

## Our Vision:

A Parish and its people that are enriched by wildlife, where people enrich the natural world and help to safeguard it for the future.

## Our aims are to:

Share knowledge of the wonderful wildlife in the Parish of Chudleigh.

Raise awareness through events and activities that involve and motivate the community.

Encourage positive action by local residents to attract and sustain more wildlife in the town and Parish of Chudleigh.

Conserve and enhance our existing wildlife and local habitats, features and species populations, through working together and with others.

Survey & record what we have, holding and sharing our wildlife records with others.

Advise groups and individuals on biodiversity and land management for wildlife.

Monitor development proposals that may result in damage to important wildlife.

Be environmentally and socially aware and responsible in what we do.

## Interested in joining us?

If you would like to be added to our mailing list, are interested in joining the committee, or would like to volunteer, please contact

[info.chudleighwild@gmail.com](mailto:info.chudleighwild@gmail.com)

## Talks and Events

Dave Smallshire's March talk 'Dazzling Dragonflies' gave a true insight into these beautiful creatures, their ecology and behaviour and where to look for them locally. They are fascinating and great to photograph, so why not see if you can find some and learn to identify the different species? There are around 30 species to see in Devon.

**Donations on the night raised £80 for Comic Relief.**



## Creating Habitats for Wildlife

A talk by John Nightingale from The Habitat Group

Friday 24th April 2026 at 7.30 pm

Woodway Room, Chudleigh Town Hall

Free event with refreshments  
(donations welcome)



# ***Chudleigh Wild Wildlife Gardening Group***

Are you interested in gardening with wildlife in mind? Would you like to know more or show off what you have created? Would you like to join a group of like-minded people? If so, please join our new Wildlife Gardening Group!

We plan to meet monthly during spring and summer in a series of members' gardens. We will chat informally for an hour or two, using each garden's features as talking points. Our aim is to provide a venue for discussion and learning, without the 'admin burden' that comes with Open Gardens! You will be expected to join a WhatsApp Group to communicate the times and locations of gatherings, and of course we expect some of you to invite us around to visit!

Sue and I will host the first gathering at 8 Twindle Beer on 18 April from 2-4 pm. Subjects to discuss include ponds,

lawns and long grass, solitary bees, Slow Worms, wild vs cultivated flowers and pollen and nectar sources.

If you would like to join the Group, please text your name to Dave Smallshire (07853 216239), mentioning 'Wildlife Gardening Group'. If you would like us to visit some time, either for advice or to show us your garden, then please say so.



## **Open Gardens 2026: 13-14 June**

**We are looking for people who could open their gardens on Saturday June 14th**

We now have enough gardens opening on Sunday the 14th but are looking for a few more who could open on Saturday 13th. Your garden can be formal, informal or largely for wildlife, so long as it can be accessed without going through your house. We are happy to come around and chat to you about how the day will be run and you can raise money for a chosen charity, if you so wish, by selling teas/coffee/cakes etc. or plants or crafts.

If you would like to join in this year, please contact:

Emma Rush: [emmarush305@gmail.com](mailto:emmarush305@gmail.com)



## Orchids at Harcombe Split

Since 2018, Chudleigh Wild volunteers have counted the orchids flowering in Devon County Council's 'Special Verge' at Harcombe Split, following on from Michel Hughes' monitoring that began in 1988. This is where the tapering bed of limestone crosses the A38 had provided ideal conditions for a range of orchid species and other flowering plants since the dual carriageway was constructed. Nine species of orchids have been seen over the years, although not all appear every year. Described as perhaps the best orchid site in Devon, the most important is Greater Butterfly Orchid, which numbers into hundreds (1044 in 2011!). The wide range of other plants makes it a good place to gain botanical skills, although surveying near main roads does require 'Health and Safety' vigilance.

**If anyone would like to join the small group of dedicated volunteers to help with the counts**, please make yourself known to Mary Rush (please email with your mobile number). Mary will be taking over organising the counts this year from Tess Frost, who has done a sterling job organising us since 2018 (thank you Tess).



*Early Purple Orchid*



*Common Spotted Orchid*



*Greater Butterfly Orchid*

## Orchid walk at Holmans Wood

**Sunday 31st May (2-4 pm)**

*Chudleigh Wild*, in conjunction with Holmans Wood Holiday Park, invites you to join a guided walk to view the orchids and other plants of interest. Haulfryn have kindly allowed us to park a few cars in their small entrance car park (car share if you can) and to walk through their grounds. For safety reasons, we will not venture along the busy roadsides, but will stick to Harcombe Lane and Holman's Wood. The walk is timed to see the Greater Butterfly Orchids at their best.

