

HAPPY 2023

to all our readers

Litter coping and disposing

Chudleigh is a relatively neat and tidy town with litter mainly a problem in play areas. This is thanks to the care of residents and kind, energetic litter pickers. So perhaps we should encourage young people to take litter home ... but how?



A larger problem is roadside litter; we pick up huge amounts, blitzing laybys and entry roads to Chudleigh. This is mostly plastic bottles, cans and packaging for sweets and snacks. All of this is too dirty for recycling, so goes into black bins for landfill or incineration.

Apart from changing people's habits (a difficult long term project), we should also be campaigning for plastic free packaging. We cannot find every piece of litter, so let's hope some at least degrades safely. We know crisp packets take 70—80 years to degrade! There has to be a better way.

In the meantime, can I encourage walkers to carry rubbish bags, garden gloves or pickers with them and empty pickings into black bins and reuse bin bags. We are also looking for someone willing to organise winter layby picking. There are hoops, bags and pickers at the town hall.

For insurance purposes, it must be understood everyone picks for themselves, their community and the planet ... not as agents of the Council or other local authority. So take care, but **no dogs or children for roadside picking**. **ENJOY BEING OUTSIDE!**

Please get in touch if you want to learn more or to take part: info@chudleighwild.com

Tessa Frost



Insects in your Garden

**How to identify and look after the
small things that run the world**

An illustrated talk by Dave Smallshire

Friday Feb. 24th at 7.30pm

The Woodway Room - Chudleigh Town Hall

Are you intrigued by the small creatures that inhabit your garden?

Do you have any idea what they are and what they are doing there?

Dave will give tips on how to identify some of the insects (and other invertebrates) that might be found in wildlife-friendly gardens. He will also describe the various habitats that we can provide, which in turn will attract a wide range of species that provide us with pleasure and enjoyment, as well as vital 'ecosystem services'. Love them or hate them, these include pollinators, detritivores, predators, parasites, pretty ones, ugly ones and even alien invaders. Come along and be amazed at what lives under our very noses!

FREE, but donations appreciated



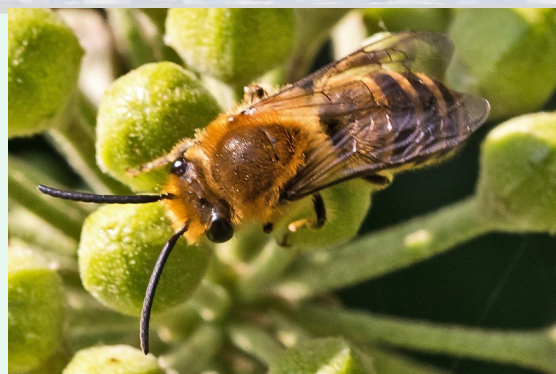


Friend or Foe?

Ivy - *Hedera helix*

Evergreen. **Flowers** September - November. **Berries** November - January.

The ancient Celts believed that the two sacred plants of midwinter were the Holly and the Ivy and where they grew together, great luck and power reigned. In ancient Rome, Ivy was a symbol of intellectual achievement and wreaths of Ivy were presented to winners of poetry contests. In ancient Greece, wreaths of Ivy were also presented to winning athletes.



As the days lengthen and we move closer to springtime, many avid gardeners will be venturing out into their gardens to start preparing for the new growing season. Tidying and cutting back overgrown and dead vegetation will be the aim of many. Before you do this, take a step back and have a good look around your garden.

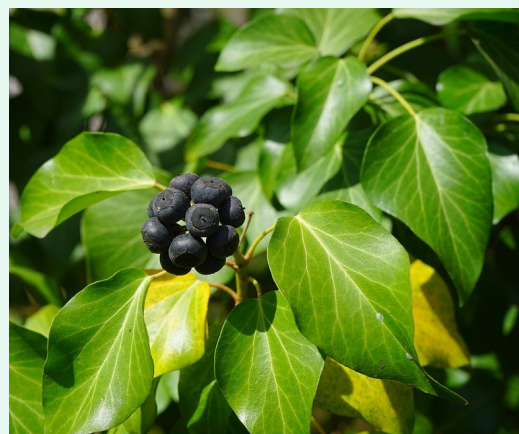
There are many plants from the previous growing season (living and dead), that provide an invaluable source of food and shelter for many insects, birds and mammals as well as a visual 'backdrop' to a garden. Ivy is one of these plants, but it has developed quite a bad reputation for being a bit of a 'thug' in the garden and many believe that older growth is capable of 'strangling' trees.

There are two subspecies of Ivy that are native to the UK: one creates ground cover and the other climbs trees. According to the Woodland Trust, Ivy does not have a detrimental effect on tree health. From a wildlife point of view, Ivy can offer a year-round habitat due to its structure, and its flowers and berries. Woody stems provide a suitable habitat for beetles which bore into the older growth and the dry shade of dense ivy offers protection to nesting birds such as Blackbirds, Robins, Chaffinches, Wrens, Woodpigeons, Collared Doves and sometimes Jays.

