Tern by Milo Peters*

Two Arctic Terns flew over, just metres above us, more Common Terns followed. We heard their calls getting fainter and fainter as they flew off into the distance. Throughout the day Sooty Shearwaters careened past. Never for long, but beautiful, arcing up above the side of the boat. Two Cerys Shearwaters went past in the distance and I hoped more would come closer to let us see their full beauty.

As we watched the Storm Petrels dance about in front of us, A Wilsons came in and proceeded to come within reaching distance from us. Excitement levels now on the boat were very high. The Wilsons gave us an incredible performance, better than any of the other Storms. Two more came in and fed in the slick. For hours we watched them in awe.

A Corys now decided to treat us with a close fly-in. Its dark grey head and yellow bill stood out against the deep blue sea, its flight clearly out-competing everything else we saw that night. With such ease it glided and sheared past, it turned around and came past once more before we lost it to the sea again.

Now it was getting later the beauty of everything was exemplified with golden light - every fine detail, every shade of colour, every silhouette was highlighted against the sky and imprinted in our memories forever.

At 9 pm we started to head back to the islands. Our objective now was to bring all the birds that were feeding by the boat up into the air to follow us. This sight would hopefully bring in some Skuas and others. And it did. Two Great Skuas followed the boat for a few minutes before heading off again.

As it started to get too dark to see many birds we started chatting to all the other enthusiastic birders on the boat. Just listening to all their stories of birding Scilly in October and sharing some most memorable birding experiences was an experience in itself. Everybody's spirits were high and we were all having a fantastic time. An experience not to forget. A Scilly pelagic.

*Rowan and Milo Peters*

## In this issue

there has been a lot about birds. It seems appropriate to end the newsletter on the same note as it started. When we were discussing the potential for changing the YACWAG logo some of the comments we received stated that the two lapwings made it seem as if the group was a bird-watchers' group. Some people suggested we should have a barn owl as our logo, or a bat. It was suggested that we should have a change because lapwings are not part of the YACWAG experience, whereas barn owls and bats are the iconic species we have been working most visibly and successfully for. I have explained at the front of this newsletter why the trustees decided to keep the two lapwings, one for Yatton, one for Congresbury, flying together over our wetland. They symbolise hope in the power of nature.

The next issue will be out in November. If you have anything to share please send it to [contact@yacwag.org.uk](mailto:contact@yacwag.org.uk)

*Faith Moulin*

## WANTED - APPLES!

If you have an apple tree and you know its variety, and would be prepared to donate three of its apples, please get in touch. We would like to use them in a display on Saturday 4th October.

**Thank you!**

[contact@yacwag.org.uk](mailto:contact@yacwag.org.uk)