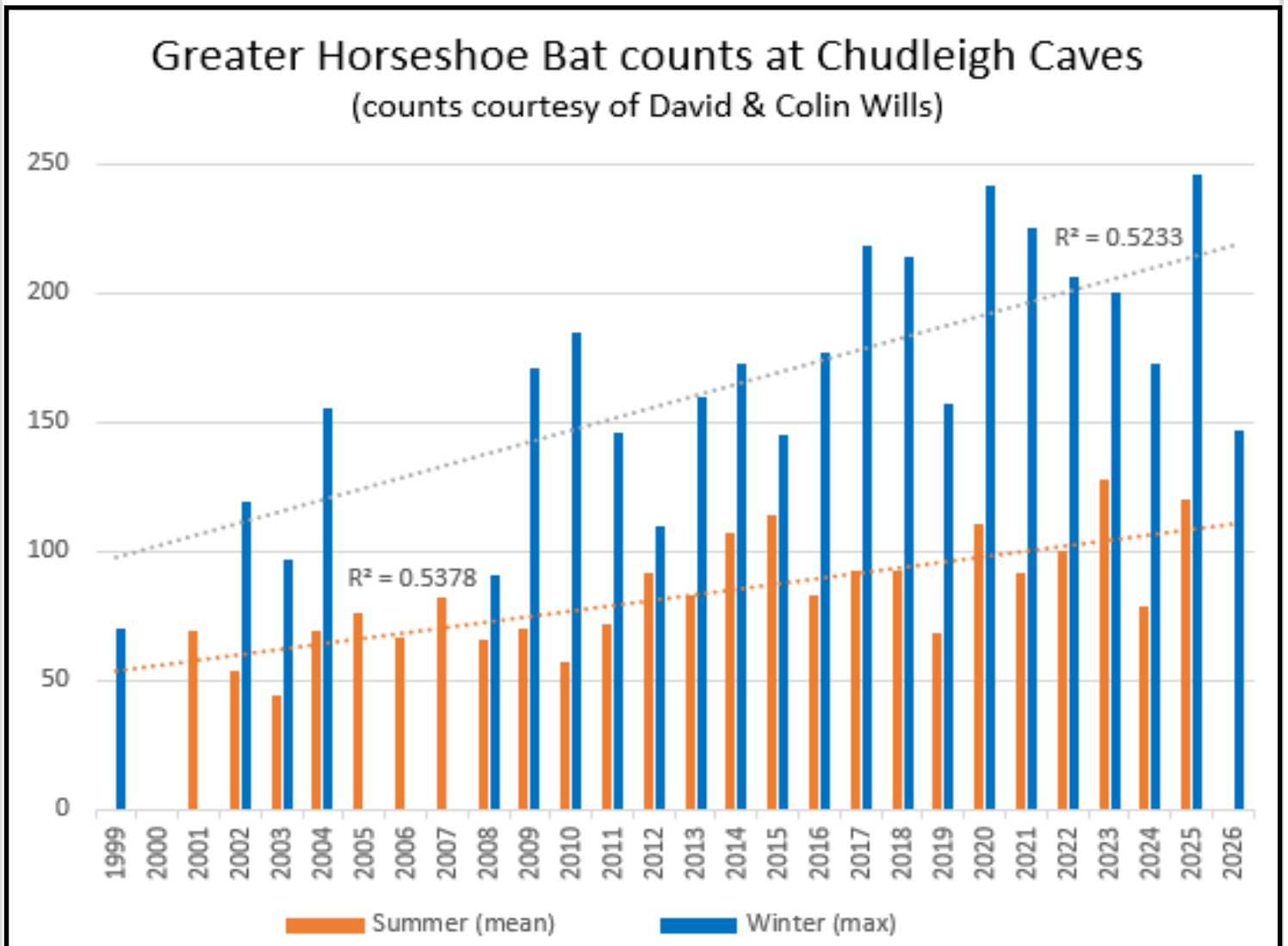


# Greater Horseshoe Bats at Chudleigh Caves

Licensed bat expert David Wills and his son Colin have braved the potentially dangerous caves below Chudleigh Rocks for some 25 years to monitor our important colony of Greater Horseshoe Bats. Once or twice each summer they have counted the bats exiting the padlocked grills across the cave entrances as they go off to forage around the Parish and beyond. Heroically, they have also entered the caves each winter to count the hibernating individuals.