The older growth also provides an ideal habitat for many insects to live and overwinter and in turn, a good food supply for foraging mammals such as the Wood Mouse. The leaves provide a food source for some caterpillars, especially those of the Swallow-tailed Moth. The flowers provide nectar for wasps, hoverflies, moths and butterflies (especially the summer brood of the Holly Blue butterfly, which lays its eggs into unopened buds of Ivy blossom). The Ivy berries provide a food source for caterpillars of the Holly Blue, and for Blackbirds, thrushes and Woodpigeons during the winter months.

So, friend or foe? From a personal and environmental point of view, I choose friend.

P.S. Should you feel that your Ivy is a little unruly, try a gentle bit of pruning now, as this is the optimum time to avoid major disturbance to wildlife.



Vicci Camm





Open Gardens 2023

Chudleigh Wild will be hosting
'Chudleigh Open Gardens' again this year.



Saturday 17th and Sunday 18th of June.

We would like to include plenty of wildlife-friendly gardens, as well as a range of attractive, productive, formal and flower gardens. Gardens of any size are welcome.

Garden owners will get a share of the ticket money to donate to a charity of their choice. If you also choose to sell plants, crafts or refreshments, your takings will go to your chosen charity. You may also like to include a display of art or some live music as part of your garden!

There is only one qualification to join in: there must be a way into the garden that isn't through your house or garage, e.g. a back gate. This is for insurance purposes.

We are looking for up to 12 gardens to open. You can choose to open either day or both. Gardens are usually open from 10am to 4pm.

If you would like to invite others to enjoy your garden, please email Emma by
1st April

e.smith33@sky.com



Chair's Chat:

In Praise of Rats

Well, somebody has to give it a go!



Let's start with a confession: I rather like rats. They certainly make good pets (ask my daughter), albeit smelly ones (ask her fiancé!). My Uncle Walter used to breed rats and many other animals, mostly to supply to educational establishments for dissection. They were housed in a large shed in his garden, which I loved to explore with him. The rats were his favourites, by far. But sadly they're not everyone's favourites. Is this justified, I wonder?

I suspect that most people have an almost inherent disgust of rats that, as with a general view of Wolves, comes from centuries of often ill-founded fear. Yes, rats are commensal creatures that have pillaged our farm products for centuries and taken advantage of our messy

habits and discarded waste. These days, rats often eat the spillage from garden bird feeders or tuck into food waste put onto compost heaps, thereby bringing them as close again to householders as they were in the days of the Black Death.

Plague has been killing people for over five millennia, so I suppose we've had every reason to hate rats ... or have we? A recent article about Ship (Black) Rats in *British Wildlife* by renowned mammologist Stephen Harris has confirmed what I learned years ago from QI (which busts so many myths!): we laid the blame for plague wrongly on rats. Many naturalists will be aware that it was actually the fleas present on Ship Rats that transmitted the deadly bacteria, and maybe that this well-named species helped to spread plague around the world. But after unwittingly transporting the fleas and the bacteria to new places, transmission from them was likely due mainly to human parasites (body lice and human fleas) and aerosol infections (I guess face-masks weren't advised during plague outbreaks!).

Common (Brown or Norway) Rats can also spread diseases, notably Weil's Disease (Leptospirosis), which is why it's important to cover open wounds when dabbling in watercourses. A cousin of mine who had a passion for underground exploration managed to catch it, but it's uncommon in Britain. Humans have waged war against only three invasive species of rats worldwide: Ship, Common and Polynesian. Rats are difficult to trap, because they are neophobic (they avoid objects that are new to them), so Warfarin baits became the preferred method of control from the 1920s until the 'second generation anticoagulant rodenticides' (SGAR) came into use in the 1970s. SGARs are much more concentrated and rats will take on much more than a lethal dose in one feed.

Continued



Unless dead and dying rats are collected daily they pose a threat to non-target organisms, such as raptors and owls, which may be killed or lose their sensory acuity if they eat just part of a poisoned rodent (I believe SGARs are the reason for reduced numbers of Kestrels and Barn Owls). So poisoning rats kills not just rats.

Ship Rats are now rare in Britain, although information from pest controllers suggests not as rare as the mammal atlas suggests, but we are told that we are never more than a few metres from a Common Rat (or is that another myth?). One estimate suggests that humans outnumber rats in Britain by six to one – so which of us exists in ‘plague proportions’, eh? There hasn’t been a case of plague in Britain for over 100 years, so perhaps it’s time we took a more relaxed views of one of our commonest mammals. We probably have Common Rats living in our garden – certainly they’ve produced (very cute) young in burrows by a drain cover – but we see them rarely and it’s mostly the corpses that our neighbours’ cats very kindly provide us with that remind us that they’re still around. And I’m grateful that, along with the Hedgehogs and Dunnocks, they help to clean up the mess that those ‘horrible’ Goldfinches toss onto the floor. Or am I just being biased there?