The 25-year average summer count since 2001 has been 83.5, although last year's 120 was the second highest total. The average hibernation count has been 166 over 23 winters since 1999, although this winter's total of 147 was well down on the record 246 of early 2025. The overall trends, however, have been positive – which is great news for a species that has undergone substantial declines nationally in the past.

Many thanks to the Wills for all their hard work and for providing the counts to produce this graph:



# Radio-tracking Greater Horseshoe Bats

Chudleigh has been privileged to host an exciting trial of a novel way of tracking bat movements. PhD student Katie Allan, under guidance from Professor Fiona Mathews, is completing her thesis currently, but has kindly shared some of her exciting results with us.

The results from Greater Horseshoe Bats caught late in 2023 showed that they moved widely around the southern outskirts of Chudleigh, completely avoiding the bright lights of town and concentrating their activity along Kate Brook and the woods close to the Caves. This was unsurprising, given the data our Bat Group has gained from bat detectors in recent years. However, what is surprising is the extent to which they moved south-westwards and especially south-eastwards, all the way to the A380 and beyond. There was a lot of activity in parts of Ugbrooke and especially towards Olchard and Ideford Arch. Surprisingly few were recorded north of town. The most surprising movement detected was an individual that flew from Buckfastleigh Caves to Chudleigh and back in the same night!

More results can be shared in the future, once Katie has submitted her thesis and scientific papers, but for now we must be patient!

*A Greater Horseshoe Bat marked with a traditional ring.*



## ***Chudleigh Wild Bat Group***

If you would like to try your hand at bat detection, why not register your interest with our Bat Group? We shall be meeting weekly from March, either on a Tuesday or Wednesday evening, with instructions coming via a WhatsApp group. Send your name and phone number to [info@chudleighwild.org](mailto:info@chudleighwild.org) if you are interested.



# Riverflies – Life Beneath the Surface

(from a blog written by Richie Blake, TACA)

If you spend enough time in and around rivers, you eventually develop some rather odd habits. Some people begin checking the weather and river level obsessively; others find themselves peering over bridges hoping to spot fish. And then there are those of us who - quite willingly - get in the water, turn over rocks, swirl a net through the gravels, and become far too excited about what crawls in a white sorting tray! Welcome to the wonderful world of the **Riverfly Monitoring Initiative**.

This is a nationwide scheme that trains volunteers to regularly sample certain groups of aquatic invertebrates – tiny river residents whose presence or absence tells us how healthy the water and habitat are. Most of the groups monitored are insects that spend the early stages of their lives underwater, making them excellent long-term indicators of what's really going on beneath the surface. They're like the canaries of the catchment.

Each group responds differently to water conditions, which gives us a fantastic picture of river health at each surveyed location:

- **Stoneflies** – the divas of the river world: they demand clean, cold, well-oxygenated water.
- **Mayflies** – the free-swimming nymphs love fast, stony riffles.
- **Caddis-flies** – engineers, building tiny survival suits from fine gravel and sediment.
- **Olives & Blue-winged Olives** – reliable indicators of A1 habitat.
- **Freshwater shrimps (Gammarus)** – the workhorses of the food chain, normally present where the others aren't: an indicator of less than ideal water conditions.



Monitoring these groups gives us a surprisingly accurate picture of river health and data that is far more sensitive and reactive than chemical testing alone. *Continued on next page*



## The three-minute dance

The **Riverfly Monitoring** method is simple, standardised and surprisingly enjoyable! It's based on a three-minute kick sample: think of unleashing your finest soft shoe shuffle on the riverbed to disturb the invertebrates to catch them in a well-placed net downstream. Following this, a one-minute stone search is also carried out to see if anything of interest is lurking under, or clinging to, rocks on the riverbed. It looks something like this:

1. Stir up the riverbed with your feet while holding a net downstream.
2. Collect whatever drifts in.
3. Empty everything into a white tray and begin counting the myriad of tiny creatures.



It's science, but the fun sort!

## Why *Riverfly Monitoring* matters

Here's the magic of the **Riverfly Monitoring** approach – through it we get consistent monitoring as it happens at the same sites every year towards the end of **May, July** and **September**, creating a long-term dataset. High counts of Riverflies are linked to clean gravels, dappled shade, stable flows, healthy weed beds, low silt inputs and good oxygen levels. But low numbers wave a red flag: pollution incidents, sediment sources, failing banks, excessive water temperature stresses ... Riverflies often detect these before anything else does.

In 2025 our results, from three sites along Kate Brook and one in the River Teign, compared favourably with those from 33 others in the Teign-Bovey catchment. However, our scores have gone down slightly at the Kate Brook sites over the last four years, something we need to keep a close eye on.

**Chudleigh Wild** volunteers also carry out **water quality monitoring** at a range of sites throughout the year, added measures to check on the health of our watercourses.

**Our volunteers are so important! It you would like to join in the fun of sampling for Riverflies (or Water Quality), please let me know soon, as training is planned for April.**

*Dave Smallshire (text your mobile phone number and name to 07853 216239)*



# Bye-bye dark sky



A view of London's light pollution at night from space.

## Is light pollution costing us more than just the nighttime?

Humans, birds and several other animals are finding it increasingly challenging to experience nighttime uninterrupted by artificial light.

### What is light pollution?

Also known as photo pollution, light pollution is the presence of artificial light in the night environment. It's an anthropogenic pollutant, meaning it originates in human activity, that can be disruptive and harmful to both wildlife and humans.

In well-lit areas such as towns and cities, sky glow can be enough to entirely obscure our view of the stars. A 2016 study found that 77% of the UK are unable to see the Milky Way. But there's a lot more to light pollution than an obstructed view of the stars.

Year-on-year global artificial lighting has increased by about 10% and it's not just the amount of light that's changing, the location and type of lighting matters to wildlife as well. Much of that light is directed or reflected upwards and is clearly visible from space.

### How is light pollution affecting British wildlife?

For bats, encountering an artificially lit area is like staring into car headlights on full beam. If they suddenly encounter something glary or reflective they might not see the object in their path, potentially leading to impacts with obstacles.

Some types of bats, such as brown long-eared, greater horseshoe and Natterer's bats, are used to operating in complete darkness very late at night. Many bats will avoid lit areas entirely, as they associate them with the risk of predators.

If you create a long, linear arrangement of street lights, like a highway, it can be very difficult for bats to navigate, particularly if there's a lot of upwards light spill. A well-lit road can effectively become a permanent barrier to bats trying to commute to their preferred feeding sites, which can lead to the deterioration or loss of bat roosts.

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## How is light pollution affecting British wildlife?

Studies show artificial lighting leaves moths and their caterpillars more vulnerable to predation and distracts the adults from breeding. Moth numbers have fallen by a third in the UK since the late 1960s. It's a concern for any animal that relies on these insects as a food source.

Birds rely very heavily on their eyes to navigate and hunt, and artificial light can affect their sleeping and eating patterns. At night, migrating birds sometimes crash into buildings because they're attracted to artificial lights, but that's not the only negative impact. Many animals experience changes in daily or seasonal rhythms in artificially lit areas as well as changes in their behaviour, from breeding to feeding. While some will be able to forage or hunt more, others will find themselves more vulnerable to predation. Some species actively avoid light, impacting their ability to use and cross urban areas, for example, Tawny Owls avoid lit areas, possibly because the small mammals they prey on do too.

### Tips to reduce light pollution at home

**There are things we can all do to minimise the impact of artificial lighting on biodiversity, without impacting our ability to work, travel or feel safe.**

#### 1. Light only what you need

Avoid wasting light and energy by lighting only the features you need to see, such as steps and the lock on the front door. Avoid lighting up trees that could be home or feeding sites for bats or other nocturnal wildlife.

#### 2. Get directional

Use cones or baffle lights to focus the light down onto the ground or on the object you need to see. This will limit your contribution to sky glow and improve star visibility in your area.

#### 3. Avoid floor lights and bollards

Although ground lighting seems bat-friendly, bollards near reflective surfaces like concrete, water or pebble pathways can be a double whammy for wildlife. Instead, place lights higher and directed downwards.

#### 4. Keep it warm

Most domestic outdoor lighting is now LED, so look for warm white options rather than the cool white and blue wavelengths of the light spectrum. **Warm whites, oranges and reds are all better options for most wildlife as well as our own circadian rhythms.**

#### 5. Draw your curtains at night

Avoid unnecessary light spill into your garden so that bats and other animals can forage for food.

**Help local wildlife, see more stars and maybe even get a better night's sleep – all fairly compelling reasons to join the dark side.**

*Hein van Grouw and Steven Holt, Natural History Museum*

<https://www.nhm.ac.uk/discover/light-pollution.html>