Dave Smallshire

Chudleigh Prickly Hedge

Hedgehogs are alive and well in Chudleigh. Residents have them hibernating and breeding in their gardens right in the centre of the town.

As hedgehogs come out of hibernation, do provide water and food. I find dried kitten kibble (not fish flavour) the easiest.

If you are concerned about a hedgehog, please phone ELM hedgehog rescue at Seale Hayne, Newton Abbot. We are so fortunate in having them close by and willing to give friendly advice and help. **07971 276658**

I have been walking around checking on our hedgehog signs. They have been displayed for a few years now. If you have one near you, or on your property, please can you check that it hasn’t fallen down? If you no longer want it, can you arrange to return it as they cost our group £12 each. Being sturdy, they can be reused. I’ve noticed that one which was displayed on a tree on Lawn Drive has disappeared completely



Jonathan Valentine has made a new sculpture, currently located at 1 The Square. He would like this to tour Chudleigh, displaying in different places to reach a wide an audience as possible. Do you have a suitable garden/area? A fun way to promote awareness of hedgehogs in Chudleigh.

Barbara Steele
(Chudleigh Prickly Hedge)



Taking part ...

Chudleigh Bat Group

Did you know that we have a Bat Group? We meet from March to September to track the rare Greater Horseshoe Bats that live and breed in Chudleigh Caves. We also monitor the many other species of bat that fly around the town and roost locally. We have 8 bat detectors that we lend out to our members. We will be starting in March, so if you would like to join us, or just sample what we do,

contact info@chudleighwild.com

WhatsApp Bird Group

Members of the bird group keep in touch via WhatsApp and report sightings of birds in the parish. They help each other to identify the more unusual birds and join together from time to time to share a birding walk or trip.

For further information, or to join the group

Contact Dave: davesmall@btinternet.com with your name and mobile number.

Dave will be away from March 9, so if you would like to join the group contact him asap and he will add you.

The tough stuff

If you enjoy the more challenging habitat management jobs, join us at the Batfields Reserve, where we manage the site for a variety of wildlife including the Greater Horseshoe bats, small mammals, butterflies and other invertebrates and for wildflowers.

We have a range of tools, or you can bring your own. Work will start soon to manage the reserve, before the birds begin to nest.

Contact: Vicci: info@chudleighwild.com

Verges and grass raking

The verges down Lawn Drive are being managed for a variety of wildflowers, which attract the insects that are so important to in our environment. We are attempting to link a corridor of nectar and pollen-rich flowers across the town, through our gardens and other open spaces. Local development has destroyed many of these corridors, but we can create others so that these insects can carry out their important work.

Lawn Drive has been a great success, but we need to keep these verges under control. Some areas are only mown once a year and others on a more regular basis, but the grass needs to be raked each time and the grass disposed of. The flower beds also need weeding on a regular basis.

Contact info@chudleighwild.com

Keeping Chudleigh litter-free

Our merry band of 'litter pickers' work hard to keep the town and outlying areas litter free. They enjoy the task and we are very grateful to them, but they need more help. You can find details on page 1 of the newsletter.





Flavio Winkler Ford has recently left his post as ACT Wildlife Warden Coordinator to take up a great job in the Highlands - and already we are missing him!

When the ACT (Action Climate Teignbridge) Ecology Group decided to set up a Wildlife Wardens Scheme, I managed to get enough funding to pay a self-employed Coordinator for 20 hours work a week; we were really delighted when Flavio applied and was given the job.

I knew Flavio a little from Stover Wildlife Watch visits to our farm - although he was only a teenager at the time, his interest in wildlife and his friendly manner shone through.

Flavio had recently completed an Ecology degree at Exeter University and was living locally with his parents - he was dead keen to help his local wildlife and work with local people. He's much better at IT stuff than I am, as well as being very well organised, and he was SO generous with his time, not only with the WWS, but also as a member of the ACT steering

group. He also supported the ACT Food, Farming, Fisheries and Forestry Group.

Some people learn to be good communicators - but I think Flavio was born one; he has really helped to build a 'family' of WWs who work together and support each other.

Flavio has become a really good all-round naturalist, helping with WW training courses, surveying and recording schemes. He has turned out to be really easy to work with - coming up with good ideas, questioning old ideas - and above all, doing what he has undertaken to do. We've now got over 100 WWs based all over Teignbridge District and several other areas in Devon are starting, or hoping to start, similar projects.



Thank you Flavio for everything. We look forward to seeing you whenever you come back to Devon!

Audrey Compton
(ACT Wildlife Wardens Scheme)

